

to the Resurrection. But this Nucleus, be it noted, was practically complete almost immediately after the Founder's death. The close "suggests a document drawn up within a few months of the final events."<sup>1</sup> How, then, Dr. Petrie can speak of logia incorporated in the Nucleus in respect of the conditions of the time, is not very clear. By his account the prevalent Christian idea about the year 30, *during the Ministry*, "was the proper understanding of the law, which was not yet abrogated in any particular." At this stage, accordingly, the Sermon on the Mount would be the prominent logion. "And when we notice how the fulfilling of the law is the main theme of the nucleus, and how little [even] of the completed Gospels refer to the Gentile problems, we must see how devoid of historic sense is the anachronism of supposing the main body of the Gospels to have originated as late as the Gentile period"<sup>2</sup> [*i.e.* 60-70!]. But in 40-50, with the spread of the Church, as set forth in the Acts, "the Samaritans were welcomed, and Gentile proselytes such as the centurion Cornelius"; whereupon the suitable logia would be added to the Gospels current. Then in 50-60, when the Gentiles began to enter in decisive numbers, there was "a special meaning in the parable of the Prodigal Son, and in the subjection to kings and rulers"; hence further embodiments. Then, after the fall of Jerusalem in 70, "Christianity lost its sense of any tie to Judaism."

<sup>1</sup> *Id.* p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 38.

It will be admitted that this is a stirring change from the run of New Testament criticism of the past seventy years. That criticism more or less unconsciously recognized the problem set up by the entire ignorance of gospel teaching revealed in the Pauline and other epistles. Dr. Petrie, following Professor Blass in an unhesitating acceptance of the narrative of the Acts, simply ignores the Pauline problem altogether. He boldly credits the Church with a Gospel before Paul's conversion, and, like other traditionalists, supplies Paul, the gospel-less, with a physician, Luke, who had collected from the scattered mass of logia more gospel than anybody else!

Thus has the pendulum swung back to the furthest extreme from that at which men carried down the Gospel dates to accommodate the data. As to chronology, Dr. Petrie is practically at the orthodox standpoint of Professor Salmon.<sup>1</sup> An objective and ostensibly scientific method, involving no element of personal bias or preference, is employed to make a selection from the Gospels which shall present as it were mathematically or statistically the earliest elements in the synoptics. On that selection, however, there is brought to bear no further critical principle whatever. It is assumed that it *must* all come from the traditional founder, a mass of whose utterances *must* have been committed by auditors to writing as they were delivered (the power to write being held to be common in

<sup>1</sup> *Histor. Introd. to the N. T.*, 4th ed. 1889, p. 111.

Galilee and Judea in the first century because it was common in Egypt in the third); and a nucleus collection of these separate documents *must* have been made soon after the crucifixion, and there and then wound up. At any rate, such a collection is yielded by selecting the groups or blocks of matter which occur in all three synoptics in the same order; and this *must* have been made about the year 30, because it is mainly occupied with the problems of the law, and very little with "the Gentile problems" which so soon began to come to the front. The history of the Acts is here taken as unassailable ground, like the main Gospel record.

Two comments here at once suggest themselves. Dr. Petrie's line of construction might with perfect congruity be employed to yield evidence that the assumed original *Teacher* was mainly concerned with problems of the law; and (2) the inferred multitude of original floating dicta may with immense gain in plausibility be transmuted into a series of interpolations made by different hands long after the supposed Founder's death. For what critical right has Dr. Petrie to subsume a store of floating Jesuine dicta which supplied the Church, in its changing circumstances, for three or four decades, with suitable parables and teachings to meet every new problem? If you profess to seek a strictly impersonal principle of selection, why not apply a strictly impersonal principle of inference from the result?

Obviously the additional logia are far more likely to have been invented than found. Such a chronic

windfall of papyri is a sufficiently fantastic hypothesis on the face of it, in no way justifiable from the recent discovery of a few enigmatic scraps that had not been embodied, and suggest no community of thought with those embodied. But even if we allow the probable existence of many floating leaves, where is the likelihood that their sayings all came from the same Teacher? In the terms of the hypothesis, he occupied himself mainly with the law (unless the lost logia outbulk the saved), while at the same time he duly provided for the Samaritans and the Gentiles! His disciples and apostles, nonetheless, paid no attention to these latter provisions until they found that such provisions were really necessary to accommodate the thronging converts! All this is very awkwardly suggestive of the Moslem saying that the Khalif Omar "was many a time of a certain opinion, and the Koran was revealed accordingly."<sup>1</sup> It would indeed have been a remarkable experience for the evangelist to discover the logion (Mt. xvi, 17-19) as to the founding of the Church on the rock of Peter when a Petrine claim had to be substantiated. To the eye of Dr. Rendel Harris, an orthodox but a candid scholar, the "rock" text suggests an adaptation of a passage in the ODES OF SOLOMON in which God's "rock" is the foundation not of the Church but of the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> Such probabilities Dr. Petrie never considers.

Let us see how Dr. Petrie's method explains

<sup>1</sup> Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History*, 1892, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, ed. Rendel Harris, 1909, pp. 74, 118.

Matthew x, 5: "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans." It occurs only in Matthew: Luke gives the parable of the Good Samaritan, with its flings at the lawyer and at the Jews in general; and in John the Founder makes Samaritan converts. The anti-Gentile text Dr. Petrie never discusses! Yet his method does not permit him to exclude it. It belongs to his "sixth class," of "sayings and episodes which only occur in one Gospel. These classes are almost entirely in Matthew and Luke, and are *the accretions which were added after the Gospels had finally parted company.*"<sup>1</sup> So that after the Gentile period had set in, Matthew, the one "professional scribe among the apostles," somehow found a *logion Iesou* which suited the need of the Church to exclude Samaritans and Gentiles, while Luke found another which suited the need to welcome them. And yet, in respect of its very purport, the anti-Gentile and anti-Samaritan teaching ought, if genuine, to belong, on Dr. Petrie's general principle, to the earliest collection of all. Such is the dilemma to which we are led by the strictly statistical method of selection, conducted without any higher light.

<sup>1</sup> Work cited, p. 49.

## CHAPTER XII

### FAILURE OF THE LOGIA THEORY

To the open-minded reader it must be already plain that, unless we are to be led into mere chaos, there must at once be added to the statistical test either the proviso that given sayings may for the purposes of certain sections of the Church have been *left out* in certain Gospels, or that for the purposes of certain sections they may have been invented. And the moment such a concession is made, the primary assumption of necessary authenticity is destroyed. If the anti-Samaritan precept is the utterance of the Founder, the pro-Samaritan parable is not; or else the Founder was literally all things to all men. If either could be foisted on a gospel, anything could be; and the futile historical argument to save the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem—an argument proceeding, as we have seen, on a quite uncritical view of one uninvestigated and loosely described case—becomes doubly irrelevant. Dr. Petrie's Nucleus of triple tradition contains the prophecy:—

The Son of Man shall be *betrayed* unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles *to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him; and the third day he shall rise again.*

Is *that* to be salved as historical, on the pretext

that Blass has by the case of Savonarola "exploded the dogma" of *omne vaticinium post eventum*, or is to be salved by the plea that Savonarola, like Lincoln, predicted his own death at the hands of his enemies? And if prudence perforce abandons that course, why was the vaguer prophecy about Jerusalem sought to be salved at all? Why was not the miracle prediction included in the Savonarola argument? Considered as a whole, the other is not at all a bare prediction of the sacking of a city, fortuitously fulfilled forty years after utterance: it is a Messianic judgment, carrying a whole eschatology bound up with it.<sup>1</sup> And the fact that different gospels give it differently is not to be rationally explained by Professor Blass's device of saying that Jesus *must* have said a great deal more still, and that Luke selected what would appeal to Gentiles, while Matthew and Mark omitted what would give pain to Jews. This conception of evangelists playing fast and loose with the known divine oracles to suit men's susceptibilities ought to be disturbing to any believer's moral sense; while that of a set of propagandists inventing oracles to suit their own religious aim puts the Gospel-makers in a line with the whole succession of Jewish and early Christian framers of supposititious documents, as men of their age, well-meaning, narrow, deluded, devoted.

<sup>1</sup> Bousset (*The Anti-Christ Legend*, Eng. tr. p. 23) "assumes, with many recent expositors, that the *distinctly apocalyptic part* of Matt. xxiv and Mark xiii is a fragment of foreign origin introduced amid genuine utterances of the Lord. It is also evident that, compared with that of Mark, the text of Matthew is the original." Here we have the old strategy of compromise.

We have come back to the fundamental issue between authoritarian supernaturalism and free reason. If the prediction of the betrayal, the trial, the scourging, the mocking, the crucifixion, and the resurrection is to stand, there need be no more discussion over miracles or anything else. "It is written," and there an end. Biblical criticism has once more become blasphemy. If reason is to have any access to the matter, the prediction must fall as a fiction; and if the "exploded" argument from Savonarola is to be revived, it will have to be restricted to the case of the prediction to which it was so prudentially applied. But if one hopeless prophecy is to be dropped as *post eventum*, it is mere irrelevance to debate over another which is only in one selected and isolated aspect less hopeless, while as a whole it is equally so.

Savonarola's prediction of the fall of Rome was one of many, motivated by religion and invited by the absolute fact of previous invasions, of which the last had occurred only two years before. The one concrete detail in which it was "fulfilled" was simply a specification of a common feature in the warfare of the age. Another invasion of Italy was believed to be imminent, *and actually took place in the year of the prophecy*, without fulfilling that in any detail. The Gospel prophecy is Messianic, devoid of political motivation, accompanied by a whole apparatus of Christian eschatology, and backed by other predictions of pure miracle. The details of the siege and the sequel are as plainly supplied after the event as those of the betrayal, the mockery, the scourging,



the crucifixion, and the resurrection. To hold by one set of predictions and abandon the other is mere critical trifling. Even orthodox critics give up the early chapters of Luke as late accretions. What kind of credit is it that is to be saved by making him the faithful chronicler of a real prophecy?

The prediction of the fall of the temple, which is in the Nucleus as being common in matter and order to all three synoptics, is in no better case. On Dr. Petrie's principle, it is one of the earliest accepted sayings—that is, it was embodied when the Jesuist movement was pre-occupied over the law, and yet it did not disturb that pre-occupation. On his theory, it should not have appeared in the Nucleus at all, or in any Gospel until the occasion arose. Thus incompatible with Dr. Petrie's own theory, it is equally incompatible with any critical principle. This is a concrete Messianic prophecy, not to be salved by any juggling with mere historiography. In the terms of the case, it was made at a time when there was no politically visible reason for making it,<sup>1</sup> and is not in the least to be explained as were the vaticinations of Savonarola. On the principles of Professor Blass, it ought to have been far too "painful" for preservation by men adhering to the Jewish law.

