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### The Social and Economic Background of the Parables of Our Lord

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THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC  
BACKGROUND  
OF THE  
PARABLES OF OUR LORD



I, Richard A. Jesse, was born November 15, 1901 at Corder, Missouri. Shortly after my birth the family home was removed from Corder to Detroit, from there to Pittsburgh, and later to Clifton, Texas, father there assuming the presidency of a small Lutheran college. My schooling was begun at the age of six and a half years by entrance into the Lutheran Parochial School. This was followed by two years at the local public school and three years at Clifton Lutheran College.

Again the family moved, this time to Seward, Nebraska, father being called to fill the vacant directorship of the Lutheran Normal School there. After two years' comparative idleness on my part began five years of study at St. John's Lutheran College at Winfield, Kansas. Following the completion of the preparatory course at St. John's came four year's study at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, during the third year of which our home was again transferred to be relocated at Atchison, Kansas, father becoming the local Lutheran pastor. At the close of my fourth year at St. Louis I received and accepted a call from the Texas District Mission Board to care for a new mission field discovered on the outskirts of Houston, Texas.-----This is, in brief, the history of my life from birth to June 1925.

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T H E P A R A B L E S O F O U R L O R D

to be

CONSIDERED IN THE THESIS-----

- |                            |                                      |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1.Mk.2,22:                 | New wine in old bottles.             |
| 2.Lk.6,39:.                | Blind leading the blind.             |
| 3.Lk.7,40-50:              | The two forgiven debtors.            |
| 4.Lk.13,6-9;Matt.24,32-33: | The barren fig tree.                 |
| 5.Matt.13,3-9;18-23:       |                                      |
| Mk.4,3-9;14-20:            | The Sower: (the four kinds of soil)  |
| Lk.8,5-8;11-15:            |                                      |
| 6.Matt.13,24-30:           | The wheat and the tares.             |
| 7.Mk.4,26-29:              | The seed sown.                       |
| 8.Matt.13,31-32:           | The mustard seed.                    |
| 9.Matt.13,33:              |                                      |
| Lk.13,20-21;               | The leaven hidden in the meal.       |
| 10.Matt.13,44:             | The treasure buried in the field.    |
| 11.Matt.13,45-46:          | The pearl of great price.            |
| 12.Matt.13,47-50:          | The drag net                         |
| 13.Matt.18,12-24:          | The first parable of the lost sheep. |
| 14.Matt.18,23-35:          | The unmerciful servant.              |
| 15. Lk.10,30-37:           | The good Samaritan.                  |
| 16.Lk.14.8-11:             | Taking the chief seat at a wedding.  |
| 17.Lk.11,24-26:            | The demon returning.                 |
| 18.Lk.12,15-21:            | The foolish rich man.                |
| 19.Jn.10,1-5;7-18:         | The Good Shepherd.                   |
| 20.Lk.12,35-40:            | The watchful servant.                |
| 21.Lk.12,42-48:            | The faithful and wise steward.       |
| 22.lk.13,24-30:            | The door shut.                       |



23 Lk. 14, 16-24:	The great supper.
24. Lk. 4-7:	The second parable of the lost sheep.
25. Lk. 15, 8-10:	The piece of money lost and found.
26. Lk. 15, 11-32:	The prodigal son.
27. Lk. 16, 1-13:	The unjust steward.
28. Lk. 16, 19-31:	Dives and Lazarus.
29. Lk. 17, 7-10:	The unprofitable servant.
30. Lk. 18, 2-8:	The unjust judge and the importunate <sup>widow</sup> widow.
31. Lk. 18, 9-14:	The Pharisee and the Publican.
32. Matt. 20, 1-16 :	The laborers in the vineyard.
33. Lk. 19, 12-27:	The nobleman and his ten servants (The <sup>pounds</sup> pounds)
34. Matt. 21, 28-32:	The two sons.
35. Matt. 21, 33-44;	
Mk. 12, 1-12:	The vineyard let to husbandmen.
Lk. 20, 9-19:	
36. Matt. 22, 2-14:	The royal marriage feast.
37. Matt. 24, 32-33:	The fig tree leafing.
38. Mk. 13, 34-37:	The man taking a long journey.
39. Matt. 24, 42-51:	The faithful and the evil servant.
40. Matt. 25, 1-13:	The wise and foolish virgins.
41. Matt. 25, 14-30; Lk. 8, 18:	The ten talents.
42. Jn. 15, 1-17:	The true vine.

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## P R E F A C E.

The object of this paper, in strict accord with the definition of a master's thesis, is to give evidence of a teaching knowledge of the chosen subject. It will, therefore, not have failed should it succeed in producing<sup>such</sup> a presentation of the social and economic facts which form the storehouse from which our Lord, with wisdom divine and ever marvelous, chose the mundane symbolism of His Parables. As to efforts along original lines, they are excluded by the subject itself inasmuch as the general field is almost as old as the Parables themselves. Therefore the writer has had to content himself with a selection and collection within one compass of those social and economic facts which bear directly upon the Parables, taking care to exclude what is not directly relevant. In so doing he has hoped by individual treatment of component factors to present an analysis of the parabolic background as well as the synthetic effect of a complete mosaic by a treatment inclusive of practically every point.

In strict keeping with the subject as stated, the paper is confined to an exposition of Jewish society and economics as exhibited by the Parables. For this reason it will take no cognizance of the relations existing between these facts and the subject of the Parables itself, ~~the~~ the Kingdom of Heaven — if, indeed, such a recognition be not already precluded both by the writer's inability to cope with so difficult and danger-fraught a situation and by the fact that it would greatly broaden a scope already wellnigh too general.

It is indeed true that the scope is broad, for it includes



the whole of the parabolic background. For two reasons, however, the writer has deemed it wise to forbear attempting to limit the subject. In the first place, if the scope is narrowed so as to bear only on a portion of the background or only on some of the parables, the treatment must necessarily be only partial, and, if partial, then of only comparative value, thus becoming quite unsatisfactory. In the second place, the hope of hitting on a satisfactory division of a social and economic background has seemed somewhat absurd to the writer, for a satisfactory fundamentum dividendi seems, in the very nature of the matter, to be out of the question. Nor can a halving of the twofold subject (social and economic background) be in any wise satisfactory, since the ignoring of the former removes the purpose of the latter, whereas to disregard the latter is to leave the former "pendulous in air". In the one case we should have the purposelessness of a pedestal bereft of its column, and, in the other, the enigma of a mode of life with no visible means of support.

While the brief treatment of a broad subject inevitably results in some measure of superficiality, the effort has been made to avoid too close an approach thereto in the present paper by permitting some detail in the discussion of each point. The necessary brevity of the production the author has endeavoured to turn to account by attempting to produce only a cross-section of Jewish life as presented by the Parables. This cross-section of the parabolic background displays the first and direct origin of the earthly figures in the Parables, and is therefore sufficient almost without exception. To explain the origin of the cross-section would only be to supply the origin of origins - which cannot, <sup>but</sup> ~~by~~ obscure the intended firmness and



clearness of the outline of the picture. Therefore details of this remote sort have been excluded in the hope that the entire background might be satisfactorily assembled, that moderation in length might be retained, but that the fault of superficiality might still be obviated or transformed into a virtue.

The thesis will fall naturally into two major parts, as the subject implies. The latter may be briefly paraphrased as Jewish life and its support, according to the Parables. Hence the first part will discuss Jewish life of the period - or, "Society and Social Customs" - whereas the second will treat of the means of supporting this life - or, "The Economic Background", which consists chiefly, of course, in a study of Jewish trades and professions. Part I will be subdivided into two lesser divisions: 1) Social Classes; 2) Social Customs.

P A R T I  
T H E S O C I A L B A C K G R O U N D .

SECTION 1.

THE CLASSES OF JEWISH SOCIETY.

I. The Rich.

Whatever may have been the state of Jewish society prior to the time of Christ, there nevertheless existed prominently at His time, among other classes, those two widely separated and sharply defined ones which so unerringly mark the period of national decadence the world over and at every period of history - the rich and the poor. Just as after the death of Dives and Lazarus there was a gulf fixed betwixt them, so on earth was there a decided abyss between the classes they represented. The wretchedly poor were as definitely without as the very rich were exclusively within the pale of comfort and gaiety and shelter and luxury. And in no instance was the contrast more sharp as between their respective dwellings.

In both cases the dwellings were quadrangular. But to this the resemblance was almost exclusively restricted. In the case of the rich the general ground plan was that of a hollow rectangle, the hollow being represented by a court (or, sometimes, by two or more courts), while the sides consisted of the various chambers deemed necessary for the varied requirements of the household.

Today, as one traverses the narrow Palestinian streets (eight feet wide, or less), he sees the blank, desolate walks of the houses reach upwards to a height of from forty to sixty feet, almost unornamented save for the door and the projecting, lattice-



filled window over it. Formerly, however, the large mansions of the rich, sometimes two or more storeys high, appear to have presented a more ornate exterior. The walls were at least of squared or dressed stones (Is.9,10; Amos 5,11) and often even of marble. They were embellished with rows of pillars and with various architectural adornments, sometimes having a sort of piazza running along the side (Barton,p.127). Not infrequently were the walls tinted with delicate colours, such as vermillion (except, no doubt, in the case of marble). Doorways and doors were often highly ornamented. Probably the doors were usually, as today, of hard wood, studded with iron nails or sheeted with iron, opened inwards, and were provided with bars and bolts. No doubt the doors were large and massive, for the one before which Lazarus lay was called  $\pi\upsilon\lambda\acute{\omega}\nu$ , which is closely allied to  $\pi\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\eta$ , "gate" (cf. Mk.7,12.:  $\pi\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\eta$   $\pi\acute{o}\lambda\epsilon\omega\varsigma$  ). They were also equipped with wooden locks to which wooden keys, "large enough for a stout club", were fitted (cf. Is,22,22.). Finally, a wide, costly, exterior stairway ran up to the flat roof.

In Palestine every house of every age has had a flat roof, tho it was, to be sure, slightly sloping in order to allow the water to drain off, perhaps into a cistern. The building-methods in vogue for the roof were much the same for all classes. First of all, beams (of cypress or cedar in the case of the rich) were laid from wall to wall. Across the beams were laid the smaller rafters (cf. Cant.1,17). On top of the rafters was first placed a layer of brushwood, reeds, sticks, etc., then a layer of earth several inches thick, and on top of all a thick plaster of clay or of clay and lime. Some roofs were still better surfaced against the seasonal rains with a pavement of brick or stone - which



treatment rendered <sup>them</sup> ~~it~~, of course, the ne plus ultra of <sup>their</sup> ~~its~~ kind. On the roof was to be found the stranger's room, also called the upper chamber or room (Lk.22,12; Acts 1,13). And from this cubicle the stranger could come and go into the city via the exterior stairway. This chamber is still to be found on the Syrian roof, being now called "El 'Alliyeh" (See "The Land and the Book" illust. p.636). It is still the most desirable and best fitted up room in the house, and is still given to guests who are to be honored (Op. cit., 634) These flat surfaces <sup>of the Palestinian roofs</sup> ~~were~~ put to a variety of uses, it being here that green booths were set up at the feast of Tabernacles. It was daily, however, much used for meditation and <sup>prayer</sup> ~~prayer~~ (Acts 10,19), for consultations requiring isolation, if not <sup>privacy</sup> ~~privacy~~ (1Sam. 9,25.26), for strolling up and down (Josh.2,6), and no doubt as places where the children might play of a warm, sunny morning (since it was rendered safe by a balustrade at three feet high (Deut.22,8) ), and where at evening the household might gather to seek the first cooling breeze after the long day's heat, the while from this vantage-point they silently watched the fiery sun-set-embers die and blacken to the velvety darkness of the Eastern night.

Were a person to seek admittance to such a Jewish home, he would be admitted thru the wicket-gate <sup>of the great front-gate</sup> ~~by~~ the porter or <sup>portress</sup> ~~portress~~ (Acts 12,13.14) and would then traverse the outer court to come to the entrance to <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ inner court, which was "the court" proper. Or, if there were no outer court, the visitor, on turning in from the street, would find the same kind of large door at the farther end of a vestibule or porch, the vestibule being, as today, a recess let into the front of the house, and about 12 feet deep (See "The Land and the Book", illust. p.636). If this were the case, then the "gate" opened directly into the inner court (see Nevin "Bib.



Ant.", p.59)

The inner court of every house was open to the sky, with no protection whatever from beating heat or driving rain save the awning that was sometimes stretched across by the rich to ward off the direct sun-rays. In the center of the court there was the inevitable fountain, spring, or pool to cool and moisten the hot, parched air with its spray, to soothe the ear with its liquid bubbling and plashing, and to rest the eye. Besides these things, the floor of the court was paved at least with stone or, if the owner had the means, with mosaic-work. It is probable that sometimes trees, or bushes, or clinging vines to cover the walls, likewise found a place within the family-court of the wealthy. Finally, if the house were a two-storeyed structure, the lifted gaze of the visitor would behold a second-story balcony running clear around the sides of the walls, and communicating <sup>with</sup> the first floor by flight of stairs situated usually in a corner *of the court.*

Every court of the day was surrounded, also on the ground floor, by a covered gallery, which was in turn always surrounded by rooms. However, the nature of these rooms depended upon whether or not this court was the only one of the establishment, and upon whether there was a second storey above. Since, however, every rich family always had either an additional court or an additional storey, we may relegate the consideration of the single-court dwelling to that portion of the present discussion which touches on the middle-class residence

In the case of more than one court, the courts to the rear, and the rooms surrounding them, were devoted to the exclusive use of the women (Esther 4,4.). Likewise would a second storey be reserved for the use of the female members of the household. These provisions then left the first court of the first <sup>floor</sup> floor



available for other uses, the most natural of which would be, of course, the ceremonial. This was in fact the case.

All the first-court rooms were called reception rooms, but they were apparently equipped with interiors of varying quality, the idea possibly being that the grade of the room ought to be somewhat suited to the rank of the visitor. Thus, there was a principle reception room, a chamber upon which the owner lavished his means, causing it to be highly ornamented and probably furnished with cedar-- or cypress-lined walls and ceilings (Jer.22,14; Hag.1,14) (or having them ornamented or painted, if of stone (Jer.22,14)), with floors paved with marble, with a fountain, and having the floor at the farther end raised to form a sort of dais (called the "lîwan" today) surrounded on the sides by a divan formed of mattresses and cushions covered with carpets. This room was no doubt the scene of the banquets and the revelries of the elect in the local society, as well as being the scene of the feast in honor of the distinguished guest.

One more room deserves mention, tho there can be nothing more than mention made, in view of the scarcity of information. This is the bathroom of the private house. Of public baths, in Greece and Rome, with their gymnasium<sup>s</sup> and libraries, we are very familiar. But to find private baths in Palestine is something of surprise. And yet we are assured that, beginning with the Hellenistic period in the Holy Land, they were not infrequently to be found in the well-appointed establishments of the wealthy. (Barton p.127).

It has been mentioned above that the exterior of Eastern houses today present a bare, desolate appearance, with a great scarcity of windows to break the monotony. This seems always to have been a characteristic of the East, for also at the Saviour's



time the windows were comparatively few, and these looked usually into the court. According to the Mishna they were narrow, though we know that at least some were large enough to permit the passage of a man's body thru them (1Sam. 19,12; Joel 2,9). It is, however, safe to say that nearly all were smaller than the windows of today. That they were unequipped with galls scarcely needs mention. Instead, they were closed with some sort of wood- or lattice-work, accentuating the extreme privacy of the Eastern home. — From these conditions it follows, of course, that even the homes of the rich were but poorly lighted, and, consequently, not nearly as well ventilated as might have been desirable at times.

