

THE FAUST-BOOKS AND THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

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THE first Faust-Book, of 227 small pages, published in 1587, carried a potency of which its unnamed compiler doubtless never dreamed; from it, directly and definitely, came the countless German Faust-Books and ballads of the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. The stern demands of these earlier books for the persecution of necromancers may well have added fagots to the many flames lighted for witches during the 17th century. Immediately translated into English, it spread the legend over British soil, and gave Marlowe the stuff for his grandiose tragedy; this, being brought to Germany, was the parent of the Faust-spectacles and puppet-plays which led to the dramatic suggestions of Lessing, and bore full fruit in Goethe's chief life-work and masterpiece.

This book (hereafter referred to as "A") was written about forty years after the death of its well-documented protagonist. Its historic foundations are little to our purpose. A is by no means necessitated by its sources—least of all by reality. The most obvious of these sources are works having no honest relation to Faust at all—conspicuously Schedel's *Chronik* of 1493, from which the writer borrows not only countless details for use in fabricating Faust's journeys through Europe and the Orient, but much impertinent matter applied to Faust's surveys of Paradise, astronomy, the evolution of the world, and theological speculation.

The sweeping success of this cheap production was natural: it has Form; it is an effectively grouped relation of the life and doings of its subject; its sensationalism, brevity, proverbial style, fervid emotion and aggressive piety explain its wide human appeal.

Given such popularity, the issuance of an "improved" rival work became a foregone conclusion. Widman's huge *Historie* (Hamburg, 1599) raised the 227 pages of A to 671 considerably larger ones. While Wi never refers by name to his source, his frequent

sharp bites at the hand that was feeding him sufficiently prove that A was always set before his eyes. A specious originality is gotten by copious new chapters at the beginning. Widman's most obvious device consists in shattering the well-ordered scheme of A, and remoulding it nearer to his heart's desire—which is, to conceal theft. His first wholesale appropriation is chapter 10 of A, which he hides in the 25th chapter of his second book, about half-way through the volume. It properly belongs among the early negotiations with Mephisto, but is put among pranks and adventures. A 15 is taken over, practically word for word, but most illogically removed from theological inquiries and put among more secular performances. Widman omits a long bill-of-fare found in A, so comprehensive as to be compromising, but works part of it (much concealed) into a later banquet. A begins its third division effectively with the conjuring-up of Alexander the Great, a dignified tale thrown by Widman into the middle of a series of vulgar practical jokes. In general, when he reaches this third division of A, Wi drops the mask of originality, and borrows *plenis manibus*. Chapter 46 he takes word for word, but expands the framework and stuffs it with much extra matter; 47 and 48 are as literal as possible, but switched into Wi's second book.

That pestilential editorial passion, to "re-write" and improve, is seen even in the contemporary English translation of A, which professes to be "according to the true copy, printed at Frankford." The Englishman had traveled, and enriches the account by liberal additions, some of which were taken into Marlowe's play. Such creative activity is as nothing to Widman, who twists his source at every point—even to his own disadvantage. He is determined to show himself more authentic than his rival, even at the expense of self-contradiction: he reproves his predecessor for putting Faust's great Alexander-conjuring during the reign of Charles V, instead of in Maximilian's time. Near the beginning, however, Wi asserts that, according to original written evidence, Faust received his *first* gift of necromancy from Mephisto in 1521, but that it "was in the year 1525, after he had previously given himself over, body and soul, to the Devil, that he really came first into public notice." Maximilian died on January 11, 1519.

One example, typical of every page: A, er wolte mit ime für das Thor hinaus gehen = Wi: ire Gnaden wolle mit jhm einen spazier weg für das Thor nehmen. (Wolle=wolte: mit jme für das Thor=mit jhm (3 words) . . . für das Thor; gehen=spazier weg

nehmen.) The orthography is constantly, but inconsistently, varied. This extends to the capricious substitution of small letters for capitals, and *vice versa*. Wi is no purist: on one page he prints "Schloss" in three different ways. When taking over the word "tanzten" he changes it, for variety, to "dantzen," but, where he inserts the same word independently, spells it "tanzten." "Voll und Doll," in A="toll und voll"—changing order, capitalization, and phonetics in that one brief phrase. Dass er nimmer weder *ritte*, noch *fahre*=das er nimmer weder *fuhr* noch *ritt*; A: der Dölpel *wegerte* vnd *abschluge* = er jhm *abschlug* vnd *wegert*.