It is quite thinkable, of course, that the compilers

<sup>1</sup> The assertion of Dr. Conybeare (*Myth, Magic, and Morals*, p. 46), that the destruction of the temple was "an event which any clear-sighted observer of the growing hostility between Jew and Roman *must* have foreseen," is characteristic of that writer's way of interpreting documents. A second reading may perhaps yield him another impression. Forty years of non-fulfilment is a precious proof of the "must."

of the Gospels may have found such quasi-predictions already committed to writing, and merely embodied them. But that admission only carries us back to the problem of authenticity. If any current "scrap of paper" concerning "Jesus" or "the Lord" could thus secure canonicity, what trust is to be put in the canon? It is recorded in the history of Islam that Abu Daoud, who collected some half-a-million traditions concerning Mohammed, rejected all but 4,800, which included "the authentic, those which *seem* to be authentic, and those which are *nearly so*."<sup>1</sup> This again, it may be argued, proves that false traditions do not negate the historicity of the personage they concern. And that is clearly true. There may conceivably have been a Teacher in whose mouth many invented sayings were put even in his lifetime. But when we thus come to the historicity problem, there is simply no such basis in the Gospels as we have in the life of the confessedly "Illiterate Prophet." The Gospel life begins and ends in miracle, and it yields no intelligible evangel apart from that ostensibly founded on the sacrificial death—the death, that is, of the God.

Apart from the sacramental rite, the whole body of the Teaching is but a mass of incompatibilities, telling of a dozen standpoints, legalism and anti-legalism, Judaism and Gentilism, Davidism and non-Davidism, asceticism and the contrary, a meek Messiah and one claiming to be greater than Solomon,

<sup>1</sup> Muir and Weir, *Life of Mohammed*, ed. 1912, p. xlii.

a Teacher vetoing invective and one freely indulging in it, a popular and unexplained Gospel for the masses who are declared to be purposely excluded from comprehension of that very Gospel, whereof the esoteric explanations yield nothing that could apply to the alleged propaganda.

Even self-contradictions, it may be argued, do not negate the authenticity of a teaching. Carlyle and Ruskin abound in them; who escapes them? Many passages in the Koran are contradicted or abrogated by others, 225 verses being cancelled by later ones.<sup>1</sup> Here indeed there is plain ground for critical doubt; and some of us must emphatically decline to accept Muir's verdict, endorsing Von Hammer's, that "we may upon the strongest presumption affirm that every verse in the Koran is the genuine and unaltered composition of Mohammed himself."<sup>2</sup> But even if we are satisfied that Mohammed in his long life deliberately modified his doctrine, there is no room for such an explanation in the case of a teacher who is never once said to avow modification, and whose whole teaching career ostensibly covers but a year in the synoptic record.

As the tradition stands, whether read with Unitarian or with Trinitarian assumptions, it is a mere mosaic of enigma and contradiction. If the Teacher never called himself the Son of God in a

<sup>1</sup> Muir and Weir, as cited, p. xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. xxviii. Contrast the pronouncements of Palmer, Kuenen, and Nicholson, cited in the author's *History of Freethought*, 3rd ed. i, 250.

miraculous sense, how came the men for whom his word was law, and who in the terms of the thesis knew his life history and parentage if any one did, to call him so? In Dr. Petrie's Nucleus, the triple tradition, the Founder does assure his disciples that "in the regeneration" he will sit in the throne of glory, and they on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes. What room is there for Gentilism here? And if downright miracle and miraculous prediction alike be given up as unhistorical, on what grounds can we give credence to *this* as a really delivered oracle?

On the other hand, no fundamental difficulty remains when we recognize that the whole Gospel record is the composite result of a process of making a life history for a God. The command of the Messiah to Peter to keep silence as to his Messianic character is quite intelligible as providing at once the claim by Jesus and an explanation of the fact that no such Messianic movement was historically recorded. The blank enigma of the early "popular" evangel is solved when we realize that there had been no such evangel; that the cult had really grown out of the ancient sacramental rite; that the growing movement had to evolve a quasi-biography when the God of the rite was to be developed into a Messiah; and that the Judaism of the old Messianic idea had to be transmuted into universalism when the cult came to a Gentile growth. All the contradictory texts fall (more or less clearly) into their orders as survivals of the divergent sects formed by the changing situation—or, let us say,

of those changing needs of the widening cult which Dr. Petrie so arbitrarily makes a ground for the mere *selection* of dicta from a floating mass of written notes, but which may so much more rationally be taken as grounds for *producing* the required oracle.

That there were such scattered and floating oracles, indeed, we are not critically entitled to deny. The Judæo-Greek world was indeed familiar with oracles of "the Lord." The Gospel Jesus is made to predict that there would come after him many saying "I am Christ"; and while the traditionalist must accept this as true prediction, the historian must pronounce that various "Christs" or quasi-Christs did come. We have some of their names and their brief secular history.<sup>1</sup> Each of these men would be "the Lord" for his followers; and some of them, surely, propounded some teaching. The Gospel ethic of reciprocity, we know, was put in a saner form by Hillel; did he get it from the Jesuists? Christian scholars do not claim as much.<sup>2</sup> There is no Messianic item in the Gospels, apart from the lore of the sacrament, which may not have been in the legend of any "Christ." As it happens, the best authenticated saying of "the Lord" is one which no Christian now accepts—the fantastic millenarian prediction given by Papias, who had it from "the elders who saw John, the

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Antiq.* xx, 5, § 1; *Bel. Jud.*, vii, 11; Dio Cassius, lxi; Orosius, vii, 12.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.* the orthodox Ewald, *Geschichte Christus' und seiner Zeit*, 3te Ausg. p. 31 note.

disciple of the Lord," and textually quoted by Irenæus, who is practically corroborated by Eusebius. The latter, it is true, pronounces Papias very limited in his comprehension;<sup>1</sup> but has not the same thing been said many times of the disciples by believers in the gospel Jesus?

The logion preserved from Papias, we know, is in the APOCALYPSE OF BARUCH, which imitated the BOOK OF ENOCH, both of which are full of oracles of "the Lord." But this only proves that oracles passing current in other quarters and of another source could pass current with devout Jesuists as oracles of Jesus. The APOCALYPSE OF BARUCH is pronounced by Canon Charles, who has so ably edited that and other remains of Jewish literature of the same age, a "beautiful" book, "almost the last noble utterance of Judaism before it plunged in the dark and oppressive years that followed the destruction of Jerusalem"; a book written when "breathing thought and burning word had still their home in Palestine, and the hand of the Jewish artist was still master of its ancient cunning."<sup>2</sup> It was admittedly long more widely current in Christian than in Jewish circles, and fell into discredit only when it was felt to contain "an implicit polemic against Christianity." It is to its early Christian vogue that we owe its preservation in a Syriac translation made from the Greek: "of the Hebrew

<sup>1</sup> "Stupidity" is ascribed to him by Blass (*Entstehung*, p. 8), who on his own principles has no right whatever to reject such a "tradition."

<sup>2</sup> Compare with this avowal of an orthodox scholar, Mill's assumption of the total absence of genius in Palestine apart from Jesus.

original every line has perished, save a few still surviving in rabbinic writings."

Who can say how many other such Jewish books may not have furnished items for the compilers of the Gospels? The Sermon on the Mount we know is a Judaic compilation; and the "Slavonic ENOCH" contains sets of beatitudes closely analogous to those of the Sermon. To the traditionalist these things are matters of profound perplexity; for the rational critic they are evidences for the naturalist conception of the rise of Christianity.

## CHAPTER XIII

### RESURGENCE OF THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM

WHEN the "selection" theory is applied to the *logia* actually recovered at Oxyrhynchus it conspicuously fails to square these with the traditionalist assumption. On Dr. Petrie's principle they were left out of the Nucleus and Gospels alike because they met *no* need of the Christian organization. That is to say, oracles of the Son of God were simply ignored by the apostles and the organizers because they did not serve any useful purpose. Independent criticism finds in them plain marks of Judaism, of Gnosticism, of Christian heresy, and of a Christism irreconcilable with the Gospel record.<sup>1</sup> Logion iv, iii, *a*, runs: "I stood in the midst of the world, and in flesh I was seen of them; and I found all drunken, and none found I athirst among them" [*sc.* for the word]—the saying of a retrospective Christ, no longer in the flesh, such as we find in the Gnostic PISTIS SOPHIA and the ODES OF SOLOMON.<sup>2</sup> On the traditionalist view this at least

<sup>1</sup> See the collection of opinions in Dr. Charles Taylor's *The Oxyrhynchus Logia and the Apocryphal Gospels*, 1899, pp. 15-19, 23, 24, 25, 27, 39, 42, etc.

<sup>2</sup> These *logia*, it should be noted, are always ascribed to "Iēs." The full name *Iesous* is never given, and there is no cognomen.



must be tolerably late ; what then does the "selection" argument gain from the recovered papyri ?

But it fares no better when confronted with the opening chapters of Luke. For the Blass school these are to be dated 50-60. Already Luke's "many"<sup>1</sup> had drawn up their narratives ; and these, we are to suppose, included the miracle story of the birth of John, the Annunciation, the kinship and intercourse of Elizabeth and Mary, the preparation of John "in the desert," a different account of the birth at Bethlehem, the appearance of the Divine Child in the Temple, and all the rest of it ; but no mention of the flight into Egypt. We are asked to believe that all these added narratives were current among the faithful "from the first," but that Mark and Matthew did not see fit to include them in their Gospels, though Matthew saw reason to tell of the flight into Egypt, and Luke to suppress it. Whatever may be the outcome of the "liberal" method of handling the Gospels, it is safe to say that this will never appease the critical spirit. The "gospel of the Infancy" thus embodied in Luke is visibly cognate with the "apocryphal" gospels which were never allowed into the canon, but were more or less popular in the Church. A compromise between traditionalism and the statistical method may set up the position that the stories were current from the first, although all fictitious ; but this involves the awkward consequence that the whole atmosphere "from the first"

<sup>1</sup> "Many," says Blass (*Entstehung*, p. 11), may mean 3, 4, 5, or even more.

is one of unrestrained invention. Would the inventors of all these myths have any scruple about putting in the mouth of "the Lord" any medley of teachings collected from the present and the past?

