

# JESUS AND JUDAS

J. M. ROBERTSON







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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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- CHRISTIANITY AND MYTHOLOGY. Second edition.
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- THE JESUS PROBLEM : A Restatement of the Myth  
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# JESUS AND JUDAS

A TEXTUAL AND HISTORICAL  
INVESTIGATION

BY

J. M. ROBERTSON

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## PREFACE

A YEAR ago it was suggested that an appropriate motto for a work on the non-historicity of Jesus would be "Bishop Gore's latest pronouncement: 'Acceptance of the story of Christ remains an act of faith. There can be nothing demonstrable in history.'" That citation is indeed noteworthy as indicating how little support is given by the more religious spirits to the common position that Christianity stands on a rational footing. Cardinal Newman, it will be remembered, made the still more remarkable declaration—probably unacceptable to Dr. Gore—that there is little in the ethic of Christianity which had not been anticipated in older literature. He knew that even the cry, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," is pagan.

It would hardly be fair, however, to suggest that other Christian scholars are in any way bound by the avowals of eminent Christians who outgo them in force of faith. In any case, the present work necessarily addresses itself to men and women who honestly believe in the existence of Jesus as a historical fact, however much they may have discarded of the mass of beliefs with which that was

formerly associated. That they should regard the myth theory as an extravagance is the more easily understood by the writer because in his youth, some fifty years ago, he so regarded it. Having delivered a lecture on "The Jesus of Renan and the Jesus of Strauss," he was met by a friend's challenge: "Why do you take it for granted that there was a Jesus at all?" Whereupon he smiled—not, indeed, with the ineffable superiority of the modernist Christian (that is unattainable by others), but quite superiorly—and tranquilly replied, "That is an extravagance."

In a sense it was; for the old myth theory, derived mainly from Dupuis and Volney, took account mainly of the arguments from astral and solar mythology—a body of lore really important, and calling for full recognition and investigation in any complete myth theory, but by itself inadequate to the explanation of much of the gospel story. It was only after many years of acceptance of the historicity of Jesus that the writer was driven, upon a long and close inquiry, to surrender it as untenable.

The following pages indicate, among other things, how the argument, since developed by various hands, is commonly ignored, or idly derided, or, when seriously met by argument, only formally rebutted. But whereas the case for the

myth theory, originally set forth in large volumes, is apt, even in concise statements, to repel by an air of abstractness all save the more studious readers, it is here approached, in terms of a new textual analysis, on a particular line of concrete narrative and of direct challenge to that. All who are concerned at all about the truth of Christianity may reasonably be invited to make that approach, and to note how the myth theory here comes into action. From that concrete standpoint, the whole myth theory is indicated in outline.

Professor Burkitt is doubtless right in confessing that interest in the problems of Christian origins is declining in mass; even as Bishop Ellicott confessed fifty years ago that "the thoughtful and critical study of the Scriptures is becoming increasingly neglected." The process is clearly cumulative. But Dr. Burkitt would perhaps be in agreement with many rationalists in granting that such mere surrender to indifference is not of the best augury for the intellectual life; and that even a scientific classification of Christianity as a product of folk-lore and myth-making rendered viable by ecclesiastical organization, is preferable to sheer unconcern about the whole matter. Without hesitation, one assumes that he has no word to say for the conservation of a cult not believed in by its official exponents.

Short of that extremity of cynicism, however, there are, it would seem, not a few who would rather see a placid continuance of the forms of faith, in the lack of a faith in the substance, than any strict inquiry into the whole problem. By such, perhaps, the myth theory is regarded with more impatience than it is by many who sincerely reject it.

Our comment must be the saying of Whately, so much more pregnant than whole batteries of religious texts : " It makes all the difference in the world whether we put truth in the first place or in the second." That is the saying of a prelate who was quite festively confident of the truth of the miracle stories in the gospels, now abandoned by so many men of light and leading in his Church. In the circumstances he may be regarded by some of his own house as a dangerous prophet, seeing how opinion has travelled.

After Whately came Seeley, whose ' *Ecce Homo*, ' proclaiming a non-divine but a super-man Jesus, was much resented by the faithful of his day, the dimly prescient Lord Shaftesbury branding it as the worst book " ever vomited from the mouth of hell," though the otherwise prescient Gladstone took it under his powerful protection. Seeley's heresy is become academic orthodoxy ; and still the work of reconsideration proceeds.

The innovators and accommodators of the past are either to be humanely ranked as faithful to what they held to be truth, or black-listed as practitioners of the "economy of truth" understood to be justified by some Jesuits. Giving them in mass the benefit of the doubt, the new heretic can fitly challenge his gainsayers to live up to his principle. To generate the suspicion that a vast mass of gravely proclaimed opinion is in any large degree mere convention is to do even worse service to social stability than to scientific truth. And the one way to escape such a degeneration is to reason problems out.



# CONTENTS

## PART I

### THE JUDAS MYTH

	PAGE
I. THE LITERARY PROBLEM - - - -	1
II. THE CRITICAL PROBLEM - - - -	5
III. THE MESSIANIC MYSTERY - - - -	14
IV. THE BETRAYAL MYSTERY - - - -	23
V. THE TEXTUAL FABRICATION - - - -	28
§ 1. External Evidence - - - -	28
Outside the Four Gospels - - - -	28
In the Epistles - - - -	30
§ 2. The Internal Evidence - - - -	31
§ 3. The Matthias Election - - - -	38
§ 4. The Denial by Peter - - - -	40
§ 5. Barsabbas and Barnabas - - - -	41
§ 6. General Considerations - - - -	42
VI. MYTH THEORY AND BIOGRAPHICAL HYPOTHESIS - -	46
The Name Iscariot - - - -	50
Competing Ideals - - - -	52

## PART II

### THE JESUS MYTH

I. THE NEO-UNITARIAN POSITION - - - -	57
II. HISTORICAL AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS - - - -	69
The Drama - - - -	70
The Group's Mode of Life - - - -	76
III. THE TWELVE MYTH - - - -	79
IV. THE EVANGEL MYTH - - - -	83

## PART III

## THE MYTH OF THE TEACHING

	PAGE
I. THE SILENCE OF THE EPISTLES - - -	91
II. THE SPECIAL TEACHING IN THE GOSPELS - - -	98
Conflicting Teachings - - -	99
Composite Teaching - - -	100

## PART IV

THE RESISTANCE TO THE MYTH  
THEORY

I. RECENT ACTIVITIES - - - - -	117
Goguel ; Wright ; Klausner ; Warschauer -	117
II. CURRENT ARGUMENTS - - - - -	140
§ 1. "The Brothers of the Lord" - - -	140
§ 2. Dr. Schmiedel's "Pillar Texts" - - -	144
§ 3. Arguments of Dr. Burkitt - - -	157
§ 4. The Argument from Josephus - - -	163
III. THE À PRIORI ARGUMENT - - - - -	172
§ 1. Its Vogue and its Nullity - - -	172
§ 2. Its Analysis - - - - -	176
§ 3. The Thesis of "Sinlessness" - - -	180
§ 4. The Value of "Impression" - - -	187
§ 5. The Method of Bluster - - - - -	190
§ 6. Conclusion - - - - -	196

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EPILOGUE - - - - -	204
APPENDIX.—THE PROBLEM OF "MARK" - - -	209
PREPARATORY LITERATURE - - - - -	235
INDEX - - - - -	237



## PART I

### THE JUDAS MYTH

#### I.—THE LITERARY PROBLEM

AN English poet, Mr. Frank Kendon, selecting a notable theme, has recently published a poem entitled 'A Life and Death of Judas Iscariot,' of which the narrative, he tells us, "intends to supply a consistent and human character to fit the facts and limitations of a well-known story." And whereas he has made "changes.....in the character of Judas as the evangelists report it," he claims that these are "justified on the grounds of imaginative truth." Such a plea and such an experiment are, of course, warranted by poetic practice from the Greek tragedians onwards. They took what they called a myth from poetry or folklore, and handled it in the light of their imagination, as the Elizabethan dramatists took legends and chronicles for *their* purposes.

Mr. Kendon, in turn, assumes that his subject is historical. Whether he has made anything lastingly effective out of it, poetically or psychologically, is a question for future literary criticism, not to be discussed in the present connection. Fifteen years ago Mr. Eden Phillpotts handled the same theme in a simpler and perhaps more impressive fashion, in a more nervous and dramatic blank verse, and with another kind of "imaginative truth." And there have been, I believe, other

attempts, in other languages,<sup>1</sup> in addition to Mr. J. W. T. Hart's 'Autobiography of Judas Iscariot,' published in 1884, which in adequately vivid prose offers perhaps as good a construction as any, from the point of view of fictive art.

But constructions of this kind are not special to the modern period. Such speculation, in fact, dates back to the early ages of the Church, when, in the second century, according to Epiphanius (d. 403), some of the "Cainites" held that Judas betrayed Jesus because he had come to see in him a dangerous person who was destroying law and order; while others declared that the betrayal was a good action, designedly done to bring about human salvation by compelling the Jewish priestly authorities to sacrifice a good man, and thereby to overthrow their own power. According to Irenæus, who wrote earlier (177-202), the Cainites "produce a fictitious history, which they style the Gospel of Judas"; and from other passages in the same writer's work<sup>2</sup> it would seem that Judas figured in one of the many Gnostic schemes as a "suffering Æon," the twelfth in order. The account in Epiphanius points to a less fantastic doctrine. The Cainites, in fact, may be put on record as the first to try to frame a quasi-rational theory of the gospel story. But the small modern Christian child who asked her mother, "Oughtn't we to be much obliged to Judas for what he did?", expressed what was probably a not uncommon sentiment in all ages among scrupulous Christians.

<sup>1</sup> The list, which is a long one, includes a medieval romance and an Elizabethan play (not preserved) by Samuel Rowley. The matter has been gone into in an essay by Dr. A. Luther, *Jesus und Judas in der Dichtung* (Hanau, 1910).

<sup>2</sup> *Against Heresies*, I, xxxi, 1; II, xx, 2-5.

For here was an "inspired" tale of a man charged with "betraying" an Omnipotence which at the same time is revealed as betraying him. For Judas is not merely foreordained like other people to do whatsoever he does: his action is predicted by inspired prophets who are vouched for by God Incarnate; and he "goes to his place," in Tartarus and in history, with the burden of an execration unmatched even in Christian history. And though the Cainites seem to have been Gnostic eccentrics, perhaps vegetarians, it is still significant that in the second century, when the orthodox were accepting the story of Ananias and Sapphira, and learning to make Ananias, not Peter, the supreme type of liar, there were some who revolted from the whole reason-wronging ethic at work, and sought a way out, even on the religious plane.

It is for modern historic science, studying the remains of ancient Christianity without prejudice and without historic presupposition, to reach a firmer judgment than that framed by undisciplined intuitionists in an age of manifold delusion and no less manifold fabrication, to solve a problem as to which they made no inductive scrutiny. That problem, it may be noted, is not faced in such a work as the recent 'Life of Jesus' by Mr. Middleton Murry. Even he, indeed, avows that he rejects certain incidents in the synoptics as "apocryphal," besides dismissing the fourth gospel as "unhistorical." It is not clear why, since he accepts some of the most impossible miracles. But Mr. Murry approaches his subject not as a historical investigator but as a mystic or an intuitionist, conscious of having newly "understood" Jesus by ignoring all those difficulties of exegesis

which have driven so many would-be biographers to painful straits. For him the concept of Jesus is an aspect of his concept of God. It is the more interesting to find that, like the intuitionists of the early Church, he is moved to dismiss the orthodox conception of Judas.