The furniture of the day was both quite numerous and variegated. Tables, of course, there were, these being round or square or oblong (as the Mishna attests), and chiefly of wood. Of couches there were no doubt a number in the better homes of the day, and in this sort of furniture especially were the luxurious tastes of the owners' exhibited. When, several centuries before Christ, Amos was sent to warn Israel of her wantonness before God, it was the couches and the "beds of ivory" (Amos 6,4) which he chose as symbols of her passionate love of luxury. Thus, too, the couches of later Palestine were to be found inlaid with ivory, shaped in agreeable lines, and fitted with cushions of silk for head and arms, thus being eminently well fitted to typify an age deeply affected by the now universal Hellenistic love of ease and luxury.

Lamps, of course, were an indispensable adjunct, no matter what the means of the owner. One of the materials, favorite the world over, was, needless to say, clay. But it is probable that the majority of the lamps of the rich were at least of bronze



and frequently of silver. But besides the ordinary lamps, there were to be found also lampstands, standing, if the recent finds in Crete be an index, about thirty inches high. Such do authorities (as Dr. A.R.S. Kennedy of Glasgow U. in Hasting's Dict. <sup>ed.</sup> one vol. <sup>ed.</sup>) hold the "candle-stacks" of the Authorized Version (e.g. Matt. 5, <sup>15</sup> 15) to have been. Not only, however, were the Jewish lampstands of the single-flame type, <sup>but numerous specimens have been found of the multiple type,</sup> having the rim pinched into three, four, or seven spouts, with a wick in each reaching down to the olive oil (or sometimes naphtha) within.

Such were the establishments of the rich. However, for their maintenance some method of acquiring sufficient and steady income was necessary, and this, then, leads us to a discussion of their means of livelihood. Such a discussion will, of course, be brief, in that it occupies a place of no great importance in the parabolic background.

We of the twentieth century, being better informed as to the history of Jewish enterprise since the days of Christ than at that time, have need to disillusion ourselves of a prevalent misconception. This erroneous idea consists in the notion that, since the Jews of the past centuries have so zealously attended to commerce, such was the case at the Savior's time. Nothing could, however, be further from the truth. In fact, it was well nigh impossible for two reasons.

In the first place, past history served to deter them from attempting commerce. From the first the Hebrews had never been intended to be a commercial people. To this end had God seen fit to impose the many ~~the many~~ restrictions upon intercourse between the Hebrews and the Gentiles. Moreover, the internal <sup>financial</sup> ~~financial~~ transactions that inevitably take place within a people as





result of commercial relations with outsiders were rendered impossible by the injunction forbidding the taking of interest from a fellow Jew (Lev.36,37) — despite the fact that it was permissible thus to charge a Gentile (Deut.23,20). Again, the laws touching the Sabbatic and Jubilee years would have recurrently brought commerce to an embarrassing, if not fatal, standstill.

But despite legal obstructions, some Israelites had attempted foreign trade, and the history of the indifferent results was sufficient to indispose the later Jew toward such attempts. Not only did Jehoshaphat's ill-starred attempt (2Chron.20,36.37) sour the national mind, but also the ultimate failure of Solomon's ambitious projects served as a damper to later aspirations in this field.

But, in the second place, there were influences at the time of Christ which forbade such attempts. The position of the Rabbis, for instance, was quite decidedly antagonistic. In the whole Talmud there occurs scarcely a kindly word for this occupation; and to the Rabbinic mind there was little difference between the despised pedlar and the merchant. (See "Rays of Christ", p.205). Then, too, the highest permissible profit among the Jews (Sixteen percent) would hardly have served to incite the cupidity of any man. Therefore the statement of Josephus that "we neither inhabit a maritime country nor do we delight in merchandise, nor in such a mixture with other men as arises from it" (Ag. Apion, Ippar. 12) is but the statement of a logical condition. — Yet there were, despite the general rule, a few exceptions, such as the rich Jerusalemite Sebu, who atoned for this irregularity, however, by assisting the great teacher Hillel in his pursuits, thus not only gagging his critics, but also winning even commendation ("Edno." In the



There was, therefore, only one profitable source of income available to the average Jew of the upper classes—that which derived from the soil. The accuracy of this is borne out by Josephus, who says, "Having a fruitful country for our habitation, we take pains in cultivating that only" (Ag. Apion, I, par.12). This cultivation was usually of two sorts. The one sort was that of farming on a large scale (Lk.12,16-18), and the other was that of husbandry (Matt.20,1-16). It follows, then, that the time of the wealthy Jew was divided between his urban home and his country estate or estates.

Not only on his dwelling and the fittings thereof, however, did the prosperous Jew display his means, but also, of course, on his person. The Jewish clothing for the body consisted usually of two garments - the inner and the outer. The undergarment was known as the χιτῶν (Geikie) or as the "Chaluq" or "Kethoneth" (Edersheim), and was usually of wool or linen. This garment, in the case of the poorer classes, who engaged in active labor, came only to the knees; but it was customary for the wealthy laity, as well as for the sages, to wear it long, reaching to the heels. It had no openings save for neck and arms, was sleeved, close fitting, and was fastened round the loins or under the breast with a girdle.

Over this garb came the outer garment, the "Tallith" (Edersheim) or ἱμάτιον (Geikie), reaching down to within a handbreadth of the lower edge of the χιτῶν. There were various sorts of this garment, of materials ranging from the coarse Boresin (from which is derived the present "Burnoose") to the finest. In color it was either white, being then often embroidered, or of gorgeous purple. In shape the "Tallith" was square, having at each of the four corners a "fringe"—tassel-wise, no doubt—



consisting of four long white threads and one of hyacinth. Such, no doubt, was the *ετολή* with which the happy father hastened to cover the rags of his son that "was dead and is alive again" (Lk.16,24). Finally, the rich seem usually to have added two articles to the standard wardrobe—the shirt of fine linen or cotton, worn beneath the undergarment or *χιτών* (Judg. 14,12 f.); and <sup>a</sup>second, but longer and sleeveless, underdress worn just over the *χιτών* (ISam.18,4) (Kéil "Bib. Arch." II, 139)

The characteristic head-covering of the wealthy consisted of a kind of turban, or pointed cap, of some fine material, curiously wound, and having the ends falling behind. As for the feet, they were shod, during the greater part of the year, with sandals, being encased with the coarse, clumsy shoes only in winter or in rainy weather. It is probable, if not certain, that the "shoes" of the A.V. of Lk,15,22 were only sandals (see Thayer, *ὑπόδημα*, "a sandal, a sole fastened to the foot with thongs").

We have now a fairly accurate picture of the "certain rich man" of the Saviour's parable (Lk.16,19), sheltered luxuriously within his splendid mansion, dazzling the eyes of the beholder with the whiteness of his "challuq"—which was, according to the Savior's word, of byssos, a fine, intensely white linen, and so costly that, according to Pliny, it was weighed against gold—and gladdening the vision with the royal splendor of his outer garment. This outer garment of Dives was steeped in purple, we are told, and thereby we are given a key to the approximate financial rating of the man. He must have been quite immensely rich, for the purple dye of old was very expensive because rare. It was the true sea-purple, rare, (according to Pliny (H.N.1,9, c.60)) because of the fact that the dyeing liquid was found only



in some now unknown kind of fish, there being merely a few drops to the fish. This color was, therefore, considered royal, and the purple garment was almost the standard in the matter of royal gifts (see Esth.8,15; Dan.5,7; IMacc,10,20; 11,58; 14,43).— Let us complete the sketch now by placing a seal-ring on his finger or suspending it about his neck; and clasping about his arm, just above the elbow, a jeweled armband; and noting how meticulously his beard is trimmed, anointed, and perfumed. (See Edersheim "Life and Times" I,621 ff; "In the Days of Christ", pp.216 ff; Geikie, "Life of Christ"; Trench, "Parables", p372, 372 n.))

## II. The Middle Class.

Next in order, and just beneath the rich class, was the greatest class, numerically, of old Palestine, just as the case is in every normal society. To this great middle class belonged the small property owners, the better sort of tradespeople, the local Sanhedrin and their officers, etc. As became their station, the life of the members of this class was moderate, being neither replete with ease nor altogether bare of comforts.

The dwellings of the middle class were usually built of brick, tho sometimes of undressed or dressed stone. They were restricted in height to one storey; the walls were whitewashed or painted some neutral tint; and up to the flat roof ran the outside flight of steps. Like the houses of the rich, the ground-plan of the edifice was rectangular in shape, with but a single court, however, in the center. Admittance from the outside was had to this court either thru a large outer court, or else merely thru the porch or vestibule and finally thru a door. Surrounding this inner court was a gallery running clear around, after which came the various apartments, and finally the outer, windowless wall.



Among the rooms were the living, or family room, the sleeping apartments, and, toward the front, the reception room or, as it was also called, the guest-chamber, where the man of moderate means entertained, on a modest scale, his friends and neighbors.

It is to be understood, of course, that the <sup>luxury</sup> furnishings varied with the wealth of the owner, so that at one extreme the middle class establishment more and more resembled those of the rich, while at the other it merged into the cottage of the poor.

This observation is equally true with regard to clothing. While the usual articles (undergarment, girdle, upper garment, headgear, sandals) formed the minimum, various articles of varying quality were added according to the wearer's means.

### III. The Poor.

When, in speaking of the next and poor class, we compare their homes with the middle class dwellings, we find a difference ~~not only~~ not only in degree, as between rich and middle class houses, but also in kind. In these houses the inner <sup>court</sup> was entirely lacking — for the excellent reason that they consisted of only one room, as well as of only one storey. The building material was frequently clay — either in the form of mud or <sup>9,10</sup> sunburned brick (Is. 9, 10). So poor were their houses that their foundation was said to be in the dust (Job. 4, 19), and so frail that they "were ready to become heaps" (Job 15, 28) and to be "crushed before the moth" (Job 4, 19); and so poorly constructed generally that constant vigilance and repair alone kept them from falling in or at least leaking copiously in rainy weather (Ecc. 10, 18). So unstable were they that, unless instantly attended to, they were liable to be overthrown and reduced to ruins by heavy rainfall, by hailstorm,



or by strong winds (Ezek. 13,10ff). Another result of the clay construction was that the thief sometimes took advantage of the householder either by first soaking the wall with water and then proceeding to dig his way thru the softened clay, or else by commencing to dig after the rain had obligingly performed the preliminary soaking. So it was <sup>that</sup> the house of the unwary Jewish Goodman could so frequently have been "broken thru" as to afford to the Savior's hand a ready illustration of the unexpectedness of His own future Return (cf Lk.12,39).

Within the little house the cattle were also housed in cold weather, the portion for the family being raised on a dais some two feet above that allotted to the cattle. On this elevated section were the beds, chests, and cooking utensils of the family. This, of course, did not tend toward the ultimate in internal cleanliness nor in sanitation. Nor did the fact help that the houses were dark, deriving their light for the most part from the doorway, the narrowness and the rarity of the windows, as well as their height from the ground and the fact that their already small dimensions were sometimes obstructed with wooden gratings efficiently preventing the entrance of light. Moreover, these cottages boasted no chimneys, the smoke being left to find its way out thru various holes in the building.

These facts, together with this, that the floors of such houses as these were such-strewn, must have rendered housekeeping a difficult, as well as a dubious and sketchy process. Especially must the problem of keeping the floor clean have been very knotty, for no doubt the rushes on the floor served as nuclei for dust and miscellaneous debris. That it would have required prolonged and painstaking search to have recovered a lost coin from the darkness and the littered floors of Palestinian huts is therefore not



surprising.

Included in the housekeeping of the lower classes in Judea was the daily obligation of preparing bread. The grain was ground in a handmill, the usual "batch" having been three "measures" (Matt.13,33; Lk.13,21) (*ḡaror* —about a peck and a half) of meal in which leaven was mixed, together with water, to make the dough. The meal, in the case of the rich, was wheaten; in that of the poor, barley. The flat ~~of~~ cakes of dough were then <sup>baked by being</sup> laid inside of a jar which had previously been heated. Such cakes were very thin. Sometimes no doubt, the loaves were placed instead in a hole in the ground which had previously held a fire, to remain there over night to bake. (See Nevin, "Bib.Ant." p.66, for illust. of "oven").

As the lowest stratum of Jewish society there were the very poor, the beggars, such as were incapacitated for earning a livelihood either by natural handicaps such as blindness or lameness or by accidental maiming with a resultant crippled state. These being regarded as especially grievous sinners now laboring under the heavy weight of God's displeasure (cf. Lk.13,4), they were looked down on and were consequently left to shift much for themselves. They were to be found in the larger streets of the city, before prominent buildings, and in the narrow city lanes, playing the only trade open to them, beggary (cf. Lk.14,21; Acts<sup>3,2</sup>3,2), even as in eastern towns of today the passerby is being constantly implored for "backsheesh". But they seem to have been found also wandering also on the main roads outside the city, and in the footpaths running thru the fields alongside the hedges, (cf. Lk<sup>14</sup> 14, 23). It follows therefore that this class was very numerous in the towns of ancient Palestine, the sight of their rags, their fil-



thiness and deformities being visible constantly.

It seems, however, that the poor were not totally forgotten, but that a spark of sympathy in the Jewish breast moved the better off to afford some measure of care ~~of~~ the poor. It is evident from the query of Judas Iscariot when he saw Mary, in the house at Bethany, anoint the feet of Jesus with costly ointment (Ju.12,3-5) that it was customary to dole out to the poor occasional sums of money. Likewise the custom prevailed of laying the helplessly poor before the gates of the rich, hoping—tho sometimes vainly—that the wealthy man, seeing them constantly there, would at length have pity and send out to them scraps of food and perhaps medicines to alleviate their pains. (Lk.16,20).

That this class of the poorest<sup>poor</sup> was the painful, festering, neverhealing sore in the ancient Jewish body politically, even as it was in all eastern countries of the day, cannot be doubted. It is the natural curse of <sup>every</sup> society which tends to exalt the fortunate few to dizzy heights and to crush the masses under a grinding,merciless, causually thoughtless heel for the luxurious support of the few. It is therefore pleasant to turn from this painful phase to the most beautiful in the whole social relations of the ancient Jews; to consider for a moment that side which constitutes the background of the Parable which so many penitent Christian hearts have esteemed the most splendid that ever fell from Jesus' lips, namely, that of the Prodigal Son.

#### IV. Fathers and Sons.

The relations between fathers and sons in Israel were happy indeed. Sons of few other nations were as devotedly loved and cared for. Says Josephus, "Our principal care of all is this, to educate our children well" (Ag. Apion I, Par.12). It is therefore in keeping with facts that the Prodigal's father should



bestow, even upon a fallen son, those Eastern tokens of highest favor—the mantle and the ring (1 Macc. 6,15; Gen.41,42)

Nor did this love remain unrequited. Even as parents cherished their offspring, so did the children bear with the foibles and pettishness of age. Undutifulness or inconsideration for parents, when heard of, was wont to send little chills of horror up and down the Hebrew spine. The Hebrew son owed unquestioning obedience to his father. With no discussions, therefore, as to the righteousness of the command did the sons receive the order of the father to toil in his vineyard (Matt.21,28-32). They obeyed without question, or disobeyed without conscious guilt. Such a rule of obedience held good, however, only in case the son was dependent on his father for his livelihood. He was considered independent as soon as he could gain his own living. (Edersheim "In the Days of Christ", p.99).

#### V. Masters and Servants.

Somewhat akin to the relations between fathers and sons in ancient Jewry were those between masters and servants. We find the masters of the parables characterized by negligence of their own interests (Lk.16,1), by sternness in cases of investigation and judgment (Lk.16,2), by swiftness to punish (Lk.12,46; Lk.19,12-27), yet by equal swiftness to reward the faithful (Lk.12,43.44). Finally, however, the relations between master and servant were frequently in grateful contrast to similar heathen relations, for there was often cordial intercourse between Jewish master and slave (Gen.24; Ruth 2,4).

The "servant" of the New Testament is indeed a broad term, including everyone who performed service for another, be that service voluntary or involuntary, honorable or dishonorable. Every



subordinate, therefore, from the war-slave to the king's grand vizier, was concluded in the term. Therefore this term may indicate a position of honor, distinction, and authority.