Luke inserts the episode of the mission of the seventy, with the usual lack of time measurement, between the mission of the twelve and the decisive visit to Jerusalem. In this narrative, the twelve bring back no message, merely reporting "what things they had done." Their mission is in effect made of no account: we read of more miracles, predictions of the approaching tragedy, the Transfiguration, and a series of episodes disparaging the disciples; and then we come upon the mission of the seventy, who are "sent two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself was about to come." To the seventy is now ascribed the joyful report which the Weiss school calmly assign to the Primitive Gospel, and ascribe to the returning twelve, though Matthew and Mark have no mention of it. Thus Luke is in effect represented as connecting with a new mission story a result which he found connected in the primitive story with the mission of the twelve, while Matthew and Mark had seen fit to suppress the result altogether.

What gain in credibility, then, is effected by substituting the "selection" theory for one in which the third evangelist is implicitly represented as a framer of fiction? For Dr. Petrie, the story of the seventy is a logion ignored by the first two Gospel-makers, presumably as serving no purpose, albeit

one of the most important items in the history. What kind of narrators, then, were the men who passed it over? The alternatives are equally destructive to credence: on either view we are dealing with men who would invent anything or suppress anything. And yet the subject of the missions lies at the core of the historical problem. To the eye of rational criticism it is an evolving legend. If we take Mark as the first selector or collector, we have the twelve sent forth "by two and two" without money or supplies; with authority over unclean spirits; and with no specified message whatever, though the twelve are to make a solemn and minatory testimony against those who refuse to hear them. "And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." They make no report.

In Matthew, similarly, the twelve are empowered to cast out spirits and heal diseases, and are "sent forth" with a peremptory veto on any visit to Samaritans or Gentiles, to "preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: *freely ye received, freely give.*" As in Mark, they are to go unfurnished; and are to withhold their peace from the unworthy, testifying as aforesaid. Then ensues a long discourse, with no explanation of the kingdom of heaven, though the missionaries are to "proclaim upon the housetops" what they "hear in the ear." Then, "when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, *he* departed thence

to teach and preach in their cities." Of the mission there is not another word: the disciples are not even mentioned as returning.

Upon this kind of basis Luke erects a new structure. The twelve are sent forth to exorcise, heal, and preach, unfurnished; and as before they are to give testimony against those who will not receive them. "And they departed, and went throughout the villages, preaching *the Gospel*, and healing everywhere." "And the apostles, when they were returned, declared unto him what things they had done." The story is not suppressed, and it is supplied with a conclusion; but it is on the mission of the seventy that stress is visibly laid: they "return with joy," and are told to rejoice that their names are written in heaven. "In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit"; and after the discourse on the Father and the Son<sup>1</sup> the disciples are "privately" told that many prophets and kings had desired in vain to see and hear what they had seen and heard.

In face of all this the methods of the Bernhard Weiss school and the selection theory are alike invalid. They furnish no explanation. The third Gospel is simply substituting a mission to the Gentiles for a mission to the Jews, under cover of a story of a preparatory mission to all the places that were to be visited by the Teacher on his way to his death at Jerusalem. The seventy—in some MSS. seventy-two—stand for the seventy or seventy-

<sup>1</sup> Codices A and C preface *this* with "And turning to his disciples, he said."

two peoples into whom, by Jewish tradition, mankind was divided. The notion that a genuine logion of this kind was all along lying ready to be used is surely fantastic. It is a planned myth, eking out the main myth. It yields only the same Gospel of one phrase, not meant to be understood by the hearers. But it carries in symbol a provision for the Gentiles; and immediately upon it there follows the story of the Good Samaritan, demonstrating that the real tie among men is not nationality but humanity, and impeaching the fanaticism and hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders.

Facing once more the sharp antithesis between this and the strictly Judaic command in Matthew, we dismiss as a futility the notion that the same teacher delivered both about the same time, and that the pro-Gentile compiler merely "selected" one and dropped the other. The two sayings are framed for two schools or two sects; and it is idle to see history in either. *If* the deified Teacher had delivered the first, the second would have been a daring blasphemy. They are alike but men's counsels ascribed to "the Lord." To this conclusion we are always driven. The starting-point of the diverging sects must be looked for in something else than a body of oracular teaching of any kind.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ORTHODOXY AND THE "ORAL" HYPOTHESIS

THE diverging schools of documentary "construction" being thus alike unable to yield a coherent notion either of the process of Gospel-making or of the beginnings of the cultus, it is not surprising to find yet a third school of scholarly interpretation undertaking to do better, and to build on an "oral" basis where others have vainly built on documents. This theory, long ago predominant in Germany,<sup>1</sup> is latterly represented in England by the Rev. Arthur Wright, author of *THE COMPOSITION OF THE GOSPELS*, a *SYNOPSIS OF THE GOSPELS*, and *SOME NEW TESTAMENT PROBLEMS*.

Writing before the appearance of Dr. Petrie's treatise, Mr. Wright did not contemplate that development of the later school which gives the earliest possible dates for the Gospels; but we may feel sure that he would give it small quarter. Himself essentially orthodox, and making without question all the primary assumptions of historicity, he dates the Epistle of James before the year 50, Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians in the year 52; Mark

<sup>1</sup> Strauss speaks of it as having been "firmly established." *Das Leben Jesu*, Einl. § 9, end.

about 70; Matthew "not much" later; Luke in 80; and John later still.<sup>1</sup> He is not tied to the synoptics: when they become unmanageable he vigorously rectifies them by the aid of the Fourth Gospel. But on his own lines he is so candid that he can always be read with pleasure; and his arguments are well worth consideration.

Mr. Wright's theory, in brief, is that the Gospels, one and all, represent the late consignment to paper of matter preserved from the first in the Christian catechetical schools, given by the apostles and preserved by their pupils in the Rabbinical fashion. As Matthew divides plausibly into fifty-one lessons, and Mark in the Westcott and Hort text into forty-eight paragraphs, it is suggested that the plan in both cases had been to attain to a set of fifty-one or fifty-two; and

If there really was an attempt to provide every Sunday with a Gospel of its own, we shall understand why the formation of Gospel sections proceeded rapidly at first and then ceased; we shall understand why all our Gospels are so short and contain so little which is not essential; we shall understand how S. Mark's order became fixed.<sup>2</sup>

This plausible but dangerous detail, however, is not insisted on; what is essential is the datum of long oral tradition. Orthodox as he is, too, Mr. Wright holds that Luke i; ii; iii, 23-38, "are comparatively late additions, which never formed part of the primitive oral teaching."<sup>2</sup> Thus he can summarily get rid of a number of incredibilities which

<sup>1</sup> *Some New Testament Problems*, 1898, pp. 197-98.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 15.

the other schools more prudently leave to be excised by the reader as he sees fit. But we shall find him making a stout fight for many others.

On the "oral" theory every Church had its own tradition,<sup>1</sup> "differing both in contents and wording from that of other Churches, and in particular exhibiting much mixture and *many sayings of Christ which are not in our Gospels at all*"<sup>2</sup>—an interesting approximation, in effect, to the theory of scattered leaflets. Thus is to be accounted for the endless variety in Gospel phrasing and detail. For Mr. Wright, further, it is inconceivable that any evangelist left out anything he knew of. "The common idea" (before Dr. Petrie) "that they picked and selected what was specially adapted to their readers, I most confidently reject."<sup>3</sup> Matthew would gladly have given the parable of the Prodigal Son, and Luke the story of the Syrophenician woman, which would so well have suited his purpose.<sup>4</sup> "He did not give it because he had never heard of it." Thus, in brief, Mr. Wright posits much teaching lost even from the oral tradition, as Dr. Petrie posits many lost leaflets.

But Mr. Wright's conception of the oral tradition, upon scrutiny, becomes disquieting to the critical sense. In one place, discussing Luther's estimate of the Epistle of James as an epistle of straw, he

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere (p. 200) Mr. Wright speaks of the traditions as "*circulated* in an oral form from very early times"; but he does not appear to mean this in the natural sense.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 213.

<sup>4</sup> Would it? For Loisy it is stamped with Jewish exclusiveness. The "dog" merely gets a compassionate crumb.



remarks—with a great deal more truth, I fancy, than he dreams of—that James's Epistle "is Christianity in swaddling-clothes."<sup>1</sup> Again, the opening verses of John's Gospel "reveal a depth of knowledge to which S. James never attained. Not that S. James would have contradicted them or doubted their truth. But it is one thing to see truth when it is set before you; it is another to set it forth yourself. There is such a thing as latent knowledge."<sup>2</sup> Yet on the same page with the swaddling-clothes passage Mr. Wright has said, with regard to Mark's omission of the words, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest":—

Was it humility that made him deliberately omit them as too good for so insignificant a creature as himself to record? Or was it a conscious or unconscious feeling that they were unsuited to his readers? A man with such preposterous humility was ill-equipped for the work of an evangelist. Readers so unchristian would not value a Gospel.

What now becomes of the two presentments of James and John? Both must presumably have known most that was to be known, *ex hypothesi*. Yet James has not a word of specifically Christian doctrine, and, save in two sentences, one of which has every appearance of interpolation, while the other is only less suspicious, no mention of Jesus. John, on the other hand, as an apostle (whether or not the beloved one), must on the theory have heard many of the sayings given in the synoptics, which

<sup>1</sup> *Id.* p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 215.

he does not report. Why does he not? Had *he* never heard of the "Come unto me" allocution? Could *he* conceivably have put it aside from a preposterous humility? If he had not heard that, had he not heard the Sermon on the Mount, or any of the parable-solutions given in the synoptics as specially addressed to the twelve disciples? Can Mr. Wright, holding by the central tradition of Jesus and the twelve, believe that John had heard none of the teachings which he does not repeat? If, on the other hand, he admits wholesale suppression in John's case, what becomes of the argument above cited?

It matters little that Mr. Wright credits John with evolving the *Logos* doctrine out of his own profound meditation, and with having "remoulded" the sayings of Jesus which he does give. That is a standing device of exegesis, Unitarian and Trinitarian alike; and by his account the general oral tradition did the same thing indefinitely. But all the while Mr. Wright is going a great deal further. He alternately insists that every evangelist told all he knew, and assumes that the two evangelists who are alleged to have been apostles did not. If, he writes—

If, as becomes increasingly probable, a Johannine course of teaching was extant in comparatively early times, it is not strange that, as S. John dealt chiefly with the Judæan ministry, S. Peter should have refused to intrude into his brother Apostle's domain. *They may have agreed at the outset to divide the work thus between them.*

It is impossible to reconcile this with Mr. Wright's

theory of the inclusiveness of the evangelists. Why should not Mark do what Matthew and John did in the terms of the case?

