

upon a rock can only be disfigured and weakened when the buttresses with which men have thought to strengthen it are built of spurious material and daubed with untempered mortar.

In one more paper I hope to return to this subject, and to shew that Scriptural interpretation may be endangered by far subtler enemies than those very obvious ones on which I now have touched.

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*STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.*

## XV.—THE BETRAYER.

THERE is nothing more remarkable in the history of the Passion than its moral truthfulness, the extraordinary realism with which the varied and most dissimilar characters are painted. The men live and act before us obedient to their respective natures and ends. Each has his own character, and the history but exhibits it in action, articulated in speech and conduct. There is everywhere the finest consistency between the doer and the deed ; new events but make us the more conscious of the harmony. And this harmony is exhibited and preserved under the most extraordinary conditions and in what seems most violent combinations. The central figure is the holiest Person of history, but round Him stand or strive the most opposed and contrasted moral types, every one related to Him and more or less concerned in the tragic action of which He is at once object and victim. The characters and catastrophe are alike beyond and above all the conventional ideals, whether of history or tragedy. The Christ Himself is a wonderful picture. Jesus appears in

every moment and circumstance equal to Himself. To paint Him as He lives before us in his final agony was a feat possible only to the sweet simplicity that copies Nature, unconscious of its own high art. It was a work beyond not only the Galilean imagination, but any of the imaginations that had as yet created the ideals of the world. Physical weakness and suffering do not readily lend themselves to the expression of moral dignity and power. The Victim of the scourge and the cross, fated to endure the contemptuous pity of his judge and the merciless mockery of his foes, is hardly the kind of subject imagination would choose as the vehicle or embodiment of a spiritual sublimity so transcendent as to demand our worship and command our awe. Creative art would find it almost, perhaps altogether, impossible to keep the weakness from depraving and so destroying the dignity—the scornful hate that kills the person from casting its shadow over the character. It is only when we compare this simple historical presentation with the highest human art that we see how perfect it is. The splendid imagination of Plato has done its utmost to invest the death of Sokrates with high philosophical meaning, with the deepest ethical and tragic interest. Yet when the closing scenes in the *Phaedo* are compared with the closing scenes in the Gospels, how utterly the finest genius of Greece is seen to have failed in his picture of the good man in death. Sokrates is the philosopher, not the man. In his very serenity there is something selfish. His speculations calm and exalt him, but at the expense of his humanity. Affection, passion does not trouble him, and he does not feel how, sorely it may trouble other and lower spirits. Death, so far as an

evil to himself, he has conquered ; but he has not even imagined that his death may be an evil to others, all the greater that he suffers it so unjustly and meets it so serenely. The guilt of Athens in causing his death does not touch so as to awe or overwhelm him ; he feels the guilt almost as little as Athens herself. Then the sorrows of Xanthippe do not move him. He remains sublimely discoursing with his friends, while she, face to face with woman's greatest sorrow, is introduced only to be made ridiculous in her grief. Xanthippe indeed has been one of the most ill-used of women. Neglected by her husband in life, she is not comforted by him in death. He has lofty principles and wise speeches for philosophers, but only scornful pity of the woman whose sorrow ought to have touched his spirit and made him feel that death is more terrible to the living than to the dying, and the sorrows of affection have a greater claim on our comfort and sympathy than the serene souls of philosophers. How infinitely does Christ in his dying passion transcend the most virtuous of the Greeks ! Death to Him has no terrors, save those made by the guilt of man. He fears death for the sake of the men that work it ; because of their sin it is to Him an agony He cannot bear. The man who followed and betrayed Him, the men who loved and forsook Him, the women who loved and forsook Him not, He pitied, He comforted as far as they would receive the comfort He had to give. The sorrow of Christ in death was diviner than the serenity of Sokrates, and the historians of his sorrow could have made Him so seem only by painting Him as He was. They were without the imagination that could create an ideal so strange yet so beautiful, and only possessed the

love that is quick to understand and sure and true of speech. And thus, by their very openness and simplicity of soul, which keeps them remote from invention and near to reality, they so represent Christ in his passion as to make the passion exalt and glorify the Christ. But the transfiguring power is in the person, not in the suffering. It is made sublime through Him; He remains glorious in spite of it. The case is without a parallel. There are no sufferings in the world that awaken the same emotions as Christ's; but the emotions they awaken are due not to them as sufferers, but to the Sufferer. Their transcendent significance only expresses his; and the degree of their significance for the world is the measure of the wonderful unlearned art that had the wisdom to read their meaning and tell their story.

