

JUDAS ISCARIOT.

WE have now seen the witness borne by the graphic and homely truthfulness, the air of nature which breathes about the apostolic group. But it is sometimes objected that the choice of Judas was unnatural.

It is important to observe the sense in which the word *natural* is here used. It is not the same in which we have, throughout these articles, found an evidence in the natural behaviour of the eleven. It is not meant that anything in his behaviour is ill-conceived, improbable, inconsistent with the rest of his conduct; but only that our theological notions about Christ on earth make us recoil from supposing that His choice of an apostle could be a failure. But when we set any theological prepossession against plain words of Scripture, we act in just the manner which Bacon denounced in science; we argue from *à priori* views of what is to be expected, instead of interrogating the facts. No objection of the sort can stand against positive evidence, of which one branch is such internal verisimilitude as it has been the work of these papers to exhibit.

If we appeal to theology, to theology we must go. Then we have to consider whether and in what sense the choice of Judas can be pronounced a failure. Did anything result from it except according to the deliberate counsel and foreknowledge of God? Did the great treason prevent Jesus from walking in all the hours of His allotted day, working until the night came, in which none can work?

If it is not from the high ground of theology that the election of Judas can be assailed, neither is it from the consideration of the perfection of the humanity of Jesus. When we remember that He emptied Himself, was compassed about with infirmities, and declared that there was a day and hour which He knew not, we cannot be disturbed by His choice of one, then promising well, who afterwards degenerated into a devil. What must be held fast is that Christ's self-accepted limitations were not such as to hinder or impair His Messianic offices and work, which were not only flawless, but perfect as to completeness also. Now it is not pretended that the betrayal thwarted or maimed any function of Him who should be taken away by oppression and judgment, that so He might bear the sins of many.

The objection gains all its force from the confusion of two points of view; it expects Jesus to have chosen according to our human views of failure and success, and yet, in so choosing, to have been armed with the perceptions of omniscience.

There is yet more real unfitness in the notion that Jesus should not experience deceit and treachery. He had to be tempted in all points like as we are. As the ideal sufferer, it was not necessary that He should experience every several pain. But in every distinct class of innocent woe, mental as well as bodily, amid ingratitude, injustice, and disgrace, and the baffling sense of perplexity and of unexplained desertion from above, we recognise that His steps were there before us. Now the sting of treachery is dipped in a poison all its own. There are men who could defy anguish, and laugh at the insults of enemies, to whom the desertion of a friend is maddening. Brutus, in the agony of defeat, could not only console himself, but rejoice

"that yet in all my life
I found no man but he was true to me."

Yet this was the well-beloved Brutus who struck the blow that broke the mighty heart of Cæsar. Now the betrayed, as well as the suffering and the wronged, can feel the sympathy and gain courage and calmness from the fortitude of Him whom Judas betrayed with a kiss.

Moreover, the choice of one who subsequently fell is analogous with all the ways of God. At what degree of privilege does the objector suppose that apostasy should begin to be credible? Other ambassadors of Christ have fallen. The candlestick has been removed of whole Churches among which Christ, in all the glory of His apocalypse, was seen to walk. In every age men have been endowed with mighty powers of genius and with vast resources, and yet their free will has not been cancelled. The marvellous brain of Napoleon could have permanently elevated all Europe if he had only been true to what is called one's better self, and yet he was not coerced. It remained open to Napoleon to drown the civilized world in blood, to compromise the future of history, and permanently to degrade the political aspirations of Frenchmen, by the abuse of powers which God, having given, did not paralyse. Nay, the meanest who rejects salvation has a soul for which Christ died; and that universal privilege, vastly greater than all special gifts which may be superadded, does not insure heaven. Doubtless the treason of Judas remains unmatched in turpitude, but it is not in kind that it differs from many more; and sober commentators have believed that his guilt is yet to be overtopped by the lawless one of the last time.

Dismissing such objections, and returning to the evidence of verisimilitude, especially in the display of character, and in the absence of later subjective elements, we see plainly that the betrayal by a chosen one is quite unlike a subsequent evolution. Let us suppose that St. John had omitted or extenuated the fall of an Apostle, the unworthi-

ness of a familiar friend in whom Jesus trusted, how eagerly would certain critics have welcomed such a proof of the deifying process ascribed to the fourth gospel! But this very gospel brings out his treachery with a clearness which Renan ascribes to malice. It is there we find the problem involved in it stated boldly and even sternly in the phrase, "Did I not choose you the Twelve, and one of you is a devil?" And in this very phrase the explanation is hinted; Judas is not now what he was then: the choice was prior to the degradation.