The curious result is that, refining upon the exegesis of Dr. Schweitzer, from whom he apparently has derived his impulse, Mr. Murry makes Jesus arrange his own tragedy in a new sense, employing Judas not in the callous fashion of the gospel story but sympathetically and with the sympathy of Judas. Renan made the raising of Lazarus a matter of skilful deception; Mr. Murry gives that character to the Betrayal and its sequel, positing "a secret understanding between Jesus and Judas," in which theory he finds "nothing whatever shocking." And thus is Judas newly vindicated:—

"His memory has been blotted out. Even by the believers in the God-man the name of Judas should have been revered as the name of the man by whose hand God's sacrifice was made possible. For a believer in the man-God Judas stands next to Jesus himself in the great story. For he, when all were without understanding, must have understood. Perhaps not all, but something.....The man who betrayed Jesus and hanged himself in sorrow was a man, and perhaps more a man than the disciples who left their master and fled, or than Peter who denied him thrice. From the bare facts of the synoptic story we are forced to conclude an understanding between Jesus and Judas."<sup>1</sup>

The answer to all this, as to the reasoning of

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Jesus*, 1926, pp. 212-13. "I confess," writes Mr. Murry (pref., p. 9), "that not a little advanced criticism of the Gospel narrative repels me as a man and irritates me as a critic." It is to be feared that he will find his clerical critics reciprocal on that head. In his later handling (p. 289) he falters, as did Renan over *his* theory of the Lazarus story, and puts a "perhaps."

the Cainites, is not to be found in any new exercise of poetic hypothetics over the possible psychology of Jesus and Judas. Authors capable of framing a psychology of God can frame psychologies *ad libitum* for any imagined character, from Adam to Hamlet. For men whose sense of reality is based upon tested knowledge and a perception of the procedure required for the testing of all knowledge, the only rational course is to scrutinize the narratives in question as they scrutinize all other problems. The result will be found to be a discovery that the problem in question is merely fictitious.

## II.—THE CRITICAL PROBLEM

The early suggestions of the Cainites were not lost on the rationalizing German theologians of a hundred years ago. The once famous Paulus, who produced a *Life of Jesus* in 1828, and whose forte was the substitution of prosaic and credible for incredible narratives at all points in the gospels, saw Judas as seeking to attain a good end by evil means. Neander explicitly represented him as arguing that if Jesus were the Messiah he would repel arrest by calling up legions of angels to rescue him; while, if he were not the Messiah, he deserved death. In England, Archbishop Whately favoured the first part of the hypothesis, which had long before been put by Daniel Whitby, a commentator of the reign of William and Mary, who in turn cited Theophylact (11th c.) as ascribing it to certain of the Fathers.<sup>1</sup> De Quincey zealously

<sup>1</sup> Whately's *Lectures on the Characters of Our Lord's Apostles*, By a Country Parson (1851), p. 102. Whately adds that "the best Commentators have supposed" that Judas aimed at forcing Jesus

adopted and developed it,<sup>1</sup> declaring that the action of Judas was taken in the confident hope that Jesus would be forced to declare himself the Messiah, whereupon the people of Jerusalem would rally to him, and so throw off the Roman yoke. That attractive view of the problem is substantially embodied by Mr. Phillpotts in his vivid and rhythmic verse, which has much of the spirit and energy of Browning, and a music of its own.

The professional theologians, especially in England, have naturally been slow to respond hitherto to such suggestions, especially since Milman took up the question on the German promptings and the English speculation they aroused. It is told of Carlyle that he was immensely entertained by a phrase of Milman concerning "the extraordinary conduct of Judas Iscariot." When we read the passage in Milman we begin to realize how in that age the new spirit of historical criticism, begotten on the French side by Voltaire and on the English side by Gibbon, adjusted itself to some of its problems; and how, on the other hand, a temperament like Carlyle's reacted against reasoning in such matters.

Milman is writing in his immature 'History of Christianity,' which dates 1840, and is composed in the moribund academic prose of that period:—

"Much ingenuity has been displayed by some recent writers in attempting to palliate, or rather to account for, this extraordinary conduct of Judas;<sup>2</sup> but the language in which Jesus

to use his supernatural powers. But he accepts the account of Judas given in John, and argues that Judas could make more money by "his system of speculation" than he got by the reward.

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, ed. 1863, vol. vi, essay on Judas Iscariot. De Quincey cites Jeremy Taylor as holding his view.

<sup>2</sup> A modern commentator on Mark repeats the "extraordinary." Cited in Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 2nd ed., i, 347.

spake of the crime appears to confirm the common opinion of its enormity. It has been suggested, either that Judas might expect Jesus to put forth his power, even after his apprehension, to elude or to escape from his enemies, and thus his avarice might calculate on securing the reward without being an accomplice in absolute murder, at once betraying his Master and defrauding his employers.

"According to others, still higher motives may have mingled with his love of gain: he may have supposed that, by thus involving Jesus in difficulties otherwise inextricable, he would leave him only the alternative of declaring himself openly and authoritatively to be the Messiah, and so force him to the tardy accomplishment of the ambitious visions of his partisans.

"It is possible that the traitor may not have contemplated, or may not have permitted himself clearly to contemplate, the ultimate consequences of his crime: he may have indulged the vague hope that if Jesus were really the Messiah, he bore, if we may venture the expression, 'a charmed life,' and was safe in his inherent immortality (a notion in all likelihood inseparable from that of the Deliverer) from the malice of his enemies. If it were not, the crime of the betrayal would not be of very great importance. There were other motives which would concur with the avarice of Judas....."<sup>1</sup>

And so forth. The historian, officially committed to the conception that a man could "betray" the Omnipotence which at the same time was betraying *him*, dallies cautiously with the new "liberal" attempts to rationalize dogmatic Christian history, but is careful to take up no clear position. Judas is left very much as he was in the tradition, an evil person, covetous, vindictive, unable to venerate "the exquisite perfection of a character so opposite to his own," and not even to be regarded as sincere in his remorse, that being rather a sense of the odium he had incurred than a repentance for what he had done.

Yet Milman was for his illiberal time a "liberal"; and his discussion of the new speculations, deriving from Germany, as to human motivation in the

<sup>1</sup> Work cited, bk. i, chap. vii (Paris ed. 1840), p. 173.

gospel history, counted for as much in the intellectual life of early Victorian England as did his presentment of Abraham, in his 'History of the Jews,' as "an Arab Sheikh." And if we sum up that his liberalism and his historical criticism did not go very far, we are compelled in justice to confess that the official or professional historico-religious criticism of to-day, after nearly a hundred years, has not got much further.

Milman's stimulus, indeed, was little responded to by English scholarship, which even in the next age spent itself rather in the new documentary analysis of the Old Testament than in any radical treatment of the vital problems of belief involved. On a comparatively bold scrutiny of Old Testament literature followed a mere text-revising scrutiny of the New; and the kind of inquiry into Christian origins which should have ensued has been mainly left to foreign hands.

It is true that the orthodox clerical attitude to the Christian creed has, since Renan, been tacitly directed more or less to the Neo-Unitarian end of proving that the Gospel Jesus was a historical human being—a heresy that has become virtual orthodoxy. But the pursuit of that end has been relatively as unscientific as was the orthodoxy of the past. As early as 1857, the Zürich Professor Gustav Volkmar had crisply stated the essential incredibility of the story of the Betrayal; and 'G. R.,' the author of a rather turgid work entitled 'Gospel Paganism: or, Reason's Revolt against the Revealed,' had in 1864 taken up the theme (p. 104); which Thomas Scott handled afresh in his 'English Life of Jesus,' 1866 (re-written in 1871). Again it was independently discussed by Derenbourg in his 'Essai



sur l'histoire et la géographie de Palestine,' in 1867 (note ix); and it was developed on Volkmar's lines in the anonymous work, 'The Four Gospels as Historical Documents' (1895), an expansion of Scott's 'English Life of Jesus' believed to be the work of Sir George W. Cox.

By this time the sheer incredibility of the gospel story had so impressed itself on the more critical spirits in the Church that Keim's avowal, in his monumental Life of Jesus (1863), of a wish that the narrative could be dismissed as unhistorical, found sympathizers among readers of the English translation; and in the 'Encyclopædia Biblica' (1899-1903) Professor Cheyne, who had become convinced of its mythical nature, and had further realized the non-historicity of the Twelve Apostles, courageously and definitely treated it as unhistorical. Yet again, in 1901, Mr. P. C. Sense, in his 'Historical Inquiry into the Origin of the Third Gospel' (p. 382), avowed his disbelief in its historicity, pointing out that there is no allusion to Judas in any orthodox writer prior to Irenæus; and recently, in the *Hibbert Journal* (April, 1925), Dr. Jacks has declared it to be at once "inexplicable" and unnecessary, remarking, after Wrede, on the unnaturalness of the passivity of the eleven. In Germany half-a-dozen writers have gone further. And still the mass of the professional scholars, in England and elsewhere, make no avowal of doubt.

Thus the Judas story is being approached by many in our "emancipated" age very much as it was approached in the England of 1837; and the professional scholars, preoccupied with the task of repelling the myth theory in general, have dived no deeper than Milman into the particular problem

which was thrust upon him by the German speculation of his time.

It is not necessary to dwell long on the theological side of the discussion—the recurring debate as to how Judas can fitly be treated as an infamous traitor when, on the face of the gospel story, he is the foreordained minister of the scheme of salvation. Without his action, theologically speaking, the divine sacrifice would not have been accomplished; how then could he be decently doomed not only to eternal obloquy but to eternal punishment when the cowardly treachery of Peter went unpunished? Judas carried his remorse, according to one of the two scriptural accounts of his end, to the length of suicide; and the German Von Hase argued that his remorse proved his original nobility of character. Peter shows no lasting sense of shame in the records.

An uneasy consciousness of the dilemma presumably underlies the folk-myth, embodied in Arnold's 'Saint Brandan,' which represents Judas as being released from hell on one day in every year; and some good pietists have gone further. Anatole France, in 'Le Jardin d'Epicure,' tells of a good Abbé, Oegger, the "most amiable of the Cainites," who devoutly hoped and prayed for the pardon of Judas. And indeed it must be difficult for the humane pietist to reconcile the treatment of Judas with that of the penitent thief, especially in view of the rules laid down in the Sermon on the Mount for patient remonstrance with and dissuasion of wrongdoers.

The theological dilemma of orthodox faith on the subject is indeed a trying one, and has probably been the source of as much unbelief as any other item in the sacred books. There are still minds

which convulsively adhere to the time-honoured doctrine that the Divine Potter is entitled in the nature of things to make vessels of dishonour at his will, foreordaining their sins from all eternity, and punishing them *to* all eternity in due sequence ; but these zealots are increasingly outnumbered by the minds which decide that if a religious system reduces life to a moral farce the system had better go. That frightful gospel saying,

The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him ; but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed : good were it for that man if he had not been born, is no longer acceptable to thinking men, even be they mystics.

Hence alike the pious pleadings of the Abbé Oegger (who later became a Swedenborgian) and the humane efforts of the Neanders, the Whatelys, and the De Quinceys to frame a character of Judas which shall put him in the category of pardonable sinners, discreetly leaving alone the question whether the salvation of the human race is really to be supposed to have turned on the accident of a betrayal which, in the terms of the case, was to human eyes wholly unnecessary for the purpose of bringing about a tragedy foreseen and accepted in advance by the victim.

But the rationalizing of irrational creeds is, to say the least, a trying task, and ardent spirits are to be found who will allow of "no nonsense" about Judas Iscariot. In the early 'nineties the then Bishop of Ripon demurred to what a certain journalist indignantly described as "the modern passion for whitewashing the infamous."<sup>1</sup> For the

<sup>1</sup> It can hardly have been on that inspiration that Burns penned his characteristic account of Judas as much inferior in perfidy to

bishop Judas was "a type of the man without principles." As he justly pointed out, Judas had had his warning, though the bishop could not conceive that Judas could have "destroyed his own post as treasurer" of the group for the mere reward of thirty shekels. The late Professor Fairbairn, on the other hand, took the adjusted view that Judas was a disappointed man who sought his revenge.