And as Christ remains Himself, true to his ideal character, the other actors in the tragedy no less faithfully and consistently unfold in action and conduct their respective moral natures. While He rises above his sorrow, and commands it, even in the very moment when it works his death, his disciples behave like simple men surprised in the midst of fond illusions, suddenly and fiercely shaken out of them, and too completely bewildered by the shock to know what to think or to do. Judas, perhaps the man of strongest character and will in the band, foresees the catastrophe, contributes to it, but only to be so appalled by the issue as to be hurried to a deed of terrible atonement. And this evolution of moral nature and principle stands in radical relation to the presence and action of the Christ. The men who touch Him in this supreme hour of his history do so only to have their essential characters

disclosed. In Him judgment so lived that it acted as by nature and without ceasing. The men who thought to try Him were themselves tried, stood in his presence with their inmost secrets turned out. The stars that look down on us like the radiant eyes of heaven shine out of a darkness their light but deepens. The sunshine makes the plant unfold its leaves, the flower declare its colour, the tree exhibit its fruit. So from Christ there came the light as of a solitary star, deepening the darkness round Him, a heat and radiance that made the characters about Him effloresce and bear fruit, each after its kind. The high Priest is made all unconsciously to himself to shew himself, not as he is thought or would like to be thought to be, but as he is before the eye of God and measured by the eternal law of righteousness—crafty, devoted to expediency, using his high office for private ends, turning the forms of justice into the instruments of injustice; scrupulous as to ceremonial purity, but heedless as to moral rectitude; able red-handed but calm-hearted to keep the Pass-over, feeling in no way disqualified by his part in the trial and crucifixion for celebrating the great religious festival of his people. The Procurator, a Roman, imperious, haughty, scornful of the people he ruled, contemptuous of their religion, impatient of their ceaseless disputes, stands, from his brief connection with Jesus, before all time morally unveiled—a man vacillating, cruel, as a judge in the heart of him unjust, surrendering to a popular clamour he proudly despised the very person he had declared innocent. The Priests, fearful of pollution, hating a Gentile as if he were organized sin, are seen, as it were, spiritually unclothed, sacrificing their hitherto greatest to a still greater hate,

stimulating in the crowd their thirst for blood, preferring Cæsar to Christ, standing mocking and spiteful before painful yet sacred death. The People, thoughtless, impulsive, are shewn, the ready tools of the cunning, demanding the life of a murderer, the death of the righteous; as a multitude, where men, de-individualized, are almost de-humanized, capable of atrocities which each man apart and by himself would abhor himself for thinking either he or any other man could perpetrate. The inner nature in each determines the action, but the contact with Christ shews the quality of the nature, and forces it into appropriate action and speech. As the Passion reveals in Jesus the Christ, its history is but the translation, under the impulse He supplies, into word and deed of the spirit of the men who surrounded, tried, and crucified Him.

Now this indicates the point of view from which we wish to apprehend the last events in the life of Christ. They are the revelation of very varied moral natures, and they possess a singular unity and significance when studied in relation to the natures they reveal. The standpoint is critical, but psychological rather than historical, the criticism being concerned not so much with the probable order and outer conditions of the events as with their moral source and spiritual sequence. If we can find their subtler inner relations—can, as it were, interpret the drama through the actors, or the plot through the characters, especially in their attitude to Him whose presence gives unity and movement to the whole—it may help us the better not only to understand its truth but believe its reality.

The first man who meets us is the one who led the band of captors to Gethsemane. Judas is one of the

standing moral problems of the gospel history. What was the character of the man? What motives induced him first to seek and then to forsake the society of Jesus? Why did he turn traitor? Why was he so little penetrated by the Spirit and awed by the authority of Christ as to be able to do as he did? And why, having done it, did he so swiftly and tragically avenge on himself his deliberately planned and executed crime? These questions invest the man with a fascination now of horror and again of pity; of horror at the crime, of pity for the man. If his deed stands alone among the evil deeds of the world, so does his remorse among the acts and atonements of conscience; and the remorse is more expressive of the man than even the deed. Lavater said, "Judas acted like Satan, but like a Satan who had it in him to be an apostle." And it is this evolution of a possible apostle into an actual Satan that is at once so touching and so tragic.

