

bold an assertion that, at no other period of the world, before or since, could Jesus of Nazareth have been born. Then, and then only, had come the fitness and fulness of times ; just then there was a gap which only He could fill—a place made ready by thousands of years of preparation, and at that particular time. The vast wheel had been revolving until the precise point in its revolution was reached where the vast mechanism demanded for its completeness a new force and factor, which just then came into play.

In the simple story of Christ's advent, as told by the evangelists, certain prominent features stand conspicuous. A decree went out from *Cæsar Augustus* that *all the world* should be taxed. The Roman world then embraced *Syria*. The employments of the people were mainly *pastoral*, indicating a Semitic origin as *Asiatics*. Christ was born in a stable and laid in a manger, indicating *identification with the poor—the commoners* rather than the *aristocracy*. The angels' song is twofold : it hints that henceforth there is to be a *new goal* to human endeavor—glory to God, and a new result on earth—peace and goodwill. Mark also the shepherds not only *come personally* to Christ's cradle, but hasten to *make known abroad* the fact and significance of His birth. Not to examine more closely, here are some *ten* particulars which serve to define this event as not only unique, but transcendent. Its precise period is the period of Roman supremacy—more exactly, the Augustan age ; it is the time when all the world is virtually controlled by one sceptre ; when that sceptre has passed finally from Asia to Europe ; the precise field or locality of this event is *Syria*, which occupies a peculiarly central position, having both an Asiatic and a European frontier, facing both ways—fit pivot on which the history of the world shall turn, whence the ripest product of Asiatic civilization shall take a westward course to Europe and to a farther West yet undiscovered. Note also that this new personage is unmistakably of the lower classes, identified with poverty, and so the representative of the many rather than the few. The angels announce a new law of the kingdom—God is first of all to be glorified, and so peace and good-will are to be realized among men ; the Fatherhood of God is to be recognized that the brotherhood of man may be realized. The shepherds first bow at the manger as disciples, and then become propagators of the good news.

To read that simple narrative is to see more than human hand delineating the outlines of a perfect scene, at once historic and prophetic. In twenty verses of Luke we have a condensation of all history and all prophecy. The world has come to its highest development without Christianity—reached a period when for the first time an imperial decree from one Cesar or Czar can affect the whole area of civilization, and when the completest political unity has at last been attained. Rome, the last of the world kingdoms, is in its golden age. Civilization has left the more sluggish atmosphere of the East to breathe inspiration in the Occident. Just now a child is born who is to represent not a patrician rank but a plebeian