Varying the discourse from historical account to direct dramatic dialogue is one of the easiest of devices, already exemplified freely in the English translation of A: Darnach forderte der Keyser den Faustum in sein Gemach, hielte jm für, wie jhm bewust, dass er ein erfahrner der schwartzen Kunst were=(the emperor) called unto him Faustus into his privy-chamber; where being come, he said unto him: "Faustus, I have heard much of thee, that thou art excellent in the black art." Just so, A: was er nemmen wolte=Wi: höre, mein Freundt, was wiltu nehmen? The exact opposite: A: ich drey Fläschen in meinen Garten gesetzt habe=darauff hat D. Faustus drey flaschen in seinen garten gestellt. Narrative=question: A: In solchem Fürhaben gehet ein Sturmwindt seinem Hauss zu = Wi: Was folgt darauff? alsbaldt gehet ein grosser Sturmwind seinem hauss zu. The historical present is changed to the preterit, A: wirrft jn in die Stuben hineyn=wurff jhn in die Stuben hinein. Concrete terms are changed to abstract. A: ward ein guter Astronomus oder Astrologus=war in der Astronomie und Astrologia so wol erfahren—and thousands of similar transparent changes for change's sake. No deeper meaning need be sought for variations in fact. A: Faust was born near Weimar=born in Anhalt; A: Wagner, his Famulus, whimsically changed throughout by Wi to Johan Wäiger (though Pfitzer, seventy-five years later, and all other sources hold to "Wagner"). Wi changes the ten infernal realms to nine, probably not suspecting that the source of A at this point was Anselm's *Imago Mundi*. Of like sort are A: name *zwo* silberne Schüsseel=Wi: nam 3. silberne schüsseel; A: einen breiten Mantel=seinen *nachtmantel*.

Again, we note expansion by adding new details. A: wem war banger dan dem guten Herrn=er stiess an die fenster, tobt und wütet, als ein wilt thier; A: Perlen=Orientalische perlen; A: ein spitzig Messer develops into: ein spitziges *Schreib* messerlin; A:

genug essen lassen=gnug für einen Salat grunmat essen lassen; A: sie tapffer sangen, sprangen, vnd alle Kurtzweil trieben=da trieben sie allerley kurtzweil mit springen, singen *vnd tantzen*. A: ein schön herrlich Pferd=Wi: ein schön *brauns* herrlichs Pferd—to which Pfitzer, who claims to hold strictly to his original, Widman, gives the crowning touch, “ein schönes *lichtbraunes* Pferd!”

Morphologically, the development of the synoptic gospels is identical with that of the Faust-books. The anonymous little work known as “Mark” is of the type “A”. It was originally known simply as “The Gospel”; later, to distinguish it from rivals, *κατὰ Μάρκον*; still later, it was widely known as “The Memoirs of Peter.” The consensus of critics puts its completion at just about forty years after the death of Jesus. The writer, as in the case of A, had many sayings and stories given into his hand: Christianity was a lively factor in the Roman world by the time of Nero, as we know from Tacitus’ *Annales* (xv., 44), and from the accredited epistles of Paul. This first of the gospels is a well-constructed, freely sketched brochure, giving a succinct, literary, unified history of Jesus. The author ignores any miracles connected with the birth of Christ, and covers, in general, John the Baptist’s mission, the temptation, calling of the disciples, various parables and miracles, the transfiguration, entry into Jerusalem, prophecy of the second coming, betrayal, Gethsemane, the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection.

