

ENGLISH HISTORICAL NOVELS ON THE FIRST CENTURY
A.D. AS REFLECTING THE TRENDS OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT DURING
THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

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October 1957.
(*June, 1958.*)



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my deep sense of indebtedness to Dr. A. M. Clark, of the English Language and Literature Department of Edinburgh University, for the kindness and patience with which he has guided and advised me through my course of study in preparation for this Thesis; and especially for the constant stimulus of suggestion with which he has opened up to me further areas of investigation. Whatever there may be of value in the results has been largely due to his prompting and inspiration.

I wish also to thank my former Professor of Church History, and present associate-supervisor, the Reverend Principal (Emeritus) Hugh Watt, D.D., for reading my manuscripts and giving me the benefit of his advice and encouragement.

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CHAPTER I

"THE OUTSIDE TRADITION"

"Novellis, novellis, of wonderful marvellys,
Were high and sweet unto the hearing,
As Scripture tells, these strange novellis,
To you I bring."

(The Coventry Nativity Play)

After three days of searching, Joseph and Mary found the boy Jesus "in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions." (1) Many questioning minds in the last century and a half have seized upon the last phrase of the quotation, and have found in it a heightened personal significance in the light of their own religious experience. "Why is it assumed that no one can have difficulties unless he be wicked?" asked James Anthony Froude's sceptical hero in The Nemesis of Faith (1849). (2) And when Tennyson wrote his often quoted reply to the same question:-

"You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds..." (3)

(1) Lk.ii.46. (2) p.55, 1903 edition. (3) In Memoriam,
xvii.

he was simply stating the plain fact, that in an age in which expanding knowledge put a strain upon all accepted ideas of life, the mind that probed beneath the accepted interpretations of experience, that asked questions and felt the difficulties besetting the further reaches of knowledge and belief, was often much more deeply and sincerely religious — George Eliot's, for example — than many another that fitted more easily and conventionally into the orthodox patterns of the creeds. It was part of the achievement of Tennyson's In Memoriam (1850) that it vindicated the right to ask questions not only as a necessary, if painful and often unhappy, step in religious understanding, but even as being itself an integral element in the full experience of faith. After all, Paul himself had confessed in one of the great illumined passages of his epistles: "Now I know in part...."(1)

The last century and a half, over most of its course, has been a period of asking questions; and for that very reason it has also been a period of affirmations, counter-affirmations and reconsiderations in the relative spheres of religious faith and secular knowledge. Nor has this questioning mood been confined to rationalists and sceptics.(2) It has marked the more

(1) Cor.xiii.12. (2) cf. Charles Hennell - Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity, 1838. Francis Newman - Phases of Faith, 1850; The Soul, 1849. J.A. Froude - The Nemesis of Faith, 1849

formative writings of religious thinkers from the beginning of the 19th. Century. (1) The popularity of the religious novel in the mid-century is symptomatic of the ferment of ideas going on at that time, (2) and it was in keeping with the prevailing mood that there should be a development of the religio-historical novel from Lockhart's Valerius (1821) onwards dealing with the early Christian period.

For most of the 19th. Century, the historical novelists were obviously nervous of the New Testament period, preferring if possible a late 2nd. to a 5th. Century setting, or if they did come within the New Testament period, avoiding scriptural events and handling very gingerly any reference to New Testament personages. But with Edwin A. Abbott's Philochristus (1878), the historical novelist grasped the nettle of modernism firmly with both hands. Philochristus is an attempt to recapture a picture of Jesus as He was, and of the historical setting of His ministry through the memoirs of an unknown disciple. From its appearance onwards, there flowed a stream of novels, varying from

(1) cf. S.T. Coleridge - Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit, 1840; Aids to Reflection, 1825. T. Erskine of Linlathen - The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel, 1828.
 (2) See A.L. Drummond - The Churches in English Fiction, 1950, chapter 2. Fuller discussion in ch.3, infra.

romance to historical reconstruction, set in the New Testament period and dealing more or less directly with New Testament events and persons. The stream became a spate in the years between the two world wars, and still continues so. The list of authors contains a number of names that are much better known for their work in the more general fields of the modern novel than in the specialized zone of the religio-historical novel.(1) It would seem that the impulse with many of them has been, not just to write an historical novel, but to trace out in a living picture what they believe (or question) about Christianity as a revelation of God in history.

In this type of fiction, the novelist turns his imaginative energy into painting a picture of some aspect of the New Testament world. The distinctive interest lies in the purpose he has in mind. Sometimes it is to build up, sometimes to destroy, sometimes to

(1) As, for example, Marie Corelli - Barabbas, 1893; H. Rider Haggard - Pearl Maiden, 1903; Mary Borden - Mary of Nazareth, 1933; The King of the Jews, 1935. Naomi Mitchison - The Blood of the Martyrs, 1939; and Victor MacClure - A Certain Woman, 1950.

The list could easily be extended, but Victor MacClure is a particularly striking example of a writer of popular thrillers who evidently had to get something out of his system by writing an historical novel which would give a picture of the Jesus of faith seen through the eyes of Mary Magdalene.

recondition the historic structure of the faith. (1) Sometimes it is simply to tell a story of romance and adventure with the religious and historical events of the New Testament as a background. (2) Some novels were written to supplement the "official" narrative, to re-create the childhood and youth of Jesus (3), or to fill in the gaps in the Apostles' lives, or again, to describe what really happened behind the documents (4), to express the author's own insight into the life of Jesus and His Church, or else his doubts and difficulties about it (5). They are stories about Jesus or about His family, or about the Apostles and their Church communities -- or about the pagan world surrounding Christianity (6) -- coloured by varying interpretations of Christianity or particular beliefs about Jesus; written to explore the relative importance of Jesus and Paul to the belief of the Church, to exploit the

(1) Victor MacClure - A Certain Woman, 1950 to build up; George Moore - The Brook Kerith, 1916, essentially destructive; By An Unknown Disciple, 1919, to recondition.

(2) Lew Wallace - Ben Hur, 1880.

(3) John Oxenham - The Hidden Years, 1925.

(4) Anon. - Paul the Jew, 1927; E.A. Abbott - Onesimus, 1882.

(5) By an Unknown Disciple, 1918; E. A. Abbott - Philochristus, 1878.

(6) W.P. Crozier - The Fates Are Laughing, 1945, from a non-Christian standpoint; Evan John - The Darkness, 1955, from a Christian standpoint.

differences between Peter, Paul and James (1), to support or criticise a doctrine about Jesus. (2). Some are orthodox in outlook, others varying from the less orthodox and the heterodox to rank heresy -- if this phrase has not become an anachronism in these free-thinking days.

Underlying the interest both of the author and his reading public is the mood of asking questions. What was the actual Jesus like? What really happened in history? If it was something less than is contained in the Gospel records, how did the change, the development of the disciples' belief as shown in them, come about? Why did Jesus have to die on the cross, and what was the nature of the Resurrection experiences? Was God really "in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself"? (3) What are the facts behind the beliefs? -- the final question of a sceptical, analytical, questioning age. And so, out of what he believes or does not believe, the novelist constructs his story about Jesus

(1) Don Byrne - Brother Saul, 1927; and most novels about Paul since then admit the differences with varying emphasis.

(2) By An Unknown Disciple, 1918; Gerald Heard - The Gospel According to Gamaliel, 1946.

(3) 2 Cor. v.19.

Christ, the Apostles, or the people of the early Church.

The great difference between the religio-historical novelist (whether he is orthodox or heterodox in his views) and the "straight" writer on Christian origins or theology, is that the novelist, as a story-teller, brings to his interpretation a much greater freedom of imagination to reconstruct and add to the circumstances of the story; and together with that he brings to it the literary techniques of the secular novel or romance. He is not bound by the logic of argument or the authority and limitations of historical sources to the same extent as the historian or the theologian. His imagination supplies as well as supplements the argument and the plot (1), creates the characters, delves into their motives and purposes; and the reader judges the result by its realism first as the creation of the novelist's art and imagination, and only secondarily by its possible faithfulness to historical fact.

(1) As an example of this, compare F.G. Slaughter's story of Luke gathering the Gospel materials together in The Road To Bithynia, Bk.V. chps. viii-xii, with Vincent Taylor's Formation Of The Gospel Tradition, p. 183-6, or with Manson's Luke, (Moffat Comm) Introduction, p.xxviii-xxix.

I have entitled this class of religio-historical fiction 'the Novel of the Outside Tradition', because in its essential characteristics it bears a remarkable likeness to, and is in fact a literary descendant from, the Christian romance literature that developed from the 2nd. Century onwards, after the canon of the four Gospels was closed.(1) The earliest Gospel was the Oral Tradition, "delivered"(2) by word of mouth, and tending to become centred, as gathering points of the Tradition, in leading Church communities such as Jerusalem, Caesarea, Antioch, Rome and Ephesus. It was safeguarded from disintegration and from intrusions, by the place of the Person of Jesus Christ in the Sacraments, Worship and preaching of the Church, as well as by the mnemonic forms of speech which Jesus used.(3) By the middle of the 1st. Century, these sayings and stories about Jesus were tending to be gathered together by the Church communities

(1) In the following description of the Oral and Outside Tradition of the Gospel, which is necessarily a severely pruned epitome of the case, I have used as sources - Martin Dibelius - A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature, 1937; Vincent Taylor - The Formation of the Gospel Tradition, 1933; (especially ch.viii on "The Emergence of the Gospels"; H.G.G.Herklots - A Fresh Approach to the New Testament, 1950, especially chs. x and xi; and E.J. Goodspeed - A History of Early Christian Literature, 1942.
 (2) cf. Lk.i.2: 1 Cor.xv.3; and especially 1 Cor.xi,23,ff
 (3) Dibelius - A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature, p.28-35.

into such collections as Luke refers to at the beginning of his Gospel. (1) The period between the year 65 A.D. and the end of the Century is commonly recognized as the formative time during which the Gospels as we know them were written -- by Mark in Rome, by Luke from material probably gathered in Judaea and Caesarea, by Matthew possibly in Antioch, and by the "Evangelist" in Ephesus. (2)

From about 120 A.D., the accepted Tradition throughout the Churches became that contained in the four written Gospels. (3) Not all the Oral Tradition had been used in them. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did", concludes John's Gospel, "the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written". The oral tradition still continued with much popular acceptance, as we may gather from Papias's expressed regard for it about 140 A.D., as well as from its own further development in the hand, and on the lips, of the people. But it was no

(1) Lk. i. 1. cf. Vincent Taylor, op. cit., p. 175
 (2) cf. Papias (c. 130 A.D.) quoted by Eusebius, H.E. III, 39; Treneaus (c. 200 A.D.) in Eusebius - Historia Ecclesiastica, V. 8; and the Muratorian Canon (end of 2nd. Century) in Bettinson's - Documents of the Christian Church, p. 40. 170
 (3) Goodspeed, p. 61.

longer used as authoritative ^{fit} in the worship and preaching of the Church. It now became "the Outside Tradition"(1) and passed into the open currency of the people, no longer safeguarded by the sacred milieu ^l of Word and Sacrament, but guided and influenced by the speculations, longings, curiosities and superstitions of the world.

In the 2nd. Century A.D., as in the 19th., people were asking questions, a different sort of question, but evincing the same human curiosity to know more about Jesus and His Way, the same desire to fit Him, if possible, into their own personal prepossessions of ideas, superstitions, belief or unbelief. What was the boy Jesus like, this Son of God, in the growing years? What was the life of Mary, the virginal vessel of the Incarnation? What were the agonies of the Cross to a nature that was at once human and divine? Was it not a denial of His divinity to say that He felt in His flesh all the agonies of the scourging and the crucifixion? What was His relation as Son of God to the Father, or to the other gods and demi-gods of the nature and mystery religions? How did Jesus, the Saviour of the World, in His dying redeem the multitude of faithful already dead? What were the adventures of the heroes and heroines of the Church's mission to the world? How

(1) The name given it by Dibelius, op. cit., p.67.

would Jesus come again and when?

It is not surprising that stories, especially of the infancy of Jesus, His Passion and Resurrection, should have multiplied even while the accepted tradition was being gathered into documentary form: and a comparison between the "apocryphal gospels" into which these were in time collected, and our four "accepted" Gospels, increases one's respect for the care and integrity with which the material of the latter was selected. The Agrapha, or "sayings of Jesus" unrecorded in the Gospels, remain scattered throughout the works of the early Fathers, and isolated sayings of Jesus have been recovered in Egyptian scraps of papyrus, to tease our curiosity concerning the "many other things that Jesus did", and which have not been recorded in the Gospels. (1) But the examination of them shows that nothing of vital significance to the Gospel of Christ was left out by the omission of them from the accepted record.

"The Church has four Gospels", wrote Origen (185-254 A.D.), "the sects very many I know a gospel that is called According to Thomas, and one According to Matthias, and we have read many others". (2) The

(1) For Agrapha and Gospel fragments, see James, pp. 25-34, 569-570. 7

(2) Origen on Luke, homily 1.

Infancy Gospels, of which the Protevangelium of James (1) and the Gospel of Thomas (2) are the most important sources, tell the traditional tales of the birth and upbringing of the Virgin Mary (Protevangelium) and incidents of the boyhood of Jesus in which the marvellous predominates (Gospel of James). Both these Gospels date from the 2nd. Century. The guiding factors had apparently been, in the first place, the curiosity and wonder of childlike and unlearned minds, which created a folklore out of the mystery of their faith in God incarnate in an infant of days; and, in the second place, the purpose in the minds of the writers who gathered these tales into a written document. The Protevangelium of James was written to support the Virgin Birth, and in praise of the purity of the Virgin Mary; and the Gospel of Thomas tells of the youth of Jesus with an overtone of Gnostic belief about the marvels of His divine nature.

The Passion Gospels embellish the narrative of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. The fragmentary Gospel of Peter (c.150) (3), probably the oldest among

{1} The Apocryphal New Testament, ed. M.R. James, p.38, ff.
 {2} M.R. James, op. cit., p.49, ff.
 {3} James, op. cit., p.90, ff.

them, exalts the divinity of Jesus by minimising the reality of His sufferings, and in its account of the Resurrection has a striking dramatisation of 1 Peter, iiii, 19, ff., -- "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison". The soldiers at the tomb saw "three men come out of the sepulchre, and two of them sustaining the other, and a cross following after them. And of the two they saw that their heads reached unto heaven, but of him that was led by them that it overpassed the heavens. And they heard a voice out of the heavens saying - Hast thou preached unto them that sleep? And an answer was heard from the cross, saying: Yea." (1)

The 4th. Century Gospel of Nicodemus (or, Acts of Pilate) tells the experiences of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea during and after the events of the Passion and Resurrection, and has appended to it an older document, The Descent into Hell, which reflects the interest of 2nd Century writers in Christ's deliverance of the dead from Hades.(2) The point of departure here is in St. Matthew's Gospel, xxvii.50-53:- "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the

(1) op. cit., p.92-93; or Gospel of Peter, x.39-42.

(2) James op. cit., p.123, ff.

top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." The Descent into Hell is interesting not only for its religious ideas, but because it makes a very exciting story indeed in which Leucius and Karinus tell how the Son of God stormed the gates of hell, and released the faithful dead. The story is told with a grandeur and vividness of imagination that awes and stimulates both the mind and the feelings, from the point when a great light shines into the deep, and Abraham gathers the dead souls together and Esaias cries: "This light is of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, concerning which I prophesied when I was yet alive." (1) John the Baptist comes to proclaim the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world (2); and afterwards, "there came a great voice as of thunder, saying: Lift up, O princes, your gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.(3) When Hades heard, he said unto Satan: Go forth if thou art able, and withstand Him. So Satan

(1) James. op. cit., p.124.

(2) Jo. 1. 29

(3) Ps.xxiv. 7-10., Ps.cvii. 14-16

went forth. Then said Hades unto his devils: Make fast the gates of brass well and strongly, and the bars of iron, and keep my locks, and stand upright, and beware at all points, for if He come in hither, woe will take *hold* on us". (1)

The Descent into Hell is the story-teller's splendidly imaginative response to popular questionings. What happened between the world of the living and the dead at the moment of Christ's death? The whole account is set in a typical story-teller's frame, being represented as the first-hand accounts of Leucius and Karinus, two of the resurrected prisoners of death, written at Arimathea at the request of Joseph and Nicodemus before their assumption into heaven.(2) One can well understand how this highly imaginative composition, intended as it was to supplement and reinforce the belief in the Resurrection, would appeal to the sense of wonder in an age which, as the mystery religions give evidence by their existence and proliferation, hungered to penetrate the mystery beyond life and death.

The adventures of the Apostles and of the early

(1) James, op. cit., p.132-133

(2) op. cit. p. 144

missionaries and converts of the Church were also the subject of a lively popular tradition, which in literary form produced the various apocryphal books of Acts. The most interesting of these are the Acts of John (c.150 A.D) (1), attributed to a traditional companion of John, one Leucius; the Acts of Paul, including the Acts of Paul and Thecla (c.160-170) (2), whose author was degraded for writing them, according to Tertullian (3); the Acts of Peter (c.200), and the Acts of Andrew and Thomas (3rd. Century). All these books, though they vary widely in the character of belief and purpose which they were written to serve, share in the common influence of the canonical Acts of the Apostles as their model in sacred literature, and the literary technique of the professional story-teller as their model in secular romance. They are in fact religious fiction. The Acts of John, written in opposition to the cult of Artemis in Ephesus, is Gnostic in outlook, and treats the sufferings of Jesus on the cross as symbolical. John relates the appearance of Jesus to him on the Mount of Olives while He was being crucified on Golgotha.(4) Celibacy is exalted and marriage reprobated as "the experiment of the serpent" and "the gift of death".(5)

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- (1) Op. cit., p.228, ff.
 (2) op. cit., p.270, ff.
 (3) Tertullian-De Baptismo, XVII.
 (4) James, op. cit., p. 254-256
 (5) op. cit., p.266.

The adventures and agonisings of Drusiana and her husband Andronicus, living in continence, and the machinations of her lover, are told with all the erotic interest of the Greek romances in reverse. The marvellous predominates in the stories of the Apostle's works, raising from the dead being a repeated artifice (paralleled by the premature burials of the secular romances), to keep the exciting plot going. The most charming wonder-tale, with the hint of a story-teller's chuckle in it, is that in which John addresses the bugs in bed, with its delightful moral, - "This creature hearkened unto the voice of a man, and abode by itself and was quiet and trespassed not; but we which hear the voice and commandments of God disobey and are light-minded; and for how long?"(1)

Compare and contrast all this with the Ephesiaca of Xenophon of Ephesus (2nd. and 3rd. Century), or the Aethiopica of Heliodorus (3rd. Century), surviving examples of the kind of non-Christian romance with which the early Christian writers had to compete. They were not only romances of love and adventure, with every device of shipwreck, piracy, kidnapping, attempted rape, premature burial, hidden identity, coincidence, dream and omen, all thrown in for good measure to end in a happy

(1) op. cit., p.242-243.

reunion; but they were also propaganda for the cults of Artemis and Isis, who look after the fortunes of their devotees. In the modern sense of the word, there was no such thing as secular romance: they were all bound up with the ideas of the mystery and nature cults; and the

Page 18. Additional footnote.

The earliest of these Greek prose novels is Xenophon's Cyropaedia (4th. Century B.C.) which expounds his philosophical, political and educational ideas in the framework of a largely fictitious tale of the career of Cyrus the Great. There is a corpus of more or less fictitious accounts of Alexander starting from his own lifetime. (See The Oxford Classical Dictionary, sub "Alexander"). A further impulse in the development of fiction came from the Suasoriae and Controversiae of the rhetorical schools. (See The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature, sub "Novels" and "Seneca the Elder").

Two later examples of Greek philosophical fiction are Dio Chrysostom's The Hunters of Euboea, (1st. Century A.D.) a Stoic philosopher's presentation of the ideal of the simple life in the form of a traveller's tale; and Philostratus' religious-philosophical life of Apollonius of Tyana (written c.170-250 A.D.), which blends fact with fiction in honour of the wandering Cappadocian, Pythagorean philosopher and mystic of the 1st. Century A.D., whose "miracles" were claimed by later followers to rival Christ's.

Of the later popular "erotic" Greek novels of romance and adventure, apart from the Ephesiaca and Aethiopica referred to above, the following should be noted:- Chaereas and Callirhoe by Chariton (c.150 A.D.); the pastoral romance, Daphnis and Chloe, by Longus (2nd to 3rd Century A.D.); the story of Apollonius of Tyre, whose author is unknown (3rd. Century A.D.); and Leucippe and Cleitophon, by Achilles Tatius (4th Century A.D.)

The Latin novels are represented by Petronius Arbiter's Satyricon (1st Century A.D.), a type of the picaresque novel, and The Golden Ass of Lucius Apuleius (2nd Century A.D.), written in honour of the cult of Isis and Osiris. Both of these (and also the Roman satirists) have been much drawn on as source material in descriptions of Roman social life by modern historical novelists.

For the contribution of the philosophical Dialogue to fiction, see the additional footnote to page 21.

reunion; but they were also propaganda for the cults of Artemis and Isis, who look after the fortunes of their devotees. In the modern sense of the word, there was no such thing as secular romance: they were all bound up with the ideas of the mystery and nature cults; and the Christian romances are to be viewed as countering, both as tales and in their ideas, the propaganda and influence of the non-Christian romances.

The Acts of Peter (c.200) develop the adventures of Peter against the machinations of Simon Magus, thirsting for revenge for his humiliation in Samaria, as recorded in the canonical book of Acts, viii.9-24. These exploits, which are more marvellous than edifying, culminate in the famous episode of Simon's attempt to fly from a tower in Rome, watched by Nero. (1) Here again the Christian story-teller is not only meeting the popular demand for tales of adventure about the Apostolic heroes, but is contending with stories of such Gnostic magician-teachers as Simon Magus or the Pythagorean gymnosophist and reputed wonder-worker, Apollonius of Tyana, whose cult was popular in the 1st. and 2nd. Centuries. Philostratus wrote his largely fictitious life of Apollonius of Tyana early in the 3rd. Century as

(1) op. cit., p.300, ff.

anti-Christian propaganda and in support of his cult, in so doing directly challenging the miracles of Christ.

The Acts of Paul and Thecla (c.160-170), were written in praise of Paul, the celibate life, and — with a surprisingly un-Pauline note of feminism — of Thecla.

One purpose of the writer was clearly to assert the right of suitable women to share in the teaching ministry, and also to baptize. He probably had in mind the apostolate

Page 19. Additional note:-

Mention may appositely be made here of the Christian romance, Barlaam and Josaphat (or Joasaph), an attempt to translate the life of the Buddha into the Christian ascetic tradition. The name Josaphat is a variant of Bodisatva, a title of the Buddha. It was attributed to St. John of Damascus (8th. Century), though an earlier Syrian source has been suggested. Written to further the monastic ideal, it seeks to assimilate elements of the Buddha's story into Christianity, just as Philostratus attempts to attach the healing and miraculous element in Christ's ministry to his life of Apollonius of Tyana. Barlaam and Josaphat is the story of an Indian prince, immured by his father in his palace, who escapes and fulfils a prophecy concerning himself by becoming converted to Christianity through the hermit Barlaam. After sharing in the rule of his father's kingdom for a number of years, Joasaphat renounces the world and withdraws into the wilderness and the ascetic life with Barlaam. The romance consists of narrative, statements of doctrinal teaching (including the Apology of Aristides), and parabolic fables. It was a popular tale throughout the Middle Ages. Barlaam and Josaphat both appear in the Lives of the Saints of Symeon Metaphrastes, the Byzantine hagiographer (c.960 A.D.), and they were added to the Roman Martyrology by Cesare Baronius, the ecclesiastical historian, in the editions published by him in 1586-1589. Their feast is set on November 27th. In Josaphat or Joasaph, therefore, we have a surprising instance of an early Christian attempt to assimilate the Buddha, through his renunciation of the world and adoption of the ascetic life, into the Christian Calendar of Saints. cf., Oxford Comp. to Classical Lit., Oxf. Comp. to Eng. Lit., and the Oxford Dict. of the Christian Church. Text in the Loeb Classical Library edition of St. John Damascene: Barlaam and Joasaph, translated by G.R. Woodward and Harold Mattingly.

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The Acts of Paul and Thecla (c.160-170), were written in praise of Paul, the celibate life, and -- with a surprisingly un-Pauline note of feminism -- of Thecla. One purpose of the writer was clearly to assert the right of suitable women to share in the teaching ministry, and also to baptize. He probably had in mind the prophetic office of women in the pagan oracles, or else the Christian Montanist movement which was active in the centre of Asia from the year 156 A.D. onwards. Certainly he challenged the Pauline decision of 1 Timothy ii.12 - "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Thecla, converted by Paul -- whose preaching she had overheard from her house across the street! -- in Iconium, breaks her betrothal engagement with Thamyris, and elects to share in the work of evangelism with Paul. It is not surprising that Paul obviously does not know what to do with a young woman of her temperament and determination. Paul is put on trial as one who "alloweth not maidens to marry" (1), and while he is taken before the governor, -- "Thecla rolled herself upon the place where Paul taught when he sat in the prison." (2) Whether the

(1) op. cit. p.275.

(2) op. cit. p.276.

person of Thecla has an historical basis or not, the author had in mind the ecstatic temperament of a very real Iconian woman when he wrote this story about her. She endures with spirit the attacks of her lover upon her virtue, and of the magistrate upon her life. Delivered miraculously from ordeal by fire and the beasts in the amphitheatre of Antioch, she once more seeks out Paul, who, apparently accepting the inevitable, says, -- "Go and teach the word of God", -- with, one suspects, the operative emphasis on the word, Go. The Christian element of romance here reverses the order of the popular erotic tale, finding its sex interest in the pains and plots of the frustrated lover (like the Acts of John already referred to), and its happy ending in the vindication of Thecla's dedication to virginity.

Similarly the Acts of Andrew (3rd. Century) relate a long and varied series of popular tales, in which all kinds of human situation are solved and resolved, and diseases cured by the works of the Apostle. Whether heretical or orthodox in their underlying ideas, the common characteristic of all this prolific literature of the "Outside Tradition", is its use of popular romance and folk-tale to supplement and elaborate the facts given in the spare narratives of the canonical books,

which have stimulated the curiosity and speculations of

Page 21. Additional footnote.

The philosophical Dialogue is also of importance here, as it was used by Christian writers as a weapon in controversy and propaganda. While not setting out to tell a story, the Dialogue used fictional situations and characters to provide the setting and occasion of topics and arguments. The chief classical examples were the dialogues of Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle and Lucian, in Greek literature, and of Cicero and Tacitus, in Roman literature. Justin Martyr (c.100-165 A.D.) wrote his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew (c.135 A.D.) to discuss the relation of the New Covenant to the Old, and of the New Israel (i.e., of the Gentile Church) to the Old. On the other hand, Celsus, the pagan philosopher, in his attack on Christianity in The True Discourse, (c.178 A.D.) used the character of a Jew to voice the objections to Christianity from the angle of Biblical history, and, in particular, to express from the Jewish point of view his repugnance to the Christian ideas of the Incarnation and the Crucifixion. The device left the author, Celsus, free to adopt the detached pose of an independent observer. Minucius Felix (2nd or 3rd Century) presented in Octavius a discussion of paganism and Christianity between Octavius, a Christian, and Caecilius, a pagan, the immediate occasion being the latter's salutation to an image of Serapis. Its chief interest today lies in the character of the Christian's arguments which, intended to appeal to the educated Roman, rely little on Christian doctrine, and much more on Christian morality and on the philosophical arguments in support of monotheism and the providential order.

Lucian, (c.115-200 A.D.) in his Dialogues of the Gods and Dialogues of the Dead, transformed the classical dialogue into a vehicle of satirical scepticism, with which he riddled the ~~gods~~ myths of the gods and the tales of past history. Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864) modelled his classical Imaginary Conversations on both Plato and Lucian, and set the latter in his ironical ~~satir~~ dialogue on early Christianity, Lucian and Timotheus. Walter Pater included a version of the conversation between Lucian and Hermotimus in his philosophical novel, Marius the Epicurean, 1885.

The importance of the Dialogue as a literary form is, first, the contribution of its own essential character as dialogue to enliven and add variety of interest to the story-teller's medium of bare narrative. It also developed the imaginative elements and the psychological interest of personal characters for the story-teller to use, and provided him with a means of introducing ideas as well as incidents into his plots.

which have stimulated the curiosity and speculations of the common people. Moreover, when one considers the propagandist slant of such non-Christian romances as survive, and especially the erotogenic character of many of the popular tales told by the professional storytellers, as exemplified by The Golden Ass of Lucius Apuleius, (c.200), it was probably an act of sheer necessity that some other form of popular tales should be propagated with at least some kind of Christian overtone, however elementary.

The literature of the Outside Tradition, as we find it in the first five centuries of the Christian era, reflects many more outlooks among the common people than that of orthodox Christianity. It is essentially popular in its appeal, and it reflects some aspect of Christian thought or speculation in the half-light of the seething religious quests of the Hellenistic world, the fears, longings and superstitions of the ordinary man and woman. The Outside Tradition is thus the point where Christianity makes its contact with the thoughts and imaginations of the hearts of the people in the world about it, and where they in their turn make their contact with Christianity. It is also the point where the knowledge, ideas and speculations of the contemporary

Page 22. Additional footnote.

The connection between these modern historical novels and the early Christian literature of the Outside Tradition is not simply one of comparison of subject matter and treatment across the wide gulf of time. There are continuous links between them to be traced in the various elements of the romance literature right through the Middle Ages to the revival of classical interest at the Renaissance, all of which in their due course were bound up with the more imaginative treatment of the past in the novels which followed in the wake of Scott and the romantic revival. I would trace these mediaeval links very broadly as follows:-

1. The lore of the Outside Tradition was brought early into the centre of English romance literature through such Anglo-Saxon poems as Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles, which interpret the new subject of the Christian faith in the spirit of the hero warrior of Teutonic epic poetry. Mediaeval romance (and all forms of representational art) drew heavily upon the apocryphal books, as, for example, the metrical poem, The Harrowing of Hell, draws upon the Gospel of Nicodemus.

2. The mediaeval interest in classical subjects, though based on fabulous wonder tales rather than direct knowledge of classical literature, was continued in the romances of King Alisaunder (which, according to Chaucer's Monk's Tale, were "so commune" in his day), in the metrical legends of Troy (which go back to the pseudo-historical Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis rather than to Homer and Virgil), and in such historical romances as Titus and Vespasian or The Destruction of Jerusalem.

3. Through the blending of the Arthurian legends with the Quest of the Holy Grail, the Arthurian cycle of romances became a great inspiring power towards fostering the chivalric ideal of character in association with the mystical quest. The most important romancers in accomplishing the transformation were the French Chrétien de Troyes -- Conte del Graal (1195); Robert de Boron -- Joseph D'Arimathie (13th Century); and the Quête du Graal attributed to the Welshman, Walter Map (c.1200). Sir Thomas Malory's Le Mort D'Arthur, 1485, translated the idealised legends at their best into English literature. As a literature of imaginative narrative, through which moral and religious ideals are given life, it shares in the literary portion of the later historical novel.

4. The Miracle and Mystery Plays of the mediaeval town cycles embody a homely realism and inventiveness in their treatment of Biblical incident, as, for example, the shepherds' scene in the Wakefield Second Shepherds' Play. The same qualities of human realism mingling with the Divine are also found in such traditional carols as The Holy Well, The Cherry Tree Carol, and the passion carol, The Seven Virgins. (See The Oxford Book of Carols, 1928) The blending of the homely and the holy, the common speech with high doctrine, has all the qualities that are the very stuff of the religio-historical novel.

world, philosophical, scientific and spiritual, meet together with the techniques of the romancer and teller of tales, and judge or are judged by the Gospel of Christ. It is the point where the spirit of the age meets the spirit of historic Christianity at the hands of the story-teller.

And that is the point where the two literatures of the Outside Tradition, the early Christian romances of the first five centuries A.D., and the religio-historical novels of the last century and a half, share common purposes and common ground.* The modern historical novelist has to look back much further in time and bridge a much wider gulf of knowledge and outlook, but whether he is simply telling a story of the early Christian past, or restating what he believes about the significance of Jesus Christ and His Gospel in the life of His Church, he, too, is bringing to bear the questions and insights of his day upon historic Christianity through the creative power of the story-teller's imagination.

In his introduction to The Apocryphal New Testament, M.R.James writes:- "They record the imaginations, hopes and fears of the men who wrote them; they show what was acceptable to the unlearned Christians of the first ages,

what interested them, what they admired, what ideals of conduct they cherished for this life, what they thought they would find in the next. As folk-lore and romance, again, they are precious; and to the lover and student of mediaeval literature and art they reveal the source of no inconsiderable part of his material and the solution of many a puzzle". (1) So, too, the modern novelist who sets out to portray any aspect of human life and relationships, is bound to reveal at the same time something of his own sense of values and purpose, and through them his own place in contemporary thought. "My writing," wrote George Eliot in a letter to Dr. Joseph Payne in 1876, .."is simply a set of experiments in life -- an endeavour to see what our thoughts and emotions may be capable of -- what stores of motive -- actual or hinted as possible, give promise of a better after which we may strive -- what gains from past revelations and discipline we may strive to keep hold of as something more sure than shifting theory. I become more and more timid -- with less daring to adopt any formula which does not get itself clothed for me in some human figure and individual experience, and perhaps that is a sign that if I help others to see at all it must be through that medium of art". (2)

(1) p.xiii. All references/are to the 1953 edition.

(2) The George Eliot Letters, vol.vi, ed. G.S. Haight.
1956.

George Eliot was characteristically a novelist of ideas, with a strong sense of moral purpose running through all her writing, as her historical novel on Renaissance Florence, Romola, (1863) shows by its strong portrayal of the interplay of differing religious and moral ideas upon human lives. But no novelist can tell an effective story about other people's lives without telling something of his own attitude to life in the course of it. Even a novelist like Gustave Flaubert, who deliberately sought to depersonalise his narrative and style of all doctrines and didacticism that might come between the reader and the characters in the book, could not keep them out altogether. Yet by reason of this very manner of telling the story, both Madame Bovary (1857) and Salammô (1862) seem to be impregnated with the author's personal feeling about the harsh purposelessness of human life and its values.

In the case of novels set in the New Testament period, however, just because the Person of Jesus Christ is so fundamental to the religious faith^{and life} of the primitive Christian communities, the novelist ^{cannot} ~~can~~ picture them or the part which he feels Christ played in their lives, however objectively he may try, without committing himself personally to a confession of his own attitude

towards the Christian faith. What he thinks about either the character or the events or the significance of Christ's life necessarily involves the adoption of some verdict on the faith which springs from His Person. This is the chief underlying reason for the particular form of approach to historical novels on the 1st. Century A.D. which is adopted in this study of them.

I propose, therefore, to make a study of novels set in the 1st. Century A.D., and more especially those dealing with New Testament times. Though this boundary will be a flexible one, the chief focus of interest is on the period of Christian origins, the way in which historical fiction pictures the scene, and in doing so reflects or contributes to the religious trends of the author's own day. At the same time, advances in understanding or technique may be made in other fields of historical or general fiction which have a bearing upon those in this particular area of study, and in such cases they will be brought into the inquiry as possible steps towards the type of novel which is more directly my concern.

The purpose is to examine the interplay between the developing general thought and outlook of the 19th and 20th. Centuries, and the historical novelists' approach

to the 1st. Century in the same period. I have taken historical novels as the touchstone of that interplay because they, in George Eliot's figure of the purpose of her own novels, attempt to put the formulae of new historical and scientific theories about the New Testament to the test of clothing them "in some human figure and individual experience" of the period. Moreover, they seek to do, though more elaborately, what everyone else, who has any kind of thought about Christianity at all has to do, -- whether for or against -- to create out of the materials available a mental picture of the New Testament life, and in particular of Jesus Christ on whom it rests. They are, therefore, in their own way, typical of the human [scene] scene of historic Christianity as many minds, influenced by modern viewpoints, have seen it.

Personal outlook of thought and feeling can affect what one sees of the world about in much the same way as a spectacle lens. One of the most striking consequences of the revival of the poetry of nature in the second quarter of the 18th. Century was that people began to see the scenery of the countryside in an entirely new way, and to appreciate their own particular views of the landscape. James Thomson's Seasons (1726-30) and the landscapes in Gray and the brothers Warton (1) not only

(1) e.g. Thomas Gray's Elegy, 1745-50; The Odes of Joseph Warton, 1744 and 1746 and Thomas Warton's The Triumph of Isis, 1749

gave them eyes to see but the imaginative feeling to enjoy what had been in front of them all the time. Another result which followed upon this change was that people with the means and opportunity sought to change the surrounding scene, sometimes by landscape-gardening, sometimes by pseudo-antique building, or both, in order to create romantic views which were more in accord with the new taste for wild nature. The poet ushered in the era of the landscape gardener. Then in due course with the advances in technical knowledge, the industrial revolution altered the people's way of life and caused them to make much more drastic changes in many parts of the countryside in order to meet the needs -- or the hard realities, if you like -- of the new industrial communities.

Something similar to these three kinds of change are to be looked for in the effects of the developing intellectual and moral outlook of the last 150 years upon the scenery, as it were, of the Christian faith. The first Christian generation are not just "the past" for the believer of today: they are, along with the life and relationships of the present, the scenery of the Christian faith -- the Word "clothed-----in some human figures and individual experience", in George Eliot's phrase -- seen with the inward eye. "Whoever would paint Christ must

first live with Him", said Fra Angelico. It would also be true to say that whoever would live with Christ must paint Him in the imagination of his own heart. We have to ask, then, -- In what ways did developments of knowledge and outlook change that inner mind's eye view of the New Testament scene? Secondly, to what extent were alterations made in the perspectives and vistas of the New Testament scene in order to suit the new viewpoint? And thirdly, to what extent were drastic, perhaps even destructive, changes made to much that seemed essential to the original New Testament scene, in order to meet the so-called necessities of adjustment to new knowledge and new ways of life?

The purpose of this study, then, is not so much to arrive at specific conclusions, as to survey what modern thinking has done, through the medium of the novel, to the scenery of the New Testament faith.

CHAPTER IITHE NOVEL ON EARLY CHRISTIAN TIMES, 1820-1850

Polonius - "The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individual, or poem unlimited...."

Hamlet - "O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!"

(Hamlet, Act ii. Sc. ii. line 415, ff.)

J. G. Lockhart - Valerius, 1821.

Thomas Moore - The Epicurean, 1827.

George Croly - Salathiel; A story of the Past, the Present, and the Future, 1828.

Edward Bulwer Lytton - The Last Days of Pompeii, 1834

Richard Cobbold - Zenon the Martyr; a Record of the Piety, Patience, and persecution of the Early Christian Nobles, 1847.

The five novels that come under review in this chapter reflect, on the whole, the complexity of character which the novel had acquired by the early years of the 19th. Century. Only one of them -- The Epicurean

-- is a simple romance, although, with its parade of historical annotations, it professes to be more than that. In the other four, romance does remain. In the mystery and terror tradition of Walpole's Castle of Otranto, (1764) Beckford's Vathek (1784), and Mrs. Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), romance is still the strongest influence,—and along with it are found the plot techniques and devices of the Greek romances. But in the thirty or forty years before 1820, the novel had been developing along many other lines -- as the novel of social ideas, (in the hands of Holcroft, Godwin and Bage), the novel of manners (Jane Austen), the historical novel (Scott), and, on another literary level, the didactic religious novel (Hannah More and Legh Richmond). The romance, by the eighteen-twenties, was blending many other elements with itself, and in the case of the five novels with which I am^{here} concerned, the mixture of these elements varies with the temperament of each author, so that a catalogue of their respective characteristics sounds like garrulous old Polonius's list of the fashions in drama. Starting from the original romance of mystery and adventure, we have in Valerius religio-historical-satirical romance, with a dash of the novel of manners; in Salathiel religio-apocalyptic-historical-Byronic romance; in The Epicurean religio-Byronic romance; ~~in~~

~~Alroy~~ ~~Byronic~~ ~~recesso~~ ~~romance~~; in The Last Days of Pompeii historical-archaeological-religio-Byronic romance; and in Zenon the Martyr didactic-historical-religio-romance. At first sight, one might well exclaim with Hamlet - "Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!"

At the same time as this complexity of characteristics and purpose was developing in the field of fiction, there was taking place a deep and complex change in the whole life and thought of the times. Institutions and ideas, things that had long been regarded as established, ordered and accepted, were giving way to movement, flux and uncertainty. Something of this was bound to enter into the character and subject matter of the novel at the same time. Behind all the attitudes and affirmations, of the first half of the 19th. Century there is to be found, as a pervasive mood, a feeling of fear or anxiety, or unhappiness, even where distrust of feeling is most loudly asserted; and a sense of human insecurity and insufficiency, both among the faithful conservers of the old paths and among the free-thinking trail-makers of the new. "The more I read of the early and mid-Victorians", wrote Humphry House in All in Due Time (1955), "the more I see anxiety and worry as leading clues to understanding

them". (1.) This judgement seems to me to be true of the 19th. Century from as early as the Regency period onwards. Before dealing with these novels, therefore, I must give a picture if only in broad impressionist strokes, of the social and religious landscape and climate of thought throughout the years they cover.

An agricultural order of society, which in the 18th. Century seemed part of the order of nature itself, had by the 'thirties and 'forties of the 19th. Century given place to a predominantly industrial society, which herded the majority of the nation's population into cities in bad living and working conditions, amid sordid poverty and the iniquitous exploitation of women and children to provide cheap labour. The result was a division between the prosperous and the poor -- The Two Nations, as Disraeli called them, in the subtitle of Sybil, 1845 -- which presented a greater threat of social disruption than ever the French Revolution had done in England of the 1790's. From the end of the Napoleonic wars onwards, the workers' reform movement gained in strength and activity, and in the days of the Chartists (1838 onwards) the nation seemed to be on the brink of revolution. It was not until the 'fifties that this fear abated. But even so, in the rapidly expanding industrial community, social

(1) *op. cit.* - p. 100-101.

order had given place to social conflict and insecurity.

All this sense of crisis and social and economic tension is reflected in the literature of the period -- in Carlyle's use of history to preach a message from the past for the social ills of the present (1), in the novels with a social purpose of Dickens (2), Charles Kingsley, (3), Benjamin Disraeli (4), and in Mrs. Gaskell, (5). The novel, including the historical novel, developed rapidly in variety of subject and purpose as a branch of literature with a pronounced social and controversial slant. But underneath the stirrings of the social conscience and political panaceas there lurked often a pessimism amounting to despair for the future. The letters of J.G. Lockhart, when editor of the Quarterly Review, record in the 'thirties a strike of "nearly 20,000 ... republican zealots", and on another occasion, "the seeming paralysis of all government but mob government" (6). Lockhart's biographer comments:- "Lockhart's forebodings, expressed in many letters, may

(1) The French Revolution, 1837; Heroes and Hero-Worship, 1841; Past and Present, 1843.

(2) Oliver Twist, 1838, vice and poverty; Nicolas Nickleby 1839, on cheap schools for unwanted children; Martin Chuzzlewit, 1843-44, drunken nurses.

(3) Yeast, 1848, and Alton Locke, 1850, present, like Carlyle, the moral basis of the workers' case for social reform.

(4) Sybil, or the Two Nations, 1845.

(5) Mary Barton, 1848; North and South, 1855.

(6) John Gibson Lockhart, by Marion Lochhead (1954) p.172-3

at first appear exaggerated, almost fantastic, seen by us across the great space of Victorian and Edwardian security. But taken in regard to their period, they were by no means foolish. The wonder is that England came so close to revolution, was so nearly republican, without taking the final step".(1)

The chief focal points of anxiety and insecurity that one finds in this social situation are: — 1. the fear of imminent revolution already referred to: 2. the fear of irreligion generally, and of the atheism which was being propagated among the working classes by radical political journals (2): 3. the fear of Roman Catholicism arising out of the Catholic Emancipation controversies: 4. the fear, following the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832, of interference by increasingly secular-minded Governments in the life of the Church of England, and possibly even of its disestablishment: 5. the fear of Rationalism as an intellectual philosophy,

(1) Lochhead, op. cit., p.173.

(2) See- Amy Cruse, The Victorians and Their Books, ch. vii., and pp, 122 and 131 in particular on Chartists' newspapers. Florence Nightingale reported in a survey in 1852 that Locke, Hume and Voltaire were the authors from which the mass of sceptical artisans drew their arguments against Christianity.

and particularly the fear of the effects of German rationalistic scholarship in criticism of the Bible (a less widespread fear, this, simply because all too few were equipped to study it)(1): 6. fear of the effects of new scientific knowledge and ideas, coming at this time mainly from geology and astronomy, upon the authority of the Christian faith, of the Bible with which its teachings were bound up, and of the Church that proclaimed it.(2)

The crucial questions which this situation presented to the thinking religious mind may be summed up in the following three points. Where did Christian doctrine stand against a criticism that queried its documentary authority, the Bible? Where did the Bible stand, as a revelation of the Word of God, in regard to new knowledge from geology and astronomy about the processes of creation and the vastness of the universe? And where did the Church stand as a religious institution dating from historical events which were bound up with the accuracy of the Bible records?

(1) Among those so equipped were S.T. Coleridge, T. De Quincey, T. Moore (rather surprisingly), Thos. Arnold, E. B. Pusey and J.H. Newman.

(2) Much of it coming from the avalanche of cheap primers put out by the rationalistic "Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge" founded by Lord Brougham in 1827 to offset the work of the Religious Tract Society of Wilberforce. cf. Muriel Jaeger - Before Victoria (1956) pp. 100-102.

The answer which Samuel Taylor Coleridge gave provided the signposts of religious thought and restatement for those who later had to defend Christianity against the full impact of German rationalism when it did come with Strauss's Leben Jesu (1). Christian truth, said Coleridge, can only be understood and interpreted by the believing mind.

"And you must love him, ere to you

He will seem worthy of your love". (2)

But the believing mind does not mean one in which the judgments of reason are temporarily suspended, but one in which every faculty of Reason is developed to its fullest extent, moral and spiritual as well as intellectual. In his examination of the poetic insight(3) Coleridge distinguished between the Imagination (in which he included Reason) as first-hand creative knowing, and Fancy as the second-hand acceptance of the insights of others. And in regard to the insights of religious knowledge, he similarly distinguished between Reason (in which he included Faith) as the intuitional insight of the whole personality into the meaning of life (4), and

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- (1) German ed. 1835; George Eliot's trans., 1846.
 (2) Wordsworth's A Poet's Epitaph, 1799.
 (3) Biographia Literaria, 1817, chs.13-14. "The Primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM". p.159, Everyman ed.
 (4) cf. The Friend, 1809-10, p.366, Bell's ed. (See foot of next page.

Understanding, as the analysing intellectual faculty — abstract knowledge. Faith has the same creative part in religious insight as Imagination has in poetic insight, and both are at the heart of all true knowledge.

Coleridge thus led the way to a greater emphasis on religious faith as covering the whole experience of human life, and involving all the faculties of moral and spiritual perception — knowing, willing, feeling, doing, believing. Under the influence of Coleridge, there was a more imaginative approach to the processes of knowledge, as involving something more than the intellectual powers of reason, but also the creative powers of imaginative insight. So, by equating Faith with the highest functions of human Reason, as distinct from the Understanding or Intellect, Coleridge defended religious experience from the attacks of rationalism. And in doing so he led the way to the reaffirmation and reinterpretation of Christian doctrine in the light of new and widening knowledge in the realms of science and technology.

Note 4. continued from page 36:- "... the contemplation of reason, namely, that intuition of things which arises when we possess ourselves, as one with the whole, which is substantial knowledge". cf. also Aids to Reflection (1825) Aphor. cxix & cxxi on Faith and Reason. "In no case can true Reason and right Faith oppose each other".

The Evangelical answer was - Christian truth is a matter of practical Christianity (1) - of being a Christian in the inward experiences of regeneration through Christ, and in the outward witness of missionary, educational and social work in the world. They held to the verbal inspiration of the Bible, the Word of God, laying emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in its interpretation by the believing mind.

The Liberal school of thought were not an organised party like the Evangelicals, but rather a group of likeminded scholars and thinkers, of whom Thomas Arnold, Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, ^{and} F.D. Maurice are notable examples. They believed that the Bible could and should stand modern critical examination. To those who criticised the conflict of standards of revelation as found in the Old Testament, they replied that the Bible revealed a progressive revelation of God (2). They distinguished between questions of literary criticism and religious questions. They, also, leaned towards an

(1) In 1797, Wm. Wilberforce published his Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians -- Contrasted with Real Christianity; it became known as A Practical View of Christianity, for short and hence associated with the idea of practical Christianity as distinct from dogmatic Christianity, experience in contrast to doctrine.

(2) See Thomas Arnold's Essay on the Right Interpretation of the Scriptures. Sermons, vol.II, (1832)

individualistic interpretation of the Christian life, and though they were loyal churchmen, they distrusted sacerdotalism and what they felt to be the Tractarians' elevation of the Eucharist above the Gospel of Christ. Like the Evangelicals, they stressed the moral conscience and character in personal living, and social reform in community life, but with a greater emphasis on political implications. It was from the political activities of Maurice and Charles Kingsley that the idea of the "Social Gospel" originated.

The Oxford Tractarians' answer was - The Bible is the Word of God, but its interpreting is committed to the Church for safeguarding. They agreed with Coleridge that religious truth was to be discerned only by Faith, but to them that required the Church as a vehicle of interpretation. They looked, therefore, to the teaching of the Bible as interpreted and developed in the tradition of the Church, and especially in the great creedal Councils from Nicaea (325 A.D.) to Chalcedon (451 A.D.). The Church itself was safeguarded by the Apostolical Succession. They idealised the Middle Ages as the age of faith, and strove to revive the pre-Reformation usages and beliefs of the Church. Their particular contribution to counteract the religious insecurity of the times was to revive the authority of the

Church as the divinely ordained and safeguarded medium for the transmission of sound doctrine. It was at this point that Newman and his closer followers went the further step forward towards the authority of the Roman Catholic Church as the supreme guardian of the individual conscience.

Free-thinking religion had also its answer to this dominating sense of insecurity regarding the sacred literature of Christianity and the historicity of its origins. There is noticeable in the literature of the period a hankering to free religion from its bondage to a book and to an historical Person, to see the evidence of God in Nature and living history and read His message in the inner experience of the heart. Leigh Hunt wrote and printed privately his belief in God in "Christianism" (1832), subsequently rewritten as The Religion of the Heart (1853). In it he proclaims God "the great First Cause of the Universe", who "has written his religion in the heart, for growing wisdom to read perfectly" (1). Francis Newman in The Soul, 1849, (2) declares that as an historical religion Christianity has become a literature and its missionaries have to be armed, not with the sword of the Spirit, but with an elaborate paraphernalia of

(1) p.1.
 (2) p.319-320.

literary scholarship. "What God reveals to us, he reveals within, through the medium of our moral and spiritual senses" (1). So he proclaims a religious belief free from "book-revelation". In the writings of Thomas Carlyle, the prophetic note is so pronounced, that it is difficult to realize that revealed religion, as Christianity understands it, has been rejected from it. Christ has no place, even among the priests and prophets of Heroes and Hero-Worship (1841). Carlyle wrote The French Revolution (1837) as the record of judgement on a society whose soul was diseased; and in Sartor Resartus (1833-34), he wrote of his own mystical faith in God as an experience of conversion, with all the compelling power of evangelical emotion. But the God in Whom he believed was not the God of the Bible, the Word made flesh in particular events in time, but One whose word is revealed in all life and its history, not in any special dispensation of events. He is the transcendent God of power, the God of Nature and Eternity, and Thomas Carlyle writing the Gospel According to Thomas the Doubter, is his prophet. His conviction met a need in the minds of many who, feeling the traditional foundations of the historic faith to be disintegrating, were reinforced by this assurance that the living prophetic voice remained

(1) Phases of Faith, 1850, p.115

and the Eternal Verities of God were valid, though the Book might vanish.

The period in which the earlier religio-historical novels appeared, was one of social and religious crisis and change, and of widening horizons of knowledge and experience. It was, therefore, by reason of the sense of social and spiritual insecurity so caused, marked by a ferment of questioning, re-interpretation and dogmatic affirmation. But through all this ferment of thought, it was marked by an anxious search for authority or conviction in religious belief and for balance in thought and life. There was much controversial writing, with all the dogmatic assertion that goes with it, much separation into parties united by particular beliefs in common, but the over-all picture is of a multiform search for the solution, both in the religious and in the social life of the time, to the prevailing sense of insecurity and insufficiency.

John Gibson Lockhart, the son-in-law and future biographer of Sir Walter Scott, has the distinction of being the author of our first classical historical novel, Valerius, 1821. It was also his first novel, written at the age of twenty-six. It is natural to see the influence of Scott in his turning to history as a context for his

first essay in fiction (1). But the choice of a classical setting was his own, and reveals his independence as well as his love of the Scots tradition of the Humanities in which his father had brought him up, (2). At the time when he wrote his novels (3), Lockhart idealised a type of minister and churchmanship which belonged neither to the Evangelical nor to the Moderate parties of those days in Scotland, but which, embodied for him in the person of his father, Dr. John Lockhart of the College Kirk of Blackfriars, Glasgow, combined solid qualities of character and conscientious piety of mind with a love of learning for its own sake. Lockhart was a child of the Scottish Reformation and of the Renaissance love of the Humanities, in the old Scots sense of that word -- the love of classical learning and literature, in the tradition linked with George Buchanan (1506-82), the scholar and historian. In Valerius, he sought to write, not primarily a novel about early Christianity, but a "Roman Tale", as he himself described it in the sub-title of the book,

(1) Scott certainly encouraged him. "I am delighted to hear you get on so soon with the Roman Tale", he wrote in July, 1820, .. "It cannot but be admirable, and is quite new". Letters, ed. by Grierson, vol. VI. p.244

(2) cf. A. Lang - Life, vol. I. p.19

(3) Valerius, 1821; Adam Blair, 1822; Reginald Dalton 1824; and Matthew Wald, 1824

In these early years of his life as a journalist, when he was writing for Blackwood's, he had already revealed himself as a man of brilliant gifts, some of them to his own disadvantage. Temperamentally, he had a leaning towards mockery, and with it a gift of wit which could be venomous, and which he seemed unable to resist when the opening occurred to him. "His satire was mischievous", wrote Mrs. Oliphant in Annals of a Publishing House, "virulent, not so much from hate as from nature. It was as if he had a physical necessity for discharging that point of venom which he emitted suddenly, without warning, without passion or excitement" (1). There was an ambivalence in his character, which on the one hand produced Lockhart the man of sincerity and honourable friendship, and on the other, the "Scorpion" -- self-nicknamed by his own insight -- "which delighteth to sting the faces of men".(2)

The effect of this inward conflict of nature on his religious experience and thinking is seen in some of his novels. In Adam Blair, 1822, and Matthew Wald, 1824, Lockhart showed a remarkable absorption in the problem of sin and repentance. In Adam Blair, he told the

(1) Quoted in Marion Lockhead's J.G. Lockhart 1954, p.34.
 (2) The "Scorpion", self-named in Blackwood's Magazine article, October, 1817, - The Chaldee Ms.

story of a minister of the Church of Scotland who sinned against his conscience and his vows, of his deep contrition, and his eventual reinstatement. In Matthew Wald, he portrayed a man who allowed jealousies and hatreds to poison his mind until he sinned so direly against his own better nature, that his mind was broken by the strain; and in the character of John M'Ewan, the Cameronian Church elder and murderer, who believed that as the elect of God he was above the penalty of sin, he produced in embryo the Justified Sinner (1). Something of this absorption with sin and contrition appears, too, as will be seen, in the portrait of his Christian martyr, Thraso, in Valerius.

Lockhart, choosing a setting further back in time than Scott ever used, and a foreign one at that, bridged the gulf of time and strangeness for the reader by taking as his hero one whose point of view was British in tradition, Valerius, the son of a Roman-British marriage, visiting Italy for the first time to claim his inheritance. In this he both set a precedent for many romancers to come, and followed -- in a measure, at least -- the lead

(1) It has been suggested, ^{secret} that Lockhart may have had a hand in - or even been the author of - James Hogg's novel, The Confessions of a Justified Sinner, 1824.

of the early mediaeval chroniclers, who delighted to find for their heroes a secular or sacred descent going back to Rome or the Holy Land, (1). In Valerius, Lockhart followed the example of Scott in Guy Mannerling, 1815, in setting imaginary characters in an accurately drawn historical and social background (in this case, of the time of Trajan), but without involving particular incidents or persons as a material part of the story. He did, however, use the policy towards Christians outlined in Pliny's letter to Trajan, and Trajan's reply confirming it, as the crux of the plot, in the Christian aspect of the story (2). In Rome, Valerius falls in love with Athanasia, a secret Christian of noble family, and after her arrest becomes involved in her fate. With the aid of a Briton who has been in the palace service and knows all the secret passages and spring-doors of the building, (here, the plot goes very wild) he effects an eleventh hour rescue from the very ante-room of Trajan's Council sitting in judgement (3).

(1) Geoffrey of Monmouth first invented a genealogy for the British in his Historia Regum Britanniae (12th. Century) going back to Brutus, great-grandson of Aeneas. Wace, (in Roman de Brut) and Layamon (in the Brut) both followed him in this. In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, there is a genealogy going back to Adam. The monks of Glastonbury claimed Joseph and Arimathea for their Avalon, and wishful legend included Britain among "the utmost bounds of the west" reached by St. Paul. (1 Clement, V)

(2) Pliny - Epistles, X, 96, 97.

(3) Valerius, vol. III., ch. 7.

Finally, after adventures in the course of which he receives what may be termed emergency baptism without any instruction (1), Valerius lets his Roman inheritance go by default and sails with Athanasia for Britain and Venta Belgarum.

The merits of the story lie in its individual scenes and characters; its weakness in the author's failure to fuse these scenes into a coherent novel or a balanced picture of its pagan and Christian elements. Even although Lockhart made use of the autobiographical method of telling his story, which allows the hero to give his own thoughts and outlook upon the events, and so to weave the unity of his personal experience into the whole, the different parts of the story still do not seem to fit into one pattern. The fault seems to lie in this, that Lockhart tried to be too faithful to his sources in Latin literature, Roman where they were Roman, Christian where they were Christian; and the result certainly is, not a unity, but a collection of near-translations from very different minds, though not so remote in style from the reader as Andrew Lang suggested (2). The historical novelist is more than a translator

(1) *ib.* vol. III., p. 213-4

(2) *cf.* Lang's Life & Letters of Lockhart, vol. I, p. 288

of the past. He has to catch the interest as well as the understanding of the reader of his own day by the success with which he passes it all through his own imagination, thought, and feeling in the form of the tale he has to tell. In this Lockhart is hardly successful. In his delineation of social background and manners, he is true to his sources in classical literature, brilliant in his treatment of individual scenes and characters in terms of social comedy; but when these are set in the picture of the whole story, with its framework of plot and characters with inter-related motives and loyalties, there is a manifest division of interest and perspective.

This is particularly noticeable in his treatment of traditional Roman religion and the mystery cults, which in turn springs from his attitude to Christianity. His interest is divided between the Roman element in the story and the Christian element; he lacks a standard by which to judge the old religions in the light of the new, and in consequence he fails to offer a serious interpretation of the Roman mind with which Christianity came into contact. He did more than borrow local colour from his Roman literary sources; he brought the satirical approach of Horace and Juvenal to his descriptions of ancient philosophy and religion, -- to the character of the comic philosopher Xerophrastes (1), the scene of the priests

(1) Valerius, vol, III, ch.1.

of Cybele begging in the streets of Rome, (1), and to the Greek sceptic taunting the priest of Jupiter with the desertion of the old gods by the people (2). The method suited Lockhart's own personal bent at the time, which was towards satire, but it also set a strict bound to what he could achieve here as an historical novelist. The resultant scenes of ancient religious life make brilliant and often lively comedy, ^{but} ~~as a result, his scenes of ancient religious life~~ lack the depth of penetration to the inner experience or longings of the heart which the ancient cults sought to meet or satisfy -- some form of personal communion with the divine in the midst of life.

For Lockhart, there were no half-lights about religious faith. It was either Paganism or Christianity -- darkness or light. And so, when it came to the problem of picturing pagan practices, the way out for him was through the medium of satire and social comedy.

In this matter, Lockhart lacked the perspective towards the ancient religions which the idea of development was later to give to the historical and comparative study of religions. At the time of writing Valerius, he was, we must remember, a young man of

(1) ib. vol. III, ch. 2.

(2) Valerius, vol. III, ch. iv, p. 115-116

twenty-seven, at the start of ^{his} literary career, brilliant in his gifts but, as both his biographers make plain (1), with maturity and balance of intellect and character still to find. His classical sympathies were at odds with his Christian faith, and though he never threatened to desert that faith, in which he sincerely believed, he felt the same tension between home piety and school learning as James Anthony Froude revealed through the mind of his imaginary "Markham Sutherland", the priest-turned-sceptic of The Nemesis of Faith, (1849).

"I remember thinking it odd that I should be taught to admire Hector, and Aeneas, and Ulysses, and so many of them, when all they were idolators too. What had we to do with the wisdom of Cicero, when he was as great a sinner as these Canaanites? But I readily laid the blame on the defects of my own understanding -- I was sure it was all right; and, though I read Hume and Gibbon, I hated them cordially, only doubting whether they were greater fools or greater knaves". (2)

The problem was characteristic of the inner tensions of the day, as well as of many an earlier generation,

(1) Andrew Lang - J.G. Lockhart, 2 vols. 1897; Marion Lochhead - J.G. Lockhart, 1954.

(2) The Nemesis of Faith, p.80

including Tertullian's,—how to assimilate the accepted doctrines of the Christian faith into the whole experience of life, including secular learning, ancient or modern. In Lockhart and Froude we see the same inner tension from two opposite points of view, in the first from the point of view of a believing mind, and in the second from the point of view of a sceptic.

In his treatment of Christianity in Trajan's Rome, Lockhart drops the ironical tone of the satirist and develops a picture of the heroic age of Christianity. Valerius, brought up to honour and pay his devotions to the gods of Rome, is disillusioned by the desertion and disrespect alike of the Epicurean philosopher, Capito, and of the common people, which he regards in the same way as Lockhart himself regarded free-thinking Whigs and German rationalists — "utter infidelity" (1). In contrast to this indifference and neglect, he sees the heroic quality of Christianity in Thraso first of all, accepting death in the amphitheatre rather than deny that he is a Christian; and afterwards in the courage of Athanasia and her priest, accepting the daily risk of exposure by their profession of faith. So far as Valerius himself is concerned, no attempt is made to describe the inward experience of his

(1) Lang. vol.1.p.175; Lochhead, p.241.



approach to Christianity — what might have been his hesitations, difficulties, struggles or hopes — beyond his revulsion from the inhumanity and infidelity of Roman life, and his admiration for the courage of the Christians.

In the amphitheatre, Valerius is repelled by the cruelty and indifference to human life shown by the Romans in taking pleasure in scenes of violence, bloodshed and death, as a sport. Strong descriptions are given of the holiday spirit of the spectators (in chapters XI and XII), and especially of Valerius's reaction to the pleasure of women spectators in bloody spectacles (1). No doubt Lockhart would have in mind — as the public most certainly did — "Childe Harold's" eloquent feelings as he stood in the ruined Coliseum of Rome, —

"Here, where the Roman million's blame or praise
Was death or life, the playthings of a crowd". (2)

The amphitheatre scene and Valerius's repulsion would appear, however, to rest primarily on the story of Alypius told by Augustine in his Confessions (A.D. 397), Book vi., with this difference, that Alypius was overcome

(1) Valerius, vol. I, p.222-223, where the excitement of Rubellia and the other women spectators is described by Valerius.

(2) Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto I, stanza CXLII.

by the savagery of the scene and the spectators; he "was stricken with a deeper wound in his soul" - than were the gladiators in their bodies, and "so soon as he saw that blood, he therewith drunk down savageness". This incident in the Confessions is much used by successive novelists as one of the points of strain for humane minds in the civilisation of the Empire. Walter Pater in Marius the Epicurean, (1885), describes the reaction of Marius both to the "shouts of applause" of Lucius Verus and the "impassibility" of the Stoic Marcus Aurelius. (1). Dean Farrar in Darkness and Dawn (1891), following Augustine more closely, describes the "paganisation" of the slave Onesimus by his experience of sharing the spectators' thrill in having the issues of life and death in their hands. (2) Lockhart probably had also the judgement of the Stoic Seneca in mind when he described the haughtiness of the gladiator awaiting the final death blow at the signal from the crowd, (3), and how the surviving gladiators, when he met them behind the scenes afterwards, "infected me with a strong sense of the irrational and inhuman life these unhappy persons were condemned by folly or necessity to lead". (4)

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- (1) Marius the Epicurean, ch. xiv.p.181-2. (pocket ed.1924)
 (2) Darkness and Dawn, p. 90-91.
 (3) And also, no doubt, Byron's Dying Gladiator, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, 1812, canto I, stanzas CXXXIX to CXLII.
 (4) Valerius, ch. xii., vol. 1.

"Man a sacred thing to man", Seneca wrote, "is slain for sport and merriment; naked and unarmed he is led forth; and the mere death of a man is spectacle enough". (1)

The most complete description of the personal experience of a Christian is given in Thraso's testimony in the Amphitheatre, (2). It is founded upon a belief in Christ whose "miracles", of which you have all heard, were in truth performed in the sight of the people", and of whom "the old prophets had foretold those wonderful works"; and whom God "sent into the world to teach loving-kindness, and long-suffering, and patience among all kindreds, and tongues, and nations of mankind; and to make expiation, by the accursed death of the cross, for the evil and the wickedness that is in the world". The special interest of Thraso's testimony, revealing the stamp of Lockhart's own outlook and experience, rests in its emphasis on the unhappiness of sinning against the light of the faith professed, and on the hope of recovery through suffering and contrition. Thraso, years before, serving under Vespasian in Egypt, had been put to the test, had given way, and had sacrificed to the gods; yet he had known no peace or happiness until he returned to his

(1) Epistles, xciv.33.