The first thing which strikes us, studying this subject, is probably the taciturnity of Judas. Words or deeds of one like Bartholomew might be forgotten, but Judas is a great figure in history; why then are we told nothing of his call, his services, or even of the loud professions by which insincerity is wont to veil itself? We read absolutely nothing. Almost from the first, the man must have had a baffled sense of unfitness for his calling, mingled with eager desire to secure the great things which Jesus promised, and which the miracles attested His power to grant. As each day led others up from their old levels, by the purifying tidings of an unearthly kingdom, of vast rewards to be received "with persecutions," and how they should be killed and crucified, yet not a hair of their heads should perish, all was assuredly a blind paradox to the earthly heart of Judas, causing him to lie silent, warily abstinent from comment and from question, feeling his way towards the position which would best suit him in the expected kingdom by securing now the poor treasurership of the Galilæan group. By what intrigues he excluded or ejected from that post Matthew, whose experience as a publican fitted him so especially for it, we cannot tell; but we can well imagine that he would endeavour, by energy in the direction which gave scope to his earthly instincts, to hide from others, and

for a season from himself, the lifelessness and lovelessness of his spirit. For such is the method of all declining souls.

Meanwhile, the Lord's disregard of influential persons and of popular applause, and His frequent neglect of chances to secure such advantage as Judas valued, would vex and chafe him. Opportunities wilfully thrown away, and influence wasted, would irritate him as a personal wrong, for his own interests were at stake. The rebuking sense of motives which were not his, and yet were too high to be despised, would deepen his estrangement. Because he neither understood nor sought to understand Jesus, because he is never recorded to have sought an explanation like Jude, nor like Thomas confessed a difficulty, nor like Philip caught eagerly at the hope of being "satisfied," therefore his whole spirit was embittered against his Lord, even while he lingered on, hoping for that kingdom which continued to be a part of the programme, and fascinated by the wonders which continued to prove it possible.

The operation with varying intensity of these two forces, personal alienation from Christ and selfish adhesion to His party, explain the conduct of Judas and suit the language of Scripture far better than any highflown theory that he helped the arrest in order to force sterner action upon Jesus.

Thus his character is the very reverse of that of Thomas. The one was faithful through love when hope was over; he would go to die with Christ: the other gave Him a loveless adhesion until selfish hope expired.

Jesus would not remove from His circle (as the Church may not remove from hers) the most unsatisfactory member who had not severed himself by open sin. His tolerance of Judas will for ever condemn all priestly attempts, whether of Rome or Geneva, to subject Church membership to a prying inquisitorial scrutiny. But His frequent warnings against low and sordid motives, against reliance upon wonderful works by doers of iniquity, above all, against the

mammon of unrighteousness and the deceitfulness of riches choking the word ; His mention of the rich man whose soul was required, and the other at whose gate Lazarus desired the crumbs, the camel at the needle's eye, and the rich at the door of the kingdom—all these are samples of faithful dealing with the most unhappy of mankind.

If He would not expel Judas, He would hold the door open for him to depart and so escape the "greater sin." The connexion establishes this intention in the question, asked when many went back, "Do ye also choose to go away?" It was put at a moment when Judas would assuredly experience, in their fullest strength, both the motives which seem to have disputed for his life.

Not only had he just witnessed two stupendous miracles ; he had also beheld at last a popular movement in favour of the crowning of Jesus, even by force. Another such movement might succeed ; it was not the time for desertion ; all was not lost. Yet as he watched the multitude first baffled and then alienated, his disappointment and resentment would rise almost to fury. It was natural that he should not yet go away. It was also natural that the Searcher of hearts should answer, to Peter's renewed assurance of adhesion, "Did I not (once) choose you the Twelve, and one of you is (now) a devil?"