There is an instructive contrast between what we know of the man and how we conceive him. There is, perhaps, no person in history of whom we at once know so little and have so distinct an image. The lines that sketch him are few, but they are lines of living fire. He is too real a person to be, as Strauss argued,<sup>1</sup> a mythical creation, made after Ahithophel, and draped in a history suggested by verses in the very Psalms Peter quoted in his address to his brother Apostles.<sup>2</sup> The man and his part are so interwoven with the history of Christ's last days as to be inseparable from it; the picture of the man is too defined, concrete, characteristic to be a product of the mythical

<sup>1</sup> *Leben Jesu*, § 130; *Neues Leben*, § 90.

<sup>2</sup> Ac s i. 15 ff.; 1<sup>ss.</sup> cix., lxix.

imagination which, always exaggerative, never works but on a stupendous scale. The objects loom as through the mist—do not look like Judas, clear and sharp cut as if fresh from the sculptor's chisel. Still less can we allow Volkmar<sup>1</sup> to resolve him into a creation of the Pauline tendency, framed expressly to make a place in the apostolic circle for Paul. His reasons are as violent as his conjecture. Judas is no bestial phenomenon, lying outside the pale of humanity. On the contrary, the human nature of him is terribly real and distinct; and Paul's own reference to the betrayal<sup>2</sup> is, notwithstanding Volkmar's specious exegesis and strained rendering, clear and conclusive. But if the critic is required to spare his historical reality, it is not simply in order to allow the speculative theologian to destroy his humanity. Daub,<sup>3</sup> in one of the strongest

<sup>1</sup> *Die Religion Jesu u. ihre erste Entwicklung nach dem gegenwärtigen Stande der Wissenschaft*, pp. 260, ff.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. xi. 23. Volkmar proposes to translate *παρέδωκεν*, *überliefert wurde* (was delivered, given up), instead of *verrathen ward* (was betrayed). But the change does not mend the matter. If He was delivered, some one delivered Him: to somebody, which to the Apostles could only appear as a betrayal. This whole theory as to Judas is an example of how a scholar, possessed by an hypothesis, may in its interest do violence to all the probabilities of history and laws of grammar.

<sup>3</sup> *Judas Ischariot, oder Betrachtungen über das Böse im Verhältniss zum Guten* (Heidelberg, 1816, 1818). There is no more remarkable figure in modern theology than Daub, and no more gruesome book than his *Judas Ischariot*. He might be said to be the mirror of German Transcendentalism in its successive phases. He began life a Kantian, he ended it an Hegelian, but was throughout distinguished by the most heroic loyalty to the speculative reason, addressing an audience always few, though not so constantly fit. When he wrote *Judas* he was under the influence of Schelling's first transcendental theosophy, bent on discovering in God and Nature the dark ground which the eternal Reason had to conquer, and against which it had to establish light and order. To him Jesus and Judas were the universal in miniature—their history veiled the universal truth. "As Jesus Christ had no equal among men, neither had his betrayer. While to the Christian mind the first man was the first sinner, yet among his descendants Judas is the only one in whom sin reached the highest point" (vol. i. p. 2). "In him was personified and concentrated all the wickedness of all the enemies of Jesus and evil identified with its instrument; and so for him, as an incarnation of the:



works of his massive but hardly modern mind, has conceived Judas as the embodied evil who stands in antithesis to Christ as the embodied good. The one was the power of Satan in human form as the other was the power of God, and without the devilish the Divine agent could not have accomplished his work in the world. Hence Judas was chosen to be a disciple expressly that he might betray the Christ, and so, by enabling Jesus to fulfil his mission, fulfilling his own. But this theory is without historical warrant, its reason is entirely *a priori*, its significance purely speculative. The man is to us simply an historical person, and must be interpreted as one, on principles and by standards applicable to human nature throughout the world.