(2) Valerius, vol. 1. ch. xiii.

mother's Christian community in Palestine.

"But when I, being humbled, made confession to her and to her household, and to all the faithful that were in the place, of the grievous sin whereof I had been guilty in Egypt, both she and all the rest of them busied themselves continually to comfort me, and to assure me that there was yet hope, if my repentance were sincere, and my resolution immovable never again to yield myself to any similar temptation. One of them also that had been set apart to minister in holy things among the scattered believers that dwelt up and down in that region, came not many days after to the same place, and having publicly heard my confession, admitted me once more to be a partaker with them in the mysteries of the sanctuary"(1)

Something of the individual experience and character of the author himself, as well as of his Scottish background, enter into Lockhart's Roman Tale. Although his personal religious bent is seen worked out in greater detail in the characters of Adam Blair and Matthew Wald, the same emphasis on inward self-searching and self-humiliation in the light of his creed are also

(1) ib. vol. I. ch. xiii.

apparent in the testimony of Thraso. "All these things that shepherd, the angel of repentance, commanded me to write" (1). The fact is that Lockhart was absorbed, at this time when he was writing his novels, in this particular problem of the place and the possibility of atonement in the personal experience of one whose conscience has to confess not only a call to believe, but also the fact that he has sinned against the light of his calling.

It is a characteristic problem of the time, We hear more of it later in the forties and fifties of the Nineteenth Century, in the writings of theologians, honest doubters and rationalists. Froude's criticisms of the doctrine of the Atonement are the immediate occasion of his Markham Sutherland resigning Holy Orders, (2). Macleod Campbell's unorthodoxy regarding the Atonement and Eternal Punishment entered into the charges on which he was condemned by the General Assembly of 1831; and for questions concerning the doctrine of Retribution raised in his Theological Essays of 1853, F.D. Maurice was forced to resign his professorship at King's College,

(1) Hermas, Bk.II., introduction.

(2) The Nemesis of Faith, 1849, p.45-48. (Page reference is to the 1903 edition). Publication of this novel also resulted in Froude's resignation of his Fellowship at Oxford.

London. But the changing trend of thought that led to these events in ecclesiastical life, the shift of accent from the acceptance of a narrowly intellectual statement of doctrine to the realised experience of religious truth, was already taking place in quarters less noticed ecclesiastically. Lockhart's self-communings were among the minor evidences of this change. More permanent and further reaching was the thought of Coleridge when, in Aids to Reflection, 1825, he claimed considerable freedom to interpret the "Metaphor" of the Atonement (1). Elsewhere in the same book, he was downright in his emphasis on experience in its widest sense as the ultimate test of theology. "Christianity is not a Theory, nor a Speculation, but a Life. Not a Philosophy of Life, but a Life and a living Process".(2). It is an interesting and illuminating symptom, therefore, of a far-reaching trend of religious thinking of those times, to find in his first classical historical novel, Valerius, the early evidences of the young Lockhart's inward communings regarding the

(1) Aphorism cxviii. (c) I. But in expressing some sympathy with "some Arminian divines", he also gives a warning, - "to discover and keep the true medium in expounding and applying the efficacy of Christ's Cross and Passion, is beyond comparison the most difficult and delicate point of Practical Divinity -- and that which especially needs 'a guidance from above'". Aphor. cxvi. (c), 3, note: page 233 in the Routledge edition.

(2) Aphorism civ., I.

problems of sin, contrition and atonement not as a problem of theology, but as a vital element in human experience close to the springs of conscience and the conduct of life.

In the second novel in my list, George Croly's Salathiel, romance blends a number of elements which give a quality as flamboyant and unusual as the author's personality. Something of Biblical apocalyptic, something of Greek romance, something of Josephus, something of mediaeval legend, something of Mrs. Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho, something of Beckford's Vathek, something of contemporary evangelicalism, something of Byronism (and behind that, of Chateaubriand's René, 1805), and something of popular Second Adventism: add to all this an unflagging imagination for the invention of incident and adventure, and an exuberant literary style for the description of catastrophe and horror, and there you have the constituents of a novel whose popularity outlasted the century.

George Croly was a native of Dublin, took his degree in classics at Trinity College, Dublin and was ordained in the Church of Ireland in 1804. He settled in London in 1810, disliking the obscurity of an Irish curacy, and

was engaged in periodical journalism, until in 1835 Lord Brougham procured him the rectorship of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, where he acquired a reputation and attracted a following by the same flowing gorgeousness of style and fancy in preaching as marks his literary works.

Before Salathiel appeared in 1828, he had made his literary reputation principally by the publication of his long poem, Paris in 1815 (published in 1817), an essay in the manner of Byron (who haunts most of his work), Catiline, (1822) a poetic drama in five acts,; and a religious work in 1827, entitled - The Apocalypse of St. John, or Prophecy of the Rise, Progress, and Fall of the Church of Rome: The Inquisition: The Revolution of France: The Universal War: and the Final Triumph of Christianity. Being a New Interpretation. With this last book in mind, one is not surprised by the full title and sub-title of his novel, Salathiel: A Story of the Past, the Present, and the Future. A later edition, published in the U.S.A. in 1901 by Funk and Wagnalls Company, is entitled - Tarry Thou Till I Come; or Salathiel, The Wandering Jew.

It is a story of the Wandering Jew, who appears in the literary currency of the day under various designations.— Something should first be said, however, of the first

appearance of the Wandering Jew in mediaeval legend. The earliest English record is given in the Chronicle of St. Alban's Abbey by Matthew Paris in 1228; the first French record in the rhymed chronicle of Philip Mouskes, Bishop of Tournai, in 1242; and the first German by Paul von Fitzen, bishop of Schleswig, in 1547. He is variously named - Kartaphilos, Joseph, Ahasuerus, Bultadaeus, and Lacquedem. By some accounts he was the door-keeper of the Temple who struck Jesus crying - "Away with you! Away!" Or again, as in Croly's tale, he was a priest who led the shouting in the Praetorium, "Away with him! Crucify him!" In each case, the reply of Jesus was - "I go, but thou shalt tarry till I come again". It was one of the many pseudo-Biblical beliefs and legends from the Middle Ages that were revived both in French and English literature under the stimulus of Chateaubriand's survey and defence of Christianity (and, in particular, of the Bible as against Classical legend and literature) as the greatest source of creative inspiration in literature and the arts - Le Génie du Christianisme (1802)

Croly must have sought out the theme in much the same spirit as Thomas Moore, the Irish poet, sought The Epicurean for his novel of that title. The Byronians were tumbling over each other — and occasionally over

Byron himself (1) — in their search for novel settings for the sufferings of wandering exiles to adorn a poetic romance. Moore found much of his material intended for Lalla Rookh in collision with Byron's The Giaour and The Bride of Abydos (1813), and had to admit that "instead of being a leader, as I looked to be, I must dwindle into a humble follower -- a Byronian".

Shelley introduced Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, into Queen Mab, 1813, putting into his mouth an account of Jesus which was Shelley's caricature of what he believed to be the theologians' caricature of the Crucified Christ.

"Humbly He came
Veiling His horrible Godhead in the shape
Of man, scorned by the world

At length His mortal frame was led to death.
I stood beside Him: on the torturing cross
No pain assailed His un^{ter}restrial sense;
And yet He groaned. Indignantly I summed
The Massacres and miseries which His name
Had sanctioned in my country, and I cried,
"Go! Go!" in mockery.

(1) See Stephen Gwynne's Thomas Moore, p.58-59, for the effect of Byron's publication of The Giaour 1813, and The Bride of Abydos, 1813, on Moore's plans for Lalla Rookh.

A smile of godlike malice reillumed
 His fading lineaments. - "I go," He cried,
 "But thou shalt wander o'er the unquiet earth
 Eternally."

In his notes, Shelley quotes a translation he made from a German work. The following excerpt is an example of the heady stimulus the idea gave to imaginative fiction.

"Ahasuerus crept forth from the dark cave of Mount Carmel -- he shook the dust from his beard -- and taking up one of the skulls heaped there, hurled it down the eminence; it rebounded from the earth in shivered atoms. "This was my father!" roared Ahasuerus. Seven more skulls rolled down from rock to rock; while the infuriate Jew, following them with ghastly looks, exclaimed -- "And these were my wives!" He still continued to hurl down skull after skull, roaring in dreadful accents -- "And these, and these, and these were my children! They could die; but I! reprobate wretch! alas! I cannot die!..." (1)

In Croly's hands, the Wandering Jew, Salathiel, becomes a typical Byronic exile from society, bearing a burden of evil and suffering, living through great world events, yet spiritually, by reason of the doom set upon him, outside both of society and normal life. The story

(1) Oxford ed. of Shelley, 1917, p.809. Identified as a translation of part of a poem by Schubart on the Wandering Jew, printed in La Belle Assemblée, or Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine, Jan.1809, pp.19-20. cf. Shelley- by Newman J. White, vol.I. p.581 & 653

begins with Salathiel's leaving Jerusalem, the horror of the curse upon him. He goes down by the Dead Sea, where he meets the wraith of the apostate King Antiochus Epiphanes -- the Antiochus who polluted the Temple courts and worship, and set up "the abomination of desolation"(1). Antiochus prophesies - "Power you shall have, and hate it; wealth you shall have, and hate it; life you shall have, and hate it; yet you shall know the depths of the condition of man".(2) He prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem, and by one of those swift transitions of scene which characterise the book, shows him Jerusalem being attacked by the Romans. Salathiel plunges into the fray, from the vision into the reality. It is only the first of many adventures, which, beginning from Jerusalem, range from Syria, Cilicia and Rome, back to Transjordan, and eventually to the destruction of Jerusalem. He fights, and is fought over, is driven insane by the horrors seen, immured in prisons, captured by pirates: he loses his family jointly and severally in successive adventures, and recovers them again by far-stretching arms of coincidence - even to an infant lost down a Galilean torrent and recovered as a pirate in the Mediterranean(3).

(1) cf. 1. Macc i.54: Dan.xl.31: xii.11: Joseph. Antiq. xii. 5.

(2) Salathiel, Bk.i. ch.viii. p.100.

(3) Salathiel Bk.iii. ch. xxii. p.379.

All this, at first sight the luxuriant imaginings of a mind that refuses to be bound by reason or reality, conforms to the pattern of the 4th. Century Greek romance, the Aethiopica of Heliodorus. In the Aethiopica too, the hero and heroine, Theagenes and Charicleia, undergo a long series of wrecks, kidnappings, and rescues at the hands of robbers, pirates and designing lovers, in which incident is piled on incident, adventure on adventure, coincidence on coincidence, their faithfulness to one another surviving all stratagems and misfortunes from Thessaly to Egypt and Aethiopia. It was a type of romance which was certainly as familiar to Croly as Juvenal was to Lockhart, and it gave him the free narrative framework he required to set forth his ideas, in which he contrived to combine the popular taste for Byronic novels of suspense and terror with apocalyptic speculation and popular piety.

Croly had a love of the macabre and the spectacular which he shares with Bulwer Lytton. Both drew it from the tradition of Beckford. Typical examples of his gift are the spectacle, during the great fire of Rome, of the solitary negro sitting in the blazing amphitheatre watching the struggling wild beasts below (1), and the parade of armed skeleton warriors in Herod's secret armoury at Masada (2). The final chapters of scenes

(1) Bk.1. ch.xx. p.299-300 (2) Bk.ii.ch.ix.p.157-9.

within the besieged Jerusalem, in which he drew upon Josephus for Sabat, his grim prophet of woe (1) and for his visions seen in the skies, (2), illustrate his gifts for eloquent, imaginative description and sustained tension.

The apocalyptic character of his thought suited well the popular feelings of crisis in the times, and harmonised with the romantic taste for the mysterious and terrifying. One cannot help feeling that Croly's motive is not by any means all religious; like Charles Dickens's fat boy in Pickwick Papers (1837-39), he "wants to make our flesh creep".(3) Both the literature and the art of the first half of the 19th. Century reveal the fascination that the catastrophic scene or event held for the general public. Croly and Bulwer Lytton were both in the fashion of the day, as exemplified by John Martin's still famous pictures, "Belshazzar's Feast"(1821), "The Destruction of Nineveh", "The Deluge", "Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still" (4), as well as his spectacular illustrations of Milton's Paradise Lost, published in 1827. Behind both the artist and the novelists was the

{1} Bk.iii. ch. xxii. p.394.

{2} Bk.iii.ch. xxii. p.399-400, 413.

{3} Pickwick Papers, ch. 8.

{4} "Belshazzar's Feast" and "Joshua" were criticised by Charles Lamb in his essay on the Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art, in 1833.

inspiration of the French romantic and Catholic revivalist, Francois-René de Chateaubriand, who selected Milton's Paradise Lost as one of the great examples of the Christian inspiration of an epic theme(1). Like Milton, Croly with this epic tale would "justify the ways of God to men". To this spectacular epic quality, Croly added the apocalyptic symbolism. With his Wandering Jew, (traditionally^{ti} linked with the Second Coming) he introduced the destruction of Jerusalem prophesied in the apocalypses of Mark and Luke (2), the figure of Nero hidden in the apocalypse of John (3), and Antiochus Epiphanes who set up the "abomination of Desolation" in the Temple in the days of the Maccabees (168 B.C.)

This Antiochus, who has a word of prophecy and doom to speak near the beginning and again near the end of the tale, has a special place in the apocalyptic theories of Croly. In the Apocalypse of St. John (1822), Croly argued that "as Judaea was chosen for the especial guardianship of the original Revelation; so has England been chosen for the especial guardianship of Christianity" (4). Contemporary "Popery", with its worship of "false

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- {1} Le Genie du Christianisme, Part ii., Bk.1., ch.iii.
 {2} Mt. ch.xxiv: Mk.ch.xiii: Luke.ch.xxi. 5-58
 {3} Rev.xiii, especially verses 17 & 18.
 {4} Opening preface of the book.

mediators", corresponded to the paganism which set up false images in the Old Testament, and he quotes the disasters under "the Roman Catholic Administration"(1) from 1806 onwards as cases in point. He sees the Inquisition and the French Revolution among the vials of the Church in Revelation, xii-xiv. The great falling away was occurring as he wrote -- in the form of atheism, superstition, threats of war among the nations. The final catastrophe was approaching, and there was but a brief interval for the unbeliever and idolater to repent and accept the truth.

In Divine Providence: or the Three Cycles of Revelation, (1834), Croly follows a similar line of argument, finding parallels between the three cycles of Patriarchal religion, Judaism, and Christianity. Again, he finds a correspondence between "the scourge that fell upon Judah" in the period of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the issues of his own day. "The interval succeeding the fall of the French empire takes the same place in Providential history, and will witness the same evil, --- As Epiphanes prostrated the Jewish altars, crushed the nation, and dragged the people in chains to a senseless and abhorred worship; Europe may yet see the Church all but

(1) p.xi.

extinguished --- and some new shape of tyranny, thoroughly infidel, forcing upon all men some new and monstrous observances ..."(1).

"If the theory of the three Cycles be true, the future events of the third will be, as in the two former, -- a falling away of the majority of the visible Church, into religious negligence or direct infidelity, followed by a great and visible chastisement of the Church, as in the days of Epiphanes...."(2)

It is through this pattern of thought that the "ghost" of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) comes into the book, reappearing in the middle of the final disaster to Jerusalem, to announce the doom, and prophesy a later age. "Happy, I say to you, happy will be the hour for Israel .. for mankind, for creation... when he shall take into his hand the records of his fathers, and, in tears, ask, What is that greater crime than rebellion? than idolatry? which not seventy years, nor a thousand years, of sorrow have seen forgiven; which has prolonged his woe into the old age of the world .. which threatens him with a chain not to be broken but by the thunder-stroke that breaks up the universe!

(1) Divine Providence, p.xii
 (2) ib. p.369.

"...But upon that mountain shall yet be enthroned a Sovereign before whom the sun shall hide his head and the heaven of heavens shall bow down! To that mountain shall man, and more than man, crowd for wisdom and happiness. From that mountain shall light flow to the ends of the universe, and the government shall be the Everlasting!"(1)

The feeling of crisis that characterises the opening decades of the 19th. Century plays a large part both in the religious purpose of Salathiel and in its popularity as a novel. The aftermath of the French Revolution and the threat of Napoleon, with the disillusionment that followed, the poverty and social unrest, the religious-political struggle over Catholic Emancipation, the prevalence of irreligion and active propagation of atheism -- all these elements combined to produce in the minds of people with widely different points of view a feeling of critical changes impending, and of the moral insufficiency of the people to meet the issues before them. J.G. Lockhart's forebodings, recorded in his letters, have already been referred to (page 33) in this chapter. "Believing as we do, that society is about to undergo some great change", wrote the Tory Lockhart in the Quarterly Review of 1833, reviewing the current fashion of

(1) Salathiel, Bk.III.ch.LXIV.

trivial "silver fork" novels, .. "we cannot doubt that these books will be referred to long after the daintiest of their authoresses have stooped to the woollen. They will be quoted as evidence that we deserved our fate". In many religious minds this public anxiety showed itself in the presentiment of an imminent Judgement Day; and this was fostered by many a preacher of Apocalyptic prophecy, finding in the evils of the day the "abomination of desolation" (1) or the "seven golden vials of the Wrath of God". (2).

Edward Irving and his followers made a particular study of the Apolcalypse, and his belief in the near at hand Second Advent of Christ was the subject of two of his writings -- For the Oracles of God and For Judgement to Come, published in 1823. Later in the century, ~~certain~~ Dr. Cumming, of Crown Court, London, provoked George Eliot to write satirically in the Westminster Review, in 1855, her advice on the easy way to power and reputation for "a man of moderate ability" and "some rhetorical affluence". "Let such a man", she wrote, "become an evangelical preacher.--- Let him shun practical extremes and be ultra in what is purely theoretic: let

(1) Dan. xii.11.: Mk.xiii.14.
 (2) Rev. xv. 7.

him be stringent on predestination, but latitudinarian on fasting; unflinching in insisting on the eternity of punishment, but diffident of curtailing the substantial comforts of time; ardent and imaginative on the pre-millennial advent of Christ, but cold and cautious towards every other infringement of the status quo. ... Above all, let him set up as an interpreter of prophecy, and rival Moore's Almanack in the prediction of political events..."

(1)

It is at least certain that Croly, in introducing the apocalyptic theme, with a prophetic application to an imminent crisis, was aware of its interest to a large section of the public whose religious "principles" would otherwise cause them to disapprove of a novel as sinful imaginings(2). Probably, too, for the very reason that the public to whom it would appeal belonged to widely differing religious groups, such descriptions as he does give of early Christian communities are sparse of detail regarding worship or organisation, suggesting only that it was simple, and leaving the reader to fill in himself the details of the particular form such simplicity would take.

(1) Quoted in Bullett's George Eliot, p.71; Amy Cruse - The Victorians and their Books, p.117.

(2) For evidence of Evangelical suspicion of novels, see Cruse, op. cit. p.68-70.

"The ceremonial was simple. Those who had witnessed the heaven-commanded magnificence of the Temple ... might scorn the few and obvious forms of the homage. But there was the spirit of strong prayer .. the breathing of the heart .. the unmeasureable sincerity. Every violence of the mere animal frame was unknown. I saw no pagan convulsion .. no fierceness of outcry and gesture .. not even the vehement solemnity of the Jew. All was calm: tears stole down, but they stole in silence; knees were bowed, but there was no prostration; prayers fervent and lofty were poured forth, but it was in accents uttered less from the lip than from the soul, appeals of hallowed confidence to a Being that was sure to hear, the voice of children to a Father and a God, who, wherever two or three were gathered together, was in the midst of them"(1).

In doctrine Croly is a typical Church of England Evangelical of his day, discouraging the "enthusiasm" of the sects, as this description of the prayers of the Christians suggests, and while giving a large place to the evidence of conversions to the faith, rests the proofs of the Gospel on a typically "evidential" statement of miracle and prophecy-fulfilment. His "Martyr" in the arena in Rome testifies to the miracles of healing and of tongues, of lives changed "by the name of Christ", and

(1) Salathiel, Bk. 1.ch.xiv. p.200-201.

finally to Jesus Christ Himself, and the evidences of His miracles and fulfilment of prophecy to His Divine Sonship. "All were predicted; all were beyond human collusion, human power, even beyond human thought; all were accomplished! Is not here the finger of God?" (1) This voice has the ring of Paley rather than of Paul(2). In this, his position is very similar to that of Cobbold twenty years later, except that Cobbold, with the events of the Tractarian movement and Newman's defection fresh in his mind, gives much more attention to the form and organisation of the early Church and its services, and even greater prominence to his anti-Roman Catholic feelings in the course of his story.

The Epicurean, 1827, set in the time of the Valerian persecutions, is a "Gothick" tale of mystery and the uncanny, with the added fashionable characteristics of the narrative poem of oriental romance, travel and adventure popularised by Byron. At the same time, Alciphron, its hero, has more of the hazy, temperamental melancholy of Chateaubriand's romantic heroes (such as René, 1802) than of the more contrasty, curse-ridden characters of Byron's imagination.

(1) Salathiel, vol.I., ch.xx., p.319,ff.

(2) Although he is referred to in the story as "the Martyr", it is obviously Paul whose execution is being described. The final words of his prayer are a paraphrase of 2.Cor.XI.26.ff. and Phil.III.21.

It should be remembered that Moore first studied the background for the tale, as a poem, Alciphron, among the French "savants" in Paris in 1820, when he would have ample opportunity to feel the pulse of Chateaubriand's influence among French Catholics, (1).

Alciphron, elected to the Chair in the Gardens of Epicurus in Athens, meditates in a gentle melancholy upon the shortness of life. Falling asleep at the foot of the statue of Venus, he dreams a dream, in which a voice says - "Thou who seekest eternal life, go unto the shores of the dark Nile .. go, and thou wilt find the eternal life thou seekest!" He sails to Alexandria, and thence travels to Memphis; and from this point the tale's hazy dreamlike atmosphere changes to that of a nightmare. In the temple of Isis, he is attracted by one of the sacred maidens. He follows her into a pyramid temple, searches through a gallery, "along each side of which stood, closely ranged and upright, a file of lifeless bodies, whose glassy eyes appeared to glare upon me preternaturally as I passed"(2). Still pursuing, he passes through gloomy caverns in the rocks of the desert, through mysterious fires and rushing torrents on which float grim, spectre-like shapes with

(1) cf. Gwynne - Life, p. 95.
 (2) p. 51.

dismal shrieks. He climbs upward by nightmare steps, "with nothing beneath me but that awful river in which .. I could hear the splash of the falling fragments as every step in succession gave way under my feet. It was a most trying moment...."(1)

Alciphron is welcomed at last to safety by the Hierophant of the cult of Isis, as an "aspirant to the mysteries". The priest instructs him, to the accompaniment of further visions in the sky, which are now revealed, along with the other terrifying ordeals, as the product of his fraudulent craft (2). These adventures, with their nightmarish quality of supernaturalism, in strong contrast to the idyllic half-light atmosphere of the opening chapters -- are a horrific and highly imaginative rendering of the rites hinted at by Apuleius in The Golden Ass: "I approached the very gates of death and set one foot on Proserpine's threshold, yet was permitted to return, rapt through all the elements. At midnight I saw the sun shining as if it were noon; I entered the presence of the gods of the underworld and the gods of the upperworld, stood near and worshipped them"(3)

(1) p.60.

(2) p.131-2.

(3) The Golden Ass, trans. Robert Graves, p.286

The Hierophant himself is a familiar type from the ^{18th}Century novel of terror, and continues to be so right up to the mid-20th. Century. The widespread credulity concerning sorcery and astrology, together with its exploitation by priests of the mystery cults and gnostic philosophers, is, of course, sufficiently authentic and is testified to by Juvenal. (1). They provide the historical background for the wicked priest or sorcerer, mingling fraud with mystery, who is a recurrent character in many later novels, from Arbaces in The Last Days of Pompeii, (1834), to Simon Magus in The Silver Chalice(1953). And it is worth noting that, firmly founded though the magician is in historical fact, his character in fiction is deeply imbued with the Gothic romance tradition of terror which flourished from the 18th. Century through the works of Walpole, Beckford, Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe.

Finally, Alciphron and his Alethe, who is revealed as being a secret Christian, escape up the Nile, to join the desert hermits outside Antinoë. There, Alethe is given refuge by Melanius, who had known her mother; and Alciphron professes his desire for Christian instruction, hoping that his conversion will commend his love to Alethe. Chapters xvii. and xviii are occupied with his instruction by the

(1) Juvenal. VI.511-534: 548-591.

hermit. Chapter xix brings the story swiftly to its close with the martyrdom of Alethe. Alciphron's actual conversion to Christianity takes place outside the story, as the sequel to her martyrdom, and is only referred to in an appended "author's note". There is, therefore, no detailed picture given of Christian community life beyond the teaching of Melanius and its effect on the epicurean, Alciphron. Moore, officially a Roman Catholic -- though a rather heterodox one -- follows the precedent of Lockhart in avoiding any controversial details of early Church worship and practice, limiting his picture to the Christian personal character and way of life. There are, however, several interesting features of the teaching of Melanius and Alciphron's reaction to it, which reveal something of the impact of contemporary thought on Moore.

Alciphron, reading the "Hebrew scriptures" for the first time, is impressed by "the high tone of inspiration -- the poetry, in short, of heaven, that breathed through these oracles, Could admiration have kindled faith, I should that night have been a believer; so elevated, so awed was my imagination by that wonderful book,.. its warnings of woe, its announcements of glory, and its unrivalled strains of adoration and sorrow." (The underlining is mine.) It is surely not too much to find

an echo here of the spirit of Chateaubriand's search for the poetic of Christianity in the Bible, comparing the Scriptures with Homer on their merits as literature,(1).

Further, the teaching of Melancthon is fused with a warmth of human feeling regarding the Person of Jesus and the universality of His mediating purpose, which strains refreshingly at the more conventional theological bonds of the day, when Paley's rationalistic arguments from external evidences were still the accepted orthodoxy. "Such was the last crowning dispensation of that God of Benevolence", teaches Melancthon of the Mediatorship of Christ, "in whose hands sin and death are but instruments of everlasting good, and who, through apparent evil and temporary retribution, bringing all things 'out of darkness into His marvellous light', proceeds watchfully and unchangingly to the great, final object of His providence .. the restoration of the whole human race to purity and happiness!" (2). Here, Moore reveals very plainly his sympathy with the universalism of his friend Leigh Hunt, whose Religion of the Heart has already been referred to. Although not yet published in book form, it was long before this, as a heritage from his father,

(1) Le Génée du Christianisme, Part II. Bk.V.

(2) The Epicurean, p. 187.

explicit among Hunt's very outspoken views. For Moore himself, it was no passing whim of thought, for we find in an article written by him in the Edinburgh Review in September, 1814, on "The Fathers", in which he wrote of Origen, the great 3rd. Century teacher of the Church, whose one flaw as a Catholic was his unorthodoxy on eternal punishment: "Still more benevolent was Origen's never-to-be-forgotten dissent from the doctrine of eternal damnation. To this amiable weakness/more than anything else, this Father seems to have owed the forfeiture of his rank in the Calendar: .. and in return for his anxiety to rescue the human race from hell, he has been sent thither himself by more than one Catholic theologian."(1). For an official Catholic who identified himself strongly with the Catholic Emancipation movement, as Moore did, this is a surprisingly un-Catholic exposition of the Atonement. It is probably evidence of the lack of organised Church life and discipline in the English Catholic movement at this time, but still more clearly it is evidence of the ferment of religious rethinking that was going on. Here were two very dissimilar men, both in personality and religious background, Lockhart the Scottish Presbyterian and Moore

(1) Moore's Uncollected Writings (1878). p.58

the Irish Catholic, each concerned in his own distinctive way with the problem of sin and atonement as one involving not simply dialectics but the conscience and experience of the heart.

Moore was more concerned than Hunt to reconcile the religion of the universe, as Hunt liked to call it, with the religion of the Book. To Moore, Christ was more than a theological concept. He was a subject of warm feeling, and, to him, the phrase "Saviour of the World" meant what it said without causing heart-searchings concerning problems of predestination or of ultimate retribution and the goodness of God. Possibly Moore's Catholic background enabled him to see his solution in a "temporary retribution", on the analogy of purgatory. An official Catholic all his life, he could never be called an orthodox one, although he confessed that after the passing of the Catholic Relief Bill in 1829, he thought more deeply about his religious beliefs and, if he did not attach himself more firmly to his Church, at least detached himself more definitely from the Church of England(1). It is interesting, and significant of the complex currents of thought at the time to find him on

(1) Gwynne, Life, p.140.- "It is certain that in later life, though on the friendliest terms with the vicar of his parish, he never attended service at the Church".

the edge of the movement towards a reinterpretation of doctrine and, with a surprising understanding of the situation, conscious of the need of it. In 1831, four years after the publication of The Epicurean, he wrote an article for The Edinburgh Review on German Rationalism, with a real awareness and balance of judgement in regard to its excesses, achievements and future; and in it he commended to "the earnest consideration of our own learned divines" and "all reflecting Christians" the two most important problems raised, in his view -- the origin and authorship of the Synoptic Gospels, and the source from which they copied their material in common (1). His severest strictures were upon the indifference of English scholars. Moore was a most unpredictable Roman Catholic.

The Epicurean is not primarily a religious novel, though Moore's personal feeling for Christianity can be detected in the hermit's teaching; nor is it in any real sense an historical novel. The multitude of historical notes appended to it, referring the reader to French historians and Classical sources, are evidence of the learning and research behind the story. The tale itself consists of a fine-spun bubble of terror and the uncanny,

(1) Moore's Uncollected Writings, p.178.

in the vein of Vathek, a Byronian hero in a plot that might have made a Byronian poetic romance, with a colouring of Christianity which tells us more about Moore's belief than it does of the early Christians. It reveals a warm feeling for Christian sentiment. It was not in Moore's nature to go deeply into questions of personal religion: he was content to feel it emotionally. Thus a reading of Goethe's Faustus could provoke him to tears and prayer in "one of those bursts of devotion which perhaps are worth all the church-going forms in the world", as he recorded it himself in his diary (1) . And so it was through his emotions that he sought the answer to the problems of Retribution and Atonement in the purpose of a loving God, where Lockhart sought it through his conscience.

With The Last Days of Pompeii, 1834, by Edward Bulwer Lytton, we return to history, with a strong blend of romance. Lytton as a novelist, had a flair for gauging the public taste, and by blending the flavours in his compositions, led the way in literary experiment. In Falkland (1827), Pelham (1828), The Disowned (1828), Devereux (1829), Paul Clifford (1830), Eugene Aram (1831), and Godolphin (1833), he had shown an astonishing and at times dangerous facility for writing on widely varied

(1) Quoted in Stephen Gwynne's Thomas Moore, p. 140.

themes. From his Gothick treatment of romance in Falkland, he turned to fashionable social satire in Pelham and Godolphin, to the novel of political ideas in Disowned, to crime and social reform in Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram, and to the historical novel in Devereux and The Last Days of Pompeii. In The Last Days of Pompeii, he set his imaginary characters in a particular historical background, and tried to bring to life a whole city at a climax in its history, by detailed archaeological research and explanation. In Rienzi (1835), and again in Harold (1848) he set himself to make a novel out of the life of an actual historical person. Thus, he led in experiment by bringing particular events and persons in history into the main plot of his novels, and reinterpreted them as fiction. While he did not, therefore, add much of value to the religio-historical novel by The Last Days of Pompeii, he did develop the subject matter and treatment of the novel in the direction of historical particularity and exactness of setting, and so brought closer the possibility of writing a story founded on the historical persons, events and documents of the New Testament.

At the same time, the qualities and characteristics in his books were part of his own personality, and are

apparent in varying degree alike in his writings and in his life. As a man of the world, deeply involved in the competitive struggle of London's social life, he was very much the child of his own Napoleonic post-war day; and as a man of letters, he was deeply imbued with the older imaginative strain of Anne Radcliffe, with the sentiment of Chateaubriand, and the romanticism of Byron.

The Byronian strain in Lytton, showed itself strongly in his way of life -- his "dandyism", his flamboyance of temperament and habit of life, his tendency to self-dramatisation, and especially rather larger than life in his writings. Lytton's autobiography, for example, tells his own story of his first frustrated love at the age of seventeen and the effect it left upon him, when through opposition from the lady's parents they were separated. "Henceforth melancholy became an essential part of my being; henceforth I contracted the disposition to be alone and to brood. I attained the power of concentrating the sources of joy and sorrow in myself. My constitution was materially altered"(1) Michael Sadleir, in his study, Bulwer: a Panorama, (1931) adds the strange Byronic sequel of the loved one's death three years later, and Lytton's all-night vigil at her grave (2).

(1) *Life*, by his grandson, the Earl of Lytton, vol.ii.p.65.
 (2) Sadleir, p.39-40.

Yet nothing in his later life provided evidence that he allowed brooding melancholy to come between him and the good things of a very full, and, so far as his means allowed, extravagant social life. Michael Sadleir gives a picture of his "assault on London" from 1830 onwards, as a young author and married man -- his "raging years of social climbing, domestic squabbling, political wire-pulling"(1). "He was selfish, flamboyant, unscrupulous, a mass of conflicting insincerities. But he worked..., unflaggingly, efficiently, and (as even those who do not fancy his novels must admit) to great effect".(2). The proceeds of his writing fed his furnishing mania, his passion for pictures and statues, his love of lavish parties, out-of-season foods. And so it was this side of the Byronian in Lytton that found expression in the novel on Pompeii.

The novelty of The Last Days of Pompeii lies in its use of the results of archaeology, and in the linking of the threads of the plot with the detailed discoveries made in particular buildings unearthed, even to the bodies as they were found in the ruins now called "the house of Diomed", (3), and in the Temple of Isis. Into this

(1) ib. pl52.

(2) ib. p.152

(3) The Last Days of Pompeii, Bk. 5. ch.xi.

background, with its atmosphere of suspense and impending disaster, Lytton wove the sinister and uncanny element through Arbaces the Egyptian and the witch of Mount Vesuvius, and a romantic love interest through Glaucus and Ione with the added tragic interest (rather heavily over-worked) of Nydia.

The detailed descriptions of the houses of wealthy Pompeians, their paintings, mosaics, art treasures, and their rivalries in buying them -- in all these things, Lytton himself shared their enthusiasms and tastes. The dinner-parties of Glaucus, Sallust and the new-rich Diomed (even he had his contemporary counterpart since the Napoleonic wars), their bright, over-bright and flamboyant social life were of a kind that he understood. At least seventy-five per cent of Lytton was with his pagans -- always provided, of course, that they were of the upper classes.

The result was that, like Lockhart, but for an entirely different reason, he was unable to see clearly the comparative values of the Christian and pagan religions. Lockhart in Valerius (1821) did less than justice to the cults as a hunger for religious experience: and Lytton in The Last Days of Pompeii did as little justice to Christianity as a way of life. The fact was that his

heart was not wholly with his early Christians. On the whole, his comment in Book IV, chapter I, expresses his attitude, rooted as it was in dislike of anything he suspected of fanaticism or enthusiasm. "In a dominant Church the genius of intolerance betrays its cause:.. in a weak and persecuted Church, the same genius mainly supports. It was necessary to scorn, to loathe, to abhor the creeds of other men, in order to conquer the temptations which they represented.... It was thus that the same fervour which made the Churchman of the Middle Ages a bigot, made the Christian of the early days a hero without fear."(1) So when it comes to the last issue of life and death, and Glaucus and Olinthus meet in prison, the latter is a man of resolute courage, prepared to die in the arena rather than recant his faith (2).

Christianity is presented in the story through its appeal to the hope of immortality. "O Cyllene!" cries Olinthus, .. "bride of my heart! torn from me in the first month of our nuptials, shall I not see thee yet, and ere many days be past? Welcome, welcome, death, that will bring me to heaven and thee!" He tells Glaucus - "The immortality of the soul .. the resurrection.. the reunion of the dead .. is the great principle of our creed.. the

(1) Bk.iv.ch.i.p.235-6.

(2) Bk.iv.ch.xvi.p.335-7.

great truth a God suffered death itself to attest and proclaim."(1). It is in keeping with this emphasis on the Resurrection of Christ as proof or confirmation of personal immortality as a general truth, that the only character with a direct link in the New Testament (apart from Glaucus's account of Paul's preaching in Athens, heard by his father), is the now aged son of the widow of Nain, in whom Apaecides meets "one who had known the Mystery of Death"(2). The picture of a Christian congregation into which Olinthus introduces Apaecides, is vague in its terms except for a heavily accented description of these "men of mailed and impervious fortitude" teaching the little children the Lord's Prayer. "Our religion? You behold it!" Olinthus tells Apaecides. "Yon cross our sole image, yon scroll the mysteries of our Caere and Eleusis! Our morality? it is in our lives!-- sinners we all have been; who can now accuse us of a crime? we have baptised ourselves from the past!"(3).

Nearly thirty years later, in a letter to his son about his religion, Lytton wrote of his belief in - "Christ coming to announce a future world, and not to expatiate upon all that can civilise this one. Christ,

(1) Bk.iv.ch.xvi.p.336-7

(2) Bk.iii.ch.iii.p.176; and Bk.iv.ph.iv.p.265-8. cf. Lk.vii.vv.11-15.

(3) Bk.iii.ch.iii.p.174.

therefore, reduces His precepts to two very simple ones - 'Love man, and believe in God'. . . Finally, I entreat you to hold fast to the conviction of soul and hereafter, and the connecting link between which is found in habitual prayer".(1) In this, Lytton shared the prevailing mood of his day, in which one of the most sensitive points both of religious belief and of religious doubt was the question of the immortality of the soul. Tennyson's In Memoriam (1833-50) was the product of his own dark questionings (intensified by the death of Henry Hallam, and pondered over for years), concerning the assurance of immortality in the neutral universe, vast and cold, of geological and astronomical time and space. For Tennyson, Lazarus had the same significance as the son of the widow of Nain for Lytton -- one who bears the answer, if he can give it, to the question, What lies beyond the curtain of death?.

"Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unrevealed;
He told it not; or something seal'd
The lips of that Evangelist".(2)

(1) Life, by his grandson, vol.II.p.407. Letter to Robert Lytton, Dec.17.1861.

(2) In Memoriam (1850) xxxi. Compare with Browning's Epistle of Karshish.

Lytton, however, reduces his old man's revelations to the level of one of Mrs. Radcliffe's mysteries, when he tells how, on the day Christ died -- "through the gloom I saw them glide - the dim and ghastly shapes, in the cerements of the grave, -- with horror, and woe, and warning on their unmoving lips and lightless eyes, as I passed -- they glared upon me -- I had been their brother; and they bowed their heads in recognition; they had risen to tell the living that the dead can rise!" (1)

Lytton's personal religion was a matter of good feelings and impulses, into which he was not prepared to probe very deeply. "I accept the Church to which I belong", he wrote to his son, Robert, -- "because I think it immaterial to me here and hereafter whether some of its tenets are illogical and unsound, and because, before I could decide that question, I must wade through an immense mass of learning for which I have no time, and then go through a process of reasoning, for which I have no talent. And when I have done all this, *cui bono?* I take many things in life and in thought as settled, or if to be unsettled, I am not the man to do it. (It is not my *métier*; it does not belong to my *τὸ πρῆπον* nor

(1) Bk. iv.ch.iv.p.267.

to yours.) Browning's Bishop is right in his way. But what he says as a cynic I say as a gentleman and an artist" (1).

Again, to Lady Sherborne, with whom he cultivated a sentimental friendship in his latter years, he confessed his preference for moderation in religion. "The 'religious temperament', -- that exaltation or ecstasy of spirit which makes 'the joy of the heart' you describe, which turns pain and sorrows into loving messages from God, and can absorb itself into Heaven when the body is stretched on the rack -- is, I believe, a constitutional gift and no more to be acquired than the gift of poetry is. --- I believe that the last persons to whom this gift is usually granted are men accustomed, like myself, to the culture of reason, the strife of active life, the balance between judgment and imagination which the student of literature, the politician, the man of the world, seeks to maintain. In a word, I have not that gift"(2).

There is more than a touch of Lytton in the self-justification of Glaucus in his final letter to Sallust, in which he tells him of the conversion of Ione and himself to the Christian faith -- "a creed, Sallust,

(1) Letter, Jan.22.1862. cf.Life. vol.II.p.411.

(2) Letter, 1869. Life, vol.II.,p.458.

which, shedding light over this world, gathers its concentrated glory, like a sunset, over the next"(1). The mark of Chateaubriand's thinking is plainly visible, even if Lytton had not avowed his source in a footnote, when Glaucus writes of the love that unites him to Ione -- "a love that has taken a new sentiment in our new creed -- a love which none of our poets, beautiful though they be, had shadowed forth in description; for mingled with religion, it partakes of religion; it is blended with pure and unworldly thoughts; it is that which we may hope to carry through eternity, and keep, therefore, white and unsullied, that we may not blush to confess it to our God" (2).

All this Chateaubriand expounded in his Génie du Christianisme, Part II, Book III, in which his theme is that "Christianity has changed the relations of the passions, by changing the basis of vice and virtue". (Chapter I). He continues in chapter VIII, -- "Not satisfied with enlarging the sphere of the passions in the drama and the epic poem, the Christian religion is itself a species of passion, which has its transports, its ardours, its sighs, its joys, its tears, its love of

(1) The Last Days of Pompeii - Chapter the Last.
 (2) Chapter the Last.

society and of solitude. This, as we know, is by the present age denominated fanaticism". (1) "This religious passion is the stronger as it is in contradiction to all others, and must swallow them up to exist itself".(2)

Lytton, however, as we have seen in his judgment on the early Christians, was unable to see the religious grand passion as anything else than fanaticism or bigotry. And the religious love which he here attributes to Glaucus, while it owes its inspiration to Chateaubriand, is far short of his doctrine. It is -- as it was apt to become in practice -- human sentiment with a Christian colouring, not swallowing up the other passions, but accommodating itself all too easily to them in the life of this world. "Yet, Sallust," writes Glaucus (3), "some mixture of the soft Greek blood still mingles with my faith. I can share not the zeal of those who see crime and eternal wrath in men who cannot believe as they. I shudder not at the creed of others. I dare not curse them -- I pray the great Father to convert" -- (And do not Church courts or committees, in a dilemma, do the same? -- "commend to the earnest prayers of the Church")-- "This lukewarmness exposes me to some suspicion among the Christians; but I

(1) Le Génie, Part II. Bk.III. ch.viii.

(2) Ib.

(3) Chapter the Last.

forgive it; and, not offending openly the prejudices of the crowd, I am thus enabled to protect my brethren from the dangers of the law, and the consequences of their own zeal. If moderation seem to me the natural creation of benevolence, it gives, also, the greatest scope to beneficence".

As a novel, The Last Days of Pompeii relies for its effect on spectacle rather than on characterisation, on suspense, melodramatic effect and the sinister rather than on human emotion and situation. Lytton was certainly following in the wake of Scott in seeking to recapture the past in a story of daily life; but he does not reveal here anything of Scott's gift for creating period characters in ordinary life. He is at his best and happiest in describing spectacles -- the brilliant entertainments of Pompeii's society, the life of the gladiators, the scenes of the arena, and the final destruction of Pompeii in earthquake and rain of fire. He helps us to see the brilliantly lit social scene, but not to know individual people as Scott does -- or, for the matter of that, Lockhart in Valerius. Failure though Valerius was as a novel, it attempts more in the way of individual characterisation than Lytton's novel; and Sabinus the Praetorian is a more true to life character

than anything in The Last Days of Pompeii."

In his two rather self-congratulatory prefaces — one to the 1834, and the other to the 1850 edition — Lytton discussed some of the pitfalls in the way of the Classical novelist, the temptation to display his learning too much, or to make his characters talk like Cicero instead of ordinary people. Strangely enough, it is precisely in these two respects that he himself was most at fault, for the research is constantly obtruding into the social scene, and the elaborate, artificial and stilted style of the conversations, in which the characters speak as no one ever did at any time, are the most discouraging impediments to the reader of the book today.

Nevertheless, The Last Days of Pompeii was a tremendous success with the public, recalling the debut of Waverley (1814). Two letters written to Lytton at this time give some idea of the impact that the book made upon the general reading public. "It is in everyone's hands", wrote Lady Blessington, "Hookham told me that 'he knows of no work that has been so much called for' (I quote his own words), and the other circulating libraries give the same report. The classical scholars have pronounced their opinion that the book is too scholarly to be

popular with the common herd of readers -- but the common herd, determined not to deserve this opinion, declare themselves its passionate admirers ..." (1). The second letter gives a more personal impression of what the story meant to individual readers. "You have done more than all the erudite delvers have done", wrote old Isaac d'Israeli "We can enter the city when we choose. We can follow the blind flower-girl as she threads the streets. We can join the pugilists at the tavern, and take a look at that female Amazon with any of them. I was present at the tremendous tragedy of nature -- a trembling spectator" (2)

Though not by any means Lytton's best novel, nor even his best historical novel, The Last Days of Pompeii does illustrate his ability to excite as well as gauge the public taste. His combination of detailed antiquarian history (largely derived from Gell's Pompeiana, 1817-32) of spectacle, suspense and terror, and of the romance of high life long ago, with an "Early Christian" interest that was in fact strongly marked by the fashionable orthodoxy of the day, a Christianity of religious sentiment expressed in moderation and good feeling -- all

(1) Oct.13.1834. Life of Lytton, vol.I.p.446.

(2). Nov.13.1834. ib.vol.I.p.444.

these commended it to the romance-loving public, who either bought the book or read it through the popular circulating libraries. Even Mount Vesuvius itself, as if to give publicity to the occasion, had threatened Naples with a disastrous eruption just at the time of publication (1).

But with all its faults, Lytton's real achievement with the story was that he brought a particular scene and place in past history to life in all its vivid detail. That itself was a new development in the subject-matter of the historical novel, which will have to be discussed in the next chapter, for it was an important step towards the possibility of making some part of the New Testament documents live again in the form of a novel.

So far, the main purpose of the religio-historical novelists dealt with, has been that of romance, -- the telling of a tale of adventure to excite the wonder and interest of the reader. Even George Croly, with his special Apocalyptic interest and Evangelical slant, sets the action and excitement of the tale first. With

(1) Introduction to Dent's edition of - The Last Days of Pompeii, p.7.

Richard Cobbold (1797-1877), we discover the frankly didactic motive. A native of Ipswich and the twentieth of twenty-one children, he was educated at Bury St. Edmunds, served as a curate in Ipswich, was Rector of Wortham in the same county for the next half-century, and also was rural dean of Hartismere. Apart from his years at Caius College, Cambridge, where he graduated in 1820, he must have lived most of his life within the County of Suffolk. A strong Churchman, of liberal outlook, ^{he was} ~~and~~ deeply impressed with the need for religious education, ^{also} ~~he~~ rode to hounds and was a keen sportsman with rod and gun. From his mother, Elizabeth Knipe (1), he inherited literary and artistic gifts, and being himself a man of wide and kindly human interests, he wrote illustrated stories based on real life, the Suffolk life that he knew so intimately, generally with religious and moral education in view, or some charitable purpose to support.

The History of Margaret Catchpole, a Suffolk Girl, 1845, tells the life story, adventures and misadventures,

(1) Elizabeth Knipe or Cobbold, 1767-1824: a descendant of Edmund Waller: wrote Poems, illustrated Valentines, a novel, and contributed to journalism: e.g. Six Narrative Poems, 1787: novel, The Sword: or Father Bertrand's History of his own Time, 1792: Cliff Valentines, 1813 and 1814.

of a girl of obviously strong character who gets into trouble with the authorities through loyalty to her sailor sweetheart. "It is hoped", Cobbold wrote in the preface, "that an instructive lesson may be conveyed by it to many who may not yet have seen the necessity of early and religious instruction". But to the modern reader it seems remarkable that the author should have missed the real moral in the iniquity of the penal system which could twice sentence a young woman to death (1), and finally show its mercy by a life sentence of transportation to Australia. Her spirit was unbroken, and she made good from the moment she had the opportunity in Australia. A second real-life story was that of Mary Anne Wellington, the Soldier's Daughter, Wife, and Widow, 1846, whom he endowed with the £600 profits from the book. Cobbold himself actually made little from his writing, most of the profits being given to charitable purposes. He also wrote two historical novels, Zenon the Martyr, (1847), and Preston Tower (1850), a story of the early days of Cardinal Wolsey.

(1) Margaret Catchpole was sentenced to death, then had the sentence commuted to transportation for 7 years, for stealing a horse and riding to London to join her sailor, 1797. Second sentence of death, commuted to transportation for life, 1800, for breaking out of Ipswich Gaol, again to join her lover. Pled guilty at both trials, undaunted in speech and demeanour. - D.N.B.

Zenon the Martyr is set in the reign of Domitian in the years of persecution, A.D.93-96. Cobbold followed Lockhart's precedent by giving his hero a British mother. Accused of refusing to attend the Games, to which Domitian had sent him an invitation, Zenon makes his defence before the Senate:— "...The son of Ostorius Scapula is by birth a Roman, though his mother was a British lady nearly allied to the Queen of the Iceni. — Thou hast imputed to him disloyalty and falsehood. Know, O Emperor, that he who has the best nobility of British blood in his veins is guilty of neither. — Romans are not disloyal, and Britons never tell a lie. There is as much virtue in the latter as in the former..." (1)

Condemned to the wild beasts, Zenon is helped to escape by a thunderstorm which strikes the amphitheatre itself, scattering the spectators. Domitian, his fears lulled by Apollonius of Tyana, who knows of the plot against him, is murdered by his own servants, Stephanus and Parthenius, at the instigation of Domitia the Empress (2). In Ephesus, Apollonius breaks off his discourse and cries out - "Courage, brave Stephanus! Courage! Strike the tyrant home!" (3). The Christians

(1) Zenon, vol.I.p.181-2.

(2) ib.vol.II.p.35: III.p.176.

(3) ib. vol.III.p.177: Philostr. Bk.VIII.26.

are pardoned by his successor, Nerva.

The plot involves historical and imaginary characters mingled together. The hero, Zenon, is linked with Clement of Rome in the Christian Church, with Flavius Clemens and his family in their arrest, and with Apollonius of Tyana in Domitian's dungeon. Apollonius of Tyana, brought in to advise Domitian whether a fortune-teller's prophecy of his death is true or false, shares Zenon's dungeon for a time. He is represented as a mixture of worldly wisdom, medico and quack, philosopher and diviner, who believes in no god greater than himself. In the chapter in which they meet, he is labelled "Infidelity" and Zenon "Faith" (1).

The whole tale is laced with pious instruction. On the contrast between Zenon's peace in the dungeon below and the luxurious life of Domitian's palace above, chapter X concludes with the exhortation - "O blessed state! Happy mayst thou be, O reader, to love the Lord thy God, and His Son Jesus Christ, and sleep soundly on the floor of a dungeon, or the downy bed of a palace. May God bless thee with sweet peace and rest!" (2). Each chapter has its appropriate homily, in which some

(1) Zenon II. ch. xxiii. pp. 222, ff.
 (2) ib. vol. I. p. 223.

aspect of the events or conversation just described is brought home to the reader's present circumstances. The tone of the book is strongly anti-Roman Catholic.

Zenon's British mother prays for her country:-

"Preserve my country, preserve my sea-girt isle, my rock-bound shores, my wooded hills, my fertile plains!

Preserve my brave people, my loved friends, my virtuous relatives! O preserve them from Roman tyrannies, Roman

vices, Roman superstitions" (1) And in order to

make it quite plain that he has more than ancient

Roman tyrannies and superstitions in his mind, the author

devotes almost one hundred pages at the end of the story

to extolling the Christian character, with special

reference to England's freedom from tyranny and idolatry,

especially of the "Pope of Rome"(2). He is also

disarmingly frank about his motive in writing his tale.

"Readers, had the author of "Zenon" published a volume of

sermons, perhaps you would not have condescended to read

one of them.... He has collected material and woven them

into a connected form, to convey a lesson which appeared

to him not unseasonable".(3)

It becomes evident too, that the churchmanship of the

(1) ib. vol.II.p.82.

(2) ib.vol.III.p.219-303.

(3) op. cit. p.302-303.

day, no less than theology colours the picture given, and sharpens its contrasts, particularly in regard to Christianity and the early Church. What we have to remember, in reading Zenon the Martyr, published as it was in 1847, is that just two years before, John Henry Newman, for some ten years the outstanding figure among the Oxford Tractarians, had been received into the Roman Catholic Church, and in 1846 had been ordained in Rome, to return as a Roman Catholic priest to Birmingham, where he founded the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in 1847. His move had been accompanied by a series of secessions which not only rocked the Tractarian movement but shook the security of the Church of England. That in itself was bound to make a man with Cobbold's sense of purpose in writing anxious to show the way of faith and Church life which he believed, as a loyal Church of England clergyman, to be true to its source in the early Christian authorities. Moreover, since the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, there had been a marked revival of organisation and activity in Roman Catholic circles. Within three years of the publication of Zenon the Martyr, the Roman Catholic hierarchy was restored and their leader, Dr. N.P.S. Wiseman, a prominent intervener in the Tractarian controversies of the past years, created Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. The

effect of these changes, past or impending, is to be seen in Cobbold's story. He felt that the security of the Establishment was being threatened, and the accepted faith of the Church undermined by the accretions of the Roman system. How did they stand in regard to what was actually known of the belief and practice of the early Church?

Two other contemporary problems were very much in the front of his mind in writing. There was the enemy of irreligion in the popular form of rationalistic radicalism as well as in its intellectual form of scientific materialism -- in a word, "infidelity". Along with irreligion, Cobbold would, as will be seen, place rebellion as one of the dangers threatening. And finally, there were the extravagances of "enthusiasm" to be guarded against, the abnormalities, unbalanced extremism of belief which the predominance of feeling over reason in religion caused among the sects.

First, therefore, Cobbold builds up a careful picture of the early Church in Rome (1). For this purpose, the historical figure of Clement of Rome is brought into the story (2). He has been "ordained

(1) Zenon I. ch. ii.

(2) cf. Phil. IV. 3: Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. III. 3. for his place in the Roman succession: cf. also Clement's first Ep. to Corinthians: Cobbold does not identify him with Flavius Clemens, Domitian's cousin, whom he put to death.

successor of St. Peter among the Hebrew converts of the Church of Rome", "as Linus and Clitus had been successors of Paul over the Gentile portion; but both became united now under Clemens" (1). Eubulus and Pudens (2) are associated with him in the work of the Church, which has "more than one house set apart, with distinct keepers thereof for decency and order" (3). The atrium of the house is used as the place of prayer (4); the men sit on benches on the right, and the women on the left. "Two deacons presided over the arrangement of the males, and two deaconesses over the females, and these stood at each end of the aulæ or covered aisles of the atrium (5). The pluvium in the centre is used for baptisms.

The Bishop presides, and in the following service simplicity is the rule. "There was no rising at the Bishop's entrance to pay him homage, much less any prostration or genuflexion denoting any act of prayer to him (6). On the call of the Bishop, all kneel in prayer, which Clement leads. One deacon reads from the Old Testament, another from the New Testament (sic).

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- (1) Linus - cf. 2.Tim.IV.21.
 (2) Eubulus, Pudens - ib.
 (3) Zenon, I.p.32.
 (4) ib.p.34-5
 (5) ib.p.34-5
 (6) ib.p.36.

Zenon is asked to read from the Acts or the Epistles (1). If there are any letters from the provinces dependent on Rome, they are now read and discussed. Finally Clement gives an exposition of the circumcision error (2). The instructional aim of this picture is plain, when one remembers Cobbold's strong opinions on the need for popular religious education. It presents the case that the simpler forms of the Anglican service and order are in keeping with the Church of the end of the 1st. and middle of the 2nd. Centuries, in contrast to the late accretions and elaborations of Roman Catholic belief and practice.

Similarly, Zenon's affirmation of the Christian teaching to Domitilla and Flaviana, the wife and daughter of Flavius Clemens, is a statement in particular of the place of Christ's death in personal experience, appealing for confirmation to the testimony of Scripture "read not with your natural eye, but with the eye of the spirit"(3), and not to the tradition of the Church as the custodian of His Sacraments. God "sent His Son into the world, to

(1) *ib.*p.37.

(2) For this Church order, Cobbold's authorities are -
 A I Clement, xlii, xliv. ("bishops and deacons").

B Ignatius - Ep. to the Smyrnaeans, viii. (on the authority of the bishop). C Justin - Apology, I.67, (for description of the prayers, reading and exhortation, but Cobbold omits the breaking of bread).

(3) Zenon, I.ch.vi.p.135.

take our nature into His, to restore to it its immortality.... He came, according to God's earliest promise, to make atonement in the flesh for the sins of the whole world. And that atonement was made, when our Roman governor in Judaea nailed Him to the Cross. He consented, -- for all power was His, and he could have annihilated legions of Roman soldiers; He came to fulfill the Scriptures, submitted to that cruel death formerly so ignominious, now honoured indeed by His blood shed upon the Cross. He died upon it, was buried, rose again, ascended into Heaven, sent the Holy Spirit who now rules in our hearts, works by us and with us, and will raise us again, with bodies like our Saviour's, though we be here eaten by wild beasts or burnt to death" (1)

Apollonius of Tyana is pictured in volume II, chapters 22 and 23, as "Infidelity", sets "the works of nature" above all other powers, acknowledges "no other duties than the wise of nations, of which he himself desired to be the chief and to be looked upon of all as something more godly than the whole world (2).

(1) ib. I.ch.vi.p.134-5.

(2) Zenon, vol. II.p.192-3

In the conversation with Zenon in the dungeon, he agrees with much in the Christian "way", but disbelieves the Resurrection. Apollonius is hand-in-glove with the plotters against the life of Domitian, and is fully prepared to justify the use of violence ~~authority~~ to overcome unjust tyranny (1). Against this, Zenon argues - "Our duty is obedience to the laws of the land we live in, and to leave it to God to defend us from our enemies, and to give us the support of His grace"(2)

Cobbold, like Newman and Paley (3), saw in Apollonius a Pythagorean sophist and miracle-monger, whose claims were intended to undermine the evidential value of Christ's miracles. But Cobbold, over and above this, considered his sophistry the equivalent of rationalist "Infidelity", as he saw it in his own day. The philosophy of scientific rationalism set man and nature at the centre of its thinking instead of God, and in popular atheistic rationalism, especially in the workers' movements and journalism in the Chartist

(1) Cobbold shares Newman's belief that Apollonius's second sight re Domitian's death was due to his complicity in the plot. cf. J.H. Newman - Apollonius in Historical Sketches, vol. I.1876.

(2) Zenon, II, p.231.

(3) cf Newman on Ap. cited under (1): also Wm. Paley - Evidences of Christianity, 1817. ed. p.196,197.

'forties, Cobbold saw a threat of sedition or rebellion towards the state as well as infidelity toward God (1). Again, in chapter xxiv, in which the argument between Apollonius and Zenon is continued, Zenon sets out the Christian duty towards rulers even where there is a conflict of obedience, as in times of persecution. "I should consider it my duty to do as God commanded me ... It is even now a sin against the state to be a Christian; but it would be a sin against God not to be such, and which is greater, sin against Rome or against Rome's Maker? The Emperor has issued a cruel edict: he has made a law against Christians. Christians must either seek another country and government, or they must abide the persecution of the Emperor... I know his intention to have me devoured by the wild beasts: but I would not therefore slay him to escape the jaws of the lions"(2) Near the beginning of the story, Zenon says to his friend, Flavius Clemens, of Domitian's summons to attend the Games: - Had he received it, - "My duty would have taken me to the amphitheatre, but I should have felt it my duty to tell Domitian that those savage shows were

(1) It was this situation among the workers which drove Kingsley & Maurice to produce Politics for the People in 1848. See Amy Cruse - The Victorians and their Books, p.130-140.

(2) Zenon, III.ch.xxiv.p.12-15.

beneath the dignity of a civilised state, and far beneath the glory of an Emperor" (1).

All this faithfully reflects not only the instruction in the New Testament on duty to rulers (2) and the early Christian attitude towards the spectacles in the amphitheatre (3), but also one of the great anxieties of the 1830's and 1840's -- the fear of revolution and social upheaval. In the latter decade especially, Chartism became more an organ of socialistic revolution than of industrial reform, which had been its policy up to 1840. After that date, impatience with the slowness of progress by means of public propaganda produced the call for direct action among the extremists, many of whom even advocated a resort to arms. There followed riots and social and industrial disturbances, the effect of which on such minds as Lockhart's has already been noted. Not till 1849 was the threat of the Chartists removed by improvements in industrial conditions. But until then, the issue between peaceful reform and force was a very real one in the workers' movements. When, therefore,

(1) *ib.* ch. iv. p. 81.

(2) 1 Tim II. 2; Ro. XIII. 1-7; Tit. III. 1; 1 Pet. II. 13-25; 1 Cor. VII, 20-24.

(3) Tertullian - De Spectaculis
Augustine - Confessions, Bk. vi.

Cobbold wrote his novel, with a homiletic motive running through it, he had the social upheavals of the 19th. Century just as much in mind as those of the 1st. "The Christian's kingdom is not of this world", Zenon tells the Emperor Domitian. "We would have all men live, not for this life, but for that which is to come. We seek a country and city not to be found on the face of this earth, but in heaven above. To that kingdom we aspire, but not with violence"(1). This may be the religion of "otherworldliness", but it is preached with a shrewd eye on this world's issues between Reform and Revolution in A.D.1847.

Lastly, Cobbold stresses the normality of the Christian religious experience in worship, its freedom from "rude, extravagant, passionate contortions of the body or the muscles of the face", (2), by which we infer he has in mind ecstatic "enthusiasm" as it was known in the sects. Similarly, when Zenon prays in his dungeon, - "He was carried into no ecstatic or extravagant gestures. His countenance alone betrayed the angelic motions of his heart,..." (3) As for the gift of

(1) Zenon, ch.xviii.p.124-5

(2) ib.vol.II.ch.xvi.p.92.- the baptism of Domitilla and Flaviana: compare also Croly, supra.

(3) Zenon,III.p.63.

tongues, it is now an ordinary gift of the Churches, exercised by the "Societies of the Church" which unite to send out Scriptures in all languages.(1)

As a novel, Zenon the Martyr lacks human interest, with its emphasis on the unsullied, its restriction of its characters to persons of noble blood, who are mouthpieces of virtue and sound doctrine, rather than flesh-and-blood persons with the feeling of our infirmities. The conversations are stilted, the action slow-moving and too frequently interrupted by homiletic interpolations. The author ignores the romance or suspense value of his people or events in favour of talking points for the discussion of attitudes and beliefs by his characters. But behind it lies the more serious motive characteristic of the average later historical romance on New Testament times -- simply the desire to stimulate the imagination of the average person and to enable him to see more really the scenes and persons and purposes of the historic Christian faith. What distinguishes it in interest from the other novels so

(1) The reference here is to the work of Wilberforce and his fellow Evangelicals. The British & Foreign Bible Soc., 1804. Edinburgh Bible Soc. 1809. Glasgow, 1812. The earlier societies were - Society for Promoting Xian Knowl. 1698. Soc. for Propag. of Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1709. Soc. for Promoting Xian Knowl. among the Poor, 1750. Naval & Military Bible Soc. 1780.

far considered, is that it builds up from patristic sources a picture of the life and worship of the Church in Rome near the end of the 1st. Century, and that in the picture given, the author commits himself recognisably to an Evangelical or low-Church point of view in the contemporary churchmanship.

The Churches, with all their differences in constitution, practice, or belief, have all alike sought to found the substance of their distinctive positions in "primitive usage" (1), except for the Catholic position, which adds to the foundation in Scripture "the said Traditions, as well those pertaining to faith as those pertaining to morals, as having been given from the lips of Christ or by dictation of the Holy Spirit and preserved by unbroken succession in the Catholic Church" (2). They might differ in what they considered fundamentals and what they considered secondary and therefore subject to development, but in certain fundamentals of faith, community practice or constitution,

(1) cf., Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem, IV., 5. - "In fine, if it is agreed that what is earlier is truer, and what is there from the beginning is earlier, and that what issued from the Apostles is from the beginning; it will equally be agreed that what has been held sacred in the churches of the Apostles is that which has been handed down from the Apostles". (Bettenson's trans.- The Early Christian Fathers, 1956).

(2) Council of Trent - On Scripture and Tradition, Section IV., 8th April, 1546.

they claimed continuity with the Primitive Church. We realise, therefore, that in describing the Roman Church of Domitian's day as episcopal in form, yet simple in its worship and practice, avoiding over elaboration of ceremony or aggrandisement of office, Cobbold was committing himself to a definite point of view within the Church as well as writing for a definite section of the religious reading public. He would find himself in controversy with the non-episcopal Churches on the one hand, with the Roman Catholic Church on the other, and also with the Oxford Tractarians in his own Church, each of which claimed that something more, or something less, or something other, was required to complete authentic continuity with the past. For all the Christian communities, their picture of the First Century Church was inextricably bound up with their spiritual and ecclesiastical values^{and character} in the present. The historical novel was, therefore, now entering the sphere of 19th. Century religious controversies, a development which falls to be considered more fully in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.THE EARLY CHRISTIAN NOVEL ENTERS CONTROVERSY

"The Vision of Christ that thou dost see

Is my Vision's greatest enemy".

- William Blake - The Everlasting Gospel, 1818

The first half of the 19th. Century has so far produced four novels whose setting is in the 1st. Century A.D. -- J.G. Lockhart's Valerius, 1821, set in the reign of Trajan, 98-117 A.D.; George Croly's Salathiel, 1828, in the period from the Crucifixion to 70 A.D.; Edward Bulwer Lytton's The Last Days of Pompeii, 1834, in the year 79 A.D.; and Richard Cobbold's Zenon the Martyr, 1847, in the reign of Domitian, 81-96 A.D. There follows an interval of roughly twenty-five years during which, except for J.G. Whyte-Melville's The Gladiators, 1863, no First Century subject appears among the many historical novels produced. Nevertheless, during this interval, in the fields of general literature outside the novel, and in art, there is a very lively and intensely imaginative interest shown in subjects taken from the New Testament times. Then, from the early seventies onwards, novels on Christianity of the First Century begin to appear once

more, and there is a steady stream for the next thirty years. Just why these changes of interest should have taken place, and their significance and place in the trends of religious thought at the time, it is the purpose of this chapter, and the following two, (chapters IV. and V.) to explain.