The chief pseudo-source of Mark is apparent, namely the Septuagint. The little story, taking only sixteen pages of the Revised Version, draws on Gen., Exod. (iv.), Lev., Numb., Deut. (iv.), I Sam., Psalms (iii.), both Isaiahs (vii.), Jer., Dan. (iii.), Joel, Zech. (ii.), and Mal. It is fair to assert that *all* these citations are, in their original context, quite irrelevant. The story of the crucifixion is partly built on Ps. xxii., which only the most determined theological intention could connect with Jesus. The process is carried further in Matthew’s story of the same event, where he draws with equal irrelevancy on Ps. lxix. (“They gave me also gall for my meat and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink”), and records: “They gave him wine to drink mingled with gall.” Here the King James Version helps along by forcing the reading “vinegar to drink”—honorably restored to “wine” in the Revised Version of 1881. Matthew also adds another touch from Psalm xxii.: “He trusted in God: let him deliver him now if he will have him.” Mark’s report on the prophecy of the coming of the Son of Man is a cento of unrelated phrases lifted from Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah and Deuteronomy.

Mark was a true *Volksbuch*, adapted to be widely circulated, and it was eagerly welcomed by a large and fast growing body of Gentile Christians. It is colloquial in its word-order, the use of certain popular terms like *κράββατος* and *σφενδύς*: of diminutives, double meanings, the historic present, and pleonasm. I would be the last to speak lightly of words of love and hope, hallowed by sacred associations, and glorified in art and music—but Professor Goodspeed is undoubtedly right in maintaining that the language is that of common, everyday life. That master-Grecian, Gilbert Murray, in one of his latest publications, points to the “mere beauty of language” of the gospel narrative, citing only two examples: “And there came unto him a certain rich man.” and “Verily I say unto you.” The first quotation does not exist; the second, in the form *ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν*, scarcely has musical charm, and, repeated fourteen times in this little book, becomes a wearying mannerism—not to speak of John, who, protesting still more stoutly, uses the enhanced phrase, *ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν*, twenty-four times! The white glow of Tyndale’s martyr-zeal, and the stately language of the seventeenth century have transposed this humble text into a very different key.

Mark is a *Volksbuch*, also, in having its interest largely centered in demonology and exorcism: as Bacon says, it is “the nucleus and core of Mark’s Christology.” I find thirteen such allusions, including the long account of the man among the tombs, possessed by a legion of spirits which ran into 2,000 swine that were choked in the sea. In the generally discredited ending (x., 9-20 of the last chapter) there is also an allusion to Mary Magdalene who had been possessed of seven devils, and a final assurance to the apostles that the casting out of devils should be a sign following those that believe. Of popular appeal is the sensational prophecy of the terrors of the last day, occupying all of chapter xiii., and made more poignant by the most solemn of all possible asseverations that “this generation shall not pass away, until all these things be accomplished.”

Matthew is the moral equivalent of Widman; in general, every device of the latter in superseding A is exemplified by Matthew’s use of Mark. It is more than one and one-half times as long (Luke, following Matthew, is somewhat longer than Matthew). In making additions, Matthew, like Widman, provides an entirely new beginning—in this case, as well as in Luke, of two chapters—commencing with the genealogy of Joseph, which is absolutely and mathematically irreconcilable with a rival genealogy at the beginning of Luke. The preaching of John the Baptist is much expanded.

In chapter iv., Matthew takes over the two verses of Mark which make his entire account of the temptation, varying them for the sake of variation, and adding to them in the precise manner of Wi. One brief example of Matthew's procedure, sufficing for hundreds: Mark: *καὶ ἔδιδον αὐτοῖς ἑξουσίαν τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν ἀκαθάρτων* = Mat.: *ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἑξουσίαν πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων*, etc. The same main verb is used, but changed from the imperfect to first aorist; indirect and direct objects are identical; objective genitive identical, except that Mark has the article twice, and Matthew omits both. Matthew adds: "and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness." The most convenient and convincing illustration of Matthew's systematic borrowing under cover of trivial variants is the Parable of the Sower, making the first nine verses of both Mark iv. and Matthew xiii. A comparison, verse by verse, seems to me to dispose, once for all, of the "memory-tradition" theory supported by learned and ingenious New Testament scholars. Recurring to the temptation, Matthew spreads Mark's two verses into his verses one, two, and eleven, and fills his verses three to ten with a dramatic dialogue between Jesus and Satan, constructed from Deut. viii., 3; Ps. xci., 11ff.; Deut. vi., 16; Deut. vi., 13.