Of course this is not the true critical solution; the immediate question is the consistency of Mr. Wright's critical principles. To the eye of unbiassed criticism the "Come unto me" logion is not a possible oracle at all; it is an unintelligently inserted liturgical formula from the mysteries, misplaced and meaningless as a public teaching.<sup>1</sup> As regards the fair historical inference from the wide difference between the synoptic Gospels and the fourth, it is not possible to accept any of Mr. Wright's solutions, tried by his own tests. To suggest that John had not "heard" of the Virgin Birth story is for him impossible, unless he post-dates that as he does the birth-stories in Luke. If he follows that course, what can he make of the 13th chapter of John, a palpable interpolation or substitution between the 12th and the 14th, which form a sequence that the 13th absolutely breaks?<sup>2</sup> If that interpolation be admitted, what exactly is left to fight for?

In any case, the implication that Matthew, the apostle, "had not heard of" what John declares to be the first miracle, or of the raising of Lazarus, is as destructive of every traditionalist assumption as is the implication that John the Apostle had not heard of the Sermon on the Mount, or of the parables of the mystery of the kingdom. Mark

<sup>1</sup> See *Christianity and Mythology*, 2nd ed. p. 388.

<sup>2</sup> The "Arise, let us go hence," at the end of ch. 14, is another interpolation which has no meaning in the context.

and Luke expressly declare that John was present at the raising of Jairus' daughter; and the fourth Gospel makes no mention of it. It was perhaps to meet cruces of this kind that Mr. Wright makes John and Peter "divide between them" the portions of the ministry; but such a device simply destroys, as we have seen, another main part of his case. Mr. Wright may well reject the thesis of Mr. Halcombe, who, severely condemning "modern criticism," produces a modern criticism of his own, which makes John's Gospel the *first*—another of the hopeless devices of traditionalist critics to escape from the imbroglio of the tradition. Mr. Halcombe gravely reasons that the best Gospel came first; and Mr. Wright pronounces that "such a plan of composition seems unworthy of God and incredible in man."<sup>1</sup> But his own theory presents only a different set of incredibilities. He accepts without a misgiving the most staggering anomalies. "If it were not for a single incidental statement in S. John" (iv, 1, 2), he writes, "we should have concluded confidently that the sacrament of holy baptism was first instituted after the Resurrection." John's statement is in fact the sole intimation that Jesus or the disciples ever baptized at all; and it is either a designed or redacted equivoque or a flat contradiction in terms:—

*When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself*

<sup>1</sup> Work cited, p. 209.

*baptized not, but his disciples*), he left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee.

The exegesis which can take this for a historical datum, and compose it with the theory of an oral tradition in which baptism either by Jesus or by his disciples never appears, is really outside serious discussion. The proposition that, given the main tradition, either Jesus or the disciples baptized freely, and that yet neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke ever heard of it, is a mere flouting of the critical reason to which it professes to appeal. And there is no alternative save an honest confession that the record is incredible. The whole Christian tradition of baptism breaks down on examination, as does the record of the acceptance of the higher mission of Jesus by John, followed by statements affirming the continuance of John's movement and teaching alongside of the Jesuine. Mr. Wright is severe on the orthodox harmonists in general. "If I am right," he remarks, "the exhausting labours and tortuous explanations of the harmonists, in their endeavour to reconcile what cannot be reconciled, have been wasted."<sup>1</sup> That is exactly what the attentive reader must regretfully say of Mr. Wright's own reconstructions.

His handling of the problems of the date of the crucifixion and the duration of the Ministry is a warning to every student who desires to be loyal to critical principle. By his final admission, no one can tell whether the Ministry lasted one, two, three,

<sup>1</sup> *Id.* p. 178.

four, ten, or twenty years. He frankly rejects Sir William Ramsay's attempt to salve as history Luke's story of the census. The alleged procedure, he sees, is simply impossible — "S. Luke evidently has somewhat misunderstood the situation"—and he solves the problem by throwing over Luke's opening chapters as late accretions. But the question of the duration of the Ministry, which is bound up with that of the date of the crucifixion, and thus lies at the very centre of the whole historic problem, he is content to leave as insoluble, yet without a misgiving as to the historicity of the record.

John makes Jesus go four times to Jerusalem; while in the synoptics we note "the extraordinary fact that they do not bring Christ to Jerusalem until He entered it to be crucified."<sup>1</sup> John puts the cleansing of the temple at the beginning of the Ministry, and the synoptics place it at the close. Orthodox exegesis then assumes two cleansings, but "such a repetition is, to say the least, highly improbable," for Mr. Wright. "What end would such a repetition serve? And if repeated, why should not S. Mark or S. John have told us so?"<sup>2</sup> Why, indeed! So Mr. Wright suggests that the synoptics may have telescoped several years into one. "Events in real life move much more slowly."<sup>3</sup> They certainly do!

Yet, on the other hand, "the one-year ministry would solve many difficulties. It is the only scheme which reconciles S. Luke, S. Matthew, and S. John.

<sup>1</sup> *Id.* p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 176.

Not improbably it is true: the more I consider it, the more attractive it appears.”<sup>1</sup> Such, evidently, was the view of the Christian and other Gnostics. But Irenæus, the first Father to handle the problem, declared for a ministry of about twenty years, founding not only on the quotation in John, “Thou art not yet fifty years old,” but on the fact that “all the elders who had known John the disciple of the Lord in Asia witness that he gave them this tradition.”<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, in Mr. Wright’s opinion, “ten years is the utmost length to which we can stretch the ministry without throwing overboard S. Luke’s chronology altogether.”<sup>3</sup> Yet Bishop Westcott declared concerning the record of Irenæus that, “however strange it may appear, some such view is not inconsistent with the only fixed historical dates which we have with regard to the Lord’s life, the date of His birth, His baptism, and the banishment of Pilate.” Thus turns the kaleidoscope of the tradition of which Harnack has latterly affirmed the “essential rightness, with a few important exceptions.”

It is hardly necessary to point out that the “oral” hypothesis, like the “documentary” and that of scattered logia, is more compatible with the negative than with the affirmative answer on the question of historicity. Contradictions and anomalies irreconcilable with the assumption of a real historical process present not difficulty but confirmation to the theory of a fictitious production, whether docu-

<sup>1</sup> *Id.* p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* 186.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 187.

mentary or oral, to establish a transforming cult, supplying a quasi-historical basis where none such existed. Contradictory episodes and dicta stand for diverging sects and movements. Save for incidental concessions, all the traditionist schools alike ignore the grounds for inferring a long-continued modification of the Gospels at many hands; though, when Celsus late in the second century alleged the common practice of interpolation, Origen could only explain that it was the work of heretics. Such a procedure is for the rational critic only the natural continuance of the method of formation.

Over the point upon which Mr. Wright most completely diverges from the various Unitarian schools—his acceptance of the Fourth Gospel as essentially historical—we need not here concern ourselves. Those who can accept the Fourth *and* the Synoptics cannot be supposed to admit the application of criticism to fundamentals at all, however critically they may handle secondary issues. And they have their defence. The liberalizers who see that the Fourth as a whole is a work of invention, making free play with previous material, and yet cannot conceive that the synoptics had beforehand followed a similar method, can make no claim to critical consistency. They merely realize that the Fourth and the Synoptics cannot *all* be records of a real Life and Teaching, and they decide to reject the last rather than the prior documents. The argument from "vividness" and lifelike detail simply goes by the board. In the fourth Gospel



there are many more lifelike details than in the second; but that is not allowed to count.

For the rational inquirer, however, the fact remains that the dismissal of the fourth Gospel is a beginning of historical as distinct from documentary discrimination; and it is to those who have made such a beginning that a further critical argument falls to be addressed. Mr. Wright, facing a chaos of doctrinal contradictions and chronological divergences, falls back trustingly on the reflection that "after all we are not saved by the Gospels, but by Christ." He has no misgiving as to the evangelists being inspired. "Inspiration quickens their spiritual perception, but does not *altogether* preserve them from errors of fact": *e.g.* Mt. i, 9, 11; Mk. iii, 26; Lk. ii, 2; John xii, 3; Acts v, 36; vii, 16.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Mr. Wright would grant some dozens more of errors of fact if pressed; but his faith would not be modified unless he should be shaken on the resurrection. "History as well as criticism leaves us no room to question this. On so sure a foundation is our most holy faith erected."<sup>2</sup> For Mr. Wright that is supremely certain which a myriad Christian scholars now find incredible. And we can but take our leave of him with the question of the Jew of Celsus, "Did Jesus come into the world for this purpose, that we should not believe in him?"

<sup>1</sup> *Id.* pp. 222, 223.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 123.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE METHOD OF M. LOISY

TURNING away, so to speak, to the Gentiles, we concentrate our case in countering that of the "emancipated" defenders of the historicity of the Founder, as put by M. Loisy, the equal of any of the German or English professionals in scholarly competence, and the superior of some of them in candour. Precisely because Catholicism yields least preparation for the work of critical science, one who slowly makes his way out of it into the "liberal" position is reasonably to be credited with a special capacity for the task. And he is on the whole the most useful theorist for the purposes of the "liberal" school, inasmuch as he is prepared to give up many documentary items to which others needlessly cling. Nonetheless, M. Loisy is a confident champion of the historicity of the gospel Jesus. He does not indeed combine his summary presentment of his case with a discussion of the myth theory—that he is content to put aside in mass with the epithet "superficial"; but he puts his own construction all the more unreservedly.

It is interesting to note his certitudes. No one of his school, perhaps, has more frequently claimed indubitability on points of inference. For instance:—

The advent of Jesus in the time of the procurator Pontius Pilate is a fact as certain as a thousand other facts on the subject of which no one dreams of raising the slightest suspicion; it is *not doubtful* that he announced the speedy coming of the kingdom of God.....*since* that idea.....which is the fundamental idea of the preaching of Christ in the synoptics, was *incontestably* that of his first disciples and Paul.....

Great as are the real obscurities of the evangelical history, they are less numerous than they seem, and *without doubt* also less considerable on the important points.

Paul.....does not say that Jesus predicted his death and resurrection. He does not even say what was the ground for his execution; but it *does not seem doubtful* that this ground was *precisely* the announcement of that kingdom of God which the apostles and Paul himself preached.

Paul and the other apostles practised exorcisms in the name of Jesus on certain patients. It is told that Jesus had done the same, and *without doubt* he had really done it, with still more assurance and more success than his disciples.