The number of servants among the Jews must have been large, in the first place because they are so frequently mentioned, and, in the second, because the sources of servitude were both numerous and fruitful. Of this class it is, moreover, undoubtedly correct to say that the majority were slaves. This conclusion follows from the facts that the nature of the sources provided rather for slave-service than for hired service, and that the Essenes were moved, in their reform~~atory~~ efforts, fiercely to denounce the system— which they would not have done had it not been prevalent and deeply rooted. (See Neander's "Life of Christ", par. 26). If slavery were prevalent, however, then it is indisputable that the Jewish man of any means whatever preferred this <sup>sort</sup> of service, just <sup>as</sup> heathen masters did. In view of these conditions, then, we may confidently say that the Jewish household was almost entirely cared for by slaves. The balance was formed of Hebrew servants (involuntary, but privileged workers).

Briefly, the sources of Jewish slavery were five: 1) by war; 2) by purchase; 3) by birth from slaves owned; 4) as payment for debt; 5) by voluntary sale of self or daughter (see Davis' Bible Dict., "Slave").

The legal status of the Hebrew servant (scarcely slave) was one ~~of~~ the rights of which were numerous <sup>and</sup> carefully guarded by law. After six years of service he was to have his freedom (Ex.21,2). If owned by a foreigner, he could buy himself free at any time possible (Lev.25,47-55). At the Jubilee Year he was to go free, regardless of whether his six years were past or not. But also the Gentile slave had certain valuable rights and pri-



villeges (Lev.24,17.22; Deut.12,12.18; Ex. 23,12).

The classes of Jewish domestics were three: 1)The steward, 2)the household servants, 3)the field-servants. It is natural to assume that the two latter classes were frequently represented by one group who did double duty. This is borne out by the Parable of "The Unprofitable Servant" (Lk.17,7-10).

In the large household, especially when the care of an estate was involved, the head-servant, known as the steward, was indispensable. Being indispensable, he was an important personage in the household, and, as such, he occupies an extraordinarily prominent position in the Parables and hence, in their background. --- In the large households, with its numerous slaves, the most faithful and capable was customarily set over the rest as steward. Such was Eliezer, in the house of Abraham (Gen.15,2; 24,2) To the steward was given such absolute contröel over the master's property that the master himself frequently had no accurate knowledge of its state (Gen.39,6). His duty it was to dispense their portions of food to the different members of the household (Lk12,42), and to keep the servants in order --- tho in some instances this power was perverted into beating and maltreating the underservants (Lk 12,45). In his master's absence he became the head of the house. Likewise, he was the go-between betwixt <sup>his</sup> master and his master's creditors (Lk. 16,5ff), seeming to act <sup>with</sup> unquestioned authority in such instances. In fact, it was his <sup>duty</sup> to assume the entire weight of household responsibility, leaving the master free for other pursuits.

Under the steward were a number of household servants, the number depending, of course, upon the means of the master. These servants performed the various domestic duties devolving, in lesser establishments, upon the ~~members~~ of the household, such



as perparing the meals and waiting on table (Lk.17,8), cleaning and sweeping, running errands (Lk.14,17), etc. But there were servants with special duties, and designated by special names. One of these was the porter, who was not only to watch for and herald the master's return, as Mark 13,34 has it, but also to admit those desiring entrance, announcing their arrival, and warning of the arrival of undesirables (cf. Acts 12,13.14.). Sometimes, as in the Acts passage, this functionary was a woman -- a portress. --- These servants were, of course, on the average, no more excellent than, for instance, those of today. While no doubt faithful on the whole, yet, when the master's eye was not upon them, they were given to relaxations which manifested themselves as brawlings (Matt.24,49), sumptuous feasting<sup>s</sup>, drunkenness<sup>s</sup>, and laziness (Lk. 12,45). So no doubt, while permitting the master a more uninterrupted enjoyment of the pleasanter things of life, yet the possession of servants also entailed certain griefs.

The masters of that day had, strangely enough to us of the modern West, a use for their servants to which we would never think of putting them. This use forms the basis of two of the Lord's Parables --- that of the Talents and that of the Pounds. It consisted in entrusting ~~to~~ to servants a certain sum of money with the understanding that the servants take it and ~~either~~ go into business with it or else loan it to bankers at a certain rate of interest. The former case is that of the Talents. The servants were given the money with the intention that they trade with it, "do business" with it. Sometimes these slaves were artisans. If so, then they were to set themselves up in business and return the profit to the master. Or possibly they understood the business of buying and selling. If so, they were to open bazaars and



and bring the increase to their lord. (see Matt. 25,16) --- Or, as in the case of the Pounds, the servants were sometimes made the financial agents of the master, thus relieving him not only of his domestic cares, but also of his financial worries.--- which become onerous in the case of great wealth. In the latter case the servants took the sums to the bankers ( whom we shall discuss later) to loan them to these men at interest (see Lk. 19,23), the interest then reverting to the lord.

That servants who faithfully performed these duties should be rewarded by their grateful masters is but natural. To show, however, that this actually occurred in sober fact, Trench (p. 420,note) cites a statement of Barhrebraeus (found in Havernick's "Comm. ueber Daniel", p. 17) telling of a prudent slave who was elevated by a certain Sultan Zangi to the governorship of the Kurrisch.

The third group of Jewish servants is the agricultural class. These more robust, but less nimble servants were employed about the estate in various capacities, such as those of plowing, sowing, weeding, harvesting, storing the grain, feeding cattle, etc. (cf. Matt.13,24-30; Lk. 17,7-10). From the last-quoted passage it is apparent that these field-servants were likewise, in cases of limited means, also required to perform household duties.

## VI. Employers and Laborers

As we have intimated, the labor discussed above was of the domestic, and usually unremunerated, type. However, at times of pressing need for haste, or when some special project was under way, it was the usual occurrence that those who made laboring for



others their prime occupation received a call from the property-owner who had need to employ them.

The employers of the Judean day, we may take it, were, for the most part, just in their exactions and rewards. That too their number included some miserly as well as dishonest creatures, is, in view of unchanged humanity as we see it today, probable and but to be expected. But, be the exceptions what they may, the employers of the Parables are men of exemplary and generous character. So much we may say with certainty.

Likewise were the laborers, in conformity with a natural state of affairs, partly good and hard-working, while others were not so worthy of approbation. Some toiled diligently and contentedly received their wages, while others were true sticklers for every fancied right, even when they had, no doubt, not labored as zealously as they might have (cf. Matt.20,11.12). Theirs was not an easy life, to be sure, for they had to bear "the burden and heat of the day" (Matt.20,12), besides the hardships of labor with primitive implements. This *καύσων*, heat, is the word used by the LXX for the dry, burning wind from the eastern desert and plains which is so fatal to vegetable life. This is Hosea's "wind .... from the wilderness" (c.13,15). It has much in common with, tho it is not so severe as, the Sam or Samiel, which modern travellers say is sometimes fatal to even human life. (see Trench, p.151)

To these labourers, then, the Palestinian employers were used to come when the harvest or vineyard or orchard cried for attention. These laborers were customarily to be found in the market-place. That was, it seems, the somewhat primitive but effective employment-bureau (cf. Matt.20,3.6.). There did the poorer neighbors foregather if they desired employment, and there



might have been found, too, the "harvest-hands" who were travelling with the harvest just as similar modern laborers do in our country, following the season from Oklahoma to the Dakotas and Canada. This ancient custom of hiring in the market-place has, according to Morier ("Second Journey thru Persia", p.265, see Trench p.145), persisted to this day in Eastern countries, crowds of peasants armed with spades gathering there before sunrise, waiting to be hired for the day. Later in the day other groups of idlers in the same place have answered, when asked the Biblical question, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?", with exactly the same hoary answer, "Because no man hath hired us". --- The labor contract was verbal, according to the usual, world-wide custom in such matters, though in the East it must have involved a good deal of preliminary dickening. At the time of Christ the usual wages for a day's service was one Roman denarius, a silver coin reckoned the equivalent of the Greek drachma, though a little lighter (60 grains). (During the latter part of the Commonwealth it rose to equal  $8\frac{1}{2}$  drachmae.) This was the tax-coin, bearing the image and superscription of Caesar on its obverse (Matt. 22<sup>19</sup>). One denarius, such as the laborers of Christ's parable received (Matt. 20), is equivalent to about 17 cents, and was a liberal, though a common, day's wages. This day for which they were paid was the standard rural working-day of all times — 12 hours, lasting from the Jewish first hour (6 a.m.) to the twelfth (6 p.m.) (cf. John 11,9; Matt. 20,1-12), noon being then the sixth hour. --- This was the usual way of obtaining laborers to care for produce. But among the Jews was to be found also another system, to be found to this day also among Western people. This system was that of renting for a certain price, to be paid either in money or in produce. The latter was, no doubt, the more usual



as well as the more natural. (comp. Matt.21,34; karpos, 'fruit', with Matt.21,19: karpos, 'fruit' of the fig tree). In the latter case it was the practice, at least sometimes, for the renters to receive not only a share of the 'fruit', but also free seed (if grain were to be grown) for planting and wages wherewith to hire laborers to work under their management. More frequently the agreement probably simply called for the payment of a fixed amount of produce, be the harvest good or bad, the remainder becoming the property of the tenant. Such contracts or leases were given by the year or for life, and sometimes they were hereditary (Edersheim "Life and Times" II,423). This system of rentals was once prevalent over a good part of Europe, and is still known in parts of France and Italy (Trench, "Parables", 1855). Pliny (Ep. 1.9.37) claimed that this system was the only one that would bring him any return for his rented estate. Chardin (Voy. en Perse, V,384, Langlès Ed.) says that similar arrangements are made in modern Persia, and that there, too, as in the case of the Wicked Husbandmen (Matt.21,33-44), frauds and violence sometimes occur as a result. (See Trench, "Parables", p.168).

#### VII. The Pharisees.

In Jewish society the laboring class represented fairly well the clay deemed common by those who lacked the deep insight possessed in a measure by the ancient students of Scriptures but in fullest measure only by the Savior Himself. In this same shallow, careless estimation the class representing the antithesis to the above was the Pharisaic. We now pass, then, from popular depth to height, to consider the Pharisees.

Briefly, the history of the Pharisees begins in all probability before the Maccabaeen wars, as a protest against the



Hellenizing attempts on the part of the Seleucidae and against tendencies toward that culture on the part of the people. During the brutal assaults of the mad Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) (175-164 B.C.) on the Jewish religion, these national and religious patriots were drawn more closely together. They were however, practically a cipher in Jewish politics until about 147 B.C., Demetrius II ruling the Seleucidæan realms, and Jonathan Macabaeus being the active Jewish leader. At this time they began to loom upon the national horizon (Ant. XIII, 5, 9: chronologically the first mention of them in Jewish history). By 78 B.C. Alexander Jannæus, dying, "advised his queen, Salome-Alex<sup>an</sup>dra, to seek the support of the Pharisees. . . . . The Pharisees now became the ruling element and persecuted or favored whom they liked." (E.G. Sihler, Biblical Review, X, 2) (Ant. XIII, 15, 5).

This class may be said to have represented 100% Judaism both politically and religiously. In the latter role, however, they especially distinguished themselves. They insisted upon a rigid observance not only of the written Law of Moses, but also of the traditional law --- the "traditions of the elders" (Matt. 15, 2, 3, 6). This led to a zealous punctiliousness that rapidly became a hollow externalism manifested by frequent and obtrusively public prayers (Matt. 6, 5), by the overbroad fringes of their outer cloak (Matt. 23, 5), by their inevitable and oversize phylacteries (Matt. 23, 5), and by a mien exaggeratedly appropriate. This was the hypocritical degeneration of a party which, during the early persecutions, had truthfully boasted the possession of the best and the strongest of the nation. Even in the sorry decadence of insincerity it must be said in justice that their number included some who were perfectly sincere and of the highest character, <sup>such as Nicodemus.</sup> The majority of them, however, deserved the epithets bestowed <sup>ed</sup>



upon them by John the Baptist and the Savior. They were a supercilious set, disdaining to consort or even eat with "the ignorant" (of the Law). This superciliousness, based upon an extreme notion of personal worthiness, as well as their spiritual hauteur before God which sprang from the same source, was never so aptly and starkly exhibited as by the Savior's searching Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Lk.18,10-14) --- no, not even by the Mishnah's brazen declaration: "It is more punishable to act against the words of the Scribes (concerning the phylacteries) than against those of Scripture" (Sanh.XI,3; cf. Ederheim "In the days of Christ", p.223). (How fitting were the Savior's words charging them with "laying aside the commandment of God ! -Mk.7,8). In that Parable the Savior exhibits two of the pet punctilios of this class in the boast of the Pharisee. This man, having gone up to pray in the Temple --- supposedly "at the hour of prayer, the ninth" (Acts3,1)---stated that he fasted twice in the week (Lk.18,12), whereas Moses had commanded but one fasting day in the year --- the great Day of Atonement (Lev. 16,29; 23,26-32; Num,29,7-11; cf.Acts 27,9). These supererogatory fasting days were the second and fifth of each week, i.e., Mondays and Thursdays (Edersheim, "Life and Times" I,662). The Pharisee's second boast was that he tithed all his possessions, whereas the Law commanded him to tithe only the fruit of field and cattle (Lev.27,30.32) (cf. also Matt.23,23).

With a word as to the due fairly theirs, we shall leave the subject of the Pharisees. The enormous influence of the Pharisees over the people (Ant.XIII,10,6; 15,5) had been exercised often for the good of the people. For instance, they had hesitated at no sacrifice to prevent the substitution of a Greek altar



for that of Jehova<sup>h</sup> in the evil days of Antiochus Epiphanes, and had resisted even "unto blood" his efforts at Hellenization. They had verily been a tower of strength in those troublesome times. Finally, as has been said above, they were at times and in part perfectly sincere. Had they not, in stiff-neckedness and pride, perverted their original purpose to such a selfish and wickedly preposterous extent, then it may be that the lash of the Savior's rebuke had fallen less bitingly upon their richly deserving backs.

#### VIII. The Publicans.

As mutual foils for contrast of antipodal qualities surely no fitter personages could have been chosen to stand side by side than the haughty Pharisee and the humble Publican. With surpassing pride was matched profound humility; with the snort of superior virtue, the tremulous sigh that confessed the conscious weight of a world of sin. But, oh what reason this man had for his humility ! How many meticulous pains were taken daily to remind him of his low estate !

That the Publicans as a class were in very fact a low sort is attested by the word of the Savior which speaks of them as the least virtuous <sup>class</sup> ~~calys~~ (Matt.5,46.47) and uses synonymously the terms heathen and publican (Matt.13,17). But this fact fails to account for the venomous hostility displayed toward them by the people, priesthood and laity alike. Rather does this rest on two entirely different facts. In the first place, this class was the daily reminder and traitorous representative of a hated and irksome foreign dominion, and secondly, ~~because~~ it was a constant and intolerably dishonest nuisance.

The Roman government had the custom of collecting pro-



vincial taxes by auctioning off the revenues thereof for a stated number of years to the highest bidder. For this purpose of bidding, companies were formed, with offices at Rome, whose purpose then was to collect from the provinces sufficient to pay to the government the purchasing price and afford a handsome profit besides. The provincial collecting was done through various grades of officials down to the actual assessors, the publicans, who were usually natives. Publicans levied import and export dues, bridge-toll, road tax, and town-dues; they were to be found at every bridge, along every road, at every city-gate, and in every city. Thus buyer and seller, native and traveller, alike were expensively aware of <sup>their</sup> ~~his~~ presence. But their activities did not stop with honest taxing. Many of them (to whom Zacchaeus of Jericho, sub-contractor for the revenues of that district—Lk. 19, 1-10—was a happy exception) were dishonest scoundrels. It was the custom, in levying their percentage, frequently to evaluate possessions at more than their worth, and to assess accordingly. Nor could they be successfully appealed against, for every judge was a direct beneficiary of this system --- besides dispensing possibly a purchasable sort of justice. It was therefore impossible for the people to call these rascals to account. They were simply helpless.