The long sermon on the mount is not found in Mark, but Matthew puts into its construction scattered passages from Mark, taken out of their logical setting, and in the following order: Mark, chapters ix., iv., xi., iv. At chapter viii. Matthew goes on from Mark, chapter i., but in the order, verses 21, 40, 29. Then very direct borrowing from Mark, chapter iv. and v., going back in Matthew's chapter ix. to excerpts from Mark, chapters ii., v., iii., vi. The brief saying of Jesus, "For he that hath, to him shall be given," etc., occurring once in Mark, is repeated by Mat. at xiii., 12, and xxv., 29, and by Luke at viii., 18, and xix., 26.

Matthew's unnecessary expansions are quite in the spirit of Widman, e. g., Mark's simple and effective phrase, "Which, when it is sown upon the earth," is produced into "which a man took and sowed into his field": Luke, varying on this extension, writes: "which a man took and cast into his own garden"—altering two words, and adding one new one. Mark has a dramatic interval in the story of the withered fig-tree, which Matthew makes less effective by leaping over some seven intervening verses. Matthew, in following Mark, chapter vi., unexpectedly lifts a passage from Mark xiii., from its original setting in a discourse on the second coming, which Matthew treats as a whole in chapter xiv., where

he repeats his verse from x., 22. At x., 26, Matthew introduces, with complete irrelevancy, "for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known"—wrested from its logical setting far back in Mark iv., 22. At Matthew xxiii., 6, Mark's order, 1, 2, 3 = 3, 2, 1; and similar shifts in other places, while following the original *teorās* of Mark very closely. At the beginning of Mark x., the order of discourse is logical and clear. Matthew takes it over with notable verbal agreement, changing the order of paragraphs to 2, 1, 4, 3—a triumph of mathematical permutation. Similarly at Mark i., 7-8 the order is simple, effective, climactic: Matthew puts the sequence 2, 1, 3, 4. In Mark, where one asked, "Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?", Jesus replies simply and consistently: "Why callest thou me good?" Matthew alters this infelicitously to "Why askest thou me concerning that which is good?"—which even Luke refuses to accept. Mark's pungent "I adjure thee by God, torment me not" is put by Matthew: "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" while Luke reads, "I beseech thee, torment me not." The phrase "whose shoes I am not worthy to *loose*" (Matthew, Luke, Acts) is not improved by Matthew's change: "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear"—nor the "rent asunder" of Mark by Matthew's "opened," though here Luke follows Matthew. The parable of the vine-dressers, simply and well built up by Mark, is muddled and diffused in Matthew's arrangement.

At the beginning of chapter xiii., Matthew, like Widman, wearies of piece-meal mosaics, and, taking up the beginning of Mark iv., follows his model systematically and as literally as his method permits, through Mark's chapter iv. (Mark, chapter v., had already furnished its materials for Matthew viii.), and from Mark vi. to xvi., which is the end. The borrowing throughout is so literal as to be practically identical.

Matthew, like Widman, is prone to heighten his source incrementally: for one blind man he gives two; for "a colt" he gives "an ass and a colt"—mechanically (but rather inconsiderately) correcting here Mark's *ἐκάθισεν ἐπ' αὐτὸν* to *ἐπεκάθισεν ἐπάνω αὐτῶν*: "and he sat on *them*." Mark's "5,000 men" who were fed by five loaves and two fishes, become "5,000 men, beside women and children." According to Mark, Joseph wound the body of Jesus in a linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb; Matthew, using the same diction, adds that it was a *clean* linen cloth, and *his own new* tomb. Mark and Matthew record that one of those with Jesus struck off the ear of the high

priest's servant; Luke adds that it was his *right* ear, and that the ear was restored; the much later John specifies *Peter* as the agent, and gives the name of the servant, *Malchus*—all according to the general law of this class of books: the further away from the event, the more numerous and exact the details.