If Daub is unjust to Judas, sacrificing his historical and moral significance to a speculative theory as to the relation of evil to good, there are two current yet opposite interpretations that are, though for different reasons, no less unjust. According to the one of these, Judas is moved by avarice; according to the other, by mistaken enthusiasm, by an exalted notion of Christ's mission and power. There is nothing that can so little explain the act and conduct of Judas as greed, the love of money. There is, perhaps, no passion more intense, but there is certainly none so narrow, so selfish, so blind or indifferent to the miseries or misfortunes it may inflict on others. To avarice money is the greatest good, the want of it the greatest evil, and the means that can obtain the good and obviate the evil are ever justified by the end. The miser who

devil, mercy and blessedness are alike impossible" (vol. i. p. 22). With the way in which Daub works out the universal problem given in this moment of the evangelical history, we are not here concerned. It is enough that we see to what extraordinary uses Judas has been turned.

can indulge his master passion minds his own miseries too little to care for the miseries it may cause either to persons or States. The remorse of Judas disproves his greed ; the man who could feel it had too much latent nobility of soul to be an abject slave of avarice. The " thirty pieces of silver " had no power to comfort him ; they were the signs of his guilt, the witnesses of his shame that in his despair he cast from him in mingled rage and pain. The fact, too, that he was the bearer of the bag<sup>1</sup> proves that he was no lover of money. However his co-disciples may have judged him, Jesus would never have so led him into temptation, fostered avarice in the heart of the avaricious by making him the custodian of the purse. Christ, we may be certain, did not elect him to this office in order that He might cause the offence to come.<sup>2</sup>

And Judas was as little a mistaken enthusiast, a man weary of his master's delay in declaring Himself, seeking by a fond though foolish expedient to force Him to stand forth the confessed and conquering Messiah.<sup>3</sup> This theory has nothing in the history to support it, is indeed, in every respect, violently opposed to the evidence. If he had been an enthusiast, why had his enthusiasm slumbered so long, and never been expressed till now, and why now in a form so extraordinary and fantastic ? And how, if he had so great an idea of Christ's power, had he so mean an idea of Christ's wisdom ? If, too, he had meant to compel Jesus to shew Himself, would he have chosen the silent night as the time for the

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xviii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the article " Judas " by Paulus, in Ersch und Gruber's *Encyclopædie* ; Whately's *Essays on Dangers to the Christian Faith*, Discourse iii. ; and De Quincey's celebrated *Essay on Judas*, which throws the same theory into more literary but also more paradoxical form.

capture and still Gethsemane as the place? If, too, while his means were so foolish, his motive had been so good, would Jesus have received and spoken of and to him as He did? The theory is too unreal and violent to deserve grave discussion, and would never have been gravely proposed for belief save as offering a welcome alternative to the commoner and less generous interpretation. There are men who but see in the remorse of Judas the evidence of his sin and condemnation; and there are men who see in it the proof of a sorrow for his act too deep to allow the man to forgive himself. The former are contented to say: "Judas is the one man of whom we know with certainty that he is eternally damned;"<sup>1</sup> but the latter are anxious to find some means of softening the fate of one who died from unspeakable horror at his own crime. Apart from this reason no man would ever have seen in Judas a mistaken enthusiast.

Let us look then at the man as he stands before us in history. It is not easy indeed to get face to face with him. His early life lies under the shadow cast by his later; the man is interpreted through his end. And the men who interpret him for us looked at him in a light wonderfully unlike the light in which he had seen and been seen in the flesh. To their eyes, enlightened by Divine events, everything assumed a new meaning. Jesus became another person than He had been—of diviner nature, higher authority, immenser significance. His kingdom ceased to be Israel's and became God's—spiritual, universal, eternal; his death was changed from a last disaster into a sacrifice "offered once for all," abolishing all need of further

<sup>1</sup> *Die Evangelische Zeitung*, No. 30, 1863; Hase, *Geschichte Jesu*, p. 549.

sacrifices, and creating a new and living way by which men might draw near to God; the life of humiliation and suffering He had lived to their senses was transfigured and sublimed by the life of exaltation and glory He now lived to their faith. And this change in their notion of Christ changed the proportions and meaning of everything that related to Him or his history. In the presence of the Divine in Christ, acts of the simplest devotion were touched with sublimity, while words of distrust or deeds of disobedience became charged with a darker guilt. And the new light which had risen on their spirits cast a shadow which fell deepest on Judas, stretching along the whole course of his life. The man was to them ever a traitor; in the hour of his discipleship he had still the soul of an alien,<sup>1</sup> and in his last act he was not so much a man as the agent and organ of the devil.<sup>2</sup> But we may be certain that, whatever the man was towards the end, he could not have been bad at the beginning. As Jesus would never have selected a man to be a disciple for the express purpose of making him a traitor, Judas must have had promise in him, possibilities of good, capabilities of apostleship. Christ's act is more significant than the Evangelist's words; and it permits us to infer that in Judas when he was called there was a possible Peter or John, as, perhaps, in these there was a possible Judas. There is no question that he was one of the twelve,<sup>3</sup> nor that he occupied a position of trust.<sup>4</sup> The man Christ so trusted must have seemed to Him a trusty man, not likely to be corrupted by his office or its opportunities.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 4; Mark iii. 19; Luke vi. 16.