The fervid journalist just cited, who, I think, was the late Andrew Lang, was not unwilling to adopt an explanation that left Judas duly condemned as a foul traitor. That was what *he* was mainly concerned about. A bad man, he unanswerably argued, is a bad man, and the sole records we possess concerning Judas represent him as all that. It is most true. But the zealous moralist, who was wont to speak of Jesus as "Our Lord," failed to realize, in his zeal, that he was still leaving his co-believers in a dilemma which had been acknowledged by serious theologians, among them the German Keim, who had to write for more reflective readers than those appealed to by the journalist. And, what is worse, the Bishop of Ripon, who ought to have known better, had evaded that dilemma likewise.

Jesus is to be regarded by those who believe in his historic existence either, in terms of the historic faith, as a supernatural person, a God Incarnate, or, in terms of the Neo-Unitarian view which is now becoming orthodox, as an abnormally gifted

Queen Elizabeth : "A sad dog to be sure, but still his demerits sink to insignificance compared with the doings of the infernal Bess Tudor. Judas did not know, at least was by no means sure, what and who that Master was ; his turpitude was simply betraying a worthy man who had ever been a good Master to him, a degree of turpitude which has even been outdone by many of his kind since." Letter to Dr. Moore, February 28, 1791.

man and teacher. And on either view he is to be regarded, if we follow the Bishop of Ripon and Mr. Lang, as having chosen among his twelve apostles "a type of the man without principles." Renan, the effective founder of Neo-Unitarianism, accepts that situation. And the common assumption appears to be that such a mischance could happen to the abnormally gifted Teacher as to any other man.

The heathen critic Celsus, however, started an enduring difficulty when he taunted the early Christians, somewhere about 200 A.C., with the fact that their Lord had not had sagacity enough to discern a villain in his own immediate following, as any brigand chief would. And, while the average good Christian is prepared at this point to fall back on the doctrine of the Divine Potter who creates and uses vessels of dishonour for his own high purposes, the more scrupulous theologians, with Keim, recognize a difficulty which they would be glad to get out of.

For the Neo-Unitarian school seeks of necessity to frame an intelligible Jesus, however unmanageable the task may be. On the old orthodox view, Jesus saw into all men's hearts, and must have known the character of Judas. Nay, by his divine foreknowledge he was aware that Judas would actually betray him, and he chose him with that knowledge. For the Neo-Unitarian school that view of things has become offensive and impossible. They must have a Superman who, however much he has been made to play the God, remains a man through and through, and is not merely human for theological purposes when he is facing his fore-known doom.

The God who quailed at the prospect of fulfilling

“ His ” Father’s and “ His ” own eternal purpose is a troublesome enough conception even for the orthodox theologian. For the Neo-Unitarian it is a chimera. His Jesus *must* be a human reformer, or an idealist, who had *not* planned his own sacrifice. For him, then, the historical Jesus *cannot* have said those things about his necessarily dying “ as it was written ”; the declaration that he *must* be betrayed ; and that it had been better for the fore-ordained betrayer if he had never been born. These things, for the biographical school, *must* be fictions of the gospel-makers. And yet it is to the gospel-makers that they must look for any knowledge of their Jesus !

### III.—THE MESSIANIC MYSTERY

What kind of man, then, do we find as a result of the biographical method which merely deletes the supernaturalist element from the gospels ? What, in particular, is his relation to Judas ? Concerning that personage we get no preliminary detail. He is merely one of the twelve whom Jesus suddenly “ called unto him ”<sup>1</sup> from an unspecified number of disciples on the mountain top, according to Mark and Luke ; and “ Judas Iscariot, who *also* betrayed him,” is one of the twelve whom Jesus sends forth to preach the gospel, with power to doom unbelieving cities to a worse fate than that of Sodom and Gomorrah—an aspect of the matter which does not appear to impinge on the average Christian consciousness.

No light is cast on the man’s character in the

<sup>1</sup> In Matt. x, 1, the twelve are suddenly introduced. In Mk. iii, 13, the twelve are “ called ”; so in Lk. vi, 13.

synoptics. It is in the admittedly factitious and fictitious fourth gospel (vi, 67-71) that Jesus, after "many" of his general disciples have abandoned him, first asks the twelve: "Would ye also go away?" and adds, upon Peter's protest: "Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil? Now he spake of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for it was he that should betray him, *one of the twelve.*" Here we have that largely different mental atmosphere which long ago forced critical readers to set aside the fourth gospel as utterly incompatible with the synoptics where it thus diverges from them. When, then, that gospel further announces (xii, 6) that Judas grudged the costly spikenard on a hypocritical pretence, "because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein"; and again records (xiii, 29) that Jesus actually commissioned this thief and hypocrite to "buy what things we have need of for the feast," the biographical school tacitly or avowedly sets the testimony aside as a late invention. If these things were true, how came it that the earlier gospel-makers knew nothing of them?

But what is now left as ostensible matter of record in regard to Judas? Simply that, after having taught him and empowered him with the others, Jesus suddenly divines, in the climax, that Judas is going to betray him, and, making no attempt to sway or enlighten the wretch, allows him to proceed. Concerning Peter, on the other hand, the third gospel, and that only (xxii, 31), tells us that Jesus said: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast

turned again, stablish thy brethren." But Judas, on the biographical view, is deliberately and mercilessly allowed to go to his doom; and this by the Teacher who had inculcated brotherly forbearance and long-continued pleading with the sinner among the brethren, and laid it down that all sins are on an equality in the eye of God.

Why? Here it is that the Neo-Unitarians yearn for the kind of solution offered first by the more amiable Cainites, and latterly developed by Neander and Whately and De Quincey, and finely poetized by Mr. Phillpotts. Jesus, they would fain think, realized that Judas dreamed a vain dream, and, not heartlessly but resignedly, left him to "dree his weird." But the fatal records, which are always crumbling under their feet, give them here no support. Synoptics and fourth gospel broadly concur in representing Jesus as reckoning Judas an evil soul, in the power of Satan. Cut out all the fatalistic references to prophecy, and that conception is still the only one offered. Is it, then, plausibly to be claimed that we can fitly delete *all* details from the records, and proceed to make our own guesses as to the nature of an episode *which those records alone give us any reason for supposing to have taken place?* Is the æsthetic method of the poets and the novelists to be tacitly adopted as the method of history, and fiction to be propounded as fact?

Dr. Arno Neumann, one of those zealous modernists who are quite sure that "something of the kind happened," and are confident of being able to write a spiritual biography of Jesus, takes the Judas difficulty in his stride. As thus<sup>1</sup> :—

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus*, Eng. trans.; 1906, p. 152.



“ Fate now willed that one of Jesus’ most trusted followers should become his Master’s betrayer, Judas of Kerioth. By his crime against the purest and greatest of any who have ever appeared on the stage of history this man has become for us the type of the basest kind of sinner, and the hire and kiss of Judas have become proverbial. In the Creed of the Church the traitor became, as it were, the living embodiment of Satan in the tragedy of the earthly sojourn of the Son of God. For the historical inquirer, however, whose first and chief aim is to understand and depict his character, the renegade disciple is a perplexing figure.

“ *It is very probable* that at heart Judas was never a thorough disciple ; that, a Jew by birth, he joined Jesus’ disciples only at a somewhat late stage ; that Jesus’ growing hostility to the religion of the fathers estranged him ; and that, like the great majority of the people, he held with tenacity to the notion that the Messiah was bound to free his country from the rule of Rome. The hot-blooded realist in Judas came to be disillusioned by Jesus.

“ Our sources give us no satisfactory account of the reasons for his apostasy, for we cannot believe that he was impelled, as is mostly suggested (John xii, 4-6), by mere lust of money. ....If Judas was a covetous man, we must ask what it was that could have led him to join the poor wandering preacher, and *what interest could the Master have taken in him?* The only answer to both questions is to be found in his Messianic enthusiasm.

“ It would seem, indeed, as if *the keen-sighted Nazarene* had become conscious of a change in his manner during the last days ; perhaps because Jesus’ eyes had been made specially watchful by His anxiety for His own safety.....”

Here, it would seem, even the confident biographer must fear that his glowing narrative is too thin-spun to yield any satisfying conception. His guess that Judas joined the group “ at a somewhat late stage ” is sheer fabrication in the face of the plain record and the fact that the total ministry ostensibly lasts for little more than a year. In an earlier chapter (p. 89) he had told us that “ A quick insight into character, and good fortune as well, must have co-operated to help Him in this task [of choosing his twelve disciples] ; for he seems

to have been deceived only in one disciple, Judas of Kerioth." "Only in one"! Thus do the biography-framers play with their material. Again and again do the synoptics indicate that Jesus found all, or nearly all, of his disciples impercipient, unteachable, self-seeking.

Of course, there are other passages where he tells them (Mt. xiii, 16) they are the blessed hearers of things which many prophets and righteous men had desired vainly to know. That is part of the insoluble confusion of the gospels. But when a professed modernist, choosing what he will believe and rejecting what he will not, assures us that the "keen-sighted Nazarene" had a "quick insight into character," and yet was also lucky in that he picked *only one* villain and predestinate traitor in twelve, we become conscious that the infirmity of judgment and the speculative ignorance which went to the compilation of the gospel narratives have not disappeared from the procedure of the confident guessers who undertake to find the truth for us in that tangled web of fantasy and contradiction.

Dr. Neumann, despite his inference that the "keen-sighted Nazarene had become conscious of a change" in the manner of Judas, feels driven to reject as incredible the exact prediction of his treachery by the Master. "It is *certain*," the biographer assures us, "that Judas had to dissemble down to the last moment, and also *had to keep himself apprised of all the places where the Master proposed to spend the night*; for the task he had undertaken was to lead the band of capturers, *without any stir*, to Jesus (Acts i, 16). His kiss also—the kiss of the scholar on the hand of the teacher—was rendered necessary by the darkness

as a sign by which others could recognize Him." And then, finally, we have this lame and impotent conclusion: "Jesus at first, *doubtless*, thought the intention was innocent (against Luke xxii, 48)." That is to say, the keen-sighted Nazarene, who has been described to us as dreading "His" risk of death as a result of "His" proceedings, did not even at the moment of the kiss of betrayal realize that he had been betrayed.

From such nugatory guess-work as this one turns, not indeed sanguinely, but with at least a hope for more circumspect procedure, to the new Life entitled 'Jesus of Nazareth,' by Dr. Joseph Klausner of Jerusalem. That scholar is in the habit of censuring for their unscholarlike and unscientific procedure many of the "Christian" specialists of the day, and sees "uncritical belief" at work among the orthodox. It might have been supposed that his pro-Jewish bias would have made him alert to an unhistorical atmosphere where the Christian-minded biographers remain absorbed by their *à priori* design of extracting history from their documents. But Dr. Klausner's method is just theirs, with a Jewish instead of a Christian colouring. He has no doubts about Judas; he is, in fact, sure that he knows all about him:—

"Judas came to Jesus from a distant part of the country (Kerioth in Judea), a proof that he was an exceptional man and attracted strongly by the new teaching. *This alone persuaded Jesus* to receive him as one of his most intimate Apostle-disciples; not till the very last did Jesus recognize in him the base character which made him a traitor.<sup>1</sup>....."

"Gradually his enthusiasm cooled, and he began to look

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching*, by Joseph Klausner, Ph.D. (Heidelberg): Jerusalem, Eng. tr.; ed. 1927, p. 285.

askance at his master's words and deeds. He was generally convinced that Jesus was not always successful in healing the sick; that Jesus feared his enemies, and sought to escape and evade them; that there were marked contradictions in Jesus' teaching.....