We can readily understand that to the people, in their helpless wrath, the publicans were anathema. But especially were they an execration to the Rabbis. They accounted them traitors to nation and God. They ranked them not only with heathen and harlot, but, still lower, with highwayman and murderer, and declared them excommunicate. No alms might be received from their money-chest; it was unlawful to have them even change one's money; their evidence was declared to have no legal value. <sup>The Rabbis further</sup> The Rabbis further



taught, with true Rabbinical extremity, that it was lawful even to deceive and cheat them in order to avoid payment of their odious taxes ! (Edersheim, "In The Days of Christ", pp.55-58)

Being pariahs, it meant degradation and even ostracism to associate with them. For this reason did Christ so quickly and thoroly lose caste when He ate with them, and therefore did that single charge occupy so large a place in the minds of His accusers. But the Savior, whose divinely penetrating gaze saw alike through<sup>th</sup> the coarse exterior of the publican and the armor-of-proof of the Pharisee to discover sincerity and repentance (Lk 18,10-14 vz. John 3), received all who craved His presence and word, regardless of station or caste (Lk.5,27-30; vz. John 3 & Lk.23,51), for He loved them all. That He actually did find anxiety for spiritual help among even the publicans, the Savior demonstrated in two ways --- by receiving them graciously, and by His public use of the repentant sincerity of the Publican of the Parable.

#### IX. Priests and Levites.

As the Savior availed Himself of the proud shortcomings of the supercilious Pharisee, so likewise did He use those of the priests and Levites to point the lesson for those whom He sought to teach. So by reason of this parable do we obtain an incidental sidelight upon the character of these two classes.

The priests in Israel were reverently looked up to as a class by the whole people. "The whole order formed a national aristocracy, however poor and degraded some of its members might be" (Geikie "Life of Christ", I,90). This was true for two reasons. In the first place, every priest was a lineal descendant of Aaron, frequently deriving this lofty pedigree from both father



and mother, since priests usually married the daughters of priests. The utmost care was taken to insure the reality of this necessary descent in every priestly candidate. Moreover, the priest must be altogether free from each of 140 physical defects, besides being a man of blameless character. The rules of his marriage, too, were very strict. He might marry only a pure Israelitess, lawfully born, and even she must be only a virgin or an undivorced widow. How proud these priests must have been of the consequent purity of the blood that reached so far back into high antiquity to connect him with Aaron, himself the chosen priest of God? And how must the people have respected this pride of blood! ~~But~~ In the second place, the priest was revered because of the approach to the awful presence of Jehovah which his work gained him. None but the priest might dare to minister before Him in offering the morning and evening incense; none but the priest might slay His victims and sprinkle their blood. It was death for another to attempt these things (Num. 18, 1-7). Moreover, these men were required to serve as interpreters of niceties of the law, and, to some extent, as judges and magistrates in the land. Most important, however, were the requirements made of them while on duty at the Temple. He must be ceremonially clean during this period; he dare not taste wine or strong drink; he was forbidden the customary demonstrations in times of grief. No matter what the depth of his sorrow, he might not rend his garments, cut himself, or shave his beard or head. Contact with the dead, save his own beloved dead, was strictly forbidden as a defilement. (cf. Lev. 10, 6; 21, 1-5). That these numerous restrictions rendered the order sacred in the estimation of the people, just as <sup>a host of</sup> similar ordinances render the Indian Brahmins sacred, it is natural to assume.



Among the priests were to be found distinctions as to rank and course. The first in rank was the high priest, the supreme pontiff. Next came the second priest (2Kgs.25,18), also called "ruler of the house of God" (2Chron.31,13; Neh.11,11) and "captain of the temple" (Acts 4,1; 5,24). Under these two the great body of ordinary priests subordinated themselves. This great body, unwieldy by reason of number even at the time of David, had been divided by him into twenty-four courses, each course ministering for a week at a time, the change occurring on the Sabbath before evening sacrifice (1Chron.24,1-19; 2Kgs.11,5-9; Ant.VII,14,7). On the first day of the week, then, (our Sunday) companies of priests might have been seen journeying to their thirteen cities, all in Benjamin, Judah and Simeon, given to them of old in lieu of a landed heritage (Josh 21,9-19), that here they might live and earn a measure of livelihood in addition to the tithes of the people (Lev.7,10; 10,13.14.). To one of these cities was the Priest of the Parable of the Good Samaritan probably journeying when his eye fell upon the stricken Jew by the wayside (Lk.10,30.31).

The companion class to this one was the Levitical. This order, too, was respected, for, while not deriving from the family itself of Aaron, as did the priests, yet they were one in tribal bonds. To this tribe belonged the signal honor of having been chosen by God, probably for their voluntary return to fealty before Sinai (Ex.32,26-29), to be "wholly given unto Him" (Num.3,9). Moreover, the Levites had long been connected with the sacred service of the Lord by an intimacy but little less than <sup>that of</sup> the priests themselves. It follows, then, that this class, too, was held in respect by the people.

Like the priests, the Levites were also divided into



twenty-four courses, each serving a turn of eight days (Ant.VII, 14.7). These twenty-four were divided again into classes for the performing of various duties. They were: 1) assistants to the priests in the work of the sanctuary; 2) judges and scribes; 3) gate keepers; 4) musicians. The judges and scribes, of course, were the most respected, the former being so by reason of their authority as local judges all over Palestine, the latter because of the great learning they frequently amassed in a single mind. By reason of this learning they were called "Doctors of the Law" (Lk.10,25), and they were commonly addressed as "Rabbi" (meaning "Great" or "Master") or by the still higher title of "Rabboni" ("My great Master") (John 20,16).

Like the priests, the Levites, too, had towns of their own. These were scattered thru the remaining nine tribes, and numbered forty-eight all told (Josh 21,41). No doubt it was to one of these that the Levite of the Parable was travelling, via Jericho, when his gaze, too, fell upon the wounded Jew.

These two incidents lead us to the consideration of another, and darker side, of Priestly and Levitical life. As classes, these orders were indeed venerable in popular estimation. Yet there must have been individuals concerning whom unsavory knowledge was current even among the masses, for not even the lawyer (Lk 10,25), himself a Levite, uttered a protest against the Savior's uncomplimentary, but accurate, parabolic use of the Priest and Levite. It may be that in the Lawyer's mind, too, lurked the hoary instance of Levitical apostasy in the person of Jonathan, the Levite of Bethlehem-judah, who became priest of the idolatrous Danite clan (Judges 17,8-13; 18,18-20; 30.31).



### X. The Samaritans.

When Sargon of Assyria captured Samaria, he led away, according to his own words, 27,280 Hebrews. This number probably represented the noble and influential of the Northern Kingdom. This left, of course, the humbles Israelites behind. Now, to denationalize the remainder, he pursued his customary policy of introducing colonists from other portions of the empire --- in this case from Babylonia, Hamath, and Arabia (2Kgs 17,24). Later, Esarhaddon and Asshapper (probably Ashurbanipal) completed the work by importing Elamites (Ezra 4,2.9.10.). These heathens of course injected into the religion of the province their own paganism. Efforts by an orthodox Hebrew priests to convert them succeeded only in the formation of a mixed religion which combined their image-worship on the high-places with that of Jehovah (2Kgs 17,25-33). During the reign of Josiah of Judah, his agents traversed the country destroying the high places (2Chron 34,6.7.). It is probable that this iconoclasm, together with the teaching of the priests, greatly lessened the hold of idolatry on the Samaritan mind. Some years later some of them habitually went to the Temple at Jerusalem to worship (Jer. 41,5). The Samaritans, however, because of the refusal of Zerubbabel and Jeshua to permit them to assist in the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 4,1-10), conceived the idea of building a national temple of their own on Mt. Gerizim. The task was finally accomplished, not during the life of Alexander the Great, as Josephus believed (Ant. XI; 7,2; 8.2), but, according to Schuerer ("Gesch. d. Jued. V. im Zeit. J.C.", 11,16), about a hundred years earlier. This mountain continued to be the Samaritan place of worship until the Savior's time (Jn. 4, 20.21), tho John Hyrcanus had destroyed the edifice in about 129 B.C. (Ant. XIII, 9.1). At the time of Christ the Samaritan faith did not differ widely from the Jewish, especially in the latter's



Sadducean aspect. The Samaritans accepted only the Pentateuch, however, out of all the Scriptures of Jews, basing their Messianic hopes upon Deut.18 (cf. Jn.4,25).

The intense animosity between the two peoples dates from the rejection of the samaritan offer of help in the Temple-building (Ezra 4,3.). This antipathy increased during the ensuing centuries (Ecclus.50,25.26.), until at the time of our Lord the name had come to be used by the Jews as a synonym for heretic (Jn.8,48). They called them Cuthites (tho essentially, as well as in a wider sense, Jewish (Schuerer, II, 421.; Josephus, Wars, III, 3, 1.)), idolators who worshipped the image of a dove. They held Samaritan testimony to be invalid and void; that to hospitably entertain a Samaritan was a sin which God would not fail to visit with dire punishment; that to eat of Samaritan fare was equivalent to eating swine's flesh; and that no Jew might ever receive kindness or charity at their hands. They not only anathematized the race and cursed the members thereof publicly in the synagogue, but even went so far in their bitter enmity as to pray that they might have no portion in the resurrection. --- Nor were the Samaritans behind-hand in cursing and enmity; rather did they reciprocate in generous fashion the illwill and hostility of their southern neighbors. Not only did they refuse hospitality to Jewish pilgrims Jerusalem-bound (Ju.4,9; Lk.9,53), but, at least on one occasion, fell upon a pilgrim-band of Galileans and murdered them (Ant.XX. 6,1). Josephus --- besides making the wry statement that the Samaritans fawned upon the Jews in prosperity, but in adversity repudiated all kinship and obligations (AntIX,14.3.) --- relates an amusing manifestation of Samaritan ill-will (Ant.XIII,2,2.). During the Passover it was the custom to open the Temple-gates just after midnight. A band of Samaritans took advantage of this



to creep into the sacred precincts one night and defile the whole Temple by strewing dead men's bodies about (Trench, p.257: human bones). He adds that, following this incident, Samaritans were rigidly excluded from the building.

In view of these mutually bitter relations, it appears, indeed, that the Savior could have chosen no better illustration of what lengths perfect neighborly love will go in caring for fellow-man than that of the Samaritan tending his hereditary, but wounded, foe. To the Jewish mind He had touched the ultimate in the hated, the feared, and the execrated. And it must have been borne in upon His hearers that, if one who might have been expected to hate as he was hated could have found it in his heart so to forgive and tenderly care for an enemy, then surely they could be expected so to quench their trivial mutual animosities as to help some inimical but luckless Israelite in his distress --- as they did not always do.

#### XI. The Sick and Wounded.

Among the six chief forms of human disease in Palestine (fever, cutaneous diseases, dysentery, ophthalmia, boils, paralysis) that of the eyes held a position near the front rank. Blindness was, and is, one of the commonest afflictions of the natives of Palestine; in fact "the blear-eyes, often crusted round with dried secretion, and fly-infested, make some of the most sickening sights in a Syrian village crowd". The chief cause of this ill was a highly infectious ophthalmia, which, in Palestine, was aggravated by the glare of the sun, by sand, and by dirt (for it was very common for a brother to have a "mote" of dust in his eye, Lk. 6,41) (Hastings,1). Contributory causes were smallpox,



old age, and blind birth (Davis). In view of the facts, then, it must have been a common sight, indeed to see the Jewish blind being slowly and ~~ag~~refully led about by a seeing guide --- an office which no blind man could perform for his blind friend without serious consequences (Lk 6,39). This view as to the prevalence of blindness is substantiated by the estimation concerning modern Gaza that out of a population of 30,000, more than 10,000 are blind of one or both eyes (Eadie's Biblical Cyclopaedia). --- The only ancient remedy for sick eyes seems to have been the application of saliva (surely a dubious interpretation of John 9,6, however). The salivary application was probably only one of several modes of bathing. On the whole, the people of the day seem to have regarded blindness as an incurable visitation, for while the Bible is replete with instances of blindness, it nowhere records a definite mode of treating it.

In the matter of treating wounds the Jews seem to have been quite abreast of the somewhat primitive times. The usual treatment was faithfully followed by the Good Samaritan in his attentions to the wounded Jew. His first care was to cleanse the wounds by pouring in wine (which was frequently almost vinegar), this liquid having ~~having~~ something of a canterizing effect due to its content of acetic acid, and the alcoholic content possibly assisted the process. Following the cleansing, this <sup>ch</sup>aritable man ~~pourd~~ poured in an oil to "mollify" it and assist in the healing process. Following this the wounds were bound up with bandages, and nature was left to do the rest (cf. Lk. 10,34; Is. 1,6).

As to the treatment of sores, a curious belief was held by the old Jews --- ~~tho~~<sup>tho</sup> this same belief was probably correct. It consisted in attributing medicinal ~~virtu~~<sup>virtu</sup>se to dogs' tongues, as being ~~cleansing~~ because moist, and soothing because warm and



smooth. Thus, while the masterless curs that roamed the streets of old (Ps.59,15.16.) humbled the helpless Lazarus by the liberties they took, yet they also rendered him a service which human beings had disdained to do.

## XII. The Traveling Class.

The traveling class in old Palestine consisted chiefly of four sorts of people. Of these perhaps the merchants, such as the pearl-merchant of Matt.13,45.46, formed the most constant and common class. Likewise must the various government officials, especially those who did police-duty, have been required to pass frequently from place to place. At the festival seasons especially were the highways thronged with pilgrims. Lastly, the priests and Levites travelled back and forth constantly between home and Jerusalem, and were always to be found on Palestinian roads. (Lk. 10,31.32)

As for the two common modes of travel, they are both represented in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The one is represented by the walking priest and Levite, and the second by the Samaritan and his "beast", probably an ass or pack-mule carrying both himself and his goods. While both horses and carriages (Acts 8,28) were to be seen on the ancient roads of Judah, the horses were reserved for government officials and the soldiery, while the carriage was used by the wealthier. The equipment in the case of the ~~ease of the~~ plodding traveler consisted of a staff, a hand-bag, a sufficient quantity of food, sandals, and money (Mk.6,8.)

By an argumentum e silentio we are forced to think that the highways traversing Jewry were fairly safe. No doubt occasional raids were made by the robber-bands which had resulted from the



troubled days of the Maccabees and which Roman authority had never been so all-powerful as to end completely. Yet so frequently had the stern roman cohorts lifted up their robber-dead that a salutary fear had fallen upon the members of this illegitimate profession, and had restrained them to a large degree. To this state of general security, however, that great highway was a proverbial exception which led from Jerusalem, by Bethany, to Jericho, and from there, thru Perea, to Galilee. By reason of the fact that Jerusalem was some 3500 feet higher than Jericho, <sup>the traveller leaving Jerusalem for Jericho</sup> by this road was said to be going down (Lk.10,30), whereas to travel in the opposite direction was to go up (Lk.19,1.28). The distance between the two cities is about seventeen miles, and most of it is thru a desolate and rocky region (Josh.16,1). Jerome mentions that a certain part of this road was called the red or bloody way because of the numerous murders done there by robbers. He adds that in his own time the Romans had found it necessary to build and garrison a fort at one point in this wilderness in order to afford travellers some semblance of protection (Trench, "Parables", p.253.254). Travellers of all times have been impressed by the wildness and desolation of this road. As late as 1850 travellers along this way have deemed it wise to join their trains for the security of numbers, and, besides this, to take along ten or a dozen armed guards. Harriet Martineau, a traveller of seventyfive years ago, relates this, and adds: "The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is as dangerous as it ever was. There is not a worse road in Palestine". Between Bethany and Jericho "there is a hollow way which is considered the most dangerous of all (the route)". Here Sir Frederick Henniker was stripped and left for dead by robbers in 1820. His servants fled and hid themselves on the first alarm. When they



returned, he was lying naked and bleeding on the sultry road. They put him on a horse, and carried him to Jericho, where he found succour " (H.Martinean, "Eastern Life, Present and Past", pp.386.388). What a parallel to the Parable of Luke 10,31-35 ! It may easily be that it was exactly in this dangerous spot that the Good Samaritan found his stricken foe, and risked his very life to stop and tend him as he lay in the rough road in the blistering heat.

