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A STUDY OF SELECTED HISTORICAL FICTION  
BASED ON THE BIBLE

By

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## INTRODUCTION

A STUDY OF  
SELECTED HISTORICAL FICTION  
BASED ON THE BIBLE

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem and Purpose of this Study

One of the great problems facing Christian leaders today is that of conveying the spirit and content of the Bible to people who find its form, its unfamiliar and often difficult language a barrier to their understanding of it. In an age in which the daily reading of the Bible by professing Christians no longer retains the place held in former times, our problem is to discover effective means of presenting Biblical truths and Biblical history to our people in a form with which they are familiar and which has strong appeal for them, in a language which they understand, and in such a manner as will turn them to the Bible itself with increased ability to understand it and a greater desire to penetrate its mysteries.

In the realm of fiction we find one answer to our problem. From early childhood through adulthood the appeal of a story well-told remains with most of us. One need only glance at the sales records of some of our

modern fiction to discover the universality of its appeal. Here, then, is a literary form which lends itself readily to our purposes in as far as it is a popular and familiar form.

Under the general classification of fiction we find much that deals with historic characters and episodes, with particular places and times, and attempts to convey to the reader a more or less authentic picture of a period or person. This type of fiction has ranked high in the estimation of the reading public. In 1900 at the height of its popularity each of the six best sellers of the year in the field of fiction was an historical novel.<sup>1</sup> During the succeeding years its appeal has remained strong and in 1947 five of the ten national best selling works of fiction were historical novels.<sup>2</sup>

In a further study of historical fiction we discover that a number of works have been produced which deal primarily with Biblical material. From among such works three have appeared on annual lists of top best-selling fiction in the last ten years. The Nazarene by Sholem Asch appeared in both 1939 and in 1940. The Robe

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1. Cf. H. H. Howland: "Historical Revival", Publishers' Weekly, June 9, 1934, p. 2136.
2. Cf. "The Best Sellers of 1947 According to Sales in Book Stores", Publishers' Weekly, January 24, 1948, p. 300.

by Lloyd Douglas appeared each year from 1942 through 1945. In 1943 and 1944 Sholem Asch's book The Apostle found a place among top ranking fiction.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the extreme popularity of this type of fiction we will seek to discover what value it may have as a vehicle for the presentation of Biblical fact. The purpose of this study will be to find what contribution is made to an understanding of the Bible by selected works of historical fiction dealing with Biblical material.

#### B. Preliminary Procedure

Because of the great number of works appearing in this field, it will be possible to survey only a selected group of them. For the purposes of this study we will limit the books to be analyzed to those works of adult fiction which have been published during the ten year period from 1938 to 1948. Furthermore, we shall deal only with historical fiction in the form of the novel since it is in this form that it is most widely read.

As a further means of selection we will use

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1. Cf. A. P. Hackett: Fifty Years of Best Sellers, 1895-1945, Miss Hackett sets a minimum of one-half million copies sold as the criterion of inclusion in her best seller lists.

only those books appearing in the Book Review Digest during this period. Inclusion in the Book Review Digest signifies that a book has been reviewed in at least two of a list of some one hundred magazines covering a wide range of interests and of a popular but reputable character. In this way we will eliminate those books which are of little significance in the field.

We shall further limit our study by selecting only those works dealing with the New Testament period. This will be done in order that all the books analyzed may be studied from the Christian viewpoint. The books dealing with the Old Testament often present problems of Jewish interpretation requiring research that cannot be handled in the scope of this study.

Because of the large number of books and the limited time available for the carrying out of this study, we will analyze only one book by an author who has made more than one contribution to the field.