"What was more, this 'Messiah' neither would nor could deliver his nation, yet he arrogated to himself the rôle of 'The Son of Man coming with the clouds of Heaven,' asserting that he should sit at the right hand of God in the Day of Judgment, daring to say of the Temple, the most sacred place in the world, that not one stone should remain upon another, and, actually, that he would destroy it and in its place raise up another after three days!

"Judas Iscariot became convinced that here was a false Messiah or a false prophet, erring and making to err, a beguiler and one who led astray, one whom the Law commanded to be killed, one to whom the Law forbade pity or compassion or forgiveness.....After [the] revelation to the disciples at Cæsarea, and to the entire people at Jerusalem, Judas expected that in the Holy City.....Jesus would.....destroy the Romans and bring the Pharisees and Sadducees to naught; then all would acknowledge his messianic claims, and all would see him in his pomp and majesty as the 'final saviour.'

"But what, in fact, did Judas see? No miracles (Matthew alone tells how Jesus healed the blind and lame in the Temple, matters unknown to Mark); no mighty deeds; no one is subdued by him; the mighty Messiah escapes nightly to Bethany; except for 'bold' remarks against the tradition of the elders, and vain arrogance, Jesus reveals no plan by which he will effect the redemption. Was it not, then, a 'religious duty' to deliver up such a 'deceiver' to the government and so fulfil the law: Thou shalt exterminate the evil from thy midst? (Deut. xiii, 2-12).

"This *must* have been Judas Iscariot's train of reasoning." Avarice "*could not have been* the psychological cause for his action; rather was it the desperation which Judas endured because of his very proximity to Jesus and his knowledge of the human frailties of Jesus.

"Judas was an educated Judean with a keen intellect but a cold and calculating heart, accustomed to criticize and scrutinize; his knowledge of the frailties blinded him to the many virtues of Jesus, which at first had so impressed him and aroused his enthusiasm. It was otherwise with the other disciples, all alike uneducated Galileans, dull of intellect but warm-hearted; for them the virtues covered up all the

defects, and till the hour of danger they remained faithful to their master, and when the short interval of doubt was past they returned to his holy memory and so cherished the knowledge of his words and deeds that they survive to this day.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus is the docile reader kept standing at a point of view reached a century ago, only with a pro-Jewish instead of a pro-Christian treatment. By Dr. Klausner's own account, Judas was justified in “betraying” his Master; but he so far accommodates himself to Christian sentiment as to pronounce Judas “base,” and also “cold and calculating”—this last in the same breath with an account of him as having been aroused to “enthusiasm” by the “many virtues of Jesus.” These and other details, wholly hypothetical save for the use made of the fourth gospel, which elsewhere he treats as quite untrustworthy, the Jewish critic posits unreservedly as historical facts. And without a sign of misgiving he implicitly ascribes to the “uneducated Galileans” the preservation of the whole body of Jesuine doctrine in the gospels.

He has simply turned the story to Jewish account, inventing as the occasion requires. Insisting on the historicity of the narrative as a whole, he unreservedly affirms that in the story of the arrest “the gospels give many supplementary details, few of which are true.” This of the sole sources for his narrative. But the Christian biographer is not a whit more critically scrupulous in his equally free manipulation of the documents; and when the confident modernist has conducted us to an *impasse* of self-contradiction by way of eluding the self-contradictions of his records, we shall perhaps have some even of the faithful with us in calling

<sup>1</sup> *Id.* pp. 324-6.

for a reopening of the case on something like judicial lines.

For every one who cherishes a fair ideal of a Super-Teacher has a ground of grievance against an expositor who tells them, as does Dr. Neumann (p. 135), that Jesus really did carry through the violent and disorderly proceeding of driving the money-changers out of the Temple, and (p. 153) that afterwards his eyes were made "watchful by His anxiety for *His own safety*." If we are to pick and choose our texts and frame our guesses at will, the idealist may well say: "Let us have a figure who when he defies the ruling powers knows what he is doing and is prepared to take the consequences. Let us have something like a Superman, not a blend of heroism and dread, Messianic possession and timid calculation. Let us not be told that when Jesus asks the high-priests why they come to take him like a thief in the night he was actually hiding in terror, trusting to their fear of arresting him in the daytime. Let us not be left with a collapsed Superman in place of a collapsed Deity."

The obliging biographer may perhaps reply that the idealists will have to take what they can get; that, having given up the unacceptable God, who fore-ordains a treason and damns the traitor, they will have to come down to practicalities and plausibilities, even to the extent of stripping the Teacher of the attributes of consistency and calm courage, making him a visionary expectant of supernatural aid, and losing heart when he finds it lacking. But when it comes to such a substitution of hypotheses for a narrative which is at once discredited by rejection and founded on as a valid historical proof of a personality, at least the inquirer who is concerned first and last for historical truth must

take another path and another method; and perhaps the disillusioned ex-believer may see fit, for the time being, to follow him.

#### IV.—THE BETRAYAL MYSTERY

Re-opening the inquiry, then, in the spirit of historical science, let us ask concerning the betrayal story, in the words of Volkmar, *What was there to betray?* According to the narrative, Jesus had been for days the most prominent figure in Jerusalem. He had made a triumphal entry; he had been teaching daily in the Temple; he had made a violent commotion there by expelling the money-changers—an episode which has been naïvely explained as a deed done in the interest of devout Jewish worshippers who were habitually defrauded by the money-changers. That the Jewish authorities should wish to imprison and punish such a high-handed disturber of the peace is readily conceivable—provided we can believe that one man with a whip of small cords could thus, as it were, upset the Bank of England. Origen, the most intelligent of the early Fathers, felt forced to regard it as a miracle.

We are told, however, that the priestly authorities feared to arrest Jesus openly because of the friendly populace—this in face of the further record that on the day after the arrest that very populace were shouting “Crucify him,” and demanding the release of the robber Barabbas in preference to the Son of David. The priests, then, were able to turn the populace as they would.

Waiving that point, nevertheless, let us assume that two days before the capture the chief priests

and the elders planned how they "might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.....not during the feast, lest a tumult arise among the people." What then are we to make of the narrative that on the night of the arrest there went with Judas "a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people"? Was a tumult by night, then, a matter of indifference? The resourceful biographer, Dr. Neumann, actually tells us that Judas had to lead the band of capturers "without any stir." And the outcome is "a great multitude, with swords and staves"! Thus can history and biography be written.

But all these queries are capped by the crowning one, Why should the authorities have either invited or accepted the leadership of Judas in the matter? Jesus, by his own alleged declaration in all three synoptics, taught openly in the Temple; then he openly left the Temple and went (Lk. xxi, 37) *with his followers* every evening to the Mount of Olives. What possible difficulty could the authorities find in having him traced? A child could have done the tracking. Dr. Neumann, wisely ignoring such questions, assures us that not only had Judas to lead the multitude by means of his special knowledge, but he had to give the traitor kiss—"on the hand," an old guess for which there is no documentary warrant—because "in the darkness" the others could not recognize Jesus. Now we are asked to believe that the midnight multitude had gone through lightless Jerusalem to the lightless mountain *without* the torches and lanterns which in the fourth gospel are taken for granted! If, then, the night was thus unlitten, how could they possibly see Judas giving the kiss when they could not see Jesus for themselves?



All the while, according to the very gospels which describe Judas as coming with the multitude, Judas had been with the other disciples not only throughout the Last Supper but on the walk to the Mount of Olives, which, we are told, was Jesus' "custom." Only in the fourth gospel are we told that Judas had "gone out" after receiving the sop. The synoptics all tell that "the disciples" partook of the meal and went with Jesus to the Mount of Olives; and Matthew (xxvi, 35) expressly asserts that "*all* the apostles" joined in Peter's protestation of devotion on the Mount of Olives before they passed to Gethsemane. At no point do they tell of the departure of Judas. And thus we are forced to note, what the biographical school, down to Abbé Loisy and Dr. Joseph Klausner of Jerusalem, have so strangely failed to see, that the story of the betrayal is a documentary interpolation in the synoptics—an *addition* to a narrative in which originally *the betrayal did not figure*.

So much might have been strictly inferred from the fact that in the third gospel (xxii, 30), as it stands, the Lord is actually made to promise to the Twelve, including Judas, "Ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel," *after* we have been told that Satan had entered into Judas and the plot of betrayal made. The original compiler could not possibly have planned so to stultify the Lord and himself. In Matthew (xix, 28) the same promise is made before the journey to Jerusalem; but neither could that evangelist conceivably have penned such a prediction had he intended to relate its falsification through the treason and perdition of Judas. The promise can have been current only in an age before there was

a Betrayal story.<sup>1</sup> That consideration alone should dictate our conclusion. But we shall find that every critical datum in the case involves the same decision.

The counter-argument of Dr. Eduard Meyer<sup>2</sup>—that the story of the Betrayal must be historical because the evangelist would never have invented an episode so injurious to the prestige of the apostles—is typical of the dialectic of presupposition. We shall find that all the external evidence runs counter to that presupposition, and also that it is framed in disregard even of the *à priori* probabilities. Dr. Meyer, whose own exegesis constantly involves the admission of interpolations, here argues as if the entire text of any gospel must come from one hand. As all interpolations must have been motivated in some way, we have only to ask whether a Christian faction could have a motive for discrediting the apostolate in order to realize that the *à priori* negative is illicit.

The motive lies on the face of the conflict between the Judaizing and the Gentilizing factions of which we have the plain traces in the Acts and in the Pauline Epistles. To discredit the Jewish apostolate was the natural and, indeed, inevitable

*G. John*

<sup>1</sup> In the whole mass of the Apocryphal Gospels and Acts, I think, apart from the 'Gospel of the Twelve Apostles,' there is only one narrative concerning Judas Iscariot, that given in the 'Narrative of Joseph of Arimathea,' and there he is described as "not a disciple before the face of Jesus" but a pretended follower who contrives to get Jesus arrested for a robbery of the temple committed by the "good thief" Demas, who died with Jesus on the cross. Judas, further, is described as "[son] of the brother of Caiaphas, the priest." Of the Twelve there is no mention.

<sup>2</sup> Who follows Heitmüller, art. on Judas in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 1912, iii, 795. Prof. Rudolf Bultmann, on the contrary, sees in the Betrayal story little but legend. *Die Geschichte der Synopt. Tradition*, 1921, p. 159.

tactic of the Gentilizing movement so long as the traditional claims of the earlier Judaic body were pressed, and that there was such a strife can be least of all disputed by Dr. Meyer. For who could have invented such a comprehensive tale of unseemly division in the Christian Church if it had not taken place? Nobody could gain or hope to gain by inventing *that*.

It was the spontaneous expression of a strife of interests comparable to the strifes of tribes, nations, classes; and the result was new fiction on a moral par with the initial fictions of the faith. The author of the 'Epistle of Barnabas,' an anti-Semite proselyte writing about 140 A.C. (but regarded by all the ancient Fathers as *the* Barnabas of the Acts), speaks (c. 5) of the Apostles, whom he neither numbers nor names, as "lawless beyond all lawlessness," and chosen by the Christ *as such* "that he might show he came 'not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'" Such an attitude not only permitted but dictated, in the now greatly preponderant Gentile branch of the Christist movement, detailed charges of evil-doing against apostles by name, and we shall see how the influence operated on the gospel texts.

The fact that only in the fifth and at the end of the preceding chapter does 'Barnabas' quote from the gospels, all his other Scriptural quotations being from the Septuagint, may be held to raise the question whether there has not here been an interpolation. But any such inference only extends the time-area of the sectional strife. Whether it was the author or a redactor who penned the sweeping aspersion on the apostles, carefully colouring it by a doctrinary explanation which leaves the faith in the lurch, it is an irreducible

testimony to the Hellenistic procedure as against the Judaizers.