If the road were of another sort than this, one running through<sup>ugh</sup> a populous district, it was the custom of the wayfarer to seek shelter and food at the house of some Israelite when night came upon him. But there were also inns provided for the shelter of strangers, especially along unfrequented roads running through unpopulated districts. These inns or caravanserais, like the modern *kahns*, were built as a hollow square, the court in the middle being used for beasts, and the rooms composing the sides for the travellers and their goods. These rooms were unfurnished, the use of the *kahn* being free to all who might pass. The traveller slept upon a mat if he had one; if not, his mantle sufficed for mattress and covering. He provided the food both for himself and for his beast, the *kahn* being intended to offer only shelter. Sometimes, however, there was a man, usually a foreigner, attached to the inn from whom supplies of various sorts could be bought, and who would, for a price, care for the sick (Lk.10,35). Inns were built by rich men for the benefit of wayfarers and are mentioned as existing, at least in Egypt, long before the time of Moses (Gen.42,27; 43,21).



### XIII. The Possessed.

This class formed a comparatively small, but widely known, portion of Jewish society. Its existence has been explained by modern writers as due to various mental and physical diseases, as a sort of visible degradation of body and mind<sup>by sin</sup>. But while there are manifestations common to deranged nervous systems and functional disorders, such as deaf-muteness (Mk.9,17) and epilepsy (Mk.9,18; Lk.9,39.42), yet there are others that point to an indwelling but distinct personality. These personalities speak (Mk.1,23.24.), have a knowledge passing that of men (Mk.1,24; 3,11), recognize themselves as distinct from both Jesus and the person possessed (Matt.8,31), and cause whole droves of beasts hitherto altogether normal to become suddenly and concertedly unmanageable and inexplicably wild (Matt.8,30). Moreover, Jesus recognized them as beings of a distinctly existing order (Mk.9,29) and of a Satanic nature (Lk.10,17), and by His statement that not medicine, but only prayer, would suffice to drive them out (Mk.9,29), He gave His disciples and us to understand that the cause was not physical but spiritual, not natural but supernatural. The cause of this tribulation was man himself, for, as in the case of Saul (1Sam.16,14), the evil thing came not until he had vitiated his power of spiritual resistance by continued and profound sin and<sup>had</sup> turned his back on God, the source of all holy resistant power.

Though this class has fled almost entirely from the Christian quarters of the globe, it is still extant among heathen peoples in general, and notably the Chinese. The symptoms of transition from and back to normal present the same violent epileptic and hysterical symptoms as of old (Mk.9,20), and these cases, too, present<sup>the possession of</sup> an astonishing knowledge of things ordinarily



unknown to them. They appear to know of and to fear Christ as a Divine Person. Sometimes they converse in foreign languages normally unknown to them. As of old, many cures have been effected, some readily, some with difficulty, by prayer to Christ or by the use of His name. So far as can be ascertained this method has always succeeded, if not promptly, at least ultimately, in disinheriting permanently the foul sojourners, provided the subject became a Christian and continued to lead a Christian life. (cf. Dr. J. C. Nevin, "Demon Possession and Allied Themes")

From the words of the Savior we draw the information as to the possibility of a return invasion of the cast-out demon and as to the victim's resultant plight. In Lk. 11, 24-26 Christ speaks of the state of a man who had been rid of the baneful presence, but continued not to walk with God, As a result of this backsliding from the company of God into that of Satan, the evil spirit takes immediate advantage of his victim's sinful weakness to return with sevenfold reinforcements. "And the last state of that man is worse than the first ! " Consequently, a return into sin has caused the man to put himself in so unhappy a state that it is almost impossible for him to find sufficient strength in his sinfulness to properly seek the succor of God whom he has twice flouted. He has put himself almost definitely without the pale of divine help.



P A R T I. \*\* S E C T I O N 22.

A. Social Customs.

A discussion of the social customs constituting a portion of the background of the parables must take cognizance chiefly of two social occasions --- of feasts and weddings. While these two functions constitute almost the whole of the festive phase of Jewish life as presented by the parables, yet by a consideration of these two instances it so happens that a person gains a very comprehensive idea of Jewish social customs as a whole. This is true because of the simple fact that Jewish "social activities" were largely confined to feasting. Whatever may have been the real reason for the gathering, the feast was the apparent motive as well as the chief diversion. It formed a portion of even the wedding festivities. To this rule the instance of funerals, of course, forms an exception, but one which we cannot enter upon because it bears but indirectly upon the parabolic background. Some of the remaining customs are contained in the wedding-ceremonies.

I. Feasts.

It was the custom of the Jews to take little or no food before 10:00 a.m. Even the noon meal, between ten and eleven a.m., was light because of the heat to follow. It consisted of fruit, milk, and cheese, being in all particulars like the present meals of the modern Persians. About six or seven p.m., however, the evening-cool brought an edged appetite to these who had been so abstemious since dawn. As <sup>at</sup> the present day in Persia, the evening was consequently the time of the great feasts,



such as that of Herod's splendid birthday banquet, as well as of the more solemn and meaningful feast of the Passover. At this time of the day, therefore, did two of <sup>the</sup> three parabolic banquets occur (Matt.22,1-14; Lk.14,16-24; Lk.15,25) (See War I,17.4), the feast of Matt.22 beginning with its preliminaries in the afternoon.

According to the Midrash on Lam.4,2, the inhabitants of Jerusalem never went ~~at~~ a feast till the invitation had been given and repeated. So it appears to have been in both <sup>the</sup> cases of the Marriage of the King's Son (Matt.22,1-14) and the Great Supper (Lk.14,16-24). A preliminary invitation had been sent out, and now the servants, technically designated as *klētores*, *deipnoklētores*, *'elēatroi* (Lat.: *vocatores*, *invitatores*), were sent out to make the invited guests ceremonially aware of the actual readiness of the feast. In the case of the princely marriage (Matt.22), however, the *klētores* summoned the intended guests not to the evening banquet proper but to the "early meal" (*'ariston*, Matt.22,4) (Edersheim "Life and Times," II,42?) occurring at some time between noon and late afternoon, though also the second and principal meal, to be eaten that evening, was in a state of readiness, the oxen and fattings being killed. Thus the servants in this particular case set out on their errands possibly in the late forenoon or at about noon to inform the guests that now was ready the first meal of a series lasting through the period of rejoicing and culminating in the great banquet following the formal wedding-ceremonies. In some cases, as in that of Samson (Judges 14), the preliminary festivities lasted for seven days, involving a corresponding number of meals. In the present instance, however, we believe the festivities



mentioned lasted only for the greater part of the day and night of the actual wedding-day. The meals were only two in number, then, the preliminary light meal (āriston) during the course of the afternoon, and the elaborate banquet of the evening. --- In the case of the Great Supper the servants were sent out during the early evening ("at supper time", Lk. 14, 17) to inform concerning the prepared state of the feast to be held within an hour or two. Usually, however, the second invitation was sent on the morning of the feast-day (Tristram, "East. Cust. in Bible Lands", p. 82).

The refusal of an invitation except on valid and grave grounds is interpreted at least as a slight even by us of the colder North and less ceremonial West. In the East, however, a careless or (worse yet) a flat refusal must have been considered tantamount to a direct and unequivocal insult, even among equals. Therefore the "certain man" of Luke 14 who had prepared the great and costly supper was scarcely to be blamed for his wrath. In the case of the king who had arranged for the marriage festivities of his son, the mocking and violent refusal of those invited constituted lèse majesté, if not actual rebellion. So the punitive measures of the king were fully justified by Eastern standards in general and <sup>by</sup> those of that day in particular. (Tristram, Op. Cit., p. 83).

Meanwhile, between the sending of the first and second invitations, the house of the host presented a busy scene. In the case of the rich the favorite reception room, or banquet-hall, opening into the forward court was cleaned and garnished. Then about the "lîwan", or about a table, were grouped the divans or low, broad couches, sometimes inlaid with ivory (Amos 6, 4) upon which the guests lay, and the pillows for supporting the back



and the left arm of the guests were arranged upon them. The number of these couches ~~was usually~~ three, and they formed three sides of a square about the central table, leaving one side open for the admittance of servants with the dishes. Each couch usually held three persons, though sometimes four or five. The place of greatest honor was the middle section of the <sup>middle</sup> couch (Bib. Cyclop., 587; Edersheim, "Life and Times", II, 207. 208), called the "highest room" (Lk. 14, 8), the next best being successively those to the left of the "highest room" to the end, and, least honorable, those to the right, or back, of the worthiest down to the right extremity of the open square (i.e., to the right of the servants as they approached the table), this <sup>last place being the least honorable. The definition of the less honorable places appears</sup>, however, <sup>to have</sup> been vague and not stressed, though that of the most important was carefully and minutely determined as being of great moment. Therefore it is doubtful whether, in actual practice, there was a definite "lowest room", though Lk. 14, 10, as well as Pharisaical and Rabbinical punctiliousness, would seem to indicate that there was. --- In the case of the man of moderate means the arrangements and ceremonies were the same except in point of splendor and elaboration, as well as in this that he always used the reception-room, or guest-chamber (for <sup>he</sup> had only one), this being one of the forward rooms about the court and the most handsomely furnished of the entire establishment.

The viands prepared and a-preparing for the banquet were various. The wines, to be mixed with two or three parts of water ere drunk, were of various vintages:- red wine, black wine, spiced wine, vinegar-wine, <sup>palm-wine,</sup> must, barley-wine. Other liquors were apple-cider, fruit-juices of various sorts, and Median and Babylonian beer. As to the foods, there were the various kinds of grain, meats, fish, and fruits. In the matter of meat the Jewish



polate preferred young meat ("fatlings"), goats, lambs, calves; beef was common, but fowl rare. No meal was complete without bread. In addition there were soups of vegetables and meat, and milk-dishes, into both of which people dipped their bread. Besides these articles there were condiments, such as mustard and pepper.

With the arrival of the guests began the ceremonies proper. Each guest upon arriving was greeted by the host with a kiss (Lk. 7, 45). It was probably a custom among the wealthier to distribute presents at this time among the festal guests, and the presents no doubt were usually garments of some sort. There is no indication of a customary dispensing of a special wedding garb for the marriage banquet as occurred at the Wedding of the King's son, however. But the instance of such a distribution in Matt. 22, is, in view of the fact that the guests were poor and hastily assembled, quite natural and reasonable especially since the donor was a king. After the distribution of presents the guests were assigned their places at the table by the master of the house, or, as probably in Matt. 22, by the major domo, care being taken to give the more honorable places to the more distinguished guests. Then all the guests took their places by reclining on the couches on their sides, their backs supported by the back-pillow and the head by the left arm supported on a second cushion. This permitted the right arm freedom of movement for <sup>the</sup> taking of food from the table in the middle. But ~~here~~ <sup>before</sup> the meal was begun, however, several ceremonies intervened. First the hands were to be washed (MK. 7, 3.4; Matt. 15, 2) either by



lightly pouring water over them or by dipping the hands into a basin of water, a supply of water for this purpose being kept at hand in large stone water-pots, (Jn. 2, 6). Whereas this washing was done by the servants, the feet of the guests being extended backward from the couch a little as they reclined. Sometimes, too, the guests were anointed with perfumed ointments (Lk. 7, 38; Jn. 12, 3:). At about this time the rich host appeared, if the head-servant had superintended the preliminaries, to greet his guests. Then followed the benediction, or short prayer, over the food. This benediction was apt, due to Rabbinical casuistry<sup>s</sup>, to become a complicated ceremony. But the usual host satisfied common custom by asking a blessing upon the bread as representative of all the food, and another over the wine as representing all other kinds of drink. The guests responded by saying "Amen" ! Now the official known as the "Governor of the feast", one of the guests appointed to overlook the rest, took charge, His duties were to "preserve harmony and good humour, to see that the servants attended to their business, and to regulate the whole service of the table" (Nevin, p. 114). One of his special duties was to taste the wine and judge as to its strength and as to its quality and fitness for the particular stage of the entertainment at which it was brought in. (Jn. 2, 8.9.)

All the ceremonies being accomplished, the servants brought in the introductory course of appetising salted meat or some other light dish. This was followed by the dinner itself. The meat was carved into pieces of convenient size beforehand, and each guest now helped himself with his right hand. If a morsel of special delicacy were present, the host conveyed it with his finger to the mouth of his honored guest. When liquid food such as broth or soup, was to be taken, each person broke his



bread into bits and dipped a morsel, together with his fingers, into the liquid (Ruth 2,14). The drink was passed to each in separate cups (a man's cup coming thus figuratively to signify his individual lot or destiny, as in Ps.11,6; 23,5), and it was considered good form to turn the face away from the company when drinking. Finally the dinner was completed with dessert consisting of pickled olives, radishes, lettuce, fruit, and sometimes even preserved ginger from faraway India. (Edersheim, "Life and Times" II, 209.210; Nevin, p.113; Tristram, "East. Cust. in Bible Lands", pp.79-86)

But while the meal was underway there was a variety of ~~entertainment~~ entertainment. The conversation — though some sages forbade it as ill-bred, (Edersheim op.cit., p.209) --- was apt to become lively and humorous, sometimes taking the form of stories or riddles (Judges 14,12), sometimes being only spontaneous sallies of wit. Usually, however, conversation was grave and restrained. A guest spoke only when he had something to say which was sufficiently valuable to warrant the attention of the company. Hence, sentiments were expressed in a formal, sententious fashion, taking the form of a brief and dignified address. Briefly, the conversation was naturally in keeping with the occasion. Were the feast to celebrate some happy event, then of course it was light, brisk, happy, and unrestrained. In the latter case, too, music and dancing were provided (Lk.15,25), and poetry was chanted to the sound of the viol (Amos 6,5). The standard musical instruments for the occasion were "Harp, viol, tabret, and pipe" (Is. 5,12; 24,7-9).

When the feast, with its attendant entertainment, was finished at last, hands were again washed, this time to free them



from adhering remnants of food, and prayer was once more offered, led by the same person who had prayed before the meal. It was his custom to call on the company to repeat the prayers after him, the formula differing according to the number present. Following the lead, the company repeated the prayers in any preferred language. This being accomplished, the guests dispersed to their various dwellings.

By way of closing the discussion, we shall briefly note the differences existing between the various feasts. There were domestic feasts for purposes of intra-family rejoicing (Lk. 15, 23-25), to which no outsiders, save perhaps the closest of friends, were invited. Then there was the formal, but gay, wedding-banquet (Matt. 22), which served to mark some joyous event, and also, in the case of kings, to foster loyalty to the regal person among his subjects. Lastly there was the purely political banquet, grave, decorous, and designed to secure favor or support as well as to furnish opportunity for the taking of council (Lk. 14, 16 ff.). When the last named feast was given by a king it meant of course a great conclave of officers and vassals to discuss a policy, especially a warlike one. Thus the feast of Ahasuerus (Esther 1) is the same as the great gathering which Xerxes made when planning his Greek expedition, and which is recorded by Herodotus (Herod. 1.7; c. 8: *súllogon epíklēeton Perséōn tōōn 'aristōōn*). In the two descriptions of this feast, that of the sacred writer stresses the festal, that of Herodotus the political, side. (Trench, "Parables", p. 179).