### C. Findings

In following the above plan we find the following fourteen books to be studied:

Asch, Sholem	The Apostle
Bauer, F. M.	Behold Your King
Bekessy, E.	Barabbas
Blythe, LeG.	Bold Galilean
Douglas, L.	The Big Fisherman
Kagawa, T.	Behold the Man
Komroff, M.	In the Years of Our Lord

Linklater, E.	Judas
Loewenstein, H. zu	The Lance of Longinus
Malvern, Gladys	According to Thomas
Murphy, E. F.	The Scarlet Lily
Perkins, J. R.	The Emperor's Physician
Robey, J. B.	The Innovator
Wilson, D. C.	The Brother

#### D. Method of Procedure

In order to determine the value of the books to be studied it will be necessary to set up a standard by which they may be measured. In the first chapter we will present the findings of an intensive analysis of two novels selected arbitrarily from the above list. On the basis of these findings we will set up a scale of value by which the remaining books will be judged. This evaluation will form the basis of the second chapter. The scale will be reframed and adjusted to the above purpose as the study proceeds if this is found to be necessary.

CHAPTER I  
SETTING UP CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION  
OF  
SELECTED HISTORICAL FICTION



## CHAPTER I

### SETTING UP CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF SELECTED HISTORICAL FICTION

#### A. Introduction

Our purpose in this chapter will be to determine what are those characteristics of a Biblical historical novel that make it valuable from the standpoint of Christian teaching. To accomplish this we will make an intensive study of two of the selected books, The Apostle by Sholem Asch and The Brother by Dorothy C. Wilson.

#### B. A Study of The Apostle - Sholem Asch

1. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented.

In any work of this sort the more it acquaints the reader with actual Bible content, the more valuable it must be. This is one effective means of familiarizing people with the Biblical narrative. The value of this is most apparent in The Apostle. Asch follows very closely the life of Paul as we find it contained in Acts and in his Epistles. Not only so, but also he quotes frequently and at some length from Paul's Epistles. At times one feels as though he were reading the Bible with occasional

interpolations by Asch.

2. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented in letter and in spirit.

While the quantity of Scripture appearing in a book is a determining factor in its evaluation, the technical accuracy with which it is presented is of prime importance. By technical accuracy we mean presentation of material, both quotations and episodes, as they appear in the Bible. While direct quotations do not generally present problems, the rendering of Biblical incidents may. For instance, in Gladys Schmitt's novel, David the King, we find that David's experience with Bath-sheba and his condemnation by Nathan does not leave him truly repentant. Though sorry that he has been forced to kill Uriah, he rejoices that he has taken Bath-sheba as his wife.<sup>1</sup> Unlike this book, The Apostle presents faithfully the Biblical record. We discovered only one instance where the novel fails to corroborate an incident appearing in the Bible, this being the belief instilled into Sergius Paulus through his contact with Paul (Acts 13:12). Asch tells us that Paulus did not accept the belief in the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

In a novel such as this in which Biblical material is used so extensively, another question presents itself.

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1. Cf. Gladys Schmitt: David the King, p. 467.
2. Cf. Sholem Asch: The Apostle, p. 326.

Is the material used in such a way that it maintains the spirit of the Biblical record? Is its context in the novel compatible with its Biblical context? This question presents itself in a striking way in Asch's development of Paul's personality during the period of his persecution of the Christians. He sets the Biblical incidents into the framework of Saul's intellectual and spiritual turbulence and uncertainty, laying open to the reader the soul-shaking struggles which he underwent prior to his conversion experience when he was torn between what he was certain was great zeal for the God of Israel and the strange attraction of those who withstood him in the faith of the Messiah. Here Saul is revealed as a "battle ground of a struggle between good and evil".<sup>1</sup> While this experience of Paul is not explicitly expressed in the Bible, it seems in no way incompatible with the spirit of Scripture and serves to vivify in a very powerful way, the experiences related in the Bible. It is a fitting frame for the incidents of the Biblical narrative and is an example of a characteristic technique of Asch's which heightens to a great extent the significance of the Biblical narrative.