## V.—THE TEXTUAL FABRICATION

### § 1. *External Evidence*

Before studying the documentary grounds for this conclusion, let us note the negative grounds for it.

**Outside the Four Gospels.**—In the first place, the recovered fragment of the so-called ‘Gospel of Peter’ expressly speaks of “We, the *twelve* apostles,” mourning together *after* the capture and execution of Jesus, with no hint of any betrayal; and no scholar dates that document within the first century. In the second place, not only is there no mention of Judas as betrayer in any of the Epistles, but even the plainly interpolated passage in First Corinthians (xi, 23), in which we have the phrase, “the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was delivered up,” without any naming of the betrayer, is balanced in that regard by the later chapter (xv, 5–8) in which Paul is made to assert, with the same revealing formula of introduction, that Jesus after rising from the dead appeared to “the twelve”; then again to “all the apostles.” In the third place, the picture in the Apocalypse (xxi, 14) of the reign of the Twelve recognizes no breach in the foundation of Twelve Apostles.

In the fourth place, the recovered Apology of Aristides (found in 1889 by Mr. J. Rendel Harris, in a Syriac version, in the Sinaitic convent of St. Catherine) speaks of the Twelve Apostles in terms which negate the possibility that he had heard of Judas as a traitor. Professing to found on “that

Gospel which a little while ago was spoken among them [the Christians] as being preached," Aristides near his outset writes that Jesus "had twelve disciples, in order that a certain dispensation of his might be fulfilled"; that he was "pierced by the Jews," died, and was buried; adding: "and they say that after three days he rose and ascended to heaven; and then *these twelve* disciples went forth into the known parts of the world and taught concerning his greatness....."

The Apology of Aristides is addressed to "Cæsar Titus Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius"—that is, either to Hadrian or his successor Marcus Antoninus, who adoptively bore Hadrian's name; and as Eusebius (iv, iii) speaks of Aristides as having, "like Quadratus," addressed an apology to Hadrian, the presumption is that it was to the emperor commonly so named. The document is accordingly to be dated between the years 117 and 138. It is unnecessary to inquire whether it may belong to the next reign: if the story was absent from a gospel circulating about 120-135, it must be classed as a late invention, from any standpoint.

It might perhaps be argued that an apologist, making only a brief statement as to Christian origins, might naturally refrain from troubling the Emperor with such a detail as the Betrayal story even if he knew it; but on the other hand it is unthinkable that he would expressly say that "*these twelve disciples*" preached the gospel after the Resurrection if he knew that one of them was recorded to have betrayed his Lord. The only warrantable inference is that when Aristides wrote, the Christians had no Betrayal story.

In the fifth place, even the Syriac version of the so-called 'Gospel of the Twelve Apostles,' a

stratified document worked upon as late as the eighth century,<sup>1</sup> exhibits plain marks of dislocation and manipulation at the points at which it catalogues the Twelve and relates their function. Judas, with the usual parenthesis, "he that betrayed him," is placed last on the list, in which the apostles are assigned to tribes: then there follows the sentence: "These twelve are his disciples to whom he promised twelve thrones that they may judge Israel." Also, the list is preceded by the sentence: "And he chose him *true* disciples and twelve apostles.....whose names are as follows."

And still further the primary structure reveals itself, for, after a paragraph ending with an allusion to the "holy gospel of the four truthful evangelists," we are told that the Lord "commanded" the twelve to "evangelize in the four quarters of the world, *and we carried out the preaching.*" Only then supervenes a paragraph telling of the betrayal by "one of his disciples, *him that is called Scariota*"—a name *not before given* even in the interpolated parenthesis in the list—the crucifixion, the death of Judas, and the election of Matthias. Even after that, Jesus is made to "appear to the *eleven*"—a revelation that the election of Matthias had been separately superadded to the previous interpolations. The whole series of fabrications is thus plain. The Betrayal story, here as in the canonical gospels, had been thrust into a document that originally lacked it; and still later the Election story had been awkwardly superimposed on that.

**In the Epistles.**—If there were any room for hesitation here, there would still be none over the

<sup>1</sup> See the careful introduction by J. Rendel Harris to his valuable transcript and translation, 1900.

canonical books. There is only one possible inference as to the passages in First Corinthians: interpolated as they are, they were interpolated at a time when the story of the betrayal by Judas had not yet found currency. The passage in the eleventh chapter is inferably the later interpolation of the two.

But here let us take note that the Greek verb which in our versions is in this connection rendered by "betrayed" means strictly "delivered up." It is the same verb that is rendered by "delivered up" in Mark i, 14, in the account of the arrest of John the Baptist, who is not reputed to have been "betrayed"; and it occurs also in Romans iv, 25, and in Matthew x, 17, 19, where there is no question of betrayal. It may therefore have been used in First Corinthians with no reference to any betrayal story but merely in allusion to a story of capture. Still, an interpolation the passage obviously is, and it may have been a late one; though there is force in Volkmar's suggestion<sup>1</sup> that the ambiguous verb "delivered up" may have given the first cue for the invention of the Judas story.

### § 2. *The Internal Evidence*

For when we return to the synoptics we find there also, at this point, evidences of a process of interpolation, of relatively late date. Let the open-minded reader turn to the 26th chapter of Matthew, verse 21, and note how the passage in which Jesus exhibits his knowledge of the treachery of Judas is introduced by the phrase: "*and as they were eating.*" Now let him go on to verse 26, at the end of

<sup>1</sup> Work cited, p. 261.

that passage, and we again have the phrase "*and as they were eating,*" the matter being now the institution of the sacrament. Why is the eating thus specified twice within a few lines, without any narrative necessity? The explanation is fairly clear. The repetition is created by the insertion of verses 21-5, introduced by the same phrase.

Let us turn yet again to the 27th chapter, in which verse 2 tells how "they bound him and led him away, and *delivered him* (παρέδωκαν) *up to Pilate the governor.*" At this point intervenes the paragraph beginning: "*Then Judas, who delivered him up*" (ὁ παραδίδους αὐτόν), which tells of Judas's remorse and suicide, and the buying of the potter's field, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah. After that paragraph verse 11 recommences: "*Now Jesus stood before the Governor.*" Here we have the same procedure as in chapter 26. Something had to be added, but nothing must be taken away.

Exactly as in the case of the introduction of the Judas episode at the supper, we have a double use of the catchword, which reveals the process of interpolation, deliberately gone about. That process is repeated, as regards the supper episode, in the 14th chapter of Mark, where we have the Judas passage introduced with: "*And as they reclined and were eating*"; and after the doom we resume with: "*And as they were eating,* he took bread." In both gospels the Judas item has visibly been added to an already constituted narrative; and as the story of Judas's remorse and suicide is *not* interpolated in Mark or Luke, the inference is that in Matthew it is the latest interpolation of all. The resuming catchwords are our clues.

In Luke the process is different. There the



story of the challenge to Judas is *not* given in the account of the supper. But at the beginning of the chapter we can trace, by catchword, the interpolation of Judas's treason, which, we are now forced to infer, had been either before or after interpolated in similar terms in the first and second gospels. Luke's 22nd chapter begins: "*Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.* And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might put him to death, for they feared the people." Then come the four verses telling how Satan entered into "Judas who was called Iscariot," and the seventh verse resumes: "*And the day of unleavened bread came on which the Passover must be sacrificed*"—a repetition created, as in the other instances, by the previous paragraph. When this is followed (v. 24) by the paragraph in which the foolishly wrangling apostles are told that they shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, we cannot but infer that, however much *that* passage may have been interpolated, it must have been penned before the stultifying story of the treason of Judas had been inserted. And when we come in the same chapter to the story of Peter's denial, and note how verse 63 reads naturally just after verse 54, with the Peter story left out, the same presumption of interpolation strongly obtrudes itself.

That such repetitions of connective phrases as we have noted are really marks of interpolation the student can perhaps best realize by turning to a particularly obvious insertion in the first gospel (xi, 25-30), beginning: "*At that season* Jesus answered and said, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth,'" and ending: "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." There is

no congruity in the "At that season"; and the latter of the two sections which constitute the passage is still more incongruous with the context. Abbé Loisy, seeking doubtfully to connect both with the return of the missionary disciples, confesses his suspicion that the second is post-Jesuine; and many critics reject the whole. It is really a close parallel to poetic formulas of the pagan mysteries;<sup>1</sup> though also to passages in Jeremiah (vi, 16) and Ecclesiasticus li, 23 sq.

But the point that for the moment concerns us is the mode of the interpolation. The next chapter begins exactly as does the interpolation: "*At that season* Jesus went....." The interpolator had to get in his passage somewhere and somehow. As a passage of lyrism, unrelated to any incident, it has no proper place anywhere; but he thinks to save the situation by forcing it in just before the "*At that season*" which begins chapter xii. The simple psychology of the interpolator is satisfied by that measure of adaptation to the environment. If there is no congruity of matter, there may be at least a manufactured congruity of form.<sup>2</sup>

It is not improbable that the repetition of catch-word phrases was held requisite for the purposes of oral learning and recitation; and the cadencial quality of composition which M. Loisy is latterly expounding, as regards the gospels in general, is particularly noticeable in the passage in question. However that may be, the gospels are thickly studded with the marks of cumulative insertion,

<sup>1</sup> See *Christianity and Mythology*, second ed., p. 388. Cp. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, in loc.

<sup>2</sup> In the Greek the formal repetition is perhaps more striking:

Ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς  
Ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἐπορεύθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς

and in particular we see a process of successive accretions as to Judas and Peter upon a story which in its earlier form told neither of betrayal by Judas nor of denial by Peter. All the incidental allusions to Judas in the earlier chapters of the synoptics as the destined betrayer are mere consequences of the insertion of the story at the climax. Their insertion is obviously retrospective. Judas is described as "one of the twelve" after all the prior insertions. Such phrases as "Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot," and "Then Judas which betrayed him," might alone reveal the procedure. The fact that Luke does *not* insert the story of the remorse and suicide of Judas, and the sequel as to the potter's field, which in Acts also is visibly late, is further confirmative of the inference of the lateness of the insertion in Matthew. Had it been in early currency, Luke would in natural course have given it. And, once more, the astonishing thing is that the biographical school have not seen the obvious traces of a process which it so plainly behoved them to see.

When we find so thoughtful and so candid a scholar as Professor F. C. Burkitt blandly obliterating for himself all those clues with the remark that "Nothing is more characteristic of Matthew's style than his fondness for repeating his own phrases,"<sup>1</sup> we are almost driven to despair of academic vision. As we have seen, the repetition of phrase made by the interpolation concerning Judas at the Supper is *almost exactly the same in Mark as in Matthew*; and in Luke we have a similar repetition of phrase in regard to unleavened bread and the Passover, *for the same kind of*

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Beginnings*, 1924, p. 16.

*reason*—the necessity of soldering an insertion. What then is to account for the repetition of phrases in Mark and Luke? Dr. Burkitt, like so many of the modernists, leans heavily on the split reed of the priority of Mark. What then can the assumption of the priority of Mark do for him here? Did Matthew find a repetition so congenial that he copied that of Mark? Is it not plain that either the interpolation is such *in both*, or that Mark follows Matthew with the usual verbal differences, yet with the significant repetition?