He [Jesus] *without doubt* never frequented the schools of the rabbins.

His family was *certainly* pious.

One fact is *certain*, that a seizure was concerted of which he [Judas] was the principal agent.

It was *without doubt* arranged [at the house of the high priest at earliest daylight] that they should content themselves with denouncing the Galilean prophet to the Roman authority.

*Without doubt* he [Jesus] expected to his last moment the succour which only death could bring him.

It was Peter, *it would seem*, who first obtained the proof and the definitive certainty [of the resurrection] that faith called for. One day, at dawn, fishing on the lake of Tiberias, he saw Jesus.

Already, *without doubt*, he had assembled around him the other disciples.<sup>1</sup>

It is enviable to be so *sans doute* on so many points in a narrative of which so much has had to be abandoned as myth. The odd thing is that with all these certitudes M. Loisy introduces his book with the declaration, "We must [*il faut*] now renounce writing the life of Jesus. All the critics agree in recognizing that the materials are insufficient for such an enterprise."<sup>2</sup> And then, after an introduction in which he contests the view that nothing can be written with certainty, he gives us a Life of Jesus which is simply Renan revised!

It is certainly brief; but that is because he is content to say only what he thinks there is to say, whereas his predecessors were at more or less pains to embed the thin thread of biography in a large mat of non-biographical material. M. Loisy seems to have become a little confused in the process of prefixing a critical introduction to three chapters of the former introduction to his commentary on the synoptics. "The present little book," he writes, "does not pretend to be that history which it is impossible to recover." Naturally not. But it proffers a Life of Jesus all the same.

M. Loisy is quite satisfied that there was a Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph, a "worker in wood, carpenter, furniture maker, wheelwright."<sup>3</sup> "And

<sup>1</sup> *Jésus et la tradition évangélique*, 1910, pp. 9, 12, 36, 40, 56, 57, 99, 102, 105, 113.

<sup>2</sup> So, for instance, Wernle: "On the basis of these oldest sources we can write no biography, no so-called Life of Jesus" (*Die Quellen des Lebens Jesu*, 1905, p. 82).

<sup>3</sup> Work cited, p. 56 sq.

Jesus followed originally the same profession." When he began his preaching of the speedy coming of the heavenly kingdom, "his mother Mary was a widow, with numerous children. It is not certain that Jesus was the eldest....." "It was probably John the Baptist who, unknowingly, awoke the vocation of the young carpenter of Nazareth. The crisis which traversed Judæa had evoked a prophet. ....This preaching of terror made a great impression.....John was usually on the Jordan, baptizing in the river those touched by his burning words. Jesus was drawn like many others.....He was baptized, *and remained some time in the desert.*"

And so it goes on. "What appears most probable" is that Jesus had already "passed some time in solitude. A time of reflection and of preparation was indispensable between the life of the carpenter and the manifestation of the preacher of the evangel. Pushed to the desert by the sentiment of his vocation, Jesus was bound (*devait*) to be pursued by a more and more clear consciousness of that vocation." Thus M. Loisy can after all expand his sources. It was after the imprisonment of the Baptist that Jesus felt he "was to replace him, and by the better title because he felt himself predestined to become the human chief of the Kingdom, there to fill the function of Messiah." But "almost in spite of himself" he worked miracles. From his first stay at Capernaum the sick were brought to him to heal; and, fearing that the thaumaturg might hurt the preacher of the Kingdom, he left the place, only to be followed up and forced to make

cures. "He operated with a peculiar efficacy on the category of patients supposed to be specially possessed by the demon.....He spoke to them with authority, and calm returned, at least for a time, to those troubled and unquiet souls." As to the greater cures, M. Loisy observes that "perhaps" there was ascribed to the healer the revivification of a dead maiden. On the instantaneous cures of lepers and the blind he naturally says nothing whatever.

The dilemma of M. Loisy here recalls that of Professor Schmiedel over the same problem. The latter, claiming that it would be "difficult to deny" healing powers to Jesus, in view of the testimonies, is fain to argue that the Healer's personal claim (Mt. xi, 5; Lk. vii, 22; not in Mk.) to have healed the sick, the blind, the deaf, the lepers, and raised the dead, meant only a spiritual ministration, inasmuch as the claim concludes: "the poor also have the Gospel preached to them." On this view the assumed healing power really counts for nothing; and the last clause, which Schmiedel contends would be an anti-climax if the healings were real, becomes absolutely an anti-climax of the most hopeless kind. One day men will dismiss such confusions by noting that the theory of spiritual healing, an attempt to evade the mass of miracle, is only miracle-mongering of another kind. Are we to take it that regeneration of the morally dead, deaf, blind, and leprous is to be effected wholesale by a little preaching? Did the Christian community then consist wholly or mainly of these?

M. Loisy in turn blanches at a claim in which

“raising the dead” figures as a customary thing, with cures of leprosy and blindness; and he too falls back on the “spiritual” interpretation,<sup>1</sup> failing to note the flat fallacy of making the preaching to the poor at once a contrast and a climax to the spiritual healings, which also, on the hypothesis, are precisely matters of preaching. The Teacher is made to say: “I raise the spiritually dead, and cure the spiritually leprous, deaf, and blind, by preaching to them: to the poor I just preach.” Schmiedel does not see that the preaching of the Gospel to the poor is added as the one thing that could be said to be done for them, who would otherwise have had no benefit; and that on his own view he ought to treat this as a late addition. On the contrary, he insists that the “evangelists” could not have thought of adding it; and that it makes an excellent climax if we take the healings to be purely spiritual.

The rational argument would be, of course, that the first writer did make the Lord talk figuratively; and that a later redactor, *taking the words literally*, added the item of the poor, which he could not have done if he took them figuratively. But the irreducible fallacy is the assumption that as a figurative claim the speech is historic, one order of miracle being held allowable when another is not. Schmiedel has exemplified his own saying that “with very few exceptions all critics fall into the very grave error of immediately accepting a thing as true as soon as they have found themselves able to trace it to a

<sup>1</sup> *Les Évangiles*, i, 663 sq.

'source'."<sup>1</sup> It does not in the least follow that by substituting spiritual for physical miracle we acquire a right to claim historicity. And by the claim we simply cancel the "fame" of the records.

M. Loisy, committing himself to some acts of healing where Schmiedel, after accepting the general claim, commits himself to none, balances vaguely between acts of faith-healing so-called and cures of sheer insanity, and accepts the tradition of

an unfruitful point at Nazareth.<sup>2</sup> "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and among his own kin, and in his own house," Jesus had said before the disdainful astonishment of his fellow-citizens and the incredulity of his family; and he could work no miracle in that place.

M. Loisy, it will be observed, here assumes that we are dealing with real cures, and tacitly rejects the qualifying clauses in Mark vi, 5, and Matthew xiii, 58, as he well may. They are indeed stamped with manipulation. "He could there do no mighty work *save that* he laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them," says the first; "he did not *many* mighty works there because of their unbelief," says the other. Such passages raise in an acute form the question how *any* statement in the Gospels can reasonably be taken as historical. What *were* the alleged mighty works done elsewhere save acts of

<sup>1</sup> *Encyc. Bib.* as cited, col. 1,872.

<sup>2</sup> It should be remembered that the Gospels do not specify Nazareth, but speak simply of "his own country" (*πατρίς*). Professor Burkitt, recognizing the mass of difficulties in regard to Nazareth, suggests that that name is a "literary error," and that the *πατρίς* of Jesus was Chorazin (*Proc. of Brit. Acad.* vol. v, 1912, pp. 17-18).



healing the sick? And how many cases for such healing would naturally be presented by one small hamlet? If, again, all the healings were spiritual, what are we left with beyond the truism that *sinners* who did not believe were unbelieving?

As the modifications produce pure counter-sense, it is critically permissible to surmise that they were lacking in the first copies, and were inserted merely to guard against profane cavils. But as the whole episode is found only in Matthew and Mark, it cannot figure in Dr. Petrie's Nucleus; and for similar reasons it is absent from the Primitive Gospel of the school of Bernhard Weiss. M. Loisy, recognizing that it is the kind of item that Luke would avoid for tactical reasons, is loyal enough to accept it as historical without the modifying words, and seeks no better explanation than that given in the cited words of Jesus.

For those who aim at a rational comprehension of the documents, the critical induction is that the story was inserted for a reason; and the explanation which satisfies M. Loisy is so ill-considered that it only emphasizes the need. A prophet is likely to be looked at askance by his own people: yes, if he be an unimpressive one; but upon what critical principles is M. Loisy entitled to assume, as he constantly does, that the historic Jesus made a profound and ineffaceable impression upon all who came in contact with him, from the moment of his call to his disciples, and that nevertheless he had not made the slightest impression of superiority upon his own kinsmen and fellow-villagers, up to

the age of thirty? How can such propositions cohere? Jesus has only to leave Nazareth and to command men to follow him, in order to be reverently recognized as a Superman: for M. Loisy, it is his mere personality that creates the faith which, after his death, makes his adherents proclaim him as a re-arisen God. Is this the kind of personality that in an eastern village would be known merely as that of "the carpenter," or the carpenter's son?

M. Loisy, it is true, claims that Jesus had needed a period of solitude and meditation in the desert to make him a teacher, thus partly implying that before that experience the destined prophet might not be recognizable as such. But is it a historic proposition that the short time of solitude had worked a complete transformation? Was a quite normal or commonplace personality capable of such a transfiguration in a natural sense? That the critic had not even asked himself the question is made plain by his complete failure to raise the cognate question in regard to the marvellous healing powers with which he unhesitatingly credits the teacher, on the strength of the wholly supernatural testimony of the Gospels. These powers, according to M. Loisy, were also the instantaneous result of the short period of solitude in the desert. What pretensions can such a theory make to be in conformity with historical principles? Cannot M. Loisy see that he has only been miracle-mongering with a difference?

It is bad enough that we should be asked to take

for granted, on the strength of a typically Eastern record of wholesale thaumaturgy, a real "natural" gift for healing a variety of nervous disorders. But a natural gift of such a kind at least presupposes some process of development. M. Loisy obviously asks us to believe that all of a sudden a man who had throughout his life shown no abnormal powers or qualities whatever, began to exercise them upon the largest scale almost immediately after he had left his native village. Now, whatever view be taken of the cynical formula that a prophet has no honour in his own village, it is idle to ask us to believe that a great healer has none. The local healer of any sort has an easy opening; and the redacted Gospels indicate uneasy recognition of the plain truth that Jesus needed only to heal the sick at Nazareth as elsewhere to conquer unbelief. It was precisely the cures that, in the Gospel story, had won him fame in the surrounding country. M. Loisy has merely burked the problem.