<sup>2</sup> John xiii. 2, 27; Luke xxii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxvi. 14; Mark xiv. 10; Luke xxii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> John xii. 6; xiii. 29.

But the unlikely was the realized. He who carried the purse betrayed the Master; and the well trusted became the traitor.

The position, then, from which our constructive interpretation must start is this: Judas the disciple was a possible apostle, chosen to the discipleship that the possible might be realized. It was with him as with the others—they, too, were possibilities; their souls, like his, the battle-ground of evil and good, where the worse often came dangerously near to victory. The struggle was due to the good in Christ and the evil in themselves. The evil was the fruit of ignorance or prejudice or passion, of the Judaism in which they had been nursed, with the false ideas it had created, and the false hopes it had inspired. Their ideas of God, of the Messiah, of the kingdom, of righteousness, of worship, of man, were the very antitheses and contradiction of Christ's. His aim was to lead them from their ideas to his, to expel the Jewish and plant in them the Christian mind. At first they loved Him because they believed He was the one who could realize their ideals; at last they loved Him because they had made his ideals theirs, and had by faith and fellowship been qualified to become agents for their realization throughout the world. But the way between the first and the last was long and hard to traverse, marked here and there by struggles fierce in proportion to the strength of the old convictions and the new love. Where the convictions had the deepest root the struggle was sternest; where the love was most intense victory came earliest and was most complete. But in no case was it easy. Peter, the man forward in speech and action, could rebuke his Master,

even after months of closest fellowship.<sup>1</sup> The sons of Zebedee could not trust Him, but must urge that He fulfil their ambitions in their own form and way.<sup>2</sup> They had not learned to trust his wisdom because they had not learned to know his mind; and his mind was hard to know because it was so utterly unlike their own.

Now of Judas it may certainly be said he was at once the most Jewish and the least attached of the disciples, the man most pronounced in his Judaism and least bound by his affections—the feelings of personal love and social loyalty that could alone have steadied him in the process of violent and distressful change. He was known as Iscariot<sup>3</sup>—the man from Kerioth—the only Judean in the band. The others were men of Galilee, kindred in blood and akin in faith. Galilee was the circle of the Gentiles; in it the people were more mixed, were freer, more open to new or strange ideas, less fierce and fanatical in their Judaism than the people of Judea. In the man from Kerioth there lived the hotter temper, the haughtier spirit, the more intolerant faith of the South. The air round his home was full of the oldest traditions of his race; its scenes, consecrated by the wanderings and history of Abraham, by the struggles and early victories of David, may well have coloured the dreams of his youth and the hopes of his manhood. Conscious purity of blood involves austerity of faith, and so his ideals would be national in a degree quite unknown to the Galileans. Learning Christ would be a much harder thing to him than to them, for it implied a more radical revolution. They

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 22; Mark viii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Mark x. 35-37.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. x. 4; xxvi. 14; Luke xxii. 3.

were alike in this—they followed Jesus at first because they believed his word and mission to be not hostile to Judaism, but complementary of it—its vital outcome and fulfilment. But they were unlike in their relation both to Judaism and Jesus. Of all it may be said that the light as it began to break was not altogether loved, was not always welcome, but even now and then positively hateful. When the new order stood disclosed, it was found so to cross and contradict the inherited prejudices of generations, that only supreme love to Christ's person could create and maintain loyalty to his aims. And Judas was precisely the man who would feel the contradiction most and the love least. He had no friend or brother in the band; neighbourliness had not drawn him into it, and family affection could not help to hold him there. The solitary Judean in a Galilean society, he would be, as the least known, the least loved, with fewest personal associations and interests and least community of thought and feeling. Where friendship, with the confidences it brings, is not spontaneous or natural, the soul is easily forced into the silence that creates misconception and distrust.