Again and again, in Matthew, the repetition of phrases should suggest to a vigilant scholar that there has been a tampering with the text. We have noted the case of the passage xi, 25–30. But what of chapter xxii, where we have (a) the paragraph (15–22) beginning: “Then *went the Pharisees, and took counsel* how they might ensnare him in his talk,” dealing with the tribute to Cæsar; then (b) the paragraph (23–33): “*On that day* there came to him the Sadducees,” discussing the resurrection; then (c) that beginning: “But the Pharisees, when they heard he had put the Sadducees to silence, *gathered themselves together*” to discuss with Jesus “the great commandment”; and finally (d) the paragraph (41–46): “Now, while the Pharisees were *gathered together.*”

Here the consonance of the “gathered together” is not so exact in the Greek as in the English, but we have in all three paragraphs the words “saying, Master” (*Didaskale*), and the first two end with sentences to the same effect, both beginning *Kaì ἀκούσαντες*; and instead of setting down the phenomena to Matthew’s fondness for phrase repetition we are led to surmise a process of accretion in which one debate is added to another to establish

the triumphant dialectic of the Lord. Here the difference between Matthew and Mark (xii, 13-37) is that the latter tells of the successive accosts, without the machinery of the "gathering together" of the hostile bodies, reducing a more elaborate to a more natural form of narrative, as he so frequently does.

The error of the modernists, we may here sum up, is that they read with their inner ear rather than with their eyes, on the presupposition that among the ventriloquizing voices of the gospels they can detect the dominical, and simply finding that in those they like best; whereas if they read with vigilant eyes they might detect the different *hands* manipulating the text, making it a marvel of patchwork. And thus they miss detections which might at least partly minister to their own comfort by revealing the factitiousness of some embarrassing matter.

In the present connection we find a different kind of miscarriage befalling Strauss, who so strangely pronounced the Judas story "without doubt historical," after having pointed to some of its distinctly mythical aspects. At neither time was he paying any attention to the structure as distinct from the purport of the gospel records. Hence his miscarriage. It was critically relevant to object to his first 'Life of Jesus' that he pointed out the innumerable discrepancies among the gospels without attempting to trace the process of their composition; though he might reasonably have replied that the two inquiries had better be separately conducted. In his second 'Life' (1864), however, written nearly thirty years after the first, he has still failed to make the due bibliographical scrutiny; and here it is that he expressly

speaks (3te Auflage, p. 283) of the betrayal of Jesus by a false disciple as "without doubt historical."

Volkmar in 1857<sup>1</sup> had shown strong reasons for thinking it unhistorical; and of these reasons Strauss takes note.<sup>2</sup> It is instructive to find that he rejects them not as lacking weight—that he could not and does not say—but because of the hypothesis by which Volkmar explains the insertion of the figment in what he terms "the original gospel." That hypothesis was that the motive was to make an opening for the name of Paul in the list of Twelve by causing one to be struck out—an intention which, Volkmar recognizes, was parried in the Acts of the Apostles by the late figment of the election of Matthias by the Eleven, a story of which the motivation is revealed, in Volkmar's sense, by verses 21 and 22. Now, that is a highly plausible account of the procedure; but inasmuch as Volkmar heedlessly ascribed the invention of the Judas treason to the "original gospel," Strauss argued, justly enough, that at that stage the Paulinist influence could not be strong enough. On this score, however, he rejects the whole argument against the non-historicity of the betrayal story. Yet if Volkmar had but recognized that the fiction is not early but late, Strauss could hardly have refused to admit it.

### § 3. *The Matthias Election*

For the section of Acts i which relates the election of Matthias in place of Judas is in its substance as palpable an interpolation as the Judas

<sup>1</sup> *Die Religion Jesu und ihre erste Entwicklung*, 1857, p. 260 sq.

<sup>2</sup> *Leben Jesu* (second), 3rd ed. 1874, pp. 273-4 (§ 43).

stories in the synoptics. The very idea, indeed, of *electing* to the Twelve-group, alleged to have been established by "the Lord," a substitute for one discredited and deceased, is a plain figment, intelligible only as a device in a controversy. There is nowhere any pretence that the number was subsequently kept up when disciples died or, as the tradition goes, were martyred. Why, then, should it be maintained in this fashion in one instance? And, if the gospel story be true, how could disciples pretend to elect any one to fulfil a function created by the Founder?

The story is retrospective myth, telling of a time when, there being notoriously *no* continuing body of Twelve, factions fought over their pretensions to an authority derived from Apostles in the days when, by tradition, there *were* Twelve Judaic Apostles with sacrosanct claims, and the adherents of Gentile Christism were claiming for their remote founder, Paul, a status as high as that accorded to the alleged original apostles. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles is as it were the chief "palimpsest" in which the bibliographical traces of that strife may be followed. Late as is the whole opening narrative of the first chapter, the election story can be seen to be later still, as has been recognized by modern investigators.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> A concise survey of the study of the Acts up to 1895 is given in *Die Quellen der Apostelgeschichte*, by Johannes Jüngst (Gotha, 1895), which makes an important advance on the previous work of Spitta. Later English work seems to have failed to profit by his analysis. As to the secondary nature of the story of the election of Matthias, see his section on "Die Ersatzwahl für Judas," pp. 23-6, and the "Quellenübersicht" at the close. The main criticism to which Jüngst appears to be open is the habit of positing "Quellen" for all differences instead of simply indicating changes of hand. But the scrutiny is close and convincing.

introductory phrase of verse 15, "And in these days Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren and said," with the superadded parenthesis which follows, reveals the procedure. As Jüngst argues, it is probable that the passage from "men" in verse 21 to "from us" in verse 22 is a redaction; but it is still clearer that the parenthesis in verse 15, and the further undisguised parenthesis of verses 18 and 19, are patches *on* the main patch. In the first script ii, 1, had followed immediately upon i, 14.

#### § 4. *The Denial by Peter*

Here the first inference forced upon us is that the story of the election of Matthias was framed before that of the Denial of his Lord by Peter. If the latter story were already in the gospels at the time of the insertion of the Matthias story at the beginning of the Acts, the procedure of the traitor Peter arranging for a substitute for the traitor Judas would have been a monstrosity beyond imagination. He of all men, in such a case, should have remained silent. So also with the story of Ananias and Sapphira, condemned to death for a venial falsehood by the man who had denied his Lord with curses (alleged in Matthew and Mark, not in Luke). The story of the Denial, in fine, is the counter-invention on the Gentile side to the Acts story of the election of Matthias. And it may be at the same time a counter-stroke to the ghastly story of the supernatural murder of Ananias and his wife, which in turn may have been a stroke at a Paulinizing Ananias (Acts ix, 10), who may have figured in an early "Acts of Paul."



§ 5. *Barsabbas and Barnabas*

There emerges in chapter i yet a further disclosure of the motivation. In verse 23, "Joseph called Barsabbas, who was *surnamed* Justus," is alleged to have been nominated in competition with Matthias, the latter being elected. There is no further mention of a Joseph Barsabbas; but in chapter iv, verse 36, we have the story of "Joseph who by the apostles was *surnamed* Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of Exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race." While, however, Barnabas figures frequently in the Acts, there is no further mention of Joseph Barsabbas. It is thus particularly remarkable that in chapter xv, verse 22, there are named, after Paul and Barnabas, "*Judas* called Barsabbas, and Silas, *chief men* among the brethren," who are also graded (verse 32) as "prophets." And of this *Judas* Barsabbas, in turn, there is no further mention.

From this tangle of adaptive fabrication there emerges one fairly clear inference. At one stage in the early Jesuist movement there had been a Judas Barsabbas among the leaders. When, in the interests of developed Paulinism or Gentilism, there had been put in currency the story of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot, the Judaizing party, realizing the Paulinist plan of making a place in the traditional twelve for Paul, countered by fabricating a fresh story of the election of Matthias. And, as it was then in the recollection of some that a Judas Barsabbas had been a "chief man among the brethren," it was seen to be further expedient to cover *his* traces by boldly putting a *Joseph* Barsabbas, further disguised as Justus, in competition for the apostleship vacated by Judas

Iscariot. Unfortunately—or fortunately—the enterprising redactor forgot, or failed, to eliminate from the manuscripts the mention of Judas Barsabbas in chapter xv, with its revelation for those who can bring critical intelligence to bear upon it.

### § 6. *General Considerations*

That the whole story of fabrication, figment upon figment, will ever be disentangled it would be rash to predict. The work will certainly not be done by churchmen bent on “saving the face” of early Christianity. But there stands out unmistakably the decisive fact that the gospel myth of Judas Iscariot the Betrayer grew out of the scheming rivalries of Gentilizing Paulinists and self-aggrandizing Judaists, at what time in the second century it is at present impossible to say. The broadly reasonable inference is that the manipulation of the gospels in this regard was made effective at a time when Jewish Christianity was but a small and dwindling remnant, and the bulk of the Church lay in the Greek-speaking lands.

That the Judas story is late to enter the gospels we have seen by simple bibliographical scrutiny, the omission of which alike by Strauss and Volkmar left much of their argumentation *à priori*, and, as we see in this very instance, unconvincing. Volkmar hamstrung his negative argument against the historicity of the betrayal by positing the theory that the Paulinists were the authors of the “original gospel,” and that in that capacity they invented the story.

A study of the texture of the gospels might have opened his eyes to his error. He would have seen at this point, not a primordial narrative, but a late interpolation, alike in Matthew and in Mark; and

might thus have partly guarded others against falling into the then arising error that Mark is the oldest gospel. All he achieved by that twofold error was to make Strauss close his eyes to the overwhelming external argument against the historicity of the Judas story. From rejecting Volkmar's unsound theory of a primordial Paulinizing gospel, Strauss passed blindly to the conclusion that the story of the betrayal is "without doubt historical."

And this is the more astonishing because in his first Life he had calmly pointed to the reasons for inferring that the whole story of the betrayal of the Messiah by one who had sat at meat with him is one of the usual gospel derivations from the Old Testament, the original being the story of David and the traitor Ahithophel, who finally hanged himself (2 Sam. xv, 31 ; xvii, 23), and the verse in the 41st Psalm (verse 9): "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." That text is actually given in the fourth gospel by Jesus as the motive of his action ; and it was just such clues of Old Testament lore that had led Strauss to see so many items in the gospel story as mythical. The story of the payment to Judas is in the same fashion framed on the passage in Zechariah (xi, 12-13) :—

And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my hire ; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver. And *the Lord* said unto me, Cast it unto the potter [*Syriac* : into the treasury], the goodly price *that I was prized at of them.*

But it was particularly the business of the biographical school to detect the lateness of the betrayal story. Abbé Loisy, who recognizes the

incredibility of the story of the midnight trial before the Sanhedrim, cannot see the equal incredibility of the story of the superfluous betrayal, and discusses it with his usual "*sans doute*."<sup>1</sup> Yet the extrusion of the Judas story from the gospels as a late interpolation—an extrusion called for by the negation of such a story even in the interpolation as to the resurrection in First Corinthians—would have removed at least one of the most obvious stumbling-blocks to the belief in the historicity of the main story.

Not that the extrusion can finally save the historicity of the rest. Loisy has with signal candour avowed that if the story of the trial before Pilate can be effectively called in question there remains no solid ground for affirming the historicity of Jesus. And that story is by an increasing number of students regarded as incredible and fictitious, the product either of the general evangelical purpose of throwing the guilt of the death of Jesus on the Jews or of a special purpose of dissociating the gospel Jesus from the memory of a human sacrifice in which a "Jesus Barabbas" was originally the annual victim, and latterly the mock victim. Even so the stories of the betrayal by Judas and the denial by Peter can be seen to be results of the Gentile animus against the Twelve in the early Church.<sup>2</sup> Let us ask how Peter could be described

<sup>1</sup> *L'Évangile selon Marc*, 1912, p. 419.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. L. G. Rylands, in his important work on *The Evolution of Christianity* (R. P. A., 1927), writes (p. 178) that "The episode of Peter's denial of Jesus was included in the Gospel according to the Hebrews, an episode so shameful for Peter that no Jewish Christian could have invented it." It should be noted that the documentary basis for this is rather slender, being only a marginal note on Tischendorf's Codex A at Mt. xxvi, 74:—"The Jewish [Τὸ Ἰουδαϊκόν]: "And he denied and swore and cursed." Still, it

as holding up his head in the first days at Jerusalem, and dooming Ananias and Sapphira for a far slighter sin, if he were known to have basely and repeatedly denied his Lord—let us ask this, and we get a new vision of the long process of recrimination and imputation between Judaist and Gentile Christians, which in the Acts is sought to be reduced to an accommodation.