3. The extent to which historical background is presented.

One of the prime values of historical novels is the way in which they are able to provide background, an

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1. Asch: op. cit., p. 149.

historical setting into which the figures and isolated incidents of the Biblical narrative can be placed. Asch in a very effective way carries us into the world in which Paul and his fellow servants moved and enables us to grasp with far more understanding the world that he faced, the situations that called forth his letters. With how much more clarity do we understand the tremendous impact made by the Gospel of Christ upon the pagan world when we are exposed to that world's depravity, its flagrant disregard of human rights and dignity - and this, not in terms of a recital of the evils of heathendom that Paul so frequently gives us in the Epistles, but in terms of human experiences that sear our hearts and minds. This is the effect of his description of the slave life in the underground bronze foundries of Corinth<sup>1</sup> and of the pagan orgies at Antioch.<sup>2</sup> The effect is to leave us rejoicing at the power of the Christian gospel to change life and realizing how often we fail to be conscious of that power today because contrasts are frequently not as apparent as they were in those days.

#### 4. Treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

Since our Bible is essentially a record of God's revelation in human experience, we find that there is great

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1. Cf. Asch: op. cit., p. 457.  
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 300 ff.

value in taking the often times isolated experiences of the Bible and setting them into the framework of a total personality. In some cases this requires the creation of much that is wholly fictional in character with only slim foundation in Biblical fact. In the case of Paul, however, this is not so. We have material for building a man of full stature from his letters and the record of Acts. Even so, we find that Asch's novelized presentation of his life adds appreciably to our understanding of Paul. We have mentioned before the great soul struggles that beset Paul during his persecution of the Christians. Throughout the novel we are led into the innermost soul of Paul as he seeks to serve his Lord. We see the torture he endures as he realizes that the gospel he must preach separates him irrevocably from the masses of his own people, not only those who reject Christ, but from many who accept Him but cannot understand Paul's teaching and turn bitterly against him. We follow his development from his earlier days marked frequently by outbreaks of bitterness toward his opposers such as appear in Galatians 1:9 and 5:15 where he curses the Judaizers who are leading astray the people of Galatia. From these earlier years in which we find these expressions of resentment we find him growing until at last the bitterness is gone and only love remains. In a brief summary of Paul's life Asch says:

"He had made many detours; he had erred and blundered. But in the end his feet were on the true path, and he had found his brothers, whom he thought he had lost forever. Many others, both Jew and gentile, had found the true path, led to it by the simple fishermen, Simon bar Jonah, and by the martyr, Reb Jacob; they had found it long before Paul himself. . Bitter and painful had been the path of the apostle to the gentiles; every discovery, every forward move, had been paid for in sufferings of the flesh and spirit. . And suddenly he perceived, that with all the dissensions and quarrels which he had provoked and been a part of, he was one with his brothers, on the same path as they. . the path of faith, of trust, of charity."<sup>1</sup>

While the development of a fully-rounded character from more or less meagre details is the privilege and one of the values of historical novels, it can also be its peril. It is only when the character in his full stature is wholly compatible with the facts we have concerning him that the interpretation and the recreation of the author can be of real value. When the author deals in all honesty with the facts he has available, when he builds carefully, imaginatively, creatively upon the foundation of fact, then the isolated facts and experiences are bound inextricably into the whole fabric of a human life and experience. When this happens with a Biblical character such as Paul, the man before us suddenly grows in his outline, his recorded experiences become outgrowths of tremendous daily experiences, and those of us who cannot read so expertly between the lines, who have neither the experience nor the sensi-

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1. Asch: op. cit., p. 683.

tive imagination with which to recreate the fabric from which these experiences grew, suddenly find ourselves seeing the Bible with new clarity as an expression of great personal experiences of faith and worship and service. It is this response which points up this realm of value. It is the possibility of this response and its motivating power which makes it essential that the character portrayal be honest, be in keeping with the known facts.

5. Extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

In writing on the production of historical novels Naomi Mitchison makes the following statement concerning the nature of the characters represented.

" . . . The characters must think and act within the framework of their own time and its conceptions of happiness or value, and through their own materials of life. They must have some relationship with the present day, but it must not be overt from their side . . . They must be so completely caught up in their own time that they are able to catch the present into it."<sup>1</sup>

This quality of timelessness is an essential one if a novel is to produce lasting effects upon its reader. In his study of modern fiction H.J. Muller says that if a novel is too closely bound up with a particular time or problem and not "deeply rooted in the constants of experience . . .

. . . . .