One reason is that current religious controversy in the forties and fifties, centred on the claims of the Oxford Movement, took possession of the historical novel as a powerful weapon of argument, and the subject of dispute, being the Creeds and Councils of the Church, tended to set the locus of historical discussion in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries of Church History rather than the First. As has already been seen in the last chapter, a reading public with a common religious interest had been built up in the early decades of the Nineteenth Century by the Evangelicals, largely through the publishing work of the Religious Tract Society (1). Other publishers quickly saw the possibilities of the market, and so didactic novels with an Evangelical religious purpose — a development both in subject and in treatment from the prototype tracts of Hannah More (2), and Rowland Hill (3) — became a characteristic and

(1) Founded largely through the efforts of Wm. Wilberforce in 1799.

(2) Works of Hannah More, pub. in four volumes, 1834, 1837.

(3) Lived, 1745-1833. Village Dialogues.

popular feature of the time (1). But from 1840 onwards, the struggle between the Evangelical or low-Church point of view, and the Oxford Tractarian or high-Church point of view, began to dominate religious controversy, and the popular religious novel was quickly brought in as a dialectical weapon (2). Throughout the 'forties and 'fifties there appeared a succession of novels from both sides dealing with the efficacy or otherwise of High or Low Church ministries, in which "innovations" of all kinds -- from Gregorian chants, ancient festivals, and saints' banners, to rood screens and Gothic "reconstructions" -- play a part (3). Newman himself contributed one of these frankly propagandist novels after his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church, in Loss and Gain, 1848. "The business of writing religious novelettes was far more lucrative about 1850

(1) e.g. Hannah More's Coelebs in Search of a Wife, 1809: Legh Richmond's The Dairyman's Daughter, 1809: J.W. Cunningham's The Velvet Cushion, 1816: Mrs. Sherwood's The Fairchild Family, 1818.

(2) Evangelical novels - Charles Taylor's Margaret, or The Pearl, 1844: W.F. Wilkinson's The Parish Rescued 1845: Elizabeth Harris's From Oxford to Rome: How it fared for some who made the Journey, 1847. Tractarian- Francis Paget's St. Antholin's, 1841: E.A. Paley's The Church Restorers, 1845: William Sewell's Hawkstone, 1845.

(3) Miss C.M. Yonge wrote the most outstanding novel of Oxford Movement idealism in social life, in The Heir of Redcliffe, 1853. J.H. Shorthouse's philosophical romance John Inglesant, reflecting in a historical story the sacramental thought of Tractarianism, belongs to a later date, 1881

than either before or since", writes A.L. Drummond in The Churches in English Fiction (1). "It was quite commercialized. Emma Worboise makes one of her heroines explain - 'If I wrote a red-hot Puseyite story, I know exactly to whose care it should be confided; if a Low Church novel, I knew where it would receive a hearty welcome'".

The historical novel also became involved, quite naturally, because the subject at the heart of all the controversy was - the authority of the tradition of the Church and of the great Credal Councils to stand along with Scripture as the rule of faith and life (2). The traditions of the Fathers or Doctors of the Church, as well as the Creeds of the Councils, show development of Credal thought, Church government and practice. How

(1) P.45-46. See a very full discussion of these controversial novels of Protestant and Catholic tension in chs. 1-3.

(2) i.e. the first four General Councils. - Nicaea I, 325 A.D., which condemned Arianism: Constantinople I 381 A.D., reaffirming the Nicæan Creed: Ephesus, 431 A.D., condemning Nestorianism and Pelagianism: Chalcedon 451 A.D., Definition of the Faith against Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism.

cf. J.H.Newman's Tract XC - "Remarks on Certain Passages in the 39 Articles" para 1 - "Holy Scripture and the Authority of the Church", 1841: also his Essay on the Development of Doctrine, written about 1844 at Littlemore from which he departed to enter the Roman Catholic Church in October, 1845.

far was that development to be respected as authoritative, and if so, by what standard was such development to be judged or justified? And how far were the Fathers entitled to authoritative respect as guides to the doctrinal interpretation of Scripture? When the novelist entered the arena, the historical novel was inevitably linked with the contemporary "Tract for the Times" motive; it became either frankly propagandist or a novel of ideas based upon past history, and in either case it constituted a long step away from Scott's aim to recapture the romance of the past in terms of character in a tale of ordinary life.

Charles Kingsley produced the most outstanding novel of this historical propagandist character in Hypatia, 1853, (1) in which he depicted the turmoil of intellectual, moral and spiritual ideas, beliefs and standards in Alexandria of the 5th. Century — the conflict between Christianity and Greek philosophy (2); the deadly struggle between the Arian and the Catholic Christians; the bigotries of doctrinal fanatics, and the misuse of their loyalties by leaders who set political or social power before the qualities of Christian living

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- (1) Hypatia was serialised in "Frazers Magazine", 1852-53.
 (2) Especially in the form of the Neo-Platonist School of Philosophy.

and character; the fragmental belief of the syncretistic religious compromisers; and the gross immorality of materialistic paganism. The interest of the novel is not so much in the romance, or manners, or social life of the past, as in the interplay of intellectual, moral and spiritual ideas, beliefs and standards in the whole complex, struggling life of the period. Characters tend to represent types or standards of thought and outlook rather than their own individual selves. Moreover, the past is sought, not for its own sake, but to mirror its similarity to features of present life, and to read from it a contemporary message. It is characteristically an historical novel of ideas, presenting in the closing picture of the Abbot Philammon (1) the case for a broad Christian charity which reserves its severity of judgment for doctrinaire orthodoxy. Kingsley makes this plain in the sub-title of his book -- 'New Foes with an Old Face' -- and in the homiletic postscript - "And now, readers, farewell. I have shown you new foes under an old face -- your own likeness in toga and tunic, instead of coat and bonnet. --- The same devil who tempted these old Egyptians tempts you. The same God who would have saved these old Egyptians if they had willed, will save

(1) Hypatia, p.433-4 (Dent's ed.)

you if you will. Their sins are yours, their errors yours, their doom yours, their deliverance yours. There is nothing new under the sun...."(1)

Compare this with Thomas Carlyle's vivid presentation of history in The French Revolution, 1837, Heroes and Hero-worship, 1841, and Past and Present, 1843, written not simply to recapture the past, but to illustrate or expound a social or moral lesson for the present. "The centuries, too, are all lineal children of one another, and often in the portrait of early grandfathers, this and that enigmatic feature of the newest grandson shall disclose itself, to mutual elucidation"(2). In thus setting history to the task of working out a case or a message or a set of ideas, Carlyle must be regarded as a potent influence in the blending of the historical novel with the novel of ideas.

Charles Kingsley's stress in Hypatia had been on the power of the Word and the Spirit in human life, and on the Church as partaking in the creaturely weakness of man. Now Newman stepped in with Callista, 1856, giving a picture of Proconsular Africa in the Third Century. In it he set out to show the life and significance of the

(1). ib. p.438.

(2). Past and Present, Bk.II, ch.i.

historic Catholic Church as the authoritative custodian of the Word and Sacraments, and the Divine medium of community life and worship in the surrounding pagan community, meeting with the strength of its martyrs and saints ~~of~~ the Decian persecutions. Newman, in his preface to the 1888 edition of the novel, emphasized that he did not consider his story in any sense controversial; he was writing solely for the edification of Catholic readers, to give a picture from their point of view of the relations between Christians and non-Christians at that period. Nevertheless, he could not help being aware that this meant taking up certain positions regarding worship and usage (1) which were the subject of controversy, and he could hardly avoid the temptation to supply a corrective to Kingsley's "exaggerations", as he would regard them, of the Church's bigotry and intolerance towards the non-Christians.

The interest of Callista lies in its observation of the effect of Christian ideas and pagan influences upon the character and relationships of the young countryman, Agellius, and the Greek girl whom he adored, Callista;

(1) e.g. by setting in the 3rd. Century "devotions, representations, and doctrines, declaratory of the ' high dignity of the Blessed Virgin". - 1888 Preface, p.ix.

the conflict between the heavenly and the earthly love in the young man's heart, and the final acceptance of the heavenly love by both, though it leads to Callista's martyrdom. This is the theme of the "Poetic of Christianity" (1) explored by Chateaubriand in his survey of the Christian inspiration in literature -- the Christian religion as the grand passion. "Now, Christianity, considered itself as a passion, supplies the poet with immense treasures. This religious passion is the stronger as it is in contradiction to all others, and must swallow them up to exist itself"(2). This universalised all-consuming passion, which Bulwer Lytton, as we saw (3), reduced to a generalised Christian sentiment, both Newman in Callista and Cardinal Wiseman in Fabiola 1854, identified with the holy zeal of the martyr. In the relationship of Newman's two principal characters, Callista hopes to find out more about Christianity, for whose secure faith she has a secret longing: Agellius hopes she may become a Christian as his wife; but in the result Callista feels that he has come between her and God, because he has put love for her before his own love of God (3). Agellius, stirred

(1) Le Genie du Christianisme, pt.II.

(2) ib. translated by Charles I White, D.D., (Burns & Oates, 1856) Pt.II, Bk.III.ch.8, p.291

(3) Callista, p.130, ff.

and recalled to the higher passion, protests - "God help my inconsistency! but I never meant to love you as I love Him. You are destined for His love. I commit you to Him, your true Lord, whom I ought never to have rivalled, for whom I ought simply to have pleaded -- to His keeping and that of His holy martyrs I commit you"(1). Agellius rediscovers his purpose in life through renunciation, and the way is open for Callista to discover "God within my heart"(2), and to accept her martyrdom with the joy of a bride. "But now I have espoused Him, and am going to be married today"(3).

For Cardinal Wiseman's holy martyrs in Fabiola, 1854, a story of Third Century Rome, the Diocletian persecutions bring no hard decisions or inward struggles, but only the opportunity of the happy ending, for which they compete with a holy envy. (4) For his women characters, there is only one romance and one espousal (5). The story is a pious writing up of the Martyrology, designed to foster interest in the Saints' Offices in the Breviary. It uses

(1) *ib.*, p.134.

(2) *ib.*, p.314-5.

(3) *ib.*, p.357.

(4) *cf.* Fabiola, 1926 ed., pub. Burnes, Oates & Washbourne, p.175, 229, 235.

(5) *ib.*, p.24-25, 162.

the author's archaeological knowledge of the Catacombs towards religious ends, to exalt the martyrs in the worship of the Church, and to impress on Catholic readers the continuity of the Eucharist with the Sacrament as celebrated by the martyrs in the Church of the Catacombs. Fabiola is an example of the novel set to a purely propagandist end. It lacks historical atmosphere, and represents its ideas of the Christian vocation with little psychological insight into the human situation and nature of the characters. Its interest is that, like Wilkie Collins's Antonina, 1850, (1), it uses the results of archaeology as material for the construction of both background and plot, a characteristic feature of most "Early Christian" novels of the latter half of the 19th. Century.

George Eliot's Romola, 1863, although it is set in Florence at the close of the 15th. Century, must also be mentioned here, because like Callista, it blends the novel of ideas with historical romance, and at the same time reveals a deep interest in the psychological aspect

(1) Antonina, Collins's first novel, is a deliberate attempt to write a popular "best seller" after the pattern of Lytton's The Last Days of Pompeii. Set in the time of Alaric's siege of Rome, it failed to catch the popular fancy, and Collins departed from this genre of fiction.

and treatment of the story. In fact, the four novels, The Last Days of Pompeii, 1834, Hypatia, 1853, Callista, 1856, and Romola, 1863, taken together as a literary sequence illustrate the trend of development in the historical novel towards the type which, by reason of its particular concern with intellectual and spiritual ideas, and the inwardness of human actions and relationships, was most capable of representing the New Testament period in the form of fiction. In all four, there is a more detailed particularisation of historical background and events than we find in Scott's novels, and with this specialised type of historical research novel, Lytton was the first to experiment. Lytton also led the way in the use of historical personages as prominent or central characters in the plot -- in Rienzi, 1835, and Harold, 1848 -- a practice which Scott preferred to avoid, but in which the authors of Hypatia, Callista and Romola chose to follow Lytton. What is even more important, in these three novels, the moral or instructional value, which it was accepted must somewhere underlie even a novel written primarily for entertainment, is superseded by the high seriousness of the theme, in which ideas of life take precedence of interest over plot and romance. All three novels are concerned/^{primarily} with the clash and tensions caused by the power of ideas in life; and while they

describe the past with a carefully wrought realism, they are nevertheless just as much concerned with the present day and its spiritual and intellectual interests.

Hypatia is more concerned with ideas as forces working through the contentions of parties and the cross-currents of thought and purpose, in a wide human landscape such as Fifth Century Alexandria with its background of desert monachism and neo-pagan philosophy. Callista traces the power and influence of Christian ideas of vocation in the personal lives and relationships of individuals; in conflict with their own inner background of pagan belief as well as with their outer environment. At the same time, it is quite deliberately reaffirming the spiritual validity of celibacy as a Divine calling in the present day against the challenge from Kingsley in Hypatia (1). Romola deepens the psychological interest of the novel by tracing the conflict and influence of philosophical and religious ideas in the mind and life of Romola, brought up by her father in the culture of Renaissance humanism, in contrast to the demoralisation resulting from the enlightened self-interest of Tito, her husband. Here again, in spite of the exceedingly great weight of scholarship, from which the story is constructed, the reader is aware

(1) See Raphael's arguments, p.233-4, 290-291, Hypatia (Dent's ed.)

that George Eliot is as much concerned with Comtean humanism and the problems of the supernatural and spiritual elements in religion in the Nineteenth Century as with philosophy and religion in the Fifteenth (1)

The importance, then, of Hypatia, Callista and Romola is that with the more specialised historical research experimented with by Bulwer Lytton, they blended the "doctrinal" novel of ideas with an increasing and deepening interest in psychological analysis and insight. Religious controversy (in the case of Charles Kingsley and J.H. Newman) and "honest doubt" (represented by George Eliot) both played their part in extending the human subject matter and treatment of the historical novel into the field of religious ideas. That itself was a necessary step towards a novel capable of portraying New Testament times. The story of Jesus Christ, after all, is written not only in particular historical events and lives, but also in the universal longings, hopes and urges of the inner experience of the heart and the mind. It is there ultimately that the story is understood.

"I feel that God within my heart", says Callista, on

(1) cf. Romola pp.336-7;396;485, Blackwood's one vol. ed.

the threshold of avowed faith, -- "I feel myself in His presence. -- It is the echo of a person speaking to me. It carries with it its proof of its Divine origin. My nature feels towards it as towards a person. When I obey it, I feel a satisfaction; when I disobey, a soreness - just like that which I feel in pleasing or offending some revered friend. So you see, Polemo, I believe in what is more than a mere 'something'".(1)

"Father", cries Romola, protesting her own right of judgment to Savonarola, whose religious faith has given her both 'light and strength', -- "you yourself declare that there comes a moment when the soul must have no guide but the voice within it, to tell whether the consecrated thing has sacred virtue. And therefore I must speak".(2)

"The Bible is given us", wrote Thomas Erskine of Linlathen (3), "to teach us who it is that is speaking in our own hearts. --- Jesus is not merely a character or a personage in a book; He is a real substantial being whom we have not to seek for at a distance, nor strive to

(1) Callista, p.314.

(2) Romola, p.425.

(3) The Doctrine of Election, 1837. cf. T.F.Henderson's Erskine of Linlathen: Selections and Biography 1899, p.163-4.

picture to ourselves by an effort of the imagination. It is he who, however hitherto unknown or misnamed by us, is now in our own hearts The Bible tells us of things which are true in our own hearts; it does not make them true".

So the New Testament novelist's materials will be not only his knowledge of the historical past, and his power of creative imagination to recapture it alive, but also his own spiritual insight into and understanding of the ultimate hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, which are themselves the universal subject matter of faith and questioning in the inner experience of the heart. Charles Kingsley and John Henry Newman, by their quality of faith, and George Eliot, with her deep questioning sense of the mystery of human life and its experience, each moulded the historical novel as an instrument to delineate the power of spiritual and moral conceptions to work upon and influence the inner thinking, the motives, feelings and purposes of human lives in the history of the past. And in so doing they developed the historical novel into an instrument capable of representing the New Testament period for what it is, -- not simply a story of particular events and persons and their relationships, but a story of spiritual conceptions and powers become Incarnate in one

particular Person, and entering through Him into human lives and history with a power to act upon and change their spiritual values and moral direction in a way that has altered the course of peoples as well as individuals.

Thomas Erskine had a percipient truth to give to the historical novelist as well as to the theologian, when he wrote: - "Each man is a microcosm, a miniature of the world and of the race, and therefore when we hear of Christ coming into the flesh of our race, we in fact hear of His coming into the flesh of every man. When we hear of God so loving the world, we hear of His so loving each man of the world".(1)

(1) *ib.* p.184-5

CHAPTER IVTHE IMAGINATIVE APPROACH TO THE NEW TESTAMENTOUTSIDE THE NOVEL.

"God stoops to the language of men, to reduce His wonders to the level of their comprehension; but He still is God".

- Francois René de Chateaubriand - Le Génie du Christianisme, 1802.

It is an interesting characteristic of the quickening of religious experience in the early Nineteenth Century, that it came so largely from the literary world outside the specialised field of theology. "There is at the moment", wrote J.H. Newman to Dr. Jelf in 1841, "a great progress of the religious mind of our Church to something deeper and truer than satisfied the last Century.... The poets and philosophers of the age have borne witness to it many years. Those great names in our literature, Sir Walter Scott, Mr Wordsworth, Mr Coleridge, though in different ways and with essential differences one from another, and perhaps from any Church system, bear witness to it".(1). Coleridge, though he was for a few years a

(1) Quoted in Basil Willey's 19th. Century Studies, p.61. See also Newman's essay The state of Religious Parties in "The British Critic" April, 1839: and his Apologia Pro Vita Sua, (Walter Scott ed.) vol.1.p.150-151.

Unitarian preacher, and actually preached for a congregation in Shrewsbury (1), was never nearer to being a minister than, than he was a soldier when he enlisted as a deserting student from Cambridge (2). Wordsworth refused as a young man the opportunity to enter the Church. And Scott, like Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, whose theological writings were quoted in the last chapter, was a legal Advocate by training. It is a remarkable feature of the time, from the 1850's onwards, that exponents of widely varying shades of belief and unbelief, while in conflict with one another, could unite to acknowledge a common debt to the great literary Romantics -- Coleridge, Wordsworth and Scott.

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- (1) In Jan. 1798. cf. William Hazlitt's lively account of that visit to his father's house in My First Acquaintance with Poets - "When I came down to breakfast I found that he had just received a letter from his friend T. Wedgwood, making him an offer of £150 a-year if he chose to wave his present pursuit, and devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy. Coleridge seemed to make up his mind to close with this proposal in the act of tying on one of his shoes". Later, he confided to Hazlitt that he still had two sermons to preach, -- "one on Infant Baptism, and the other on the Lord's Supper shewing that he could not administer either, which would have effectually disqualified him from the object in view". cf. P.P. Howe, Life of Hazlitt, p. 61-2.
- (2) In 1793 in the 15th. Dragoons; But having written on a stable door - "Eheu, quam infortunii miserrimum est fuisse felicem" - he ~~identity~~ was discovered, and was bought out.

Coleridge gave to Romanticism its religious impulse from philosophy, -- by his metaphysical teaching on the significance of the Imagination, on the creative nature of all knowing, and on Faith as exercising in religious knowledge the function of the Imagination in the highest insights of mental knowledge. In thus affirming Faith and Imagination as involving the highest exercise of Reason -- as distinct from the partial, analytical knowledge of intellectual reason, or "the Understanding" -- Coleridge gave to imaginative literature a strong impulse of religious thought; to religious literature an enriching emphasis on the validity of the whole area of human experience as the sphere of reference of theology; and to rationalism, a realisation that man is more than a reasoning machine, and Nature more than a neutral mechanism (1). He stimulated the experience of faith

(1) cf. J.S. Mill's Autobiography, p.92-113, for a description of his inner discontent. Also Mill's Dissertations and Discussions, vol. 1.p.403, on Coleridge's revolt against the philosophy of the 18th. Century; and p.330 for reference to Coleridge as, with Bentham, one of the "two great seminal minds of England in their age". See, for an assessment of Mill's debt to Coleridge, Willy's 19th. Century Studies, p.141-2; 146-9.

among the liberal group of Churchmen (1), found a response among high Churchmen(2), and he was responsible also for much of the dissatisfaction of "honest doubters" alike with the narrowness of intellectual rationalism and conventional theology as being inadequate to explain or fulfil the whole experience of the human spirit (3).

Wordsworth, too, while owing much of his delayed popularity from the 'thirties onwards to the appreciation of the great liberal theologian and educationist, Thomas Arnold of Rugby, had become by the 'forties the poet of the High Churchmen, as Scott was their novelist (4). The lofty austerity of his mystical discovery of God in Nature appealed to the religious mind, and especially to

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- (1) Through the earliest group of his disciples, John Sterling, F.D. Maurice, and Julius Hare; and through Thomas Arnold, cf. his *Life* by Stanley, vol.1.p.344; also see Willey, 19th Century Studies, p.53, 64.
- (2) cf. Newman, Apologia, vol.1. p.150-151
Prof. Basil Willey quotes Newman, on reading Coleridge first in 1835, with comment, "I am surprised how much I thought mine is to be found there". - 19th.C.Studies, p.90.
- (3) e.g. Tennyson, In Memoriam, 1850, to whom Coleridge's influence was mediated through the circle of "the Apostles" at Cambridge - John Sterling, F.D.Maurice, Arthur Hallam. c.f. Willey, More 19th. Century Studies p.60-63.
- (4) See Humphry House All in Due Time, 1955, p.38-41. for an analysis of Wordsworth's place in Victorian appreciation, and his influence on their outlook. cf. also, Amy Cruse, The Englishman and his Books in the early 19th Century, 1930, ch.III - "Wordsworthians and Anti-Wordsworthians".

such as were painfully conscious of the neutral, mechanistic world of Nature expounded by scientific thought. This same quality fed the spiritual void admitted by J.S. Mill, the rationalist utilitarian, in his Autobiography, 1873, (1) and to the "honest doubter", William Hale White, it brought a religious quality of feeling which his soul still seemed to demand (2). At the same time, there was something sacramental about the dignifying seriousness with which he wrote of ordinary lives and simple things "half hidden from the eye" (3) symbolising and recalling, against the grand background of Nature and the Universe, thoughts and feelings of high spiritual worth. That, as much as his ecclesiastical poems, gave him his place among the sacramentalists as their poet. To the great mass of ordinary Victorian

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- (1) cf. Autobiography, p.125. "What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty".
- (2) cf. The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, 1881, p.19. — "... He recreated my Supreme Divinity; substituting a new and living spirit for the old deity, once alive, but gradually hardened into an idol".
cf., also, the effect of Wordsworth on Marian Evans (George Eliot) - "I never before met with so many of my own feelings expressed just as I would like them".
Humphry House - All in Due Time, p. 111.
- (3) Lucy Gray

people, who came to revere his name though they could not always see far into his Nature-mysticism, it brought confirmation and comfort in their hope that religious experience was still valid, even in times when its foundations in historical revelation seemed to be shaken, to know that a man of Wordsworth's calibre could still find the satisfactions of religious experience and the worth of the human spirit, in direct communion with God in Nature. Thus, in a very real and effective way, Wordsworth helped both the believer and the doubter, labouring under the sense of their own insufficiency in face of the widening perspectives of human knowledge and experience.

Scott, too, made the same almost universal appeal to all sorts and conditions of men as Wordsworth. He avoided committing himself completely to any particular form of dogma in past controversy, whether between Catholic and Protestant, or between Presbyterian and Episcopalian. He was content to portray his periods in terms of the traits of human character and characteristics, without delving into their inner development of thought and belief. And this he did as much from temperament as discretion. He was not interested in the doctrinal side of religion: he seems to have been content to accept it on a conservative basis of established good custom,

loyalty to the throne, and the sterling qualities of sound character wherever they were to be found. In portraying the more intimate feelings, particularly love-making, he practised a reserve and a careful good taste which commended him to the average household in days when novel-reading was a more social and family affair than it has ever been since the mid-century (1). The result was that he was acceptable to the Low, Broad, and High Churchmen alike (2).

To Newman, he was the novelist who "turned men's minds to the direction of the Middle Ages" --- "stimulating their mental thirst, feeding their hopes, setting before them visions, -- and silently indoctrinating them with nobler ideas"(3). Scott's undoctrinal mediaevalism undoubtedly prepared many

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- (1) See Amy Cruse's The Englishman and his Books in the Early 19th. Century (1930), p.15.ff., on the custom of reading books aloud in the family circle, so that they were often judged on their fitness for this purpose. "Exactly how far this influence went, and whether on the whole it acted for good or for evil, there is not sufficient evidence to determine; but we can see it at work during the whole of the pre-Victorian period, and on throughout the 19th. Century".p.17. Examples of the practice quoted by her are from - Jane Austen, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Moore, Walter Scott and Ruskin's father.
- (2) Except certain stricter Evangelical circles, which banned novels altogether. cf. Cruse - The Victorians and Their Books pp.68-70.
- (3) Apologia vol. 1. p.150.

people's minds for a revival of Catholic ideas, though this consequence could hardly have been more/^{remote}from his own intention in writing. On the other hand, his "broad toleration and genial humanity" (1), together with his "refusal to make the line between right and wrong follow a sectarian contour, his reluctance to make any particular dogma the condition of salvation" (2) commended him to the humanist George Eliot as the example of what an historical novelist should be in breadth of mind; and this is no doubt the reason of his wide appeal and influence, across the divisions of thought and belief, in Nineteenth Century historical fiction.

A fourth name must be added to this list of those who gave to Romanticism its religious impulse in literature, that of Francois René de Chateaubriand, whose influence has already been noted in the work of Thomas Moore, Bulwer Lytton, and (indirectly through Byron) George Croly. Although at the time of its publication in 1802, Le Génie du Christianisme was a powerful factor in the revival of Catholicism after the years of Revolutionary anti-religion in France, its most widespread

(1) cf. Gerald Bullett - George Eliot, p.131
 (2) cf. A.L. Drummond - The Churches in English Fiction
 p.159.

effect was the stimulus it gave to the imaginative treatment of Bible subjects generally in literature and the arts. This Chateaubriand accomplished by his survey, in Part II of Le Génie du Christianisme, of the Christian theme and its treatment in literature, and his comparisons between Christian and "pagan" literature and mythology, as well as by his own imaginative representation of early Christianity in his Miltonic prose-epic, Les Martyrs (1809). His main thesis was that Christianity, rather than the "pagan" thought and mythology of Greece and Rome, is the foundation of European culture, and in support of this he cited, not the truth, but the beauty of Christianity, in which he obviously was much more interested.

This aesthetic appeal of Christianity was strongly characteristic of the French revival of religion in the early Nineteenth Century, and had its kinship in certain aspects of the liturgical, ceremonial, and architectural interests of the Oxford movement, in contrast to the moral emphasis particularly of Evangelical and liberal religion in Britain. Nevertheless, something of this side of Chateaubriand's influence, the sense of truth as beauty, did appear later in Matthew Arnold's humanistic presentation of Christianity as Christian culture (1)

(1) In Culture and Anarchy(1869) and Literature and Dogma (1873)

and still later in Walter Pater's representation of the aesthetic appeal of Christianity in Marius the Epicurean (1885) (1).

Byron was the chief agent and populariser of Chateaubriand's influence in England, though he did not openly acknowledge his source of inspiration. "Stick to the East", he wrote to Thomas Moore in August, 1813, (2) when the latter was having difficulties with his composition of Lalla Rookh;-- "the oracle, Staël, told me it was the only poetical policy". But the real oracle guiding Byron's choice of subjects, and even much of his mental outlook and tastes, was Chateaubriand. "Byron was steeped in Chateaubriand", writes André Maurois in his biography (3). "As early as the publication of 'Atala' (1801), he wrote to the author; all his life he imitated his attitudes, followed in his footsteps as a traveller and borrowed even his imagery. Of all the one French writers Byron loved, Chateaubriand was the only whom he never named either in his journal or in his verse, perhaps because he was fain to banish an untimely ghost".

Byron's popularity had the same effect on English

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- (1) It appears also in the sentiment of Renan's Vie de Jesus (1863)
 (2) Stephen Gwynne - Moore p.58-59.
 (3) Chateaubriand (Eng.trans., Cape, 1938) p.336.

literary fashion as Chateaubriand's in France. There was a feverish search for new settings and subjects -- in Greece, the Levant, Persia and Arabia, plots from the Bible stories and background, and from mediaeval legend, Christian, Jewish and Moslem. Even the grand tour to Greece and the Levant, the fashionable finishing off given to the education of a young man of means, became something of a mystical pilgrimage and a sentimental journey under the impact of René (1805) and Childe Harold (1812-18). At the same time, there was a revival of the Classical themes, (as in the poetry of Shelley and in the "Imaginary Conversations of Walter Savage Landor") but treated with an imaginative feeling for the romance of the classical past, or else the character or myth reinterpreted in the light of contemporary religious questionings. Shelley mingled the old and the new mythologies in his poems. Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, appears both in his early attack on Christianity, Queen Mab (1813), and in Prometheus Unbound (1820), in which the old rationalism and the new romanticism seem to struggle within him for power. Again in Hellas (1822), classical and Christian imagery mingle in the magnificent Messianic hymn of expectation which forms one of the choruses of this celebration of the hoped-for revival of the glory of Greece freed from the Turk.

"A power from the unknown God,
 A Promethean conqueror, came;
 Like a triumphal path he trod
 The thorns of death and shame.
 (lines 211-214)

So fleet, so faint, so fair,
 The powers of earth and air
 Fled from the folding-star of Bethlehem:
 Apollo, Pan, and Love,
 And even Olympian Jove
 Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them;
 Our hills and seas and streams,
 Dispeopled of their dreams,
 Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
 Wailed for the golden years."
 (lines 229-238)

Shelley's added note to the chorus (1), far from undermining its foundation in Christian belief, illustrates the more pointedly the contrast between the two strains of rationalistic materialism and increasingly Christian Platonic idealism which run through his poetry.

(1) cf. Poetical Works, 1 vol. Oxford ed. (1917), p.473, in which he claims he represents Christian ideas "without considering their merits in a relation more universal".

Walter Savage Landor's Greek and Roman Imaginary Conversations were written at intervals in the years between 1824 and 1876, half of them during the first five years of that period. They are a step towards the representation of actual historical characters in particular situations, though the reader is left to fill in the background with his own imagination, and as such they have their place here. But Landor himself was a man of far too strong prejudices and presuppositions to be able to enter with real understanding into the mind of anyone with whom he differed. The conversations are apt to be heavily weighted on one side, as in the case of Epictetus and Seneca (1828) in which the wealthy Stoic statesman is made a too easy mark for the blunt, unpolished speech of the philosopher slave. In Lucian and Timotheus (1846), his only early Christian dialogue -- its setting is in the years 160 to 180 A.D. -- the Christian Timotheus is represented as a stupid, vain, humourless man, petty in thought and feeling, an easy mark for the wit and mockery of the Sophist rhetorician Lucian. The discussion never reaches the inner nature and content of the Christian faith, and even the satirical philosophy of Lucian is strongly coloured with a contemptuous rationalism and anti-clericalism that smell more of the politics of Whig radicalism and the backwash of the French Revolution than

of 2nd Century philosophy. (1)

Landor's importance for this study of novels on the New Testament period rests on his revival of fictional interest in classical themes, and his attempt to re-create the personalities of ancient times by their self-revelation through dialogue in particular situations and relationships (2). At the same time, Landor's bluntness of mind contrasts with the finer sensibilities of Tennyson in Lucretius (1864) and St. Simeon Stylites (1842) or of Browning in Cleon (1855) and An Epistle of Karshish, the Arab Physician (1855) revealing their greater ability to enter into the personal experience and nature of the character and the situation represented.

Tennyson's faith was always conscious of the areas of doubt that lay between what he would fain believe and the ever extending frontiers of scientific knowledge and speculation. The strength and appeal of In Memoriam (1833-1855) to the larger public was that it gave them points of contact with the poet's own experience of the

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- (1) cf. Classical Dialogues (Routledge ed.) p.319, where Christianity is dismissed as "profitless speculations and acrid controversies".
- (2) Of importance in the technique of the historical novel of character: it should be noted that Kingsley in Hypatia brings out the ideas and outlook of his characters largely by means of dialogue.

tensions between faith and knowledge in terms of the scientific issues of the day. In Memoriam was probably his most widely known and influential religious poem. Three poems, St. Simeon Stylites, Ulysses, and Tithonus, written during the years in which his mind was ranging over the doubts and fears embodied in In Memoriam, have the special interest that they were experiments in representing the spiritual outlook of a particular character in history or legend, in the form of a dramatic monologue. St. Simeon Stylites is a shrewd and penetrating study of the inner moods and motives of a saint of abnormal eccentricity, revealing with uncompromising realism the mixture of self-conscious merit and pride in humility which is the pitfall of the ascetic extremist. In Ulysses, written in 1833, there is more of the feeling of the human situation of Tennyson's own time and the high spirit in which he faces it in his strongest moods -- the sense of being outward bound towards new frontiers of experience, new discoveries, new possibilities. The Ulysses of Homer is anxious to get home to Penelope; but Tennyson sees him -- probably no less truly -- in his old age, with the restless nostalgia of travel upon him, yearning to be off again towards the frontiers of the unknown. Tithonus (1842) is a study of immortality seen as a process of endlessly growing old.

The very fact that Tennyson was at the time passing through a period of acute religious questioning made him the more ready and able to examine and assess at their own worth outlooks and states of belief far different from his own. This atmosphere of the frontier ground between religions and faiths, between knowledge and the Mysterium of life, pervades these dramatic monologues of psychological reconstruction, and gives them their keen edge of feeling. In Lucretius (1864), Tennyson takes the tradition that the philosopher was in the end driven to madness and death by a love potion, and re-creates out of the situation the mental states and feelings of revulsion, in a true Epicurean, against the animal instincts of sensuality which smirch and destroy the bliss of ideal passionless tranquillity. Tiresias (1885) and St. Telemachus (1) are contrasting studies of pagan and Christian sacrifice, in which the latter gave his life in protest against the inhumanity of the amphitheatre games (2).

The importance of these studies is their psychological interest in reconstructing a far distant inner state of experience or outlook in a particular human situation or set of circumstances. This, as an imaginative approach

{1} A narrative poem in form, published 1892.
 {2} In the reign of Honorius, 393-423 A.D.

towards the historical past, is in the true line of development towards the characterisation required in a novel capable of picturing the New Testament scene, although here Tennyson applies it chiefly to classical themes. Matthew Arnold attempts a similar reconstruction of a classical theme in Empedocles on Etna (1852); but here the ancient theme is used in order to provide a frame for the poet's own melancholy sense of the narrowness and inadequacy of a life that is bounded by the limitations of the analytical intellect.

"We had not lost our balance then, nor grown
Thought's slaves" (1)

But the most direct line of imaginative approach to the New Testament in Nineteenth Century poetry is found in the work of Robert Browning, and some of his minor imitators such as E.H. Plumptre and Walter C. Smith (2). Like Tennyson's In Memoriam, Browning's Christmas Eve and Easter Day (1850) had as deep a religious influence as any of the more strictly theological works of its day, though in Browning's case the wider appeal to the public

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- (1) L.248-249. It is worth noting that in a great deal of this revived use of classical subjects, they are treated as a vehicle for conveying distinctively modern thoughts and questionings on the frontiers between religious faith and scepticism.
- (2) F.W.R.Myer's St. Paul, 1867, should also be mentioned as a study of Paul & his missionary impulse in form of a dramatic monologue. Myers subsequently became a spiritualist & was antagonistic to Christianity, cf. Elliott-Binns - English Thought, 1860-1900.

was considerably delayed, while the popularity of In Memoriam was immediate. L.E. Elliott-Binns cites the testimony of William Robertson Smith, Hastings Rashdall and T.H. Green to the power of Tennyson and Browning as great "theological teachers of their generation" (1) "There was a turning away from professed theologians, with their reserve and restraint", comments Elliott-Binns, -- "to guides who were unshackled and free to proclaim what they felt and experienced. It may be that poetry is a more adequate medium for expressing the true essence of Christianity than dogmatic theology".(2)

Robert Browning is ^{significant} ~~outstanding~~, in the religious poetry of the Nineteenth Century, of the developing interest in religious faith as a form of experience, containing its evidential value in its own character, and interpreted in the whole setting of human knowledge and experience of life. In much of his poetry, especially in the form of dramatic monologue, he is exploring states of experience and outlook in the characters he creates, and so leaves himself uncommitted. He rarely allows us an opportunity to say with certainty - This was Browning's personal belief. Nevertheless,

(1) cf. The Life of Hastings Rashdall, by Matheson, p.177.
 (2) English Thought, 1860-1900, (1956), p.296.

through all his poems on a religious theme, there does run the fundamental bias of interest, which was Browning's own, in religious faith as truth arrived at through experience, and not simply accepted as a statement of doctrine demonstrated by logic of reason. Moreover, in his two early doctrinal poems, Christmas Eve and Easter Day (1850) -- and, I believe, also in A Death in the Desert (1864) -- he does give a clear commitment of his personal religious position. In Christmas Eve, he surveys in visionary company with Christ, the different forms of the Churches' approach to faith and worship, including (very pungently and amusingly described in section XV) a German professor's lecture, after the manner and thought of Strauss(1), on the myth of Jesus, to find himself returned in the end to the drab little chapel by the common from which he had started out.

In Easter Day, he analyses the worth of life, in a vision of Judgment, in which he is given in turn, at his own request, the world of sense, of beauty, of knowledge, and of love, to find that life on earth-bound terms, even with all these things, but --

(1) David Friedrich Strauss - Das Leben Jesu 1835
English trans. by Marian Evans (George Eliot) pub.1846.

"Unvisited, as heretofore,

By God's free Spirit ..." (1)

is only a worthless husk if cut off from the hope of the fuller life with the Eternal God.

"Thou Love of God! Or let me die,
 Or grant what shall seem Heaven almost!
 Let me not know that all is lost,
 Though lost it be -- leave me not tied
 To this despair, this corpse-like bride!
 Let that old life seem mine -- no more --
 With limitation as before,
 With darkness, hunger, toil, distress:
 Be all the earth a wilderness!
 Only let me go on, go on,
 Still hoping ever and anon
 To reach one eve the Better Land!" (2)

It was with this emphasis in his own thinking on the worth of life as the dwelling-place of God's Spirit, that he wrote subsequently the three dramatic poems, An Epistle of Karshish, the Arab Physician (1855), Cleon (1855), and A Death in the Desert (1864), in each of which he sought

(1) Easter Day XXII
 (2) Easter Day XXXI.

to do what the novelist had still to attempt, enter imaginatively into the mind and inner experience of a man of the New Testament period. In An Epistle of Karshish, the Arab physician, writing to his old teacher of medicine, gives an account of his journey from Jericho up the mountain road to Bethany, with a careful building up of the outlook and technical interest of the man in medical cases and natural phenomena on the way, culminating in the encounter with the puzzling case of Lazarus in Bethany, where he stays the night.

"'Tis but a case of mania -- subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days".(1)

Karshish describes the original happenings, -- the death and burial, the Nazarene physician who three days later bade him, "Rise", and his present condition "beyond the common health". Then he gives his impression of Lazarus' outlook since this experience of death and return to life. He has passed through something that human flesh cannot experience, and he is in two worlds. "His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here". He has -

"the treasure knowledge, say,

(1) 1.79-81.

Increased beyond the fleshly faculty --
 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
 Earth forced on a soul's sense while seeing heaven."

Then Karshish tells the story of Jesus' death as he has heard it from Lazarus.

"This man so cured regards the curer then
 As -- God forgive me -- who but God himself,
 Creator and sustainer of the world,
 That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!
 -- 'Sayeth that such an One was born and lived,
 Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
 Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
 And yet was -- what I said nor choose repeat,
 And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
 In hearing of this very Lazarus".

Karshish tries to come back to factual matters in his letter, tells of "a blue-flowering borage" he has seen by a pool, and adds, "It is strange!", but he is thinking not of the flower but the case of Lazarus. He adds a postscript in Jerusalem, where he has arrived next morning. He still cannot understand his own reactions,

"the peculiar interest

And awe indeed this man has touched me with."

But the implications of it all, he cannot dismiss from his

mind.

"The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
 So, the All-great were the All-loving too --
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice
 Saying, O heart I made, a heart beats here!
 Face, My hands fashioned, see it in Myself.
 Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of Mine,
 But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
 And thou must love Me who have died for thee!
 The madman saith he said so: it is strange!"

The picture given in Cleon, also in letter form, is of a wealthy Greek sage, renowned as an artist and a man of wide culture, and also very much a man of the world -- a typical Browning male character for a dramatic monologue, of whatever period. King Protus has written him sending him gifts, and pays his tribute to the worth of Cleon's achievements in the creative arts in contrast to his own. Cleon's life will remain in memory,

"in the poems men shall sing,

The pictures men shall study", --

while the life of Protus, great in the affairs of his day, will be forgotten, --

"Complete and whole now in its power and joy,
 Dies altogether with my brain and arm!"

Cleon repeats the king's question to him --

"how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand:
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men".

The question is just as characteristic of the Nineteenth Century mood towards religion as the First. Cleon's answer is that with the increasing treasures of his mind he is more conscious of the increasing weakness and poverty of his bodily powers, and of --

"The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape,
When I shall know most and least enjoy".

The parallel in this study is with his own thought in Easter Day, of the dreadful judgment of being given the whole world, but without a share in the eternal life of God.

"It is so horrible,
I dare at times to image to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy;
-- To seek which the joy-hunger forces us.

.....

But no!

Zeus has not revealed it; and, alas,
He must have done so were it possible!"

The climax of the letter is in the postscript, about the man Paulus of whom Protus writes, and Christus. Yes, Cleon has heard of him, and of other followers of Christus,-

"Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ;
And, (as I gathered from a bystander)

Their doctrines could be held by no sane man".

The king's real question has been in the postscript, and the sage has missed the answer to his own fear and longing.

A Death in the Desert (1864), supposedly an ancient manuscript inscribed by the eyewitness Pamphylax, tells of the death of St. John the Evangelist in a desert cave, tended by a few faithful disciples, while a Bactrian convert keeps watch outside pretending to graze a goat. It is a time of persecution, and the Bactrian is prepared to give his life to distract any searchers from the cave. The whole opening scene, to the point at which John is revived to full consciousness, is dramatically tense and significant in all its factual detail, down to the "splendour of a sudden thought" that is given to the Boy to revive the dying man. Then John speaks, and in a

long monologue answers the problems of far-off future generations, whose questionings he for^{sees}.

"To me, that story — ay, that Life and Death
Of which I wrote 'it was' — to me, it is;
— Is, here and now: I apprehend nought else.
Is not God now i' the world His power first made?
Is not His love at issue still with sin,
Closed with and cast and conquered, crucified
Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?"

Then follows his view of the place of miracle in the history of the faith; and from this point, ^{of course,} John becomes the mouthpiece of Browning's own message, in which he defends Christianity, and in particular the Gospel of St. John, against ^{the} rationalism of Strauss and Renan. (1)

"This book's fruit is plain,
Nor miracles need prove it any more.
Doth the fruit show?

I cried once, *That ye may believe in Christ,
Behold this blind man shall receive his sight!
I cry now, Urgest thou, 'for I am shrewd
And smile at stories how John's word could cure --

(1) Strauss - *Leben Jesu*, 1835; Eng. ed. 1846. Renan - *Vie de Jesus*, 1863.

Repeat that miracle and take my faith?
 I say, that miracle was duly wrought
 When, save for it, no faith was possible.

So faith grew, making void more miracles
 Because too much: they would compel, not help.
 I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
 Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
 All questions in the earth and out of it,
 And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
 Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove the proved?
 In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof,
 Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung?
 Thou hast it; use it, and forthwith, or die!"

It is possible now to understand the powerful impression made by Browning on the religious thinkers of his time; he is in outlook so fully cognisant of the movement of emphasis from accepted doctrine to the test of experience characteristic of such a period of new knowledge and discovery as the Nineteenth Century (1). Moreover,

(1) Compare, as examples of this general change of emphasis, the two passages quoted from A Death in the Desert, on p.157 and 158 above, with Coleridge, De Quincey, Erskine of Linlathen, and the theologian Jowett. Coleridge -- "Christianity likewise has its historical evidences, and these as strong as is compatible with the nature of history, and with the
 (continued over page)

Browning's place as an influence upon historical novels touching the New Testament period rests on the qualities shown here in these dramatic poems of religious subjects, his strong religious conviction of the Love of God as revealed in the historic Person of Jesus Christ, together with his psychological interest in exploring the mental processes and inner experiences of men and women at widely varied periods of history. His religious interest leads

(Note 1 continued from previous page)

aims and objects of a religious dispensation. And to all these Christianity itself, as an existing power in the world, — give a force of moral demonstration that almost supersedes particular testimony". (Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit, p.60)
 De. Quincey - "The evidential miracles accomplished their whole purpose in their own age. Something of supernatural agency, visibly displayed, was wanted for the first establishment of a new faith. But once established it must be a false faith that would need this external support. — Being a true religion, once rooted in man's knowledge and man's heart, it is self-contained" (Essay on Miracles, Works, vol.8. p.235-6).

Erskine of Linlathen - "Each man is a microcosm, a miniature of the world and of the race, and therefore when we hear of Christ coming into the flesh of our race, we in fact hear of His coming into the flesh of every man". (Henderson's Erskine, p.184)

Jowett - "Therefore, without entering on the vexed question of miracles, and without denying that 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy', I think the time has come when we must no longer allow them to be stumbling-blocks in the way of those who desire to be the followers of Christ. The true evidences of Christianity are the public evidences, the effects upon history, and upon the world, and upon the lives of men in our own time". (Select Passages, ed.L.Campbell,1902, p.17).

him to select some subjects close to the historic surroundings of Jesus, and his sense of dramatic realism together with his human interest in the mind of his character prevents his picture from being stylised by any form of traditional pietism. The bearing of these studies in Dramatis Personae was therefore bound to be considerable upon the treatment and characterisation of the religio-historical novel; and it is not surprising to find that Dean F.W. Farrar drew much of his inspiration from him (1). It was natural, of course, that Farrar as a religious leader should be drawn to Browning's work, but as the author of two early Christian historical novels (2) the Dean drew as much upon the poet's sense of human situation and significant thought and feeling in the creation of character, as upon his religious inspiration.

The impulse of Browning's dramatic monologues towards the characterisation of religious states of feeling and belief, continued in the direction of the New Testament through his imitators. E.H. Plumptre, Dean of Wells, in Lazarus, and other Poems (1864) pictures Lazarus as an old man in Massilia advising a penitent robber sent to him by John. Lazarus tells over again his own story. The

(1) Life of F.W. Farrar, by Reginald Farrar, 1904, p.287.
 (2) Darkness and Dawn, 1891: Gathering Clouds, 1895.

interest of it lies, not in the poetry, which is pedestrian, but in his plotting of different Gospel incidents round the figure of Lazarus. He is represented in the plot of the tale as the rich young ruler of the Gospel story as well as the brother of Martha and Mary; he is present when Jesus is betrayed, and when the disciples flee, he is the young man "having a linen cloth cast about his naked body", who, when laid hold of, flees naked, leaving the linen cloth with his pursuers. This fusing of different incidents in the Gospels into a plot round a single New Testament figure was to be taken up and developed by novelists of the 20th. Century. In Thoughts of a Galatian Convert and Jesus Bar-Abbas, he develops less elaborate plots, and in his next book of verse, Master and Scholar(1865), he weaves a romance round Claudia and Pudens, two of the names in St. Paul's list of greetings in 2 Timothy, iv. 21., an idea which Dean Farrar further developed as a sub-plot in his early Christian romance, Darkness and Dawn. (1891) (1)

(1) The association of E.H. Plumptre and F.W. Farrar, begun as a teacher-pupil relationship at King's College, continued as a life-long friendship (Life of Farrar, by Reginald Farrar, 1904, p. 23); and Farrar acknowledges his debt to Plumptre's "early Christian" verse in Darkness and Dawn, p. 448.

Walter C. Smith's Heretic, and Other Poems (1890) contains one dramatic monologue on a New Testament subject, What Pilate Thought of It. The story is told by Pilate with a pagan freedom of detail: he and his friends have been engaged in a drunken trave~~l~~sty of the Temple Passover Feast as the climax to a dinner party, when the prisoner Jesus is brought to the Praetorium. Pilate tells the incidents of the trial, filling in the Gospel story with his own thought and motives at the time. At the close he tells of rumours that Jesus is alive again; but he has no doubt about His death (though he doubts its justice): his men never leave their work half done.

"The Lord is risen indeed!" I wish He were;
 'Twould take a load off me to see Him living,
 And what I did undone. But that's past hope;
 The dead are dead for ever.

Like many of Browning's minor imitators, both Plumptre and Smith "like to dock the smaller parts-o'-speech"(1), and their poems, lacking the depth of insight and originality of Browning, would be better told as the prose tales that they really are. Yet they are characteristic of the influence of Browning on the imaginative approach to the

(1) C.S. Calverley's The Cock and the Bull.

New Testament through his dramatic monologues.

The revival of interest in the carol and the folk ballad in the second half of the Century played some part also in humanising the attitude of the religious mind to the Gospel story(1). Sabine Baring-Gould, the author of the historical novel, Domitia (1898) was a tireless and sympathetic gatherer of the traditional songs of the people throughout his long life (2), from his early diaconate in Yorkshire, to the ripe years of his squire-parsonage in Lew-Trenchard, Devonshire, where he gathered the material for his great collection of Songs and Ballads of the West, (1889-91). He himself tells how he was once teaching a modernised version of a carol to a party of Yorkshire mill-girls, when they cried out -- "Nay! we know one a great deal better nor yond"; and spontaneously sang together a popular version of the traditional Cherry Tree Carol, with its familiar realism of narrative and dialogue (3). Something of the leaven of the folk song, as well as the new liberalism of thought, penetrates

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- (1) New interest in carols was stimulated by the publication of the translation by J.M. Neale and T. Helmore of some of the Swedish 16th C. Piae Cantiones in Carols for Christmastide (1853) and Carols for Eastertide, (1854); by Edmund Sedding's Antient Christmas Carols (1860); and especially by H.R. Bramley's Christmas Carols New and Old (1871).
- (2) He lived from 1834 to 1924. See William Addison's The English Country Parson (Dent 1947) ch.xxiv, for a good picture of the man and his work.
- (3) The Oxford Book of Carols, No. 66, and footnote.

the minor religious verse of George Macdonald (1824-1905). His Christmas Carol -- "Babe Jesus lay in Mary's lap" -- is probably his most successful effort in this vein; Blind Bartimeus considerably less so. But in his songs of The Gospel Women, slight though they are, he recaptures the human scenes of Jesus's ministry through the women who appear in the Gospel story. The legend of Judas Iscariot and St. Brandane inspired Matthew Arnold, Sebastian Evans and Robert Buchanan to write ballads of Judas Iscariot, which give an opportunity of comparing their treatment of the subject.(1). Robert Buchanan's version is probably the most moving in its compassion upon human suffering and failure.

"The Holy Supper is spread within,
And the many candles shine,
And I have waited long for thee
Before I poured the wine!"

Robert Buchanan, highly individual and controversial as his own attitude to Christianity was, illustrates the tortured dilemma of many minds in the second half of the Nineteenth Century, as strongly drawn to the Person and hopes of

(1) Arnold's St. Brandan (1860); Evan's Ballad from Judas Iscariot in Paradise (1865); Buchanan's Ballad of Judas Iscariot (1883).

Jesus Christ as he was deeply impressed with the scientific picture of "Nature, red in tooth and claw" (1), and of the Order of Nature, as undeviating and irrevocable in its closed laws as the most extreme doctrine of predestination. If he never managed to resolve that dilemma between the Faith's hopes in Christ and the crude realities of earth (2), yet he never ceased to be fascinated by the human love of Jesus as it is revealed in the Gospels. In The Ballad of Mary the Mother, 1897, he sought to reconstruct the human scene of the Gospels as he saw it. "We have reached the vantage ground", he wrote (3) "where the story of Jesus can be taken out of the realm of supernaturalism and viewed humanely, in the domain of sympathetic art". The result is a

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- (1) Tennyson's In Memoriam, lvi.
 (2) cf. The Wandering Jew: a Christmas Carol (1893) in which he pictures Jesus as the Wandering Jew, seeking vainly through life the Father-God of His dream.
 (3) Ballad of Mary the Mother. In a note to the ballad, Buchanan wrote - "Jesus of Nazareth was an unbeliever, perhaps the most audacious unbeliever who has ever lived. He led the war against Nature, against the God of Nature, and that unhappy war is not over yet. But he -- adopted a new system of attack -- he assumed that the God of Nature 'did not exist'; and he substituted in his imagination a new Personality, his own. History has furnished the answer to his pretensions, and the God of Nature, the great unknown God who is at once the master and servant of His own inexorable Will, has conquered all along the line. -- In saying so much, I do not wish to infer that my sympathy is with the Conqueror. No; it is with the fallen Atheists"

poem which exalts human love, but cannot see the Christian hope beyond the Passion and the Crucifixion.

"What man shall stand in the wh^hirlwind
 Where only the Lord may stand?
 The feet of the Lord are on the dead,
 And the quick blow round like sand!"

In contrast to this almost despairing attachment to the personal character of Jesus in a world overshadowed by the God of Nature, stands the virulently anti-Christian neo-paganism of Swinburne, who saw in Christ and Christianity only the destroyer of ^{the} beauty and colour of life that other neo-classicists, such as Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater, each in their own way, found in it. The Hymn to Proserpine (Poems and Ballads, 1866) contains the best known expression of his attitude.

"Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world
 has grown grey from thy breath".

While Swinburne himself afterwards claimed, in answer to criticism, that he was expressing an ancient attitude of mind representatively in a dramatic form of poetry; yet it was plain that it also sprang from his own personal feelings and opinions. A modern reading of Church history and doctrine had at least as much to do with these as

ancient religion. He saw Christianity with the eyes of Shelley, through the history of the Inquisition and the cruelties of wars of religion and a persecuting Church; he saw the God of Jesus as the God of Predestination and eternal Retribution, whose "Righteousness" could yet be mollified by an Atonement in the person of a penal substitute; and he hated that God.(1).

"All we are against thee, against thee, O God most high"
(2).

In his poetry however, this mood of religious rebellion had its roots in what may have been the same revulsion of feeling against Christianity that inspired the charge of "odium humani generis" against the Christians in Nero's reign (3). To people who loved the old freedoms and culture of this life, and who did not regard the moral life as a necessary condition of knowing God, a religion of self-denial, sacrifice, and other-worldly expectation

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- (1) cf. H.J.C. Grierson, Swinburne(1953),p.16-17.
An example of Swinburne's attitude is described by Alfred Noyes in an article Dinner at the Pines in The Listener, 28th March, 1957, p.508: - "Watts-Dunton had mentioned some gruesome newspaper sensation that had just come out about that time, and Swinburne stared straight at me, and as if he were challenging me to a duel, he said: 'Christianity itself never conceived anything more ghastly'. The time was shortly after Swinburne's 70th. birthday, about 1907.
- (2) Atalanta in Calydon (1865)
- (3) Tacitus - Annales, xv.,44.

must have seemed very like "hatred of the human race".

To Swinburne it certainly did look like that.

"Wilt thou take all, Galilean? but these thou shalt not

take,

The laurel, the palms and the paeon, the breasts of the

nymphs in the brake:

Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer

breath;

And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joys before

death"(1)

In Hertha (1870), (2) he developed his philosophy of humanism more fully and arrayed it against the God of faith.

"A creed is a rod,

And a crown is of night;

But this thing is God,

To be man with thy might,

To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and

live out thy life as the light.

- - - - -

But the Gods of your fashion

That take and that give,

(1) Hymn to Proserpine, written in 1862; published in Poems and Ballads, 1866.

(2) Hertha, 1870; published in Songs Before Sunrise, 1871

In their pity and passion
 That scourge and forgive,
 They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls
 off; they shall die and not live".

Nevertheless, though he looked back to the old paganism, the creed he discovered there had the characteristics of Nineteenth Century pantheistic humanism as it developed through the leaven of Schopenhauer's life-force. In his Hymn of Man evoked by the meeting of the Oecumenical Council in Rome, 1869-70, he composed a militantly anti-theistic "Te hominem laudamus", as he himself described it (1).

"Not each man of all men is God, but God is the fruit of
 the whole;
 Indivisible spirit and blood, indiscernible body
 from soul.
 Not men's but man's is the glory of godhead, the
 kingdom of time,
 The mountainous ages made hoary with snows for the
 spirit to climb" (2)

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- (1) In a letter quoted by Humphrey Hare - Swinburne (1949) page,147.
 (2) Hymn of Man, 1870

Henrik Ibsen based his Emperor and Galilean: A World-Historic Drama (1) on the motive of this same conflict between the love of God and the love of life in the experience of the Emperor Julian.

"Always 'Thou shalt'. If my soul gathered up in one gnawing and consuming hate towards the murderer of my kin, what said the commandment: 'Love thine enemy'. If my mind, athirst for beauty, longed for scenes and rites from the bygone world of Greece, Christianity swooped down upon me with its 'Seek the one thing needful!' If I felt the sweet lusts of the flesh towards this or that, the Prince of Renunciation terrified me with his: 'Kill the body, that the soul may live!' -- All that is human has become unlawful since the day when the seer of Galilee became ruler of the world. With him, to live means to die. Love and hatred both are sins. Has he, then, transformed man's flesh and blood? Has not earth-bound man remained what he ever was? Our inmost, healthy soul rebels against it all: -- and yet we are to will in the very teeth of our own will! Thou shalt, shalt, shalt!"(2).

Maximus the mystic, Julian's confidant and adviser, develops the idea of the recurrent super-man in history as

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- (1) Begun in 1864, during Ibsen's first stay in Rome. Completed 1872, and published 1873. Eng.trans.pub.1876.
 (2) Part I. Caesar's Apostasy, Act,V.p.145-6.(ed.1890,W.Scott)

the justification of the Emperor's mission.

"There is One who ever reappears, at certain intervals, in the course of human history. He is like a rider taming a wild horse in the arena. Again and yet again it throws him. A moment, and he is in the saddle again, each time more secure and more expert; but off he has had to go, in all his varying incarnations, until this day. Off he had to go as the god-created man in Eden's grove; off he had to go as the founder of the world-empire; -- off he must go as the prince of the empire of God. Who knows how often he has wandered among us when none have recognised him?

"How do you know, Julian, that you were not in him whom you now persecute?"(1)

Julian himself is persuaded of this. "I feel that the Messiah of the earth lives in me. The spirit has become flesh and the flesh spirit. All creation lies within my will and power"(2). But in the end, both Julian and Maximus find that the "world-will" in which they had hoped is against them (3).

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- (1) Part II, The Emperor Julian, Act IV, p.290
 (2) ib. p.314
 (3) Julian - "The world-will has laid an ambush for me, Maximus". The Emperor Julian, Act.V.p.348

"The power which circumstances placed in my hands, and which is an emanation of divinity, I am conscious of -- having used to the best of my skill. --- And if some should think that I have not fulfilled all expectations, they should in justice reflect that there is a mysterious power outside us, which in a great measure governs the issue of human undertakings" (1)

To Maximus are left the last words of doubt whether this world-will or Fate -- or what you will -- is working in human life towards good or evil, progress or blind necessity.

"Wast thou not, after all, the chosen one -- thou victim of necessity? What is life worth? All is sport and make-believe. -- To will is to have to will". (2)

The words recall the summing-up of Thomas Hardy, whose pessimistic philosophy of life has affinities with this, on the death of Tess -- "The President of the Immortals (in Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess" (3).

It seems evident from this survey so far that from the time of Tennyson's In Memoriam (1850), the imaginative

{1} ib. Act V.p.349.

{2} ib. Act V.p.352.

{3} Tess of the D'Urbervilles, 1891, ch.59.

approach to early Christian times was strongly and increasingly marked by the desire to re-state the Christian faith in the light of the view^{of life}/given by new scientific thought and discovery, and to reconcile the story of the Bible with the story of Nature told by science. By the end of the Century, it was the language of science, of evolution and of material progress by impersonal forces, rather than the language of the Bible, that was used in general literature to evaluate the worth and purpose of man's hopes and aims in what appeared to be an impersonal universe.

Two extremes of non-theistic belief emerged as alternatives to orthodox evolution by natural selection -- the optimistic belief in an impersonal life-force making towards progress, "creative evolution"; and the pessimistic belief in a blind, inexorable Immanent Will, dominating all life, and manifest in the cruelty of nature and the frustrations and suffering inseparable from human life. The ideas of Nietzsche, Buddhism, and Madame Blavatsky's spiritualistic theosophy mingled curiously with modern rationalism in this blending of eastern and western ideas, from which Samuel Butler (1), Henri Bergson (2), and

(1) Life and Habit: An Essay after a Completer View of Evolution, 1878; and Evolution, Old and New, 1879

(2) Matiere et Memoire, 1896; L'Evolution Creatrice, 1907; Les Donnees immediates de la conscience, 1889

G. B Shaw (1) all drew their inheritance. Schopenhauer, leaning to pessimism, but mingling Buddhistic ideas of an impersonal Divine force with his own conception of a frustrating, sorrow-creating world-will, achieved a remarkable reincarnation, of influence at least, through the diverse personalities and ideas of Swinburne, Ibsen, and Thomas Hardy(2).

Like a knitter drowsed,
Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
The Will has woven with an absent heed
Since life first was; and ever so will weave" (3).

The Dynasts was published in 1904, but the philosophy contained in it runs through the earthy paganism of Hardy's Wessex novels of the 'eighties and 'nineties.

The response to all this ferment of beliefs and unbelief, from the defenders of Christian belief, was the appeal to history for the evidences of the faith, and a more imaginatively human presentation of the historical past. Ernest Renan's Vie de Jésus (1863), with its bias

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- (1) Man and Superman, 1901-3; Back to Methuselah, 1921
 (2) Schopenhauer's Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, 1819, was published in English translation in 1883 as The World as Will and Idea, and had a strong influence in the 'eighties and 'nineties.
 (3) cf. The Dynasts, part I, fore scene.

against miracle or any form of supernaturalism in the life of Jesus, while it disturbed accepted beliefs and caused widespread controversy, undoubtedly was a stimulus in the return of theology and religious thought generally to the rediscovery of the human personality of Jesus and to the experience of the Apostles in the faith. E.H. Plumptre, in his poem, Vie de Jésus (1863), expressed the reactions of an enlightened and loyal Churchman, who managed to remain above Church parties in his opinions and associations, to Renan's book and the ensuing controversies. "Has then the Christ departed?" he asks:-

Is there none

To whom the lonely and the lost may turn?"

Then addressing himself in turn to the "priest, with waving censer" and to "thou boaster of a purer sect" -- the ritualist and the theological extremist, he asks of the one --

"Hast thou forgotten that the Christ was man?"
and of the other --

"Hast thou turned

To lifeless dogma all the living truth?"

He tells them both --

Thy Lord

Has given thee all the records of His life
And thou hast made them silent. Wonder not

That men should fill the gap with aught that brings
 The living Man before them. They will have
 A Jesus with the pulse of human life,
 The throbs of human feeling".

His own answer to them both is —

"Proclaim the living Christ,
 The youth, the man, all tempted, struggling, worn,
 Labouring and suffering as the millions now
 Suffer and labour.....
 And tell them that He bowed Himself to this,
 To all the shame, the agony, the Cross,
 For them, and sufferers like them....."

Renan's imaginative history merely completed a process that had long begun. There was throughout most of the 19th. Century a steady pressure, on the one hand, from the liberal rational scholarship of Germany, towards greater historical realism in the treatment of the New Testament; and, on the other hand, a deepening desire in the religious mood of the times (betraying its own anxiety for reassurance concerning the historicity of the faith) for a more imaginative human presentation of the New Testament truth and scenes. Both these pressure points of interest are to be noted from the 1840's onwards.

The first not unnaturally found expression in the prose of history and Bible commentary; and the second chiefly in poetry and art.

The new interest in the Bible as history was evident in H.H. Milman's History of the Jews(1830) (1) and still more so in his History of Christianity under the Empire (1840.) If these were wanting in imaginative quality, that was due to the limitations of the author and not to the want of will to show it, as his poetic drama, The Fall of Jerusalem, 1820, showed (2). Thomas De Quincey's historical essays on The Essenes, 1840, (3) and especially Judas Iscariot, 1857, while they show a remarkably free and imaginative character-interest in the New Testament, and treat the Scriptures simply as historical sources, are a manifestation of the wide-ranging speculative curiosity of the man rather than the fruits of the historian's

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- (1) J.G.Lockhart wrote in a letter to Milman on his History of the Jews:- "It is a splendid book, but some wise folks shake the head at some passages touching miracles. A few syllables would have disarmed them, and will no doubt go into the next edition". Lang's Lockhart, vol.11.p.93.
- (2) Lockhart considered it "as a dramatic work, feeble and poor in the extreme". and obviously had a much lower opinion of his poetry than his history. cf. Lochhead's Lockhart, p.181.
- (3) First published in Blackwood's, 1840.

mind. (1).

The year 1855 saw, in the publication of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley's Commentary of 1st. and 2nd Corinthians, and Benjamin Jowett's Commentary on the Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans, a more decisive departure by two leading Churchmen from the accepted treatment of Scripture as source books of doctrinal exposition, through their emphasis on the human scene, situation and character in interpreting the teaching and belief of the Apostolic Church. Jowett's volume especially was notable for its psychological interest in the character and experience of Paul, and above all for the very human and sympathetic picture he gave of the Apostle as a man (2)

Ernest Renan's challenging, yet facile (3), Vie de Jésus, 1863, was followed in England by J.R. Seeley's gracious and human hearted interpretation of the teaching of Jesus in

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- (1) Other essays of De Quincey's which have a bearing upon his free ranging curiosity concerning the Christian origins, together with his equally definite Christian belief, are -- The Pagan Oracles, Miracles as Subjects of Testimony, On Christianity as an Organ of Political Movement, and Protestantism.
- (2) cf. The Epistles of St. Paul, 2nd.ed.1859.vol.1.183-4.
- (3) "This insufficiently tormented thinker" -- is a shrewd judgment given by Geoffrey Brereton in A Short History of French Literature, 1954, p.265.