It has long been the fashion of clerical exegetes to evade or belittle the significance of that struggle, of which the historic actuality was first made clear by Baur; and even so unconventional a thinker as Dr. Burkitt has applauded the verdict that "It is one of the mistakes of the Tübingen School that it did not recognize that Peter, not only in Acts but in the Pauline Epistles, is on the Hellenistic, not the Hebrew side." "This admirable sentence," writes Dr. Burkitt,<sup>1</sup> "may be taken to mark the end of a long controversy." It really marks the continuance, or revival, of the tactic of putting the spy-glass to the blind eye. To limit the survey to the dubious activities of Peter and Paul as deduced from falsified documents is to exclude from survey the main body of the facts. The cue for "liberal" orthodoxy has always been<sup>2</sup> to claim, as against Baur, that the strife between Paul and Peter was short-lived. The gospel texts, critically studied, are the witness that the real struggle was long, and that the narrative in Acts is a mere dramatization of a protracted schism.<sup>3</sup>

is conceivable that the story was added at a late date to an originally Judaic gospel. Mr. E. B. Nicholson surmises a "Nazarene" MS.

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Beginnings*, p. 57 note, citing Professors Jackson and Lake.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Donaldson, *Crit. Hist. of Christ. Lit.*, 1864, i, 43.

<sup>3</sup> I am moved to add in this connection that Professor Burkitt

## VI.—MYTH-THEORY AND BIOGRAPHICAL HYPOTHESIS

But, it may be asked, if we accept the historicity of Peter and Paul, in despite of all manner of falsifications of their records and epistles, how shall we deny the historicity of Jesus? That is a large question, not to be disposed of on the particular issue as to the betrayal story, though that story is one of the vital clues. Suffice it at this point to note how the myth theory accounts for elements in the gospel narrative which even the biographical school, taking endless liberties with the texts and multiplying guesses without documentary warrant, find perplexing.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, for instance, follows the process of latter-day critical disintegration of the gospels up to a point at which, as he justly declares, the current "liberal" or biographical conception of

does not take due account of Baur's exposition in *Das Christenthum*. The English adoption of a Ritschlian in preference to a Baurian attitude is the natural expression of clerical preference for the lax and self-contradictory traditionist over the stricter reasoner. Baur is not at all met by the facile pronouncement cited. Again, in his own verdict (*The Gospel History*, 3rd ed., p. 39), that "Baur and his followers" rejected the claim for the priority of Mark because Matthew has the Sermon on the Mount and Mark has not, Dr. Burkitt is merely extravagant. "This is of course a very crude way of putting the matter," he pleasantly confesses, "but I believe it to be near enough." How that can be said by one who has studied Baur's massive discussion in the *Kritische Untersuchungen über die Kanonischen Evangelien* is a mystery. Baur could not have staked his case on the Sermon. He applies a stringent criticism all along the line; a thing never done on the other side in reply. It is much more plausible to say that the Marcan school turned and have clung to their thesis mainly because Mark relieves them from the Birth Story, thus giving a useful lead to the Neo-Unitarian view. This motivation, clear at the starting-point, is now carefully ignored by the champions of the priority of Mark.

Jesus is practically swept away, inasmuch as it has become a mere tissue of contradictions. Then he attempts to establish a new biographical solution, which shall substitute a credible for an incredible account of the turning of the multitude against Jesus when Pilate seeks to save him. Dr. Schweitzer has seen, with the help of Volkmar, that the betrayal story as it stands is a futile invention; but he adheres to the Triumphal Entry, the Rejection, and the Crucifixion; and his own private theory demands a betrayal of some kind.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. J. Warschauer, who in his *Historical Life of Christ* (dedicated to Dr. Schweitzer) follows Dr. Schweitzer at this as at other points, writes (p. 297) that the question *What was it that Judas betrayed?* has been "hardly ever so much as seriously asked." Insofar as this suggests that the question "What was there to betray?" has hardly ever been asked, it should be noted that Dr. Schweitzer, who had put the question in the first-cited form, proceeded from the challenge of Volkmar; that the issue was raised, as above noted, by two English writers, as well as by the French scholar Derenbourg, in the sixties; again, by Cox, in 1895; again, very definitely, by Professor Cheyne in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*; and by Mr. P. C. Sense in 1901. Further, the non-historicity of the betrayal story was affirmed (apart from the general propaganda of the myth-theory) by G. Marquardt in 1900, in his monograph *Der Verrat des Judas Ischarioth: eine Sage*; again by Karl Kautsky in 1908 in his *Der Ursprung des Christentums* (p. 388); again by the Jewish scholar Louis Germain Lévy, in the French weekly *Les droits de l'homme*, April 23, 1911, in an essay entitled *Que Judas le Traître n'a jamais existé*; again by Dr. G. Schläger, in the German *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, in 1914, in an able article on *Die Ungeschichtlichkeit des Verraters Judas*, with new arguments; and yet again, in the same periodical in 1916, in a widely learned article by M. Platts, putting the question "Why did the early Christian community attach weight to the tradition of the Judas stories?" Add that, as above noted, the problem has latterly been pressed by Dr. Jacks in the *Hibbert Journal*, and that it has been repeatedly mooted by the present writer in the past thirty-five years, and the facts are broadly in view. The apathy of professional exegetes on the subject, at which Dr. Warschauer exclaims, is in the ordinary way of English official silence. But Dr. Warschauer, for that matter, seems to have profited as little as anybody by the long discussion.

The gospel story of the Rejection is truly astonishing. The miracle-worker who a few days before had been acclaimed by the whole populace as the Son of David is greeted by the same multitude with the roar of "Crucify him"—this as a result of the sudden secret stirrings of the priests. As Schweitzer claims, such a right-about-face by an entire populace in so short a time, with no motive, is incredible.

How, then, does he explain it? By the stupefying proposition<sup>1</sup> that what Judas did was not to "betray" Jesus in terms of the written story but to tell the priests, what they did not know, that Jesus had privately claimed to be the Messiah, and that it was by spreading *this* knowledge among the people that they were moved to execrate the man they had acclaimed. To claim to be Messiah, argues Dr. Schweitzer, was to commit blasphemy. We must promptly and emphatically answer that it was no such thing. To assert that the Jewish people had long collectively expected a Messiah, and that at the same time they held it blasphemy for *any one* to claim to be He, is to put a flat counter-sense. Barcochba was not charged with blasphemy when he made his claim, though he was freely denounced when he failed. The talk of "false Christs" in the New Testament suggests frequency. The gospel Jesus, in the circumstances alleged, would *not* have been popularly execrated; and the recorded execration, taken with the story of the triumphal entry, is incredible and unintelligible.<sup>2</sup>

If, moreover, the priests proceeded with the

<sup>1</sup> Which, as we have seen, Mr. Middleton Murry develops into a conviction that Jesus had a "secret understanding" with Judas.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the views of Wellhausen, as cited by Dr. Montefiore in his *Commentary on the Synoptics*, i, 356.



populace as Schweitzer suggests, *that* fact must have become known to the Christists, if the rest of the story be true. The disciples are assumed to have got knowledge of trials at which they were not present: how should they, then, have failed to hear of what Judas had really done? Nor was it necessary, as the story stands, for the priests to get any information from Judas in order to question Jesus as to his Messianic claims. The triumphal entry, as described in the synoptics, has a distinctly Messianic aspect, though Schweitzer will not admit it. The only conclusion open to the strictly historical student is that neither episode took place; that there had been no triumphal entry; and that the Barabbas story, which Loisy admits to be unhistorical as it stands, points back to something vitally different from the gospel story—an ancient annual Barabbas sacrifice, a ritual human sacrifice of “the Son of the Father,” as to the historic probability of which the details have been elsewhere fully set forth.<sup>1</sup>

Returning, however, to the Judas story, and restricting ourselves to that, we shall find in the mythical theory a solution of all the anomalies which we have been examining. Considered as a Gentile invention to discredit the Judaic Christians and the Twelve, it is readily intelligible. A probable hypothesis is that, in a late form of the mystery drama which can be seen<sup>2</sup> to underlie the gospel chapters of the tragic climax, there was a betrayer who traditionally received the price of blood, the sacrificial victim being always “bought

<sup>1</sup> See *Pagan Christs*, 2nd ed., pp. 146, 162, 182, 185, 186, 199; *The Historical Jesus*, p. 170 sq.; and *The Jesus Problem*, pp. 31-9.

<sup>2</sup> See below, Part II, sec. iii.

with a price." The betrayer might naturally be named just *Judaios*, "a Jew"; though it is possible that the Old Testament story of the betrayal of Joseph by Judah and his ten brethren might suggest the name of Judas. In any case, the betrayer, in the mystery drama, would be likely to carry a bag to receive his thirty shekels, which, be it remembered, was the usual price of a slave. To make the traitor a Judas, and to make him one of the Twelve, would be a simple way, for Gentile Christians, to throw fresh odium on the Judaic side.

**The Name Iscariot.**—The riddle, indeed, is not completely read until we learn how the branded disciple came to be labelled Judas *Iscariot*. A majority of scholars seem to be satisfied that the Greek Ἰσκαριώθ, or Ἰουδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης, Judas the Iscariot, stands for an Aramaic Judas Ish-Kerioth, 'the man of Kerioth,' or Karioth, a small town in Judea. But this would be an abnormal way of naming, applied to no other apostle; Wellhausen has even pronounced it philologically impossible; and there have been other speculations. The able philologist Dalman, in his treatise 'The Words of Jesus,'<sup>1</sup> thinks "there is every probability that Ἰσκαριώθ, without the article, was the original reading from which arose through misunderstanding Ἰσκαριώτης as well as Σκαριωθ and Σκαριώτης." Professor Blass, on the other hand, thinks that in Luke (vi, 16; xxii, 3) Judas was originally called *Skarioth*, as in Codex D at vi, 16; while yet another philologist, Schulthess, holds that "Iskariota" in the Syrian translation signifies just *Sicarius* = brigand.<sup>2</sup>

"It is a very plausible conjecture," sums up Dalman, "that Ἰσκαριώθ was already unintelligible

<sup>1</sup> Eng. tr. 1902, i, 51.

<sup>2</sup> Klausner, as cited, p. 285 n.

to the evangelist." If that is so, it might very well be unintelligible to us. In the circumstances, however, peculiar interest attaches to the thesis of Professor W. B. Smith, who, after an examination of the philological commentators, contends that "we must reject the accepted interpretation 'Man of Karioth' as impossible, and at the same time the notion that the term is gentilitial at all." Professor Smith's conclusions are (1) that the Syriac *Skariot* is an epithet equivalent to the Hebrew verb *sikkarti*=I will deliver up; (2) that the supposed surname is thus, as Wellhausen surmised, merely an aspersion epithet; and (3) that, "Judas" being probably taken as equivalent with *Ioudaios* (Judæus), the residual significance is just "the Jew Surrenderer."<sup>1</sup>

If the very interesting thesis that *Skariot* was but an epithet signifying "surrenderer" should be established, the problem is substantially solved in terms of the myth theory. Judas is once for all not merely not a historical person but a traditional *functionary*, the person who in the mystery-drama played the part of "deliverer-up" of the divine victim, with "Judas," as equivalent to *Judæus*, for prænomen.