## II. Weddings.

"He that loveth his wife as his own body, honoreth her more than his own body, brings up his children in the right way,



and leads them in it to full age --- of him the Scripture saith: 'Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace' (Job.5, 24)" (Sanh.76,b; Edersheim "In the Days of Christ", p.145). We shall let these words from the Talmud suffice to prove our statement that among the Jews marriage was regarded as highly sacred --- and this despite their frequent divorces (Matt.19,3). From this fact of its sacredness it follows that bachelors and maids were expected to look eagerly forward to entrance into this estate. Ordinarily a young man was expected to wed ( according to Maimonides ) at the age of sixteen or seventeen, while the age of twenty was considered the farthest limit. Girls might, and no doubt did frequently, wed as soon as minority was left behind, i.e., from the age of twelve on. A girl might be betrothed before this age, but not married (Edersheim, "In the Days of Christ", pp. 144; 156).

The choosing of a spouse for a child was done, in older days, by the parent without consulting the child --- as Abraham <sup>(But now that Rebecca was married)</sup> chose a wife for Isaac. Later, however, they chose for themselves, of which free choice Scripture gives abundant evidence (Samson, Judges 14). At the time of Christ it was the custom to view as even invalid the marriage contract to which a woman had not given free and expressed consent <sup>Edersheim,</sup> (op.cit., p.143).

Despite the childrens' right of choosing, the overtures were still made by the parents. One parent, so the custom went, was to see the other and arrange the terms (Judges 14,2.5.). The terms consisted of a settled dowry made over to the father, and sometimes of gifts to the brothers (Nevin, Bibl.Ant., p 123). This custom of the husband's giving, and not receiving, a dowry has remained a custom in the modern East. It follows, therefore, that girls were considered quite a fortune by the father.



The actual engagement came about after the preliminary agreement between the respective parents. The two parties --- the prospective bride and groom --- were brought together, and in the presence of witnesses made a mutual covenant to marry at some future date. That this covenant was reduced to writing, we learn from the Mishna (Bab.B.X,4). It seems that these writings of betrothal (called "Shitre Erusin"), drawn up by the authorities at the expense of the groom stated the mutual obligations, the dowry, and all other mutual agreements. The betrothal was also marked by the bridal present or "Mohar", the dowry (ISam.18,25; Gn.34,12), to be paid either on the spot or before the actual marriage. --- This betrothal-covenant was rigid and allowed of no breaking. It was accounted as actual marriage; there could be no dissolution of the bond, save by regular divorce; unfaithfulness was regarded as adultery; and the woman's property became that of her husband (Bib.Ant., p.124; "Days of Christ", p.148). The bride, however, remained at her father's house until the wedding.

The actual wedding ceremonies, extending over a period of several days, began with the arrival of the bridegroom at the house of the bride's father. There ensued a festival which commonly lasted for a week (Judges 14,12), during which time the groom and his companions --- called "sons of the bride-chamber" (Mk.2,19) --- amused themselves with feasting and witty bouts and probably also games (cf. Judges 14,12). In another part of the house, away from the masculine party, the bride and her friends held revelry in like manner. (Nevin, op.cit.)

On the last day of the feast came the actual wedding. This consisted first in the procession from the bride's house to that of the groom, occurring usually in the evening. For this occasion the bride was arrayed in a veil reaching from this occasion the bride was arrayed in a veil reaching from



head to foot, was bejewelled (Is.61,10; Ezek.16,12), and was crowned with a festal crown. Her hair, however, hung loose, and her head was uncovered except for the crown and light veil, in token that she was not yet under the authority of a husband (Tristram, op.cit., p.89). The groom was richly arrayed with a marriage robe and a crown. When he arrived for the bride, the two set off for the bridegroom's house, accompanied by their respective companions, each in ordered companies. The virgins were arrayed in veils which concealed their features, and many were equipped with musical instruments and all sang songs. The way, as they advanced through the night, was made brilliant with numerous torches and lamps. Palm and myrtle branches were carried before the couple, a cup of wine was carried before the bride, grain or money was thrown in the way, and all who met the procession were expected to fulfill the religious obligation of joining the ranks. As the procession neared the groom's home it was met by a second procession consisting of female relatives and friends of the groom. This band arrayed in festal robes, had been waiting at the groom's home for the first signal of his approach. This given, they went out, bearing lamps fastened to the top of staves, to meet the advancing party, to welcome it, and to conduct it back to the home of the groom. Now took place whatever wedding ceremonies proper were customary. In the bridegroom's house, no doubt garnished for the occasion, the couple received the solemn blessing of the relatives, preceded, however, by a brief formula such as "Take her according to the Law of Moses and of Israel", and were crowned with garlands. A legal document, the "Chethubah" or marriage-contract, was next produced and signed. This document provided that the husband settle on his maiden-wife at least 200 Zuz or denars and



increase at least by one half the dowry bestowed upon her <sup>by her</sup> father. After this the marriage-supper began, the cup was filled with wine and the solemn prayer of the bridal benediction was uttered over it. Then followed the feast, continuing with its consequent merriment until a late hour --- or, if during the day, it might last through the day and longer. At the conclusion of the feast, then, the two "friends of the bridegroom", or groomsmen --- one for the groom and for the bride---, conducted the couple to the bridal chamber. Before the marriage these two men had acted as intermediaries, had offered presents at the wedding, and now acted as the final attendants, being also, in a manner, the guarantors of the bride's virgin estate. These groomsmen were a detail of Judean ceremony only; they were not customary in Galilee. (For "Friend of the bridegroom" see Jn.3,29; cf. IICor.11,2) ("Days of Christ", pp.149-155; "Life and Times of Christ" I, pp.354-355) <sup>Revised</sup> ("Bib. Ant." 125 f.)

With regard to the shutting of the door (Matt.23,10) in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins the conclusion is logical that this, if not custom, was at least known to the Jews and reasonable to their minds. None were to be admitted to the wedding at any time, of course, except those who had been bidden, and the proper time for their entrance was with the groom on his arrival. <sup>the door was closed, and anyone who knocked was assumed to be an uninvited</sup> Since no more were expected, <sup>the</sup> stranger, or, if he who knocked was known to have been invited, he might <sup>still</sup> be excluded because he had neglected the courtesy of arriving early enough to participate in something besides the food. In addition, this possibly had something to do with the closing of the door, that "an unbidden guest ..... was proverbially an unwelcome apparition" ("Life and Times" II; p.209) --- doubly so, no doubt, upon



an occasion when none but the happiest auspices were desired.

B. Social Relations Established and Conducted by Law.

Not all the relations existing among the Jews were personal, amicable, and informal, however. Ordinary business relations called for legal oversight, and grievances required the mediatorial offices of some representative of the law. The latter need brings us to a consideration of the local courts of the day, with the end in view of determining how unsatisfactory relations existing between two individuals were commonly adjusted.

I. Local Courts and Judges.

The number of members of the minor, or local, Sanhedrin varied according to the population of the town. If the place numbered 120 men or more, the Sanhedrin consisted of twenty-three members; if less, the Sanhedrists numbered only three (Days of Christ, p.91). These men were appointed by the Great Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, which consisted of seventy-one members and was the supreme authority in all Jewry. These men of the local bodies were known as "judges" (Lk.18,2), as "elders" (Lk. 7,3), collectively as "the council" (Matt.5,22; 10,17), and again as "rulers" (Matt. 9,18). They appear to have had no individual power to settle differences between quarreling parties (Lk.18,3); but as a whole could render verdicts in cases of eccleastical trespasses and civil law-breaking, having even the power of capital punishment provided the number of the judges was twenty-three (Life and Times, II,287.554), though under the Romans, of course, this power was lost. The minor Sanhedrin seem to have assembled in the local synagogue, at least in the case of the smaller. Court-days occurred twice a week, on



Mondays and Thursdays, the second and fifth days of the week, respectively.

The Unjust Judge was one of a second class of authorities, appointed, not by the Great Sanhedrin, but by Herod and later by the Romans. They were called "Dayyaney Gezereth" (Judges of Prohibitions, or else of Punishments), or, popularly but improperly, "Dayyaney Gezeleth", Robber-judges. They received a salary from the temple-treasury, were always on duty, and occupied but a low place in both popular and Talmudical esteem. They were frequently charged with ignorance, arbitrariness, covetousness, and injustice ("Life and Times" II, 287). To such a magistrate did the Importunate Widow come (Lk. 18, 1-8), possibly finding him in the marketplace, where the elders of ancient Israel sat and where the elders sit today (Tristram, op. cit., p. 224), begging the man to make legal inquiry into the matter and by a verdict to right her wrongs. But this extreme man among an evil kind, conscious that he <sup>had</sup> held before him a poor, resourceless, friendless widow, whose class had so often been sinned against (in view of the number of the passages against this injustice --- EX. 22, 22; Deut. 27, 19; Mat. 23, 5; etc.), he refused to do his duty, until, utterly weary of her pleadings, he fulfills her desire. This slothfulness in setting aright the wrongs of the poor seems to be a typically Eastern failing, just as the patiently remonstrant method seems to be the typically Eastern mode of obtaining just dues. Thus Burder (Orient. Illustr. "II, 382; quoted in Trench's "Parables", p. 404 n.) says that governors traversing the streets are constantly beset by supplicants who are unremitting in their pleadings until the governor, actuated by a desire to be rid of annoyance and not by love of justice, at length grants their requests.



## II. Laws Governing Transactions.

### § The Purchase of Real Estate.

Real estate had formerly, if not today, a peculiar potential value in the East. Changing dynasties brought troublous times in their turbulent wakes. For this reason rich men frequently divided their possessions into three parts, with one of which they did business, the second being converted into jewelry for easy flight, the third secretly buried. If the owner would suddenly die, the secret of the location of the treasure would perish with him, remaining a mystery until some lucky man should chance upon it. These finds seem to have occurred frequently enough in the East to have hampered the inquiries and diggings of modern searchers in the ruins (Trench, Parables, p.106), as well as to have afforded the savior material for a likeness --- for upon this basis is the parabolic structure of Matt.13,44 reared.

According to Jewish law, if a person, bought a field in or on which was located a treasure, the latter was certainly his, just as whatever the purchaser found among purchased fruit was now his --- unless some man could absolutely prove priority of right thereto ("Life and Times" I,595).

Whether or not a written agreement was drawn up, such as a bill of sale, the Parables do not say, nor indeed does the New Testament. We may assume, however that the cautious and businesslike Jews made the signing of such a document a rule. In this matter of buying property Edersheim affords a few meager details. He says, for instance, that a bargain was not considered closed until both had taken possession of their respective properties. Once money had changed hands, however, it was deemed dishonorable for the purchaser to draw back. ("In the Days of Christ", p.210). Possibly for this reason did the



purchaser --- or perhaps prospective purchaser --- of Lk.14,18 refuse the invitation to the Great Supper in order that he might make one more close examination of the property in question before he took the final and irretrievable step of paying over the price.

b. Buying Live Stock.

The same anxiety seems to have stirred the bosom of the man who had bought --- or was <sup>in</sup> process of buying the five yoke of oxen (Lk.14,19), and refused the supper-invitation because he wished to try them out ere closing the deal, after which a return of the property on the ground of discovered defects would be impossible. A trial previous to purchase was a necessity in the case of oxen, for a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke was useless or nearly so, as were probably also ill-matched yokes (Trench, "Parables", p.295 n.).

c. Settling Debts.

For the collection of debts from an insolvent debtor there were two courses open to the collector, both of which are presented in the Parable of The Unmerciful Servant (Matt.18, 23-35). The first is the selling of the man, together with his family, into slavery. This selling of the family with the head thereof rested on the theory that wife and children were a part of a man's property. This selling, though by no means instituted by the Law of Moses, was permitted thereby, but only after it had been hedged about with precautions for the impoverished Jew's comfort and welfare. He was a slave in the single respect that he must do involuntary and unrewarded labor. The first Year of Jubilee to arrive marked the regaining of the freedom which



would permit him to return, but not emptyhanded, to his native place. (Lev.24,35-41; Deut.7,12-14). In every other respect his status was that of one who served for wages and by choice.

The second method of collecting seems to have been employed only in cases in which there was doubt as to the debtor's protestations of bankruptcy, and was essentially a method of extracting the inconvenient truth from the reluctant man by imprisonment and torture. This method was, however, essentially foreign to Jewish practice for the two reasons that it formed no part of Jewish law and was rendered superfluous by the law which permitted the selling of a man to satisfy his obligations. We must assume, therefore, that the Savior, in the Parable of The Unmerciful Servant either borrowed a practice from some neighboring country or else that this foreign practice had been thrust into Jewish life. The latter is, of course, the more probable in view of the savior's preferred usage of practices found among, and familiar to, <sup>his</sup> hearers themselves. That such an unnatural practice was possible, if not provable, among them, is established by the fact of the many foreign dominations of Palestine and notably that of the Romans, who held Palestine at the time of Christ. That the romans had this practice, Trench establishes by quotations from Arnold ("History of Rome" I,136) and Livy (2,23); and that it was plausible in the past, by saying that the poorest-appearing bankrupt was frequently the possessor of secret hordes.



d. Laws Concerning Heritage.

Among the Jews heritage formed the only means of permanently acquiring property. Land could be mortgaged but could not be sold outright, thus to pass permanently into the hands of a stranger. The land therefore remained in one family, passing from father to sons. The distribution, however, frequently took place before the father's death, though there was no legal provision requiring it before that time. The demand of such a division on the part of the Prodigal seems to have been based on old custom which seems to have had almost the force of law at the Savior's time, since there <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ no demurring on the father's part. Concerning the shares of the various sons, the law was, however, specific enough. The property was equally divided among all the sons, with the exception of the eldest; he received a double portion (Deut.21,15-17) including the homestead or parental estate. A younger son, e.g., the Prodigal, probably received his share in the shape of jewels and precious stones, "the commonest form to this day of investing wealth in the East" (Tristram, op.cit., p.242). In the case that there were no sons the daughters inherited, but only on condition of their marriage within the family of the tribe to which the deceased father belonged.



P A R T    II.

THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND.

SECTION 1.

THE MONEY SYSTEM.

A study of the economic background entails a discussion of that upon which every economic system is based --- monetary standards. Accordingly, we must devote a little space to the consideration of the moneys used in the parabolic transactions. They are: the denarius (Matt.20,2: penny; Lk.7,41: pence); the ~~dra~~ drachmon or piece of silver (Lk.15,8); the talent (Matt.18,24; 25,15ff; Lk.8,18); and the mna or mina or maneh (Lk.19,13: the pound). The denarius, so named because it was originally worth ten asses, weighed about 61,3 grains Troy and was equivalent in value to 16  $\frac{2}{3}$  cents of American money (Barton, p.165). The drachmon, or drachma, a Greek coin, corresponded roughly in value to the denarius. There were several sorts of drachma current at the time of Christ, these having been issued in the past by different kings and cities (Barton, p.166). The talent was, strictly speaking, a weight composed of 60 manehs. It was, however, commonly used in a monetary sense, designating them an amount of precious metal weighing a talent, the value of which varied according to the standard. H.Porter, writing in the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, believes the standard for Palestine to have been the Phoenician, making the silver talent worth about \$2,050 and the gold about \$30,750. The Attic talent was worth from \$960 to \$1180 (Davis). The Syrian talent, according to Thayer (p.614), was worth about \$237. The question as to which of these was actually the talent of parabolic use is



still unsettled, and, <sup>hence</sup> the authorities still differ. H. Porter, as we have said, favors the Phoenician standard. Thayer, on the other hand, believed that the New Testament references are to the Syrian talent (p.146). According to Davis, the talent employed in Palestine was money of account worth 6000 drachmas. Besides these, the Attic talent must receive mention, for we know that it was widely in vogue during the Graeco-Roman period. Accordingly, the silver talent of the time may have ranged in value from \$237 (Syrian) to \$2050 (Phoenician). A fairly accurate and probable estimate would be about \$1000, the writer believes. The gold talent seems to have been worth about \$30,000, without any dispute. While there is no mode of proving the assertion, yet the writer believes that the talents of both Matt. 18,24 f. and Matt. 25,14 f. were silver talents for the reason that otherwise the sums in either case would have been too enormous, though the Unmerciful Servant of Matt. 18 was probably a provincial governor or satrap who had systematically embezzled large sums from the enormous revenues constantly passing through his hands (cf. Trench, p.126 f.). The pound, maneh, or mina (<sup>77</sup>77, <sup>maneh</sup>), was, like the talent, also really a weight, but was likewise used in a monetary sense, as in the Parable of the Pounds (Lk. 19,13-25). The maneh was either of silver or of gold, the former (probably the one Luke had in mind) being equal to about \$33, the latter to about \$510 (according to Porter). Davis, however, believes <sup>the silver maneh</sup> ~~it~~ to have been equivalent to 100 drachma, or about \$16 in our money (p.810). This is likewise the view of Thayer (p.416).