Ecce Homo, 1865, in which the Kingdom was presented in the form of a warm and humane Christian social ethics. In the last three decades of the Century, the interest of the religious reading public in the life and surroundings of Jesus and the early Apostolic Church is shown by the many popular books on the life and teaching of Jesus and of Paul, and by travellers' accounts of the land and people as a background to the New Testament. The desire was for reassurance concerning historical foundations.

The second pressure point of interest, the need for a more imaginative human presentation of the New Testament scene, which I have sought to trace in the poetry of the Century, (with Browning as the most outstanding), is found also in religious art. John Martin's highly imaginative paintings, with their wild scenery and cataclysmic, spectacular subjects, I have already referred to in connection with the novels of Croly and Lytton. A more positively religious contribution was made by the work of the Scots painter, William Dyce (1806-1864), whose austere paintings(1)

(1) His studies of the 'Madonna and Child' were painted from 1828 onwards, and were not appreciated in his native Aberdeenshire. "The Golden Age" (not a N.T. subject, but a child study) "The Dead Christ" and Christ Crowned with Thorns" belong to his Edinburgh period, 1830-35. From 1844, he was Professor of Fine Arts in King's College, London. His "St. John leading home his adopted Mother" belongs to the period 1844-60, as also the well known "Temptation in the Wilderness". All Saints Church, Margaret Street, London has frescoes from the life of Christ, painted by him. And the Queen's Robing Room in the House of Lords is decorated by his frescoes from the Arthurian cycle illustrating the characteristics of "Chivalry".

of New Testament subjects reflect the "early Christian" influence of the German "Nazarenes", Overbeck and Cornelius (1), as well as his own strong religious impulse (2). Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893) (3) brought the Nazarene religious tradition closer to the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood of William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), John Everett Millais (1829-96), and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82). Brown had more influence on the mediaevalism of Rossetti, particularly his first two Pre-Raphaelite pictures, The Girlhood of Mary Virgin, 1849, and Ecce Ancilla Domini, 1850, (4) than he had on the naturalism of Hunt and Millais. In the work of Holman Hunt, historical realism and religious interpretation coalesced. Millais came into the forefront of public attention first with his Christ at the Home of his Parents, 1850, but Hunt proved more faithful to his original religious inspiration. In a long succession of Biblical pictures (5), he pursued his aim of

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- (1) A community of painters founded in Rome in 1810 by Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869) and others, whose object was to revive German art through the inspiration of the Christian faith. With Peter von Cornelius (1783-1867), Overbeck virtually founded a new school of German Catholic art, and revived fresco painting.
 - (2) Dyce was deeply learned in theology and patristic literature and a leader in his time of the high church movement.
 - (3) His most famous painting today is - Christ Washing Peter's Feet.
 - (4) Altered in title to - The Annunciation when exhibited in 1850.
 - (5) Among many others - A Hireling Shepherd, 1852; Strayed Sheep; 1854; The Light of the World, 1854; The Finding of Our Saviour in the Temple, 1860; The Shadow of Death, 1873.

preaching the Christian way of life and faith through painting, carrying his search for accuracy and realism to the lengths of two prolonged visits to the Holy Land, the first producing The Scapegoat, 1856, and the second The Triumph of the Innocents, 1875-85. The search for accuracy, naturalism and "story value" in their pictures, which was in part a reaction from the conventions of mystical symbolism in religious art, inspired a number of artists to travel in Syria and Palestine about this time (1), notably the French artist, J. James Tissot, who spent ten years in Palestine from 1886, gathering impressions for his illustrated Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ (2).

All previous schools of art, Tissot believed, "have worked, more or less conscientiously, to lead astray public opinion". "Some of these schools, preoccupied, as were those of the Renaissance, with the setting of the scenes represented, others, like those of the mystics, with the inner meaning of the various events, were of one accord ignoring the evidence of history, and dispensing with topographical accuracy" "I determined to go to

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- (1) e.g. Thomas Seddon, painter of The Valley of Jehoshaphat in the Tate Gallery, and Mihaly Munkacsy (1844-1900) the Hungarian who painted Christ before Pilate and Christ on Calvary, both visited the Holy Land.
- (2) J. James Tissot - The Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Palestine on a pilgrimage of exploration, hoping to restore to those scenes as far as possible the actual aspect assumed by them on the spot, the configuration of the landscape, and the character of the inhabitants, endeavouring to trace back from their modern representatives through successive generations, the original types of the races of Palestine, and the various constituents which go to make up what is called antiquity.... What I sought .. was to have my emotions acted on directly by the life of Our Lord, by traversing the same districts as He did, by gazing upon the same landscapes, and by hunting out the traces of the civilisation, which prevailed in His lifetime. ... I have only endeavoured to supply a personal interpretation based on serious data, and intended to remove as far as possible vague and uncertain impressions. I have thus, I hope, accomplished a useful work, I have taken one step in the direction of truth, and set up one landmark which will point the way to be followed for penetrating yet further into this inexhaustible subject"(1).

There was a perplexing mixture of attraction and repulsion in the attitude of the religious public to all this, with rather unpredictable consequences at times to both authors and painters. Their curiosity to know

(1) *ib.*, Author's introduction, p.x-xi.

more and have a more accurate view of the Biblical scene was mixed with a fear that too much realism would cheapen the faith. Rossetti's combination of legendary symbolism with realism of technique in his picture of The Annuciationⁿ drew such an attack from the Athenaeum in 1850, that he vowed never to exhibit to the public again(1). The same year, Millais's Christ in the House of His Parents, whose naturalistic figures still have a freshness and charm of appeal, drew a storm of vituperative criticism from all sides, which today seems incomprehensible -- "revolting" (2), "ugly, graceless and unpleasant (3), "odious, revolting, and repulsive"(4). The Athenaeum's art critic wrote that Millais's picture "has been most successful in the least dignified features of his presentment, and in giving to the higher forms, characters, and meanings, a circumstantial art-language from which we recoil with loathing and disgust. There are many to whom this work will seem a pictorial blasphemy". I have underlined the passage I consider most significant. Allowing on the one hand for a certain amount of suspicion of "popery" in Rossetti's picture of the Annunciation (5), and for

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- (1) cf. Oswald Doughty - A Victorian Romantic, 1949, p.100-101
 (2) The Times.
 (3) Blackwood's
 (4) Charles Dickens writing in Household Words
 (5) Doughty, p.101-102. Rossetti actually changed the title from Ecce Ancilla Domini to The Annunciation to avoid this.

prejudice against the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's ideas of naturalism in art, much of the furore was simply an emotional reaction against a too humanistic presentation of Gospel scenes and characters which seemed to many utterly inimical to religious reverence and fidelity.

For a very similar reason in the sphere of letters, Benjamin Jowett suffered bitter criticism from those who could not understand that his claim to treat the Epistles of Paul like any other literary or historical documents could be compatible with respect for Bible truth and belief in its inspiration. Five years later, his essay on The Interpretation of Scripture in the ill-fated volume of Essay and Reviews (1), raised such a further storm of bitter antagonism that he retired from theological writing to the more temperate zone of Plato's Dialogues (2). Stanley's companion volume on the Epistles to the Corinthians, 1855, was saved from the heaviest criticism by its concentration on historical, pictorial and illustrative material, although its absence of theological interpretation was criticised by

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- (1) Essays and Reviews 1860, edited by Henry Bristow Wilson, sought to revive interest in liberal scholarship in Oxford by a collection of liberal tracts for the times. Rowland Williams and Wilson were condemned for heresy in the Court of Arches, 1862, but later acquitted by the judicial committee of the Privy Council.
- (2) His translation of Plato, pub. 1871; Thucydides, 1881; Aristotle's Politics, 1885. But he still preached occasionally, and his collected College Sermons were pub. posthumously in 1895.

theological purists. On the publication of Stanley's travel book, Sinai and Palestine, in 1856, John Keble (1) wrote Stanley a letter of loving rebuke. "While I love it for the deep love which it seems to me everywhere to breathe of Him whom we all wish to serve, it fills me with regret more than I can express to see that in no part at all of your book is His Person spoken of as properly Divine; rather that the tone and language of it seems, as by a kind of instinct, to avoid any such assumption, and to shrink from setting Him forth as more than a perfect man"(2). Thus, while Jowett was criticised for his handling of doctrine, Stanley was criticised for not handling doctrine. (3). Such were the trials of churchmen who chose the way of liberal scholarship (4)

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- (1) Author of The Christian Year, 1827: and leader with Pusey of the Oxford Movement, after Newman's secession.
- (2) R.E. Prothero - Life of Stanley (Nelson's one-vol. ed. 1909) ch.XIV., p.253.
- (3) Thomas Carlyle is said to have remarked of Stanley at a later date - "There's that Dean down in the hold: Bore, bore, boring, and some day he will bore through and let the water in". (Quoted by Elliott-Binns in English Thought, 1860-1900, p.177). Surely the unkindest cut of all from the man who omitted Jesus Christ from his Heroes and Hero-Worship! See Prothero, p.248-256 for an account of Stanley's share in these controversies.
- (4) Charles Gore, successor of Keble and Pusey in the Oxford tradition, was yet to suffer similar rough handling when the Lux Mundi essays of 1890 revealed that modern critical scholars had also entered into the thinking of the Anglo-Catholic re-statement of its positions.

"Why", asked a friend of F D.Maurice, "are things tolerated in Stanley, which would not be pardoned in anyone else?" "Because", replied Maurice, "Stanley has done more to make the Bible a reality in the homes of the people than any living man" (1). What commended itself most to the general public, as distinct from the warring elements of theological parties, was the power to illustrate the truths of the New Testament through a vividly pictorial re-creation of the scene, circumstances and characters. Re-interpretation of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, unless it followed the traditional lines, was suspect. This attitude was faithfully reflected in most of the popular "early Christian" histories and novels which marked the three last decades of the Century. There was a dislike of undue realism in art, as the case of Millais revealed, and the two opposite extremes of Pre-Raphaelite artistic interpretation, Rossetti and Holman Hunt both had a certain suspicion and dislike to overcome.

The poet, as I have tried to show, had most freedom to reconstruct and re-interpret the New Testament scene and experience. He was accepted as, by the nature of his genius, an individualist and an interpreter with a mystical insight of his own. The Nineteenth Century

(1) Prothero - ch.XIV.p.251.

reading public undoubtedly gave a prophetic recognition and prominence to its poets, which the Twentieth Century has so far withheld. However, the successful prophets of the Century, whether poet or prose-writer, of major or minor degree, usually contrived to speak from an independent position within or without the Churches. Loyal Churchmen who sought to re-interpret and reconstruct the faith had a rougher road to travel, and there were many casualties.

CHAPTER VTHE EARLY CHRISTIAN ROMANCERS, 1860 TO 1900

"The more you mow us down, the more we grow. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church"

-- Tertullian - Apologeticus, L. A.D., 197.

(Alternative - "As often as you mow us down, the more numerous do we become; the blood of the Christians is the seed". Henry Bettenson's translation)

"The noble army of martyrs praise Thee".

-- from the Te Deum, 4th. Century.

Principal English novels considered:-

G.T. Whyte-Melville - The Gladiators, 1863.

Elizabeth Charles - The Victory of the Vanquished, 1870.

F.W. Farrar - Darkness and Dawn, 1891.

S. Baring-Gould - Domitia, 1898.

Hugh Westbury - Acte, 1898.

"Without entering on the vexed question of miracles", wrote Benjamin Jowett (1), "and without denying that

'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy', I think the time has come when we

(1) cf. Select Passages from the Theological Writings of Benjamin Jowett, ed. Lewis Campbell, 1902, p.171.

must no longer allow them to be stumbling blocks in the way of those who desire to be followers of Christ. The true evidences of Christianity are the public evidences, the effect upon history, and upon the world, and upon the lives of men in our own time.---- The true internal evidence of Christianity", he went on to emphasise, "is the life of Christ in the soul; the true external evidence, the progress of religion in the history of mankind".

Without going so far as Jowett did to shelve the question of miracles as evidences, most of the "early Christian" novelists of the latter half of the Nineteenth Century rest their case on the assumption that the history of the early Church is itself an important evidence of the truth and power of the Gospel. They are concerned not simply to show the heroism of the early Christians, but to demonstrate the power of the Church to expose what was lacking in the moral and spiritual character of Roman life, and to fulfil that vacuum of faith by the quality of its own inspiration. Above all, they are concerned to show the power of the Church, though small in numbers and weak socially and politically, to stand up to the might of Rome by the power of its faith in God and its capacity for self-sacrifice, and to prevail against the repeated onslaughts of persecuting emperors.

The resulting achievement in literature is, with one or two exceptions, a group of minor novels, popular tales of romantic adventure; and with the one exception of John Graham's Neaera, 1886, they may fairly be described by the title, "Early Christian", for it is from that point of view that they are written. I have, however, selected five novels from the English list for special consideration in the next chapter, partly because their intrinsic material or worth seems to merit it, and also because they have the common characteristic that they attempt to reconstruct the past according to a particular point of view, and romance is sacrificed to this dominant purpose. To these five I have added Marie Corelli's Barabbas, 1893, by way of contrast. The remaining early Christian romances, I shall discuss together in this section.

George John Whyte-Melville had already written a number of country society novels with a special interest in hunting -- Digby Grand, 1853, and Market Harborough, 1861 before he wrote The Gladiators: a Tale of Rome and Judaea, in 1863. The previous year, he had made a first experiment in historical romance with The Queen's Maries: a Romance of Holyrood, 1862, and now he turned his hand to a classical theme. Although he produced a steady stream of novels between 1853 and 1878, he had the mental

limitations of one who shunned all literary connections, preferring the retired-army and hunting society of country life, and, apparently unwilling to profit from his books, he devoted the proceeds to charities connected with his favourite field sports. His classical education, provided by Eton under Dr. Keate, was sufficient to enable him to produce a translation of Horace in 1850; but in The Gladiators his classicism is marred by the prejudices of the ex-Guards officer who had fought in the Crimea as the commander of Turkish irregular cavalry. His contempt for other nationalities reveals itself at schoolboy level in his attitude to the Romans of his story and distorts his whole picture of Roman life. Kingsley's Teutonism becomes in Whyte-Melville's hands something like a caricature picture of ancient British Jingoism.

"Who and what are you?" asks the patrician Valeria of Esca, the British slave for whom she nourishes a passion. "A prince in my own country", replies Esca, "and a chief of ten thousand; a barbarian and a slave in Rome".(1) Later, when Esca rescues the Jewish Christian girl, Marianne, from a drunk priest during a procession of the devotees of Isis, he soothes her fears, saying, "They are a weakly race, these Roman citizens, I think I can promise to stave them off if they come not more than a dozen at a time" (2). Again,

(1) The Gladiators, (Dent's Everyman), p.33.

(2) ib. p.42.

introduced to a gladiatorial training school, Esca can best all the others at boxing, wrestling, running, leaping, though he needs to be taught their weapons for fighting. The reader is constantly coming up against this contrast of the physical and moral superiority of the natural barbarian over the civilised Roman. For example, as a gladiator, Esca is matched against Placidus, a patrician "amateur" in the amphitheatre games. It is doubtful if in actual life a Roman general of good family would have cultivated the "net and trident" technique as his speciality, a rather inglorious one of tip-and-run. But that is the part for which the author casts Placidus against Esca. It enables him again to show the natural courage and dignity of the barbarian against the cunning (coupled with the plain suggestion of cowardliness in the technique of attacking and then running away) of the Roman. There is more of the rising temper of Victorian Jingoism (1), than of classicism in this picture of the Roman background.

Nevertheless, The Gladiators is a plain and virile enough tale of the love of Esca for Marianne, and their adventures, first among the intrigues of patrician Rome in the

(1) It is perhaps significant that fifteen years later, and again over the policy of assisting the Turks against the Russians, for which Whyte-Melville had fought in 1853, W. Hunt sang his music-hall song, - "We don't want to fight, but by Jingo! if we do"

brief reign of Vitellius, and finally in the events of the destruction of Jerusalem (1), to the scene of which the author by a rather incredible sleight of hand, transports all his principal characters, including even his patrician wicked lady, Valeria. There is, however, in the Roman side of the story, a good picture of the rough fellowship and code of the gladiators' "family", and a moving incident in the amphitheatre when a stricken swordsman smiles up at his victorious antagonist, saying, "Through the heart, comrade, for old friendship's sake".(2).

The picture of early Christian life is given in the home life of Mariamne and her uncle, Calchas; and there is a charming scene in which Calchas walks into the gladiators' training quarters and gives them an address on courage -- something that they know exists though they cannot see it -- as an introduction to the meaning of "spirit". His

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- (1) For his scenes of Jerusalem's destruction, the author is indebted, like George Croly before him in Salathiel, 1828, to Josephus, The Wars of the Jews. Sabat, the prophet of woe, whom no novelist of the destruction seems able to resist, once again strides the street, and the whole scene is given the colouring of apocalyptic catastrophe, although its value for the story is little more than a spectacular and awesome climax with which to round off the adventures of his characters according to their various deserts.
- (2) cf. The Gladiators, p.143. Byron's dying gladiator most probably inspired this scene, as also Lockhart's in Valerius, vol.1.p.227. cf. Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, 1818, canto IV.cxxxix-cxli.

picture of the early Church in Rome is interesting, as this incident also suggests, for its stress on simple individual faith and right feeling as being, in contrast to the succeeding history of the Church, nearer the fountain-head of inspiration and the source of its power.

"There were no dogmas in those early days of the Christian Church to distract the minds of its votaries from the simple tenets of their creed. The grain of mustard seed had not yet shot up into that goodly tree which has since borne so many branches, and the pruning-knife, hereafter to lop away so many redundant heresies, was not as yet unsheathed. The Christian of the first century held to a very simple exposition of his faith as handed down to him from his Divine Master. Trust and Love were the fundamental rules of his order. ---

"In its early days, fresh from the fountain-head, the Christian's was indeed essentially and emphatically a religion of love. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to stretch a hand to the fallen, to think no evil, to judge not, nor to condemn, in short, to love "the brother whom he had seen", were the direct commands of that Great Example who had so recently been here on earth. His first disciples strove, as hard as fallible humanity can, to imitate Him, and in so striving, failed not to attain a

certain peaceful composure and contentment of mind, that no other code of morality, no other system of philosophy had ever yet produced. Perhaps this was the quality that in his dealings with his victims the Roman executioner found most mysterious and inexplicable"(1)

This desire to recover the simple truths of original Christianity was characteristic of the Broad Churchmen of the period, men such as Stanley, Farrar and Jowett, who sought the common ground of religious belief among the Churches and deprecated over-emphasis on matters causing theological contentions and division. Jowett expounded their point of view most ably in his occasional sermons and other writings (2). There is no cause, however, to class Whyte-Melville with such men, who brought their full store of learning to the search for simplicity of faith and were far from discounting the services of scholarship to the Church. He belonged to a diffused type of mind fairly common among the laity of the Church of England, which,

(1) The Gladiators, p.240-241.

(2) "Religion", Jowett wrote in Sermons on Faith and Doctrine p.211-2, " has become simpler than formerly ... Mankind have a larger and truer conception of the Divine nature; they have also a wider knowledge of themselves. They see the various forms of Christianity which prevail in their own and other countries, they trace their origin and history, and they rise above them to that higher part of Christian belief which they have in common
---(continued at foot of next page)

distrusting Roman Catholicism on the one hand and theological intellectualism on the other, pinned its faith to what was called an undogmatic Christianity. Just what that meant in practice depended very much on the character, prejudices and background of the individual. Edward Baring-Gould, as described by William Purcell in his biography of Sabine, his son, would provide a very fair clue to the mind of Whyte-Melville, both of them of the Victorian country squire class. "He would not enter, while on the Continent, any Catholic, nor equally any Reformed Church. He considered himself, however, a staunch member of the Church of England, although having 'a detestation for any sort of dogma'. And when there was no Anglican Chaplaincy in the neighbourhood, he read prayers himself on Sundays".(1) It was a mind that stressed character, the duties of life, and the customary observances of religion, leaving doctrine, for better or

(1) cf. W. Purcell - Onward Christian Soldier: A life of Sabine Baring-Gould, 1957, p.16.

Note continued from previous page: - "Their vision extends yet further, to the great religions of the East, and the controversies and phases of faith which have absorbed them. They set aside lesser perplexing questions, whether of criticism or of philosophy, which are neither important nor capable of being satisfactorily answered. They turn from theology to life, from disputes about the person of Christ to the imitation of Him 'who went about doing good'".

for worse, to the parsons. This protest against dogma was an almost instinctive lay reaction to what was felt to be an over-insistence on intellectual assent to doctrinal formulas as the evidence of religious orthodoxy. It produced the outlook that leaned towards universalism both within the Church of England as well as outside it, protesting both against the idea of eternal punishment and what seemed the conception of a loving God whose righteous anger against sin could yet be placated by an innocent person suffering for the guilty. The same protest against elaboration of doctrine underlay a good deal of popular Deism from the beginning of the Century (1). But it must be admitted that Whyte-Melville leaned, in his particular brand of religious simplicity, towards the narrower limitations of public school convention and had his full share of national bigotry. Nevertheless, he would have said "Amen" to Jowett when he wrote -- "How the simple words of Christ, 'Believe on Me', grew into a vast system set forth in hard and technical terms which the first teachers of the word could not even have understood, is a strange reflection which, living eighteen centuries afterwards, we are unable adequately to realize.

(1) The universalism of Leigh Hunt's clergyman father, and his own essay on Christianism in The Religion of the Heart, 1853, may be considered as cases of this fringe outlook on religion.

To us they seem to have gone into too much detail, and that on subjects which transcend human thought and language (1).

Mrs. Elizabeth Charles was a woman of much wider literary and religious interests and connections than Whyte-Melville. A friend of Dean Stanley, Charles Kingsley, Benjamin Jowett, and Dean Farrar, she specialised in historical fiction with a strong religious interest both in subject and treatment. The Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family, 1864, which established her popularity, was about Martin Luther. The Diary of Mrs. Kitty Trevelyan, 1865, concerned the beginnings of the Methodist movement. The Draytons and the Davenants, 1867, leaned to the Puritan instead of the usual Cavalier interest in the Civil War. The Victory of the Vanquished, 1870, brought German prisoners of Germanicus to Rome, Judaea and Galilee in the lifetime of Jesus, though neither Jesus nor the disciples are allowed to appear directly in the story. Two further early Christian novels, Lapsed but not Lost, 1877, and Conquering and to Conquer, 1876, dealt respectively with Carthage in the days of Cyprian, and Rome in the days of Jerome and Augustine.

(1) cf. Select Passages from the Theological Writings of Benjamin Jowett, ed. by Lewis Campbell, 1902, p.55.

The Victory of the Vanquished, 1870, is less an historical tale of the time of Christ than a story set in ancient times and charged with Victorian religious sentiment (1). The narrative, which tells the adventures of a Germanic family, Siguna and her son and daughter, Siward and Hilda, taken prisoner during the punitive campaigns of Germanicus, is broken up by the insertion of homiletic parallels and analogies drawn between the events of the story and the events of Jesus's birth and upbringing far away in Palestine at the same time (2). Finally the family move to Syria, where they are frequently in the

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- (1) For example, the description of the effect of her Christian conversion on Siguna's attitude toward her children is typical of Victorian piety. "As the mother looked at her children, unspeakable as the joy was of committing them, in life and death, to Him who had taken the little ones in His arms, and was Lord of life and death, nevertheless it could not banish the conviction that, in training them to be His disciples, she was training them for a service whose badge was the Cross, whose visible reward might be shame and torture such as He had borne. There could be no levity in Christian life in those days. The holy depth of the joy forbade it, and the weight of the glory to be revealed, but also the probability of the intervening suffering." p.329.
- (2) While, for example, Cloelia Pulchra, the Vestal Virgin, "the loveliest type of the purest aspiration of that old perishing world" (p.54) keeps her vigil by the sacred fire of Rome -- "through many a long night on the lonely hills of Syria vigil was being kept for the world, all night, in prayer to God. One Altar was in the world on which burned the sacred eternal fire of unquenchable redeeming love, the sacred fire linked with heaven and every hearth on earth..."(p.54) There is a recurring reference from the happenings in Rome, from Cloelia's consciousness of the wickedness of the city (82) or her hope of a Deliverer remembered in talk with an aged Jew (202) or the power of the Emperor and the extent of his dominion (170-171) to the fulfilment in preparation already in far away Palestine.

countryside of Jesus and hear the reactions of His life and teaching, but without ever meeting Him directly.

The most interesting thing in the story is the young Siward's reaction, as a barbarian prisoner in Rome, to the offer of adoption into a patrician Roman family. "I am Siward, the son of Siguna and Olave the smith. They can make me their slave. I will never call myself the son of a Roman woman and a murdress". (The reference is to the fact that the Roman mother had exposed a deformed infant). "I am thy son, mother, thine ... I would not grow like these Romans. Better be their slaves than be themselves, mother". (1).

In part, for this judgment of Roman civilisation, Mrs. Charles drew, as also did Kingsley before her, upon the histories (c.104-9 A.D.) and the annals (c.115-117.A.D.) of Tacitus, with their implicit theme that the old ways and days of the Republic were the best and truest, and that the tyranny of Emperors and the sapping of senatorial independence were both part of the moral decadence of the times. But for the most part, it was simply a reading

(1) The Victory of the Vanquished, p.38.

I propose to make a more general comment on this anti-Roman attitude in the novels later on in this chapter, and meantime I give the above quotations for purposes of comparison.

back into the ancient past of contemporary Nineteenth Century English and German middle class ideals of the family relationship and home piety, as the foundation of morals and religion. It is interesting, for example, to find the German historical novelist, George Ebers, in his novel of Fourth Century Alexandria, Serapis, 1885, picking out this same characteristic as the mark of true Christianity amidst the counterfeits and bigotries of Alexandria. "In these dark days", says his aged deacon, Eusebius, who is obviously the author's mouthpiece for giving judgment on the whole Christian scene of the time-- "our Faith is seen under an aspect that by no means fairly represents its true nature.--- What is nobler than a mother's love, but when she fights for her child she becomes a raging Megaera (1). In the same way the Faith -- the consoler of hearts -- turns to a raging wild beast when it stoops to become religious partisanship -- If you want to know what true and pure Christianity is, look into our homes, look at the family life of our fellow-believers".(2) And he goes on to speak of their home pieties, affections, and neighbourly charities in the Christian social life of Alexandria.

(1) Megaera - one of the Furiae.

(2) Serapis, ch.xxvii, p.373. The italics are mine

Similarly, Adolf Hausrath ends his Second Century story, Antinouös, 1884, on a near-Swiss-Family-Robinson note (1) when his converted Greek philosopher, Phlegon, joins his family in their pioneer settlement on the Rhine. "Here am I, children, -- I, your father, and your brother in the Lord. Now let us cultivate this beautiful garden of God, on which the Lord has poured out the fulness of His gifts, into an image of His kingdom, and show the world that the Church of Christ is no community of folly".(2) Neither of these writers, of course, applies such a doctrine of Teutonism as Kingsley did to the Roman Empire,⁽³⁾ but in their diagnosis of the genuine elements in the mixed Christian society of the day, whether of Alexandria or Rome, they read back into it the same idealisation of family virtues and affections as Kingsley did. The description in both cases is a typically Nineteenth Century one.

The immediate difference that Teutonism made to the Classical historical novel in England is that it transferred the point of view of the principal characters from that of a Roman citizen, living within the Empire, to that of a northern tribesman, owing another loyalty

(1) The Swiss Family Robinson, by J.R.Wyss, was published in 1813.

(2) p.440.

(3) On Kingsley's "Teutonism", see p.246, ff.

completely outside the allegiance to Rome. Wilkie Collins had already experimented with a novel whose characters were largely drawn from Alaric's Goths, in Antonina, 1850, (1) but he did not develop the Roman-Goth relationship beyond melodramatic motives of love and revenge. From now on, much more of this distinctively northern point of view is introduced through the characterisation of the story.

The characters of John Graham's Neaera, 1886, are all Romans, born and brought up to the traditions and social life in which their story is set. The raw materials, too, are taken more directly from classical literature. Its plot has all the stock devices of ancient romance -- the true love of a patrician hero for the daughter of a plebeian potter, her abduction and rescue, and the final revelation of her real patrician identity as a long-lost grandchild. The background, Rome under the domination of Sejanus, and the atmosphere of mystery and intrigue on the island of Capri during its tenancy by Tiberius, draw upon the Annals of Tacitus. And one of its most macabre incidents is taken from the Satyricon of Petronius Arbiter (2), and applied to the

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- (1) Antonina was his first and only historical novel
 (2) Petronius flourished in the reign of Nero, 54-68 A.D., during which period the Satyricon would be written.

heroine's luckless step-father -- the story of the inventor of unbreakable glass who, on exhibiting his discovery to Caesar, is put to death because "if his device came into general use, gold would be worth no more than potter's clay" (1). To this extent, Neaera is much more a Roman novel than either The Gladiators or The Victory of the Vanquished. But beyond that, the story lacks the binding power of a tradition or value of life. It was, after all, still a world of ideas and traditions as well as of intrigues, treacheries and villainies in high places; and yet the chief characters pass through their experiences of it without revealing what measure of the Roman tradition and way of life lies either in their own minds or their author's. Neaera represents a return to the novel of historical romance and adventure, after the pattern of Bulwer Lytton, with his use of historical and antiquarian research in the building up of background. But of purpose or idea in the writing of it, there is little to be found beyond the romance of adventure written to entertain.

Five other novels of this period, I shall pass over briefly, because, while their setting is First Century,

(1) Satyricon, ch.11.: Neaera, Part II, chs.xix-xx

they are written for juvenile reading and instruction, and as such they are naturally subject to limitations of outlook and ideas which put them outside the scope of this particular study. A.J. Church (1) was a Church of England clergyman, who engaged principally in school teaching, and had also thirteen years as Professor of Latin at University College, London, and five in a Wiltshire parish, before joining the staff of the Spectator under H.H. Hutton in 1897. By then he had already discovered his most successful gift in the production of children's books, both fiction and descriptive writing, in which he reconstructed everyday life in ancient times. Examples of his stories are -- To the Lions: a Tale of the Early Christians, 1889; The Burning of Rome, 1892; and The Crown of Pine, describing Corinth and the Isthmian Games. In these tales of adventure in ancient history, the motive of instruction, both religious and educational, is introduced much more gently than one is led to expect in most Victorian children's books (2).

Charlotte Mary Yonge, 1823-1901, early in life came

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- (1) See his Memories of Men and Books, 1908, for details of his life.
- (2) Examples of his descriptive historical books are - Pictures from Roman (and Greek) Life and Story, 1892, 1893; Roman Life in the Days of Cicero, 1883; Stories from Ancient Greece, 1907.

under the influence of John Keble, who was her near neighbour and confessor until his death in 1866. Beginning to write in 1848, she produced a large number of novels which give a picture of the social life and ideas of the Tractarian or High Church movement in the country, The Heir of Redcliffe, 1858, being still her best known effort in this vein. Among the mass of her children's books, The Book of Golden Deeds, has lasted longest and now seems to have attained the doubtful dignity of a children's classic largely unread. Slaves of Sabinus, 1890, her one essay in Early Christian fiction, is a story for the religious instruction of children, set first in Batavia and Rome in the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, and ending with the persecution of the Christians by Domitian.

The chief interest of these books is the subsidiary evidence they provide, first, of the extension of the Lyttonian romance based on historical and archaeological research to the task of children's education (it is to be feared that Lytton's Last Days of Pompeii has since been demoted to the same level); and, secondly, of a popular demand for -- or, at least, acceptance of -- highly coloured romance on First Century subjects with a bearing on the story of Christianity. For this "educational uplift" motive was by no means limited to children's

books. The taste for art and literature concerned with life and with ideas about life -- and, for all the gulf between the prosaic acceptances of orthodoxy and the shock tactics of heterodoxy, this description is just as inclusive of the plays of G.B. Shaw (1) and the novels of H.G. Wells (2) as it is of the Early Christian novels -- was as characteristic of the Nineties as the aesthetic cult of art for art's sake.

"The men with the larger prodigality of genius", writes Holbrook Jackson (3), "were not engaged chiefly with art as art; for good or ill they were engaged equally with ideas and life. Popular taste also was attracted by the artist-philosopher, as may be seen by its readiness to appreciate the older and more didactic painters and writers just as in other years it had enjoyed the didacticism of Charles Dickens. Thus George Frederick Watts, Holman Hunt, Ford Madox Brown, Burne-Jones, for instance though not of the period, received their nearest approach to popularity then, and the same may be said of William Morris, Walter Crane, and the craftsmen

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- (1) First performances of Shaw's plays in the Nineties - Widower's Houses, 1892: Arms and the Man, 1894: Candida, 1895: The Devil's Disciple, 1897: You never can Tell
- (2) The Time Machine, 1895: The War of the Worlds, 1898: When the Sleeper Awakes, 1899. 1899
- (3) The Eighteen Nineties, 1913, ch.II., p.34.

generally, who had evolved out of the Ruskinian gospel of 'joy and work' and the Pre-Raphaelite movement".

Parallel to this association of art with ideas about life, there was a revival in popular forms of the novel of ideas, which affected the whole field of fiction, from the novel of manners (1) to the historical novel (2) and even the popular romance (3). "So active was the romantic spirit of the period", writes Holbrook Jackson (4) "that it did not scruple about using many mediums for its purpose, hitherto neglected. Thus, ideas both spiritual and intellectual were pressed into its service, and he cites Harold Frederick's Illumination, 1896, George du Maurier's Trilby, 1895, and Arthur Machen's The Great God Pan, 1894, as examples of this experimentalism.

It was natural that the Early Christian novel should share in this interest in romance with a seasoning of

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- (1) e.g. Mrs. Humphrey Ward's Robert Elsmere, 1888; John Oliver Hobbes' School for Saints, 1897; The Scottish novels of J.M. Barrie and the Jewish novels of Israel Zangwill are examples of stories which picture the ideas as well as the community life of the people.
- (2) J.H. Shorthouse's John Inglesant, 1881.
- (3) Nothing could be more unlike than the novels of Maurice Hewlett and Marie Corelli, yet both are examples of novelists who used popular romance to propagate ideas of the conduct of life. See also H.G. Well's scientific romances.
- (4) The Eighteen Nineties, ch.XVI.

mystical ideas or social purpose; and in 1891 Dean F.W. Farrar (1) entered the field with his novel of the times of Nero, Darkness and Dawn. Not that Farrar was content simply to try his hand at a popular romance, with a modicum of religion added to give it the weight of respectability. Its purpose was to show historically "why a religion so humble in its origin and so feeble in its earthly resources as Christianity, won so majestic a victory over the power, the glory and the intellect of the civilised world".(2). In Jowett's phrase, it was to show the "public evidences of Christianity" in the history of Nero's reign. And behind that theme was the message for his own day, in which all the prestige of science and new thought seemed ranged against Christianity, that the power of the Church in the world rests not in intellectual gifts but in the moral and spiritual character of ordinary lives. As the Church won her early struggle with the Empire because "there stood beside her One like unto the Son of Man" (3), so it can endure through the intellectual struggle of the present day.

Farrar, therefore, found his scriptural theme for the

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- (1) In 1891, he was Archdeacon of Westminster: the Deanery of Canterbury came to him in 1895.
 (2) Preface to Darkness and Dawn.
 (3) *ib.* p.581. "One like unto the Son of Man" - cf. Rev. I, 13.; XIV.14.

tale in the historical interpretation of the Apocalypse of John, a visionary message written for the comfort and support of the Church at a time of critical struggle with a persecuting emperor. In his own rather overcharged, rhetorical prose, the Revelation of John was "the thundering reverberation of the Apostle's mighty spirit, smitten into wrathful dissonance amid its heavenly music by the plectrum of the Neronian persecution. --- When he wrote his vision three or four years later (1), the souls of those who had been slain in the great Neronian tribulation for the Word of God and the testimony which they held were still under the altar, and cried, 'How long, O Lord, how long dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?'"(2). Nero, therefore, is the principal character in the book, the Beast of Revelation XIII, the type of Rome's decadent

(1) Darkness and Dawn, p.479. Farrar himself has left an account of the part that F.D. Maurice played in turning him from the older system of allegorical and "futurist" interpretation to the acceptance of contemporaneous historical events as the Apocalyptist's startingpoint for a message primarily intended for his own day. cf. Reginald Farrar's The Life of Frederick William Farrar, 1904. p.25-26.

There was a division of opinion among New Testament scholars regarding the dating of Revelation. The majority have accepted the traditional dating of its writing as in the reign of Domitian, who most closely conforms to the record of Nero redivivus in Rev.XII, and the eighth king in XVIII,10.ff. Farrar was among those who dated its writing before 70 A.D.

(2) Darkness and Dawn, p.479: Rev.VI.9-10.

power and civilisation, and the Church's first great antagonist.

When he wrote Darkness and Dawn in 1891, Farrar was already a prolific author of many books on philology, Church history, theology, and kindred subjects. A graduate of Cambridge University, with honours in Classics, and a Fellow of Trinity College in 1856, he gained his first experience as a teacher at Marlborough and Harrow, and became Headmaster of Harrow in 1871. His philological studies drew him towards scientific interests, and like Edwin A Abbott, he urged the broadening of the Greek-Latin school curriculum to include science. His early essay on The Origin of Language, 1860, revealed his debt to the work and ideas of Ernest Renan in this field; and when he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1866, it was Charles Darwin who proposed him. A man of liberal views and broad outlook, his friendships among men distinguished in literature, the arts, science, and religion speak for his extensive interests and connections (1). Out of the formidable list of publications on education, teaching of languages, sermons, commentaries, and popular religious

(1) His son numbers among his friendships - in literature, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, Tom Hughes; in art, Sir J.E. Millais and Holman Hunt; in the Church, Dean Stanley and Dean Plumptre; in science, Charles Darwin and T.H. Huxley.

books, certain ones stand out as providing the historical source material of the novel -- the Life of Christ, 1874, the Life and Work of St. Paul, 1879, The Early Days of Christianity, 1882, and The Lives of the Fathers, 1889.

Into the main theme, the apocalyptic role of Nero, he worked a variety of sub-plots. First, there is the murderous conflict between Agrippina's ambitions for her son, and Nero's struggle, when the power for which she plotted is actually in his hands, to rid himself of her domination, beginning with her murder of Claudius and ending with her own death at Nero's instigation -- Secondly, interwoven with this, is the effect upon Britannicus and Octavia (his sister and Nero's undesired wife) of their insecurity and evil surroundings on the one hand, and of the influence and testimony of Christian slaves and friends on the other -- the "darkness and dawn". Thirdly, the element of romance is brought in between the centurion "Pudens" and "Claudia", daughter of Caractacus and ward of Pomponia Graecina, who are identified with the Pudens and Claudia of the greetings in II Timothy, IV.21. Other minor characters are introduced, either from among names mentioned in the New Testament -- Linus, for example -- or from the Apostolic Fathers -- such as Clement of Rome as a young man. Onesimus, the runaway slave of St. Paul's epistle to Philemon, is

given a fairly considerable part in the background of the story, enabling the author to show something of the slave life and the underworld of Rome, with a minor love interest to complete the happy ending of his rehabilitation. As if all this were not enough, John, Paul, Peter and Luke all enter into the story at critical times, and, not surprisingly, the story gets out of hand and loses in interest before the finish. By the time the fire of Rome has taken place, and the Christians have been martyred, and the survivors have gathered themselves together, the novel, so far as the author's characters are concerned, has come to an end. But the story will not end there; for the theme remains Nero, the Antichrist who must fulfil his deeds of darkness; and so, from chapters LVII to LXVI, the reader must follow the miserable record of conspiracy, executions, the fate of Poppaea, the Emperor's visit to Greece, and finally the revolt that brought about his death.

In regard to his New Testament characters, Peter, Paul, John and Luke, Dean Farrar evidently had some qualms about the effect of introducing them on readers who were believers in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. His way out of the difficulty was characteristic. In the preface, he assures the reader of his concern about this. He has had to bring into his story, he confesses, "several whose names are surrounded with hallowed associations", but he is sure he

will not be accused of irreverence, "for scarcely in one incident have I touched the Preachers of early Christianity with the finger of fiction.--- Recognising their sacred dignity, I have almost entirely confined their words to words of revelation. --- But the small liberty which I have dared to use has only been in directions accorded by the cycle of such early legends as may be considered to be both innocent and hallowed".(1)

When it comes to the story itself, however, the author bears these restrictions very cavalierly. John is given considerable freedom of speech in his first address to the Christians in Rome (2) and especially in his conversation with Britannicus and the young Clement, in which he is credited with special gifts of insight and prophecy to foretell their future (3). John's intended execution in a cauldron of boiling oil and his miraculous escape, he had taken from Tertullian (4), and so as a tradition it may be certifiable as "innocent and hallowed". Similarly, when Farrar tells of Peter, fleeing from Rome, the story of his meeting with the Lord (5), and of his turning back to be

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- (1) Preface.
 - (2) p.199.
 - (3) p.203-4.
 - (4) Tertullian - De Praescrip Haeretic, ch.XXXVI.
 - (5) Acts of Peter, XXXV.

crucified, he was undoubtedly using an "innocent and hallowed" legend. But earlier in the book, when Octavia reads a "Christian writing" -- viz., I Peter, II.13-III.18 -- he does not explain that he is applying the suspected "Higher Criticism" to the text of I. Peter when he comments - "It was not the letter which we now know as the First Epistle of St. Peter, which was written perhaps ten years later, but one of those circular addresses which touched, as did so many of the Epistles, upon the same universal duties, and used in many passages the same form of words".(1). Many of his readers were probably hardly aware that in his dating and treatment of John's Apocalypse, and in re-translating a few verses of Paul's Epistles as hymns, he was applying to the New Testament literature -- though in a very moderate form -- a modernist technique that was highly suspect to popular evangelicalism.

On the other hand, Bulwer Lytton himself could not have been more insistent on the thoroughness of the historical and antiquarian research on which the story was based. "Those who are familiar with the literature of the First Century", Farrar wrote in his preface, "will recognise that even for the minutest allusions and particulars I have contemporary authority, -- The book is not a novel, nor is it to be

(1) He refers to Prof. Rodolfo Lanciani's Rome, p.121.

judged as a novel. The outline has been decided by the exigencies of fact, not by the rules of art". Certainly, both for background detail and for incidents in his characters' lives, he drew lavishly from his wide knowledge of classical literature, archaeology (-), and the New Testament and Patristic sources. Where necessary, he meticulously refers to them. For example, in the story, Britannicus notices in the Galctian Paedagogium a scratched figure of an ass upon a cross with the inscription - "Alexamenos worships his god". Farrar carefully provides a note that the actual graffito, discovered in 1857, is probably Second Century, but goes on to justify his use of it by quoting parallel calumnies against Christians in the Histories of Tacitus, V.4., Plutarch's Symposium, IV.5.para 2. (1)

Onesimus provides a good example of his method of using source material in his plot. He takes the framework of known facts about Onesimus from the New Testament, and fills it in with an imaginary plot, each separate incident of which has its source in ancient literature. Onesimus's

(1) Darkness and Dawn, p.69. See also Farrar's The Life of Christ in Art, 1894, p.94, for an illustration and his own discussion of this graffito.

arrest in the Forum on a mistaken charge of stealing (1) comes from the Confessions of St. Augustine, chapter VI (2); his "paganisation" at the games at the arena, to which he is at first unwilling to go, is from the same source(3). Among his subsequent adventures, his wanderings with the priests of Cybele (4) are drawn from The Golden Ass of Lucius Apuleius, chapter XII; and the encounter with the "Rex Nemorensis" (5) makes use of Ovid's Fasti, III, 263-277, Propertius, III,24.9., and the Sylvae of Statius, III,1.32. Finally, the mass execution of a household of slaves for a murder committed by one of them (6) is based on Tacitus, Annals, XIV.,39-43. Such incidents, drawn from his diverse sources, he binds together with the available New Testament data by means of a plot of purely imaginary events. This is the method followed also by Edwin A. Abbott in his novels (7). Its success depends on the imaginative power of the novelist to fuse his material

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- (1) *ib.* p.83.
 (2) This is the misadventure of Alypius, caught in the Forum of Carthage with the thief's hatchet in his hands.
 (3) Darkness and Dawn, p.90-91. cf. Confessions, ch.VI See also ch. II, p.53 of this thesis, where it is referred to in connection with Lockhart's Valerius.
 (4) *ib.* chapter XXXII.
 (5) *ib.* chapter XLI.
 (6) *ib.* chapter XLII.
 (7) Considered in the next chapter.

into the continuous experience of a single personality, in harmony both with what is known of the historical original and with the unity of the story as a whole.

Dean Farrar's fault in Darkness and Dawn is that he overcrowds his scene with too many characters and too much incident. The elaborate extravagance of Roman social life, the orgiastic scenes in the Imperial court, and the spectacular and dramatic events of Nero's reign were all a constant temptation to his highly coloured and eloquent style of writing. His scenes of ancient Rome have the same high-lighted character and import in the story as the descriptions of scenery in the romances of R.D. Blackmore and his followers. His description of an imperial banquet, down to the clothes which the guests wore (1) is a typical example of these scenic effects. This quality alone betrays Farrar, in spite of his meticulous claims of truth to fact, ^{as a romancer} -- as lavish a provider of the highly coloured scene as a modern film producer -- rather than a realist in historical fiction. He claims that they are pictorial reality, but he uses them as scenic effects to enhance the character of his tale.

(1) p.211-213.

His scenes of the Christian gatherings for worship (1) are, characteristically, composite pictures drawn from patristic sources, principally Justin's Apology, I.lxv-lxvii., and the Didache, or the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. (2) In the first scene, in which Britannicus is present and joins in the glossolalia, the stress is on simplicity, and the author is at pains to avoid giving a particular outward form to the prayers and service generally. Two verses are quoted separately, I Timothy III.16, and Ephesians V.14., as hymns in which the congregation joined. After an address by Linus, the bishop, they respond with a mighty "Maranatha" (3), which is followed by an outburst of the glossolalia or "tongues". Farrar describes this as "the ejaculation of ecstasy, of amazement, of thanksgiving, of supplication, of passionate dithyramb or psalm" which "needed no translation", and "there was no disorderly tumult in the various voices" (4).

- (1) p.165-168; and 199-204.
 (2) Discovered in Constantinople in 1875.
 (3) "Our Lord, come". cf. Didache, X - the close of the thanksgiving prayer on partaking of the Eucharist :
 "...Let grace come and let this world pass away.
 Hosanna to the God of David. If any is holy, let him come; if any is not holy, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen. But allow the prophets to give thanks as much as they will".
 (4) Darkness and Dawn, p.165-8.

Of the three Apostles who appear in the course of the story, John has the more public part, because of the author's wish to emphasise the apocalyptic theme. There is no suggestion of past controversies either between Peter and Paul or with Judaizers within the Church. Again, the touchstones of the Christian conscience, as in earlier novels, are the state of slavery, the inhumanity of the arena spectacles, the lack of a personal religious faith and the general moral decadence. And here, the reaction of the natural healthy barbarian to the civilised decadence of Rome is once more pictured, this time in the Briton, Glanydon, who dies nobly as a gladiator, protesting against the bloodshed of the arena and the infamies of Nero (1).

In 1895, Wilson Barrett, the actor, produced an Early Christian drama called The Sign of the Cross, which was not only still packing the Lyric Theatre in London in 1899, but also theatres and small town and village halls throughout England and Scotland. H.F. Maltby joined one of its several touring companies in that year, and gives an account of it in his reminiscences, Ring Up The Curtain (2). Its plot was very simple. A wealthy Roman patrician's evil designs upon

(1) *ib.* p.336-7.

(2) Published, 1950. p.43,ff. He gives a long list of the places visited by the touring company.

a young girl are foiled by her Christian purity and "the sign of the Cross"; he becomes a Christian also, and both are sent to the lions by Nero. H.F. Maltby describes the final scene of the play, "between Marcus and Mercia, punctuated, every time the sliding doors to the arena were opened, by the distant cries of the bloodthirsty and expectant mob and the angry snarls of the savage beasts. -- Our stage manager conducted the effects, his eyes glued on the sliding doors, his hand raised when they opened, to demand more noise, and lowered when they closed, to dim us down, and finally waved aloft to urge us into a double crescendo as Marcus spoke the world-famous words: 'Come, my bride. Come to the light beyond'; --- and the final curtain fell" (1)

The Sign of the Cross was published as a novel in 1909, and both the play and the novel, with their astonishingly widespread appeal, give a clue to the nature of the popular taste for romance and religion which provided much of the demand for the Early Christian novel at the turn of the Century. It would be unfair to place Farrar's Darkness and Dawn beside The Sign of the Cross, with its shallow religiosity, its flamboyant use of spectacle and melodrama,

(1) ib. p.46.

and its ruthless application of the standard of "good theatre" to the Christian faith and life. But Farrar, too, was writing a popular novel, and something of this popular taste for sensational scenes and colourful background undoubtedly marks it.

It also marks the work of Sabine Baring-Gould, the author of Domitia, 1898. A collector of folk-lore and folk songs, and a writer of popular religious and historical books, Baring-Gould was best known in his day as a novelist. He shared with Dean Farrar the fault of being too prolific and fluent a writer, but as a man he had neither the broad humanity nor the learning of the Dean. Novel writing was for him a means of making money (1), and he developed a lucrative line of stories of strong emotions and passion, set in wild, out of the way countrysides, from the saltings of East Mersea to Dartmoor and the coasts of Devon and Cornwall. It was a time when, following the fashion of regional romances set by R.D. Blackmore (2), popular novelists vied with one another in finding romantic countrysides to heighten the atmosphere and character of their tales.

(1) cf. Wm. Purcell - Onward Christian Soldier, 1957.

(2) cf. E. A. Baker - Hist. of Eng. Novel, vol. IX, ch. VIII on Blackmore and the regional romances.

In 1898, Baring-Gould turned to Early Christian romance, and wrote Domitia, a story of the effect of her sufferings upon Domitia, the wife of the Emperor Domitian, and of her final (imaginary) conversion to Christianity. In his preface, he claims that this theme occurred to him on studying the portrait busts of Domitia in the museums of Rome and Florence, when in 1890 he was gathering material for his Tragedy of the Caesars, 1892. In the changing expressions of her portrait as a young woman compared with those made over later periods in her life, he read the progress of hardening and deterioration of her character, and finally the hardness giving way to "the sweet springs of her true nature". Into this he read the bitter years in which her father was condemned by Nero, and Domitian broke her first marriage to make her his own wife, until, after her revenge in his assassination, something happens to work the poison out of her mind. It may also be that he was deliberately trying to give a different interpretation of her life and character to that of Ernst Eckstein, who had portrayed her as a hard and evil woman, of the type of Nero's mother, in his novel, Quintus Claudius, 1881. Be that as it may, the source allows him to claim the usual antiquarian authorities for his romance, which is indeed heavily encumbered with descriptions of authentic social customs thrown into the plot without regard either for their relevance to the story

or their interest to the reader (1).

In reality, despite all this instructional façade, the story simply provides in a different dress and setting the familiar formula of sensational incident and spectacle coupled with the clash of strong passions, which he had already found so popular in his novels of the English scene.(2). The novel has an apocalyptic colouring, but this is used only as an ingredient in the suspense atmosphere of the tale. Domitian is here the second beast of Revelation, chapter XIII -- the traditional identification -- and is Nero redivivus; but as worked out in the story, this merely provides the sensational subject of a magician's crystal-gazing scene in a temple of Isis, in which Domitia receives the revelation that her fate is linked with the Emperor's, whom she sees in the form of "the Beast with seven heads, one wounded to the death, and there cometh up another out

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- (1) As, for example, the fight of the gladiators at the funeral of Domitia's father, Corbulo.p.73,ff. The whole chapter, VIII, is in fact concerned with funeral ceremonies. Another instance of the author's appeal to antiquarian interest is the note appended to the description of Glycerina's statuette of the Good Shepherd, in which Baring-Gould refers to the "Hermes" statue in the Lateran Museum, p.175. See also Farrar's Life of Christ in Art p.38-39, for an illustration and description of the statue.
- (2) Out of some thirty novels, the following - Mehalah, 1880; John Herring, 1883; Court Royal, 1886; Red Spider; 1887; Eurith, 1891; Kitty Alone, 1895; Dartmoor Idylls, 1896; The Broom Squire, 1896; Nebo the Nailor, 1902.

of the deadly wound, and -- it hath the red face I saw but just now. And it climbeth to a throne, and it lifteth me up to sit thereon" (1). So in the hands of Baring-Gould, the vision of the Apocalypse simply heightens the ominous portents of the story.

Domitia is finally led to Christianity by a freed slave, Glycerina, and her conversion takes place at a Christian house meeting for worship, presided over by "Clement, the bishop". It is a simple enough picture that is given of the early Christian liturgy in chapter XVII, with no challenging claims made either for the order or the development of the Church. The liturgical service is described as growing out of the synagogue worship and as still "in process of formation". St. Luke is present as an old man, exhorts the people and reads the lessons, including a passage from a letter of John (2). And it is at this point that Domitia is discovered lying on the floor sobbing - "The light! the glorious light!" With that, the story is brought to a sudden, and, so far as Domitia is concerned, not very illuminating close.

Hugh Westbury's Acts, 1898, stands in strong contrast

(1) p.110.

(2) I John, chapter III.

to both the previous novels, more particularly Farrar's Darkness and Dawn, though both Farrar and Westbury make Nero the principal character of their stories. Westbury is much more interested in Nero as a human being, and in his relation to Acte, or rather, in the love of Acte for him. If Nero became the worst man in Rome, in his judgment, he also wants to know why he became so. So he pictures him as a victim of mental unbalance, as much on account of Agrippina's effect on him, as of his heritage; subject to maniacal passions which Acte is able at first to soothe, but in the end has to suffer and be broken by them. Paul enters into the story -- never by name, but only as "the Preacher" -- as the comforter of Acte when Nero nearly kills her, and subsequently her guide into a conviction of sin and need of repentance. "Much that he endeavoured to teach her fell upon dull ears. To awaken in a Greek girl a conviction of sin, repentance and salvation, was a task bordering on the impossible. The subtle-minded Hebrew was an enthusiast in technical theology, and he perplexed her by his expositions of the principle of justification by faith. --- Two seeds, however, were sown in Acte's heart. She found balm for her sorrow in the picture of a great God, whose foremost qualities are love for the weak and pity for the suffering. Also, in a

vague way, she began to apprehend the sinfulness of her relations with Nero, and the condition of repentance attached to the promises of the Preacher".(1)

On realising that Paul has come between them, Nero arrests him and has him executed. But by then he has already come under the influence of Poppaea. "The worst man and the worst woman in Rome had met at last, and, as is usually the case, the man was a baby in the hands of the woman."(2) But in the end, when Nero dies, it is Acte who gathers his ashes, and in her love for him still hopes for his salvation. "And there came to her a dream of a light which should never wane, of a sun which should never set, of a glory which should illumine the darkest souls of men. Acte dreamed and was comforted." (3)

Ernst Eckstein had written his novel, Nero: a Romance, in 1889, the English translation of which was well known, and in it he had attempted to make a case for the defence of the Emperor. Acte, as a Christian, had been deliberately put in the way of Nero by Nicodemus, a Christian leader, in the hope of converting him -- a difficult policy to justify by Christian morals, as Acte^{at} least realised. However,

(1) Acte, p.152.

(2) Acte, p.186.

(3) *ib.* p. ~~109-113~~. Conclusion of the novel.

Nero, half-converted, wishes to marry her. Agrippina has her kidnapped, and tells Nero she has been drowned at sea. Seneca then enlightens Nero on the enormities of his mother, her loves and her hates, and in the shock of that revelation the young idealist in Nero dies. Poppaea enters in to complete the corruption of his nature. It is likely that Hugh Westbury had this defence of Nero in his mind, and was giving his own more realistic, though still humane, estimate of his nature, as well of Acte's place in his life.

Paul the Preacher may surprise the reader by quoting from St. John's Gospel at his first meeting with Seneca and Acte (1), but the interest of the author is manifestly in the human side of his character and moods, as well as in his religious inspiration and message. There is, for example, a description of his reaction to Seneca's rejection of his preaching, in which he falls into a trance and sees a vision of the Lord. The description is significant, because it reflects something of the new psychological interest in the nature of his conversion experience and of his "thorn in the flesh". "Suddenly his face was suffused with rapt ecstasy: his transfixed

(1) ~~Conclusion of the novel~~ Acte, p.109-113.

eyes were strained towards a glint of sunshine upon the fountain; his limbs grew rigid, his lips parted, and a slight froth arose. It seemed to him that the great light again played about his path, and the Voice spoke and said, 'Am I not He who died?'. In his vision the Preacher answered, 'Yea, Lord'. 'Then', said the Voice, 'may not mine own come to Me save through thee? Seek thou them whom I have given unto thee, and question not'". (1)

The author's underlying point of view, which is seen most revealingly in his treatment of Nero and Acte, is a simple acceptance of the basic evangelical positions of his day regarding conversion, through conviction of sin, and repentance, leading to the assurance of salvation through the forgiveness of God. According to that pattern he develops the experience of Acte in his story. Yet his traditional evangelicalism is leavened by a broad humanity that inclines him towards a universalist view of the Christian hope (2). It leads him to see the better side

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- (1) Acte, p.109-113. There were broadly three explanations of Paul's "thorn in the Flesh" - that it was a nervous affliction, possibly epilepsy, supported by J.B. Lightfoot; that it was ophthalmia, put forward by F.W. Farrar; and that it was a form of malaria, the explanation of W.M. Ramsay.
- (2) Mrs. M.M. Sherwood, the Evangelical author of The History of the Fairchild Family, 1818, also, towards the end of her life, turned to the hope that all might in the end be saved.

of all his characters. He is one of the few novelists to have a good word for Seneca's sincerity in his compromise between his philosophy of life and his ambitions. And he prefers at the last to see even his worst character, Nero, through the hopes and faith of the woman who loved him. The attraction of *Acte* as a story -- and this is also its chief point of contrast with Darkness and Dawn, and Domitia -- is just this predominant interest of the novelist in the human nature of his characters. It has its faults to set against that. The portrait of "the Preacher" is drawn in too crudely heavy strokes. Seneca's late courtship of Paullina, the retired Vestal Virgin, (or is it her courtship of him?) has a ludicrousness about it which was not in the author's intention. It is true, also, that he does not explore very deeply into the emotions and motives of his characters. But on the other hand, he never sacrifices them to the elaborateness of the incidental scene or spectacle, and in consequence his story gains in direct human interest.

At this point, it is worth while to pause, and take note of certain broad general points of interest about the character of these Early Christian novels, and also to discuss points of comparison or contrast which arise between them and the foreign novels written in the same

period on this theme. In this way, the American and Continental novels on my list may most conveniently be brought into the picture. On the whole, the American, German and Polish novelists of the second half of the Nineteenth Century -- Wallace, Ebers, Eckstein, Hausrath, and Sienkiewicz -- all follow the pattern of the loosely constructed novel of the Scott tradition, blending history and romance, and weaving several threads of plot and sub-plot into one narrative. The French novels, from Flaubert onwards, have a closer knit unity of form, subject and characterisation, and they reflect, moreover, an entirely different standpoint towards religion.

First, it has to be noted that the prevailing interest of the English historical romance is in Rome as the setting and key-point of the struggle between the Apostolic Church and the world into which missionary activities were spreading. Partly, this was due to the special historical interest of British novelists in the links of the past with the Roman Empire, and the opportunity it gave of introducing into their tales characters from, and contacts with, Britain. Partly also it was due to the fact that they continued in the archaeological tradition set by Bulwer Lytton in The Last Days of Pompeii, 1834, and they had more direct contact with the archaeology of

Rome than with that of Egypt and North Africa, which again had more direct interest for the French novelists of this period, such as Gustave Flaubert, Anatole France, and the German archaeologist-novelist, George Ebers. But chiefly it was because that was the direction in which the Book of Acts and the Apocalypse of John pointed. The burden of the whole story in the Acts of the Apostles is the spread of the Gospel, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, from Jerusalem to Rome. The destinies of the two leading Apostles, Peter and Paul, were bound up with Rome. It was Paul's deep desire, repeatedly expressed, that before he died he must see Rome and bear witness there (1). The silence that follows the account in Acts of his arrival there is made all the more tantalising by the references to personalities in the Roman Church in Paul's epistles (2), and by Clement's account of the Neronian persecution in which Peter "went to his appointed place of glory", and Paul also, "having reached the farthest bounds of the West, -- went unto the holy place" (3). The imagination of the novelists has not been slow to illuminate the scene, to paint in the personalities of those named in Paul's lists, and to

(1) Acts, XIX.21: XXIII.11: Rom.I.15.

(2) Rom.XVI.3-15: 2 Tim.IV.10,14,21: Philipp.IV.22.

(3) Clement of Rome, I Epist. ad. Cor., V. cf. also Ro XV.24.- " I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain...".

infiltrate Caesar's household with saints. And in this course, early Church tradition has given them a good start, of which they have taken full advantage. The Apocalypse of St. John, too, pointed to Nero as the first great persecutor outside Judaea, and to Domitian (1) as the second Nero who would "make war on the saints" (2). Contemporary pressure, too, from historical criticism of the New Testament was bearing heavily upon the accounts of Christian origins, and called for imaginative defence at a time when art, drama and fiction were being increasingly used to propagate new social ideas and standards. Rome, especially of the Emperor Nero's reign, was a convenient setting for the historical novelist, intensely dramatic and colourful in its events, close to New Testament Scripture, and indissolubly bound up with the history and hopes of the Apostolic Church. The novelist could embroider on the scene and the events pretty freely without fear of offending the feelings of fundamentalists who were touchy about trespassing on Holy Writ, either by making a story out of it which was not true or by paraphrasing its words too freely. (3)

(1) Rev. XIII.13-18: XVII. 10-11.

(2) Rev. XIII.7.

(3) Dr. Norman Maclean's father considered Robinson Crusoe "lying tales of adventure that never happened" "Instead of the Bible, the Book that tells no lies, you read a book all lies". The Former Days, p.77.

For the antiquarian emphasis on manners and social customs, blending instruction with fiction, which is so characteristic of the English and German romances, the German archaeologist, W.A. Becker, author of Gallus, 1838, must also bear a large share of the responsibility. The full title of the story -- Gallus: or Roman Scenes of the Time of Augustus, with Notes and Excursuses Illustrative of the Manners and Customs of the Romans -- gives a sufficient indication of its character. It is in no sense a novel. It gives a carefully factual narrative about a Roman who falls out of favour with Augustus and commits suicide, every incident in the book being carefully calculated to provoke notes. The excursuses, which in my edition (1) occupy 372 pages against 147 of narrative and notes, follow Gallus faithfully and copiously wherever he goes, from his household into the garden, the library, the baths, his banquets, and finally to his funeral. An English translation was published in 1844. Its novelty at that time as a means of teaching Roman social history, together with its German thoroughness of annotation and commentary, made it a tremendous educational power; and it went through successive popular editions right through the

(1) 1898. tr. Rev. F. Metcalfe.

Century. When Professor William Ramsay of Glasgow University published his Manual of Roman Antiquities in 1851, Becker's Gallus was one of the great sources of assistance to which he acknowledged his debt in the preface. It was a novelist's, as well as a student's, quarry of information on Roman antiquities. It undoubtedly set a weighty standard in thoroughness of research for the classical novel, in a century in which the novel was commonly accepted as being written to instruct as well as to entertain. Reading it, one can understand how Farrar, Baring-Gould and their fellow classical romancers were prone to litter their stories with scenes and illustrations of manners and social life in ancient Rome.

The tradition of antiquarianism was carried on among the German novelists by George Ebers(1), traveller and explorer of the ancient sites of Egypt and Sinai. He had to resign his professorship at Leipzig through ill health in 1876, and devoted the remaining years to writing historical romances popularising the results of his researches in Egyptology. Characteristic examples of his

(1) George Moritz Ebers, 1837-98, wrote an account of his Egyptian investigations in Aegypten in Wort und Bild, 1878.

work are - Uarda, 1877, a tale of pre-Christian times in Egypt; Der Kaiser, 1881, the story of Hadrian and Antinous set against the background of Egypt; and the spectacular Serapis, 1885, owing something to Kingsley's Hypatia, 1853, and describing the destruction of the Serapeum in Fourth Century Alexandria with all the catastrophic significance for paganism that the holocaust of Jerusalem had for the Jew. His novels were widely known in their day, and were published in English editions, but they have long ceased to be readily accessible to the general reader. Serapis is a characteristic and very readable example of the huge spectacular scene reconstructed from detailed and specialised archaeological knowledge.

In contrast to the English and German novels, Lew Wallace's Ben Hur, 1880, and Henryk Sienkiewicz's Quo Vadis?, 1896, are lavish in their use of spectacle but are much less concerned with the meticulous details of antiquarianism. Lew Wallace makes considerable use of his personal knowledge of the Biblical scenery, which would commend the book to his readers; and Henryk Sienkiewicz stresses heavily, as is natural in one who was ^{primarily} writing for Catholic readers, the traditional associations and significance of Rome for the Church. Sienkiewicz, whose novels of Polish national history show a

characteristic preference for the large canvas and spectacular incident, made a prolonged stay in the United States in his early thirties, learning something of the American popular literary scene which enabled him to generalise the religious appeal of Quo Vadis? and this undoubtedly contributed to his wide popularity in both Britain and America.