And thus we get rid of "this extraordinary conduct of Judas," which so perplexed even Milman, to the uproarious amusement of Carlyle. The rational explanation of the whole mystery is just that it never happened—the answer which has disposed of so many spurious mysteries in natural history and physics. And one would suppose, as aforesaid, that anybody but the unchanging zealots of the historic creed would be glad thus to dispose

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce Deus*, 1912, pp. 303-17.

of the problem of the "extraordinary conduct of *Jesus*," who in the gospels makes no attempt to save his disciple from committing treachery. He is made to tell the penitent thief, who confesses himself worthy of death for his crimes: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise"—another negation of the gospel sequel, and of Christian doctrine in general. The erring and penitent disciple is ostensibly left to perdition.

The historical student, of course, can no more credit the story of the penitent thief than that of the treachery of Judas. That too is one of the thousand inventions which constitute the gospel narrative. It occurs only in Luke, which is avowedly compiled from many gospels, and, as it stands, certainly contains a multitude of late additions. In Mark the two robbers are crucified with Jesus—as many of the old versions put it, following the text clue indicated in Luke (xxii, 37)—*in order to fulfil the scripture* which said "And he was reckoned with transgressors." We know now that in certain ancient human sacrifices the special victim was placed between two others. But in Mark "they that were with him reproached him"; and in Matthew it is the same. The Luke story is a late theological figment.

**Competing Ideals.**—So manifestly does the Christian ideal suffer from the strange incongruities of gospel narrative with doctrine that we can readily understand the declaration of the estimable Professor Schmiedel that it would make no difference to his religious consciousness, as a Christian, if Jesus were proved to be an entirely non-historical figure. That is in effect the position taken up by Strauss in his original preface of 1835. "The author," he writes, "is aware that the essence of

the Christian faith is perfectly independent of his criticism. The supernatural birth of Christ, his resurrection and ascension, *remain eternal truths, whatever doubts may be cast on their reality as historical facts*.....A dissertation at the close of the work," he adds, "will show that the dogmatic significance of the life of Jesus remains inviolate."

And, to my knowledge, there are cultured and estimable clergymen in this country who tranquilly stand at some such point of view, which has received a certain philosophic standing at the hands of T. H. Green. Some, with him, trace their ideal to the fourth gospel, admittedly non-historical. They proceed, I suppose, to find the "values" of the gospels in their ethical teaching—separating, of course, the grossly unethical doctrines of salvation by faith, and damnation for unbelief, from the humanist ethic of the Sermon on the Mount. And when we proceed to point out that the Sermon on the Mount is just as unhistorical as the narratives; that by the admission of competent scholars it *cannot* have been a delivered Sermon; that it is demonstrably a literary compilation; that every element in it, down to the form of the Beatitudes, is pre-Christian; even as the forms of "the Son of Man" and "the Son of God" are pre-Christian; and that the theoretic "best" of the idealistic ethic, non-resistance to enemies and love of enemies, is as old as the age of the Maccabees—when we point out all this, the cultivators of the ideal, it is to be presumed, will tranquilly reply, with Dr. Montefiore, that that does not matter to them; that the ideal figure and the ideal teaching are "values," and are as such, for them, all-sufficing.

So be it, for them. After a large part of the world

has for nigh two thousand years lived religiously on a belief in an impossible theory of the universe, knitted with an impossible story of the manner of the establishment of its creed, the system may well go on subsisting for a while at the hands of well-meaning ministers who know its historic unreality. So did the cults of Brahma and Bel and Amun and Osiris and Zeus and Apollo endure for many centuries at the hands of equally enlightened and perhaps benevolent priests, ministering to an unthinking multitude, and utilizing great and beautiful temples which no sane man would seek to ruin.

But, after all, the visionary creeds do in time pass away, and the temples cease to function, before "the unimaginable touch of time." New realities, new visions of the past reality, engender new action; and the transmutation is in terms of the amount of cognition and comprehension, and energy for change, of the aggregate of the new minds who come upon the scene. Always the creeds and the temples are either imperceptibly or swiftly decaying; and it is in virtue of the sense of reality prevailing for the time being that they stand or fade. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!

For there is another ideal now current among men. The ideal of those who, ceasing to believe in the actuality of the Jesus story, cling to it as a symbol or compendium, may be termed an ideal of Goodness and Moral Beauty detached from the ideal of Truth. But there remains for the rest of us the ideal of Truth, as the one security for a goodness and a beauty which can endure. Beauty and goodness, indeed, are to be realized not under the primary concept of truth, being first perceptible

and desirable in and for themselves ; but as little are they to be sought or found by way of a negation of truth. Goodness divorced from truth is in itself a laming conception, a moral pessimism ; and a moral beauty likewise so divorced is in precisely the same case.

The well-intentioned devotees of the Christian Ideal are under a burden which they cannot cast off, the burden of the ethical error and unethical temper everywhere entangled with the doctrine in which they find beauty. For the intuitive ideal of goodness is to be purified only by loyalty to the spirit of truth. It is in the last and most systematically factitious of the four gospels that we read the oracle which condemns itself and all who think to tamper vitally with truth in the interests of human well-being : "The Truth shall make you free." That oracle has served for an æon that has thought to find truth by authority and not by search. The new age seeks truth by discarding oracles and searching for it by the freed powers of the human mind. And if the levels of the mental life are to rise and not to fall, it is truth so sought and so found that will prevail.

For there is something essentially demoralizing in the modern official attitude of continued reverence towards a record which even under official exposition is progressively revealed as a tissue of interpolations, made by men with no sense of literary veracity. Dr. Burkitt has very candidly, and yet oddly, avowed<sup>1</sup> that "literary piety is a quality—I will not go so far as to call it an absolute virtue—which hardly makes its appearance in Christendom before 150 A.D. Indeed,

<sup>1</sup> *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, 3rd ed., p. 15.

there is not much of it to be found even then." For "literary piety" read "literary or historical veracity," and there arises the question why Dr. Burkitt does not reckon such a quality an absolute virtue. Is it that he will not see the contrary as a vice? For considerate students he is avowing that the compilers and interpolators of the gospels were unveridical men. If our literary and academic evolution is to end in a consensus that in such a state of things there is no harm, the latter state of Christianity will verily be worse than the first. Arraigned for unreason, it can hardly profit by making light of a vast moral defalcation. The ethical ruin of the New Testament lies in the fact that it forever conjoins a doctrine of love with a propaganda of hate, from its first book to its last, thus revealing the doctrine of love as a new form of "Pharisaism." If to that inner rift there is to be added a claim to build faith and hope on a process of fraud, there will verily not be left one stone upon another.



## PART II

### THE JESUS MYTH

#### I.—THE NEO-UNITARIAN POSITION

It would of course be unjust to the active majority of the clergy of the day to suppose that they either do or would carry on the cult after having realized that it is historically unreal. When Bishop Gore expounds the Sermon on the Mount he does not for a moment doubt that he is setting forth the really uttered words of "Our Lord," whom he so names either as believing him God Incarnate or revering him as the wisest and noblest of all human beings. And to that attitude the scholarly clergy must conform. Dean Inge, whom it is perhaps not indiscreet to designate as the most accomplished Sadducee of the age (albeit a great Scribe), clearly recognizes that, for average Church-of-England purposes, it would never do to admit that the gospel Jesus is merely a "Cult-Hero," like Adonis or Attis.

For, whatever may be the powers of sincere religionists like Professor Schmiedel in the way of ideal-worship, the British taxpayer will never consent to support a Christian State Church of which the accredited leaders avow that Jesus Christ never really existed. The deans and chapters must find a more practicable solution than that, be it Unitarian or Trinitarian. As a doughty champion of orthodoxy puts it: "The Christianity of

Green is a mere phantom, and whatever be its speculative validity, it has nothing of the efficacy of a gospel."<sup>1</sup> The champion himself takes the safe course of outfacing doubt with rhetoric, for which there is always a facile audience.

Green, in fact, was at this point the disciple of Strauss, who in his youth had the Hegelian assurance to tell the world that the critics who supposed they were destroying the "truth" of the Christian faith by exposing the incredibility of the gospel history were "frivolous." Strauss was perfectly serious. He was not saying, as a humorous philosopher might, that it was ridiculous to expect to get rid of a time-honoured and well-endowed church system by merely showing that the gospel narratives are no more true than the God-stories of Homer and Hesiod, or the religion of Isis and Osiris, seeing that salaried priesthods were never subversible by such criticism. Strauss had no humour for such issues. He was seriously explaining that, though Jesus was nothing like what the gospels said, there is a philosophic sense in which God is incarnate in the human race, and that the Christian system can quite soundly and profitably be readjusted to that view.

To a non-Hegelian mind, the concluding treatise in which Strauss elaborates this ærial structure may be said to represent solemn "frivolity" raised to the highest powers of verbiage. Even in Germany it counted for practically nothing as against the ordinary sense of veracity, whether for believers

<sup>1</sup> Professor David Smith, D.D., of Londonderry, *The Historic Jesus*, n. d., p. 19. Dr. Smith's protest would seem to point also against Dr. C. G. Montefiore, who, without professing to seek a "gospel," seems to argue that the Jesus figure is efficacious whether or not the sayings put in his mouth are genuine.

or for unbelievers ; and in his old age, writing his book on 'The Old Faith and the New,' Strauss was content to ignore his early Hegelian fantasy. Ideal-worshippers there doubtless were in Germany as elsewhere ; but Christology in Germany as in England has gone on evolving on the old lines—always changing, that is, in its forms, but always proceeding on the assumption that somewhere underneath the tissue of fables and fictions in the gospels there is to be found a Personality of some kind, who taught Something, which somehow is to be got at.

The vogue of Professor Albert Schweitzer in England illustrates the procedure. For a time that gifted and versatile enthusiast was in great favour as having shown that the "liberal" or Neo-Unitarian attempt to set forth a historical Jesus had broken down, and that the myth-theorists, whose books (when not German) he absurdly falsified without having read them, were talking mere nonsense. Then, rather suddenly, it was realized that this destructive criticism of the critics counted rather against than for faith, and there was a reaction. The late Professor Sanday had delivered a course of Schweitzerian lectures at Oxford and Cambridge in 1907, creating, we are told, "a furore among the younger men." They must have supposed, with the venerable lecturer, that to make hay with the Neo-Unitarian Lives of Jesus was somehow to restore or buttress the faith that was delivered to the saints. When the book in question was translated (1910) under the title of 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus,' and published with a preface by Professor F. C. Burkitt, it was found that the people most edified were the supporters of the myth theory ; whereupon Professor

Sanday pathetically explained in the *Hibbert Journal* (1911) that he had been over-hasty in supporting it.

He certainly had been. Schweitzer's conception of Jesus, though eloquently assertive of the historicity of Somebody, who either taught or believed Something, is far more destructive of the credibility of the gospels as records than are the diverging biographical reconstructions of the Neo-Unitarian schools from Renan onwards. His affirmations are simply deductions reached by him from emotional assumptions that have no more scientific justification than those of Renan.<sup>1</sup> And that seems to be why, in despite of the sad defection of Professor Sanday, he has still a religious following.

It was one of those followers who in 1913 translated a prior work by him, of which the German title had been 'The Mystery of the Messiahship and the Passion: A Sketch of the Life of Jesus,' but which in the English version<sup>2</sup> appears as 'The Mystery of the Kingdom of God,' with the subtitle of 'The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion.' The religious "value" of this treatise appears to be held to lie in its fervent conviction that, whatever Jesus may have said or done or thought, he really reached a final conviction as to his Messiahship, to the effect that it was "futuristic"—that is, realizable only through death. Such a doctrine—here laid down much more unreservedly

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Dr. Vacher Burch is within his rights (though he exceeds them in his terminology) when he complains in his *Jesus Christ and His Revelation* (1927, p. 17) that Dr. Schweitzer "remade Jesus in terms of Jewish Apocalyptic. He was a more thorough talmudizer than most of the writers he had analysed."

<sup>2</sup> Translated, with an Introduction, by Mr. Walter Lowrie.