SECTION 2.

TRADES AND BUSINESSES

The money system is, however, only a means to an end, and cannot, therefore, be considered the basis of a social system's support. Rather, it is that <sup>4</sup>which renders the basis efficient, sufficient, and convenient. The true economic basis of society consists in its trades and businesses, these activities in turn making use of the monetary system as a convenient and supporting substructure.

Among such Palestinian activities was that of farming. This pursuit, besides being the most important in ancient Jewry, was also the one which God had planned for his people when He gave them the Promised Land. We must therefore consider farming at some length, and this, too, for the more insistent reason that it enters largely into the structure of the Parables.

I. Farming.

Palestinian farmers did not live in farmhouses isolated from others by the fields. Instead they lived in villages or towns, from which the owners issued daily into the fields round about the town, passing from field to field by means of the foot-paths which ran thro<sup>ugh</sup> them (wayside: Matt.13,4). These fields, as described by the Savior, were of three-fold kind (Matt.13,1-9). There was the shallow soil, apparently rich, black, and fertile; but just underground <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ a stratum of virgin rock, or possibly a hardly buried boulder which had tumbled from the "mighty basaltic dyke" which forms the western escarpment of the Genesaret plain (Tristram, op.cit., p.131 f.), either of



which effectually prevent the downward passage of the thirty<sup>5</sup> plant-roots in their quest for water and sustenance. In such ground the tender plantlings wither and shrivel, once the kindly "early rains" have ceased to soak the earth. Then there is the thorny-infested ground --- such as is found extensively along the Galilean coasts of today. Finally there were large tracts of deep, rich loam, to whose fertility ancient Canaan was indebted for the title, "A land flowing with milk and honey". Ex.3,8.17.; Jer.11,5). From such ground came the returns spoken of by the Savior --- thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold (Mt.13,8). To this statement Tacitus is witness (Hist. V,c.6) and, indirectly, Herodotus, for he speaks of a two and three hundredfold return in the Mesopotamian plains. Niebuhr ("Beschreibung v. Arab.", p.153, quoted by Trench, p.68) likewise speaks of similar astounding returns, even mentioning a species of maize which bore a four hundredfold return !

There were various modes in use of rendering the soil more fruitful. These were commonly the burning of weeds and stubble for the rich ash residue, the removing of stones, and the fertilizing with a manure of straw which had been cattle-trodden into dunghills (Is.25,10). Besides these measures, however, irrigation was in vogue where possible, as in the Gennesaret plains of today ("The Land and the Book", p.407), and the fields were allowed to lie unworked and fallow during every seventh year, according to God's ancient command (Lev.25,2 ff), thus atoning for the custom of never rotating crops.

The crops of Palestine were usually: 1) wheat, sometimes in such quantities as to permit exportation (Ezek.27,17); 2) barley, extensively used as food (Ruth 3,15), especially by the poor; 3) spelt, this being frequently sown along field-borders;



- 4) millet (Ezek.4,9); 5) beans and lentils (II Sam.17,28);  
6) probably cotton; 7) flax (Ex.9,31).

The seasonal activities of the Palestinian farmer may be divided into three groups: 1) the preparations for the expected crops --- plowing and sowing --- which occupied the time from the middle of October to the middle of April; 2) the harvest activities, lasting from the middle of April to the middle of July; 3) the gathering of the fruits of vineyard and orchard, from July to October.

With the arrival of the early, or fall, rains --- which usually fell about the middle of October, but might be delayed until the end of December ("The Land and the Book", p.549) --- the farmer began his plowing. The plough in use was crude, consisting of wooden groundwork with iron wearing parts (I Sam.13,20, cp. Is.2,4). It had only one stilt to guide it, leaving the other hand free to flourish the goad. (Hastings, vol.I, "Agricult."). So light and inefficient were these plows that they only scratched the ground, even when borne down upon. The constant care entailed by these crude devices rendered looking around highly impractical for the plowman (Lk.9,62) (<sup>Nein</sup> "Bib. Ant.", p.75 f).

In sowing, sometimes the grain was cast on the unplowed ground and then plowed under. Ordinarily, however, the seed was sown on plowed ground and then harrowed or cross-plowed under. Sowing was usually a scattering broadcast from a basket (Matt.13,4), but the truly careful farmer placed it ~~carefully~~ in rows in the furrows (Is.28,25). The first crops to be sown were the pulse crops, the barley following a fortnight later, and wheat after another month. Thus, barley was sown in the latter part of October, and wheat in November. If necessary, barley could be sown as late as January or February. (<sup>Nein</sup> "Bib. Ant." p.77).



There were several dangers to the growing crops, such as the east winds in March and April, hailstorms; the depredations of crows and sparrows, and fungoid diseases, such as mildew. But the grimmest and most constant threat was that of weeds --- wild mustard, thistles, tares, and thorns.

In ancient times thistles, of course, were just as prolific and luxuriant as now. Then, as now, they grew to reach as high as the head of a man on horseback, and spread so eagerly as soon to overrun neglected property ("The Land and the Book", p.420.286). These pests appear to have attacked certain portions of the country especially, just as today Genēsaret is "preeminently fruitful in thorns". There "they grow up among the grain, or the grain among them; and the reaper must pick the 'harvest even out of the thorns", as Job says (c.5,5)" (op.cit.,409).

The second distinguished pest of both ancient and modern times, of both the eastern and the western world (including Colorado, notably), is the tare, or bearded darnel. This plant, in its earlier stages, cannot be told from the young wheat even by the expert eye. Since, in addition, the roots of the two plants are usually intertwined, it is impossible to weed it out without damaging much wheat (Matt.13,29). However, when the tares head out --- which they do at the same time as the wheat --- they may easily be distinguished and separated from the wheat (Matt.13,30). The grain of the tares is small and grows along the upper part of a perfectly erect stalk which, ere producing seed, bears purple-blue or red papilionaceous flowers. The taste of the grain is bitter, and when it is eaten, even though diffused in ordinary bread, causes vertigo and vomiting. Hence tare-seed must be carefully removed from the wheat before it is ground. As to the origin of the weed in wheat-sown fields, grain-growers of Palestine,



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\* floor to be thrashed. Sometimes this was accomplished by



both ancient and modern, have declared that it is wheat degenerated by marshy ground, for in marshy ground especially does it prosper to the extinction of the wheat. Otherwise they cannot explain its abundance in fields carefully sown to pure wheat. The true explanation, however, is probably this, that the light tare-seed is carried thither by birds, ants, moles, mice, sheep, and the winds blowing over the open threshing-floors of the country. (Op.cit.,395-397).

The Palestinian harvest-season began with the reaping of barley. This event began in the hot lowlands, as around Jericho, by the middle of April; in the coastal plains some ten days later; and in very upland districts as late as the middle May. By the end of April the wheat was ripe in the warm Jordan valley; at higher altitudes this occurred as late as the beginning of July. The various tasks and processes of gathering in the ripened barley and wheat lasted about a month.

The reaping was done by the household of the owner and by the hired laborers (Matt.9,38) who travelled with the harvest as it progressed from lowland to upland. The grain was cut with a sickle about a foot under the ear and was left behind in handfuls to be tied by the binders into sheaves, which, however, were not shocked (see Job 24,24; Jer.9,11; Gen.37,7).

The chief adjunct of the threshing process was the threshing-floor. This floor, sometimes private, sometimes communal, was a circular, smooth, open place surrounded by a barrier of stones; was preferably upon an eminence, as today; and was situated somewhere just outside the town gate or in the midst a man's fields, depending upon the sort of ownership ("The Land and the Book", pp.180.113). To these floors the sheaves were brought --- frequently in carts (Amos 2,13) --- and were spread out over the

\* Sometimes this was accomplished by



harnessing together four or five cattle and driving them over the grain-bundles until they were shattered and the grain trodden out (Hosea 10,11). Or it was done in one of two rude mechanical ways. Either the threshing-sled, an oblong board, roughened underneath with notches, nails, and sharp stone chips, weighted down by stones and the driver, was drawn over the sheaves by oxen; or the other device, called a threshing-wagon, was used. the latter consisted of a "low-built", four cornered wagon frame, inside of which were attached two or three parallel revolving cylinders or rollers. Each of the rollers was armed with three or four sharpened iron disks. There was a seat for the driver, and it was drawn by oxen yoked to a pole". (Hastings, vol. I; "Agriculture") (Bib. Ant. p. 78 f) (Is. 28, 27, 28). By either device the grain was shelled and the straw, to be used later as fodder, was lacerated.

Following threshing came the process of winnowing. By this the resultant mixture of grain, chaff, and broken straw was turned about and shaken with a wooden fork. Then the fan, a sort of wooden shovel, was used to heave up the grain, the chaff being blown away by the wind (Is. 30, 24). Since both processes, the first to separate straw and grain, the second to separate chaff and grain, required wind, the winnowing was usually done at night, for Syrian breezes blew only from evening until next morning's sunrise. Sometimes a fan --- usually another shovel --- was used to assist the process with its artificial wind (Matt. 3, 12). Next, the chaff having been burned (Matt. 3, 12) or left for the wind to scatter (Ps. 1, 4), the grain was shaken through a sieve to separate it from the dirt and pebbles of the threshing-floor.

The culminating process of harvesting was the storing of the grain in barns or granaries (Matt. 13, 30; Lk. 12, 18) for future



uss or sale. That it was held for unusually long lengths of time for abnormally high prices was probably true in some instances. The statement of Geikie that the Foolish Rich Man of Lk.12,16-22 enlarged his barns to engage in grain speculation, assisting toward a corner in grain that he might gain famine prices for the enormous quantities he had stored up, is reasonable (Geikie "Life of Christ", I, 282). Therefore we are indebted to the Parable just mentioned for a revelation of what lengths the rich Palestinian farmers would go to in their covetousness --- just as grain dealers do today in all countries. We can guess as to the economic stress which then resulted from the popular pinch of hunger, <sup>ing</sup> tensing the sinews of commerce for the struggle, but fraying its nerves, and manifesting itself as the darkness that hid in the hollows of the cheeks of the poor.

Sometimes, however, the times of hunger were due to another cause, i.e., crop-failures. Biblical instances of such famines are to be found from Gen.12,10, which tells of Abraham's forced journey to Egypt, up to Acts(11,28). At least one such famine had occurred within the memory of the Savior's hearers as He uttered the Parable of the Prodigal. This famine was that of the 13th and 14th years of Herod's reign (being 24-23 B.C.) (Ant.XV,ch.9), and had doubtless lingered in their minds to render graphic our Lord's description of the Prodigal's pangs in the far land (Lk.15,14). Some, too, who hearkened to the Savior that day were to live through the hungry days of 45 A.D. and the years succeeding that date, when the great famine predicted by Agabus (Acts 11,28) came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar (A.D. 41-54) (Ant.XX,ch.V).

The crop-failures causing these famines were due chiefly to two causes; 1) meteorological, and 2) pestilential, causes.



The first, unfavorable weather, consisted most frequently in the failure of the two rains (early and latter) to fall (Bib. Cyclop., "Famine"), the lack of the early rains causing the sown seed to rot in the ground, the failure of the latter, or spring rains, causing the immature crops to wither, this drought sometimes being ably seconded by the sirocco, "with its rain of powder and dust" (The Land and the Book, p.290). Less frequently, too much rain killed most of the seed, and weed-choked what did come up (Op.cit., p.396 f.). --- The second cause, pestilential, was due to the occasional plagues of pestiferous varieties of animal life. These now and again swept the country as hordes of caterpillars or locusts or of one or two kinds of worms (Joël 1,4). The locust plague was especially terrible, leaving the country absolutely bare and without sustenance, for all plant-life vanished before the innumerable hosts whose ranks crawled across the fruitful face of Palestine. Moreover, this plague partook of the nature of a swift visitation, for in a few days whole districts, naturally abounding in food, would become positively hunger-stricken. In fact, so greatly is this misfortune feared today, that provincial governors customarily call out officially all the inhabitants of the threatened districts to war on the advancing pests. (For full description of modern methods<sup>of locust-fighting</sup> in Palestine, see "The Land and the Book", p.294 ff.).

Tree-culture. --- The labor of the Palestinian farmer was not confined to sowing and reaping crops, but included also the care of trees. These are, according to the Parables, the fig-tree (Lk.13,6), the mustard tree (Matt.13,31; Lk.13,19), and the carob tree (Lk.15,16). The fig tree is native in western Asia. In the case of a young tree, cultivation is essential to fruit-bearing,



and old trees quickly degenerated into barrenness when uncared for. For this reason such trees were planted in vineyards, where the dresser of the vineyard could care for them (Lk.13,7). This involved no great amount of extra labor, for they were not cultivated as a principal crop, but were relegated to the corners of <sup>the</sup> vineyard, to irregular pieces of ground, and to other odd spots (Tristram, op.cit., p.149). The care expended upon them usually took ~~ent~~the form of digging the surrounding ground, and in manuring the roots (Lk:13,8). The first fruit is ripe in June in most places; in the hot lowlands, earlier. However, the trees keep on producing fruit, which is ripe from August onward. All told, the fruits of the fig tree could be gathered in some sections, as around Galilee, for ten months of the year (Josephus, War III, ch.10,8). The tree itself, the *Ficus carica*, grew to a height of 20-30 feet and had heart-shaped leaves ~~from~~ 8-10 inches broad which appear late in the spring and are shed at the approach of winter. --- The mustard tree was not properly a tree; but, an herb frequently attaining the proportions of a tree: its seed was very minute, giving rise among the Jews to a proverbial expression for smallness. The common mustard of Palestine was the *Sinapis nigra*, or black mustard, and grows today to the height of twelve feet ("The Land and the Book", p.163). It was sown in garden (Lk.13,19) and in field (Matt.13,31) for its seed, which was used as a condiment. --- The carob tree, whose fruit (*κρεάτιον*) is translated husk in Luke 15,16, is the *Ceratonia siliqua*. It bears a pod-like fruit shaped like a horn and having a sweet taste. It was used widely as feed for swine, and, by those who could afford no better, as human food (Lk.15,16). Only the shell, which is dark in color, was eaten, and therefrom wine



is sometimes made today; the fruit is bitter and is cast aside. Another name for the pod is "St. John's Bread", the name being based on the tradition that John the Baptist ate it in the wilderness.