Another point of contrast between the American and British novels is in their attitude to scenes and incidents from the Gospels. The English Early Christian romancers so far have been careful to avoid the Gospel setting altogether. They show a measure of moderate liberalism in their treatment of the apostolic epistles, but they avoid challenging the reader too directly. Dean Farrar shows more concern for the reader's reverence for the "words of revelation" in the preface to Darkness and Dawn than he does in the story itself. Hugh Westbury calls his Roman Apostle "the Preacher", and while he never challenges the doctrine of eternal retribution in so many words, his appraisal of his characters, particularly in the matter of Acte's concern for Nero, does quietly challenge it in fact. And in Mrs. Charles's The Victory of the Vanquished, those events in Jesus's life that are referred to invariably take place out of sight both of the

characters in the story and of the reader also, and are never directly described as part of the narrative. Of the two American writers on my list, neither Lew Wallace nor Mrs. Florence Kingsley have any squeamishness about introducing Gospel scenes and incidents by direct description into their stories. Ben Hur, a typical colourful romance, brings Jesus in various stages in His life, from boyhood onwards, directly into the story. But the narrative is always given a warmly emotional character; the atmosphere of wonder, miracle and the supernatural is heightened in the writing. There is, in fact, a great deal of over-writing, the meeting of John the Baptist with Jesus at Jordan (1), the healing of the lepers (2), and the scene of the Crucifixion (3). But there are revealing flashes of Wallace's own religious insight and interpretation in the descriptions. Ben Hur could have rescued Jesus with his Galileans, "but then it would have been history ordered by men not God — something that never was, and never will be. A confusion fell upon him; he knew not how, though afterwards he attributed it to the Nazarene; for when the Nazarene was risen, he

(1) Ben Hur, (Collins Classics reprint) p.485 - 487.

(2) ib. p.517-520.

(3) ib. chapters IX and X, Bk. VIII.

understood the death was necessary to faith in the resurrection, without which Christianity would be an empty husk" (1). Mrs. Florence Kingsley is not a romancer, of the type of Wallace, but rather a story-teller for the purpose of religious teaching, like Mrs. Elizabeth Charles. In Titus: a Tale of ^{the} Christ, 1895, the author does not follow the life of Jesus continuously. Her method is to have Jesus appear at key-points in the lives of her imagined characters, Titus and Stephen, to affect the course of their lives with some scriptural words of teaching or draw them into certain recorded scenes and incidents, then to let Him disappear again. In the final part of the book, from the Crucifixion to the scenes at the tomb, the Resurrection and the Ascension, she carefully follows the Gospels and the Book of Acts, re-telling the story with religious feeling. Stephen, 1896, and St. Paul, 1897, both follow the same policy, of weaving incidents from the New Testament into the lives of her imaginary characters, and finally letting her tale become simply a re-telling of the story contained in Acts and Paul's epistles with a colouring of religious teaching. The apparent freedom with the Gospel story, at first sight a most surprising thing to discover in the popular literature of the land most closely

(1) Ben Hur, p.557.

associated with entrenched fundamentalism, is in fact firmly bound to the accepted orthodoxies of scriptural teaching, and allows no hints of "liberal" deviations of interpretation from them.

Thirdly, the English novelists, in their attitude to the ancient civilisation and the Christian impact upon it, take a predominantly moral view of the situation. It was a case of light meeting darkness, faith in God and a new discovered purity in life, mobilised against the surrounding unbelief and impurity of a decadent society. Against that view, Algernon Swinburne and the neo-pagans raised again the Neronian accusation of "odium humani generis" (1). Christianity, they said, with its doctrines of renunciation, is a killer of the love of beauty and joy in life, even as on its coming into the world it was the deadly enemy of the culture of Hellas. Henrik Ibsen, in his drama, Emperor and Galilean, 1873, read this protest into the apostasy and revival of the old religious cults by the Emperor Julian. The same theme runs through Dmitri Merezhkowski's novel, The Death of the Gods, 1873(2), with its implied question, are the two forces in life

(1) Tacitus - Annales, XV.44.

(2) Russian pub., Smert Bogov, 1873: Eng. Trans. Death of the Gods, 1901

forever at war with one another--the humanist culture and enjoyment of the mind and its powers, and the religious culture of God through the imperious call of Jesus Christ? Ammianus the historian seems to be given the last word in the book as he points to a manuscript of Clement of Alexandria. "This is the 'Patchwork' of Clement of Alexandria, in which he proves that the greatness of Rome, and the philosophy of Hellas, paved the way for the teaching of Christ, and, by maxims and numberless forecasts, made the first steps toward the earthly Kingdom of God. Plato is the forerunner of Jesus the Nazarene".(1)

1885,

George Ebers, in Serapis,[^] put the case for the cult of the old gods in the mouth of Karnis, head of a family of wandering singers, and devotee of Apollo. As he lies dying in the wrecked Serapeum, he laments the passing of Apollo. "All that was fair in existence -- Orpheus, Herse -- we owe it all to him. He dies with us.-- They-- the enemy -- in conquering us conquer thee! They dream of a Paradise beyond death; but where thou reignest, O Phoebus, there is bliss even on earth! They boast that they love death and hate life; and when they are victors they will destroy lute and pipe, nay, if they could, wou

(1) ib. p.461-2.

would exterminate beauty and extinguish the sun. This beautiful happy world they would have dark and gloomy, melancholy, hideous; thy kingdom, great Phoebus, is sunny, joyful, light" (1). The answer of Ebers is the conclusion of the novel. Outward Beauty, "the sense of form that characterised the heathen mind", has survived and been informed and penetrated by the Spirit of Christianity and "their union is solemnised in Christian Art".

It was, of course, an urgently present question, too, in English literature of the last three decades of the Century -- what were the place of faith, morality, intellect, and aesthetics in an adequate culture of life, and in what order of importance? Matthew Arnold sought his own answer in the pursuit of perfection, whose characteristics are sweetness and light, beauty and intelligence, Hellenism and Hebraism (2). Walter Pater proclaimed his answer through the aesthetic experience in his Studies in the History of the Renaissance, 1873, and then went on to explore the possibility of religious faith through the sense of beauty in his philosophic novel, Marius the

(1) Serapis, p.303-4.

(2) Culture and Anarchy, 1869.

Epicurean, 1885. He is the one Early Christian novelist of the Nineteenth Century to approach the subject from this point of view. The prevailing conviction through the Century was that a sound cultural life could only be founded on a sound standard of morality, and to that conviction, which was shared by believer and sceptic alike (1), the believer would have added - a sound religious faith. To the English novelist whose books I have been discussing, a personal belief in God and a standard of purity of life were a first necessity for the salvation of the world of the Roman Empire, and everything else had to be sacrificed to it. That was indeed the answer which they brought back from early Christian history.

A fourth point of general interest regarding these novels arises out of the last -- namely, the attitude towards Roman civilisation attributed by the authors to certain chosen non-Roman characters. I have already referred to the contemptuous attitude of Whyte-Melville's British slave, Esca, towards all Romans in The Gladiators (2).

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- (1) Charles Darwin, T.H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer, John Morley, were agnostics towards religion, but in moral standards they shared the orthodox beliefs of their day. It is only in the 'nineties that the mood of revolt appears in the neo-pagans and younger free-thinkers.
- (2) See p.191 of this thesis.

1863. Siward, the German prisoner in Mrs. Charles's The Victory of the Vanquished, 1871, has a dread "of growing like these Romans and their slaves. Of growing to despise all women as if I had never had a mother; to dis-believe in all goodness, as if I had never known you; to be ashamed of work; to dishonour all that makes men men and women women; -- the terror of sinking through the pleasure of swinish beasts revelling in garbage and wallowing in the mire, to the pleasures of wild beasts revelling in the tortures of their victims, as the Romans do in their games, and (if the slaves speak truth) in their homes"(1).

"Brutal, bloody, slaves and women, are these Romans", cries Farrar's British gladiator, Glanydon, in Darkness and Dawn, 1891. "The Druids of my native land served the gods with cruel rites, but they did not play with death as though it were a pretty toy, as these weaklings do. And to think that by arms and discipline, they conquered my countrymen! Oh for one hour again under Caradoc or under Boudicca! I would never leave another field alive" (2). "I have found", say Lew Wallace's Egyptian woman, Iras, in Ben Hur, 1880, "that to be a Roman is to be a brute" (3).

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- (1) The Victory of the Vanquished, p.38-39.
 (2) Darkness and Dawn, p.323-4.
 (3) Ben Hur, p.573.

This reaction to the decadent Roman appears so frequently in these romancers' novels, and each time with a variation on the original strain, that I must say something here about its background and significance. Its immediate source is in Rousseau's idealisation of the primitive as the simple life, and superior in character to the more highly developed ways of civilisation. Chateaubriand expressed something of this mood in his romance, Atala, 1801, concerning the primitive virtues of a North American Indian girl. The main stream of inspiration is in this revival of romantic thought about the past and the primitive, but it has its ultimate source much further back in the hallowed tradition of the First Century Cynic preacher, Dio Chrysostum, whose Greek romance, The Hunters of Euboea, is essentially a story in praise of the simple life. Developments of Nineteenth Century civilisation introduce complicating elements into the original simplicity of the theory, first, the "Teutonium" that Charles Kingsley drew from the writings of Thomas Carlyle, then the imperialism of Whyte-Melville, (in which Kingsley himself largely shared) thirdly, an anti-Roman Catholic feeling which saw that Church as the chief bearers of the Roman heritage of decadence into modern history, and, fourthly, a patriotic allegiance to the ancient culture of their own people which has caused novelists of the northern

nations to idealise the representative primitives of their race whom they picture entering the Roman scene in their stories.

In the autumn of 1860, Kingsley delivered his first series of lectures as Regius Professor of History at Cambridge on the subject of The Roman and the Teuton (1). His thesis was that the barbarian irruption into the Roman Empire was in fact, not the beginning of the Dark Ages, but a cleansing power in its action upon the foulness of Roman civilisation and the means of introducing a much needed virility into a decadent stock. He had already put some of these ideas forward in 1853 in his preface to Hypatia, 1853. These "Gothic nations, of which the Norwegian and the German are the purest remaining types", provided, according to Kingsley, the "corpus sanum" for the "mens sana" of the Christian Church to inhabit. "These wild tribes were bringing with them into the magic circle of the Western Church's influence the very materials which she required for the building up of a future Christendom, and which she could find as little in the Western Empire as in the Eastern; comparative purity of morals; sacred respect for women, for family life, law, equal justice,

(1) Published under that title in 1864.

individual freedom, and, above all, for honesty in word and deed; bodies untainted by hereditary effeminacy, hearts earnest though genial, and blest with a strange willingness to learn, even from those whom they despised; a brain equal to that of the Roman in practical power, and not too far behind that of the Eastern in imaginative and speculative acuteness"(1). The lectures of 1860 created a great deal of controversy at the time, and they played their part in fostering the cult of Teutonism, or the nobility of the natural barbarian, in these novels (2).

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 Delete In part, for their judgment of Roman civilisation, the romancers drew, as also did Kingsley, upon the Histories (c.104-9 A.D.) and the Annals (c.115-117 A.D.) of Tacitus, with their implicit theme that the old ways and days of the Republic were the best and truest, and that

(1) Preface to Hypatia.

(2) In a letter to a friend in 1859, Kingsley wrote: "The conception of a love-match belongs to our Teutonic race, and was our heritage (so Tacitus says with awe and astonishment) when we were heathens in the German forests --- Christ has taught us something about wedlock which He did not teach the Jews; that He taught it is proved by its fruits, for what has produced more nobleness, more of practical good, in the human race, than the chivalrous idea of wedlock, which our Teutonic race holds, and which the Romance or Popish races of Europe have never to this day grasped with any firm hold?" Charles Kingsley - Letters and Memoirs, ed. by his wife. 1892 ed. p.230.

the tyranny of Emperors and the sapping of senatorial independence were both part of the moral decadence of the times. But it was also a reading back into the past of contemporary Nineteenth Century English and German middle class ideals of the family relationship and home piety as the foundation of morals and religion. It is interesting, for example, to find the German novelist, George Ebers, in his novel of Fourth Century Alexandria, Serapis, 1885, picking out this same factor as the mark of true Christianity amidst the counterfeits and bigotries of Alexandria. "in these dark days", says the aged deacon, Eusebius, who is obviously the author's mouthpiece for giving judgment on the whole Christian scene at the time, "our Faith is seen under an aspect that by no means fairly represents its true nature. --- If you want to know what true and pure Christianity is, look into our homes, look at the family life of our fellow-believers" (1). And he goes on to speak of their home pieties, affections, and neighbourly charities in the Christian social life of Alexandria. Ebers, of course, applies no such doctrine of Teutonism as Kingsley did to the Roman Empire, but in their diagnosis of the genuine elements in the mixed Christian society of the day, whether of Alexandria or

(1) Serapis ch. XXVII, p. 373

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Rome, they read back into it the same idealisation of family virtues and affections. Mrs. Charles's Siward has a great deal more of the Nineteenth Century outlook than of the First in his feelings about the Romans.

Dean Farrar, on the other hand, with his picture of Glanndon was responding to a different strain of thought in his time. It was natural for him to idealise the Celt, whose cultural renaissance was represented by the Pre-Raphaelites in the form of Arthurian chivalry, even before Matthew Arnold rediscovered the Celtic spirit in literature (1). This "primitive" patriotism, which is nearer the original strain of Rousseau's primitive romanticism, appears repeatedly in the Early Christian romancers' tales, and will continue to do so into the Twentieth Century. If Farrar produces his Celt in Darkness and Dawn, Henryk Sienkiewicz, the Polish novelist, produces his Sarmatians, Lygia and Ursus, in Quo Vadis?, 1896, and in doing so idealises the people who endured the primitive struggles of his nation. Catherine Christian's The Legions go North, 1935, is a notable example from the romances of this Century of the renaissance of ancient Celtic culture against Rome.

(1) The Study of Celtic Literature, 1867.

The attitude of the Catholic novelist, Sienkiewicz, to the Roman civilisation contrasts with these others. Rome for him is the future Capital of the Christian Church, and the Empire is re-born in Christendom. His thought is expressed in the ecstatic address of Peter to the remnant who survive the arrests of Nero. "The Lord is advancing to the assault of this proud city of crime and oppression, and you are His army. And as He redeemed the sins of the world by His torments and His blood, so in like manner does He desire that you by your torments and your blood should redeem this nest of wickedness. And by my mouth He declares it. — Thou art here, Lord, and Thou showest the way! It is not then at Jerusalem, O Christ, but in this city of Satan that Thou art to make the capital of Thy Kingdom! Here, amid blood and tears, wilt Thou establish Thy Church! And here, where Nero reigns, is Thine Eternal Kingdom to be founded! Yea, O Lord, and Thou dost bid these frightened creatures to lay with their bones the foundation of the Holy Sion! And Thou hast commanded my soul to reign over Thy Church and over the peoples of the world! Behold Thou fillest the hearts of the weak with might, that they may become strong; and behold Thou commandest me to feed Thy sheep here till the tale of the ages be told. Praised be Thy command, O Thou,

who hast bidden us conquer! Hosanna! Hosanna!" (2).

Before I pass to a review of the French novels, I should say something here on the general presentation of Christianity in Quo Vadis. Like Lew Wallace in Ben Hur, Sienkiewicz does not allow much of the minutiae of historical research or antiquarian detail to distract attention from the dramatic scenes and emotional tensions of his romance. And similarly, in his descriptions of the meetings of the Christians, he does not challenge the reader by going into detail regarding the forms and practices of the Church at worship. (1). He confines himself to picturing the fervour of the Christians, their reverence for Peter, and the testimony given by Peter and Paul to the Gospel of Christ. What he does do, as the passage quoted above indicates, is to stress Peter's Divinely appointed rule over the Church and the destined spiritual imperium of Rome as its capital. Paul and Peter work together among the Christians in the city, and there is no hint of any tensions in the past between them. His distinctive attitude towards them as a

(1) In contrast to Cardinal Wiseman's continual stress on the continuity of present Church practices and organisation with the early Church, in Fabiola, 1854. See chapter X. in particular, also chapter III on the catacombs.

(2) Quo Vadis, p.291-2

Catholic is shown by the way he presents them in the story, not by statements of Church teaching or practice. Nero, for example, moving through the streets of Rome, happens to glance at one particular face in the crowd — Peter's — "Their eyes met, and thus for one fleeting moment the two rulers of the world were face to face; and he who was about to vanish like some bloody apparition, and that other, the old man in the rough woollen garments, who was to take possession of the city and of the whole world for all time". (1) The relative significance of the two great missionary Apostles in the thinking of the Church is suggested by a subtle distinction made between the character of their work among the people. Paul, for example, informs Vinicius as a convert that it has been his part to convince him "that God came to earth and was crucified to save mankind, but that it was Peter's part to purify me at the fountain of grace, for he was the first to bless me" (2). Again, on the first day of the Christian's martyrdom in the amphitheatre, Peter, unnoticed among the spectators, rises and blesses them in their dying (3). On the next day, the voice of Paul cries

(1) *Quo Vadis?*, p.204.
 (2) *ib.* p.214.
 (3) *ib.* p.317-8.

out, as the victims are nailed to their crosses, "Not the day of wrath, but the day of mercy; the day of deliverance and of joy.."(1) For Peter to bless; for Paul to proclaim -- that seems to be the concordat.. Both Peter and Paul are martyred on the same day. Peter, dying, extends his blessing from the cross, "Urbi et orbi"(2).

Nothing could be more complete than the contrast between the French novels on early Christianity and those others which I have been discussing in this chapter. Whereas the English, German and American novelists all write from the point of view of some form of Christian belief, the French novelists are all rationalists or sceptics. While they do not, on the whole, add anything new to our picture or our understanding of the Christian past, they do contribute something to the technique and treatment of the past, which appears in later English historical novels.

Gustave Flaubert contributed most to the new treatment of history in fiction. Salammbô, 1862, is a novel about ancient Carthage in the time of Hamilcar. Its interest lies in the realism with which Flaubert sought to

(1) *ib.* p. 328.

(2) Quo Vadis? p.364.

delineate the characters and their environment, with the everyday, matter-of-fact familiarity of a story set in a modern scene. The interest was in the minds and thought of the characters, and in their surroundings only as seen through their eyes. It was to be a picture of the past, retold, not to prove anything or serve a purpose in the author's mind, but simply in order to recapture the past for its own sake. The narrator should be neutral, impersonal: the reader should forget that he is there. In Salammbô, the result is an atmosphere of savage, impersonal cruelty, a carelessness of human life that repels every sound humanistic feeling that the reader possesses. In the short story, Herodias, 1877, the same impersonal realism is applied to the story of the execution of John the Baptist. The feast and the conversations of the guests and incidents of the meal are described, from talk of the Messiahship of Jesus who has healed the daughter of one of them, to the sickness of another and his improved feelings on relieving his stomach, with the same meticulous impersonality throughout; and finally, as the disciples bear away the body of John next day, the messengers meet them with the answer of Jesus to the question John had sent Him. The impression created is, again, not of the significance of life, but the

meaninglessness of it. The Temptation of St. Anthony, 1874, on which Flaubert spent twenty-five years, is on the one hand an attempt to enter into the visionary symbols of the saint's inward communings, self-examinations and self-denials; and, on the other, a symbolical series of visions depicting the history of the Church's past intellectual explorations and divagations in the world of faith. Its conclusion is, on the whole, that at the end of a life of self-denial, the man of faith is still left with his unruly self denying discipline.

Nevertheless, The Temptation of St. Antony does represent an attempt to enter into the strange mental world and concepts of a hermit saint, and successive French novelists show their chief interest in the psychological analysis of the ideas and motives of the early Christians of their stories, such as the two short stories of Jules Lemaitre, Sérénius and Myrrha, the first of a reputed martyr who has in reality committed suicide, and the second of a young girl whose desire to convert Nero conceals the real truth that she is in love with him. The same theme serves Anatole France for the plot of his novel, Thaïs, 1890, in which Paphnutius the monk converts an Alexandrian courtesan, to discover in the end that he has only desired her all the time. The reader's difficulty with these

tales is not the subject, which is, after all, a possible happening, but the significance given to it by both authors, with their air of ironical innocence in the telling and the knowing smirk at the conclusion. The best of Anatole France's short stories, so far as they concern my subject, is The Procurator of Judaea in the book entitled Mother of Pearl, 1892, in which the climax of Pilate's talk of old times in Judaea with a friend is the fact that the case of Jesus Christ has left no mark on his memory whatever -- he cannot remember what happened to Him. This same idea, the unimportance of Christianity, he worked out from a different angle in The White Stone, 1905, in which three men discuss, among other things, why Gallio failed to realise that Paul in his preaching has a truth for which he himself is searching (1). The answer of the storyteller, Langelier, is that Paul simply would not be able to explain himself in terms that a civilised Roman and humanist philosopher like Gallio would understand. It would be like a conversation between a fakir and a Governor-General of the Sudan (2). Only in "pretty novels" and ancient fabrications like The Letters of Paul and Seneca (3) do

(1) The N.T. basis of the story is in Acts XVIII, 12-17.

(2) p.116.

(3) See James - Apoc.N.T., p.480, ff. Mentioned by Jerome in 4th Century, and believed by him to be genuine. But "of the poorest kind" -- James.

apostles converse about Christianity with Philochristus and people of fashion of Rome.

"To write the history of a religion", wrote Renan in his *Vie de Jesus*, 1863, (1) - "it is necessary, firstly, to have believed it (otherwise we should not be able to understand how it has charmed and satisfied the human conscience); in the second place, to believe it no longer in an absolute manner, for absolute faith is incompatible with sincere history". It cannot be said that the comparison between the novels of faith and the novels of unfaith represented by Lemaitre and France confirm Renan's statement: they offer us no fresh insights into Christianity. Nevertheless, the influence of Flaubert on the construction of the novel and the treatment of the past in fiction is important on later novelists, especially Walter Pater and George Moore, and I shall have to refer to him again in connection with them.

(1) *Life of Jesus* (Thinker's Library ed.) p.26.

CHAPTER VIMODERNISM, AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF A POINT
OF VIEW TOWARDS CHRISTIAN ORIGINS.

"I have seen the pictures, all of them, by the great painters who have set themselves to portray Jesus, and what could be more wide o' the mark? --- And when I look, I say, 'Thank you, Mr. da Vinci', 'Thank you, Mr. Michael Angelo', 'Thank you, Mr. Raphael', that may be your idea of Jesus Christ, but I've another of my own which I very much prefer".

--- Thomas Carlyle, to Holman Hunt, on seeing his picture, "The Light of the World", 1853. (from Hunt's Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, vol.I. page. 489-490).

- Edwin A. Abbott - Philochristus: Memoirs of a Disciple of the Lord. 1878.
- Onesimus: Memoirs of a Disciple of St. Paul 1882.
- Silanus the Christian, 1906.
- Walter Pater - Marius the Epicurean, 1835.
- Anonymous (Joseph Jacobs) - As Others Saw Him, 1895.
- Marie Corelli - Barabbas, 1893.

The special interest of the five novels dealt with in this chapter (Barabbas is added by way of a contrasting postscript) is that they all, in part intention at least, take the form of reconstructions of a point of view towards historic Christianity, by men whose minds were responding to the new scientific and historical approach to religion. By the last three decades of the Century, the main interest in the battle over scriptural revelation had passed from the Old Testament to the New -- to the historical examination of Christian origins. Edwin A. Abbott was trying, as a Biblical scholar of the liberal tradition himself, to give an answer, in the form of a living, three-dimensional picture, to the question - how much of specifically religious revelation is left, and can be accepted by the modern mind, after liberal scholarship has reduced the New Testament to the status of historical documents and applied its principles of criticism to them? Joseph Jacobs, an historian of the Jewish tradition and himself a Jew, was attempting, in the light of the new historical perspectives on the New Testament revealed by the study of environmental influence, to place Jesus against His Rabbinical Jewish background, to picture Jesus historically as a Jew. Walter Pater, from the more independent position of an aesthetic philosopher, who had cut loose from religious belief, was seeking, in his

reflective study of the developing ideas of a young Second Century Roman, to bridge the gulf between humanism and religious faith by means of the aesthetic experience as an interpreter of life. His novel is therefore not tied to the New Testament records by its subject, as the others are. But they all have the common characteristics that they are imaginative reconstructions of a personal point of view towards Christianity, and that in the working out of the story no concessions whatever are made to the element of romance.

Described by L.R. Farnell (1) as a man of frail and delicate physique, Edwin A. Abbott's keen intellectual energy and forthrightness of judgment made him a gladiator in the forefront of controversy in the theological arena of his day, in which he appeared as a Broad Churchman and a radical among liberal thinkers. Senior classic and chancellor's medallist at Cambridge, where he was also a fellow of St. John's, he was ordained priest in 1863, and found his vocation in scholastic work, becoming headmaster of the City of London School at the early age of twenty-six. There, for the next twenty-four years, until he retired, he led the way in innovations which included the broadening

(1) cf. Dict. Nat. Biog.

of the curriculum to take in science and English literature. The long list of his publications contains educational books on English and classical languages and literature, religious education, books on religion in the light of science and especially of evolution (1), and an elaborate series dealing with the text and interpretation of the Gospels. His three novels punctuate the development of his thought on the effect of historical scholarship and scientific thinking about evolution on the teaching of the New Testament.

In his three novels, Philochristus, 1878, Onesimus, 1882, and Silanus, 1906, he was testing out his theories and speculations by means of working models, as it were, of the way things happened. Five basic problems arising out of the analytical methods of New Testament scholarship at this time can be seen operating in his thinking, and affecting the form of his reconstruction of the Gospel story, -- first, the study of common ground and the differences between the three synoptic Gospels, with the question of a discoverable source or sources underlying

(1) e.g. The Spirit on the Waters, the evolution of the divine from the human, 1897.
Through Nature to Christ; or, the Ascent of Worship through Illusion to the Truth, 1877.

them; secondly, the historical emphasis on environment, and its effect on Jesus's Gospel and its reception by the people; thirdly, the nature and significance of miracles in His ministry; fourthly, the nature of the Resurrection appearances; and fifthly, the possibility of developments of interpretation affecting the content of the tradition, especially in regard to miracles and the Resurrection. A sixth factor should be added, the influence of Darwin's Origin of Species, 1859, and the theory of evolution, on Abbott's religious thought.

Philochristus essays to show what an original source-Gospel might have contained, through the memoirs of an eyewitness. In Onesimus he examines in greater detail the effects of development upon the tradition, and ultimately upon the various Gospels, with a consideration of the implications of possible error on the credibility of the records. Silanus gives his final views on the nature of the Resurrection appearances and the place of miracle in the Gospel of Christ. The novels of Edwin Abbott are thus difficult to place as novels. Cast in the form of fiction, they are really discussions, by a well equipped scholar of the New Testament, of the exegetical and Christological questions raised by the "liberal" approach to the New Testament.

Philochristus takes the form of the memoirs of a Galilean educated in the Scriptures and in the rabbinic Tradition, who, after preparatory experiences in which he meets with the Patriots' party in Galilee, John the Baptist's movement, Philo and the Hellenistic Jewish society of Alexandria, and the Essene communities by Jordan, finally throws in his lot with Jesus. In these first six chapters describing the travels of Philochristus, the author contrives to give an admirable survey of the social, religious and cultural background of the times. Thereafter, the story follows the general line of the Synoptic Gospel records: incidents are told at first hand, as far as possible stripped of later accretions through interpretation, and then, the facts having been given, the narrator interpolates some later discussions he has had with Nathanael or Quartus on the significance for faith of what happened. In this way, and by a careful selection of incident, narrative and interpretation are kept going together (1).

In broad outline, Jesus is represented as a popular

(1) For an example of this, see chapters 7 and 8, "Of the Good News" and "Of the New Law", followed by chapter 9, "How Quartus interpreted the New Law".

healer and teacher of wisdom in Galilee, who by His refusal to rescue John the Baptist from prison by force, as well as to give heavenly "signs" to back His Messiahship, loses support among the people. Going up to Jerusalem, He alienates the authoritative religious parties by His attitude to the Temple and His public flouting of the Pharisees, and He and His disciples are left isolated at the last. Judas betrays Him in order to force a sign from heaven. There is a significant selection of incidents, particularly in regard to miracles described. A "scholia" at the end of the book emphasises that Philochristus refers only to miracles common to the three synoptic Gospels, suggesting that the oldest record, closer to the original events, might be an early edition of Mark which would contain only matter common to all three Gospels (1).

On miracles the author obviously has difficulties and reservations, partly because he cannot accept miracles as evidences of a spiritual truth, and partly because he cannot believe that Jesus violated the laws of nature. And these difficulties he duly transfers to Philochristus and his fellow commentators. Philochristus says of the healing works, "Jesus had a marvellous power to discern, methought,

(1) See Scholia I, Philochristus.

not only them that had faith from them that had not, but also such diseases as were to be cured, from such as were not to be cured, because it was not prepared for Him that He should cure them" (1). "But He speaketh of these mighty works as being prepared for Him beforehand in heaven", says Nathanael, "And indeed it seemeth to me that whensoever Jesus doth a mighty work on earth, He seeth it also done, in that instant, in heaven. -- But if He seeth that the hand in heaven moveth not, then His hand also is stayed on earth" (2). Matathias testifies that Jesus drove out his un-faith, and Nathanael comments, "If He spake aright, then methinks Jesus hath a power to create faith in the heart as well as to heal the diseases of the body" (3).

The feeding of the five thousand is described as a sacramental meal; Jesus was already training the disciples and followers to "minister the bread"(4). Jesus respects the order of nature; for, says Nathanael, although He hates "devils and diseases even as He hateth the sins of men", yet "the course and appointed order of the world He

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- (1) Philochristus, p.97.
 (2) ib. p.149-150.
 (3) ib., p.151.
 (4) ib. p.214-5.

esteemeth as the vesture of God, whereof He would not disturb one single fold" (1). And Philochristus adds - "Now herein Nathanael spake truly. For once only (as I have heard) did Jesus so much as appear to adventure to alter the course of the world". There follows a description of the stilling of the storm. "Now on this only occasion did our Master appear to change the course of the world; and, methinks, even here, He did it only in appearance. For He spake as He was moved by the Holy Spirit, it being revealed to Him that the storm must needs cease lest the fortunes of the world should be shipwrecked, if the Son of Man should perish" (2). And finally, in regard to the interpretation of all these as "signs", Philochristus says, "I myself was not drawn unto Jesus by His signs and wonders, but by reason of my love for Him and trust in Him; and the same was true also of the other disciples. Moreover, Jesus desired that men should be drawn unto Him in this way ..."(3)

In his account of the Resurrection appearances, Philochristus departs from his practice of recording only those miracles mentioned by all three synoptics, and draws

(1) ib. p.245.
 (2) ib. p.245-6.
 (3) ib. p.247.

from the four Gospels equally. He is at Bethany when the women return with their account of having seen angels at the tomb who told them, "He is not here. He is risen." Peter and John confirm that the stone is rolled away and the tomb empty. In the appearances that follow, and which are either described or referred to, St. Paul's testimony that Jesus "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once", and after that "was seen of James"(1), is also used. These "manifestations", as they are called, in which the emphasis is on a spiritual rather than a physical presence, generally take place in the setting of the Lord's Supper. The fullest description is in chapter 31, in which also the incident of doubting Thomas seeing and touching the wounds of Christ is recorded in Philochristus's own version(2). "Then began Simon Peter to break bread and to reach it to each of us, and at the same time he said, 'This is the body of the Lord'. But behold in the midst of his giving of the bread, Peter made a sudden pause and was silent, and his eyes were fixed and he gazed steadfastly upon the place which had been left empty at the table; for Jesus had been wont to sit there in times past, wherefore in that place durst no man sit. Then I turned round hastily to look,

(1) I. Cor. XV.6,7.

(2) Philochristus, p.410,ff.

and behold, Jesus was there; as clear to view as ever I had seen Him in this life, only very pale, and there were the nail prints in His hands, and methought there was a wound in His side; and the brightness of His compassion and love passed sensibly forth from His eyes to mine, and all my soul went out to Him as I looked; but I could in no wise speak; for I had thoughts deeper than words.

"Now not a hand moved, not a word was spoken: and there was such a silence as if one could hear and count the footsteps of time; neither could I turn my eyes from Jesus till I heard Thomas weeping beside me; but he threw himself on the ground, stretching out his hands to Jesus, and reproaching himself for his faithlessness; and at the same time pressing the bread, even the body of the Lord which he held in his hand, he cried out saying, 'My hand hath touched; yea I have touched; I believe, I believe'. But neither he nor any of us durst adventure to go to that part of the table where Jesus sat; but when I looked again, behold His hand was stretched out (even as the two disciples had described their vision of Jesus (1)) as if He brake and blessed the bread that was His body; and Thomas also heard

(1) The reference here is to the Emmaus appearance, Lk.XXIV.13.-35.

a voice (but I heard not the voice) saying that he was to touch His hand, according to his own saying, and to be no more faithless but believing. After this, Jesus vanished from our eyes, and neither in His coming nor His departing was the door opened, but it remained shut fast; whereat we all marvelled " (1)

The distinctive thing about this account as given by Abbott is that all reference to Thomas's physical contact with the risen Lord is "sacramentalised", and he further develops this line of interpretation in Silanus the Christian, 1906. (2).

In Onesimus, 1882, Abbott works out his picture of the ways in which the Gospel records were formed and brought together. Onesimus is an educated slave, eighteen years old when bought by Philemon (3), and becomes the companion of the older man, who is something of a neurotic about his health. They visit together the temples of Aesculapius and the Cave of Trophonius in search of cures (4), and finally encounter the Christians in Antioch. From this point, the memoirs of Onesimus, written in the first person,

(1) p.411-412. Compare with John.XX.19.ff.

(2) Silanus, p.252-4.

(3) For N.T. references - Philemon and Coloss.IV.9.

(4) Bk.II. chapters 4-8, give a survey of the background of pagan religious life.

are supplemented by his letters written to a friend, which give an account of Christianity and its tradition from the point of view of a non-believer.

This account of the Gospel tradition follows the now familiar lines of Nineteenth Century critical examination, the heightening of accounts to fit Old Testament prophecy, the translating of figures of speech into fact, such as "deliverance from death" (meaning "sin") into raising from the dead. "They make frequent use of figures of speech, and these sometimes so mixed up with facts and histories, that it is hard to understand whether they are to be taken according to the letter or not" (1) There is a lack of written records because the Christians believe Christ will return soon. "Hence proceeds already a manifest alteration of the doctrine of the Christians, and more is likely to proceed. For you may already perceive different shapes of teaching among them, and each later shape departs from the truth further in order to come nearer to the ancient prophecies" (2). And he concludes: - "... So that, for my part, whensoever I hear one of their leaders say that Christus said this or that, and make no mention of any

(1) Onesimus, p.86.

(2) Onesimus, p.84.

prophecy, then I incline to believe him; but when he adds the Christus said or did anything that a prophecy might be fulfilled, then I shut my ears against the man's words, knowing that they are in all likelihood imagination and fancies"(1),

The oldest Tradition, as Onesimus describes it, begins with the public teaching of Jesus and ends with a vision of angels after His death -- the substance of Mark's Gospel insofar as it is common to Matthew and Luke. But there is also a tradition of longer discourses/and prophecies of Christus, "but this not yet having been translated into Greek, is not circulated in all the Churches". Besides these, "there are many additions or supplements concerning the birth and childhood and death of Christus, and concerning His manifestations to His disciples after His death, but these have not yet attained to be considered parts of the Tradition itself".(2).

Philemon becomes a Christian; there is a breach between him and Onesimus over his love for a pagan girl, when Philemon has chosen a Christian wife for him, and Onesimus runs away. Reaching Rome, he meets Paul, and is

(1) ib. p.86.

(2) ib. p.100-101.

converted by him to the religion he has been investigating in all his letters. Now, in close association with Paul, and as a believer himself, he continues his studies of the records.

Paul has this to say to Onesimus in a long last discourse on the possibility of error in the human tradition. "Assuredly, we, even the saints, may be, nay, must needs be, in some error. For whereas hereafter we shall discern all things as they are, seeing God face to face in heaven, on earth we can but see them darkly as it were through a mirror. ... Be not thou, therefore, O my son, shaken in thy faith if in the Tradition of the Acts and Words of the Lord some things be diversely or inexactly reported; only strive thou earnestly to keep pure and undefiled that truth which is the source and foundation of the rest; I mean, that Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God hath manifested to us the love of the Father through Himself, and that He, having verily risen from the dead, reigneth in heaven, and helpeth His saints on earth ..." (1)

Onesimus is reconciled to Philemon and becomes a worker in the Church. Travelling to Rome, he finds that a

(1) Onesimus, 251-252.

Tradition has become accepted there as fact which he had noted years before in his letters from Antioch to Artemidorus, the "Additions or supplements" referred to above. (1). He now reads the three completed Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and finds less of doubtful wonders than he had expected. He sends copies to Philochristus in Londinium for his opinion, and receives this reply. "They contain relations of certain matters whereof I neither saw nor heard aught, while I followed the Lord Jesus in Galilee; nor have I heard aught of them from the disciples, nor from the Lord's brethren, nor from the mother of the Lord. -- Yet it is possible that they may have been revealed to the disciples after my coming to this island in the reign of Gaius Caesar". Philochristus finds that "the Church is edified by the new Gospels. I know well thy sincerity and thy unfeigned love of the truth; yet bethink thee that it is the kernel of the truth that thou shouldest seek, and not the shell, and if the kernel be sound, be not thou troubled over much though the shell may show some blemish"(2).

By the end of the story, Onesimus is in a dungeon in

(1) See p.271 of this thesis; and Onesimus, p.100-101.
 (2) Onesimus, p.282-3

Smyrna awaiting martyrdom during the persecutions of Domitian. But he has heard of a Fourth Tradition at Ephesus taught by John, and also by John the Elder. And so to Silanus, who will study this Fourth Gospel.

With Silanus the Christian, 1906, the disguise of fiction becomes very thin indeed. While attending the lectures of the philosopher Epictetus in Nicopolis in 118 A.D., Silanus becomes interested in the Epistles of Paul, and especially in his theme that "the love of Christ constraineth us"(1). From the epistles he is led to the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke. He reads them with the assistance of a long letter of commentary which he has received from his aged friend, Scaurus, a man of honest, critical mind, interested in philosophy and religions, though not a Christian. Silanus's attendance at the lectures of Epictetus becomes understandably infrequent, as he puts himself, with the aid of Scaurus's letter-commentary, through what is really a modern course of Source-criticism of the Gospels. He has, however, noted and been troubled by an inconsistency in the Stoic philosopher's teaching, -- that happiness should be the mark of the good life, and yet that pity for the sins or

(1) 2 Cor. V.14.

troubles of others should be rejected as a weakness. The answer to this problem is what he is looking for in the epistles and Gospels.

He is disappointed to find that the Gospels, especially Mark, have little to tell of the "Love" of Christ. What he is searching for is the doctrine of how the love of God is in Christ, and all he gets from them, he feels, is a record of external incidents and teaching about life -- and not much even of the teaching from Mark. These teachings are sifted, and their differences with one another compared, through some twenty-seven chapters of the novel. Scaurus must have been a formidable correspondent, for large tracts from his letter of commentary are still being quoted in chapter 27.

Finally, with the aid of a Christian friend, Clemens, he discovers and reads the Fourth Gospel. John's Gospel, Clemens tells him, is "history interpreted through spiritual insight or poetic vision" (1), and gives "glimpses into a divine and human personality that includes in itself a real history -- a history of a great invisible war of good against evil, a great invisible redemption, God coming down to earth

(1) Silanus, p.314.

to lift man up to heaven" (1). Further, with regard to discrepancies between the three synoptic Gospels, Clemens has found that "where words of Mark, being obscure or difficult, are altered or omitted by Luke, -- in almost every case John intervenes to support Mark -- only expressing Mark's meaning more clearly and spiritually" (2).

Silanus's conversion comes in a personal mystical experience on the voyage homeward. "It was no act of reason. Nor was it vision. It was more like feeling. The arm of the Lord seemed to lift me up and carry me to something that I felt to be the Cross. Then the thought of the Cross sent down upon me the thought of an overwhelming flood of the mighty love and pity of God, the Father of the fatherless, and Servant of the meanest of His servants, descended on my soul from the side of the Saviour

(1) *ib.*, p., 318.

(2) This was Abbott's own considered judgment on the historicity of the Fourth Gospel. "Writing in 1913, in the preface to the introductory volume in the series entitled The Fourfold Gospel (1913-17), Dr. Abbott declares: "...I find that the Fourth Gospel, in spite of its poetic nature, is closer to history than I had supposed. The study of it and especially of those passages where it intervenes to explain expressions in Mark altered or omitted by Luke, appears to me to throw new light on the words, acts and purposes of Christ, and to give increased weight to His claims on our faith and worship". Quotation from The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation, by W.F. Howard, (4th ed., 1955), p.35.

and bathing me in His purifying blood, creating me anew in the eternal God" (1).

Now he discovers that "He alone really and truly believes in the resurrection of Christ whose belief is based on personal experience. If he has that, he can contemplate without alarm the divergences of the Gospels in their narratives of this spiritual reality. He will understand the meaning of Paul's words, 'It pleased God to reveal his Son in me' -- not 'to me' but 'in me'. For indeed it is a revelation -- not a demonstration for the intellect and senses alone -- derived from all our faculties when enlightened by God". (2).

That this description of Silanus's conversion experience is intended by him as a clue to the nature of the Resurrection appearances to the disciples, is made plain by a reference to it in his Apologia: an Explantion and a Defence, 1907, an answer to critics of Silanus. In it he says that he was led to this interpretation first by a reading of Tennyson's In Memoriam, 1850, especially stanzas 80, 94, and 123, in which the poet, mourning Hallam, describes the experience in which "unused example from the grave" may

(1) Silanus, p.366.
 (2) Silanus, p.264.

"reach out dead hands to comfort" until at last "his living soul was flashed on mine". "How much more vivid to the spiritual eye", comments Dr. Abbott, "and permanently impressive to the spiritual sense -- how infinitely more effective than Tennyson's trance -- might be the vision of that 'living soul', living after death, made all the more powerful by death, 'flashing' itself at first on the souls of those that had loved Him in forms indistinguishable from those of physical vision, and both then and afterwards illuminating their whole being with the light of His presence in their hearts!" (1)

This, of course, could never be regarded as an interpretation of the Resurrection to a First Century mind: it bears reference only to the special problems of the Nineteenth Century pre-occupation with scientific criticism of religion. Renan, following Strauss, had reduced the appearances of Jesus to subjective visions (2); Theodor Keim had put forward the middle-of-the-road theory that they were visions given by God (3); and Dr. B.F. Westcott gave what is probably still the classic restatement of the visible and tangible nature of the Resurrection appearances(4).

(1) cf. Apologia, p.66-67.

(2) Vie de Jesus, chapter 26.

(3) History of Jesus of Nazara, vol.6.p.364-365,(1867-72.)

(4) The Gospel of the Resurrection, 1879; The Revelation of the Risen Lord. See A.M.Hamsay's The Resurrection of Christ,1945, ch.4., for an account of the different critical positions at this time. Also Kirsopp Lake's Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In between these doctrinal expositions were the less theological searchings of a poet-mystic such as Tennyson, and of experimentalists outside the churches in the form of spiritualism (1). How far this last may have contributed to Dr. Abbott's view of the "manifestations" of the Lord in Philochristus, it is impossible to say. There is no direct evidence to warrant an opinion, beyond the fact that spiritualism was very much in the air at the time, and did affect men's ideas of the after-life even although they had never practised spiritualism. But he does state in connection with the revelation experience described in Silanus -- "not a vision", "more like feeling" -- that "the new believer" who gives this more psychological significance to the Resurrection experiences, is giving correspondingly more importance to the idea of evolution in God's revelation of His purpose to man through "the development of human nature from sinless animalism through sin to righteousness". (2)

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- (1) The Society for Psychical Research was founded in 1882, but investigation had begun much earlier, such as that of the "Ghostly Guild" at Cambridge in 1851, and also of Sir Wm. Crookes, F.W.H. Myers, F. Podmore, and Edmund Gurney. - cf., English Thought, 1860-1900, by L.E. Elliott-Binns, 1956, p.255,ff. See also Browning's Mr. Sludge, 'the Medium'. 1864.
- (2) Apologia, p.66. See also Abbott's Through Nature to Christ, 1877.

It has to be admitted that Abbott wrote his novels less as an historical novelist -- for all the weight of classical scholarship that underlies them -- than as a religious controversialist in the thick of the "science versus religion" issues of his own day. When Philochristus writes of his fears "that, as I hear in some of the congregations, the saints are given overmuch to the governing of their congregations, and the arranging of the worship of the saints, and the observing of feasts and fasts, more than to the waging of the war against unrighteousness" (1) -- we know that it is not the First Century situation in Galatia to which he refers, but the situation in the Church of England of the Nineteenth Century. When Paul instructs Onesimus on the possibility of error creeping into the Tradition, we know that he is referring, not to the work of Jerusalem Judaisers, but to the effect of Nineteenth Century historical criticism on the veracity of Scripture(2).

As novels, Philochristus, Onesimus, and Silanus show the imaginative gifts and intellectual energy of a teacher of genius, but not of an historical novelist. The real setting of his plot is the apparatus criticus of the New Testament, and his characters are either higher critics or liberal

(1) Philochristus, p.429
 (2) Onesimus, p.250-253.

theologians. And in spite of the fact that his whole plea is to rest Christianity on the experience of life rather than the evidence of miracles, he never quite succeeds in creating one such living character among the early Christians of his stories. He was, in fact, attempting the impossible. His purpose was to defend the veracity of Scripture while accepting the results of criticism, and to re-state the Gospel of the Incarnation in such a way as would be independent of belief in miracle and acceptable to the scientific doctrines of the uniformity of nature and of progress by evolution. To do all that, and write an historical novel, at one and the same time was just not possible. But he must have been a grandly imaginative and stimulating teacher of his ideas.

Walter Pater, in writing Marius the Epicurean, 1885, was seeking to evoke a phase of another age -- the period of the Antonines -- through the mind and ideas of a young Roman whose life is spent between the years of childhood on his inherited Etruscan farm, the years of education at Pisa, and the maturing experiences of a member of Marcus Aurelius's staff in Rome. Pater had before him the example of Gustave Flaubert's break with the tradition of historical romance, in Salammbô, 1862 (1), in which a realistic detailed

(1) English trans. by M.F. Sheldon, 1886.

picture of Hamilcar's Carthage was built up in a structural unity of subject, character and background realism by a narrator who sought to hide himself away from the reader by his objective style of writing.

Pater's interest was in the ideas of his character, Marius, and in the effect which the life and experience surrounding him had on his developing thought and outlook. This again sprang from Pater's own love of the ancient philosophies, and his identification of the religious and secular character of the Antonine scene with his own religio-philosophic leanings. Having departed, at Oxford, from the religious loyalties of his Church of England upbringing, and developed an aesthetic philosophy through his metaphysical reading and studies in art, he was now, with some sixteen years as a fellow and tutor of Brasenose College behind him, looking back with considerable longing to the spiritual pastures he had deserted.

The result is that there is a mellow, meditative character about the whole picture in Marius the Epicurean in complete contrast to Salammbô.[^] Again in contrast to Flaubert's depersonalised neutrality of style, Pater hides himself as narrator within the personality of his young philosopher. And while he follows the French novelist

in his careful building up of the past out of the small details of his chief character's vision, feeling and experience, he is more selective than Flaubert in his use of this background detail, with the result that the scene does not crowd out the human interest, as it does in *Salambo*.[^] It was this last quality of Pater's descriptions of the ancient scene which George Moore noted at the time for his own guidance and example. "I had not thought of the simple and unaffected joy of the heart of natural things", he wrote in *The Confessions of a Young Man*, 1886; "the colour of the open air, the many forms of the country, the birds flying -- that one making for the sea; the abandoned boat, the dwarf roses and the wild lavender; nor had I thought of the beauty of mildness in life, and how by a certain avoidance of the wilfully passionate, and the surely ugly, we may secure an aspect of temporal life which is abiding and soul-sufficing" (1)

In *Marius the Epicurean*, Pater pictures the young land-owner, who is in virtue of his position priest of the "little gods" of the countryside, leading the customary observance of the seasons in the fields of his ancestral Etruscan farm. From then on, he traces the inward

(1) Heinemann's Windmill Library ed. 1933, p.173.

development of his experience, as a young man more given to contemplation than action, who, through the outward events of his life, is "constructing the world for himself in a great measure from within, by the exercise of meditative power" (1). A young priest of the Temple of Aesculapius first opens his mind to the love of beauty, and teaches him "a lesson in the skilled cultivation of life, of experience, of opportunity" (2). The death of his friend Flavian from plague shakes his belief in the old Roman religion of Numa, and starts him on a search through the philosophies of the Cyrenaics and Epicureans. "If he could but count upon the present, -- he would at least fill up the measure of that present with vivid sensations, and such intellectual apprehensions, as, in strength and directness and their immediately realised values at the bar of an actual experience, are most like sensations" (3). Here Marius has reached the counterpart point in his life at which Pater had written his philosophical credo in the Conclusion to his Studies in the History of the Renaissance, 1868. "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses?. How

(1) Marius (Macmillan's pocket library ed.) p.17-18.

(2) ib. ca.3. p.22.

(3) Marius, p.22. Chapter 3.

shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

"To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life, --- For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many sensations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which comes naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion -- that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire for beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake"(1).

In chapter XI, the author describes Marius's contacts with the religions of the world, in Rome, "the most religious city in the world". There he sees the "blending of the religions" (2) and the fraternities of religious clubs dedicated to the

(1) Renaissance, p.237,ff.

(2) Marius, p.139-141

observance of a particular deity's festivals. "The humblest house had its little chapel or shrine, its image and lamp, while almost everyone seemed to exercise some religious function" (1).

In the service of Marcus Aurelius, he learns to admire the moral serenity of the Stoic, and comes to the conclusion that Cynicism and Cyrenaicism tend to meet each other halfway in a single ideal of moderation. The weakness of both, he finds, lies in their acquiescence in the world as it is, which amounts to tolerance of evil for the sake of inner happiness or peace(2). There is a striking scene at the Amphitheatre, where Marius is revolted by the cruelties of the wild beast fights, and most of all at the attitude of Aurelius himself, which is one of impassive indifference to it all, as he turns his back on it and studies his state papers. Inward serenity, he decides, is bought too costly when it is at the price of indifference to cruelty in the surrounding world (3).

(1) ib. p.139

(2) ib. ch.18.p.222.

(3) p.181-3. Compare this incident with St. Augustine's Confessions, the incident of Alypius, Bk.VI, and references in Lockhart's Valerius, and Farrar's Darkness and Dawn.

Marius begins to reflect on the possibility of "a living companionable spirit at work in all things, of which he had become aware from time to time in his old philosophic readings" (1). "That divine companion figured no longer as but an occasional wayfarer beside him; but rather as the unfailing 'assistant', without whose inspiration and concurrence he could not breathe or see, instrumenting his bodily senses, rounding, supporting his imperfect thoughts"(2).

By this time, he has made a friend of Cornelius, who introduces him to a Christian household on the Appian Way. In the garden he meets Cecilia and the children, and is impressed by their happiness. He finds there a "vision of a natural, a scrupulously natural love, transforming by some new insight into the truth of human relationships, and under the urgency of some new motives by him so far unfathomable, all the conditions of life"(3).

In chapter 23, there is described a Christian service at which Marius is present at Cecilia's house. "And so it came to pass that, on this morning, Marius saw for the first time the wonderful spectacle -- wonderful, especially in its evidential power over himself, over his own thoughts-

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- (1) Marius, p.235.
 (2) Marius, p.236.
 (3) ib. p.266.

- of those who believe" (1). He notes that people of all ranks are present, their grave air of recollection, ~~kindling~~ the "cleansing and kindling flame at work in them" (2). In the antiphonal singing of the psalms, he feels the "genuine expression of the heart" and "intimations for the intellect" as the meaning of the words grows upon him (3). Men and women come forward with bread and wine and other gifts; and following this, the Sacrament is dispensed. "As for Marius himself, the natural soul of worship in him had at last been satisfied as never before. He felt, as he left that place, that he must hereafter experience often a longing memory, a kind of thirst, for all this over again"(4).

Marius is on the verge of the Christian Church. He and Cornelius, on a journey through the country, are arrested among a company of Christians, and he sacrifices his means to secure Cornelius's release. Awaiting the help which Cornelius hopes to bring, Marius dies of plague, in the company of the Christians, with their prayers in his hearing and the sense of a living person at his side -- "Abi! Abi! Anima Christiana!"

(1) *ib.* p.282.
 (2) *ib.* p.282.
 (3) *ib.* p.284
 (4) Marius, p.289.

Chapters 22 and 23 are important for their description of what Pater believed to be the condition of the Church at this time. He describes the period under the Antonines as "the minor Peace of the Church", in which "the Church rested awhile from opposition"(1), and her modes of worship were "now blossoming freely above ground" (2). Pater believed that the Church at this time took a decision between two ideals of the Christian life -- one which "represents moral effort as essentially a sacrifice -- of one part of human nature to another, that it may live the more completely in what survives of it" (3) -- and the other an "ideal of culture" which "represents it as a harmonious development of all the parts of human nature". It was a choice between an ideal of moral asceticism and an ideal of culture and moderation of life. In contrast to the greater Peace of Constantine, which was marked by "exclusiveness", "puritanism", and "ascetic gloom" (4), -- the Antonine Church chose the way of "merciful compromises". And here Pater presents his romanticised picture of the Antonine Church blending philosophy and religion in a harmony acceptable to both. "Already, in accordance with such maturer wisdom

(1) *ib.* p.273
 (2) *ib.* p.274
 (3) *Marius*, p.275
 (4) *ib.* p.273

the Church of the 'Minor Peace' had adopted many of the graces of pagan feeling and pagan custom; as being indeed a living creature, taking up, transforming, accommodating still more closely to the human heart what of right belonged to it. In this way, an obscure synagogue was expanded into the Catholic Church --- As if in anticipation of the sixteenth century, the church was becoming 'humanistic', in an earlier and unimpeachable Renaissance" (1). It was seeking in the character and relationships of all classes the "sweetness and light" for which Matthew Arnold pleaded (2). "And this severe yet genial assertion of the ideal of woman, of the family, of industry, of man's work in life, so close to the truth of nature, was also, in that charmed hour of the "Minor Peace of the Church", realised as an influence tending to beauty, to the adornment of life and the world" (3).

Pater chose the Shepherd of Hermas as the Apostolic Father who seemed to him most close to that age. "The angel of righteousness", he quotes him - "is modest and delicate and meek and quiet. Take from thyself grief, for

(1) ib. p.278

(2) Culture and Anarchy, 1869. ch.1.

(3) Marius, p.270.

'tis the sister of doubt and ill-temper. Grief is more evil than any spirit of evil, and is most dreadful to the servants of God, and beyond all sprⁱits destroyeth man. -- Put on, therefore, gladness that hath always favour before God, and is acceptable unto Him, and delight thyself in it; for every man that is glad doeth the things that are good, and thinketh good thoughts, despising grief" (1). In Hermas, he chose significantly, for of all the Apostolic Fathers he represents "the beginning of what has been known in church history as 'paganism baptised into Christianity'" (2). "It was at this time," says Pater, "in this hour of expansion" that the Church developed her outward lineaments of worship -- "'the beauty of holiness', nay! the elegance of sanctity" (3). And this was the spirit of the worship which Marius witnessed in Cecilia's house.

In essence, the service of the Sacrament described in chapter 23 is the Ordinary of the Mass. Pater naturally does not go into all the details of its order, but those excerpts which he gives from its antiphonies, prayers and ceremonies -- from its opening "Kyrie Eleison! Christe

(1) *ib.* p.271.

(2) cf. T.F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers, 1948, p.112.

(3) Marius, p.276.

Eleison!", the "Lavabo", the call to thanksgiving, "Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro", and the absolution "-- perducatur vos ad vitam aeternam", to the final words of dismissal, "Ite, missa est" are taken from the setting of the Roman Missal. "That hymn sung in the early morning, of which Pliny had heard", he comments in chapter 22, "was kindling into the service of the Mass. The Mass, indeed, would appear to have been said continuously from the Apostolic age. Its details, as one by one, they become visible in later history, have already the character of what is ancient and venerable" (1). Marius is captured by the richness of ritual and ceremony, even as the author lingers lovingly over his description of it.

The truth is that Pater was anything but objective in this attempt to recapture the Antonine Roman scene and outlook. The story of Marius's progress from the animistic religion of Numa, through trial and experiment of Cyrenaicism, until, repelled by the impassivity of the Stoic Marcus Aurelius, he finds himself on the edge of the Christian faith, is Pater's own philosophical Odyssey. And the historical setting in the Christian Church of the Antonine "minor peace", moving into the world and building up from its

(1) Marius, p.278

materials, pagan and Christian, an idealistic culture of life transformed by its own inner vision, is a romanticised picture of that "unimpeachable Renaissance" which Pater himself was now seeking. Early in his life, his intellectual reason had rejected religious faith in favour of a rationalistic interpretation of life, but the "hard, gem-like flame" of intellectualised aesthetic experience had proved insufficient to satisfy his continuing consciousness of the mysterium at the heart of all life. Dr. A.L.Drummond, in his book, The Churches in English Fiction, 1950, tells of Mrs. Humphrey Ward that she talked rather confidently to Pater one day of her hope that an authentic Jesus, freed from the bonds of dogma, would yet be acclaimed by the "modern mind". "To her surprise he shook his head and looked rather troubled. 'I don't think so, -- and we don't altogether agree. You think it's all plain. But I can't. There are such mysterious things. Take that saying - Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden. How can you explain that? There is a mystery in it -- a something supernatural" (1). This was the man who was asking himself - Could he make contact with religious experience through his sense of beauty, which already gave him the most intense spiritual experience that he knew? In Marius the Epicurean, he

(1) p.175

attempted to do that.

In July, 1883, he wrote to Miss Paget (Vernon Lee) of the work on which he was presently engaged -- "an Imaginary Portrait of a peculiar type of mind in the time of Marcus Aurelius", which he regarded as "a sort of duty. For you know I think that there is a --- sort of religious phase possible for the modern mind, the condition of which phase it is the main object of my design to convey"(1) The novel is in fact, the reconstruction of a point of view towards Christianity, and Pater was writing as much of his own century's outlook as of the second. This no doubt detracts from its value as an historical picture. Marius, wrote Paul Elmer More, "was not a true picture of early Christianity, but romantic aestheticism disguised in the phraseology of ancient faith" (2). That is true; but it does not diminish the religious interest of the book as an approach to Christianity by a Nineteenth Century humanist.

Here, Pater reveals a characteristic mood in the rationalism of the Century -- a mood that looks back wistfully to the deserted sanctuaries of the heart which the intellect cannot re-build yet longs to inhabit. George

(1) Benson's Pater (E.M.L.) p.89-90.
 (2) Shelburne Essays vol. 8., p.91.

Eliot, in a letter to her friends, the d'Alberts, confesses that, although she has not returned to "dogmatic Christianity", her earlier antagonism has since been replaced by "the profoundest interest" in religious belief, concerning which "I have a sympathy -- that predominates over all argumentative tendencies" (1). James Thomson, 1834-82, the poet of The City of Dreadful Night, looks back in A Recusant, with nostalgic longing for the recovery of worship with all its church associations and inward satisfactions.

"How sweet to enter in, to kneel and pray
 With all the others whom we love so well!
 All disbelief and doubt might pass away,
 All peace float to us with its Sabbath bell
 Conscience replies, There is but one good rest,
 Whose head is pillowed upon Truth's pure breast".

Thomas Hardy expresses a similar mood in his poem,
The Oxen.

I feel
 If someone said on Christmas Eve,
 Come, let us see the oxen kneel,
 --- I should go with him in the gloom
 Hoping it might be so".

(1) Bullett's George Eliot, 1947, p.132

The impersonal "Life-force" of progress in a mechanistic universe was, after all, at best a Robot-Providence, satisfying the intellect, perhaps, but never warming the heart. There were many like Robert Buchanan, the poet of the Ballad of Mary the Mother, 1897, who, though he believed with his intellect that Christ was wrong and inevitably broken by the God of Nature, was nevertheless heart and soul on the side of Jesus and His Gospel of Love even in defeat.(1).

Something of this dark mood of the humanist, caught betwixt a Life-force of the intellect and the loving God of faith, enters into the creation of Marius the Epicurean by Pater. Defeated and bereft of his faith by the rationalist attack, "because he was not fortified against it by personal religious experience"(2), Pater sought to re-build the structure of Christianity on the only absolute he knew as a matter of personal experience -- the value of aesthetic perception. Marius of the novel remains on the edge of, but not within, the Church, because Pater was never convinced in his whole thinking mind that Christianity was not simply beautiful, but absolutely true. The author remains at last

(1) cf. A. Stodart-Walker - Robert Buchanan, 1901. p.229.
 (2) Lord David Cecil - Walter Pater, 1955, p.12.

the unwilling sceptic.

One of the interesting results of applying historical methods to the study of the New Testament was that it awakened Jewish writers to the fact that Jesus had a part in their own national history and cultural heritage. As Others Saw Him, 1895, is a striking evidence of this fact in the form of a novel about Jesus. Popular Jewish tradition about Jesus down the centuries has taken its tone from the Talmud and the mediaeval Jewish folk-lore "gospel", the Tol'doth Yeshu, in which the accounts concerning Jesus were simply designed either to contradict, distort, or throw ridicule on the statements and teachings of the Gospels. In the earliest traditions from the Talmud, the Gospel story of the virgin birth is met by the assertion that Jesus was an illegitimate child (1); the healing and other miracles are not denied, but are attributed to magic; and His criticisms of the Pharisaic tradition are described in the Talmud as "scoffing against the words of the wise"(2). The 10th Century Tol'doth Yeshu follows the same policy, only with more exaggerated emphasis and greater elaboration of detail. Jesus learned the "Ineffable Name" of God in

(1) cf. a Baraita quoted by Joseph Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth, 1929, p.27.

(2) cf. Klausner, p.33. [Gitt. 56b-57a quoted].

the Temple, and used it to accomplish His miracles. The body of Jesus disappeared because the gardener cast it out of the tomb, and the Resurrection was a fraud perpetrated by the disciples. The value of the Talmud is that it tells us "what were the views of the Jews about Jesus during the first five centuries", and of the Tol'Doth Yeshu that it tells us what they were saying about Him from the fifth to the tenth centuries. (1) Of the latter Joseph Klausner has written, "Our mothers knew its contents by hearsay -- of course with all manner of corruptions, changes, omissions and imaginative additions -- and handed them on to their children" (2).

By the time that Joseph Salvador, the earliest important modern Jewish historian on Jesus, published his Jésus et sa doctrine, 1838, sixty years of German rationalistic study of the Gospel background of influence and environment had resulted in D.F. Strauss's Das Leben Jesu, 1835-6. The way was now clear for a re-appraisal by Jews themselves of the life of Jesus, set against the contemporary background of social life and literature, in

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- (1) ib. p.53. See Klausner for a good survey of Jewish sources on Jesus, p.18-54. Hugh J. Schonfield writes of the Tol'doth Yeshu in According to the Hebrews.
 (2) Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth, p.48.

His national and historical environment, ^{instead} of the "elaborate metaphysical dress" in which "the immemorial theology of the churches clad Jesus" (1). Salvador was followed in Germany by Abraham Geiger with his Das Judentum und seine Geschichte, 1864, and also by H. Graetz's Sinaï et Golgotha, ou les origines du judaïsme et du christianisme, 1867 (2). In all these, the results of the new scholarship were naturally used to support the orthodox Jewish picture of Jesus, as a very human prophet, and to minimise the character and originality of His teaching. What was good in it was shown to be derived from Jewish sources, and the distinctively Christian claims for His Messiahship and the Resurrection were now explained away as the products of Hellenistic mythologising (3), or as later additions by the disciples to claim the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies (4). These Jewish historians may differ in their diagnosis of the strongest points of Jewish influence upon Jesus, but they are agreed that nothing of value was new or original in His teaching.

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- (1) E.R. Trätner, As A Jew Sees Jesus, New York, 1931, p.176.
 (2) Graetz's views are more accessible in his History of the Jews, vol. 2. (London) 1891.
 (3) cf. Salvador, Jesus Christ.
 (4) cf. Graetz. Hist. of Jews, vol. 2. p. 167.

The special interest of the novel, As Others Saw Him, which was published anonymously in 1895, is that it represents an interest by a liberal minded Jew, not simply in Jesus's creatureliness and the human faults and failings that might or might not go with it, but also in His greatness as a man of faith and a spiritual teacher. That is a new and striking thing among Jewish writers. It has to be remembered that, if all the pressure of orthodoxy upon a Christian writer would be towards emphasising the divine quality in His life, all the pressures of Jewish orthodoxy on a Jewish writer would be towards emphasising His humanity, and, at that, towards diminishing His human greatness. As Others Saw Him was published anonymously at first, probably because, while his portrait is pre-eminently humanistic, he had something to say in praise of Jesus.

Joseph Jacobs was born in Sydney, New South Wales, in 1854; was educated at Sydney Grammar school and at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he was Senior Moralist in 1876. He employed himself thereafter in the study of Jewish history and in writing books on English literature and national folk-lore. He was President of the Jewish Historical Society, and produced among his historical works Studies in Jewish Statistics, 1890, Jews of Angevin England,

1893, Studies in Biblical Archaeology, 1894, and Sources of the History of the Jews in Spain, 1895 (1).

As Others Saw Him is a story of a type that has become more common since the first World War in this Century. It was written to express a particular conception of Jesus, and an independent point of view towards Him (2). The author takes the point of view of a Pharisee, Meshullam Ben Zadok, formerly of Jerusalem, now living in Alexandria, writing to a Jew in Corinth who has sent him an inquiry about Saul of Tarsus. His reply is to give his own memories, writing now in the year 54 A.D., about the Nazarene, Jesus. These are limited to His Jerusalem visits, and mainly to His final entry into the city. For his material, he uses teaching and incidents from all four gospels according to his needs, but he relies on the chronology of the Fourth Gospel for his main outline of events. He also uses the Agrapha from the writings of the early Fathers to supplement the teaching, and on two occasions compiles chiefly from them complete sermons as delivered by Jesus in a Jerusalem synagogue (3), adding

(1) He also produced a series of collections of English, Celtic, Indian and other fairy tales; introductions to editions of Goldsmith, Thackeray, and Jane Austen; also Tennyson and In Memoriam, 1892, Literary Studies 1895.