A little later he takes as historical the "terrible invectives" pronounced against Capernaum and the neighbouring cities, which he attempts to explain. After all, the multitude had not gone beyond a "benevolent curiosity, quite ready to transform itself into an ironical incredulity. They had seen the miracles; they awaited meantime the kingdom, without otherwise preparing for it; and as the kingdom did not come they inclined less and less to believe in it." So they were doomed to a terrible judgment for their faithlessness. But why then was

nothing said of the wholly unbelieving Nazareth? <sup>1</sup> If the towns which would not receive the disciples were to be testified against, what should be the fate of the hostile birthplace?

Before such problems, the method of "liberal" accommodation here as always breaks down. To the eye of the evolutionist there is no great mystery. The avowal that the Founder either *could not* or did not work wonders at Nazareth might serve any one of several conceivable purposes. It might meet the cavils of those who in a later day found and said that nothing was known at Nazareth of a wonder-working Jesus who had dwelt there; even as the often-repeated story of the command to healed persons to keep silence could avail to turn the attacks of investigating doubters in regard to the miraculous cures. Or it might serve either to impugn the pretensions of those who at one stage of the movement called themselves "Nazarenes" in the sense of followers of the man of Nazareth, or to include the birthplace with the family and the disciples in that disparagement of the Jewish surroundings which would arise step for step with the spread of the Gentile movement. Any of these explanations is reasonable beside the thesis that a man gifted with marvellous healing powers, suddenly developed without any previous sign of them, could either find no one in his own village to let him try them, or to recognize them even when applied there,

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 147, *note*, as to the theory of Prof. Burkitt, that Jesus was born at Chorazin. On that view, the unbelieving birthplace *was* denounced.

while the country round about, *ex hypothesi*, was ringing with his fame. And the criticism which puts us off with such solutions is really not well entitled to impute "superficiality" to those who reject it.

The whole "carpenter" story, in which M. Loisy sees no difficulty, is one of the weakest of the Gospel attempts at circumstantiality. A trade or calling for the Messiah, as a true Jew, was perhaps as requisite in the eyes of some Jews as either a Davidic descent or an argument to prove that Davidic descent was for the Messiah unnecessary—*both* of which requirements the Gospels meet. Every good Jew, we are told, was required to have a handicraft or profession. A "Ben-Joseph," again, was called-for to meet the requirement, common among the Samaritans but not confined to them, of a Messiah so named.<sup>1</sup> But how came it that "the carpenter" of Mark is only "the carpenter's

<sup>1</sup> Strauss, in pointing to this detail in Jewish Messianism (*Das Leben Jesu*, Abschn. III, Kap. i, § 112) abstained from stressing it on the score that there are no certain traces of it before the Babylonian *Gemara*, the compilation of which took place in the Christian era, and the book *Sohar*, of which the age is doubtful. Principal Drummond (*The Jewish Messiah*, 1877, p. 357) further agreed, with Gfrörer, that the doctrine of a Messiah Ben-Joseph is extremely unlikely to have been pre-Christian. The obvious answer is that it is overwhelmingly unlikely to have been post-Christian! But that thesis is apparently not now maintained even by orthodox scholars. Bousset, who in his confused way suggests that the notion of a suffering and dying Messiah "would seem to have been suggested by disputations with the Christians" (*The Anti-Christ Legend*, 1896, p. 103), avows immediately that Wünsche traces "a very distinct application of Zechariah xii, 10, to the Messiah Ben Joseph" in the Jerusalem Talmud; and goes on to suggest that the notions of the "two witnesses" and the two Messiahs "may rest upon a common source, which, however, is still to be sought further back than Jewish tradition."

son" in Matthew? We can conceive the Gentilizing Luke putting both statements aside as ill-suited to his purpose, his Jesus being a God competing with Gentile Gods; but if there really was an early knowledge that Jesus was a carpenter, why should Matthew minimize it? And how came it that Origen<sup>1</sup> knew of no Gospel "current in the churches" in which Jesus was described as a carpenter?

In this matter, as about the Infancy generally, the apocryphal gospels are as rich in detail as the canonical are poor. Again and again does Joseph figure in them as a working carpenter, or plough-maker, or house-builder.<sup>2</sup> The words of Origen might imply that it was from some such source that Celsus drew his statement that Jesus was a carpenter; and yet none of the preserved apocrypha speaks of Jesus as working at carpentry save by way of such miracles as that of the elongation of the piece of wood. Having regard to the mythical aspect of the whole, we suggest an easily misinterpreted Gnostic source for the basis. For some schools of the Gnostics, the Jewish God was the *Demiourgos*, the Artisan or Creator, a subordinate being in their divine hierarchy. The word could mean an artisan of any kind; and *architector*, the term in the Latin version of Thomas, points to a

<sup>1</sup> *Against Celsus*, vi, 36, end.

<sup>2</sup> *Protevang.*, ix, 1; *Pseud. Matt.*, x, 1; xxxvii, 1 sq.; *Hist. of Joseph the Carpenter*; *Thomas*, 1st. Gr. form, xiii, 1 sq.; 2nd Gr. form, xi, 1 sq.; Lat. xi, 2 sq.; *Arabic Gosp. of the Infancy*, xxxviii, xxxix.

reflex of the idea of "creator" which attached to the Gnostic term.

That the doctrine of the *Demiourgos* was already current in Jewish circles before the period commonly assigned to Christian Gnosticism has been shown with much probability by Dr. S. Karppe. In a Talmudic passage given as cited by Rabbi Jochanan ben Saccai before the middle of the first century, C.E., there is denunciation of those who "spare not the glory of the Creator"; and other passages interpret this in the sense of a heresy which "diminishes God" and "sows division between Israel and his God."<sup>1</sup> Debate of this kind emerges with the name of the Judæo-Christian heretic Cerinthus. For him, Jesus, though naturally born, was entered at his baptism by Christ, the son not of the Jewish God, the *Demiourgos*, but of the Supreme God.<sup>2</sup> There might well be, however, round Cerinthus, who retained Jewish leanings, Jews who held to the Judæo-Christian primary position that Jesus was the son of Yahweh. By some early Gnostics he could hardly fail to be so named. Could not then the Gnostic "Son of the *Demiourgos*," the Artificer, become for more literal Christists "son of the carpenter," even as the mystic seamless robe of Pagan myth became for

<sup>1</sup> Karppe, *Essais de critique et d'histoire de philosophie*, 1902, pp. 51-52.

<sup>2</sup> Irenæus, *Ag. Heresies*, i, 26; Hippolytus, *Ref. of all Heresies*, vii, 21. See Baur, *Das Christenthum*, p. 174. (Eng. trans. i, 199.) The fact that Cerinthus is the earliest known Christian Gnostic, being traditionally associated with the Apostle John (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* iii, 28) goes far to support Dr. Karppe's view that Gnosticism entered Christianity from the Jewish side.

some a garment which had to be cut in pieces to be divided?

Met by such suggestions, M. Loisy tells us that we are superficial. But is he otherwise? Is he not simply evading his problem? Can he see nothing strange in the sudden mention of the carpenter in a "primary" gospel which had set out with a divine personage and had never mentioned his parents or upbringing? On the mythic theory the apparition of the Messiah without antecedents is precisely what was to be expected; if there was any clear Jewish expectation on the point, it was that he should come unlooked for, unheralded save, on one view, by "Elias."<sup>1</sup> Thus the Gospel record fits into the myth theory from the outset, while on the assumption of historicity it is but a series of enigmas.

Holding by that assumption, M. Loisy is forced to violent measures to reconcile the isolated Marcan mention of "the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon" with the repeated mentions in the closing chapters of (1) "Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses and Salome; *who when he was in Galilee followed [Jesus] and ministered unto him*"; (2) "Mary the mother of Joses"; and (3) "Mary the mother of James and Salome." In these closing chapters this Mary the mother of James and Joses and Salome figures first

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *Apoc. of Baruch*, xxix, 3; 4 Esdras, vii, 28; xiii, 32; John, vii, 27; Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.*, 8; and Charles's note on *Apoc. of Baruch*, as cited, giving these and other references. See also Schodde's ed. of the *Book of Enoch*, pp. 47, 57; and the Rev. W. J. Deane's *Pseudepigrapha*, 1891, p. 17.



as simply one who followed and ministered to Jesus, then as the mother of Joses, then as the mother of James and Salome, but *never* as the mother of Jesus. By what right does M. Loisy extract his certitude from the prior text?

His simple course is to decide that Mary the mother of James and of Joses and of Salome in the closing chapters is *not* Mary the mother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon in chapter vi. "Certain Fathers," he had noted in his great work on the Synoptics (citing in particular Chrysostom), "desirous of making the synoptics accord with John, identify Mary the mother of James and Joses [in ch. xv] with the mother of Jesus; but it is evident that if the synoptics had thought of the mother of the Saviour they would not have thus designated her."<sup>1</sup> Precisely! And if the Gospel of Mark in its original form had contained the passage in chapter vi, how could it possibly have spoken in chapter xv of a Mary the mother of James and Joses without indicating either that she was or was not the same Mary? Would it have deliberately specified two Marias, each the mother of a James and a Joses, without a word of differentiation?

To the faithful critic there is only one course open. He is bound to conclude that the passage in chapter vi is a late interpolation, the work of an inventor who had perhaps either accepted or anticipated the Johannine record that Mary the mother

<sup>1</sup> *Les évangiles synoptiques*, 1907-8, ii, 697.

of Jesus was present at the crucifixion, but who did not—perhaps in his copy of Mark could not—completely carry out his purpose by making the Mary at the crucifixion the mother of the crucified Lord.

We are not here concerned with the exegesis of those Fathers who desired to save the perpetual virginity of Mary; our business is simply with the texts. And we can but say that if, with M. Loisy, we make the Mary of chapter xv another Mary than her of chapter vi, we are bound on the same principle to find a third and a fourth Mary in “the mother of Joses” (xv, 47) and the “mother of James and Salome” (xvi, 1).<sup>1</sup> It will really not do. The mythological theory, which traces the mourning Marias to an ancient liturgy of a God-sacrifice and finds the mother-Mary of chapter vi an alien element, may seem to M. Loisy superficial, but it meets a problem which he simply evades.