The Vineyard: The vineyard, too, required some attention the year round, but especially during the vintage. This was general by September, though the first few grapes had ripened late in July. At this time it probably was that the laborers were hired for the vineyard (Matt.20,1-16). The year-around labor was sometimes cared for by renting the vineyard out constantly to husbandmen (Matt.21,33). It seems that there was also a caretaker employed exclusively to care for the vines --- the ἀμπελοεχός or vine-dresser (Lk.13,7). The caring for the plants consisted of careful digging and the pruning away several times a year, of dead or unfruitful vines, the cuttings being then burned (Jn. 15,2.6.). The well-equipped vineyard was characterized by three-fold equipment: a hedge, a winepress, and a tower (Matt.21,33). The hedge or fence, φραγμός, was usually a stone wall overgrown with thorns (Numb.22,24; Prov.24,31; Is.5,5) surrounding the vineyard to protect it from thieves, but especially from wild boars and foxes (Ps.80,13; Cant.2,15; Nehem.4,3). The apparatus for squeezing out the grapejuice is designated by Matthew as ληνός (ch.21,33) and by Mark as ὑπολήνιον (ch.12,1). Both terms are a part used for the whole. The ancient winepress consisted of two parts, both of them vats. The upper vat, the ληνός, was a "tub or trough-shaped receptacle or vat" (Thayer), in which the grapes were placed and trodden by human feet (Judges 9,27; Nehem.13,15). Through a small closely-grated lower opening near the bottom of the upper vat the juice ran down into the ὑπολήνιον, the lower vat, a container hollowed either out of the earth, being then



lined with masonry, or out of the same huge rock as the upper vat. The wine was then stored in new goat-skin bottles, the hairy side of which was turned inside out. Old skin-bottles would not do, for weakened by continual usage, the walls could not stand the pressure of the fermenting contents (Mk.2,22). The "Tower" supplied by the "certain householder" (Matt.21,33) was not a leafy booth, such as sufficed to shelter the watchman placed on guard (Is.1,8), but was of more substantial structure, possibly of stone, for the same word used to designate the tower here (*πύργος*) is used also of the defensive towers of walled cities. One purpose for which these towers were used is quite obvious, namely, for the protection of the purpling fruit; another may be supposed, i.e., the storing of tools and implements; a third is probable in wealthier vineyards --- pleasure. In the last case they were beautiful and rendered very ornate, cool, and pleasant.

## II. Sheep Tending.

The keeping of flocks was general especially in the highlands of Gilead and Bashan, the shepherds roaming indefinitely toward the east from this territory proper. Likewise there were considerable flocks tended in the hill country of Ephraim and Judah, the shepherd assuming a place of ever greater importance the farther south he was found. Thus the three great sheepraising districts were Gilead and Bashan; the highlands just west of the Jordan; and the territories of Moab, Edom, and that allotted to the tribe of Simeon. These districts were called "wildernesses", but only because they were uninhabited. In reality they were wide, grassy plains, steppes, or savannas; sandy or rocky in parts, but again almost jungly with luxuriant growths of aromatic shrubbery.

The flocks required watching both by day and by night



under the open sky. Thus Jacob could say of his service: "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes." Yet the labor involved by great numbers was not so arduous as one might suppose. The sheep became accustomed to certain orderly practices; they became acquainted with the shepherd's voice, and would rally round him when called. The shepherd was enabled to give even individual instructions to his sheep, for frequently each animal had its own name. For this reason, too, the absence of a missing sheep would quickly be noticed, and the shepherd would at once set off to look for it in the neighboring ravines or mountains (Matt. 18, 12), leaving the flock in the care of another man, or of his dog (Job. 30, 1) --- most <sup>of</sup> whom, however, were lazy and mean, being valuable only for their warning barks when danger approached. When it came time to move the flock from one locality to another, the shepherd had no need to drive his sheep, as western shepherds do. Instead, he called them, and they, knowing his voice, followed whithersoever he led (John 10, 4).

A frequent sight (more frequent no doubt where the pastoral inhabitants were more thickly settled) was the sheepfold. This was a square inclosure, many of <sup>which were</sup> them permanent, surrounded by stone walls (Numb. 32, 16) and entered by a gate (John 10, 1). The walls were sometimes crowned with thornbranches to render difficult the intrusion of marauders, especially predatory animals. In these inclosures the sheep passed the night under the open sky when the weather was favorable, but were driven into low, flat-roofed quarters along the sheltered side of the area when the weather was cold or stormy. Sometimes several flocks were shut up in one such fold under the charge of an under-shepherd. Then in the morning each shepherd would lead out his *flock*



for the day, having no difficulty in the separating of flock from flock, for each knew its shepherd's voice and would follow no other (Jn.10,4.5). When the flocks were far from home, it was not customary to drive them home, but instead temporary folds were constructed of thorns and briars, or the flocks were driven into convenient caves in the evening, the shepherds in both instances camping with their charges. In the course of such watches it was not uncommon for them to be forced to beat off raids by wild beasts (especially wolves), robbers, or hostile tribes (Jn.10, 12). In such cases good shepherds defended their flocks with their lives; hired shepherds, however, were proverbially cowardly and unreliable in danger (I Sam.17,34.35; Is.31,4; Jn.10,11-13).

The shepherd himself carried a garment in which to wrap himself in cold or stormy weather, a pouch for food, and a defensive weapon or weapons such as sling and staff (I Sam.17,40). The staff, a long rod usually crooked at the top, was used to manage the flock, to guide it, to defend it, and to chastise its disobedient members (Ps.23,4; Mic.7,14; Zech.11,7). (See Keil, op.cit. II, 219; Bissel, "Bib. Ant.", pp.107-111; Nevin, op.cit., 66-72; Bible Dictionaries).

### III. Swineherding.

Swine, of course, were forbidden to the Jews as food (Lev. 11,7), and the owning of them was forbidden with a curse by Jewish law (Eders. "Life and Times" II, 260). They were, however, kept to some extent in Galilee (Mk.5,11), but possibly to be sold to the Greeks and Romans. Swine were tended in herds, one of which, at least, numbered some two thousand (Mk.5,13), requiring the services of several herders. They were foddered and fattened with the pods of the carob tree (Lk.15,16). Since the swine <sup>was</sup> ceremonially unclean to the Jews (Deut.14,8) it became an object of loathing to them, and all who were associated with the animals shared this



\* cit. p 348) Matt. 13:47, 48). As for the length of this net it was



opprobrium with their charges. Hence the disdain of the Prodigal's former sycophants in the far country could by no other means have expressed itself so effectually as by forsaking him to a swineherd's life, there leaving him, in hunger and shame, to share both the feed and the society of these despised creatures.

#### IV. Fishing.

Among the Jews fishing was confined to inland waters, chief among which was the Sea of Galilee. The fishing along the Mediterranean coast of Palestine was in the hands of the Tyrians and Sidonians on the north, who sold fish to the Jews (Neh. 13, 16), and the Philistines on the south. Tristram (op. cit., p. 28) mentions thirty-seven species of fish as populating the waters of Galilee, many of which pass down the Jordan---to die if they reach the Dead Sea. The methods of securing fish were by hook-and-line, spears, and nets: (Job 41, 1. 7; Matt. 17, 27; Lk. 5, 4-7). Fishing as a business was carried on on quite a large scale, for not only did whole families engage in it as a trade, but servants were also hired (Mk. 1, 20). It must therefore have developed something of the proportions of a wholesale business. The means used by members of this trade was, of course, the net. The commercial net was of two sorts. There was the bag-net, "so constructed as to enclose the fish out in deep water, and is then drawn up into the boat" (Thomson, op. cit., p. 349). Several great hauls, successively dumped into the boat, would, of course, cause it to approach the sinking point (Lk. 5, 7). Then there was also the great drag-net, leaded below and corked above, whose ends were taken out into the lake and brought back to land by boats, the net then being dragged onto the shore by a company of willing hands the while others beat the waters about the net to prevent the escape of the fish. "This is that net which gathers 'of every kind', and, when drawn to the shore, the fisherman sit down and collect 'the good into vessels, but cast the bad away' " (Thomson, op. cit., p. 348) (Matt. 13, 47, 48). As for the length of this net it was



probably several hundred feet long at least, for ocean-nets of that time were long enough to compass an entire bay (Manilius, quoted by Trench, p. 117n.), and the seines or "seans" of the modern Cornwall coast are sometimes a half-a-mile in length (Trench, p. 117n.). Therefore an estimate of several hundred feet for the old Galilean nets is conservative.

#### V. Banking.

Though Jewish law forbade the taking of interest from a fellow Jew, the practice probably existed extensively at the time of Christ. It seems to have become a regular institution (Matt. 25, 27; Lk. 19, 23), such an establishment being designated either as "the bank" or "the exchangers" (probably because money-changing for a commission had become a branch of banking). According to Taylor ("The Parables of Our Savior"), the old Phoenicians had introduced this practice into the world of the Jews through the Romans. Bankers received money on deposit, allowed interest on it, and loaned it to others on a pledge or mortgage (Neh. 5, 3). This practice was indeed suppressed for a while, but became so prevalent again that at the time of Christ a public building was provided in Jerusalem where documents relating to loans, whether interest-bearing or not, might be deposited. Josephus tells of a seditious upheaval during the course of which these papers were burned (War II, 17.6). As for the money-changers, they sat publicly and unrebuked in the arcades formed by the quadruple rows of Corinthian columns surrounding the Temple, with their money-laden tables before them, charging the crowding pilgrims five percent for the changing of foreign money for Jewish (Farrar, "Life of Christ", p. 86). Therefore it was to an established institution to which Christ referred in the Parable of the Talents and again in that of the Pounds. The "usury" (Lk. 19, 23; Matt. 25, 27) which the masters of these two stories might expect on their investments was at least four per



cent, for the bankers of the early Empire regularly received eight per cent for fair loans to borrowers. Thus Alexander, the Alabarch of Alexandria, got eight per cent for a loan to Agrippa (Ant. XVIII, 6.3). Therefore the bankers must have paid about four per cent for deposits. (See Eders. "Life and Times" II, 463.464).

### SECTION 3.

#### THE ECONOMIC SITUATION AS A WHOLE

In looking back over the field of Jewish economics as presented by the Parables, we can form quite a definite idea of the general status thereof. That it was unsatisfactory and strained there can be no doubt. This was sufficiently proven the first paragraph of this paper, which mentions the names of Dives and Lazarus as evil portents indicative of that approaching decadence which is always first economic and then social. To prove that the existence of these two widely separated classes, the very rich and the very poor, is in fact ominous, we need but glance at Rome.

Rome's golden age, her noblest and most vigorous period, lies between the years 367 and 200 B.C. During this century and a half Rome was made mistress of Italy and potential mistress of the world. While the latter potentiality was actually realized only some centuries later, that realization could have been accomplished by the later and inferior Rome only because the earlier had founded so well. This most vigorous earlier period is characterized by one great fact: the Rome of 367-200 B.C. had no class distinctions worth the mentioning. It was that happy period which intervened between the passing of the ancient patrician and plebeian class struggles and the rising of the new class distinctions which were to be based on wealth. During this golden age the average Roman citizen, even though a patrician, was still a yeoman



farmer. The legend of Cincinnatus would have been as true of this century as it was of the fifth, for it is matched by that of Manius Curio, the conqueror of Pyrrhus. In about 200 B.C. began, however, the Macedonian and Syrian wars, and Oriental splendor and luxury began to make their way to Rome, and the conquered East began the slow but inevitable conquest of her conqueror. At the same time occurred the decline of the yeomanry, these being now forced to the cities as masses of unemployed laborers displaced from land and calling by the economic stress produced by the huge slave-worked estates of the rich. Thus on one hand luxury and wealth increased to produce the extremely rich, while, on the other, prosperity decreased to produce, ultimately, the very poor. (West, "Ancient World", ch. XXVIII, XXXI; p. 407).

Since, then, the existence of these two extremes is a proven sign of abnormality, we are safe in saying that, since they existed in Jewry, the situation was not entirely happy. Moreover, since such a wide divergence in the social status of classes is due to economic reasons, we may say that the situation was economically unhappy. The reasons for this economic, and, consequently, social, distress appear to have been two. In the first place, the Jews themselves were at fault. In their own midst were to be found those who habitually attempted a cornering of commodities, holding out for fabulous prices (Lk. 12, 16), thus enabling themselves to dispose profitably of even "the refuse of the wheat" (Amos 8, 6). Not only, however, were their sins those of commission, but also of omission. The Jews actually accomplished little toward the amelioration of the economic situation, though it is true that their Rabbis did put forth laws to that end (Mders., "In the Days of Christ", p. 206); honestly striving to better matters. But that there was lack of vigour in enforcing the laws is attested by the simple fact of the *existence of a class of speculators sufficiently large to permit* existence of a class of speculators sufficiently large to permit



the parabolic usage thereof.

But the graver reason was that of the Roman taxation. These taxes were twofold, the land tax and the poll (or rather, person) tax. The former especially was a burden upon Palestine, inasmuch as the people was an agricultural one. But this burden was further increased by the mode of collecting, namely, tax farming. It was as a result of this system that the provinces at times groaned under persistent extortion. The Jews, too, were among the sufferers, finding it necessary to send a deputation to Rome "to represent the ruin brought down on their country by the crushing weight of the taxes" (Geikie, op.cit., I, 282).

These two conditions brought about the economic stress which was responsible for the many debtors and creditors (Matt. 5, 25; 18, 28; Lk. 7, 41; 12, 58. 59), and for the many professional money-lenders (as in Lk. 19, 23), whose kind multiply and thrive only when economic pressure necessitates extensive borrowing. Perhaps for this <sup>additional</sup> reason did the merchant convert his wealth into a single pearl, that he might hide it and escape the heavy taxes; and perhaps therefore did the custom arise of burying money in the ground, incidentally causing a shortage of money by withdrawing large sums from circulation.

Yet the situation in Judaea was not as severe as it might have been. The Romans seem not to have been so unscrupulous in their taxation in Palestine as elsewhere. The taxes were not <sup>all</sup> exported into Caesar's treasury. Rather was a goodly portion restored to the province in the form of public improvements, thus insuring the country's better economic status in the future so that rich tax-harvests might be reaped again and again. (Norton, "The Rise of Christianity", pp. 7.8). Furthermore, we can argue from Jewish social facts that the situation was not unrelievedly dark. The first fact is that the class of the very poor was <sup>not</sup> hopelessly



overdeveloped. There was no need in Palestine, as in Rome, to provide doles of corn for the hunger-stricken mobs. Ergo, these mobs did not exist in Palestine to any great extent. The second fact is that there were no appreciable class struggles in Jewry. This lack of friction can be accounted for, however, only on the ground that the very rich and the very poor classes were not so abnormally developed as to enable the rich to oppress severely, or to force the very poor into rebellion for their lives' sake. Both of these facts, therefore, point to comparative social peace. If, however, the country was thus comparatively peaceful in the social respect, it follows that it must have been so also economically, for social disturbances are always, either directly or indirectly, based on economic grievances.

A brief summary may, then, be made as follows. There was a very poor class of moderate proportions; there were many resourceless and bankrupt debtors; there were times when economic stress produced high prices and hunger, when wages were low and employment scarce; there were times when the taxes demanded a goodly portion of the family funds, so that bread was <sup>always</sup> barley and not <sup>sometimes</sup> wheaten, garments were few and coarse, and the family dwelling was more squalid and its furnishings more meager and poorer than usual; the bankers and money-lenders flourished to an unhealthy degree, denoting a shortage of, and need for, money among the people.---- On the other hand, the masses did have meal in which leaven might be hidden to make bread (Lk. 13, 21), and there was money in the hands of the poor which might be lost (Lk. 15, 8). Fishing, sheepraising, and farming still flourished, not having been rendered unprofitable for the man of small means by slavery or monopoly. There was still employment to be had in the vineyard, and the small farmer still had land to farm and seed to sow. There still remained that bulwark of every society, the middle



class whose members are neither unduly rich nor so uncomfortably poor as to be unable to afford feasts and other healthy social activities. And, finally, though the Senate had found it necessary, during the reign of Tiberius, to send Germanicus to quiet the Syrian province (Geikie, op.cit. I, 282), yet the land was not drained of money by taxes (see Norton, quoted above), and it is very possible that the Jewish taxes of the future were lightened as result of their very protestations, for we know that the Romans were fairly cautious in their dealings with the turbulent Jews.

For these reasons the writer believes it to be an error of degree on the part of Geikie to assume that ruin, want, and hunger stalked the land during the life of Christ, marching with dreadful step toward the cataclysm of the sixties. As for the final Jewish rebellion, that was surely brought on by causes largely other than these. It seems more accurate to say that, though the economic situation was difficult, yet the average man of diligence and thrift had no difficulty in keeping the wolf at a safe distance from his cottage door, and that his economic status was sufficiently satisfactory to be productive of a social life which was quite peaceful, contented, and happy. Finally, it is the writer's belief that such was indeed the social and economic background against which the shadow of our Lord was cast as He moved among His fellow-men on earth, and from which He drew the materials for His inimitable Parables.