as the sole spot on this earth with any title to make use of the words which adorn the silver star in the grotto of the Nativity: "Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est." It would, in fact, be delightful to take account of the studied contempt with which those self-styled "independent critics" who have, as it were, attempted to erect a rival sanctuary of the Nativity at Nazareth, would have viewed their own pitiful arguments *if they had been presented to them from a Christian source*! "Certain it is," writes the Abbé Fillion in his classic *Vie de N.S. Jésus-Christ* (English translation by Rev. N. Thompson, Herder, 1928, I, p. 577) "that the name of this little town [of Nazareth] is inseparably and gloriously connected with that of the Lord Jesus; but honest exegesis tells us that not one of the texts just cited proves that He was born at Nazareth." The whole of his study of the objection: Jésus ne serait pas né à Bethléem, mais à Nazareth" should be read as a patient investigation by a most experienced writer of certain pseudo-critical aberrations and absurdities.

It may be useful, apropos of the traditional site, the present glorious Church of the Nativity, to emphasize the point that, while it is the oldest of all Christian sanctuaries, and viewed critically, perhaps the one best guaranteed in all Palestine, its authenticity is no part of the Christian faith! The greatest of living authorities on Palestinian archaeology, Père Hugues Vincent, O.P., in his monumental *Jérusalem* (Vol. II, p. 89) has declared, in regard to Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre, that their authenticity "is invested with the best guarantees of certitude that are to be expected in such a subject," and that this conclusion is, doubtless, most moving and consoling. Yet the judgments on which this finding rests were arrived at with the same independence of mind with which one might determine the site of the Akra, and according to the principles generally recognized in classical archaeology. All this, *mutatis mutandis*, is entirely true in regard to the traditional site of the Nativity basilica, that mighty Constantinian edifice enshrining the lowly cavern in which the Incarnate Word was born of His holy Mother.

JOHN M. T. BARTON.

What is the meaning of "He shall eat butter and honey, that he may know to refuse the evil and to choose the good"? (Isai vii, 15). *What does the symbolism mean, and why should the eating of butter and honey enable the child to distinguish between good and evil, when he was already able presumably to do this, since he was God?*

Several questions are here proposed, not all of which admit of a certain answer; I submit the following with due reference to other opinions: "butter and honey," better, "curds and honey": "curds" meaning thickened milk. The expression seems to imply a comfortable livelihood

(though some think the contrary), being akin to the expression " milk and honey." Buchanan Gray in the *International Critical Commentary* (*ad loc.*) seems convincing on the point. Isaiah vii, 21–2, is not really against this, the sense there being that in the desolation of that time a young cow and two milch sheep (cf. Deut. xxxii, 14) will yield more than enough milk for the handful of survivors ; this no doubt is hyperbole, a poetical exaggeration.

" That he may know," translates the Hebrew as it stands, but it can hardly be said that we have a satisfactory explanation of the words. The Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament, composed before the Christian era) reads : " before he knows to refuse," which seems to point to an error in the Hebrew text known technically as " haplography," the single writing of letters that really occurred twice. This seems the best explanation and the text would run parallel to Isaiah viii, 4 : even before the child comes to the use of reason, the two hostile kingdoms Syria (or Aram, with its capital at Damascus), and Israel (a term often used exclusively of the northern kingdom, with its capital at Samaria), will be devastated by Assyria (as actually happened through the invasion of Tiglath-Pileser III, king of Assyria in 734 B.C.

Isaiah vii, 17 creates considerable difficulty, and is queried in the Kittel Hebrew Bible ; it seems likely that it has come in from elsewhere. What follows it is more easily taken as the continued description of the devastation of Syria and Israel ; Judah itself was devastated much later, and by Babylon. We must remember that the prophecies of Isaiah (as of Jeremiah and Ezekiel) were not written as one continuous work, but were made into a single collection some time after their composition so that a kind of introduction such as vii, 17 may have been attached to the wrong poem.

It will be seen from the above that the child in question is not interpreted to be simply and directly Christ ; nor is it easy to see how such an interpretation can be made to fit the context. But he is a figure of Christ, bringing in a partial deliverance which foreshadows Christ's far greater deliverance of all mankind. It is an example of what St. Thomas writes in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms :

" Prophecies are sometimes uttered about things which existed at the time in question, but are not uttered primarily with reference to them, but in so far as they are a figure of things to come ; and therefore the Holy Ghost has provided that when such prophecies are uttered, some details should be inserted which go beyond the actual thing done, in order that the mind may be raised to the thing signified."

This occasional feature in prophecy I have called " compenetration," a term which seems to have found favour. St. Thomas offers as examples the Syrian persecutor Antiochus IV Epiphanes as a type of Antichrist, and Psalm lxxi. His doctrine on the subject and his examples evidently come from St. Jerome's commentary on Daniel xi, 21ff. In applying

compenetration to the child of Isaiah vii, I am following Billot in the *Études*; obviously some things are said of the child which can only refer to Christ. I have treated this particular point at some length in a little book, *Back to Christ* (Paulist Press, New York, 1919), which is now out of print, but I should be prepared to lend it for a while to the C.B.A. Lending Library if any wished to consult it.

C. LATTEY, S.J.

Please explain the following words addressed to Judas by our Lord: "It were better for him, if that man had not been born" (Mt. xxvi, 24). *Did not the Rabbis use the same phrase quite often?*

To understand the meaning of these words of Mt. (and also Mk. xiv, 21; Lk. xxii, 22) it is helpful first to consider the character of Judas. Why did he offer to betray our Lord? How was he satisfied and the Sanhedrin glad when they weighed out to him the thirty pieces? In a word, was Judas a bad man or a good man?

The answer to the nature of Judas's character must be based on the Gospel evidence. This shows in him:

(a) *Want of faith:* Jn. vi, 71, where Judas "who was about to betray him" is contrasted with St. Peter who as spokesman of the Apostles has just confessed the divinity of Christ (vv. 69–70).

(b) *Avarice:* Jn. xii, 6, "But because he was a thief and having the purse carried the things that were put therein." Here the Greek *bastazo* (carry) seems to have its second meaning "to carry off," i.e. to steal. Cf. Westminster Version.

(c) *The Devil:* Lk. xxii, 3; Jn. xiii, 27, "And after the morsel, Satan entered into him," "taking more complete possession of one who had already yielded himself to him" (St. Aug.). That is why St. John again and again calls him "the son of perdition," i.e. the son destined to eternal loss, in complete contrast with the saving influence of our Lord. Of the three influences on Judas this part played by the Devil is undoubtedly the most important, though we are unable to describe it precisely or chronicle all its manifestations.

Any estimate of Judas's character must have regard to these facts narrated in the Gospel. In the course of centuries attempts have been made (and are still made) to exonerate Judas, and hence to regard our Lord's words to him at the Last Supper as an example of oriental hyperbole. In the early Christian centuries the Cainite Gnostics circulated a *Gospel of Judas Iscariot* in which Judas's betrayal was seen as a hastening of the atoning death of our Lord, and therefore Judas is worthy of our gratitude. Origen (third century) suggested (*In Mat. Tract.* XXXV) that Judas hanged himself in order to seek Christ in the next world and there to seek pardon for his crime. Klausner thought that Judas