The only serious difficulties for M. Loisy, apparently, are the miracles and the prophecies. On the latter he makes no use of the Savonarola argument; and in his smaller work he ignores the “rock” text; but for him “the scene of Cæsarea Philippi, with the Messianic confession of Peter, seems thoroughly historic”; and on the other hand the story of Peter’s denial of his Master causes him no misgiving. For a rational reader, the conception

<sup>1</sup> The varying designations, certainly, point to repeated additions to the text. But the question arises whether the *Μαρια ἡ Ἰωση* or *Μαρια Ἰωση* of Mk. xv, 47, may have been meant to specify “Mary the wife of Joseph.”

of the shamed Peter figuring soon afterwards as the merciless judge and supernatural slayer of the unhappy Ananias is extremely indigestible. The personage thus evolved is not only detestable but incredible. How could the coward apostle figure primarily and continuously as a pillar of the Church described? Harnack's method, as Professor Blass complains,<sup>1</sup> treats the denigration of Peter as the result of the strife between the Judaizing and the Gentilizing sections of the early Church; it is the natural hypothesis. Without it we are left to the detestable and impossible figure of the apostle who denies his Lord and has no mercy for a weak brother who merely keeps back part of a sum of money when professing freely to donate the whole. The critical reader will prefer to follow Harnack.

But if we give up the story of the Denial, how shall we retain those which exalt and glorify the Judaizing apostle? If we give up Matthew's "rock" texts, with what consistency can we take as pure history the episode in Mark in which Peter, first of the twelve, declares "Thou art the Christ," eliciting the charge to "tell no man of him," followed by the prediction of death and resurrection, spoken "openly"? The episode in Mark passes into, and in Matthew is followed by, the fierce rebuke to the expostulating Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men"—a strange sequel to Matthew's "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah;

<sup>1</sup> *Entstehung*, p. 22. Of course Harnack's method is really only a development of Baur's.

for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven."

This is one of the passages that force the conclusion either that "Mark" had before him the fuller record, in "Matthew" or elsewhere, and turned it from a Petrine to an anti-Petrine purpose, or that a redactor did so. There is no escape from the evidence that we are dealing with two sharply conflicting constructions. The "Blessed art thou" passage and the "Satan" passage will not cohere. Which came first? Had "Luke" either before him? *His* "Get thee behind me, Satan" (iv, 8; A.V.), addressed to the devil in the Temptation, is ejected from the revised text as being absent from most of the ancient codices; and its presence in the Alexandrine suggests an attempt to get in *some-where* a saying which otherwise had no place in the third Gospel. The absence alike of the blessing and the aspersion on Peter sets up the surmise that both are quite late, and that the insertion of one elicited the other.

Again and again we find in the Gospels such traces of a strife over Petrine pretensions. In the story of the Denial, which we have found so incompatible with the attitude ascribed to Peter in the Acts, everyone since Strauss has recognized a process of redaction and interpolation. M. Loisy, saying nothing of the central problem, avowedly finds in Mark "a manipulation, deliberate and ill-managed, of a more simple statement."<sup>1</sup> This might have

<sup>1</sup> *Les évangiles synoptiques*, ii, 617.

sufficed to put him on his guard ; but all he has to say, after reducing the confused details to the inferred "simpler statement," is that "*if* there is in any part of the second Gospel a personal recollection of Peter it is the story of the denial in the form in which Mark found it." <sup>1</sup> Which makes sad havoc of the Peter-Mark tradition ; for the story of the denial betrays itself as a late anti-Petrine invention, as aforesaid.

<sup>1</sup> *Id.* p. 618.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE TRIAL CRUX

THUS lax in his treatment of the subsidiary historical problems, M. Loisy is of necessity accommodating when he faces those which he recognizes to be central. Over the story of the "purification" of the temple—which Origen found at once unjustifiable and signally miraculous, since it was inconceivable that so great a multitude should have yielded to the mere attack of one man with a scourge of small cords—he has again no misgivings. He feels that some such story was needed to motive the priestly action against Jesus.<sup>1</sup> In the story of the astonishing sophism ascribed to Jesus on the subject of the tribute to Cæsar he sees only "cleverness" (*habileté*); and yet he accepts as historical—again by necessity of his thesis—Jesus's admission that he claimed to be king of the Jews. In the story of the betrayal he sees fit, docilely following Brandt, to allege "a little confused fighting, some blows given and received" over and above the cutting off of the ear of Malchus, an imagined item which he finds in none of the Gospels. Over the prayers of the Lord while the disciples slept he had hesitated in his commentary;<sup>2</sup> falling back on the notable avowal

<sup>1</sup> *Jésus et la tradition*, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> *Les évangiles synoptiques*, ii, 562.

that "the sort of incoherence which results from describing a scene which passed while the witnesses [!] were asleep is *without doubt* to be explained by the origin and character of the narrative rather than by a negligence of the narrator." For once, I unreservedly assent to the *sans doute*. Quite unwittingly, M. Loisy has put himself in line with our mythical theory, which postulates a drama as the origin of the narrative.

All the same, he accepts the narrative as history; and he sees nothing in the fusion of the two speeches: "Sleep on.....It is enough.....Arise now,"..... though he rejects the proposal of Bleek, Volkmar, and Wellhausen to turn "Sleep on" into an interrogation,<sup>1</sup> and admits that the "It is enough" is an "unclear and very insufficient transition" from "Sleep on" to "Arise." Once more, which is the more superficial, this lame handling or the recognition of a transcribed drama with two speeches combined because of the omission of an exit and an entrance, in what M. Loisy admits to be "a highly dramatic *mise en scène*"?

But it is over the trial in the house of the high priest that M. Loisy most astonishingly redacts the narrative. In his commentary he recognizes that Matthew's story, in which the scribes and the elders are "already gathered together" in the dead of night when Jesus is brought for trial, and the story of Mark, in which they "come together with" the high priest, are equally incredible; and that the

<sup>1</sup> *Id.* p. 570.

story of the quest for witnesses in the night is still more so.

Once again we have a *sans doute* with which we can agree. "The nocturnal procedure, no doubt, did not take place."<sup>1</sup> Recognizing further that a Jewish blasphemer was by the Levitical law to be stoned, not crucified, he simply gives up the whole narrative as a product of "the Christian tradition," bent on saddling the Jews rather than the Romans with the responsibility of the crucifixion.<sup>2</sup> In his smaller work he simply cuts the knot and alleges:—

"As soon as the first daylight had come (*dès les premiers lueurs du jour*), a reunion was held at the house of (*chez*) the chief priest," where it was without doubt [!] arranged that they should content themselves with denouncing the Galilean prophet to the Roman authority as a disturber and a false Messiah. But it was necessary to arrange the terms of the accusation and distribute the rôles, to get together and prepare the witnesses. *These measures were soon taken. As soon as morning had come (dès le matin)* the priests brought their prisoner chained before the tribunal of Pontius Pilate.<sup>3</sup>

One certainly cannot call this manipulation of the texts "superficial." It is sheer deliberate dissolution and reconstruction of the narrative, by way of substituting something more plausible for the incredible original, when all the while the credibility of the original is the thesis maintained. And yet even the reconstruction is so thoughtlessly managed that we get only a slightly less impossible account. Only a scholar who never followed the details of a

<sup>1</sup> *Id.* p. 599.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 610.

<sup>3</sup> *Jésus et la tradition*, p. 102.



legal process could suggest that the task of hunting up witnesses and arranging a procedure could be carried through between "earliest dawn" and "morning." And for the headlong haste of such a procedure, only an hour or so after the arrest of the prisoner, no explanation is even suggested. A violent impossibility in the record, destructive of all faith in its historicity at this point, is sought to be saved by a violent redaction which simply "makes hay" of the very documents founded on. And this illicit violence is resorted to because M. Loisy recognizes that if he is to retain a historical Jesus at all he must bring the whole trial story into a historical shape. He certainly had cause to take drastic measures. Long ago it was pointed out that by Jewish law a prisoner must not be condemned to death on the day of his trial: *Judicia de capitalibus finiunt eodem die si sint ad absolutionem; si vero sint ad damnationem, finiuntur die sequente.*<sup>1</sup> This might alone suffice to "bring into doubt" the priestly trial; to say nothing of the modern Jewish protest that a capital prosecution and execution on either the day after or the day of the Passover, at the instance of the High Priest, was unthinkable.<sup>2</sup> There were good reasons, then, for seeking to found on the trial before Pilate.

Let us now survey broadly the process of historical criticism thus far. 1. At an early stage the reconstructors gave up as pure fiction the third trial

<sup>1</sup> Babl. Sanhedrin, ap. Lightfoot, cited by Strauss.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the other Jewish declarations collected by Brandt, *Die evangelische Geschichte*, 1893, p. 150 sq.

before Herod, which appears solely in Luke. They did not ask what historical knowledge, or what sense of history, can have existed in a community among which such an absolute invention found ready currency. 2. The next step was to reject as "unhistorical" the narrative of the fourth Gospel, in which Jesus (*a*) is examined by Annas the high priest, but in no sense tried; (*b*) is then sent bound to Caiaphas the high priest; (*c*) is immediately passed on from Caiaphas to Pilate, who examines him within doors while the priests remain outside, there being thus no Jewish witnesses; (*d*) tells Pilate "My kingdom is not of this world," and convinces him that he is not punishable. Rejecting this account, as they well might, the reconstructors failed to ask themselves what such an invention signifies. 3. Next disappears the so-called historical narrative of the trial before the high priest and chief priests in the synoptics.<sup>1</sup> That in turn, taken on its merits, is found flagrantly incredible; and now M. Loisy in effect puts it aside, reducing it to a fundamentally different form.

Three of the trial stories are thus in turn rejected as hopelessly unhistorical. And now we are invited to regard as "incontestable" the fourth, the trial before Pilate as related in the synoptics; the Johannine version being dismissed as fiction. In the scientific sense of the word<sup>2</sup> the rejected stories

<sup>1</sup> In Luke the high priest is not in the story, and the chief priests and others *take as well as try* the prisoner.

<sup>2</sup> See *Christianity and Mythology*, 2nd ed. pp. xviii, 2, 122; *Pagan Christs*, 2nd ed. p. 287, note 4.

have been classed as myths. And still we are told that the "myth-theory" is outside discussion.