Let us imagine, then, the unwritten history of Judas. He is a man of strong convictions, a zealot who has in his south-Judean home brooded over the problems of his race, the splendid spiritual promise of Israel, but its miserable historical failure. He believes in the destiny of his people, dares to confess to himself that, though he pays tribute to Cæsar, the Messiah is his king. Full of these thoughts, he meets Jesus at Jerusalem. The one has come south from Nazareth, the other north from Kerioth. It is in the Holy City that Judas most feels the desolation of Israel; but there,

too, he is most conscious of the consolation of hope. In a moment of moody hopefulness he hears Jesus, sees Him drive the money-changers out of the temple<sup>1</sup> and do works that seem to prove Him a teacher come from God.<sup>2</sup> He follows Him, goes with Him into Galilee; but while he believes that Jesus is the Messiah, the Messianic ideal is his own, not Christ's. He is chosen a disciple for what he may be rather than what he is; his spirit is the possibility of an apostle or an apostate. The early ministry in Galilee pleases him. In presence of the miracles, the multitudes, the words of power, his faith lives. One who can so speak and act may well be the Messiah, and patience is easy when hope is strong. He is zealous in his own way, has a genius for what, in modern phrase, is termed organization, and becomes purser of the little band. He hears and, like the others, dimly understands the Master, but interprets Him through his own desires and expectations. While the bright morning of the ministry endures all rejoice in the fresh sunshine; but as clouds prophetic of storm gathered over its noonday they did not all alike feel the better radiance that came from the serene soul of the Christ. They were like men slowly awaking to a real world, unintelligible because so unlike their ideal—men bewildered by the consciousness that their fondest dreams were illusions destined never to be realized. And now came the conflict in which love to Christ and loyalty to the ancient convictions, which they had hoped to see fulfilled through Him, wrestled for the mastery. They had to believe before they could see, and belief in a moment so trying could only live by love. The

<sup>1</sup> John ii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> John ii. 23; iii. 2.



alternatives were, assimilation to Him or recoil from Him, and for a while the rival forces, the centripetal and the centrifugal, might be so balanced as only the more to compel the man to continue moving in the path he had chosen. But they could not remain for ever in equilibrium; one or other must prevail. The consequent struggle was felt by all; no man escaped it. Jesus was early conscious of it, knew that there was an evil spirit among the twelve,<sup>1</sup> one who should betray the Son of man into the hands of men.<sup>2</sup> The prophecies of the Passion were a bewilderment to the disciples. Mark, in his picturesque way, shews them walking behind Jesus stunned (*ἐθαμβοῦντο*), stupified by wonder, communing among themselves, terrified at his words and the tragedy they foretell.<sup>3</sup> The men were all differently affected. Thomas, faithful in his very despair, was ready to die with Him.<sup>4</sup> Peter, more courageous in speech than action, foretold his fall by boasting that, while all men might be offended, yet would not he.<sup>5</sup> Judas shewed his fiercer and more dissatisfied spirit in open and ungenerous criticism,<sup>6</sup> though the mind that prompted it was shared by all.<sup>7</sup>

In those dark days, then, we see the conflict of the rival forces—the transforming love attracting the one way, the ancient convictions drawing the other. The man from Kerioth could not get near Jesus because of his own ideas as to what the Christ ought to be, and so the love that is the best creator of truthful loyalty could not exercise over him its holy and beneficent influence. The fellowship that does not beget affinity

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 70.<sup>2</sup> Matt. xvii. 22.<sup>3</sup> Mark x. 32.<sup>4</sup> John xi. 16.<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxvi. 33, 34; Mark xiv. 29.<sup>6</sup> John xii. 4-6.<sup>7</sup> Matt. xxvi. 8, 9.

evokes antipathy, the mind that has not learned to love is dangerously near to hate. While Christ's spirit had been growing readier for sacrifice, Judas's had been getting more selfish, waxing bitter over its vanishing ideals. The fuller Christ's speech became of suffering and death the more offensive it grew to Judas—the more like a mockery of his ancient hopes. Such a conflict of mind and thought between Master and disciple could not continue for ever; and it could have but one end. The longer it endured and the more it was repressed, the wider grew the breach and the more bitter the feeling. The moment when Christ's words and acts were most significant of death and sacrifice was also the moment when discipleship became impossible to Judas, and apostasy inevitable. While the Master remained to institute the Supper of everlasting remembrance, the disciple went forth to betray Him.