(2) As Others Saw Him, pp. 7, 28.

(3) ib. pp. 36-38; 86-88.

the note - "It must have been from a report of this discourse, and that given of page 86, that the majority of these utterances of Jesus have been derived which are known in modern theology as 'Agrapha'" (1). He further draws on the Jewish document, The Two Ways, embodied in the first six chapters of the Christian manual of worship, teaching and practice, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (2) and uses it as a source book of Jesus's teaching. A disciple of Hillel, writes Meshullam, compiled a summary of his teaching for the heathen called The Two Ways; and Jesus, he thinks, learned much from it, expanded its teaching, perhaps, but did not materially add to it. This first part of the Didache, the Two Ways, is printed as chapter 4 of the novel. Jesus in fact, was deeply in debt to rabbinical sources, particularly the school of Hillel, for all that was sound in His teaching. So far, the author travels with his fellow historians.

(1) ib. p. 36.

(2) See the footnotes to p. 219, above. The Didache was published by Bishop Brynennios in 1883. It consists of 15 short chapters on Christian practice, themselves superimposed on an earlier Jewish Document, The Two Ways. Starting with the Shema (Deut. VI. 4-5; Lev. XIX, 18b) and the Decalogue (paraphrased in chap. 2), it develops the ethic of the good life in terms of the way of life and the way of death. A Jewish Hellenistic document edited and added to c. 100 A.D. by a Gentile Christian Church. See also - Leitzmann - Beginnings of the Christian Church, p. 203-5. Dibelius - A Fresh Approach to the New Testament Literature, p. 221-224, 234-237, for useful literary and historical discussion of this document.

He is also, like them, concerned to defend the Pharisees against the criticisms of Jesus. In his account of the parable of the Good Samaritan, he arbitrarily alters the Samaritan to "an Israelite" (1). The Good Samaritan was, in fact, a good Pharisee. Again in chapter 11, Meshullam takes part in a meal along with Jesus and some of His disciples, at which the incidents recorded in St. Luke's Gospel, XI., 37, ff., take place. In Meshullam's account, the "woes" upon the Pharisees are the response of Jesus to the question of a guest -- "Why walk not thy disciples according to the traditions of the elders?" Old Simeon, the host, comments peaceably in reply to Jesus, that it is true that inward thought and outward act should go together; he often heard that from Hillel, and he himself has known many Pharisees "for the love of the Lord" who "did throughout their life what they knew to be his commands. Jesus says gently, "Nay, master, I spoke not of thee, nor of men like thee. These be the true Pharisees; the rest but have the Pharisaic colours." Here again, is the claim that even in so far as the criticisms by Jesus are true, they are not original, but derived from Hillel.

That is one side of the picture. On the other,

(1) p.79

he gives his account of what he believes to be the original character of Jesus's teaching. This he does, first, by compiling another complete "sermon" given by Jesus in the Temple, from leading sayings in the Fourth Gospel, in which Jesus declares Himself to be the Door, the Way, the Shepherd, the Vine, and the Bread of Life. The purpose evidently is to give a cross-section of characteristic teaching about the Person of Christ as recorded by St. John. Against this element in the teaching, Meshullam reacts strongly. "If He had been very God he could not have said more of his own power over men's souls. Our prophets have spoken boldly indeed, but none of them had boasted the power of the Lord in such terms as this man spake of himself. Could he be mad, I thought, to say such things? --- Alone among the nations of men, we refuse to make an image of our God. We alone never regarded any man as God incarnate. Those among us who have been nearest to the Divine have only claimed to be -- they have only been recognised to be -- messengers of the Most High"(1).

A second thing he notes as different in the teaching of Jesus is His lack of "Patriotic" national feeling for the Law, or for support of the cause of Judaism against the

(1) As Others Saw Him, p.112-113

Roman domination. The question about the Tribute money (1) was not an attempt to trap Jesus into making a statement from which His enemies could frame an accusation against Him, but in order to discover whether He was prepared to commit Himself to the Pharisees' side against Caesar. His reply is taken by the common people as a refusal either to lead or to countenance revolt against the Romans. Whatever kind of Messiah He is, He is not the kind they are expecting, and they are in their turn "dumbfounded at his answer"(2). This chapter is headed "The Great Refusal". Jesus is now left with only His disciples to listen. "For the word passed swiftly in the mouths of all the men of Jerusalem, -- 'He refuseth; he would have us be slaves of the Romans for ever'" (3). And that was why, after the arrest and trial of Jesus, when Pilate led Him and Barabbas before the crowd, Barabbas was chosen for liberation and Jesus for crucifixion. "The folk who had welcomed Him on the first day of the week, on this the sixth day reviled and despised Him because He had refused to lead a rising against the Romans as the other (Barabbas) had done" (4).

(1) Mk. XII 14.

(2) As Others Saw Him, p.160-161.

(3) ib. p.161.

(4) ib. p.194-5.

Meshullam is left admiring Him for what he can understand in Him, but puzzled and repelled by what marks Him off from His predecessors -- "This man alone of the prophets speaketh in his own name" (1) and, "Whether or not he felt himself in some sort to be not of our nation, I know not; but in all his teaching he dealt with us as men, not as Jews"(2). "And yet no man had appeared in Israel for many generations endowed in so high a degree with all the qualities which mark us Israelites out from the nations around. He was tender to the poor -- He bare the yoke of the Law --- God was to him, as to all of us, as an ever-present Father ..."(3).

The end of the story is given in the form of an Epilogue, in which Meshullam gives his impression of a manuscript of memorabilia about Jesus written by one Matathias (4), which has just come into his hands. Now he knows the inner secret of Jesus's thoughts about the Messiah, which He explained patiently to the inner circle of disciples, while His answers to outside questioners

(1) ib. p.201.

(2) ib. p.210.

(3) ib. p.201.

(4) The author appends a footnote to Matathias:- "Probably the so-called Primitive Gospel, the common foundation of our Synoptics. But the date is somewhat early" p.207.

were always "evasion and enigma". Why, he asks now, did Jesus not take His own people more into His confidence? "We hoped for him as a Deliverer and a Conqueror with force of arms by God's aid. Now, Jesus seemed not to think of the Anointed One in any way like this. His mind seemed to be filled rather with the picture of the Servant of God as drawn by the Prophet ^aE~~s~~ias....."(1). Why did He remain silent before us as to these ideas of His, asks Meshullam; for surely by this silence He has committed a grievous sin against us His people.

The novel ends with a striking apostrophe to Jesus. "If Jesus put another meaning on the prophetic words, why spake He not His meaning fully unto the people? All we may have gone like sheep astray, but He that might have been our shepherd went apart alone with God.

"O Jesus, why didst thou not show thyself to thy people in thy true character? Why didst thou seem to care not for aught that we in Jerusalem cared for? Why, arraigned before the appointed judges of thy people, didst thou keep silence before us, and, by thus keeping silent, share in pronouncing judgment upon thyself? We have slain thee as the Hellenes have slain Socrates their greatest, and our

(1) p.211

punishment will be theirs. Then will Israel be even as thou wert, despised and rejected of men -- a nation of sorrows among the nations. But Israel is greater than any of his sons, and the day will come when he will know thee as his greatest. And in that day he will say unto thee, 'My sons have slain thee, O my son, and thou hast shared our guilt!'"

Although the author could no doubt disclaim responsibility for this portrait of Jesus, as being simply an experiment in fiction, it remains on its own merits a striking and original tribute to Jesus by a Jew. As a Jewish novel which seeks to give a sympathetic answer to the question -- what does Jesus mean for the Jews? -- it stands alone until Sholem Asch's The Nazarene in 1939. In its determination to discover the genius of Jesus, it points the direction and spirit of Jewish liberal thought which was continued and developed in this Century by the great liberal Jewish scholar, Dr. C.G. Montefiore, through his interest and writings concerning the Gospels. There is much in The Synoptic Gospels, 1909(1), and in Some Elements of the Religious Teaching of Jesus, 1910 (2), which harks

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- (1) A commentary on the Gospels written for Jews.
 (2) His Jowett lectures, published in 1910.

back to the spirit and thought of Joseph Jacobs in As Others Saw Him. When Dr. Montefiore writes that though Jesus was not different from His fellow Jews in thinking of God as His Father, "it was not in virtue of His blood that God was His Father, it was in virtue of His humanity" (1), one is reminded at once of Meshullam's judgment on Jesus -- "In all His teaching He dealt with us as men, not as Jews". And when Montefiore wrote in his commentary on the Gospels for Jews - "If it is improper ignorance not to have read some portions of Shakespeare or Milton, it is, I am inclined to think, a much more improper ignorance not to have read the Gospels" -- he was speaking for a catholicity of cultural interests in which Jacobs himself led the way in his own writings.

The five novels dealt with in this chapter were none of them popular novels, either in intention or result. The authors were each concerned simply to express in the form of fiction their own personal approach to Christianity. Marie Corelli also sought to express her religious ideas about Jesus Christ when she wrote Barabbas: a Dream of the World's Tragedy, in 1893. She was really a purveyor of popular romantic melodrama, into which she managed to

(1) Relig. Teaching of Jesus, p.92.

infuse her own impression of the religious, moral and scientific ideas of the day, in such novels as A Romance of Two Worlds, 1886, The Sorrows of Satan, 1895; The Master Christian, 1900, and God's Good Man, 1904. She showed none of the reluctance of the English romancers of the previous chapter to bring the Gospel incidents into her story. But like Lew Wallace, the American romancer who had successfully done the same thing before her, she described her scenes concerning Jesus, with every effect of divinity and the supernatural heightened, so that the human is all but ignored or else remoulded to accord more suitably with the divine. The novel, through all of its four hundred and sixty pages, is entirely occupied with the trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, from the point of view of His fellow-prisoner, Barabbas, who was freed. Jesus is described as "of heroic mould" physically; Barabbas sees the "glory-light" about Him at the trial; the Centurion is doubtful if he has a cross strong enough to bear "the powerful and splendid figure of the captive". There is a hint of anti-Semitism in the suggestion that Jesus was not by blood a Jew at all; at least. He did not look like one. "He hath the air of an alien to this land", says the centurion, who "cannot believe that Jesus is a Jew".

I will quote only the description of the nailing of Christ to the cross, as it gives sufficient indication of her characteristic approach to a portrayal of His life in the flesh. "The executioners having received their commands, and overcoming their momentary hesitation, gathered in a rough half-nude group around the Cross, whereon lay unresistingly the Wonder of the Ages, and knelt to their hideous task, their muscular brown arms, grimy with dust and stained already with splashes of blood from the crucifying of the two thieves, contrasting strongly with the dazzling whiteness of the Figure before them. They paused a moment, holding the huge long-pointed nails aloft; --- would this Man of Nazareth struggle? -- would it be needful to rope His limbs to the wooden beams as they had done to the other two condemned? With the fierce scrutiny of those accustomed to signs of rebellion in the tortured, they studied their passive Captive, -- not a quiver stirred the firmly composed limbs, not a shade of anxiety or emotion troubled the fair face, --- while the eyes, rolled up to the blinding splendour of the sky, were gravely thoughtful and full of peace. No bonds were needed here;-- the Galilean was of marvellously heroic mould, -- and every hardened torturer around Him silently in his heart recognised and respected the fact. Without further parley they commenced their work, -- and the startled earth,

affrighted, groaned aloud in cavernous echoes as the cruel hammers heavily rose and fell, clanging out the tocsin of a God's death and a world's redemption" (1).

I will not quote further. One cannot help contrasting her lavish descriptions of Christ's divinity with the reluctance of earlier novelists to portray His humanity, or the controversy and unpopularity which the few rash novelists who did so had to endure at this time. Dean W. Berforce quoted Barabbas in Westminster Abbey, and wrote to the author in appreciation, "It is a high-minded and very powerful effort to revivify, by the legitimate use of the imagination, a time-honoured history by depolarising it from the conventionality in which it has become crystallised. The romance can by no possibility harm anyone, and it may cause many to re-read and consider the inspired record" (2). Between 1893 and 1907, Barabbas went through forty-two editions, as the fly-leaf of my copy records.

It is a revealing indication of the general attitude of the religious minded public at this time, regarding the historical portrayal of the figure and person of Jesus.

(1) Barabbas, p.137-8 (chapter XV)

(2) Quoted in Eileen Bigland's Marie Corelli, 1953, p.144-6

The late Dr. Donald Baillie, in God Was In Christ, 1948, describes how reluctant theologians have been in the past to admit the human element into their picture of Jesus. "Theologians shrank from admitting human growth, human ignorance, human mutability, human struggle and temptation, into their conception of the Incarnate Life, and treated it as simply a divine life lived in a human body (and sometimes even this was conceived as essentially different from our bodies) rather than a truly human life lived under the psychological conditions of humanity. The cruder forms of docetism were fairly soon left behind, but in its more subtle forms the danger continued in varying degrees to dog the steps of theology right through the ages until modern times "(1).

It was to dog the steps of the historical novelist for a considerable time yet. In spite of the fact that, throughout the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, both theological thought and New Testament study were moving steadily in the direction of the Incarnation as the most revealing truth about Christ, and towards the recovery of the historical Jesus as the way to religious reality, yet the religious mind, both among leaders and people, was

(1) D.M. Baillie - God Was In Christ, p.11.

still nervous in practice of any tendencies towards human realism in the portrayal of Jesus, as detracting from the reverence due to His worship and tending to produce scepticism and unbelief. It was safer to err on the side of divinity, as Marie Corelli undoubtedly did.

The quest of the historical Jesus by theologians was an old story before the religious public generally were prepared in their minds to receive a portrait of Jesus drawn with the humanistic realism of a novelist. It was, in the end, only after the breakdown of the conventions of religious orthodoxy, caused by the First World War, that there began the real rush of novels of reconstruction of a point of view, the pioneers of which I have been considering in this chapter.

CHAPTER VII

The First Two Decades of the Twentieth Century

"My own belief -- and there is some evidence for it -- is that literature begins to go to the dogs as soon as the earth becomes restive and declares its independence of heaven. In the great ages of literature, earth was, if not a suburb of heaven, a subject kingdom. Heaven and earth were places on the same cosmic map".

(Robert Lynd -- Books and Writers, p.225)

"You forget that words are not always ideas, nor are ideas always realities".

(Benjamin Jowett to Cosmo Gordon Lang. From - Cosmo Gordon Lang, by J.G. Lockhart, p.27.)

Principal English Novels considered:

H.Rider Haggard - Pearl Maiden, 1903.

Rudyard Kipling - Puck of Pook's Hill, 1906.

- The Church that was in Antioch, and The Manner of Men from Limits and Renewals, 1932.

George Moore - The Brook Kerith, 1916.

Anonymous - By An Unknown Disciple, 1918

In 1895, a little book from America achieved a wide popularity in Britain as well as in its own country, and during the first two decades of the Twentieth Century it continued to circulate in repeated printings. The Story of the Other Wise Man, by Henry Van Dyke, is no more than

a fairly long short story. It is an extension of the tale of the three wise men of Matthew's tradition, in which the author tells of a fourth wise man who sets out to join them with three gifts of his own for the infant King, how he was delayed by the need to help a sick man in the desert, and so missed his assignation. He continues his search through the years for news of the King, during which, in successive appeals to his charity, he parts with his gifts to help someone in distress (including a woman and her child during the slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem), until finally, during an earthquake in Jerusalem, the King appears to him as he lies injured and dying beside the slave girl whom he has redeemed with his last gift. The girl hears him say -- "When saw I thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? Three-and-thirty years have I looked for thee; but I have never seen thy face, nor ministered to thee, my King"; -- and hears the answer given to him -- "Verily I say unto thee, Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, thou hast done it unto me". The story concludes -- "His journey was ended. His treasures were accepted. The Other Wise Man had found the King"

In the form and manner of a wonder tale, it presented the personal mystique of the Social Gospel in a simple, yet unforgettable way; and its wide popularity at the time is evidence of the changing attitude towards the relative claims of life here and hereafter, which became characteristic of the Twentieth Century. The Social

Gospel was not a new thing, either in Britain or America, in 1895. It sprang from the work of F.D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. Yeast, 1848, Alton Locke, 1850, and The Water Babies, 1863, were the fruits of it among Kingsley's stories. It was continued through Stewart D. Headlam's "Guild of St. Matthew" (1) and B.F. Westcott's "Christian Social Union". (2) R.J. Campbell's The New Theology, 1907, expounds the social gospel which he popularised as a preacher in the City Temple, London. (3)

In America, the Social Gospel was taken up by Emerson's Trans^cendentalist Club of New England philosophers, and found expression in such communalist experiments as Brook Farm Institute (1840-47), in which Nathanael Hawthorne took a short, and disillusioning part. (4) In 1900, F.G. Peabody published Jesus Christ and the Social Question, which aroused a great deal of interest in this country as well as in America.

In Britain, William Morris, with his Socialist League gospel deeply marked both by his love of English

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- (1) Founded in 1877. (2) Founded in 1899.
 (3) For an account of the Social Gospel, see - A.L. Drummond's The Churches in English Fiction, ch.IV., and L.E. Elliott-Binns - English Thought, 1860-1900, p.279,ff.
 (4) The Blithedale Romance, 1852, satirises it.

arts and traditions and by the materialism of Karl Marx, and especially through his ideal of bringing the arts into common life (1), brought a necessary corrective to the new social planning by stressing the interest of social reform in the beauty and culture of life. Further, Leo Tolstoy's spiritual pilgrimage, away from the Gospel of Church doctrine to the Gospel of the simple life gave a powerful impulse to social idealism and co-operative experiments in the first two decades of this Century.

The Social Gospel was by no means associated only with Christian belief. There was also this secular social gospel, having its roots in the thought of sceptics like George Eliot, who transferred their religious devotion to social reform and good works. "If everything else is doubtful", says Romola in the midst of the pestilence, "this suffering that I can help is certain; if the glory of the cross is an illusion, the sorrow is only the truer. While the strength is in my arm, I will stretch it out to the fainting; while the light visits my eyes, they shall seek the forsaken".(2) That was written in 1863. By the last two decades, even agnostic thought was reacting strongly, as I have already

(1) cf., A Dream of John Ball, 1888, and News from Nowhere, 1891.

(2) cf., Romola, 1863, ch.69, p.485.

tried to show, against the neutral, featureless impersonality of the power behind the mechanistic universe of science. The idea of human progress at the behest of unconscious forces proceeding from a purely material environment, shocked the human sense. Even that satirical religious sceptic, Samuel Butler, looked for a way of escape, in which some element at least of human choice, reason and effort might have something to do with it, and wrote Life and Habit, 1878, Evolution Old and New, 1879, and Unconscious Memory, 1880, in which his mind reached out towards a rationalistic philosophy of progress. The French philosopher, Henri Bergson, in L'Évolution Créatrice, 1907, put forward his philosophy of Vitalism, the "elan vital", the psychical spirit of life creating the upward thrust towards variations of development. (1) In the midst of this situation, (in which Schopenhauer's ideas of the world will against which man's sub-conscious will struggles for existence, and Nietzsche's conception of a race of Supermen created to rule the slave types, each sought to put forward a rational philosophy of life not altogether ruled by blind fate,) George Bernard Shaw developed his philosophy of the

(1) Previous works - Les Données immédiates de la Conscience, 1889 Matière et mémoire, 1896.

Life Force, requiring the co-operation of man's higher intellectual powers in order to work out its purpose of progress towards a fuller life.

"To Life, the force behind the Man, intellect is a necessity", says Don Juan in Act III of Man and Superman, 1903, in which Shaw first put forward the philosophy;-- "because without it he blunders into death. Just as Life, after ages of struggle, evolved that wonderful bodily organ, the eye, --- so it is evolving today a mind's eye that shall see, not the physical world, but the purpose of life, and thereby enable the individual to work for that purpose instead of thwarting and baffling it by setting up shortsighted personal aims as at present".(1) In Back to Methuselah, 1921, he developed this idea further as "the basis of the religion of the near future", which he seems to have conceived as a religion of social progress whose concern was solely with the claims of this life. Christianity has by this time become, in the eyes of the secular social gospel, the un-Social Gospel. In the short play, Androcles and the Lion, 1916, Shaw attacks the idea of the Atonement together with the otherworldly "salvationist" hopes of Christianity; and in the midst of a good deal of sheer

(1) Man and Superman, Act III., p.160 (the Penguin ed.)

good-humoured fooling, his Christian martyrs find that the nearer they approach to death the more they value the force of life within them.

This changed outlook, which began to operate in the 'eighties of the last Century, largely as a protest against the sub-human impersonality of Darwinian Evolution by natural selection, and the picture of life presented by mechanistic determinism in general, developed also as a reaction against the "otherworldliness" of traditional religion. It was, nevertheless, characteristic of religious thinking as well, to which it was no new thing, except that it became much more widespread. This change of emphasis, and what it has implied for religious thought, has been well described by Dr. John Baillie in his study of the eternal life in Christian thought, And the Life Everlasting,

"There is nowadays among us a greater measure of satisfaction than there was formerly, with the possibilities and promises of the present life as bounded by the decay and death of the body and the general conditions of earthly existence. Not only has the belief in the eternal world failed, but the need felt for the belief has likewise failed. It is as if the present-day experience of living did not give rise to the same

urgent demand for a further and heavenly completion as did the experience of earlier ages". (1) Dr. Baillie continues, --"Even in quarters where the fact of immortality has remained unquestioned, the interest in the fact has lessened. Even where the existence of a future state has been regarded as a matter of course, there has been far less wistful brooding about its nature and far less eager looking forward to its joys. Even where hope has retained a place with faith and love in the trinity of Christian graces, its relative prominence has been greatly diminished, In a word, men's belief in another world has come, of late years, to have much ^{less} effect on their attitude towards the present world, and their demeanour in it, than was formerly the case."(2)

These two passages describe very adequately the self-confidence of the new mood of revolt against the ideas and moral conventions of the past which characterised the 'nineties and the opening of the new Century. The older agnostics, like Huxley and Morley, exercised their intellectual freedom to question religious belief, but in moral standards and outlook they were at one with their opponents in accepting the

(1) And the Life Everlasting, 1934, p.6.

(2) ib., p.8-9.

Christian moral code. But from the 'nineties onwards, the new freethinkers raised the standard of moral revolt as well. Shaw questioned the foundations of marriage, the relationships of family life, sex relationships generally (as distinct from prostitution, discussed in Mrs. Warren's Profession, 1898), and the place of women in Society, all with a freedom and frankness of speech which was as new and revolutionary to the older generation of agnostics as was the form of the social discussion play which he had borrowed from Ibsen.

H. G. Wells was the more active moral revolutionary. In Anticipations, 1901, he condemned monogamy, and In the Days of the Comet, 1906, one of his pre-views of the future scientific Utopia, reforms morality to establish sexual promiscuity. In Ann Veronica, 1909, and The New Macchiavelli, 1911, he not only depicted but sponsored (for the novel was always primarily a vehicle for his ideas on social change) the moral revolt of the daughters of middle class families. And in all this, he was proclaiming not so much a new order as a new freedom. Shaw, it may be said, was less revolutionary in fact than in words. What was new in his plays was the manner of the discussions between the talkative characters, their self-confident freedom, their witty

raillery of respectability and accepted ideas. The Nineteenth Century sceptic regarded "honest doubt" as something of a solemn, saddening duty. I have already noted the mood of wistful looking back that often characterises it. The new agnosticism had no regrets, and was aggressively cheerful and content with its own unbeliefs. The ironical debunking of the past in Lytton Strachey's Eminent Victorians, 1918, was a characteristic product of the new self-confident and self-contained freedom.

As the new Century developed, a change took place in the science-and-religion controversy. The old debates between the evolutionists and the churchmen, and between the "higher critics" and the fundamentalists gave way before the study of psychology, comparative religion, and anthropology. The interest moved from the story of nature to the story of man. William James brought religion under the scrutiny of psychology in his Gifford lectures, The Varieties of Religious Experience, 1902; and the psycho-analytical methods developed by Sigmund Freud claimed to explain the religious outlook in terms of neurosis. (1) Sir James Frazer's The Golden

(1) Freud's work on the significance of dreams was published in Die Traumdeutung, 1900; his theories regarding sex repressions and neuroses, in Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens, 1901, and Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie, 1905.

Bough, in its eleven volumes published between 1890 and 1915, extended the comparative study of religions to the history of religious customs, ideas and rituals.

The wider contacts of Empire administration had also extended knowledge, and often sympathy, with other religious customs and ideas. From the east had come theosophy, and from the west, spiritualism, the one seeking the Reality behind life through universal spiritual ideas, and the other seeking experimental knowledge of the after-life through direct contact with spirits beyond: -- both seeking religious knowledge apart from a particular historical event or person. From now on, therefore, the defenders of the faith are more concerned to defend the historical basis of the Christian revelation, and the validity of religious experience. The religious and psychological horizons of the approach to the New Testament, whether it is being made by the theologian or the novelist, have been greatly widened.

The results of archaeology, too, were a valuable addition to the background of the New Testament. The initial work of Edward Robinson in and around Jerusalem in 1841, and of Titus Tobler, was followed up in 1865 by the establishment of the Palestine Exploration Fund, and

by 1890 Flinders Petrie was engaged in excavating and identifying ancient sites. (1) The work of J.T. Wood in Ephesus in 1877, was followed by Sir William Ramsay's explorations among the sites and cities of Paul's missionary journeys, and the results published in his books were of the greatest value in any reconstruction of the social surroundings of the Churches of the book of Acts and the Epistles.(2) In Egypt, archaeology made its most valuable contribution to the New Testament through the discovery and study of Papyri from desert rubbish dumps and mummified remains. In 1896, Grenfell and Hunt began their systematic search for papyri in the Fayoum, and the following year they published, among many documents revealing everyday life in the early Christian period, a papyrus leaf containing unrecorded sayings of Jesus, (3) the first of many such discoveries which have continued into recent years. Meantime, Adolf

(1) To the work of identifying sites should be added Sir George Adam Smith's Historical Geography of the Holy Land, 1896.

(2) Among his more important works:- The Historical Geography of Asia Minor; 1890: The Church in the Roman Empire, 1893; St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen, 1895; Historical Commentary on Galatians, 1899; The Cities of St. Paul, 1907.

(3) cf. C.M. Cobern - The New Archaeological Discoveries, p.211, ff.; M. Van Rhyn - Treasures of the Dust, p.53,ff. S.L. Caiger - Archaeology and the N.T., ch.VIII.

Deissmann had brought out in 1895 and 1897 his first studies of the papyri collections already gathered in Germany, in which he showed that the New Testament was written in the common vernacular of its day, and illustrated the fact from contemporaneous inscriptions and papyrus documents. (1) The result was a revolution in the conception of New Testament Greek, and an enriched understanding of its vocabulary and meaning by reference to contemporary usages. A strong impetus was thus given to the production of modern translations of the New Testament, partly to give effect to the new knowledge of its vocabulary, and also to provide a modern counterpart of the live vernacular, close to everyday life, of the original Greek version. (2)

The amassed papyrus discoveries of the first three decades of this Century have been the historian's quarry

(1) Bibelstudien, 1895; Neue Bibelstudien, 1897, also, his Light from the Ancient East, 1910.

(2) The following is a list of the principal "revised" and modern versions:- The Revised N.T., 1881; The Twentieth Century N.T., 1901; Moffatt's Historical N.T., 1901; Weymouth's New Testament, 1902; Moffatt's N.T., 1913; Goodspeed's N.T., 1923 (U.S.A.); The Book of Books, 1938; Revised Standard N.T., 1946 (U.S.A.); Ronald Knox's N.T., 1945; E.V. Rieu's Four Gospels, 1952; J.B. Philips - Letters to Young Churches, 1947, and The Gospels, 1952.

of information on the everyday social life of the Hellenistic world. Although this does not mark the novels until after the first World War, all these various factors, at work from the 'nineties onwards, were helping to provide the materials for a more complete and realistic picture of the New Testament surroundings both for the historian and the novelist. They were helping, too, to arouse and spread among the religious-minded public (who, after all, if they do not write novels, help towards the creation of them by reading them) a more imaginative interest in the New Testament as history.

There were not many outstandingly original or venturesome novels in the two decades covered by this chapter. The potential novelists among the ranks of churchmen were not likely to be encouraged by the experience of Dr. Edwin A. Abbott. Modernistic novels based on the Gospels or the Book of Acts did not command a wide public, and they obviously brought to ecclesiastical authors much more discomfort and controversy than praise. Besides, a realistic historical novel

(1) On the papyri, see note on page : also - G. Milligan - Selections from the Greek Papyri, 1910; Deissmann. Light from the Ancient East, 1910; J.H. Moulton, From Egyptian Rubbish Heaps, 1917; B.P. Grenfell & A.S. Hunt, Sayings of Christ, 1897, and New Sayings of Jesus, 1904; also - C.K. Barrett, The New Testament Background: Selected Documents, 1956, Section 2 - The Papyri.

requires much more literary craftsmanship than a story of romance and adventure, and the project of carving a historical novel out of the New Testament was probably of itself sufficiently intimidating to deter any theologians who may have dreamed of it.

Among English popular novelists, H. Rider Haggard brought out Pearl Maiden in 1903, and, obviously seeking an unusual setting for a romance of adventure, set his heroine a little incongruously among the strictest sects of the Essenes, amongst whom, we are told, she grew up from infancy, accustomed to call them all "Uncle". The story includes the final attack of the Romans on the Temple among its scenes, with the heroine chained to the pillar of the Nicanor Gate (1); which she survives, to encounter further adventures between Jerusalem, Rome and Alexandria, before meeting again and marrying her Christianised Roman. The canvas is wide for the romance of early Christian times.

The Americans produced a greater number of Early Christian novels during this period, 1900-1920, but without adding anything that was fresh in knowledge or insight. Orr Kenyon's Amor Victor, 1902, gives a survey

(1) Pearl Maiden, p.245,ff.

of background life and thought to a story of Christian courage under persecution about A.D. 100, the setting being in Ephesus and Rome. He stresses the moral superiority of the Christians to the pagans, and a heavy homiletic emphasis on the contrast between the spirit of Christianity in early and in modern times enters like a refrain into the telling of the whole story. William Schuyler's Under Pontius Pilate, 1906, is written in the form of letters sent to a friend by Pilate's nephew, Caius, an officer in his service. They describe his contacts with the ministry of Jesus through Mary Magdalene, who is identified with Mary of Bethany, and also his adventures on police duty against Barabbas, in the course of which he contracts leprosy. Jesus heals him on His last journey to Jerusalem; and, in his final letter, Caius has heard of the resurrection from Mary, and is following the disciples into Galilee "to meet the risen Lord". The account of events follows all four Gospels. The purpose is plainly to give a fresh interest to the Gospel narratives by re-telling its main incidents from the point of view of an educated Roman, with a flavouring of his adventures. There is no evidence of a historical approach to the Gospel records: all is told from the point of view of accepted doctrine.

Elizabeth Miller's Saul of Tarsus, 1906, varies the formula of this type of novel in the direction of a stronger flavouring of adventure. The title is deceptive. Saul appears at the beginning and the end of the story -- first, to have Stephen stoned, and finally to be converted on the road to Damascus. In between these two episodes, the tale follows the adventures of Maryas in pursuit of two vows, one to avenge the death of Stephen on Saul, and the other to help Herod Agrippa recover his patrimony. The end is reconciliation on the road to Damascus, and, of course, the happy ending of romance for Maryas.

I give this selection of the average novel of this type, in which the accepted religious interest in the Gospel or in early Christian times is mingled to a greater or less degree with a tale of adventure and romance, designed for religious edification and popular reading commingled. A great many novels of this character, I suspect, arose out of the idea that fiction might justifiably be read on Sundays if it was edifying. Most of these novels had appeared in religious magazines before being published in book form. In all these popular novels which I have reviewed so far in this chapter, one of two motives can be seen -- either the motive of the

romancer, seeking a spectacular or unusual setting for an adventure story, such as H. Rider Haggard's Pearl Maiden, or the motive of the "religious interest" writer, seeking to produce edifying fiction for a Church-minded public, such as William Schuyler's Under Pontius Pilate.

The following books, which I shall now take into more detailed consideration, have greater interest in themselves and introduce new developments in the treatment of the early Christian theme in fiction. Rudyard Kipling's Puck of Pook's Hill appeared in 1906, and his two short stories, The Church that was in Antioch and The Manner of Men, in 1932. (1) George Gissing's Veranilda, 1904, I shall refer to as an example of the objective historical novel introduced by Flaubert, and by way of introduction to George Moore's The Brook Kerith, 1916, which is of the same literary species. Finally, I shall deal with the anonymous novel, By An Unknown Disciple, 1918, which illustrates the crisis of belief at that time as no amount of descriptive writing could do, and provides the point of entry into the mood and outlook of many of the novels in the next chapter.

Puck of Pook's Hill is a children's book, and the

(1) Both published in the volume of short stories, Limits and Renewals, 1932.

three Roman stories in it are set in a late period in the occupation of Britain. (1) But they reveal a fresh viewpoint, marked by Kipling's sense of Empire as a service calling for some form of consecration, and of the "Law" that binds men of all races and creeds together. In writing these tales, he consulted, not ancient records, but the land and ancient monuments of England, his own past experience of frontier life in India, and his own imagination. Out of these three elements sprang the tales which, as Charles Carrington says in his life of Kipling, were "told as a panegyric of duty and service". (2) Kipling saw ancient England as part of the Roman Empire, the Roman Empire as part of England's heritage, and the British Empire as Rome's successor.

"Strong heart with triple armour bound,
Beat strongly, for thy life-blood runs,
Age after age, the Empire round --
In us thy Sons,
Who, distant from the Seven Hills,
Loving and serving much, require
Thee,-- thee to guard 'gainst home-born ills
The Imperial Fire!" (3)

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- (1) A Centurion of the Thirtieth, On the Great Wall, and The Winged Hats.
(2) Rudyard Kipling, by Charles Carrington, 1955, p.381.
(3) "A British-Roman Song", A.D. 406. It should be noted that a number of Kipling's most lively character studies of Roman and early Christian points of outlook are contained in his poems, such as - A British Roman Song and A Song to Mithras (both from Puck of Pook's Hill 1906) the very characteristic Gallio's Song (from Actions and Reactions, 1909) and The Disciple and At His Execution - St. Paul (both from Limits and Renewals, 1932).

Parnesius, British-born Roman, has never been to Rome, and through his eyes Kipling pictures Hadrian's Wall as Rome's "North-West Frontier". He is not a Christian, but a Mithraist, preferring the soldier's religion as more in keeping with the Empire. In the stories, Mithraism appears as a secret bond, above creed and race, uniting men in a common loyalty. Kipling obviously pictures the cult in terms of Freemasonry, which he had joined first in India, and in which he had found men of different castes and creeds and nationalities meeting together. "In cast-ridden India, Freemasonry was the only ground on which adherents of different religions could meet 'on the level'. 'I was entered', wrote Kipling, 'by a member of the Brahmo Sanaj (Hindu), passed by a Mohammedan, and raised by an Englishman. Our tyler was an Indian Jew'" (1) Something of this enters into the incident in which Parnesius permits the sole survivor of a "Winged Hats" invasion ship to escape. "'As I stooped, I saw he wore such a medal as I wear'. Parnesius raised his hand to his neck. 'Therefore, when he could speak, I addressed him a certain Question which can only be answered in a certain manner. He answered with the necessary Word -- the Word that belongs to the degree of

(1) cf., Carrington, p.69.

Gryphons in the science of Mithras my God. I put my shield over him till he could stand up. --- He said: 'What now?' I said: 'At your pleasure, my brother, to stay or go.'"(1)

The characteristics of this picture remain unchanged, though deepened by the experience of the World War and the experience of human suffering through which he had passed, in the two short stories of New Testament times which Kipling included in Limits and Renewals, 1932. I include them here, though they belong chronologically to the period beyond this. One of the most successful features of the two stories is his free use of vigorous colloquial speech, together with his knowledge of British Imperial frontier life, to express the speech and outlook of the provinces of Imperial Rome. In The Church That Was In Antioch, Valens and his uncle talk of the problems of administration in Antioch much as district commissioners and police officers have done in any part of the Colonial Service. The story is based on the situation referred to in Galatians, II., verse II., but it is seen through the eyes of Valens, the young Roman soldier, and his uncle Sergius, head of the urban police in Antioch, to whom the religions of Syria are "part of my office work". Valens is a Mithraist, though he has heard of Christianity --

(1) Puck of Pook's Hill - "The Winged Hats", p.205.

"There isn't a ceremony or symbol they haven't stolen from the Mithras ritual". Police duty brings him into touch with Barnabas, who is pictured as a good liaison worker between the rival groups on the one hand the city authorities on the other.

Valens meets Peter and Paul at his uncle's house, and Paul asks his views as a Mithraist on their "food disputes" in the Christian Church. Valens quotes from "the old Ritual" of Mithraism. "We are all his children. Men make laws, not Gods". They change men's hearts. The rest is the Spirit", says Valens. "You heard it, Petrus?" Paul says to Peter. "You hear that? It is the utter doctrine itself".

Finally, Valens, dying of stab-wounds, pleads for the Cilicians who did it for revenge. This time it is Peter who underlines the lesson of universality. "Forgive them, for they know not what they do. Heard you that, Paulus? He, a heathen and an idolator said it!" Paul would have baptised him at once, but Peter bids him -- "Quiet! Think you that one who has spoken those Words needs such as we are to certify him to any God?" Here, recalling something of Marius the Epicurean, is the "anima Christiana naturaliter", except that in Kipling's eyes it means that Mithraism has something to teach

Christianity out of its undoctrinal universality. While Kipling would no doubt quote Paul's own words, regarding Gentiles without the Law yet showing "the work of the law in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness" (1), yet the underlying idea of the universal truth discoverable through exploring the common ground between all religions, is one that he drew from the modern study of comparative religion as well as from current theosophical ideas. The thought had a special appeal for a man who, like Kipling, had mixed among men of many faiths. (2)

"Many roads thou hast fashioned: all of them lead to the light, Mithras, also a soldier, teach me to die aright!" (3)

In the second short story, The Manner of Men, Kipling gives a glimpse of Paul through the eyes of two sailors, recalling together at a chance meeting in port their voyage with him as passenger, which had ended in a wreck on the coast of Malta. The story is told with a wealth of nautical details and technicalities, by means of which the novelist brings out the absorption of both

(1) Rom., I. 14-15.

(2) "His youth was passed in a circle where Madame Blavatsky and the early Theosophists had made no small impression. Later, he was a friend of William James and acquainted with the speculations which, in 1902, were to be formulated in the Varieties of Religious Experience, the book which made a rational analysis of Eastern and Western mysticism". — Carrington - Rudyard Kipling, p.362.

(3) Song to Mithras, from Puck of Pook's Hill.

men in the business of commanding and navigating a ship. Through their talk, there is a growing respect for Paul, having a craft of his own and a service of his own, who understands the craft and service of the sea, too.

Sulinor, the ex-pirate, who knows the fear of Caesar's law and punishments, has seen the scars on Paul's wound-marked body as the evidence of his courage and obedience in the service of his mysterious philosophy. "They set the sheep dogs on Paul at some place or other -- because of his philosophy! And he was going to see Caesar -- going to see Caesar! I shouldn't care to see Caesar with a back like that".

The significant thing in the story is the advice of Paul to Sulinor, whose deep-down fear of having to face the wild beasts he has diagnosed, -- "Serve Caesar. You are not canvas that I can cut to advantage at present. But if you serve Caesar, you will be obeying at least some sort of law. --- What concerns you now is that, by taking service, you will be free from the fear that has ridden you all your life". The incident tells something about the author as well as his characters. For Kipling, the highest religious loyalty that he knew was the "Law", and by that he meant whatever it was in a man's life that demanded his whole obedience and service --

generally in the form of his craft. There was something universal to him in the loyalty of men to their craft or service, whatever it was. Beyond that was the Unknowable Ultimate Mystery of life, into which he did not seek to penetrate. He could write the language of hymnology, and express a religious mood in a time of national crisis. His writing is steeped in the language of the Bible, but though he acknowledged the mystery, he did not achieve a positive religious belief in God. The search for God seemed only to produce doctrines and divisions. (1) He himself leaned to the undogmatic loyalties of life, the Law, service to a craft; and the nearest thing to a world religion he saw in the undogmatic "craft" of Freemasonry. I think, however, that Kipling found himself increasingly aware in his latter years, particularly after the experience of the First World War, of the points of strain and fear in life, demanding something more than loyalty to a service, but that his faith, like Sulinor's character, was not cut to that measure. He understood best the service to "some sort of law".

One of the important things about these stories of Kipling's for this study is that here is the Christian religion being pictured from the point of view of the

(1) cf. his poem, The Disciple.

history of religions rather than that of its own inner beliefs. This independent standpoint, which treats the Christian religious experience simply as one among other possible forms of religious experience, is plainly in evidence in the Puck of Pook's Hill stories of 1906, and it will be still more plainly observable in the novels produced after the First World War. While it enables the novelist to enter the more easily into the outlook of the Roman towards the pantheon of gods, it springs from a distinctively modern development of thought -- the study of comparative religion and of religious psychology, with something also of the ideas of theosophy, with its conception of "religious experience" as a basic common factor discoverable in all the great world religions.

Rudyard Kipling sought his escape from the problem of the unknowable, or mechanistically determined, reality behind the universe (having no answer to it) in obedience to a Law, a kind of service and the loyalties surrounding it as a self-sufficing way of life. George Gissing, on the other hand, sought his escape from a pessimistic philosophy of life in recalling the classical past as a world of the imagination. This he did in his one historical novel, Veranilda, published unfinished in 1904, a year after his death. Deeply imbued

with the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer and the materialist naturalism of Zola, he devoted his novels to a side of life in which sordidness, misery and monotony without hope predominate. "Every man has his intellectual desire; mine is to escape life as I know it and dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood.---The world of the Greeks and the Romans is my land of romance".(1) So, in Veranilda, he sought it.

This love of classical humanism found expression in the little book of reminiscences of travel in southern Italy, By The Ionian Sea, 1901, from which the above quotation was taken. Out of the visit there recorded, he wrote Veranilda, a novel of Italy in the Sixth Century, when the western Empire was breaking up. But from reason and historical realism he could not altogether escape, and he wrote it after the model of Gustave Flaubert's Salammbô, 1862. In consequence, the warm humanistic note of affection which is the charm of By The Ionian Sea is transformed in the novel to a chill atmosphere of winter twilight by the Flaubertian objectivity of the narrator. It remains, however, as a further example of the reaction to materialistic determinism in the form of escape into the past, even

(1) By the Ionian Sea, p.13.

although it fails entirely to avoid its influence; and it declares the line of succession, to George Moore's The Brook Kerith, of the novels of historical realism in which the past is sought to be recovered for its own sake. "So hard a thing to catch and to retain, the mood corresponding perfectly to an intellectual bias -- hard, at all events, for him who cannot shape his life as he will, and whom circumstance ever menaces with dreary harassment. Alone and quiet, I heard the washing of the waves; I saw the evening fall on cloud-wreathed Etna, the twinkling lights came forth on Scylla and Charybdis; and, as I looked my last towards the Ionian Sea, I wished it were mine to wander endlessly amid the silence of the ancient world, today and all its sounds forgotten".(1)

George Moore's religious position was as individual and unpredictable as his personality. A strong anti-Catholic, who could be stupidly bigoted in his views on Catholic writers (2), he professed a Protestantism which is difficult to define unless as freedom of thought, chiefly sceptical. "I do not believe but I love protestantism", he wrote to his mother. "If it is not the faith of my brain, it is the faith of my heart".(3) In

(1) *ib.*, p.202-203.

(2) cf. Letters to John Eglinton, p.12. Moore argued that no orthodox Catholic could be a good writer.

(3) Hone - George Moore, p.327.

fact, he was a hedonist in philosophy, starting at the point at which Walter Pater's nerve had cracked -- "experience itself is the end".(1) Marius, at the same philosophic stage in his life, made it his aim "to fill up the measure of the present with vivid sensations, and such intellectual apprehensions as --- are most like sensations". (2) From a very similar aesthetic starting point, George Moore was willing to use religious ideas equally with any other sensations in life as the material of his novels, whose reality was to be judged by its own inner consistency as a creative work of art.

If The Brook Kerith, 1916, is to be judged, therefore, as a historical novel, that is to say, as an attempt to portray the "Jesus of history", then the reader is faced by some very difficult problems in judging its truth to fact. So many of the elements in the story, which directly concern Jesus -- events in His life, His characteristics, and His teaching -- are the product of the author's own imagination, that it would only confuse the issues to apply historical standards to the novel. "I am beginning, or rather have already begun 'The Apostle'" Moore wrote to

(1) cf. Pater's conclusion to The Renaissance.

(2) Marius the Epicurian, ch. IX.

Edouard Dujardin on April 30, 1914, "and after a pretty close study of the Gospels I have come over to your belief that Jesus never existed on this earth. I am by no means sure that I shall get anywhere with him.

Stripped of his miracles, the Lord is a sorry wight".(1)
As to the Gospel records, from which he took what he wanted to fit in with his own ultimate plan of the story -- "You must look upon my Jesus as an independent creation", he wrote to John Eglinton on Dec.18, 1915, "and not as an attempt to discover what the real man was from the Gospels. My view is that there is no real man in the Gospels, but a collection of odds and ends regarding one man, compiled from different sources and very often in conflict".(2)

Moore started from a psychological situation rather than a personal impression of the character and purpose of Jesus, and he built up the lineaments of the person and the story from that situation. Jesus did not die on the Cross, but was rescued by Joseph of Arimathea, nursed back to life, and retired to the wilderness as an Essene shepherd, disillusioned, his mind anaesthetised to the past, until, with the passing of the years in quietness, he could think things out. Finally, he met Paul, and

(1) Letters to Dujardin, 1929, p.104.
(2) Letters to Eglinton, p.31.

awoke to the false impression he had created in the world. "And my story will be the repentance of Jesus for his blasphemies against life, for instance that we must hate our father and mother in order to become worthy of him", he wrote to Eglinton. "—How splendid his repentance, if only I could write it, not only for saying that he was God but for all his blasphemy against life, human duty and human love.—He out-Nietzsched Nietzsche in the awful things he says".(1) As to the effect upon his religious ideas, — "If you admit that he did not die on the cross and threw himself into the present, shutting out from his thoughts the past and the future — you must admit that it is reasonable to suppose that his mind must have progressed through Pantheism to the verge of Buddhism. — I had to invent a doctrine for him, and I invented that whether we seek a corruptible or an incorruptible crown the end is the same -- desire of heavenly things leading to sin just as much as desire of earthly things -- I think on the whole I have done better with Jesus than Paul. Paul is an historical, Jesus a legendary character".(2)

To the question, then, -- is the novel true to historical reality? -- Moore would reply that the only

(1) Letters to John Eglinton, p.23-24.

(2) cf. letter to Eglinton quoted by Hone, p.328-329.

relevant question is -- is it true to the psychological situation conceived? And is it, as a work of art, one harmonious organic unity? A work of art, to have reality, must be true to its own conception. "You must look on my Jesus as an independent creation, and not as an attempt to discover who the real man was from the Gospels".(1)

Jesus, in the first part of the novel, is seen through the eyes of Joseph of Arimathea, who, while he is drawn to Him and His teachings, marvels at His lack of knowledge of the world.(2) He has His "black moods" (3) from one of which Joseph suffers, when he puts his father's need of him during a grave illness before Jesus's call to be a disciple.(4) The extraordinary incident of the sex maniac (5) distorts the teaching of Matthew XVIII. 8-9 into a justification of self-mutilation, and one cannot help wondering why Moore chose to introduce into his story an idea so foreign to the teaching of Jesus. He goes on to portray Jesus as a man who, appearing at first as a teacher of the ethics of the kingdom and a healer of the sick, later becomes absorbed in apocalyptic imaginings of His death and coming again, so that His death becomes more

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- (1) Letters to John Eglinton, p.31
(2) The Brook Kerith, p.103. Compare Renan, p.44-45, Chap. III.
(3) *ib.*, p.151-152. Footnote references are to the "Penguin" edition.
(4) *ib.*, p.152.
(5) *ib.*, chap. XIV., p.143.

important to Him than the coming of the kingdom (1) In the end, the adulation and titles of honour given to Him by His following go to His head, and by the time of His entry into Jerusalem His "heart is swollen with pride". (2) The resultant character study seems insufficient to explain Joseph's faith in Him in the story. There is an ugly scene in which the disciples rail at Jesus for not returning again in His "chariot of fire", and quarrel over the use of the laying on of hands and the importance they were to have in the kingdom. Peter, James and John are anxious to have it known that they no longer believe Jesus was Messiah.(3) Of the disciples in the story, Moore wrote to Eglinton, "I have taken pleasure in exhibiting them as a scurvy lot". (4)

Moore drew his materials as he needed them from the Gospels (excluding John) and from the interpretations of "liberal Gospel" historians. There is no orthodoxy of the liberal Gospel -- it is a case of every man for himself -- but Renan serves better for comparison and contrast of views, than the more extreme Édouard Dujardin, whose knowledge and judgment Moore consulted much and valued highly.(5) I have, therefore, appended notes of

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- (1) The Brook Kerith, p.177.
 - (2) ib.,p.185. Compare Renan, p.133.
 - (3) ib.,p.211-212.
 - (4) Letters to Eglinton, p.33.
 - (5) See Letters from George Moore to Édouard Dujardin 1886-1922, New York, 1929.

reference to Renan's Vie de Jesus where comparison may usefully be made. The whole interpretation of Jesus's ministry as beginning in moral teaching of the Kingdom and ending in His self-absorption in His Messiahship, the climax of the Crucifixion being His realisation that He had been mistaken in His hope of a divine deliverance, is substantially in agreement with Renan's. Joseph's judgment on Jesus after His death -- "The highest I have met among men" (1) compares with Renan's resort to human superlatives to describe Jesus in the final chapter of his book.(2) The main point of difference between them is in Moore's complete rejection of John's Gospel, while Renan is content to use it for incident and teaching. Renan, for example, accepts the spear-thrust at the Crucifixion (3); Moore rejects it as "John's coup de théâtre".(4)

Paul is pictured as a man obsessed with his visionary experience, so that it has more meaning to him than the discovery that Jesus is alive after all. Any attempt to persuade him to the contrary provokes him to violent rage and risks the occurrence of an epileptic fit, as Jesus discovers.(5) In the end, Paul continues his way back to

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- (1) The Brook Kerith, p.219.
(2) Renan, Vie de Jesus, p.222,ff.
(3) Renan, p.213.
(4) Letters to Eglinton, p.76-77.
(5) The Brook Kerith, p.367.

Caesarea, reassured that Jesus will not go to Jerusalem "to provoke the Jews against him". Neither Paul's intellectual nor his moral integrity, as shown in his letters, will support this reading of his character and mental condition. George Moore seems to have felt the weakness in this part of the story himself, and in a letter to Sir Edmund Gosse, written on August 15, 1923, he told him how he should have written the same scene in the third act of his play, The Apostle. "And I, too, Jesus would say, was an inspired prophet when I preached in Galilee. I thought that when the prophet that was in me died, I would be borne up to heaven. This would give Paul an idea which he would avail himself of.---The Jesus that I have always preached, the spiritual Jesus, died on the cross. The story that I have preached is a true story, -- truer than I knew it to be, for now I have heard it from Jesus himself".(1) This appears a little more rational: nevertheless, it still does not credit Paul with much moral or intellectual honesty.

Paul at the end of Moore's story clings to his obsession with his revelation. "It is enough that the Lord Jesus spoke to me, and that His voice has abided in me and become my voice. It is His voice that is now

(1) cf. Conversations in Ebury Street, p.245,ff.

calling me to Rome——" (1)

Jesus sets aside the idea of returning to Jerusalem to proclaim the truth to the world. He has discovered His faith on the hillsides. "And as I wandered with my sheep he (God) became in my senses not without but within the universe, part and parcel, not only of the stars and of the earth, but of me, yea, even of my sheep on the hillside -- It came to me to understand that all striving was vain, and worse than vain".(2) And on that note of quietist Pantheism, Jesus turns back into the hills. The reader is left to infer that he will probably join a company of Buddhist monks on their way back to India.

The style, which is based on that of oral narrative, attempts to avoid what Moore felt to be the breaks of interest in the average novel, in passing from dialogue to narrative and back again, or from the present to retrospect, or again from the point of view of one character to that of another. He therefore modelled his style on common speech in telling a story, claiming that he was thus being more faithful to the true origin of the novel in a fable told by word of mouth. By multiplying minor transitions, he avoided the jerk to the reader's attention caused by the major transition. One

(1) The Brook Kerith, p.377.

(2) ib., p.374.

result of this in The Brook Kerith, however, is that it becomes monotonous reading. It also puts more strain on the reader's attention just because he must note these transitions of interest which the author is so carefully concealing. On the whole, John Eglinton's comment on this development of his style is probably truest -- that it is "more praised than read".(1)

The best parts of the book are the account of the boyhood of Joseph of Arimathea in Galilee.(2) Esora's care and treatment of the wounded Jesus, and His slow recovery during the weeks of hiding in Joseph's garden on the Mount of Olives (3) and, perhaps best of all, the story of the buying and saving of the stud lamb by Jesus as shepherd to the Essenes.(4) In these parts Moore's method of building up his scenes by meticulous selection of, and attention to detail, and without intruding as narrator to give a general comment or value-judgment on the mental state or character he is describing, is seen at its best. In the incident of the lamb, referred to above, simply by describing the practical and technical means by which the shepherd concentrated his care upon it on his journey, he comes closer to a genuine original

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- (1) Letters to Eglinton, Introduction, p.12.
(2) The Brook Kerith, chs.1-4.
(3) ib., p.202, ff., ch.19.
(4) ib., chs.25-26, p.247-257.

insight into a fundamental quality in Jesus's character as it is revealed in the Gospels, than at any other point in the book.

At the same time, this method of building up atmosphere or character through the concrete things of life, and through the sensations and activities associated with them, is typical of the "sensationalism" of the author's values, and the limitations as well as the significance of what he could accomplish through them. The Brook Kerith is a neo-pagan picture of Jesus, built up out of the concrete experiences and sensations of life, which for the aesthetic philosophy have value. These, experienced through the senses -- not religious or mystical apprehensions -- are the source of knowledge. What is, therefore, notably absent is religious experience, and the sense of communion which that gives. Like Pater, George Moore lacked that. The Brook Kerith is a work of art, but, apart from that, it cannot be said that there is any particular value for which it stands. It contains the author's ideas about Jesus, but it lacks the feeling of direct apprehension of Jesus which is the contribution of personal faith to our knowledge of Him.

The anonymous novel, By An Unknown Disciple, 1918 the personal memoirs of one who was just outside the Twelve

but still on intimate terms with Jesus, and a well-to-do landowner of Galilee, gives his own description of selected incidents, together with his own explanation of what it meant to them at the time. The stress is on the humanity of Jesus throughout. Miracle is played down, and the nature miracles are ignored. Jesus is shown rather as a psychological healer (though there is a power passing from Him) conveying inner peace and casting out fear.

This disciple thinks the teaching of Jesus is much more important than His healing (1), and the most striking thing about His teaching is its simplicity. "He did not teach us as the Rabbis did, as if the mystery of the knowledge of God was too great for an ignorant man to understand. — When He talked of God's love for man, I felt He told us of what He Himself had learned, and of what I, too, could learn. It seemed that even the most simple could understand".(2) It is noticeable that the teaching put into the mouth of Jesus is often an amalgam of sayings from all four Gospels without reference to time or place. "The Kingdom of God will never be found by looking for it", said Jesus. "You will never be able to say, Lo, here, or, Lo, there is the Kingdom. The Kingdom

(1) By An Unknown Disciple, p.69.

(2) ib., p.69.

of God is within you. Whoever shall know himself shall find it.-- It is in the hearts of men that God is dwelling. Let him who seeks the Kingdom cease not till he find it. Strive to know yourselves, and you shall be aware that you are the sons of the Father. No man has seen God, yet if we love one another we live in God and God in us. This is the true bread, the bread that God gives, that gives life to the world".(1)

Portions of the Agrapha and Papyrus "Sayings of Jesus" are worked into the teaching, as if to suggest the use of the original oral tradition of the Gospel;--for example, the words of Oxyrhynchus Papyrus I, verse 8, are embodied in the account of the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. "I found all men drunken, and none found I athirst."(2) I have poured out my soul and no man heeds. Oh my people, what have I done that you will not love me? What more ought I to do?" (3)

The author has reservations about the Person of Jesus. When the saying, "come unto me --" from Matthew XI. 28-30, is used, Jesus is made to say, "When you welcomed me today, you welcomed God, who has sent me as His messenger. Therefore, it is in God's name that I tell you that your Father cares for you. God's message is,

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- (1) By An Unknown Disciple, p.131.
(2) cf. James - Apoc. New Testament, p.27.
(3) By An Unknown Disciple, p.204.

Come unto me, all you who toil and bear burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn to be gentle and lowly minded. Walk in the good way, and you shall find rest for your souls. For God's yoke is easy, and burdens borne for Him seem light".(1) The first sentence is a paraphrasing of John, XII. 45, -- "He that seeth me seeth him that sent me", which significantly qualifies John's conception of the oneness of Jesus with the Father. And the transference of emphasis in the Great Invitation points in the same direction. Jesus is the Rabbi, the teacher, the messenger, but no more than that.

The burden of witness to the Resurrection is transferred from a factual record of appearances to the change in the lives of the disciples. The Unknown Disciple was prostrate with illness during this period, and only heard afterwards what happened from Mary Magdalene. He is at first incredulous. Mary's argument is -- "But what does it matter what I saw, body or spirit? I saw Jesus alive still, and whereas I was in misery I am now full of joy". --Men everywhere are asking what has happened to us. When you see Peter and John again, you can judge for yourself. Peter is altogether changed.

(1) ib., p.90-91.

People are asking "How have these barbarous and contemptible people suddenly become wise? Who has given them this? How have they been instructed?"(1)

The author, however, is not clear in his own mind what the nature of this experience is. The disciple goes north to Galilee, and there, at night on a mountainside, has an experience of communion with, it may be, nature, or it may be, with the hallowed associations and memories which the mountain recalls -- it is, at any rate, an emotion which brings back hope. With the dawn, -- "The sun came up behind the mountains, and the shadows lay from east to west along the plain. It was then that the vision came to me. I saw nothing. I heard nothing, but as the dawn spread slowly over the land, waking the earth to beauty, something awoke in my heart. I do not know what it was. -- The earth spread before me, bathed in a light that men seldom saw, a clear radiance that transfigured each familiar place and gave the world the beauty of a dream. And yet it was still the earth. --So it was with my soul. An intense still joy awoke in my heart ---and the old gay sense of something added to life came back to me. It seemed as though Jesus had watched by me all night and I had not known it. The

(1) ib., p.261-262.

place was full of his presence. Or was it only that the earth was my healer?". (1)

This is a mood which recalls the nature mysticism of Wordsworth rather than the New Testament experience of the Resurrection --

"that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on, --
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things". (2)

One might compare with it, too, William Hale White's description of the spiritual inspiration which Wordsworth's nature mysticism gave to him. "God was brought from that heaven of the books, and dwelt on the downs in the far-away distances, and in every cloud-shadow which wandered across the valley. Wordsworth unconsciously did for me what every spiritual reformer has done -- he recreated my Supreme Divinity; substituting a new and living spirit for the

(1) By An Unknown Disciple, p.264.

(2) Lines Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, 1798.

old deity, once alive, but gradually hardened into an idol".(1) The Unknown Disciple is close to the same mood and experience when he writes, --"I had seen the transformation in the look of life that an emotion brings. A remembrance of beauty and love and immortal passion, the romance of the earth and of life had hold of me".(2) Nevertheless, all this is considerably short of an experience of communion with a risen Lord, although it is a strong emotional experience such as an imaginative religious person can feel.

In great measure, too, the Unknown Disciple's view is a reflection of the changing emphasis which was at this time taking place in the dialectical exposition of the Resurrection experiences. As a result of historical criticism of the records, less emphasis was being placed on the nature of the actual manifestations recorded, and more on the effect on the lives of the men and women who experienced them. "Something happened"--that was the argument of T.R. Glover in The Jesus of History, 1917. "The resurrection is, to a historian, not very clear in its details. But is it the detail or the central fact that matters? Take away the resurrection, however it happened, whatever it was, and the history of the Church is

(1) Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, 1881, p.18-19.

(2) By An Unknown Disciple, p.265.

unintelligible".(1) This is substantially the line of argument followed by the author of By An Unknown Disciple, except that the novelist has failed to realise that the argument from the changed character of the disciples is simply a supporting case intended to counter-balance possible defects in the documentary evidence, and is not intended either as a substitute for, or a description of, the nature of that experience. The Unknown Disciple's nature mysticism is an attempt to supply what he feels to be lacking, a substitute, more compatible with the author's own comprehension and experience, for the Resurrection appearances recorded by the disciples in the Gospels. The Unknown Disciple's estimate of the Gospel has rested throughout the book on the teaching of the Kingdom rather than on anything else about Jesus, and least of all on His Person. As a natural result, he can make very little of the Resurrection experience, except as one of emotional inspiration, however, mediated, after the death of Christ.

In one respect, By An Unknown Disciple, is a logical development of the trends of liberal thought regarding miracle, and, in particular, regarding the nature of the Resurrection: in another respect, it is significant of the sudden and overwhelming disturbance which had taken place in the religious and social outlook of the people at this

(2) p.188.

time, with the close of the First World War. In regard to the first point, the description of the "resurrection experience" in the book is close to the final view taken by E.A. Abbott in Silanus the Christian, 1906, -- "not a vision -- more like a feeling"(1) --- although in his strictly qualified interpretation of Jesus Christ's personal significance for faith the Unknown Disciple goes far beyond anything that Abbott conceived. For the author, and for the large public that read the book, this is Jesus as He was, stripped of theological interpretation. We may say now, as we look back on it, --"Why, the whole thing is tendentious. It is the story of Jesus, censored and re-interpreted for a generation that would not think of religion except in terms of rationalised personal experience". The surprising thing, however, is -- and this is the significance of the second point I mentioned above -- that this radical view of Jesus, which would have been regarded as a highly controversial novel in 1906, when Silanus the Christian was published by Dr. Abbott, was received in 1918 as an affirmation of belief, and was welcomed as a positive contribution and support to religion in a day when all authorities and accepted ideas of life were being cast aside.

(1) Discussed above in Chapter VI, p.222,ff.

At the end of Chapter VI., I quoted Marie Corelli's Barabbas as an example of the popular demand for a story about Jesus, couched in the language of exaggerated religiosity and with every aspect of His divinity over-emphasised. Now, at the end of the first two decades of the 20th. Century, comes the swing of the pendulum to the opposite extreme; and a picture of Jesus which minimises all but the Teacher of Righteousness is received and welcomed as a support for the cause of personal religion. Nothing could be more strikingly indicative of the change which the war years had wrought on the general outlook and values of the people.

The author of By An Unknown Disciple wrote two further New Testament novels, Paul the Jew, 1927, and Paul the Christian, 1930, which contained his further conclusions drawn from this primary position. The consideration of these, which are characteristic of many of the novels in the next two decades, will be given in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIIINOVELS, MOSTLY OF SCEPTICISM, 1920-1939.

"Our dogmas then
 With both of us, though in unlike degree,
 Missing full credence ... overboard with them!"

-- Robert Browning - Bishop Blougram's Apology.

"They are gone hunting for Thy soul, O Lord,
 Deep-diving down into time's endless wells;
 Profounder than all sounds of chaunting and
bells,
 They have let slip their learning's lengthy cord".

-- W. R. Childe.

"The New Testament was less a Christiad than a
 Pauliad to his intelligence".

-- Thomas Hardy - Tess of the D'Urbervilles. ch.25.

I. THE RECONSTRUCTION OF A POINT OF VIEW.

Anonymous - Paul the Jew, 1927.

- - Paul the Christian, 1930.

Donn Byrne - Brother Saul, 1927.

Mary Borden - Mary of Nazareth, 1933.

Mary Borden - The King of the Jews, 1935.

F.L. Lucas - The Hydra, short story in The Woman Clothed with the Sun, 1935.

Sholem Asch - The Nazarene, 1939.

Naomi Mitchison - The Blood of the Martyrs, 1939.

2. HISTORICAL NOVELS.

Naomi Mitchison - The Conquered, 1923.

- - - When the Bough Breaks, 1924.

W.P. Crozier - Letters of Pontius Pilate, 1928.

Leon Feuchtwanger - Josephus, 1932.

- - - The Jew of Rome, 1935.

- - - The Day Will Come, 1942.

Rudyard Kipling - Limits and Renewals, 1932. Short stories - The Church that was in Antioch; and The Manner of Men.

Robert Graves - I, Claudius, 1934.

- - - Claudius the God, 1934.

3. NOVELS OF ROMANCE.

Catherine Christian - The Legions Go North, 1935.

4. NOVELS OF RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT.

John Oxenham - The Hidden Years, 1925.

A.T. Sheppard - The Autobiography of Judas Iscariot, 1920.

John Oxenham - The Splendour of the Dawn, 1930.

5. THE "TRACT FOR THE TIMES."

A secondary element in the other four types of novel.

The effect of the First World War was to hasten forward processes of change that were already at work. The movement towards social and political reform was greatly accelerated. Greater freedom from the trammels of authority and convention in religious and ethical thinking was a general accompaniment of the prevailing mood of social unrest. For the many thousands who had served in the war, their sense of the spiritual worth of human life had been depressed, and their moral hope in human striving and idealism blunted, by the sordid surroundings and destructiveness of modern warfare and the incidence of mass casualties in action.

Fundamentally, it was a spirit of general revolt which was aptly expressed in the titles of two books of war memories produced in the 'twenties -- Disenchantment, 1922, by C.E. Montague, and Goodbye to All That, 1929, by Robert Graves. It was a mood of revolt against authority, convention and institutions (especially the Church), against parents and elders (as wielders of authority in the family), against things as they were. In practice, it was an assertion of freedom to do what one liked. The approach to problems was very personal and individualistic, markedly so in religious questions.