Yet, even in coming to the trial before Pilate, M. Loisy has to begin by noting the improbability that the entire sanhedrim should have attended it, as is alleged by the synoptics. "In the minds of the evangelists the sanhedrim represents the Jews, and it was the Jews who caused the death of Jesus. Hence the general expressions which the redactors used the more willingly because they were very incompletely informed on the facts."<sup>1</sup> Still, the trial must stand good. Judas goes the way of myth; but the unintelligible procedure of Pilate must be salved. With his general loyalty to the facts as he sees them M. Loisy notes, with Brandt, that in the synoptics as in John there is no Jesuist eye-witness or auditor to report for the faithful what took place. "Here begin the gaps in the Passion-history," remarks Brandt.<sup>2</sup> "Tradition could learn only by indirect ways the general features of the interrogation and the principal incidents which passed between the morning of Friday and the hour of the crucifixion," says Loisy.<sup>3</sup> The student really concerned to get at history is compelled to pronounce that the record thus avowed to be mainly guesswork is myth. Let us take the report as we have it in Mark:—

And straightway [after the condemnation by the priests] in the morning the chief priests, with the

<sup>1</sup> *Les évangiles*, ii, 624.

<sup>2</sup> *Die evangelische Geschichte*, 1893, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> *Les évangiles*, ii, 632.

elders and scribes and the whole council, held a consultation, and bound Jesus and carried him away, and delivered him up to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering saith unto him, Thou sayest.....And Pilate again asked him, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they accuse thee of. But Jesus no more answered anything; inso-much that Pilate marvelled.

To this meagre record, in which a capital case is carried before the governor without the slightest documentary preliminaries, and in which he begins to interrogate before a word has been said about the indictment, Matthew adds nothing save the story of Pilate's wife's dream, which the reconstructors are fain to dismiss; while Luke, who sees fit to premise specific charges of anti-Roman sedition, follows them up simply by Pilate's question and Jesus's assenting answer; and then, quite unintelligibly, makes Pilate declare "unto the chief priests and the multitudes, I find no fault in this man."

What can it mean? All the exegetes now agree that the "Thou sayest" of Jesus has the force of "I am."<sup>1</sup> By avowing that he called himself King of the Jews he committed a very grave offence towards Rome, unless he explained the title in a mystic sense; and the records exclude any such explanation. In Mark and Matthew the effect is the same: Pilate finds no guilt, and proposes release; but yields to the multitude and the priests. Could any serious student bring himself to regard this as

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, p. 312; Brandt, *Die evangelische Geschichte*, p. 89; Loisy, *Les évangiles*, ii, 517, note; 604, note; 633.

history unless he presupposed the historicity of the crucifixion and was ready to let pass any semblance of motivation for it?

Once more we must affirm that the documents merely reveal entire ignorance of any judicial procedure. Pilate finally puts to death a Jewish prisoner at the request of the sanhedrim and the multitude on a charge for which he finds no evidence. That Pilate should make light of a Jew's life is indeed easily to be believed: he is exhibited to us by Josephus as an entirely ruthless Roman; but both the synoptics and the fourth Gospel present him in an entirely different light; and no record or commentary makes it intelligible that the Roman governor should crucify a politically unoffending Jew for a purely ecclesiastical Jewish offence. The offence against Rome he is expressly represented as finding imaginary; and yet on the other hand the offence as avowed is very real. By the method of mere accommodation or partial critical rationalism the ascription of the prosecution to the Jews is accounted for as the result of the later developed anti-Judaism of the Christians. But on that view what historical basis have we left? If the later Christians could invent the trial and the Resurrection, what was to prevent their inventing the crucifixion? M. Loisy admits that if the trial goes the historicity of Jesus goes with it; then the crucifixion becomes myth. To say that this is impossible is to beg the question: the myth theory offers the solution.

Given the datum of an original cult-sacrament

which had grown out of an ancient ritual-sacrifice, the crucifixion is the first step towards the establishment of a biography of Jesus. A trial and a condemnation, again, are necessary preliminaries to that; and when we critically examine these we find that they are patently unhistorical. Upon no theory of historicity can their contradictions and impossibilities be explained. Once we make the hypothesis, however, that the crucifixion is itself myth, the imbroglio becomes intelligible.

What we do know historically is that the early Christists included Judaizers and Gentilizers; this is established by the sect-history, apart from the Acts and the Epistles. For the Judaizers an execution by the Romans was necessary; for the Gentilizers, who were bound to guard against official Roman resentment, and whose hostility to the Jews was progressive, a Jewish prosecution was equally necessary. In the surviving mystery-play, predominantly a Gentile performance as it now stands in the Gospels, an impossible Jewish trial is followed by an equally impossible Roman trial, in which Jesus by doctrinal necessity avows that he is King of the Jews, thereby salving his Messiahship; while, to keep the guilt on Jewish shoulders and to exclude the suspicion of anti-Roman bias, Pilate is made to disclaim all responsibility. Such is, briefly, the outcome of the myth theory. Upon what other theory can the documents be explained?

Upon what other theory, again, can we explain the vast contrast between the triumphal entry into Jerusalem a few days before and the absolute

unanimity of the priest-led multitude in demanding the execution of Jesus against the wish of Pilate? The reconstructors accept both items, with arbitrary modifications, as historical; though the story of the entry is preceded by a mythical item about the choice of the ass-foal whereon never man had sat,<sup>1</sup> which is much more stressed and developed than the main point. We are asked to believe that Jesus on his entry is enthusiastically acclaimed by a great multitude as Son of David and King of Israel; and that a few days later not a voice is raised to save his life. Gentilizing Christians could easily credit such things of the Jews. Can a historical student do so? For the former it was enough that in the narrative the Messiahship of the Lord had been publicly accepted; coherence was not required. But historicity means coherence.

Last of all, the item of Barabbas, one of the elaborate irrelevancies which leap to the eye in a narrative so destitute of essentials, turns out to carry a curious corroboration to the myth-theory. This is not the place to develop the probable kinship of the Barabbas of the Gospels with the (misspelt) Karabbas<sup>2</sup> of Philo; but we may note the probable reason for the introduction of the name into the myth. As the story stands, it serves merely to

<sup>1</sup> This is the one of the two stories preferred by the "liberal" school, who dismiss the story of the *two* asses as a verbal hallucination rather than recognize a zodiacal myth. It makes no final difference. The "ass the foal of an ass," in their exegesis, still means an unbroken colt, an impossible steed for a procession.

<sup>2</sup> See *Pagan Christs*, 2nd ed., and *Christianity and Mythology*, 2nd ed., per index.

heighten the guilt of the Jews, making them in mass save the life of a murderer rather than that of the divine Saviour. The whole story is plainly unhistorical: "neither these details nor those which follow," remarks M. Loisy (after noting the "extremely vague indications under an appearance of precision" in regard to the antecedents of Barabbas), "seem discussible from the point of view of history."<sup>1</sup> In point of fact, Pilate is made to release an ostensible ringleader of "men who in *the* insurrection [unspecified] had committed murder," thus making his action doubly inconceivable. Why was such an item introduced at all?

It is not a case for very confident explanation; but when we note that Barabbas means "Son of the Father"; that the Karabbas of Philo is treated as a mock-king; and that the reading "Jesus Barabbas" in Matt. xxvii, 16, 17, was long the accepted one in the ancient church,<sup>2</sup> we are strongly led to infer (1) that the formula "Jesus the Son of the Father" was *well known* among the first Christians as being connected with a popular rite—else how could such a strange perplexity be introduced into the text?—and (2) that the real reason for introducing it was that those anti-Christians who knew of the name and rite in question used their knowledge against the faith. The way to rebut them was to present Jesus Barabbas not only as a murderer but as the man actually released to

<sup>1</sup> *Les évangiles*, ii, 643.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholson, *The Gospel According to the Hebrews*, 1879, pp. 141-42.



the Jewish people instead of Jesus the Christ, proposed to be released by Pilate.

Again, then, on the mythical theory, we find a meaning and a sane solution where the historical theory can offer none. Sir James Frazer's hypothesis that the story of the triumphal entry may preserve a tradition of a mock-royal procession for a destined victim is only a partial solution; and his further hypothesis of a strangely ignored *coincidence* between a Barabbas rite and the actual crucifixion of the Christian "Son of the Father" is but a sacrifice of mythological principle to the assumption of historicity. The conception of Jesus as sacrificed lies at the core of early Christian cult-propaganda.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE JESUS-FIGURE OF M. LOISY

IT is the same, finally, with the story of the original evangel as with the story of the tragedy; M. Loisy fails to come within sight of historicity in the one case as in the other. Having fallen back on the thesis, so popularized by Renan, that faith in the necessary resurrection of the Messiah created the legend of the empty tomb and the divine apparitions, he proceeds to formulate the Teaching which had created the faith. The historic creed of Christianity is thus figured as a pyramid poised on the apex of a hallucination; but we are assured that the hallucination resulted from the greatness of the Personality of the slain Teacher.

Taking no note of any other conception of a possible origination of the cult, M. Loisy pronounces that to explain it we must hold that the "group of adherents" had before the crucifixion evolved a "religious life" sufficiently deep to sustain the feeling that the death of the Master was an accident, "grave no doubt [!] and perturbing, but reparable";<sup>1</sup> and to explain this religious life he goes back to the Master's doctrine. And the moment he begins his exposition he vacillates anew over the old dilemma:—

<sup>1</sup> *Jésus et la tradition*, p. 114.

Jesus pursued a work, *not* the propagation of a belief; he did *not* explain theoretically the Kingdom of Heaven, he prepared its coming by exhorting men to repent. *Nevertheless* even the work of Jesus attaches itself to the idea of the celestial kingdom; it defines itself in that idea, which presupposes, implies, or involves with it other ideas. It is this combination of ideas familiar to Christ that we must reconstruct with the help of the Gospels.....The idea of the kingdom of God is, in a sense, all the Gospel; but it is also all Judaism.....<sup>1</sup>

Exactly. Jesus, in effect, preached just what the Baptist is said to have preached; only without baptism. The monition to repent was simply the monition of all the prophets and all the eschatologists; and it had not the attraction of baptism which the evangel of the Baptist was said to have. So that the Twelve, on the showing of M. Loisy, went through Jewry uttering only one familiar phrase—and casting out devils—and dooming those who refused to hear them. And, by their own report, it was in casting out devils that they had their success. The simple *name* of Jesus, according to the Gospels, availed for that where he had never appeared in person. Yet, again, the name is used by non-adherents for the same purpose (Mk. ix, 38). And still M. Loisy confidently claims that there is no trace of a pre-Christian Jesus cult in Palestine!<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the nullity of the original evangel he is quite unwittingly explicit when he is resisting the myth theory; albeit in the act of contradicting himself:—

<sup>1</sup> *Id.* pp. 117-18.

<sup>2</sup> *Apropos d'histoire des religions*, 1911, pp. 274-281.