No one hates like an apostate. The cause he deserts is an offence to him. It is the monument of a happier past, of hopes that deluded, of conflicts that have ended in the defeat of conscience and the loss of honour. The more honest the apostate the deeper will be his hate, for his apostasy will imply a more violent distress and disturbance of nature. The man who is not in earnest is incapable of any strong aversion, powerful feelings being everywhere at once the expression and measure of sincerity. And he who forsakes a cause, believing it has deceived and wronged him, feels that he cannot spare it, can only be its remorseless foe. Revenge becomes a passion which must be gratified before the man can be happy. And Judas acts like an apostate to whom revenge is dear.

Hate like his is a sure diviner, as quick to recognize hate in all its varying degrees and capabilities as love is to discern love. And so with the unerring instinct of his kind he seeks the chief priests. "And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money;"<sup>1</sup> but the sweet thing was the revenge, not the money. Yet why did they need him? Jesus was defenceless, was in their city, on their streets, teaching openly—what need then of a covenant with the traitor? It was not enough to capture, it was necessary to condemn Him, and so condemn Him that the Roman would execute the judgment. Only the most delicate handling could insure the death that had been deemed "expedient."<sup>2</sup> The conditions were dangerous; the millions then gathered in and about Jerusalem formed a most explosive mass. The Jews were a proud and fanatical race, believing themselves the chosen of God, the Jacob He loved, the Israel in whom his soul delighted. They despised the Roman as a Gentile while hating him as a conqueror. He might be allowed for a little to chastise them for their sins; but once it pleased God to have mercy upon Zion and restore her freedom, the Roman would have to go forth weeping, while they had their mouths filled with laughter and their tongues with singing. And the hope in the return of the Divine favour was just then at its intensest, insensible to discouragement, sensitive to every propitious sign, ready to anticipate or respond to it in deeds of fierce fanaticism. This hope so possessed the people then within and about Jerusalem that it glowed in them like a passion. The sight of the Roman was an insult to their pride and their faith. The millions were conscious of their

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 5.<sup>2</sup> John xi. 50.

multitude, of their strength, of ideals of authority and empire that far transcended the Roman. Were the belief to seize them that their Messiah had come, it would raise them into an army of fanatics, inspired by an awful hate to Rome and a sublime enthusiasm for their city and their hopes. The priests knew the possibilities that slumbered in the multitudes, but they knew not the resources of Jesus. The people's action they could forecast, but not Christ's. And with them not to know was to suspect. The bad can never understand the good, fear that their good is only disguised evil, the worse and more mischievous for being so skilfully concealed. And so the priests feared Jesus, believed that He would do what they would have done had they been in his place. They thought that to take Him in public would be to court disaster. The people believed in Him, and to threaten Him might be to force their belief into irrevocable deeds. For to see Him taken captive by the Roman would be to their hot imagination proof of his Messiahship, evidence that Cæsar feared the Christ. So the thing must be done secretly. If there was power in Him, He must not be allowed to exercise it over the people, or the people to see it. If there was faith in Him, it must not be provoked by a public arrest, but be shamed into silence and out of existence by the sight of a broken and humiliated and smitten captive. And so the coming of the traitor was like the descent of wisdom into their counsels; it made the difficult possible and the dark light.

What help the traitor needed he received, and, familiar with the haunts of Jesus, he led forth the band to Gethsemane. There they met the Saviour fresh from his agony and his prayer; and hate, that it might

the better gratify itself, tried to use the language and the symbols of love. Over the scene we may not linger, though it is in its tragic contrasts one of the moments the imagination has most loved to picture. There, under the silent stars, in the glare of the red torchlight, two faces that were as heaven and hell meeting joined in what was at once the holiest and most profane kiss ever given by human lips. But the deed was soon done, and Jesus, in the cold dark midnight, encircled by flaming torches and coarse cruel men, returned to Jerusalem. "Peter followed afar off," and so did another disciple, made bold by a love many waters could not quench. But deep as was their anguish, in another spirit there was a deeper. There is a hate that dies by indulgence—a revenge that, gratified, begets remorse. A mean and miserly nature, incapable of commanding emotions, had been able to sell Jesus and feel only the happier for being free of his presence and possessed of the "thirty pieces of silver," which was his price. But with an earnest and intense nature, whose hate was born of disappointed hope and baffled ambition, it was altogether different. The apostasy of Judas came from the feeling that he had been deceived, but the despair of Judas from the consciousness that he had deceived himself, and so become the author of a stupendous crime. Evil premeditated is evil at its best—attractive, desirable, full of promises which the senses can understand and the passions love; but evil perpetrated is evil at its worst—hideous, hateful, stripped of its illusions and clothed in its native misery. In his anger at finding Jesus not to be the Christ he had hoped for and desired, Judas deserted and betrayed Him; in the terrible calm that