This is a noticeable characteristic of By An Unknown Disciple, 1918. The reality of the Resurrection, for example, is there studied only from the point of view of the individual, and does not take into consideration the power of that experience, as something shared, to bring the scattered and broken disciples together into the first Church of the upper room, and to mark their common religious experience as well as their personal thinking in a way that is unmistakably post-Resurrection.

The average young mind in the nineteen-twenties saw religion, when it saw it at all, as a personal experience, and counted institutional religion something of much lower value, as the creator of dogmas and of the conventions of ritual worship. The next two decades, therefore, saw a considerable number of novels whose purpose was the reconstruction of a personal point of view towards Christianity. A second search for the historical Jesus began, comparable in many ways to the search of the Biblical scholars in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century. Much of the old ground and problems covered by Renan and his successors was traversed all over again -- the evidence of prophecy and miracle, the idea of the atonement, the nature of the Resurrection, the historicity of the Gospel tradition, questions

concerning the divine element in the life of Jesus, and who founded the Church, Jesus or Paul -- but this time by laymen and laywomen, mostly professional novelists, seeking to discover for themselves and to picture to others what seemed to them to remain of the life and works of Jesus out of the wreckage of traditional faith. The period was also marked by the number of literary "lives" or studies of Jesus, of which T. R. Glover's The Jesus of History, 1917, and John Middleton Murry's Life of Jesus, 1926, were the most outstanding. (1)

The types of the Early Christian novel are by now clearly defined. First, in chronological order of appearance, there is the historical romance, such as Lockhart's Valerius, 1821, and Bulwer Lytton's The Last Days of Pompeii, 1834. Secondly, there is the novel of religious sentiment, such as Cobbold's Zenon the Martyr, 1847, or Mrs. Charles's The Victory of the Vanquished, 1870, written not simply to beguile but to instruct and to convey religious truth with religious feeling. Thirdly, there is the novel with a purpose, the tract for the times, such as Kingsley's Hypatia, 1853, and Newman's Callista, 1856. Fourthly, there is the strictly historical novel, realistic, the past recovered for its own sake, such as Flaubert's Salammbô, 1862, Pater's

(1) Others - J. A. Findlay - Jesus as they Saw Him, 1921:
Giovanni Papini - The Story of Christ, 1924:
Emil Ludwig - The Son of Man, 1928:
Bruce Barton - The Man Nobody Knows, 1926.

Marius the Epicurean, 1885, and Gissing's Veranilda, 1904. Fifthly, there is the novel reconstructing a point of view, such as Edwin A. Abbott's Philochristus, 1878, or the anonymous As Others Saw Him, 1895. These should not be regarded as mutually exclusive classifications; they describe the predominant characteristic of each novel, which may combine with ^{it} the qualities of the other classifications in varying proportions.

When the Early Christian novels of the next two decades, 1920-1939, are examined under these classifications, a radical change in feeling and taste is at once seen to have taken place. The romantic element practically disappears. There is only one novel of which one can say that it is predominantly romantic in its treatment of the Early Christian theme, and even it is not free from the critical, independent mood of the times. (1) It was evidently a discouraging period for romance.

The novel of religious sentiment, too, has only three books to its credit -- John Oxenham's The Hidden Years, 1925, The Splendour of the Dawn, 1930, and A. Tressider Sheppard's The Autobiography of Judas Iscariot, 1920. Oxenham's books are romantic only in so far as they describe the feeling for the early Christian life with the quality of idealised memories. The Hidden Years tries to recapture the boyhood

(1) Catherine Christian's The Legions Go North, 1935. I have held over consideration of it in order to take novels marked by theosophy or comparative religion together.

of Jesus, through the eyes of a friend, Azor, who becomes his disciple in due course. It is an idyllic picture, the miraculous element of a wonder tale never far away, of the atmosphere of family life in which Jesus grew up, written with a sincerity that conveys religious feeling. In one respect, it shows evidence of the newer freedom of outlook. In its picture of Jesus's growing sense of the call of God to Him and of the sacrifice it demanded, he describes the young man Jesus as having loved a young girl in purity of heart, but realising that the sacrifice of such human links was part of the offering that God called upon Him to make. The story of how he learned this is told with delicacy of feeling, but the fact remains that no earlier author in this particular edificatory type of fiction would have risked such an idea in connection with Jesus. The Splendour of the Dawn, 1930, describes the relations of a young Roman with the first Christians in Jerusalem and Galilee, beginning with the Crucifixion and ending with Paul's return to Palestine as a convert. Again, the element of romance only appears in so far as it enters into the idealised picture of Christian relations described with a nostalgic quality of religious feeling for the life of the primitive Church.

A. Tressider Sheppard's The Autobiography of Judas Iscariot, 1920, is best described as a novel of religious sentiment, so far as its picture of Jesus is concerned.

Judas is a difficult character to fit into the leading part in a novel. Modern writers have tended to feel that there was something to be said in mitigation of his wholehearted condemnation by tradition.(1) He at least had grace to confess his sin and feel remorse for what he had done. There have been more thoroughgoing villains in history, but never a more miserable betrayer than Judas. Satan made himself the hero of Paradise Lost; Faust and Don Juan both stole the heroic part in their respective legends; and in Byron's hands the "wicked lord" became a hero of literary convention. It would seem, as G. B. Shaw says, that there is something even impressive in "the heroism of daring to be the enemy of God".(2) But Judas by every account fails to measure up to anything more than a very miserable fellow, and there is no example of a successful novel with him as the chief character in the story. A. T. Sheppard describes him as a man who believed himself born to wield power. Eric Linklater's Judas treats him as a "pacifist" and a neurotic, and, written as it was in 1939, may qualify as the one novel in the "tract for the times" class in this period. But it is difficult, in fact, to see why it was written at all.

The "tract for the times" motive may be regarded as

(1) cf., De Quincey's essay on Judas Iscariot; Mark Rutherford's essay of the same title; and Robert Buchanan's Ballad of Judas Iscariot.

(2) cf. the Introduction to Man and Superman.

a strong secondary motive in the novels which reconstruct a point of view. On the other hand, the qualities of religious sentiment and romance are both much weaker secondary elements. The head rules the heart in this analytical, gospel-paring type of fiction, and both religious sentiment and romance suffered a spell of depression in the novels of this period. There remain, then, the two final classifications, novels reconstructing a personal point of view towards Christianity, and historical novels recapturing the past for its own sake. Both are types of historical novel, but the former class has its special intellectualised religious interest. I shall therefore take the novels of reconstruction first.

In the first two novels to be reviewed, Paul the Jew, 1927, and Paul the Christian, 1930, the author of By An Unknown Disciple resumes his narrative, this time of the primitive Church, from the point of view of Paul. Paul the Jew presents him in the last three years of his pre-conversion period, as already a missionary of Judaism to the Gentiles -- an interesting suggestion, and characteristic of this author's tendency to emphasise what Paul brought to Christianity rather than what Christianity gave to him. He finds out in the course

of his travels how burdensome and unjust the Law can be to the peasants among his fellow-Jews; and how little certainty of salvation it offers to the Gentile convert who, though circumcised, is still barred from the inner court of the Temple. Such plot as there is, follows Paul's contacts and conversations with various fellow-travellers on two journeys, one from Jerusalem to Tarsus at the time of Jesus's Galilean ministry, and the other, two years later, from Tarsus back to Jerusalem after he has heard his father's steward, Gideon, describing the events at Jerusalem leading up to the Crucifixion, which he witnessed. This time, Paul intends to go on a missionary journey to Arabia.(1)

The author's description of Saul,-- crooked legs (2) and "black eyebrows that met above the big hooked nose" (3), -- is drawn from the Acts of Paul and Thecla (4). At Antioch he meets Barnabas, with whom he had quarrelled about Jesus on his last journey, now living a communal life in the Christian community there. (5) Barnabas has not himself seen the risen Lord, but he claims that Peter and James have both seen Him. (6) To Saul's question -- Why should God raise Him? -- Barnabas replies, "Because He is Messiah....God wanted to show us that we live after death, so He gave Jesus a body,

(1) By An Unknown Disciple, p.161,ff.

(2) ib., p.73.

(3) ib., p.137.

(4) cf. James, Apoc. N.T., p.273

(5) op.cit., p.224

(6) ib., p.225.

and He died and lives again".(1) The Kingdom which Jesus proclaimed is expounded by Barnabas in terms of the "social Gospel". "He wanted us to make a different world, a world without slaves, where money would not buy everything, where force would be at the disposal of the weak and not the strong, where Judges would not take bribes and would protect the accused".(2) Paul the Jew ends with the stoning of Stephen, largely at Paul's instigation, and with his start on the journey to Damascus, now bitterly remorseful for Stephen's death, the following day.

Paul the Christian, 1930, carries on the story from the death of Stephen. Nothing is made of the "crisis" form of his conversion on the road to Damascus. It is described as an intellectual conclusion arrived at by Paul, re-thinking his faith in the light of his deep remorse for the death of Stephen. "God had sent Jesus...perhaps His Son...and Jesus like the scapegoat...had taken the sins of the people on His head. The price for redemption had been paid. The Law was fulfilled".(3) "And the resurrection which showed that Jesus lived after death proved also that men made by God with His own attributes could live eternally. They had only to have faith. God would do the rest. Paul's brain worked with a

(1) op.cit.,p.225

(2) ib.,p.230.

(3) Paul the Christian, p.31.

clarity and precision that left him without doubt that its conclusions were revelations". (1)

The rest of the story follows out the theme of the tensions between Paul and Peter. The starting-point of that tension, in Paul's absorption in his own intellectual process of interpretation is clearly indicated at their first meeting in Jerusalem. Paul..."My revelation came straight from Christ". "It's not what Jesus taught", Peter interrupted. "You mean the Son of God?" Paul asked coldly. "We called Him Jesus", Peter snapped. "His earthly name may have been Jesus", Paul began....(2) There is conflict of temperament as well as of teaching; but the two are pictured as reconciled in Rome on the eve of their arrest. "We have both been fools, Paul. What with your pride and my cowardice,...it's a wonder the Church ever grew...You see, Jesus brought new life... like the Spring. We may both have been bad guardians of that, but it doesn't depend on us!" (3) Nevertheless, in spite of the reconciliation, the point of judgment by the author has already been made in the story that Paul theologised and Hellenised the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that the effects of this are to be seen in his epistles.

(1) *ib.*, p. 32.
 (2) *op. cit.*, p. 76.
 (3) *ib.*, p. 331-2.

Brother Saul, by Donn Byrne, published in 1927, is a more ambitious attempt to follow Paul's life from his boyhood in Tarsus to his death in Rome. It owes a great deal more to Renan's portrait of the Apostle in St. Paul, 1867 -- for example, in the matter of his so-called attraction for women,(1) which in the novel is more innocently interpreted, in the use made of the Ebionite calumnies in the Ascents of James (2) (though Byrne does give them the basis that Paul was in fact a suitor of the daughter of Caiaphas in his youth); and in interpreting the Epistles of James and Jude as breathing virulent enmity against Paul, Luke, Timothy and their friends.(3) The story does not seek to avoid the reality of the Resurrection appearances of Jesus, or to explain them away, but represents Paul as untroubled about whether they were in the body or in the spirit. "What did it matter? The greatest thing in the world was that He had lived and had died, and still lived".(4)

The tension between Paul and the Apostles Peter and James is widened into an open breach, resulting in the Judaisers sending out a rival mission, and the entire story is dominated by it. The scene in Jerusalem, on Paul's first visit after his conversion, at which Peter and James advise him to go away, is told with great

(1) cf., Renan, St. Paul, vol. 1., p. 88, ff.

(2) See James, Apoc. N. T., p. 20, for an account of the Ascents of James; also Renan, St. Paul, vol. 1., p. 182. cf. also Brother Saul, p. 64, ff.

(3) Jude, vv. 12-13. cf. also Brother Saul, p. 466-7.

(4) Brother Saul p. 194.

bitterness. James the Lord's brother questions Paul, to discover whether his vision bore any likeness to Jesus, and laughs at his reply. "Saul, go from us", Peter said, "go from us and leave us in peace". "One of you denied Him", said Saul bitterly, "and one of you did not believe in Him".(1)

On a balance, Paul gains and Peter loses in the telling of the story.(2) Paul organises his churches into a tight unity independently of Jerusalem, and makes his collections a means of putting them under an obligation. The letters of Paul are used as material for his teaching and speeches; but they are used uncritically, as when Hebrews, chapter XI, is quoted as a speech in the synagogue of Berea (3), and again in his final defence speech in Rome.(4) The pictures of Paul's closing sense of isolation from, and antipathy to, developments of thought and politics in the Church in Rome, together with his feeling of ineffectiveness in the long-term results of his missionary work, compares with Renan's summing up of Paul's life in his biography.(5)

The account of Peter's Rome activities is deliberately derogatory to his historic prestige in the Church; and I cannot help feeling that here Donn Byrne was writing with contemporary polemics strongly in his mind, to an

(1) *ib.*, p.207.

(2) *cf.* p.404-5 for an example of this.

(3) *ib.*, p.392-4.

(4) *ib.*, p.471.

(5) Brother Saul, p.464-468. *cf.* Renan, St. Paul. vol.11., p.161-4.

extent that prejudices the whole picture of Paul's relations with Peter throughout the story. "A North of Ireland man", he once described himself, "what you would call a Protestant -- though we consider ourselves belonging to the Catholic Church according to the reformed articles".(1) As a Protestant, he was for Paul in any quarrel with Peter, and as a man he was as self-willed and independent in his judgments as any Ulsterman can be. "He never re-wrote a book or story, and hardly altered a word", wrote his friend Thurston Macaulay of him; "his manuscripts are cleanly written sheets with almost no changes of markings. And he never took advice from anybody".(2) That goes a long way to explain this story of Paul, so full of life and turmoil and enmities, and leaving Paul so solitary at the last.

Mary of Nazareth, 1933, by Mary Borden, tells the story in a way which concentrates the interest on the mind of His mother towards Jesus. Both in this and in her following novel, The King of the Jews, 1935, she gives the woman's angle on the story of Christ. The psychological situation of Mary of Nazareth is built on the following New Testament references. 1. Jesus had brothers and sisters. Matthew XIII. 54-58; Mark VI. 1-5. 2. Jesus was Mary's first-born. Luke 11. 7.

(1) Thurston Macaulay, Donn Byrne, p.132.
 (2) ib., p.126-7.

3. His family did not believe in Him. John VII. 5.

At one time they thought He was out of His mind. Mark III.

21. 4. Mary lived on in the town whose people tried to kill Jesus. Luke IV. 16-30.

The first part of the book takes the story from the time when Jesus leaves home for Jordan to His rejection in Nazareth. There is a very effectively etched cross-section of the gossip of the town on Jesus's going away, the mother's silent struggle with her own inner hurt over His going, her worry about His ways, which she cannot understand, and her terror of what will happen to one who can say, as He did once to her, "I know God". After the rejection, she finds herself carried along by the implacable opposition of James to his brother, into a plan to take Jesus by force into custody, on the ground that He is out of His mind. There follows the incident described in Matthew XII. 46-50, and Mary returns home bearing the further hurt of Jesus's words, "Who is my mother?..." Yet out of it all, she realises that whatever Jesus may do, she will want to help Him and be with Him, though she cannot understand His Gospel and does not believe that He is the Deliverer.

In the last part of the story, Jesus has been

excommunicated for His association with outcasts and for breaking the Law. Mary goes to her Nazareth rabbi to ask, ...if she goes and cares for Him, will she be accursed, too? ... yet makes it plain that she intends to accept whatever is the penalty, though not because she believes He is the Messiah.

There follows an account of her journey towards Jerusalem in the track of Jesus, along with Mary Magdalene, and this is one of the notable descriptions of the book.(1) Always, she is behind Jesus; and only on arriving at the house of Mark's mother does she hear of His arrest. The Crucifixion is told in very few words (with a commendable restraint), and the final picture is of Mary standing at the foot of the Cross with the other Mary, the crowd having drawn back because it is "accursed ground". Mary stands there because it is accursed. "And all the crowd had withdrawn so that they should not be defiled by the ground that was accursed, but his mother stood near the foot of the cross in the gully under the great wall and the other two Marys stood with her, and it was right for her to be there. Was she not a woman of Israel?"(2)

Mary of Nazareth is in a very real and personal way the woman's point of view towards Jesus, and one which

(1) Mary of Nazareth, p.232-246
 (2) ib., p.295.

notes the large part played by the women in the culminating crisis of His life and death. "But John, the very young disciple, had found his way to the Cross, and stood there with Mary the mother of Jesus. --- Peter was not there, nor James nor John, the sons of Zebedee, nor his cousin Simon, nor any of his disciples. Nor was it his death that proved to them at last that he was the Messiah, but his resurrection; and perhaps had it not been for Mary of Magdala, no one would ever have seen him after his death, or believed, or known that he was the immortal Son of God come to save the world. For it was she who went first to the sepulchre and found it empty and met him...."(1) The principal concern of the novel, however, is with the working out of the purely human relationship of Jesus with His mother, given the situation created by His all-powerful and over-riding belief that God had called Him into a special relationship and for a particular purpose towards which He was set apart. The point that I wish to stress is that it is a human study, rather than a religious one, of their relationship. Within that humanistic limitation of its significance, it is a finely and sensitively drawn portrait of the Mother's mind and feelings toward Jesus as His ministry developed.

(1) *ib.*, p.297-298.

The King of the Jews, 1935, on the other hand, attempts to weave together into one pattern the threads of all those who took part in the Resurrection experiences, while leaving the author's own view of their nature and significance in considerable doubt. The swift transitions of the narrative from one person's angle to another, from one point of time to another, its "throw-backs" to the past, after the manner of a film, to explain present happenings, and its "pre-views" of the future, to explain why the account of what they saw is different from what they saw in fact, - all combine to give the story a confused, spasmodic movement, and detract from its unity and definition as an imaginative picture of the events.

In so far as it does, however, have a definite theme, it is once more the primary part played by the women in the final events of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. The reader is left in no doubt that in the author's mind the women come out of the story of Christian origins far better than the men. "All acknowledged the important part played by the women. It was certainly the women who witnessed the agony of Jesus on the Cross, the women who in the end first spread the rumour that he was alive. And although the names of the women were not in

each case the same, all accounts agreed that Mary Magdalene watched by the sepulchre and saw the Lord".(1) When Mary Magdalene, who could not believe that the Lord was dead but only asleep, found the tomb empty, she ran back to tell Peter, who promptly fled, advising all the others to do the same for fear they should be arrested and charged with stealing His body. They fled to Galilee. There follow accounts of the appearance of Jesus to Mary at the tomb (recorded as in John, chapter XX.), the appearance on the road to Emmaus (2), (told as in Luke, XXIV. 13,ff., but identified with Zebedee and Alphaeus on the start of their journey to Galilee), the appearance to Peter on the Lake (3), as in John XXI. 1-17, and finally the appearance to the five hundred on the mountainside, as in I Corinthians XV. 6.

This last appearance takes place on the mountainside where Jesus had fed the five thousand with loaves and fishes, and the followers are gathered by Peter in response to Christ's command to him by the lake: "Feed my sheep". They sing the psalm, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us but unto Thy name give glory";(4) they say the Lord's prayer, and wait. "And it began to grow dark, as it had done that other time, for the shadow of the mountain came down and covered them. But far behind

(1) op. cit. 140-141.
 (2) ib., 176-181.
 (3) ib., p.215.
 (4) P.S. 115.

and below them the lake appeared shining. And then he appeared.

"Someone in the throng whispered, 'Look, there he is', and another said, 'There on the slope. Just above the disciples', and men began pointing and women began to cry softly, 'Yes. Yes. There he is. There, where the light of the sunset comes through the cleft in the rock. Look, he is coming nearer". And then suddenly all the five hundred saw him and a shout went up like the shout of a giant.

"'Jesus the Redeemer! Jesus the Deliverer! Jesus our saviour and king is come again!'" (1)

At a council in Peter's house, they decide on future policy. The appearances of Jesus have been to prepare them for His glorious advent, and their duty meantime is to proclaim their crucified Lord to be the Messiah. They move to Jerusalem, where the Pentecost experience takes place, and the accompanying phenomena of speaking with tongues absorb their meetings.(2) The story now develops into a series of descriptions of what the risen Lord has suffered at the hands of His followers.

First, the disciples, ... "Poor deluded little army, they were so certain that their leader was coming in clouds

(1) op. cit., p.220.
 (2) ib., p.241.

of glory to rule over Israel".(1) Then Saul of Tarsus founded churches with an elaborate government and a "mighty system of law in the name of the man who gave only two commands to his friends. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God---and---Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. That was all that Jesus demanded. But it was going to prove too much. His friends loved him, believed in him, expected him and defended him. But they couldn't obey him".(2)

"He'd been a leader of men who had refused to lead them anywhere save to heaven. He'd been a king and had refused to be crowned save in heaven. He'd been a prophet who saw men exactly as they are, yet declared that they could found the Kingdom of Heaven on earth if only they would love one another as he loved them".(3) But the disciples, and Saul, and successive generations of the Church, were going to change all that. "He was going to be changed until he became scarce recognisable. --- What he had willed to do was never going to be done. And what he had been was going to give place to what men were going to make of him. For the village rabbi, that young, brave, glorious Jew who had shown in every word and deed his supreme indifference to wordly affairs and had declared that men could found the Kingdom of Heaven on earth if

(1) *ib.*, p.248.
 (2) *ib.*, p.250.
 (3) *op. cit.*, p.251.

only they would renounce the world and turn to God, was going to cease to be a Jew, was going to become the head and centre of a rich and mighty Church in which the Jews would have no part. And Jesus, the unrecognised King of the Jews, was going to become Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world. ---And after a while they were going to make him a member of the Godhead and worship him as if he were God. And they were going to declare that the mighty Church they founded in his name was itself the Kingdom of Heaven".(1)

Here, once more, the result of the writer's search for the historical Jesus is to create a rift of misunderstanding between "Jesus as He was" and the faith of His apostles and disciples, which widens with each successive generation of the Church. The last sentence quoted above refers, of course, to the claim of the Roman Catholic Church in particular to represent the Kingdom of Christ on earth; but the burden of complaint is against all churches and their creeds, from the Apostolic age onwards. The disciples and Saul together misrepresented the truth by putting what they believed about Jesus before what He had taught them of the Kingdom, and in consequence had theologised the simple Gospel. The author here expresses the spirit of her day most

(1) *ib.*, p.268.

clearly. On the subject of the Resurrection, she does not make it clear where she herself stands, though she admits it, with some suggested qualifications about its objective reality, to her apostolic record. But on the subject of the Kingdom, there is no doubt about her attitude. Jesus Christ proclaimed that the Kingdom of Heaven was to be founded on earth by the royal law of love, but the Churches with their doctrines about Jesus had turned it into an other-worldly religion and diverted it from the proper claims of the world to the worship of a heavenly Christ. It is not my task at this point to discuss this proposition, but rather to point out how this feeling of division between the teaching of "Jesus as He was" and the thought of even the Primitive Church about Him keeps recurring in these novels of reconstruction.

Two further novels require to be reviewed under this classification, -- Sholem Asch's The Nazarene, 1939, and Naomi Mitchison's The Blood of the Martyrs, 1939, both of them strongly marked by the events of the Nazi régime in Germany leading up to the Second World War. The mood of self-containment is slowly being broken up by the knowledge of suffering spreading across Europe through the Nazi expansion of power, and from 1937 onwards, the nation unwillingly begins to face the tensions

and realities of the immediately pre-war years of crisis. Naomi Mitchison's book reflects the political tension; Sholem Asch's novel springs from his consciousness of the sufferings of his people.

The Nazarene is a Jewish portrait of Jesus. Like all Sholem Asch's historical novels, it is an immense book, consisting of 722 pages and 69 chapters. It is his besetting sin that he writes so diffusely. He tends to over-write his big scenes -- the trial of Jesus, for example -- and he paints his immense canvases with such meticulous working detail, that his foreground characters are apt to be overwhelmed by the background. His historical and topographical learning frequently overweight his plot. This is the weakness of historical realism, as Flaubert himself exemplifies in Salammô. Asch could have learned much about the selection of background detail from Pater's Marius the Epicurean or Moore's The Brook Kerith. A Polish Jew in origin, he was educated at the Hebrew school of his native village. Though he made his first contacts with European literature through the German language, his books have mostly been written first in Yiddish, and then translated, and this applies to The Nazarene. He moved to Switzerland in 1908, and to the U. S. A. in 1910, becoming naturalized in 1920.

He visited Palestine in the nineteen thirties, and wrote Song of the Valley, a story of the first pioneers of communal farming there. He himself always remained in outlook a Jew of the dispersion, conscious of another culture besides his own from which he could not separate himself. He was one of those who were moved by the common sufferings of Jews and Christians under the Nazi regime in Germany to re-affirm the fundamental spiritual unity of the two religious communities of faith.

In a little book published in 1942, entitled My Personal Faith, he expressed something of this. "If men speak today of a Christian civilisation, I, a Jew, feel myself part of it. Its course has been devious, its inadequacies many; its record is stained with blood, and of that not a little came from the veins of my forefathers. For all that, its spirit was drawn from the sources which feed my soul. --- Therefore, whosoever stretches out his hand against it, stretches out his hand against the sanctities of my soul, so that my heart rebels and the blood of my forefathers speaks in me. It is thus in our day (i.e., January, 1941), when an anti-Christ has arisen ---. For if the tree falls, what will become of us?" (1)

Something of this sense of suffering shared marks

(1) op. cit., p.135-136.

the very deep sounding of the suffering of Christ, and His fore-knowledge and understanding of its necessity and purpose, as it is revealed in The Nazarene. It is the dominating theme of the book. For the same reason he has a greater understanding and sympathy with the status of Jesus as an object of faith. He also brings out, after the manner of Joseph Jacobs in As Others Saw Him, 1895, the affinities of Jesus's teaching with rabbinical thought, shows the interest of the Pharisees in His teaching, and ultimately their disappointment and alienation because He would promise no practical leadership in the political sphere. It is stressed also that His criticisms were directed against the bad Pharisees only, not against all of them. The real enemies of Jesus, and His prosecutors, were the Romans and the Sadducees in collusion. Asch does not follow the strongly eschatological view of the Kingdom of God taken by Schweitzer, Montefiore and Klausner. At the trial of Jesus, Sholem Asch makes a great deal of the atmosphere of acute tension and expectation among the crowd, as they wait for a "sign" from Jesus that He is after all the Messiah. And this acute expectation is used to accentuate the abyss of humiliation as well as of suffering that Jesus had to endure.(1) In one of the concluding scenes, Nicodemon⁽²⁾ declares the innocence of

(1) The Nazarene, p.693-702.

(2) Asch's rendering of the name, Nicodemus.

them and of their children of the blood of Christ. (1)

This Nicodemus of the story (who never becomes a Christian) seems to give the final word for the Jews on Jesus Christ, so far as the author is concerned.

"'Judah, is it not possible that your Rabbi has come for the gentiles?'

"'For the gentiles', cried Judah in despair.

"'For the peoples of the world, for those that are born only in the flesh and not in the spirit. He has been sent to bring them close to our Father in heaven. And now I understand certain words which he once uttered: 'I am a shepherd of many sheep.'....I follow his footsteps with longing.... For I say to myself: He has been appointed the prophet to the nations, according to the prophecies of former times, that he may open their eyes to the great light of the One God.... These will be the two pillars of the world according to the words which he uttered in the Temple this morning, and which the sages found acceptable. I bow my head in reverence before him, and I wait with a trembling heart for the fulfilment of his mission. But not unto us has he been sent; unto them! Leave him, Judah!" (2)

(1) *ib.*, p.709.

(2) *Op. cit.*, p.612-3. Compare this with Asch's own thought in My Personal Faith: "The first coming of the Messiah was not for us but for the gentiles". p.115-116.

Naomi Mitchison's The Blood of the Martyrs, 1939, is also marked by the Nazi menace over Europe, although in quite a different way from The Nazarene. It is a reconstruction of a point of view regarding, not the Social Gospel, but the Socialist Gospel, with the accent strongly on the proper claims of earth. The "tract for the times" motive enters in as a close secondary purpose, for the book is at once an interpretation of Christianity for the class struggle of the under privileged against the rich in terms of a Christian congregation among the slaves of Nero's Rome, and a parable of the struggle between Nazism, in the persons of Nero and Tigellinus, and democratic socialism, represented by the Christian slaves. The author's starting-point is the Galilean Gospel. Two of the disciples sent out by Jesus to proclaim the Kingdom, heal the sick, and cast out devils, continue on their mission after Jesus moves south, and they continue the Gospel of the Kingdom which He had begun to preach in those early days. They believed that "there was a kind of relationship between people, which was attainable, as they knew from their own experience, and which was worth everything else in life. When people were in this relationship, they loved and trusted and understood each other without too many words; they were

no longer separated by fear and competition and class. In this relationship men and women could at least meet without each thinking the other was hoping to do some evil. When the relationship happened, those who experienced it were very happy; they did not any longer want power and glory and possessions. ...In the meantime, it was not possible for the rich to enter into this relationship". (1)

Long after the death of Jesus, of which they heard without surprise, for they knew the rich would kill Him as soon as they had the opportunity, their followers continued in a communal way of life in Beth Zanita. Manasses, a boy of this community, being kidnapped and sold into slavery in Rome, learns from Acte something of Paul's message of a kind of Christianity that is new to him. He learns from her about the breaking of bread and of baptism; and from a dancer, Lalage, he learns the Lord's Prayer. Out of these elements springs the slaves' congregation in Rome.

There is something of Tolstoy, a good deal of William Morris's Chants for Socialists, 1884, and something of Karl Marx, in the picture of their secret community, exclusive to slaves and the under-privileged.

~~(1) of Tolstoy's exposition of the Lord's Prayer in The Gospel in Brief, 1881, ... "a very concise expression of the whole teaching of Jesus".~~
 (1) The Blood of the Martyrs, p. 35.

Their teaching is based on the Lord's Prayer (1) which, as expounded by the slave Argas, means that Prayer is made "to the Father who is also Justice, and Honour and Freedom and Love".(2) The object of the Prayer is the coming of the Kingdom, which is "the time when everyone is without fear and without shame and without hatred, when there aren't any more rich and poor, masters and slaves".(3) On the injunction to forgive, Argas explains, ... "Forgiveness is between people, so I can't forgive all the masters because I don't know them. Together, they're a thing, and I hate them and I want to destroy them. And we shall". "Did your Jesus forgive his enemies?" asks Beric. "He forgave the men who were killing him", says Argas. "But before that he hated the rich and the priests and the rule they had over his people; he never forgave their power".(4)

The "sign of the Cross" links the slaves' Christianity with an old slaves' brotherhood, which has been in existence for five hundred years, and which has sprung from the leaders who sacrificed themselves in the past "for the oppressed ones, the common people" -- "Spartacus, Eunus, Kleomenes and Nabis and Jesus Christ".(5) The cross is the sign of the poor. Spartacus, too, was crucified with six thousand of his men. As Christians,

(1) Op. cit., p. 46. Compare with Tolstoy's exposition of the Lord's Prayer in The Gospel in Brief, 1881, as -- "a very concise expression of the whole teaching of Jesus."
 (2) Op. cit., p. 89.
 (3) ib., p. 90.
 (4) Op. cit., p. 94-95.
 (5) ib., p. 177.

in disgrace with the Emperor, also shares their prison. He discusses with Paul the implications of Christianity on the relations of the individual with the state, as a subject, very relevant to the situation in the First Century, but as a topic of conversation, more characteristic of the Twentieth.(1) Christianity, says Paul, asserts "the value of the individual human being", but "we allow the human authority of the state". Gallio tries to think this out. "What you're up against is the State shaping the lives of these individuals of yours any way it pleases. Making them part of a thing, so to speak. Using them for its own ends". "Persons are ends in themselves", says Paul. "Under God". Here, the Twentieth Century and its issues loom much larger than the First.

Gallio notes of Manasses and Lalage and their fellow slave-Christians, that they do not share Paul's belief in Immortality. "They are thinking of your Kingdom and all that it implies, in this world, which is a sufficiently subversive idea, in all conscience, but at least a rational one".(2) When, at the last, the Christians go out to their deaths, Paul stands blessing them and trying to give frightened souls strength and courage to "keep their hearts and heads high for those last hours that faced them. And after that, it was in God's hands.

(1) *ib.*, p.335-6.
 (2) *ib.*, p. 417.

But when any passed him who looked as Manasses and Lalage and their Church looked, then he got strength himself to help the weak. Then he knew that the Kingdom was present and actual".(1)

There are two final scenes, pointing the "tract for the times" message; one in which Tigellinus explains a better way of smashing Christianity than executions, by propagandist education in the schools and "working up a good hate against them"(2); and a second scene in which Phineas exhorts the remnant of the slave Church in Eunice's bakehouse to "ask every day in our prayers for the ending of things as they are. And remind ourselves that we've all got to help this to happen. ---We can't just sit back and say it's none of our business. That's the death of the soul, that Jesus died to save us from".(3)

Turning now to the historical novels which portray the past for its own sake, I wish to note, first, their close relation to the novels of Christian reconstruction. Strictly speaking, both are historical novels, except that the latter give special prominence to a particular interpretation of the story of Christian origins. The historical novels, of course, are not necessarily concerned to picture the Christian aspect of the past, but rather the whole social scene, with Christianity

(1) Op. cit., p.435.
 (2) ib., p.464-5.
 (3) ib., p.483-4.

appearing as only one facet of the complex picture of religious, political and social ^{life} under the Empire. What is described as Christianity historically may, however, provide evidence of a particular point of view about early Christianity appearing under the externals of impartial history. On the literary aspect, too, both types of novel show a revolutionary change of attitude to the style in which a historical novel should be written. Sholem Asch's The Nazarene alone continues the convention of a pseudo-antique style.(1) Mary Borden preserves a careful dignity of spoken English in her Mary of Nazareth and Jesus, King of the Jews; but the anonymous writer of By An Unknown Disciple, Donn Byrne, and Naomi Mitchison all use a modern colloquial style of speech, and, far from adopting archaisms to suggest a vaguely period atmosphere, are not above using modern slang to suggest the everyday realism of the past. From this time onward, the "colloquial English" historical novel becomes the rule rather than the exception. And so far as the novel on the New Testament period is concerned, the rediscovery of the "koine", the Greek vernacular in which the New Testament scriptures were written, together with the modern vernacular translations of the New Testament which have been produced in the first

(1) Also His later The Apostle and Mary

half of this Century, have had at least as much to do with this change as the swing of literary taste towards a more naturalistic style.

Naomi Mitchison's earlier historical novels (The Conquered, 1923, When the Bough Breaks, 1924, Cloud Cuckoo Land, 1925, and The Corn King and the Spring Queen, 1931) brought this fresh vernacular realism to her studies of the classical past, and are especially interesting for their imaginative reconstruction of the impact of Roman conquests upon the tribes, and the problems of "displaced persons" which resulted, as in The Conquered, 1923, and When the Bough Breaks, 1924. The post-war refugee problems of the nine^{teen-}twenties have undoubtedly contributed to the realism and understanding of her picture in these novels. When the Bough Breaks is a collection of short stories, each of which studies the effect of this uprooting and scattering upon various small groups, families and individuals. One of these, The Triumph of Faith, in a happy spirit of the comedy of manners, pictures the household of Philemon, with its very human varieties of Christian character contained among its members, together with its household slaves drawn from far distant barbarian tribes. The story is told in first-person accounts by each of the principal

characters concerned. It is a comedy of errors in which the Christians are shown at a very human and unheroic level. The climax is the healing by prayer of the slave girl, Charope, who is believed to have taken poison. Onesimus prays in the name of his Lord, Chet invokes Wind and Scimeter, and Balas cries to his Bull-God; and when Charope recovers, each praises his own God. Phoebe Martha, on the eve of marrying her benevolent pagan, expresses the mind of the nineteen-twenties rather than the First Century when she writes in her journal of the Church in Philemon's house ... "Somehow I don't think I'll ever care for all that again".(1) It is interesting to note how often, in some casual colloquial phrase, the contemporary "feel" of modernity creeps into these stories.(2)

In Robert Graves' two books, I, Claudius, 1934, and Claudius the God, 1934, a lively picture of the social scene in Rome in the reigns of Augustus, Tiberius and himself, is given in the form of secret memoirs. As a book of revelations, it gains considerably from its direct manner of telling the story, free from literary conventions and artifices, and touched always by the highly individual outlook and judgment of Claudius the narrator. The second book, Claudius the God, is interesting in a special way through its accounts of

(1) When the Bough Breaks, p.155.

(2) Just as the 19th Century feeling creeps into Ebers's Serapis, "If you want to know what true Christianity is, ...look at our family life".p.373.

Jesus and its glimpses of the Church, seen either through the eyes of Claudius (1), or of Herod Agrippa writing from Palestine.(2) Herod's account of Jesus is much what we would expect, following the Talmud traditions of His origins, and it is at least an interesting suggestion that Jesus may have gained some knowledge of Greek philosophical ideas from friends who had attended the Greek university at Gadara. "He attempted in a naive manner to do what Philo has since done so elaborately -- to reconcile Judaic revelational literature with Greek philosophy".

There is a good description of the religious state of Rome, of the effect of Greek philosophy on the ancient Roman cults, and the filling of the void by the mysteries.(3) There is also an interesting note on his own mental attitude in the worship of Augustus, and the necessity to make a clear distinction in his own mind between "the historical Augustus, of whose weaknesses and misfortunes I am well informed, and the God Augustus, the object of public worship". There is, of course, ample opportunity, of which Robert Graves freely avails himself, in his own robust style, for telling scandalous anecdotes and adding spicy details. The "history" is told with a lively sense of the fears and sordidness as well as of the magnificence of the period, and with a salty sense of humour, as when Herod Agrippa, writing of his nation's ancient literature

(1) Claudius the God, P.275-7. References are to the Penguin edition.

(2) *ib.*, p.273-4.

(3) *ib.*, p.291-5.

about the Messiah to the Emperor Claudius, remarks casually, ..."In later sacred writings, dating from about the time when Rome was founded, he is spoken of as a man who shall gather the lost sheep of Israel...".(1) It is a pity that Robert Graves did not preserve the same balance of judgment on the past when he came to write King Jesus, 1946.

With W. P. Crozier's The Letters of Pontius Pilate, 1928, the mind of the probing historian is once more in evidence, analysing the Gospels as records, and dissecting them into trends and tendencies of thought. The Gospels were written to habilitate Christianity in the minds of Rome and its Emperors. Therefore, Pilate was whitewashed, and the blame was put upon the Jews. W. P. Crozier made use of this theory to produce a fresh point of view upon the events, seen through the eyes of one actively employed in the occupying military and administrative establishment. This is a point of view developed further in novels of the next period in this study, 1940-1955, such as The Same Scourge, 1954, and The Darkness, 1955. Here, however, we come upon another aspect of the generally held opinion among historical novelists of this time, that impartial history shows a very different story to that of the New Testament records. The chief interest of the book is that

(1) Claudius the God, p.271-2 The thought here recalls Disraeli's reply to a taunt by Daniel O'Connell - "Yes, I am a Jew, and when the ancestors of the right honourable gentleman were brutal savages in an unknown island, mine were priests in the temple of Solomon."

the Procurator is presented here as taking the initiative in dealing with Jesus, using the Sadducees' and Pharisees' parties to accomplish his will, the unseen giver of the orders; and not as being blackmailed by them with threats of report to Caesar into carrying out the Sanhedrin's judgment. The book, in the form of letters written by Pilate, uncovers a very likely but often forgotten factor in the history of the times, interested authorities who kept an unseen eye, through their intelligence service, on anything that was stirring among the people. The placard, "The King of the Jews", set up on the Cross, was Pilate's final riposte to the stiff-necked breed who had forced him to take down the legion standards with the images of Caesar from the walls of the Antonia in Jerusalem. The book ends with the death of Jesus. It is concerned simply with Pilate's point of view as an administrator. "For, after all, what does it matter? What does it matter... one Jew more or less?"

Catherine Christian's The Legions Go North, 1935, returns to the theme of romance, with a fairly stiff mixture of comparative religion, in a story of a Roman officer and a British princess, protégée of Pomponia Graecina, which also introduces Paul and Mary Magdalene. There is an idealised picture of Druidical mysticism, and

a feeling for "the truth behind all the religions." Paul is shown as a passionate thinker, but far removed from the intuitive teaching of Jesus. "One can't help liking any person so full of excellent intentions", says Mary Magdalene of him, "But when it comes to interpreting the words of the Master..." And there she just shakes her head over Paul.(1) Mary herself has a woman's gnosis of ultimate truth which seems much nearer theosophy than Christianity. Deruvian asks her, ... "Do you believe in something, some secret, some wisdom behind everything?" "There is such a wisdom, I think", replies Mary Magdalene. "It is the pattern behind the truths all faiths are teaching. ... Only now and again, once in many generations, comes a Master Builder, who can explain with the simplicity of complete knowledge the vastness and the value of the building on which all of us are at work. ... The Master Jesus was such a one".(2)

The author divides her loyalties between Christianity and Druidism, with perhaps the proviso that it is better not to be too deeply involved in either. When the young British boy, Guiderius, who had been a proselyte and a helper of Paul in Rome, returns to Britain, he lapses from grace and is sent off to the Druids' College. The only comment of his sister, Arlain, is -- "When we

(1) The Legions Go North, p.334-335.
 (2) ib., p.334-338.

were in Rome he got so staid and good I was quite worried about him. But since we've been back here, he seems to be quite himself again, doesn't he?"(1)

At the same time, it is well to remember that this note of the truth behind all the religions is one that has been already met with in the poems and short stories of Rudyard Kipling.* It recalls the leading idea of his short story, The Church that was in Antioch, which I reviewed along with Puck of Pook's Hill, 1906, in chapter 7 although it was published in 1932.(2) There also, the story turns on the common ground between the great religions, with the suggestion of how much Christianity may owe to "other religions". The idea springs from the study of comparative religion and of theosophical speculations. It is a point of thought at which two opposite types of mind are often found together,

Page 403. Additional footnote.

cf. pp.332-340, on Kipling. At this point, and again on page 439,ff., where further novels are dealt with, such as J.M. Hartley's The Way, 1945, and Gerald Heard's The Gospel According to Gamaliel, 1946, which are marked either by the ideas of theosophy or the science of comparative religion, it is worth while to recall the 8th. Century Christian tale of Barlaam and Josaphat, as evidence of a point at which a much earlier Christian generation made contact with Buddhism. (See also the Additional footnote to page 19). It is interesting to set the older tale and the modern novels alongside one another as examples of the intermingling of religions in both ancient and modern imaginative literature. The intention of Barlaam and Josaphat (or, Joasaph, as the second name is also rendered) was to assimilate the Buddha to Christianity; that of the modern novels referred to, to assimilate Christianity to the ideas of the oriental religions.

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(1) *ib.*, p.366.

(2) In Limits and Renewals, See p.265, *supra*.

circumference of religious faith.

Lion Feuchtwanger, the German Jewish novelist who established his reputation in this country with Jew Suss in 1926 (1), specialised in long historical novels in which a great number of sharply drawn characters were portrayed against a wide social background, the whole being linked together by an intricately elaborate plot. A favourite subject with him was the Jew who moves away from his own Jewish background and ideas into the world, and the process by which he returns again to his Judaist loyalty. That was the theme of his great trilogy, Josephus, 1932, The Jew of Rome, 1935, and The Day Will Come, 1943. One of the interesting features of the trilogy, dealt with in most detail in The Jew of Rome, is the stress between the national and the universal characteristics of the Law, felt especially by the Jews of the Diaspora, (2) and the desire of loyalist Jews, such as Gamaliel, to preserve the nation, after the destruction of the Temple, by raising up a ceremonial "fence around the Law". (3) As a result, the Christians, with their "kindlier doctrine", profit from the rigour of the rabbis.

Feuchtwanger, however, has a low opinion of the historicity of Jesus Christ as known in the New Testament.

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- (1) German ed., 1925. Set in 18th century Germany. It tells of the revenge of an ill-used Jew upon his enemies.
 (2) See the portrait of the Hellenistic Dr. Jana in The Jew of Rome, p.393-8.
 (3) See the portrait of Gamaliel, p.424-6.

He represents Josephus as seeking traces of the Messiah in Galilee and finding none.(1) Jacob of Sakanja, near Lydda, shows him a copy of Mark's Gospel, for which he does not claim that it is true as a legal document is true, but that "I only have the power of healing others when my soul is completely surrendered to belief in this Son of Man, Jesus of Nazareth".(2) Josephus receives information from Gamaliel, which leads him to believe that the records of the Messiah are a composite picture of two "false" Messiahs, the second being, according to the account given in the story, identified with James the Lord's brother.(3) The comment of Justus of Tiberias on this is, "...Reality is mere raw material, and very ill adapted to satisfy the emotions. It becomes of use only when it has been transformed into legend. If a truth wishes to endure it must be justified with lies".(4)

This view of myth as necessary to create religious belief, which is here put in the mouth of Justus, has much in common with that of Pilate in W. P. Crozier's second novel, The Fates Are Laughing, 1945, which may be mentioned here. Pilate there admits that he had the body of Jesus secretly buried elsewhere, with consequences which he had not expected. But what is the point of revealing the truth? "And all the other gods, Lucius

(1) The Jew of Rome, p.373-4.
 (2) ib., p.402.
 (3) ib., p.434-6.
 (4) ib., p.496.

Paetus, grave or gay, lovely or unlovely, which Rome discovers wherever she goes, what of them?" "They are impostures". "But how did they start?" Lucius..."How should I know? Someone, I suppose, away in the past, exaggerated or distorted, embroidered, or plainly just invented". Pilate ..."Or perhaps, to start with, someone just misunderstood? That's what I had in mind".(1)

Similarly, F. L. Lucas has a short story in his volume, The Woman Clothed with the Sun, 1937, entitled The Hydra, in which a Greek merchant confesses to Gallio at the time of Paul's case in Corinth (2), that he as a youth in Jerusalem had helped Judas to hide the body of Jesus, in order to do something to "wipe the shame from his name". Now he hears Paul proclaiming the Jesus Christ whom he himself had buried twenty-five years ago to be a god who had risen from the dead. He offers to give his evidence in court, but Gallio will have none of it. "I know I am old, and the old grow indolent.... I know that the world needs souls like Socrates to keep truth burning. But I will not have your evidence. Once men believed the blood of a swine could purge their sins; now it is the blood of a god. Can you purge their folly? A god that removed poor mankind's sufferings ...ah, that would be another matter. Unhappily, since Saturn was cast out of

(1) The Fates Are Laughing, p.257.

(2) cf., Acts, ch.XVIII.

heaven, no Immortal seems to think of it".(1)

Feuchtwanger, following out the logical conclusion of his own view of myth in the story of Jesus, pictures early Christianity as a non--creedal belief in a Saviour. Jacob of Sekanja expounds their position in The Jew Of Rome. "This is what divides us from the doctors, that we don't insist on imposing a definite creed on anyone. We do not weigh logical and theological arguments against one another; we sink our minds in the story of our Saviour. We draw our faith out of his words and out of our hearts. We allow everyone to understand the words of the Saviour in his own way. Nobody is bound to accept another's interpretation. That is why many of us call ourselves Believers or Faithful, because we do not simply accept prescribed opinions, but are bound, everyone of us, to dig his faith out of his own heart. We have no definition in our faith, and we want none". (2)

Here, then, is the burden of the novels of 1920 to 1939. There is general agreement among novelists of this period that a wide gulf of doctrinal or mythological development separates the historic Jesus from the Christ of the Church's faith. They vary in their account of the extent and nature of that gulf. Jesus preached a simple

(1) Op. cit., p.19.

(2) The Jew of Rome, p.471-2.

Gospel of a Kingdom to be realised in this world now.(1)
 Paul theologised or Hellenised Jesus.(2) Paul, and probably the other disciples also, gave the Gospel its other-worldly emphasis, transforming its practical social character into a salvationist worship of Christ as God.(3)
 The Resurrection is reduced to a feeling of exaltation (4), or a doubtfully accepted spiritualistic phenomenon (5), or an irrelevance (6), or a myth. (7) Moreover, the New Testament records do not even reveal a Church united in its belief, but divided and racked by divisions and personal enmities.

In part, the problem is created by the proposition from which the authors start, which is -- that there is a Jesus behind the Lord of the New Testament, if you will get at the facts, the "facts" in each case being the author's impression of Jesus and the events of His life, stripped of "dogma" and the accretions due to dogma. He selects his facts; and this he does by taking some particular point or aspect of Jesus's recorded life or teaching, and saying, -- There is the authentic person or teaching: the rest is later misunderstanding or accretion. Instead of being theologised, the events are rationalised. The nature miracles are excluded, the healing miracles are largely accepted -- because they can

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- (1) cf., By An Unknown Disciple, The King of the Jews, and The Blood of the Martyrs.
 (2) e.g., Paul the Christian, Brother Saul, The Legions go North.
 (3) As note 2 above. (4) By An Unknown Disciple.
 (5) The King of the Jews. (6) cf. The Blood of the Martyrs.
 (7) cf., The Hydra.

be rationalised -- but the Resurrection experiences are reduced to a feeling of inspiration, a psychological vision or psychic phenomenon. The teaching is concentrated on the Kingdom and its social implications -- the Simple or Galilean Gospel, as it is often called. The result is a human picture of Jesus. There is a tendency to take it too easily for granted that because an explanation has made a thing look reasonable, it is therefore the truth; and this is particularly true of modern humanistic explanations of the Resurrection. Tertullian's "Certum est quia impossibile est" (1) may be hard doctrine for the modern mind to accept. Yet it is not necessary to exalt the irrational in order to believe, while exercising the reason to seek explanations, that the fact of mystery still contains the greater truth.

Having thus pictured the human Jesus, the author has then to explain how Jesus came to mean what He did in the experience of the Church, -- how, that is to say, the "facts" of Jesus as he was gave rise to the Christ of faith. Naturally, they will not fit. Sometimes they seem hardly sufficient to explain why the simple Galilean preacher was put to death at all. The answer inevitably must be, *ex hypothesi*, the Church theologised Him, drew away the interest from His teaching to His Personality,

(1) *De Carne Christi*, V. Usually rendered, "Credo, quia impossibile".

and from its application to this life, concentrated on its application to the next life. Paul's insistence on his Gospel "by revelation of Jesus Christ" (1), and that Christ is to be known no more "after the flesh" (2), are made the grounds of the accusation that he was the real creator of Christianity, and the real organiser of the Church. The same causes serve to explain the tensions within the early Church -- Paul's dogmatism and gift for organization versus the simple practical gospel of the Jesus the real disciples had known.

It is the historical method itself, and its presuppositions, that create this problem, as Schweitzer showed in his critical study of the liberal lives of the Nineteenth Century and after. "In order to find in Mark the life of Jesus of which it is in search, modern theology is obliged to read between the lines a whole host of things, and those often the most important, and then to foist them upon the text by means of psychological conjecture. It is determined to find evidence in Mark of a development of Jesus, a development of the disciples, and a development of the outer circumstances; and professes in so doing to be only reproducing the views and indications of the Evangelists. In reality, however, there is not a word of all this in the Evangelist". (3) The historical Jesus,

(1) Gal. I. 11-12.

(2) 2 Cor. V. 16.

(3) The Quest of the Historical Jesus, 1910, p.330.

so-called, is not "the facts without dogma", but the product of the New Testament records re-edited and re-interpreted in the light of modern historical and humanistic ideas, themselves largely speculative.

The First Century mind did not probe into the elements of social and cultural background to discover trends of thought and belief; nor into the individual life, to discover the inward development of a man's thought and experience, and the interaction of the various elements of tradition, heritage and environment upon his life. The Gospels do not even set out to give a continuous biographical account of Jesus. They are a literary form in their own right, created by their theme, which is -- the good tidings of God's manifestation of Himself to mankind through Jesus Christ. They were formed out of an oral tradition; and Jesus Himself spoke in a style to be remembered, not to be read. It follows, therefore, that this material cannot possibly be analysed, set in an order of continuity of historical cause and effect, as well as of psychological development of the mind and relationships of Jesus, without a great deal of imaginative intuition and re-interpretation coming into play. Part of the breach with the traditional belief about Christ, which is so prominent a feature of the novels of this

period, is due to the discovery of the difficulty of harmonising these two ways of thinking about Jesus and of portraying Him. In the Gospels, God is always the chief character in the story, though invisible, manifesting Himself through the words and works of Jesus. In the humanistic biography or historical novel, Jesus the man, and His relationships with those about Him, His developing experience and ideas about God and life, are the self-sufficient object of historical inquiry. The gap seen between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith is therefore present first in the minds of the writers themselves, and has been projected by them upon their picture of Jesus.

Moreover, the fragmentation of outlook that was caused by the analytical approach to knowledge also affected their picture of the primitive Church. Baur and the Tübingen school began it in the Nineteenth Century with their analysis of the New Testament documents into "trends" and "tendencies" -- Pauline, Petrine, Johannine -- looking for contending influences in the Gospels which turned the whole story of the expanding Church into a tug-of-war between rival fragments of the faith. Source criticism of the Gospels in the first two decades of this Century, much as it has taught us about the composition

of the documents, carried this process further; and the Form criticism of Martin Dibelius and his school from 1919 onwards seemed about to reduce fragmentation of the Gospels to the point of disintegration. The analytical method of research itself contributed to the picture of antagonisms and division which many of these novels have described as dominating the life of the Apostolic Church.

It was an old story, and the battle had long been fought out by the time that these novels were being written, and in fact much of what they were asserting so self-confidently had long before been advanced by the despised generation that admired Tennyson and Browning. There is a time-lag in the filtering through of new ideas to the public at large, and the sudden break up of social conventions and inhibitions after 1918 opened the way to an influx of the new ideas among a religious-minded public hitherto resistant to them. Yet this new exploration of the old ground had to be made, for, with all its dangers to accepted belief, it was a journey of self-discovery, and also in the end of rediscovery of the faith, in the light of new knowledge and ideas, which had, after all, to be frankly faced in the end.

CHAPTER IXNovels, Chiefly of Belief, 1940 to 1955

"Everything was so dark in my life, and God illuminated it. Do not forget it, O my heart! Do not forget it!"

—Theodore Haecker - Journal in the Night, p.42.

"I remember once saying to Bertie Russell⁽¹⁾: 'I believe in it far more than the evidence warrants'. He said, 'I disbelieve in it far more'".

-- William Temple, from Iremonger's Life of Temple, p.626.

Dorothy Sayers - The Man Born to be King, 1941-42.
(Theological)

Robert Graves - King Jesus, 1946. (History of religions)

Sholem Asch - The Apostle, 1945. U.S.A. (Jewish)

Dorothy Wilson - The Brother, 1949. (Social Gospel) U.S.A.

Victor MacClure - A Certain Woman, 1950. (Theological)

Julius Berstl - The Tentmaker, 1951. German (natur., U.S.A.)

- - - The Cross and the Eagle, 1954.

W.P. Crozier - The Fates are Laughing, 1945. (Rationalist)

John Goldthorpe - The Same Scourge, 1954. (Theological)

Evan John - The Darkness, 1955. (Theological)

Marguerite Yourcenar - Hadrian, 1955. (French)

(1) i.e., Bertrand Russell, the philosopher and mathematician.

- Lloyd C. Douglas - The Robe, 1943.
- - - - The Big Fisherman, 1949. (*Romance*
and Religious Sentiment)
- J.M. Hartley - The Way, 1945. (Theosophy and Comparative
Religion)
- B. Montagu Scott - Magdalen, 1953. (*Romance*
and Religious Sentiment)
- F.G. Slaughter - The Road to Bithynia, 1952. (*Romance*
and Religious Sentiment)
- - - The Galileans, 1954. (*Romance*
& Relig. Sent.)
- T.B. Costain - The Chalice, 1953. (*Romance*)
- Charles Dunscombe - The Bond and the Free, 1955. (*Romance*
and Tract for the Times)
- E.G. Lee - The Beginning, 1955. (*Romance*
& Reconstr. of a point of view)

The period covered in the last chapter ends on the threshold of the Second World War, and the last two novels, in date of publication, Naomi Mitchison's The Blood of the Martyrs, 1939, and Sholem Asch's The Nazarene, 1939, reflect the darkening shadows and tensions of these years. The Nazarene, with its deep concern for the problems of human evil and suffering, is nearer the heart of the religious movement of the time, than the political materialism of The Blood of the Martyrs, with its thin veneer of a Christian hero-cult of the revolution.

In the next fifteen years, the types of Early

Christian novel produced show a remarkable change of outlook towards theology and religious sentiment generally. Both in novels of reconstruction of a point of view and in historical novels, there is a stronger interest in the theological interpretation of the facts of the Gospel story. There is also a revival of interest in the religio-historical romance of the Bulwer Lytton tradition, in contrast to its comparative neglect in the 1920 to 1939 period. At the same time, in all three of these categories, the note of religious sentiment, as I have called it -- that is to say, the love of the Christian past as a tradition of life, and the feeling for religious belief in the present -- are very much more in evidence. From the prevailing tendency in the 'twenties and early 'thirties to stress disbeliefs and doubts, and to analyse any religious belief to the minimum acceptable to reason, the pendulum has swung in the direction of a feeling for some form of religious faith. At the same time, nothing is lost either of the independence of thought or the frankness and freedom of expression which were so characteristic of the years of "emancipation" following the First World War.

It was not only the ominous condition of the times, with their recurrent crisis fears, followed by the

convulsions of war, which led to this deeper feeling for the religious element in life, although inevitably, human nature being what it is, this did connect with the mood of the times.

"All lost! to prayers, to prayers! all lost!" (1)

There was in fact a preparation of theological thought and Biblical study^{already} at work while the destructive novels of scepticism were being written, and the repercussions were now being felt in the years just before and during the Second World War. There was a revival of Biblical theology, partly stimulated by the new knowledge of the Greek koiné and social background gained from the papyri, but chiefly by the realisation that without interpretation, historical research could not recover the truth about Jesus Christ. The older method of research by analysis, dissecting the documents into separate elements, was replaced by the study of the unifying ideas that bound the New Testament records together. The starting point was, naturally enough, the question put by Jesus Himself to His disciples, -- "Whom say ye that I am?" (2) Sir Edwyn Hoskyns and Noel Davy,

(1) The Tempest, Act 1, Sc.1.

(2) Mk. VIII. 29.

in The Riddle of the New Testament, 1931, recognised that the answer to His question, in the full light of His life, death and resurrection is what gives its essential unity to all the New Testament documents. R.H. Strachan, in his Historic Jesus in the New Testament, 1931, traced through the Gospels and Epistles the effort to work out the synthesis of the "Christ of the flesh" with the "Christ of the spirit", in the reasoned knowledge of faith in the risen Lord. Anderson Scott, in Christianity according to St. Paul, 1927, traced the roots of Paul's thought deep in Judaism, and showed how far he was from being the "mystery"-monger of Wrede's picture. (1) C.H. Dodd, in The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments, 1936, examined the preaching (the kerygma) of Peter and Paul and noted how much they had in common. (2) D. S. Cairns's The Faith that Rebels, 1928, and Frank Morison's Who Moved the Stone?, 1930, did much to recover lost confidence in the place of miracle in Christ's ministry and of the Resurrection in the life of faith. D.M. Baillie's God Was In Christ, 1948, describes the main effects of the recovery of theological confidence in our time, and states the modern case for the Incarnational

(1) Wrede, Paul, 1907.

(2) cf., 1 Cor. XI. 23, ff. & XV. 3, ff.: compare with Acts X. 36-43.

interpretation of the life of Christ. Oscar Cullmann's Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr, 1957, while not minimising the tensions between Peter and Paul, also points out how close they were in missionary outlook and purpose, and gives a salutary reminder that throughout the admitted tensions they put the unity of the Church first.

Writers in the sphere of general literature, as distinct from specialised theologians, who served to mediate this strengthened confidence in the theological structure of the historic faith to the general public were, -- Frank Morison, with his re-examination of the Resurrection events in Who Moved the Stone?, 1930; H.V. Morton, with his remarkably imaginative evocation of early Christian life and background, combining travel description, archaeological and exegetical research with religious insight, in his In the Footsteps of St. Paul, 1936; and C.S. Lewis, whose chief danger in his Screwtape Letters, The Pilgrim's Regress, and Miracles, 1947, was that he created something like a literary religious cult of clever writing. Finally, Dorothy Sayers, with her radio-play series, The Man Born To Be King, 1941-42, did for the theological re-statement of the Gospel of Christ to the wider public what T.R. Glover had done for its

historical interpretation in his Jesus of History in 1917.

The events of political and international history were also exerting strong pressure upon the character and effectiveness of the average citizen's values and beliefs in life, whether these were religious or materialistic. There were the rival ideologies of the totalitarian states -- communist Marxism, with its doctrine of historical predestination rooted in economic determinism; and Nazism with its doctrine of the master race rooted in a materialistic paganism, both of them making pseudo-religious claims upon the faith and loyalty of the people. Citizens of the so-called free or democratic nations found themselves challenged to show what values were embodied in their way of life, to claim faith or inspire service. The diffused secular rationalism which pervaded society proved an insufficient safeguard against the threat to human liberties, and lacked the impulse of inspiration towards definite moral and spiritual values in a way of life.

A confirmed Rationalist of the "inner guard" of the Rationalist movement has recorded the disillusioning effect upon himself of this discovery of the weakness of the Freethought movement among the ideologies. "The

fact that so many Rationalists were also Marxists made me see that there was less respect for the development of the individual inside the Rationalist Movement than I had thought -- or than Rationalists themselves considered. And when I read some of the religious books which came my way I began to see that their authors -- people like Professor Butterfield and Dr. Fosdick -- had a greater respect for the individual human personality than all the Rationalist propaganda----would make one think. Again, then, I was forced to begin to re-think my basic beliefs". (1)

Professor Basil Willey, in his study of Christianity Past and Present, 1952, describes the change in his lifetime in the human implications of the adjective, "Christian". "In my earlier days a person was commonly called Christian if he was in all important ways 'good', and particularly if he was habitually and eminently unselfish, charitable, forgiving, and cheerful in adversity. He might or might not be a member of any Church. Today, however, the phrase, 'he is a Christian', means primarily, 'he is a churchman and holds certain definite views; he professes a certain philosophy of

(1) John Rowland, One Man's Mind, 1952, p.87.

history; he is almost certainly not a Communist'. In the same way, a man can now without arrogance or hypocrisy say 'I am a Christian';--- he can say this because he is not thereby claiming to be a saint, or even what is ordinarily called 'good'. Though the phrase will naturally mean much more than is unspoken, it is in the first instance a kind of party label like 'I am a Marxist'; it means 'in the present ideological struggle, or in the present confusion of doctrine, I stand here, and not there". (1)

As a religious attitude, this may have its own possible weaknesses, but it does indicate how historic events and issues of the past twenty years have been pressing the necessity of some standpoint of belief upon the individual in his capacity of a citizen as well as in the inner spiritual judgments of his private conscience. Against this background situation, I propose to review the character of the Early Christian novels produced during the years 1940 to 1955.

A closer examination of the list suggests that a further re-classification will bring out more clearly the significance of the change of outlook that is taking

(1) Op. cit., p.3-4.

place. I shall, therefore, deal first with those in classes I and II -- novels reconstructing a point of view, and historical novels -- which are markedly theological in their treatment of the story, and secondly, those that are founded on ideas drawn either from theosophy or comparative religion.

At the beginning of the "theological" list stands The Man Born To Be King, by Dorothy Sayers, not a novel, as it happens, but the scenario of a series of religious plays broadcast by the B.B.C. between December, 1941, and October, 1942, and published in book form in 1943. Originally commissioned for broadcasting in the "Sunday Children's Hour", (1) The Man Born to Be King has had a deep influence both upon the mind of the general public and on the theological character of the English Early Christian novels that have followed it. My edition of the book records ten impressions published between 1943 and 1946. That, together with its repeated broadcasts by the B.B.C., is sufficient indication of the widespread interest it aroused. It is the measure of her achievement that the "story" meets the intellectual demands of adult religious experience as adequately as it does the more pictorial needs of the child's mind.

(1) The Man Born To Be King, p.9.

Two outstanding characteristics of her presentation of the story together give it its distinctive quality and importance -- her frank realism of characterisation, description and speech, particularly in regard to Jesus, together with her insistence on the necessity of a theological construction of the story, "because it locks the whole structure into a massive intellectual coherence". (1) "What this actually means", she goes on to say in the introduction, "is that the theology -- the dogma -- must be taken by the writer as part of the material with which he works, and not as an exterior end towards which his work is directed. Dogma is the grammar and vocabulary of his art.-- Accordingly, it is the business of the dramatist not to subordinate the drama to the theology, but to approach the job of truth-telling from his own end, and trust the theology to emerge undistorted from the dramatic presentation of the story. This it can scarcely help doing, if the playwright is faithful to his material, since the history and the theology of Christ are one thing: His life is theology in action, and the drama of His life is dogma shown as dramatic action". (2)

(1) *ib.*, p.19.

(2) *Op. cit.*, p.20.

In effective contrast to the theological theme, is the everyday matter-of-factness of speech and mannerism in characterisation, because what is happening is in the world of the flesh, and until their eyes are opened by the Resurrection, the disciples and people are unaware of the transcendent character of the events in which they are sharing. Nothing of the dogmatic theme, therefore, is allowed to detract from the realism and limitations of Jesus's humanity in the days of His ministry. "I feel sure", Dorothy Sayers wrote in the introduction to an earlier Nativity Play, also written for broadcasting, He That Should Come, 1939, --" that it is in the interests of a true reverence towards the Incarnate Godhead to show that His Manhood was a real manhood, subject to the common realities of daily life; that the men and women surrounding ^{Him} were living human beings, not just characters in a story; that, in short, He was born, not into 'the Bible', but into the world".(1)

There have been novels as realistic in their portrayal of Jesus, such as By An Unknown Disciple, 1918, but there, it was associated with a more limited, humanistic estimate of His significance. What is distinctive in The Man Born To Be King, and its chief contribution to

(1) Four Sacred Plays, 1948, p.218.

succeeding novels, is this conjunction of a realistically human portrait of Jesus with a high theological interpretation of His Person and purpose.