The misbehaviour of Judas about the ointment was under provocation of somewhat the same kind, the vexation of seeing a great opportunity, from his point of view, entirely lost. The raising of Lazarus had once more created an extraordinary sensation, not now in remote Galilee, but in the very heart of Judaism, in the capital itself.¹ All men went after Him. But how had Jesus

¹ Nothing is more singular to observe than the inconsistent ways in which scepticism treats the miracles. How are they to be accounted for? That is quite simple, the air was full of the miraculous : when Jesus attained to fame

used His advantage? What powerful friend had He drawn towards Him? What enemy had He crushed? What new authority had He grasped? More plainly than ever He had predicted for Himself the endurance of extreme suffering and shame, and had bidden His followers also to drink of His cup and share His baptism. From that demand many brave men have recoiled through fear, and many generous men through self-interest. And we can judge of the bitter alienation and resentment of Judas. As higher impulses died in him and larger hopes grew dim, he had begun to console himself with petty dishonesties, snatching, almost as a right, the poor compensations which could be had. It was the sin of a nature no longer inspired with mighty hopes even of a worldly kind, a nature shrivelling up, and content with sordid satisfactions. And although his dream of rank and power was fading, great harvests might still be reaped from the gratitude of the healed and their relatives. It was therefore in every way exasperating, enraging his personal rancour against the quixotic Leader who had entangled him in the meshes of a lost cause, and frustrating his last hope of gain, when a "very precious" gift actually reached them, only to be squandered in personal homage, instead of converting itself into revenue.

No tender presentiment of the suffering of a loved one, amid which this graceful act might be recalled as having come before, a kind of anticipatory embalming, no sympathy as a teacher, miracles were ascribed to Him as a matter of course. They are a mere accretion, although Scripture seems to find them wonderful enough. But when once they are explained as trifles, they are important enough to explain everything. It is like asking how did a penniless man obtain a great property. He bought it with a diamond. But how did he come by the diamond? Diamonds in that country were as cheap as pebbles. It remains to be shown how the property was paid for with these cheap diamonds, and it remains to be shown how the raising of Lazarus should have created an excitement which decided the priests to destroy Jesus in their alarm, although "the faculty of working miracles . . . had nothing surprising in it" (Renan, *Vie de Jesus*, ed. 15, pp. 374-5, 267). •

with the forebodings which instinctively put so melancholy a construction upon this affectionate tribute rendered at a feast, no honour for the womanly tact which might not speak, yet found worthy utterance in a ministration truly feminine, doing what she could, no better feeling of any kind survived to restrain his indignation. But it shows a powerful and vigorous personality that he could involve the rest in his unloving sin. And it is characteristic that the conspirator and traitor should work silently and underground, so that only John detects his voice in the harsh complaint that the gift was not only wasteful, but had no purpose at all. It is to be noticed that the words of Judas, reported by him, are more cautious and measured than the honest outbreak of the Eleven. They said, "To what purpose is this waste?" "Why was this waste of the ointment made?" He asked, "Why was not this ointment sold?" (Matt. xxvi. 9; Mark xiv. 4; John xii. 5.)

Under his evil influence, the disciples not only murmured among themselves, but directly assailed Mary, or at least disturbed her by the loudness of their complaints. Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone." And the same burning scorn which so often scathed Pharisee and scribe was audible, at least to the guilty consciousness of Judas, in the words, "Ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will, ye can do them good." With the thief it was a long neglected opportunity. Thus he was again rebuked and disappointed, and had now come into direct collision with his Master, and felt that his mask was becoming semi-transparent. No wonder that the devil, whose malign influence he had long represented among the Twelve, and by whose name he had been called, now entered into him as into a home. Not to lose on both sides, he fell back on the chiefs of the hierarchy, and offered to betray Jesus unto them. That they had expected no such help, nor hoped that a disciple of Jesus would prove false, is shown in the

words, "they were glad." In fact, Judas solved for them a difficult question. The hated Teacher had been very prudent as well as bold. In public they could not arrest Him; their own emissaries had been sometimes overpowered by such words as never man spake, and at other times had feared the people. But now they might seize Him in His retirement, even though His usage was nightly to withdraw from their city to the village of His warmest friends. They said, "Not on the feast day"; but Jesus said, "After two days is the feast, and the Son of man is betrayed." And it was the expulsion of Judas from their group, destroying his means of giving any later help, which verified the prophecy, at the expense of the calculations of the priests.