succeeded indulgence he awoke to the realities within and about him, saw how blindly he had lived and hated, how far the Messianic ideal of Jesus transcended his own. There are moments that are big with eternities, when the walls self has built round the spirit fall, and the infinite realities of God stand clear before the soul. Such was the moment after the betrayal to the betrayer. In it he knew at once himself and Jesus, saw his lost opportunity and his awful crime. Above the lurid torchlight gleamed the silent beautiful stars; to the eye of Jesus they were full of pity, but to the eye of Judas they were full of blame. Calm magnanimous Nature in heaven and on earth made the one peaceful and strong, but the other remorseful and weak. Sorrow subdued into resignation is holy happiness; but revenge glutted is remorse roused.

The suddenly awakened conscience is a terrible power; compared with it justice is gentle and law is mild. The man in whom it lives feels neither inclined nor able to forgive himself, sees only where and in what he is blameworthy. In its burning light whatever can deepen guilt is made to stand out clear, sharp, and distinct; while every apology or extenuating circumstance is consumed. So Judas judges himself with awful severity, and hastens to execute judgment. The moments move swiftly, but with sure consequence. He does not wait for the issue of his act, but anticipates it. He knows the men, watches the trial, hears Jesus condemned, and then abandons himself to his horror and remorse. With the judges, the men whose hireling he had been, he had no part or lot. He was in earnest, they were not; it was a matter of life and death to him, of "expediency" and craft with them.

When they had compassed their end they were satisfied ; but he had by the betrayal defeated, as he now understood, his own purpose, given One holy, harmless, and beautiful over into the hands of sinners. Christ before his judges became intelligible to the man with the awakened conscience ; his spiritual meaning, aims, Messiahship all stood clear before his eye, while the men that were trying Him, with their hollow and selfish worldliness, turned, as it were, into living transparencies. And so the trial was enough ; he could not live to see the end. He would hide himself in the grave ; seek the blindness of death. The scene with the chief priests is most characteristic. They calm, cynical, satisfied ; he agitated, reproachful, remorseful. He cries, " I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." They answer, " That is thy own concern. What is it to us ? " The " thirty pieces of silver " he cannot keep, each accuses him so. He casts them down in his agony, turns and flees from the temple a fugitive from conscience, from self, yet only the more pursued by the remorseful self, the reproachful conscience, unable to face life followed by a so awful Nemesis, able only to seek quiet in death and a refuge in the grave.

The end of the traitor became him. It was the way in which he confessed his crime and made atonement for it to his conscience. We ought to think of Judas, if not the better, the more kindly for his end. It proved him not altogether bad — that the actual apostate had been a possible apostle. Imagine how much worse a calmer end had shewn him. If he had lived a man without passion or pain ; if he had lifted to heaven a serene brow and looked out on man like a

consciously excellent soul; if he had enlarged his phylactery, lengthened his robe, and extended his prayers at the corners of the streets and in the temple; if he had gone daily to the house of his friend, the chief Rabbi, and been often in good fellowship with his honoured and dignified neighbour, the high priest; if he had lived in the exercise of his religion, died in the odour of respectability, and been buried amid the regrets and eulogies of his sect and city—would he not have been a man of lower nature and baser spirit than he seems now as, seeking to escape his sin and his conscience, he flees out of time into eternity? Judas despairful is a better man than Judas respectable had been; and if his remorse has touched the heart of man into pity, who shall say that it found or made severe and pitiless the heart of God?

A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

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ECCLESIASTES.

CHAPTER II. VERSES 12-26.

12. *Then I turned myself to behold wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do that cometh after the king? Even that which hath been already done.* 13. *And I saw that wisdom excelleth folly even as light excelleth darkness.* 14. *The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walketh in darkness, yet I know that one fate happeneth to them all.* 15. *And I said in my heart, As is the fate of the fool, such will be my fate also; to what purpose is it then that I have had more wisdom? So I said in my heart that this also is vanity.*

16. *For there is no remembrance of the wise man more than of the fool for ever; seeing that in the days to come all will long have been forgotten. Alas, the wise man dieth even as the fool!* 17. *Then I hated life; because the work which is wrought under the sun was grievous unto me; for all is vanity and a chasing of the wind.*