For the raw material of her story, Miss Sayers has drawn equally from all four Gospels, combining narratives as she required, and, on the whole, accepting the chronology of St. John. The twelfth play, The King Comes to His Own, uses all the Resurrection accounts, the key situation, so far as the nature of the happenings in the tomb is concerned, being based on John, XX. 3-8, in which Peter and John see "the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself". "The whole language," writes G.H.C. Macgregor in commentary on this (1), "seems to have been carefully chosen to suggest that Jesus' physical body had passed into a spiritual and glorified Risen Body without disturbing the grave-clothes, which had simply settled down on the ledge within the tomb in their original positions". This is the view followed by Miss Sayers, and one that is made more acceptable nowadays by the modern conception of the molecular nature of matter. (2) At

(1) The Moffatt Commentary - St. John, p.356.

(2) See also Miss Sayers' note to the play, p.316-7. It is worth while to compare her description there of what must have happened to the body with Evan John's The Darkness, 1955, p.190-191.

the same time, she realises that the important thing about the Resurrection in the New Testament is its meaning for faith, and not the nature of the actual appearances. (1)

Victor MacClure's A Certain Woman, 1950, continues this note of theological confidence in the interpretation of the life of Jesus, but with this difference, that Jesus is seen from the point of view of Mary Magdalene, who is here pictured as a highly educated woman of intellectual interests and independent mind, a Jewish "Hypatia" or a First Century "Romola". Yet in fact there is a great deal more of the modern emancipated woman in her characterisation than in either Kingsley's or George Eliot's creation.

Mary in the story finds herself up against the synagogue rabbis. "The life of the everyday woman of our people", the aged and more liberal rabbi Samuel asks her,-- "to marry, have children, keep an orderly and pious household,-- that cannot content you?" "There are things I must see for myself" said Mary in a desperate way through her teeth. "I need food for my mind!" (2)

(1) See p.330,ff., for the scene at the tomb.
 (2) A Certain Woman, p.50.

Educated as a girl by her liberal-minded father, Mary has grown up with a knowledge of Latin and Greek language and literature, and her mental interests and affinities draw her to seek her companionships among Romans and Greeks rather than among her own people, and to find more pleasure in discussing Posidonius on the nature of the gods, or the *Carmen Saeculare* of Horace with Cleon the Greek, than the Law and the Prophets with Nahum the rabbi, who cannot satisfy her religious questionings. Accused as a wanton for giving hospitality to Romans, Mary flees with Lucian, a Roman officer, but not before she has met and talked with a young itinerant carpenter, Yeshu bar-Nasha, hired to make yokes for their oxen. There is a well worked out episode in which Yeshu, who has travelled "beyond the Two Rivers and the Indus itself", explains to her why the Judean yoke, being too heavy and insufficiently moulded to the animal's shoulders, has been a burden, and chafed and galled, so that it could not use its full strength. (1)

Mary marries Lucian under the Roman form of "*matrimonium justum*" by her own choice, as she wishes to preserve her own financial independence of her husband, and her freedom from his potestas.(2) But she is too

(1) *Op.cit.*, P.70-71.

(2) *ib.*, p.131.

advanced in her ideas even for the Roman. "Lucian could accept me as a woman, but was annoyed by me as an individual. He did not wish me to think for myself.--- My Jewish obstinacy, my outspokenness to his friends, augured ill for his advancement while I was with him. So he left me". (1) The term "harlot", therefore, was applied to her as an epithet for a Jewess who had associated with a Roman, not because she had actually sold herself on the streets. Cleon, Lucian's Greek philosopher tutor, remains with her, teaches her the art of anticipating "trends of markets", and Mary prospers in the world of business and commercial investment, centred in Magdala. There, too, she hears Jesus teaching by the lakeside, is drawn by His teaching and personality, and finds her brother Lazarus among His followers. (2)

Reconciled once more with Martha, who has also been caught up into the companionship of Jesus, she spends her time setting down a record of her own memories of His sayings, adding to them the memories of Martha and Lazarus. "With regard to the actual wording of Jesus's teaching, Lazarus was no great help, though beyond doubt

(1) ib., p.130.
 (2) op. cit., p.140-143.

he was clearer on the meaning of it than either Martha or Zachary. But he had been following Jesus intermittently from about the time of the imprisonment of John the Baptist, and had therefore a good knowledge of events in the ministry. As far as this went, Mary made this also the subject of careful record. Though in the stress of anxious times that were to follow years later, much of this record was lost, it is probable that some part of it was put into the hands of the "Beloved Physician" who followed Paul. Almost certainly, at any rate, a much older Mary was to talk to this Luke and to tell him her story". (1)

By the time Jesus is ready to make His final entry into Jerusalem, Mary has arrived at a full realisation of His significance as the Son of God. It is evident here that the author's presupposition of a Mary whose mind had been trained by a wider education than was usual, is necessary before she can be conceived as thinking in these terms. This is an example of her thoughts about Him at the beginning of Passover Week. "For Jesus was human. Unless he was a man, subject to all man's doubts and temptations, Mary thought, his purpose was vitiated. God made manifest in a creature subject to no human

(1) *ib.*, p.231.

frailties was purposeless -- God made manifest in God. But in God made manifest in man -- there was the exemplar of rich hope. Unquestionably, Jesus had received intimations of his destiny long before seeking baptism from John the son of Zecharias.--- And if, thought Mary, it was gradually out of conflict that his sublime Sonship of the Father had been perfected, so much greater, humanly speaking, the triumph, so much greater the encouragement for those whom Jesus taught to follow him".(1)

The final chapter, from the point of view of characterisation, is the weakest in the book. Felix, a faithful Roman friend who is attached to the Praetorium, offers to intercede for Jesus with Pilate, if Mary will promise to marry him. As a kind of blackmail, this is foreign to the character of Felix as shown in the story, and it only adds an inferior and falsely melodramatic quality to the spiritual tension of the trial.(2) Its purpose appears to be to throw into relief Mary's conviction of the necessity of Jesus's death to the full manifestation of His purpose. "But to doubt its being the Will of the Father was to doubt Jesus himself.

(1) Op.cit., p.269-270.

(2) ib., p.309-310.

Through his unique understanding of the will of the Father he had proved himself the Son. Since, therefore, he had made no effort to escape the toils spun by his enemies, but had even invited the worst that they could do to him, it was plain that he was accepting his lot of suffering and death as the Father's will. And since, again, she believed that Jesus was the Son of God, the Anointed of the Lord, the Messiah, it was presumption in her to think of saving his life through Felix Scaliger. She aligned herself with those unbelievers who needed a sign. Jesus could accept one thing only apart from heavenly intervention, to save him from the cross. It was that his persecutors should repent and believe in him".(1)

Whatever we may think of this as a form of theological reasoning to which Mary Magdalene could have attained at that time, it does reveal what is the outstanding characteristic of this book, a portrayal of the historical Jesus which is firmly and confidently set in a theological interpretation of His Person. In this respect, it invites comparison with The Man Born To Be King, although in one respect Victor MacClure is less successful than Dorothy Sayers. "It is the business of the dramatist", Miss Sayers had written, "not to

(1) op.cit., 312-313.

subordinate the drama to the theology, but to approach the job of truth-telling from his own end, and trust the theology to emerge undistorted from the dramatic presentation of the story".(1) If Victor MacClure had been more successful in carrying out the latter aim (a difficult one, surely, to attain), he would not have found it necessary to put so much explicit theology into the mind of Mary. Nevertheless, A Certain Woman is a striking example, following The Man Born To Be King, of the returning recognition that history cannot record the bare objective facts as they were, cannot even sift the facts from among the sources, without interpretation; and that at least one aspect of the legitimate interpretation of life involves theology.

From among the historical novels in my list, I select two because of their theological character, John Goldthorpe's The Same Scourge, and Evan John's The Darkness, 1955. The Same Scourge gives a picture of Jesus from the angle of a Roman officer in the Intelligence Service, who has been commissioned to find out through his friendships with the Chuza family and Mary of Magdala, all that he can about His teaching and possible contacts with the Zealots. It is a full-blooded

(1) The Man Born To Be King, p.20.

tale of the roughest and rawest side of life in legion stations over-seas, with its loyalties and rivalries, brutalities and personal feuds. Its interest lies in the combination of this realism with a high Christology. If anything, the marvellous element in the healing ministry is exaggerated -- not a criticism which one expects to make as a rule these days (1). All four Gospels are drawn on for the account of Jesus's teaching; and the symbolism of John is followed in placing the death of Jesus at the time of the slaying of the sacrificial lamb in the Temple, (2) with which is also collated the synoptic account of the earthquake and the rending of the Temple veil. Thus, in a dramatic scene, and without intruding theological explanations, the author brings out the sacrificial significance of His death. This scene, told from the point of view of Laban, the celebrant, a priest sympathetic to Jesus, is probably as good an example as one could find in these novels of Miss Dorothy Sayers' ideal that the writer

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- (1) e.g., the healing of the one-legged man, p.58, and the mass healings along the roadside as Jesus enters Jerusalem, p.238.
- (2) cf., John XIX.31. - "because it was the Preparation". "The Evangelist stresses the fact that Jesus died at the very time when in every Jewish home the Paschal lamb would be slain", Macgregor - Moffatt Commentary, p.349.

should "trust the theology to emerge undistorted from the dramatic presentation of the story".

"'What happened? Laban, what happened?'

"'I don't know', he whispered back. 'I slew the lamb, the ground heaved, I looked up, and saw the Veil rent in two'. He stared helplessly at the dead lamb. 'It happened just as the lamb died'". (1)

The Roman Intelligence officer, in attempting to intercede for Jesus at the last moment, is scourged by a fellow officer, in pursuance of a private feud, with the same loaded lash that had been used on Jesus. The Roman lies dying, waiting only for the third day and the hoped for message, which at last comes from Luke, that "he is with us again in the flesh. We have seen him, we have heard his voice, we have touched his hands, and he has eaten food with us.---We are no longer broken men".(2)

There is an attractive picture of Luke, who is presented as one of the followers of Jesus. In one of the most effective scenes in the book, the author describes how, in overcoming his repugnance to carry a leper woman to Jesus, Luke found his vocation. "It

(1) Op.cit.,p.303.
 (2) ib.,p.358.

was to bring the sick to Jesus". This is an example of the homiletic purpose in these novels at its best, and derives an added significance from the fact that the author himself is a doctor.

The construction of the story, which is probably suggested by the form of a radio play such as Dorothy Sayers' The Man Born To Be King, consists of a succession of sharply contrasting scenes within each chapter, and helps to carry forward the main narrative with a striking effect of light and shade in suggesting a wide variety of points of view to the main events. This is most noticeable in the last seven chapters, which divide into as many as thirty scenes, each carrying forward the main narrative a stage further from the arrest of Jesus to the Resurrection scenes, and each giving something of the relationship and attitude of very different people to these events. If at times it gives a kaleidoscopic effect to the continuity of the story, it does also give a vividly contrasted cross-section of points of view. The greatest contrast of all, which I have already noted, is the author's robust realism in the treatment of life in the raw, with the high Christology

of his interpretation of the life and ministry of Jesus.

The purpose of Evan John's The Darkness, 1955, is also to give a cross-section of the human background to the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus, and to this end he uses the epistolary method to give variety of point of view. In this he was following literary precedent as old as Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe, 1747, but he develops it with a freedom and variety which recalls Thornton Wilder's novel about Julius Ceasar, The Ides of March, 1948. (1) He compiles in effect a historical source book of records, letters, reports, military orders, all reflecting in their various ways the writers' opinions, purposes or impression of the human situation during the weeks following the Crucifixion.

Evan John (2) quotes, as the motto for the title-

(1) The letter form was also used by Scott in Redgauntlet, 1824, and was developed with more variety of document by Wilkie Collins in his mystery tales, such as The Woman in White, 1860. John Masefield uses the documentary form in Badon Parchments, 1947, a novel of 6th. century Britain. But in the variety of document used to develop the tale, Thornton Wilder's The Ides of March comes closest to The Darkness.

(2) Evan John died in 1953. He wrote Time in the East, 1946, of his war-time experiences in the Middle East; and historical novels, Crippled Splendour, 1938 (James I of Scotland), King's Masque, 1941, and Ride Home Tomorrow (the Crusades). So far as I know, The Darkness was the last novel he wrote.

page of his book, John 1.5.-- "And the Light shines in darkness, and the Darkness did not understand it". In the Postscript, he explains his purpose, -- "to sketch in, for modern readers, the negative background of a picture whose positive outline was sufficiently traced, one and for all, by the writers of the four Gospels. To use the Biblical image, I have tried to suggest a pattern for that Darkness against which the Light suddenly shone, two thousand years ago".(1) He accepts the historic statement of the Christian faith as it is contained in the Apostles' Creed, and, like Dorothy Sayers and John Goldthorpe, combines a realistic treatment of the "darkness" of life with an exalted conception of the Person of Jesus Christ. The difficulties of this form of novel are obvious: every character has to reveal himself in his own documents, or through comment by another character, without the intervention of the author's reading of their minds and purposes. But the method does lend itself to the particular purpose which the author set before him, and even though the reader has to go much further with him in providing the continuity than in "third person" narrative,

(1) The Darkness, p.204.

the result here is a particularly live picture of the gradations of the light revealed in the darkness. The service reports and documents of the Praetorium staff are particularly well rendered, probably because the author himself was in Palestine and Syria in the Intelligence service for some years during the last war. Of particular interest in the story, is the report of the Greek philosopher, Sosthenes, called in by Herod to investigate the tomb, and report his finding on what had happened. (1) His description of the state of the tomb is based on John XX. 5-8, and the interpretation given of the way in which the physical body must have disappeared from the tomb, shows that Evan John was following the same line of thought as Dorothy Sayers.(2)

I turn now to four novels which treat the Early Christian theme from the point of view either of comparative religion or theosophy,-- J.M. Hartley's The Way, 1945, Charles Lowrie's Jeshua: He Who Laughed, 1947, Gerald Heard's The Gospel according to Gamaliel, 1946, and Robert Graves' King Jesus, 1946. As I have

(1) The Darkness, p.190-196.

(2) Compare the account in The Darkness, p.190-196, with Miss Sayers' note to the play, p.316-7, and also the text of the scene itself, p.330 of The Man Born To Be King.

already pointed out, since the 'eighties of last century, a diffuse form of mysticism, chiefly Buddhistic in its ideas, in which the common factors of all the religions have been held up as the path to religious truth, has appealed to many minds whose idea of a historical revelation or a personal God was shaken by the impersonal world of science. Rudyard Kipling was not uninterested in the occult. George Moore, though no theosophist, allowed his disillusioned Jesus of The Brook Kerith to drift towards Buddhism -- a throw-back to an interest of his own youth.(1) Men like Sir Francis Younghusband carried forward into the years between the two wars the idea of a mystical experience common to all religions. "As I made a point of searching for men of religion wherever I went", wrote Sir Francis in a notebook in his old age, "and discussing their religion with them, whatever it might be, I was constantly keeping my inner soul alive. On all journeys, and in the midst of my official duties, I was constantly keeping before me that vision of a higher state of the spirit which is common to all religious men".(2) In 1937, Aldous Huxley, in his book of essays, Ends and Means, gave

(1) cf. Hone's Life of Moore, p.141-2. He links this with Moore's early interest in Schopenhauer & Indian wisdom during his stay in France.

(2) cf. Sir Francis Younghusband, by George Seaver, p. 150-151. Younghusband formed among other societies the Fellowship of Faiths, and organised the World Congress of Faiths.

evidence that he was turning from the mood of satirical disillusionment with life which had marked his earlier books, to some sort of religious experience; and by 1946 he had arrived at The Perennial Philosophy, in which he sought to gather from East and West the immemorial and universal wisdom of all the religions -- the "Highest Common Factor" (1), "the one divine Reality substantial to the manifold world of things and lives and minds". Gerald Heard (2) also shared this search with him, and among his writings on mystical religion, has written one of the four novels listed above.

This idea, of finding the universal root of religion in the essence common to all religions, is one that is encouraged both by the science of comparative religion and by the more mystical approach of theosophy. While it looks impressive stated in the abstract terms of the philosopher or the mystic, the underlying fallacy is apparent whenever an attempt is made to apply it, in the concrete form of a story, to Jesus Christ and His faith. The ignoring or denying of what is distinctive in the Gospel, in favour of what is assumed to be held in common with -- and, therefore, drawn from -- the

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- (1) cf. the Introduction to The Perennial Philosophy.
 (2) Like Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard has retreated to the U.S.A.

other great religions of the East, results either in obvious distortions of the facts of the life of Christ, or in sheer eccentricity of thinking about Him. J.M. Hartley's The Way and Charles Lowrie's Jeshua both illustrate this in their treatment of Jesus. In themselves, they are slight novels: they depict Jesus as receiving His training and chief inspiration from one or more of the Magi when He has reached the threshold of manhood. In both, "the one spirit behind all the creeds" is heavily stressed, in The Way mixed up with something like Freemasonry. A single quotation from Jeshua will suffice for both. Hertor, the high priest of Amen-Ra, asks Jeshua, "Have you heard of Bramah?" -- "I have", replies Jeshua.

"'And the story of Vishnu the well beloved, slain by Maha Deva", continued Hertor. "Of Marduk and Tammuz, of Osiris slain by Set, the Hebel and Ka-Yin of your own religion".

"Jeshua dragged himself nearer the fire, his eyes on the speaker. 'What is the meaning behind your words, Hertor?'

The old man stared into the fire muttering.
'Always the death of the well-beloved -- always the price

to be paid'. Whether by some magic he made Jeshua look into the future I do not know, but the younger man suddenly cried out: 'Must I also die?'

'Were you hoping to live for ever, my son?' smiled Hertor" (1)

Gerald Heard, in The Gospel according to Gamaliel, 1946, sets out to show how the historical figure of Jesus becomes "crystallized into a universal symbol, the Christ. An avatar takes three generations to incarnate. We can see this growth in the Gospels from Mark to John and the development in the Pauline Epistles from the personal Saviour of his first letters -- 'The Man from Heaven'-- to the Creator of the universe of Paul's last speculative writings".(2) For Paul and John alike, "the historic Jesus is simply a place of departure for cosmological speculations and theories".(3)

The story itself, which is narrated by Gamaliel, gives in its first part an account of Jesus as a teacher of righteousness, whose message of love, under pressure

(1) Jeshua, p.121.

(2) Op.cit., Introduction, p.3.

(3) ib., p.3.

of opposition and criticism, changed to defiance (1), and whose works of healing were, as described, efforts of the will and the power of suggestion. "I will you to be well", Jesus says to a leper.(2) The subsequent events in Jerusalem are interpreted by Gamaliel in the light of a conflict within Jesus himself, the dominant desire to be the peaceful priest-king of Zechariah IX. 9, when He entered Jerusalem and on the other hand, the instinct of the warrior king of psalm 110, unable to resist the mob's tense expectation of some form of direct action, as in the cleansing of the Temple "riot".

Gamaliel has nothing to say of the death of Jesus, except that, although he had no brief for the procedure of Caiaphas, he thought that Jesus made His own condemnation inevitable. He is too busy with legal cases to know what happens after that. The story passes to Saul, driven by two obsessions, a passion for the Law's "unwavering righteousness", and a belief that "only sacrifice can appease" and "only blood can atone". (3) This obsession drives first into persecuting the followers of Jesus and killing Stephen, and finally in becoming a follower of Jesus himself. Gamaliel is not

(1) *ib.*, p.47.

(2) *ib.*, p.43.

(3) *Op. cit.*, p.52.

surprised to hear this. "He needed forgiveness.--The man of Nazareth is now his Saviour God".(1) Once more, the reader is dragged through a tale of quarrels and enmities between Paul on the one hand and Peter and James on the other. The author's sympathy is obviously most strongly with James, the Lord's brother, who is given a very kindly portrayal in the spirit of the Hillel tradition.

Behind this study of Gamaliel is the author's belief that his gospel, if he had written it, would have given very much the same picture of Jesus as "textual research" and "anthropological insight" now perceived behind the "polemical accounts" of Christian origins. (2) He sees Jesus against the background of the history of all the religions, and the common principles of development which they seem to reveal, such as, for example, the principle that "an avatar takes three generations to incarnate", which I quoted at the beginning of this review of the book. For Gerald Heard, the truth is that which conforms to the highest common factor to be found in all the religions; and he finds Hillel's liberal, humanistic interpretation of the Law comes "closest to that Eternal

(1) *ib.*, p.131.

(2) *ib.*, p.4,5.

Gospel, that Perennial Philosophy which is now recognised as the living nerve at the centre of every great religion, the common creative principle in all the creeds which have produced saints". (1) What is surprising is his failure to see that the Jesus that his own "anthropological insight" produces is a very minor prophet indeed, hardly even recognisable as a pale reflection of the Son of Man, who speaks from the beginning in the Gospels as "one having authority", who has "power to forgive sins", and asks of His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" The "Perennial Philosophy" will not recognise what is original and distinctive in the Gospel of Jesus Christ but only what conforms to the "creative principle in all the creeds" (whatever that is); but the resultant minimising of the picture of Jesus, far from being historical, is as "polemical" as Paul's so-called "cosmological speculations".

Robert Graves' King Jesus, 1946, while it is written against the background of the study of religions and their origins, has nothing in common with the theosophical colouring of the last three novels discussed. Here, the "anthropological insight" is undoubtedly distinctive. Written as an interpretation of the tradition of Jesus in

(1) Op.cit., p.4.

the light of theoretical religious origins in primitive nature cults, it is as if the theory of evolution were applied (according to Mr. Graves's version) to every event and saying in Jesus's life to explain their origin, and then forcibly reversed, so that each event and saying is made to fulfil the original primitive significance, and there you have it.

I shall give here two examples only from this long and tortuous novel. First, after his baptism, at which his "Ka descends in the form of a dove", (1) Jesus is borne to the sacred grove of Atabyrius, the god of Mt. Tabor, which the men of Tabor associate with Jehovah. There, the eighth "mark of royalty" as heir of Michal, and King of the house of Herod, is added. He is led to the Heel Stone, Mary his mother on one side of him, and Mary of Bethany his "bride" on the other.

The Kenites "pelt him with stones and sticks and filth until his face was wounded and transfigured".(2) Then follows "the ritual assault upon King Jesus by the seven notables of Tabor — performed again after more than a thousand years in fulfilment of a prophecy".(3) As a result of this, Jesus's left thigh is so damaged that he

(1) Op.cit. p.220.
 (2) Isaiah LII. 13-15.

(2) ib., p.223.

thereafter limps with "the sacred lameness".(1) The marriage with Mary as his Queen follows, after which Jesus announces that for him it is a marriage in form only. "I am your King, and I have come, not to renew but to make an end".(2) The healing ministry in Galilee follows: Jesus has refused the earthly kingdom while accepting the signs of its royalty.

As a second example of this method of interpretation, I take part of the description of the Crucifixion. When Jesus felt "the royal virtue slipping away from him", "those who watched felt their lips moving with his through the verses of that terrible psalm: the ancient Lament of the Crucified Man. 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?---' But the Kenites knew the Lament in its elder version: 'Eve, Eve, why have you forsaken me''; the last four stanzas holding the Mother of All Living to her ancient covenant, charging her not to let Azazel triumph for ever, nor to deny Adam his need of ? need? immortality".(3)

The story is written as the account of Agabus the Decapolitan, writing in the years A.D. 89-93 "the history

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- (1) Op. cit., p.224.
 (2) ib., p.226.
 (3) Op. cit., p.345.

of the wonder-worker Jesus, rightful heir-at-law to the dominions of Herod"; and concludes with a commentary by an Ebionite bishop. "Jesus by his defeat of death remains alive, an earth-bound power, excused incarceration in Sheol but not yet risen to Heaven. He is a power of Good, who persuades men to repentance and love whereas all other earth-bound powers (except only Elijah) are evil, and persuade men to sin and death".(1) The novel does perhaps give some idea of what would have happened if Jesus had been manifested in the first place to a pagan people instead of one schooled in a spiritual tradition of strict monotheism. The historic personality of Jesus would have been merged in a symbolical figurehead, who could, and would, be attached to any hem or saviour-cult, and his purpose would have been lost in a jungle of primitive myth. That is actually what happens to Jesus as a living character in this story.

These last four novels have, on the whole, been written from a humanist point of view; and yet, so far as J.M. Hartley, Charles Lowrie, and Gerald Heard are concerned, one that is "a more or less settled religious attitude

(1) p.351.

(2) Robert Graves published a further exposition of his Biblical views in "The Nazarene Gospel Restored", 1953; and "Adam's Rib", 1955.

to life", as G.S. Fraser describes Aldous Huxley's position.(1) What that amounts to, as a rule, is an attitude to life rather than to God, which seeks to synthesise a technique of mystical experience while still coming short of a credal affirmation. W.P. Crozier's historical novel, The Fates Are Laughing, 1945, stands alone in this period as the product of the orthodox old school Rationalist who prefers the cold light of reason to any mystical comforts. A classical graduate of Oxford and a former editor of the Manchester Guardian, Crozier's two great interests were classical literature and Christian origins. He never wrote the book which he planned on the latter subject, but the nature of his views is clearly discernible in this Roman novel of life in the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius, in the home of a Roman senator who idealises the simple life and genial humanism of Horace.

As a historical novel, it is rather heavily marked by the author's literary bias, and also by his tendency to hold up the classical mirror to satirise modern life and ideas. Publius and his daughter, Metella, are apt to talk like source-books of classical reference. Metella

(1) cf., The Modern Writer and his World, 1953, p.89. Mr. Fraser goes on to describe it fairly enough as "a somewhat joyless and pallid thing", which is equally applicable to Heard.

quotes Catullus even in her love-making with Lucius.(1) There is a classical variation on the perfect butler theme, in the character of the literary-minded Greek domestic slave, who can quote a source or authority for almost anything from the poets or historians (2); and cannot even prescribe for morning headaches without quoting Horace.(3) The modernist school of Artemidora satirises libertarian systems of education (4), and the economic motive behind Roman imperialism is discussed in terms of 20th. Century techniques of political aggression.(5)

A course of duty in Syria brings Lucius into contact with Pilate, where he reports on his relations with the Jews. Both Pilate and Procula, his wife, claim that Christian propaganda is the sole basis of the stories that they favoured Jesus at the trial, or were pro-Christian afterwards.(6) Later, on board ship, Lucius sees Peter arguing heatedly with some of Saul's rival following. In Rome, he meets Peter again, leading a fight between Christians and Jews over the use of a synagogue. Peter assures them of their belief that

(1) Op.cit.,p.55.

(2) Op.cit.,p.49.

(3) ib.,p.62

(4) ib.,p.11.

(5) ib.,p.23

(6) ib.,p.235-6

Christ will come again and rule the world. "There will be no more princes because Christ will rule. There will be no more armies because with a word, with a lifting of His finger, the Christ will bring His enemies low. There will be no masters and slaves, for all men will be free, and all men will be equal. There will be no rich or poor, for all will share alike.---Ah, there will be no priests among us Christians, no greedy priest living in magnificent mansions on rich fees, in purple and fine linen".(1) I have already referred to Pilate's "admission" that he had the body of Jesus secretly buried elsewhere. Taking it all in all, Christianity according to the Churches, is an entirely different thing from the religion of the early Christians, and even that is based on misunderstanding.

The striking thing about the book is the author's lack of any alternat^{ive} philosophy to this ironical picture of open-eyed futility. There is none of the old confidence in scientific humanism as the answer to the world's problems. He leaves his characters settling down in Rome again, discussing rumours of threatened civil war, of the possibility that Vesuvius may erupt again, and of the influence of Peter's Christians even on

(1) *ib.*, p.409.

the young son of the house. "I don't believe any of it", says Lucius at the close of the novel. "Nor I", said Metella. "I don't and I won't. Let's talk of something else. We're making a fresh start. We've nothing to fear. Let's be happy together". They all began to chatter and laugh, a little too loudly, insisting on their confidence.(1)

The author's own philosophy, if it can be called such, is contained in the title of the story, "The Fates are Laughing". Whatever there is of a divine character revealed in history, it is at most a divine irony. Lacking both faith and hope in the future, he seems to have found compensation, or a form of escape, in a scholar's love of classical literature and the life of the past, a form of psychological other-worldliness recommended by Bertrand Russell himself as an antidote to present evil. "The question, 'What should I do?'," he wrote, (2) "is one which must take account of my circumstances, and which therefore compels me to attach more importance to what is near me in time and space than to what is distant. But if there is such a thing as wisdom, as opposed to practical cleverness, it is most

(1) Op.cit., p.409.

(2) From an Overseas broadcast, printed in The Listener, March 18, 1948.

likely to be acquired by a habit of remembering what is distant. ---- Especially in bad times, emancipation from bondage to the immediate present is useful as an antidote to despair".

Something of the mood of ironical disillusionment with the meaning of life, in which Crozier wrote his novel, Julian Duguid describes, as well as his own reaction to it, in 'I Am Persuaded, 1941. "To a sceptic, men and women are creatures evolved by a slow compulsion through two hundred million years. It amuses him to plumb their vagaries, their motives, heredity and environment. He notes their courage and obstinate pettiness; their grasping stupidity and self-sacrifice, their good-heartedness, greed and pomposity, their overwhelming complacency. Since he must watch the play till death, he observes their evasions and fantasies with a tolerance that is half contemptuous, half almost unbearably sad. He does not lose himself in the actors because a feeling of basic futility never leaves his questioning mind. Yet, he observes himself as acutely and with the same lack of passion. His gods may be uncreative, they may rest on a stark refusal of all man's secret comforts, but they have two astringent virtues. They are free from muddle-headedness, and they allow to

the individual the right to his own sweet fallacies. Those are negative enough, it is true, but then the whole outlook is negative".(1)

I have given some space to the consideration of this novel, and the rather bleak afterthought of Rationalism which it contains, because it does help us to understand the diffused anthropological religious feeling represented in the "perennial gospel" novels already dealt with. Much of the theosophical or anthropological religion, (as it might better be called) of Gerald Heard and his group of writers, has arisen by way of reaction from the barren negativeness of the Rationalism found in such as Crozier's novel. It resulted in a type of vague, "more or less" religious outlook, which, unable to make a clean break with Rationalism in the direction of faith, seeks the satisfaction of a mystical form of experience while still retaining the forms of rationalistic thought. Thus, an eclectic mysticism, tinged with the philosophies of oriental religion and modern rationalism, has been a frequently sought alternative to both thoroughgoing Rationalism and a completely committed religious faith, as the literature of our day shows.

The more notable romances of Early Christianity

(1) cf., I Am Persuaded, 1941, p.168.

have come, in this period of 1940 to 1955, from America rather than Britain, where they appeared only in the wake of the more popular American tales. As I wish to complete the over-all survey of the British novels, with their distinctive features, together, I shall take the following three British novels first, though they are later in time than the American romances — B. Montagu Scott's Magdalen, 1953, Charles Dunscomb 's The Bond and the Free, 1955, and E.G. Lee's The Beginning, 1955.

Magdalen is a simple, unpretentious tale of romance and religious sentiment which relates the story of Mary Magdalene from a childhood in poor and sordid surroundings, through a "friendship" with a Roman, to her coming under the influence of Jesus. The story ends at the point where Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem at the beginning of Passover Week. "Somehow, she knew, as though already she saw, the trial, and the terror to come — the agony — the glory. Saw and understood. ---Had He not said it -- "I, if I be lifted up, shall draw all men unto Me".(1) It is a simple and sincere story, but it does not look deep enough into the character of Mary or her relation to Jesus. It fails to tell the very thing we want to know about her, just how she came to know and understand

(1) Magdalen, p.200.

the meaning of the great events of our Lord's life, and why she was the first to see the risen Lord. It is not enough to say, "Somehow she knew".

Charles Dunscomb's The Bond and the Free, 1955, is a novel in the form of letters, written by Lavinia, a young niece of Pilate's wife, during her residence, first in Judea and later in Philippi. The letters are written over a period from 26 A.D. to 64 A.D., during which glimpses are given of the life of the early Christians, whom Lavinia admires for their courage and honesty of life, and for their generosity to the poor during famine. Transferred to Philippi in the course of her husband's duties, she is there baptised by Paul in 51 A.D., and gives an interesting glimpse of her embarrassment at her first meeting for Christian worship at which she has to mix on equal terms with people of all classes.(1) The final letter is from Rome in A.D. 64, following the great fire, and the persecution of the Christians. Peter has been crucified, but John Mark is staying at her house, where the Church now meets, and is writing down what he can remember of the teaching and life of Jesus. The Church is not dying. "Tell them, above all, that the young are coming to Christ. I am old, and

(1) The Bond and the Free, p.165-6.

I have wasted most of my life in pleasures and in doubt and indifference, but the young ones of the world will not do as I have done; they will not wait, waver and hesitate.---"(1)

Charles Dunscomb writes of the past, as the above quotation shows, with his eye constantly on the present. The "tract for the times" motive, the defence of the faith, is strong. The emphasis on the place of youth as against age in the life of the Church is much more characteristic of our day and generation than of the First Century. It is an interesting fact that Paul, in the midst of his many instructions and exhortations to the Churches, knows no such distinction. Similarly, of his characters, those that stand out in any way do so ^{more} for their implied commentary on present day characteristics than the past, -- Aufidius, the anthropologist, gathering material for his treatise on "The Nature and Mentality of Primitive Peoples", Tryphena the clever sceptic, Plautia of Philippi with her taste for religious novelties, even Lavinia's impression of the current outlook in Philippi is probably more applicable to the present day. "The ordinary people no longer believe in their usefulness: this belief has been

(1) The Bond and the Free, p.189-190.

supplanted by a bored and resigned acceptance of the fact that they are in the grip of circumstances too big to be affected by their own puny efforts. In a world that can be tossed about by the lunatic hand of a Caligula, what does anything matter?". (1)

E.G. Lee's The Beginning, 1955, which combines romance with historical reconstruction of a situation in the early Church, is a reminder that the demand for a return to the historical Jesus is not a new thing in the life of the Church. Marcus, a Roman freedman, who has long felt himself out of sympathy with the eschatological longings which bulk so large in the belief of the Church, finds his own Christian vocation anew in gathering the traditions about Jesus and building up the organisation against the expected attacks of persecution. In this, he is advised by the Rich Young Ruler of the Gospels, who, it appears, did sell all he had, and since then has been playing a lone independent hand among the followers of Jesus. "Look to the past", he tells Marcus. "Collect the memories of him, write them down, his words, gather them to your heart, and preserve them for others. The End is now, now, never in the future. The world that is to be is now, now, if we will only open our eyes".(2)

(1) The Bond and the Free, p.128.

(2) The Beginning, p.194.

When persecution comes under Nero, it is the organisation of Marcus that helps the remnant of the Church to survive, and to them Marcus gives the lead for the future.

"The Promise is not to be, it is here already --- only when we are called upon to witness what we have witnessed --- and when we are fitted unto death --- then shall the Promise shine upon us with life everlasting".(1)

The story is obviously written with the eschatological interests of much modern scholarship in mind, particularly Schweitzer's "thorough-going eschatology"(2), as well as the historical situation of the early Church. At the same time, the author, in depicting the absorption of the Roman Christians in the End, fails to give its proper value to their sense of present fellowship with the Risen Lord. Even Paul, in his address to the Roman Church (3), speaks only of the coming End, and is given nothing to say of the meaning of the Risen Lord to faith, and of the present life "in Christ", which is so important in his teaching. As a result, the attitude of these early Christians to their "Immortal Lord" (as they invariably call Him) is so far removed from any interest in His human personality or

(1) The Beginning, p.236.

(2) cf., Schweitzer - The Quest of the Historical Jesus, 1910.

(3) The Beginning, p.44-45.

existence, that the reader is left wondering why any oral tradition about the human Jesus had survived at all for Marcus to record.

However, the story does give an interesting sidelight on what must have been an important turning-point in the history of the Church, when the oral tradition began to be written down and the earliest Gospel to take literary form. It may well be that part of this development was a revival of concern for the humanity of the "Immortal Lord", (1) although it must never be lost sight of that only a lively interest in the actual personality of Jesus could have kept the oral tradition together as it did. Apart from this key-situation in the novel, the love romance element is given prominence by linking Marcus with Acte; and the apocryphal tradition regarding Seneca and Pilate is made use of to introduce them as characters on the fringe of Christianity. (2)

Looking back over the list of British novels in this final period of the war years and after, they stand out as predominantly novels of religious affirmation, in contrast to the prevailing trend of scepticism in the previous

(1) This is actually the argument of R.H. Strachan's The Historic Jesus in the New Testament, 1931.

(2) The "Anaphora" of Pilate describes his end as that of a martyr. cf., James, Apoc.N.T., p.155. c.f., Letter of Pilate to Herod, in Apoc.N.T., p.155. cf., Letters of Paul & Seneca, ib., p.480.

period between the two wars. The first four authors, Dorothy Sayers, Victor MacClure, Evan John and John Goldthorpe show a strong and confident interest in the theological interpretation of the Gospel story for religious experience. The romancers, B. Montagu Scott, Charles Dunscomb, and E.G. Lee are content to express a temper of religious experience personally felt by them in the form of a story. The "tract for the times" motive, though it is not so openly didactic as it has been in the past, is still present in the romance, even if it is only to communicate the author's personal feeling for the character of life depicted. In Dunscomb's The Bond and the Free, the note of contemporary defence of the faith is strongly in evidence, and in Lee's The Beginning, a particular historical emergency in the Early Church is recalled to present a case for the historical tradition of the Church about Jesus. It is interesting, among the most recent of these historical romances, to have this reminder in The Beginning that the full theological testimony of the faith is still bound up with the historical Jesus, who lived, died upon the Cross, and whom God raised up.(1) Crozier's The Fates Are

(1) As D.M. Baillie emphasises in God Was in Christ, p.52,ff.

Laughing is the one example of the older Rationalism brought to the historical detraction of Christianity; and what is remarkable about it is the absence of any strong sense of social impetus or purpose, but only one of futility and disillusionment with life. And it is in reaction to that spiritual vacuum that an exploratory religious outlook has arisen, such as has found expression in the novels of J.M. Hartley, Charles Lowrie, and Gerald Heard, written from the point of view of the history of religions, and seeking to express a form of religious experience.

In contrast to the leading British authors dealt with, the American novelists in this period have followed the tradition of the romancers, and where they have chosen a measure of reconstruction of a point of view, as in the case of Dorothy C. Wilson and F.G. Slaughter, they have also felt it necessary to add a liberal seasoning of romance.

Lloyd C. Douglas's The Robe, 1943, re-established the colourful tradition of the romancers both in Britain and America, recalling Quo Vadis and Ben Hur of the 19th. Century. Centring round the adventures of the Roman tribune who supervised the Crucifixion, it also introduces Peter and John Mark. A large part of the interest

concerns the "Robe", the seamless coat referred to in John XX. 24, for which the soldiers drew lots at the Crucifixión, and which, invested with a mysterious sanctity, provides a link of interest between the characters and the events of the tale. The Robe seemed to catch something of the mood of the war years in which it was published, telling as it does the story of a Christian slave and his relations with his Roman master, The final defiant declaration of Marcellus before the Emperor Caligula strikes a note that echoes in the war years and after, and this perhaps helps to explain its very wide popularity at that time. "Your Majesty, if the Empire desires peace and justice and goodwill among all men, my King will be on the side of the Empire and her Emperor. If the Empire and the Emperor desire to pursue that slavery and slaughter that have brought agony and terror and despair to the world, if there is then nothing for men to hope for but chains and hunger at the hands of our Empire — my King will march forward to right this wrong!" (1)

The Big Fisherman, 1949, also by Lloyd C. Douglas, lacks the spontaneity of The Robe. Although it is the story of Peter, by its title, the author relies on romance

(1) The Robe, p.494.

rather than history, giving primacy to the adventures of a runaway Arabian princess, who comes under the guardianship of Peter. Peter and the disciples appear as well marked character types in the glossy colourings of popular magazine illustration. While naturalism is the order of the day in historical romance, it is probably not so easy for an English reader as for an American to picture the disciples calling each other Johnny and Jimmy and Andy and Thad. And it probably seems much more natural to an American that Pilate should greet Joseph of Arimathea at the Praetorium with a -- "Well, Joe, what is it?"

The subject of Dorothy Clark Wilson's The Brother, 1950, is the relationship between Jesus as the eldest son with James, "the brother" of the title. The family life and festivals, the close communion of the boyhood years, and the "dream" which Jesus shares with James of something big which they will one day do together, is described with imaginative realism, and careful reference to rabbinical sources. The main theme of the story is of the cleavage that widens to antagonism between James and Jesus as His ministry develops, and James is unable to share in His brother's independence of the Law. The story tells how in the end he finds reconciliation in the

experience of the Resurrection. Here, Miss Wilson's interpretation of the Resurrection appearances is in the liberal tradition of the Social Gospel, as also is her presentation of the Gospel teaching. The Kingdom of God is translated into the Godlike Community. Clopas is inspired to introduce profit-sharing among his pack-drivers, and a co-operative community on his land.(1) The experience of the Resurrection is given a strong social application. James discovers his Brother's presence with him in forgiving his enemy and in helping a stranger,(2) and the same thought is applied to the other disciples.(3) The idea is an application and extension of the meaning of two of Jesus's sayings, Matthew, chapter XXVI. 35-40, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least....", and Matthew XII. 48-50, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren---". Mary the Mother of Jesus thus finds the risen Lord with her in helping the outcast. Again, the author interweaves an element of romance with her story, and it is difficult to associate starry-eyed romance with James. The family picture of the "unknown years" is quite the best part of this book, but the interpretation of the life's task of Jesus as "the Dream" hardly seems adequate to the

(1) The Brother, p.292-3.

(2) ib., p.342-3.

(3) ib., p.333.

Crucifixion, and the social application of the Resurrection appearances, while understandable as parabolic interpretation, simply does not account for their place in the experience of the disciples.

F.G. Slaughter, in two robust and colourful romances, The Road to Bithynia, 1952, and The Galileans, 1954, reconstructs the experience of a physician who comes within the orbit of early Christianity. In the first novel, it is Luke, and in the second, it is an imaginary "Joseph", nephew of Joseph of Arimathea. The device not only enables him to bring a great deal of clinical detail into his tales (the author himself being a doctor), but also to picture in these two characters the personal approach of a medical man to the faith of Christ, and this he does in a way that is probably the most effective part of both stories. In each case, the physician is drawn as a man who prefers to walk by sight, who can understand Jesus as the Teacher of the Way, but not as the Saviour and Lord of faith. And in each case, the physician learns through a Resurrection experience of his own the further truth of the Gospel.

F.G. Slaughter shows himself to be a skilled exponent of popular and colourful romance, except when, in The Road to Bithynia, he introduces Thecla of Iconium to provide

the third point in a triangle which includes himself and Paul, a use of the apocryphal Acts of Paul which is both false to the spirit of its source, and certainly false to all we know of Luke's and Paul's relations with one another.

Thomas B. Costain's The Silver Chalice, 1953, my last example of American popular romance, reveals, like The Robe, the influence of the film upon the popular story. The author is not only a journalist, but has held "editorships" under one of the big film corporations of America. This, his only Biblical novel, has been filmed in lavish technicolour since its publication as a novel, and it seems likely that that was in view when it was written. The story combines the idea of the custodianship of the original chalice used at the Last Supper, with the challenge of Simon Magus to Peter's preaching of the Gospel. The characterisation does not add much to understanding of the New Testament. Paul is shown as an egotist who talks down everyone else, and gets his own way through sheer force of self-centred personality.(1) Peter and Luke have much kinder treatment, but it is impossible in the circumstances to understand why Luke should be so loyal to Paul as a leader of the Church.

(1) The Chalice, p.89 ff.

If I were to point a contrast between the American novels of this period and the British, it would be that the range of ideas among the British novelists was strongly influenced by Miss Dorothy Sayers, and also by the technique and policy of wireless broadcasting under the B.B.C. The American novels of the same period have been more dominated by the success of The Robe as a religious romance, with the accent on romance, and by the needs of providing a possible film scenario. It is one of the contrasts of our time that while film scenarios have not as a rule encouraged the development of ideas, the oral medium of the chronicle play in wireless broadcasting, designed to stimulate the imagination and the mind together, has been a direct stimulus and encouragement to the development of ideas in the technique and subject matter of the story as a literary form. (1)

Three European authors I shall refer to briefly. Sholem Asch, the Jewish novelist, by the very immensity of his tale, The Apostle, 1945, as well as by the diffuse verbosity of his descriptive style, defeats the interest of the reader in his own evident sincerity and distinctive point of view. Julius Berstl, in his two novels of Paul's life, The Tentmaker, 1951, and The Cross

(1) An example of this influence of radio play technique has been noted already in John Goldthorpe's The Same Scourge, on p. 436 of this thesis.

and the Eagle, 1954, deals faithfully, according to his lights, with Paul's developing theology, of which it is impossible, although he does his best, to make an exiting^C story. Both novels drag the reader through the whole wretched story of quarrels and divisions, which so unaccountably transform^S the spread of the Gospel through the world of the Roman Empire into a squalid and embittered series of campaigns between rival Christian groups. On the whole, it appears to be Sholem Asch's view that Paul at first exalted the Person of Jesus so high in his thought of Him that He came between Paul and his God.(1) But with his letter to the Ephesians, "The apostle begins to find his way back to God, whom he had for a time lost, because of his love for the Messiah, his zeal for his mission, and his bitterness against his enemies.---Therefore I bend the knee to the Father of Yeshua the Messiah, in whom all the families of heaven and earth are named.---"(2)

Julius Berstl, on the other hand, believes that Paul theologised, Hellenised, and over-organised the essentially simple undogmatic Gospel of Jesus. "For one must understand one thing clearly: namely, that the first Christians did not feel themselves to be a Church, just

(1) The Apostle, p.606.
 (2) ib.,p.639.

as Jesus did not feel himself to be the founder of a religion".(1) The story of Paul, therefore, becomes for him the story of "how he followed the call of Jesus, and by his inspiration and his tenacious will created and organised the early Christian Church".(2)

The last novel which I have to survey is Marguerite Yourcenar's The Memoirs of Hadrian, 1955, a portrait in the form of a personal journal kept by the Emperor, recording his reactions to his own powers and the problems of his office, his experiences in the administration of his Empire, and especially his relations with his favourite, Antinous, leading up to his death by drowning in Egypt. The picture drawn is deeply analytical, attempting to penetrate imaginatively to the motives and processes of thought of the man who became Emperor. She attempts to delineate his thoughts about assuming divinity as Emperor, how he feels himself to be divine "wholly on the plane of intellect". "At 48 I felt free of impatience, assured of myself, and as near perfection as my nature would permit, ~~in fact~~, in fact, eternal.---- The feeling was confirmed in performing the simplest routines of my functions as emperor. If Jupiter is brain to the

(1) The Tentmaker, p.8.

(2) ib., p.8.

world, then the man who organises and presides over human affairs can logically consider himself as a part of that all-governing mind. Humanity, rightly or not, has almost always conceived of its god in terms of Providence; my duties forced me to serve as the incarnation of this Providence for one part of mankind".(1) It is essentially a psychological study, necessarily introspective, both by reason of its use of the autobiographical method, and of its acute examination of the ideas and feelings of the mind. The author herself sets out to be completely objective, she takes no side whatever in moral or spiritual judgment upon his acts or relationships or purpose in life. It is for the man to reveal himself.

The interesting consequence is, however, a book of memoirs which Hadrian himself could never have written. The whole method of self-analysis not simply makes him an inverted egotist, but represents an outlook of which the ancient mind was not capable. The author's diagnosis of his character and thoughts may be true enough, but they are completely foreign to the way in which an ancient Roman would think, much less the way in which he would write his memoirs. Psychological introspection is a modern technique of knowledge. The interest of this for my thesis is that it illustrates in the general field of

(1) Hadrian, p.153.

biographical and historical method, that modern methods of seeking out the historical past and of understanding it, themselves create a gulf between our modern mind and the mind of the past. We have to face the fact that our ways of thinking divide us. This is the problem which the historian in search of the "historical Jesus" has to face also; and it brings me to the conclusion which I propose to draw in the next and last chapter from my study of these historical novels and romances of the past one hundred and fifty years.

CHAPTER X.The Continuing Outside Tradition

James the Greater - "Lord, it is wonderful:
 When thou comest, Jesus powerful,
 To look at us,
 And to speak peace to us,
 Though they were fast, thou didst open
 Our doors".

-- Mary Magdalene and the Apostles,
 Cornish Mystery Play.

In the first chapter, I described "the Outside Tradition" as the point at which the Oral Tradition passed out of the control of the Church into the open currency of the people, and became subject to the influence of the speculations, longings, curiosities and superstitions of the world. The point of separation in time was the reception by the Church of the four written Gospels as the "Accepted Tradition" for use in connection with worship and teaching. What that meant in practice was that the Outside Tradition passed into the hands of the individual teacher of any religious group or speculative philosophical interest, and also of the popular story-teller, whether in the home or the market-

places, seeking to give an answer to the questions and curiosities of the people. There was a demand for further enlightenment about persons, incidents, adventures and doctrines contained in the accepted Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, concerning which these scriptures were felt to be reticent, and both the independent teacher and the story-teller sought to meet it in their own way.

Comparing the resulting Apocryphal Gospels and Books of Acts with the novels of the last century and a half, in which the Gospel and Apostolic (or sub-Apostolic) times have been portrayed through the medium of a story, I described the "Outside Tradition" as the contribution of the romancer and teller of tales to the interpretation of the Gospel story, in the light of the changing ideas and speculations of the world surrounding Christianity. The survey of these novels which I have made does, I think, bear out the applicability to them also, with very slight amendment, of M.R. James's comment on the Apocrypha. "If they are not good sources of history in one sense, they are in another. They record the imaginations, hopes and fears of the men who wrote them; they show what was acceptable to the unlearned Christians of the first ages, what interested them, what they admired, what ideals of conduct they cherished for this life, what

they thought they would find in the next"(1). A similar cross-section of life and thought is reflected in the Early Christian novels of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Always, something of the contemporary climate of faith and thought, problems and fears, enters into their picture of the past. And the study of these novels has brought out how closely past and present are intermingled in our historical thinking. Even when the deliberate effort is being made to reproduce the past objectively for its own sake, the present, with its religious, social and scientific attitudes, its beliefs and unbeliefs, is colouring the whole picture.

This factor of reflected light, projecting the illumination of the present upon the historical picture of the past, becomes important in view of the predominance of the historical approach to the New Testament documents by the end of the Nineteenth Century. And this is the crux of the whole survey, on which I wish to concentrate attention in conclusion. The historian now makes the claim that by getting behind the records to the facts themselves, stripped clear of all theological interpretation and tendentious heightening of miraculous

(1) James, Apoc. N.T., 1953 ed., Introduction, p.xiii.

and prophetic effects, and by setting these objective facts in their rational perspective of cause and effect, of background influences and personal reactions to them,--- there you will have the real truth. It was of little avail for the theologian or the religious historian to reply, as James Denney did, that -- "If the distinction between historical and dogmatic is pressed, it runs back into the distinction between thing and meaning, or between fact and theory; and this --- is a distinction which it is impossible to press. There is a point in which the two sides in such contrasts pass into each other. He who does not see the meaning does not see the thing; or, to use the more imposing words, he who refuses to take a dogmatic view proves by doing so that he falls short of a completely historical one".(1)

Objective history, however, held the day. The search went on for the real Gospel behind the Gospels, and the whole apparatus criticus of historical scholarship went towards the search for the historical Jesus. The result was a fragmentation of the Gospel picture, which gave the appearance of a broken up jig-saw puzzle, the different parts of which either conflicted with each other in the kind of picture they suggested, or

(1) James Denney, The Death of Christ, 1902, p.4-5.

would not fit into each other at all. The cause lay in the method pursued, that of analysis and abstraction. Baur and the Tübingen school analysed the Gospels in terms of tendencies -- Pauline, Petrine, Johannine -- the classification creating division from the start. Renan and his successors of the liberal school of rationalistic historians re-drew the portrait of the historical Jesus, from which any evidence of direct Divine intervention in history was excluded, because it violated the laws of nature. Miracle was therefore ruled out, and the Resurrection appearances were dismissed as "subjective visions".(1) Jesus became a religious genius, or an idealistic teacher of righteousness, or an apocalyptic visionary, but not the risen Lord. The result was the creation of a divide between the religious experience of Jesus and the religious experience of the Apostolic Church. Paul, said some, to explain it, "theologised" Christianity (2): or he "Hellenised" it, investing it with the salvationist doctrines of the mystery religions, thus making unbridgeable the apparent division between him and the leaders of the Jerusalem Church, and especially Peter.(3) These were not the only voices, of course,

(1) The view followed by Strauss, Renan, Schmiedel and C.G. Montefiore.

(2) The view of W.M. Wrede, St. Paul, 1907.

(3) For Paul as a Helleniser, see - W. Bousset, Der Apostel Paulus, 1906; Maurice Goguel, L'Apotre Paul et Jesus Christ, 1904; Kirsopp Lake, Landmarks in the History of Early Christianity, 1920; J. Klausner, From Jesus to Paul, 1944.

among the New Testament scholars. Adolf Deissmann (1) and Sir William Ramsay (2), followed by Albert Schweitzer (3), retraced Paul's thought to its roots deep in Judaism. Anderson Scott more recently (4) showed the links between Paul and Jesus. Biblical theology was busy, as I have tried to show in chapter IX, between the two World Wars, rediscovering the unifying ideas that brought the New Testament documents together. But, as always, the voices for disunity seemed to echo furthest, and it was this attitude which reappeared most prominently among the novelists of the Twentieth Century up to 1939.

The effect of this fragmentation upon the historical records as they stood was made all the more damaging by the Source Criticism of the Gospels of the first two decades of this century. While its analysis of the Synoptic Gospels into various older components shed a new and most valuable light on the ways in which the collections of memories and sayings of Jesus had been gathered together, it also gave the impression of the real original Gospel as something that had to be ferreted out of the existing records, which, as they stood, appeared

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- (1) Deissmann, St. Paul, 1911.
 (2) Ramsay, St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen.
 (3) Schweitzer, Paul and his Interpreters, 1912.
 (4) Anderson Scott, Christianity According to St. Paul, 1927; Living Issues in the New Testament, chs.1-iii.

to conceal it rather than reveal it. Form-criticism, appearing from Germany after 1918, (1) threw the light still further back upon the oral tradition and its relationship to the Church's worship and teaching, and yet seemed to carry the process of fragmentation so far as to make a biographical portrait of Jesus, with anything like continuity of events and development of experience, utterly impossible.

The effect of all this is seen, as I have tried to show, in the novels of 1920-1939, particularly in such novels as By An Unknown Disciple, 1918, and Mary Borden's The King of the Jews, 1935. It is still seen in the picture of Jesus and Paul in Gerald Heard's The Gospel According to Gamaliel, 1946, and in Julius Berstl's two novels, Paul the Tentmaker, 1951, and The Cross and the Eagle, 1954. What stands out in these novels is the basic assumption that their picture is closer to the real truth than the Gospel records, with their doctrinal colourings, reveal.

Thus, the Outside Tradition of the historical novel is found in the Twentieth Century claiming, in virtue of its use of historical methods of analytical research, and of the historical perspectives implicit in the causal

(1) Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel.

relationship of the individual to environment and background influences, that it is the real custodian of the truth about "Jesus as He was" rather than the Accepted Tradition of the written Gospels. It also claims to sit in judgment on the Accepted Tradition, on the ground that the Gospels have transformed the human figure of Jesus into a lay-figure on which to drape their garments of mystical and theological interpretation.

On the other hand, the result of the search for the historical Jesus has not been "the real Jesus", but a Jesus stripped of the power to explain the events that happened after His death -- that is, the gathering together of the scattered disciples into the Church, much less the nature of their faith in Jesus -- and stripped even of the power to explain why He was crucified. What has resulted has not been "objective fact", but another interpretation of the facts, rigorously censored as well as interpreted in the light of the rationalistic ideas and social and psychological emphases of the day. Moreover, as Schweitzer pointed out, the interpretation itself has only been possible through reading between the lines "a whole host of things, and those often the most important, and then to foist them upon the text by means of psychological conjecture".(1) The problem,

(1) Schweitzer - The Quest of the Historical Jesus, 1954 edition, p.330.

however, is not so much that the historians have brought imaginative and psychological insights into their "biographies" of Jesus -- historical understanding will always require these -- but that they have not tried to understand the Figure in the Gospel record on His own merits, but have cut and trimmed Him to the standards and presuppositions of their own day.

That is why, for this reason, I have concentrated in this study on the novelists' various assessments of Jesus's spiritual significance in His ministry and powers, on their view of the nature of the Resurrection experiences as recorded in the teaching of the Apostles, and on their representation of the so-called divisions between (a) the Christ of the Apostles' faith and the Jesus of the flesh, and (b) between Paul and the Jerusalem Church. I have chosen to follow out these main points of interpretation rather than follow the variety of character-interpretations of the disciples, such as Mary the Mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Judas, and so on.. There have been numerous such byways of historical treatment, down which it was tempting to turn. But the core of the matter is in these key-points of interpretation. The main issue is the clash between the humanistic historical method of interpretation, and

the kerygmatic Gospel presentation of the faith of Jesus Christ.

For the full understanding of the place of the historical Jesus in the life of the Apostolic Church, the nature of the Gospel as a literary form in comparison with a modern biography or history, has to be realised. The Gospels, as we know them, proclaim the Gospel of God in manifesting Himself to the world through Jesus Christ. God is the invisible chief character in the whole story: it is His action in breaking into history that Jesus Christ reveals, step by step.

The modern biographer or historian, proceeding by analysis of tendencies, assessment of the cause and effect of various influences, in a self-contained humanistic estimate of life, is using a method of analytical knowledge of which the First Century mind, whether Christian or not, knew nothing. And the novelist using it must recognise that part of the apparent intractability of the Gospel material when it comes to fitting it into his own historical or biographical perspectives is due to the wide difference between the thought processes of today and those of the First Century, and is not necessarily due to the difference between truth and error or enlightenment and ignorance, as is so often assumed.

Here is the real source of the dissonance between the Gospel "dogmatic" treatment and the historical "realistic" treatment of the life of Christ.

The question for the novelist of the Outside Tradition of Christianity is, then, -- Can the historical method, and the historical novelist using it, accept that Gospel perspective, and harmonise the incarnate Christ with the human personality, played upon by the influences of environment and heredity, subject to inner development of mind and experience, and limited by the knowledge of his day, which the humanistic realism of the historical method demands? That is what Dorothy Sayers attempted to do in The Man Born To Be King, 1943, and it is in this direction, in which she has been followed by such novelists as Victor MacClure, John Goldthorpe, and Evan John, that the novelist of the Outside Tradition can make his most original and distinctive contribution to the understanding of the Jesus of the Gospels.

The historical Jesus of objective, undogmatic history, has proved a chimaera, the projected fable of the rationalistic mind, and utterly inadequate to explain either the events of Jesus's life or the existence of His Church. Nevertheless, the search for the historical Jesus has been vastly worth while for the recovered sense

of the real, creaturely humanity of the Incarnate Son in the days of His flesh, which it has given to the theologian.

The practical effect upon our thinking about the doctrine of the Incarnation is evident today both in the work of the imaginative writer and the theologian. It is shown in the union of a high Christology with an uncompromising human realism which one finds in Dorothy Sayers's The Man Born To Be King: and it is equally manifest in the Christology of such theologians as the late D.M. Baillie, and Vincent Taylor. "To each Christian today", wrote Dr. Baillie in God Was In Christ, 1948, "as to Simon of old, in response to the confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God", there come with unabated truth the words; "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven". It is neither ocular nor historical proof, but Divine revelation, the testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum. And yet it remains true that the revelation came to Peter as an inward witness to the Jesus whom he knew in the flesh, and it comes to us as a witness to the Jesus whom we know as an historical personality through the Gospel story".(1) "We cannot see the Jesus of history", writes Vincent Taylor in The Life and Ministry of Jesus, 1954, "if we close our eyes to the Christ of faith; we do not see the Christ of

(1) p.51.

faith except in the light of the Jesus of history".(1)
 This "double vision" (2) is anhistorical characteristic
 of the documents themselves in the New Testament, and has
 to be understood as such by the historian today if his
 picture is to be historically adequate.

There are signs that the historian is recognising
 the barrenness of history restricted to the technical
 collecting of objective "facts", and the need to return to
 interpretative standards---"not so much new knowledge as
 a new vision, playing on old facts".(3) Herbert
 Butterfield, in drawing attention to the fact that the
 Church's search for the historical Jesus is embodied
 doctrinally in its creeds (4), is not alone among the
 historians in seeking a sanction for historical truth in
 a standard beyond itself. "Where historians have gone
 astray", wrote Geoffrey Barraclough, (5) -- "is--in
 concentrating upon the historical process as though it
 were an ultimate; ---History is not a key to life's

(1) p.36.

(2) cf., A.M. Ramsay's phrase in The Resurrection of Christ,
 p.12.

(3) Geoffrey Barraclough, article, The Larger View of
 History, in the Times Literary Supplement, Jan.6.1956.

(4) "Some of the bewildering controversies in early Church
 history become more manageable to our minds if we realise
 that the central object of the Church was to maintain the
 full humanity as well as the full divinity of Christ.--The
 quest for the historical Jesus did not begin in the 19th
 Century, though that century was the first vividly to
 realise the science and discipline which such a task required".
Christianity & History, 1949, p.129.

(5) op.cit., Times Lit. Supp., Jan.6.1956.

mysteries.---If the dangers which beset history today are

Page 487. Additional footnote.

The protest is against the attitude of objectivity demanded by the scientific historian, which tended to limit his task to the examination and systematic assembly of historical data, and to produce over-specialisation in circumscribed periods. "History is a science; no less and no more". Professor J.B.Bury's famous dictum in his inaugural lecture at Cambridge in 1903 set the keynote of academic historical standards for at least the first three decades of this Century. In spite of Dr.G.M.Trevelyan's defence of history as an art deserving its place in literature, (in Clio:a Muse, 1913) and in spite of his own record of literary histories since then, the orthodoxy of scientific history did undoubtedly cast a blight on the literary and imaginative treatment of history, and, with it, on the historical novel, as ipso facto bad scholarship and the sin of popularising the subject. (An old standing charge, this, against successful authors:-- see Scott's defence against the complaint that he was "willing to barter future reputation for present popularity", in the Introductory Epistle to The Fortunes of Nigel). From the nineteen-thirties onwards, the Oxford philosopher and historian, R.G.Collingwood, did something to modify the scientific historian's demand for objectivity, by pointing out the necessary links between past and present, and the part played by the historian's imagination in the discovery of facts as well as in their interpretation. (See The Philosophy of History, 1930, and The Historical Imagination, 1935). History is "the re-enactment of past thought in the historian's mind", and the historical imagination, "in its a priori form, does the entire work of historical construction". (The Idea of History, 1946, pp.228 and 241.) But on the debit side of this encouragement to the imaginative historical writer, he weakened his own case by laying himself open to the charge of subjectivism. Historical truth itself seemed to become a subjective thing, dependent on each historian's angle of vision. His own historical thought about Julius Caesar, Collingwood argued, differs from the nineteenth Century Mommsen's, not because one of them is wrong, but because "my historical thought is about my own past, not about Mommsen's past". (p.15) "All history is thus an interim-report on the progress made in the study of its subject down to the present". He concluded,-- "As historian, he is concerned with one special aspect of the present -- how it came to be what it is. In that sense, the past is an aspect or function of the present".(ib.,p.16)

It is from this point that the further step is being taken by such historians as Geoffrey Barraclough and Professor Butterfield, to seek again some form of universal beyond the particularism of historical study, or, in the former's words, -- "a higher purpose outside itself".

mysteries.---If the dangers which beset history today are to be overcome, the first necessity is that it should abandon its admiring contemplation of its own navel and find justification in relation to a higher purpose outside itself". *

Today, the historical novelist of the Outside Tradition can turn to the Accepted Tradition in the New Testament with a better understanding of the literary unity of the Gospels as the historic expression of the faith of Christ, and with the knowledge that the modern historian is acquiring a more realistic understanding of the limitations of his own technique and the need of some standard of judgment or vision outside of it.

The difference made is that between a photograph and a portrait. The one may exhibit externals accurately enough, and yet not reveal the invisibles of character and personality. The portrait, expressing the insight and impression of the artist, is nearer the whole truth. The true picture of "Jesus as He was" requires the interpretative insight of faith, allied to the sound scholarship (the science of history) which has its necessary part in portraying truth to reality.

Yet truth to reality, as this inquiry into the novels has shown, reveals that the novelist's picture will

always have clinging to it the evidences of his own presuppositions and the climate of opinion in his own day. When we ask of the novel -- How far is it true to the witness of the New Testament? -- we are not asking the only relevant question. We should also ask -- Is it a picture that reveals a truth about Jesus to its own day? That the portrait should be no more than a partial representation of the truth, is only to be accepted with the limitations of human knowledge and perception. "Now I know in part----". The conclusion of the quest for the historical Jesus is not ----"That is what really happened: that is Jesus as He was". Even if the answer can only be -- "So we seek Him, and see Him, in our generation, through our problems and our ways of thinking"-- it is enough. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto our fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son ----"

This much must be said, however, in conclusion, -- that the Outside Tradition is open to all comers. Whosoever has a point of view to express, and a tale to tell, and a public to read it, may join its ranks. There is no qualifying orthodoxy. Their differences are often those of the individualist, whose claims lie between

"Orthodoxy or My-Doxy and Heterodoxy or Thy-Doxy", as Thomas Carlyle once put it. (1) That is what gives life and infinite variety to it as a continuing Outside Tradition. But all the greater responsibility is laid upon the reader to bring a standard of faith as well as scriptural knowledge to his judgment of the result, and never more so than when the novelist claims to have the judgment of history behind him.

Daniel-Rops, the French historian, has written in his study of Jesus, Jesus in His Time, "The greater the subject the more scrupulous must be the historical method. Yet an historian who cannot forget that he is also a novelist may claim the right to illuminate whatever emerges from the Gospel regarding the eternal conflict of man grappling with his condition of mortality and sin by whatever light he has been able to capture, even if it burns his fingers".(2)

(1) The French Revolution, Book IV, ch.2.

(2) cf. Jesus in His Time, p.62.

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