As the great day arrived Judas would observe signs of caution, the place of the supper being indicated for their preparations by a sign impenetrably mysterious. Only his scorn would be excited when the Master Himself washed their feet, and declared such abasement to be their calling also, the vocation which had once dazzled him. And yet Jesus was then revealing, not humility alone, but the amazing love which could overcome all natural aversion, and perform menial offices even for the vile man at whose touch every instinct of the supremely sensitive heart revolted.

As at the very beginning of His ministry He had touched the loathsomeness of leprosy (and this act is recorded with much emphasis), so now He washed the feet of Judas. But since there was no desire for healing, no spiritual effect resulted. He said, "Ye are clean, but not all." And soon, the iron nerve of Judas being unshaken by this thrust, and his forehead unabashed, the grief and repugnance of his Lord rose higher. As they did eat He was troubled in spirit. How could He speak in the ears of the traitor the last, most intimate and perfect utterances of His love? How could He say, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations"? Therefore He declares

plainly, "The hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table." And in their agitation each suspected his fellow and himself; they looked each into his neighbour's face: they said, "Is it I, Lord?" But the self-restraint of Judas did not fail; no hasty question as yet exposed him to an answer which would strip off the mask; he would hold his place if possible until his villany could be consummated.

All the world confesses the pathos of the words of Jesus on the morrow, when, bleeding from the scourge, tottering beneath His cross, and on the road to Calvary, He pitied, the daughters of Jerusalem rather than Himself, and sighed for the days when Jewish mothers should envy the barren womb. But who feels aright the still more amazing pity of the betrayed One shuddering at the traitor's doom; reiterating that something human still survived in him, whom once His calm conviction, not His troubled emotion, had called a devil, now declaring twice over, with accumulated emphasis, that he was still a man, though false to the ideal Manhood. "Woe to THAT MAN by whom THE SON OF MAN is betrayed! Good were it for him if there had not been born THAT MAN!" (*Οὐαὶ δὲ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκείνῳ, δι' οὗ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται καλὸν ἦν αὐτῷ, εἰ οὐκ ἐγεννήθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος, Matt. xxvi. 24.*)

And therewith He gives to John a sign which Judas (watching them how keenly!) could not fail to recognise as such. With the sop, we read that Satan again entered into him, in the still deadlier hatred of his discovery. And who is so dull as to overlook the contrast between the question of the others and that which now, at last, is wrung from the stern self-repression of Iscariot; their "Is it I, Lord?" and his "Is it I, Rabbi?" It is his first recorded utterance, and we shall once more hear him use the same halting epithet, perhaps in malignant reference to this scene.

But now, since two apostles, at least, knew his guilt, it was necessary to dismiss him at once; and for this it

sufficed that the mastery of Jesus should assert itself in simple words, understood by no hearer except himself: "What thou art doing (*ὃ ποιεῖς*), do quickly." Thereupon, from the lighted room, from the presence of the true Light which lighteth every man, into the gloom and solitude he "went immediately out, and it was night." The whole scene is most vivid, intense, and self-evidencing; and this last phrase, one of the two or three in the New Testament of which the power is subjective, is perhaps, for quiet, unstrained intensity, the most impressive in literature.

Long before Judas had convinced the hierarchy that help from him must come that night or never, and had returned with men and officers, our Lord had gone thence to the Mount of Olives. Time had been gained for the last intimate discourse, and for the agony in which His soul gathered strength to die. And the plans of the priests had been so thoroughly dislocated, that when their Victim stood before them their false witnesses were still to seek.

How could Jesus be arrested amid the uncertain lights and shadows of the olive grove? What if He drew back, or if some devoted follower interposing confused the seekers? Judas, who knew Him well, gave the hateful sign, in which meanness and treachery reached their utmost height; they should arrest the man whom he would kiss, while entangled in his false embraces.