Matthew transposes words, even in quoting from Isaiah, and alters the commandments. Such changes are piously ascribed to personal usage, or a better literary feeling. In transferring 'Παββονεῖ from Mark, Matthew uses, to be sure, the Greek word Κίριε—but hardly on puristic grounds, for at Mark xiv., 45, he takes over the word 'Παββεῖ. Mark always uses the phrase μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας, which Matthew, followed by Luke, alters to τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ—but not for consistency, as is clear from Mat. xxvii., 63: μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας.

The variation from historical narrative to direct dialogue (noted under Wi) offers abundant illustrations. Mark: "the disciples asked"—Matthew: "Peter said, 'Tell us.'" Also the exact opposite, Mark: "Thou art"—Matthew: "This is." Mark: "Master, behold!" —Matthew: "His disciples came to show him." The simple assertion of Mark, "That kingdom cannot stand," is turned into a question by Matthew: "How shall his kingdom stand?" Mark's question, "Is it not written?" becomes Matthew's simple assertion, "It is written." Mark's plural "those that are sown" is turned by Matthew into the singular, "he that was sown." *Pars pro toto*.

At this point I must omit a further comparison of Pfitzer's *Leben Faustis* with the gospel of Luke, though this would fortify the main thesis.

The history of the Faust-books, as well as that of the gospels, reveals a series of emulations, rivalries, survivals, and defeats: *habent sua fata libelli*. Widman's pretentious revision of A put that book completely out of circulation, though it was in the hands of Pfitzer. No mention need be made of the numerous Wagner-books, *Fausts Höllenzwang*, *Dr. Faustens Miracul- Kunst- und Wunderbuch*, and the like. Mark was almost completely eclipsed in the early church by the later and higher claims of Matthew, and probably survived only because popularly supposed to derive directly from Peter (curiously enough, it is Matthew who stresses Peter's personality most dramatically). Many products of a similar kind came into competition: any popular one was called "the Gospel." They offer a tangled jumble of late, supposititious "claims" to authority. "No valid distinction can be drawn between the New Testament and early Christian writings of the first and second cen-

turies" (Moffatt). Few laymen suspect—at least it was never made a part of my strenuous Sunday-school instruction—the number of rival gospels, orthodox and heretical, whose compilers provided them with the names of saints and apostles, and supplied credentials in the way of pretended letters to and from church-fathers. Montague James' splendid new work (Clarendon Press, 1924) presents scores of such apocryphal New Testament texts. The following had an even fighting-chance of being put in the canon: The Revelation of Peter; the Epistle of Clement; the Epistle of Barnabas; the Acts of Paul; the Shepherd of Hermas. Irenaeus, in the second century, used the Book of Questions Addressed to Jesus, and His Answers. The Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans is mentioned from the fourth century, and frequently found included in manuscript New Testaments. The Gospel of Nicodemus is edited by Tischendorf from eleven Greek and nineteen Latin manuscripts; there are also ancient versions of the first part of this gospel in Coptic, Syrian and Armenian—all of which points to its widespread acceptance. The book of James, later called the Protoevangelium, is as old as the second century. The gospel according to the Hebrews is quoted by Jerome. The Apocalypse of Peter, next in popularity and date to the book of Revelation, belongs early in the second century.

The sum of this paper is the conclusion that there is a natural history in these matters, an eternal recurrence, and that the organic relations of such products cannot be ignored.

As those great spirits, Lessing and Goethe, rescued the profound Faust-myth alike from the degrading superstitions of the orthodox and the shallow contempt of the Age of Enlightenment, may we not hope that some spiritual genius may also lead our own day from the absurd literal cult of these primitive documents to a new and worthy evaluation of the sublime legend of Jesus?