But again Jesus frustrated their device, and the arrest was guided by His action, not by theirs. It was not the first time in history that a great individuality, absolutely fearless, proved his mastery over all physical odds, when, as Jesus announced, "I am He," they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Was it because His words implied a surrender, and Judas, first to divine their meaning, would fain encourage the rest, or was it in agitated, senseless inability to depart from the

pre-arranged programme, that he presently hurried forward and kissed Him much, with the cry, "Hail, Rabbi"? And is there not in the action a hideous reminiscence of their recent parting; in the kiss a retort upon the sop; in the "Hail, Rabbi," an echo of the question, "Rabbi, is it I?" By no ingenuity can the cynical part he now played be reconciled with the theory that he wished Jesus to assert Himself, in order thus to grasp his own share in a secular and earthly kingdom; of such assertion, his destruction bade fair to be the first result. But Jesus calmly and dispassionately said, "Friend, do that for which thou art come"; and the "much kissing" (*κατεφιλήσεν*) explains the second remonstrance, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" With this He yielded Himself up to die.

It is impossible that Judas, amid his plots and treasons, never asked himself how far the malice of the priests would go. In that case he would surely have reproached them for their cruelty, at least when they rejected his appeal to them. But it was natural that the difference between the contemplation of guilt and the actual burden of it should alarm his soul too late, and that the illusions by which Satan deceived him to his ruin should vanish when their end was served. Henry the Second of France was callous enough during the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, but he died in the anguish of remorse. And Shakespeare conceived that the unnatural woman, to whom, when Duncan was murdered,

"The sleeping and the dead [were] but as pictures"
(*Macbeth* ii. 2),

should swoon in the morning, when the reaction had begun, and at last should herself

"by self and violent hands
Take off her life" (v. 8).

Dreadful is the picture of the despair of this strong lost soul, as, regardless of all law, he rushes into the Holy Place, and flinging down before his accomplices the paltry reward of his guilt, the legal compensation for a slave which an ox might gore, he cries out, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

Alas! he could only discern the immaculate blamelessness to which his close, prolonged, and hostile scrutiny thus bore the most unimpeachable of testimony. No further intuition led him to seek pardon from the all-merciful One whom he had wronged so deeply. His last hope is for comfort from the chiefs of his religion, who had so lately conspired with him and flattered him. But his use was over now, and they treated him with all the callous cruelty of men disturbed by the weakness of a dupe, when their hearts were hardened to commit the world's worst crime. As the first murderer would not be his brother's keeper, so they asked, "What is that to us?" A few hours later Pilate threw back upon them the blood of this just person in almost the exact words they used to Judas, "See thou to that": "See ye to it."

Once more alone, as when he left the upper chamber, but now friendless, conscience-stricken, and desperate, the forlorn wretch naturally wandered away (*ἀνεχώρησε*) to a place of evil omen, the piece of ground which the meagre wages of his guilt would have sufficed to buy, only because an abandoned pottery work had spoiled it; and thence, in a storm of unimaginable rage, self-loathing, and sorrow such as worketh death, perhaps amid the horror and dread and blinding darkness of the noonday night, wherein Jesus cried aloud to God Who had forsaken Him, Iscariot went to his own place, a dread warning to all men of rank, influence, or endowments, an Apostle, yet the son of perdition, and the only mortal whose dark fate we surely know.

A certain mystery broods over his obscure and lonely death, through which we dimly discern an unsteady attempt at suicide, a treacherous knot or a cord that breaks, a heavy fall into the hollow whence the potters had long since dug out the clay, and last of all a hideous mass, the strange antithesis of that undesecrated Body which even then perhaps was being reverently laid in a new tomb, and which saw no corruption.

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THE CHRISTIAN SECRET.

IN a former paper I have endeavoured to reproduce a beautiful episode of church life in apostolic days, the gift from the Church at Philippi to the Apostle Paul in prison at Rome. Of this gift, the priceless Epistle to the Philippians is an acknowledgment. The acknowledgment contains, as a corrective, a casual remark which embodies and reveals some of St. Paul's deepest and most characteristic thoughts, thoughts frequently reappearing and giving a marked colour to his writings. This casual remark and these thoughts I purpose in this paper to expound.

In Philippians iv. 10 St. Paul has expressed his great joy at the gift from Philippi. That this was no ordinary or selfish joy, he has already suggested by speaking of it as a joy *in the Lord*. But this indication was not sufficient to guard his words against possibility of misinterpretation. They might seem to be the gratitude of a starving man for relief of his deep need. The Apostle therefore places his meaning beyond reach of doubt by adding, *Not that I speak in respect of want*. This phrase describes a result corresponding to its cause. St. Paul's words have nothing in common with those of a man whose possessions *fall-short*