1. Naomi Mitchison: "Writing Historical Novels", The Saturday Review of Literature, April 27, 1935. p. 645.

Its impact will be solid but not lasting . . . its value real but not rich."<sup>1</sup>

The Apostle, in an effective manner, gets behind the immediate situations to the basic principles underlying them - principles that are made explicit in the narrative and unite themselves with the problems of our own times and our own lives. For instance, penetrating beyond the fact of Saul's persecution of the Christians, Asch lays bare the motives that dictate his actions. Saul considers himself an instrument of God whose role it is to destroy the wicked, idolatrous Messianists.<sup>2</sup> His Rabbi, broken and sorrowful, knowing of Saul's part in the stoning of Stephen, sends for him and speaks:

"I am afraid for thee, Saul of Tarshish. The path which thou hast chosen for thyself is narrow and perilous. . . I will pray for thee, that God may open the sources of love in thy heart. For on this narrow and perilous path of thy choosing. . . all the lights are darkened, all measures confused, good and evil are indistinguishable! There is but one thread for thee to hold on to: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'"<sup>3</sup>

Rabbi Gamaliel knew that a true love of God was coupled with a love for his people, that served to guide. But Saul had that yet to learn, for to him his passion for God meant that all those who opposed Jehovah must be destroyed. Asch goes beyond the events of Saul's life to the underly-

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1. H. J. Muller: *Modern Fiction: A Study of Values*, p. 69.
2. Cf. Asch: *op. cit.*, p. 94.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 128 ff.



ing principles of his actions, and in Rabbi Gamaliel's warning to Saul is a warning to each of us who seek to serve the Lord. It is this practice of isolating the basic issues in Biblical events that gives the novel a timelessness and universality. It is this that determines the book's significance for our own time -- a significance which The Apostle has to a high degree.

6. The artistry of the novel.

The literary merit of a novel is a determining factor in the valuation of the work. Its style, its construction, its delineation of character are important in view of the fact that they very frequently contribute to or detract from the forcefulness and reality of the work. In books of the type we are studying, the degree to which the Biblical material incorporated is an integral part of the narrative is an important element in determining the total impact of the novel upon the reader.

The Apostle is a work of high literary merit. Its character delineation is excellent. We have previously discussed the imaginative insight that Asch has revealed in his reconstruction of the figure of the apostle Paul. The style of the novel is sometimes ponderous with its involved sentences, its extensive sections of detailed description, and its philosophical digressions. In spite of this, it is a forceful work. Great sections of Biblical material are incorporated yet always are integrated with the text of

the novel. Paul's letters, often quoted at length, are products of his daily living, of his faith, of his love, and grow naturally out of his experiences recorded in the novel. In this novel that which is imaginary and that which is Biblical are skillfully woven together so that the fiction is brought to focus by that which is Biblical fact and the facts are greatly enhanced by the imaginative re-creations.

C. A Study of The Brother - D. C. Wilson

Our purpose in this study will be to determine the degree to which this novel manifests the characteristics discussed in the analysis of The Apostle. In noting the elements of difference between the two novels we shall be able to set up a more detailed scale of values whereby to judge the remaining books.

1. The extent to which Biblical material is presented.

Unlike The Apostle, The Brother contains relatively little of the Biblical material available on the subject. Dealing with the life of James and his relationship to Jesus, the novel is made up largely of imaginative material which is brought to focus by Biblical incidents. The first half of the novel, dealing with the boyhood of James and Jesus, contains of necessity little Biblical

material. The latter half, revealing James' antagonism toward his Brother, relates those incidents from Jesus' life which emphasize the difference between his way of life and teachings and the Pharisaical narrowness of James. These include the eating with unwashed hands,<sup>1</sup> the Sabbath healing,<sup>2</sup> the plucking of grain on the Sabbath,<sup>3</sup> the questions raised by Jesus' forgiveness of sins.<sup>4</sup> Incidents such as these, with several of Jesus' teachings related to them, and the incident of Jesus' death comprise the bulk of the actual Biblical material incorporated in the novel. However, while the Scriptural narrative does not predominate in the novel, it is nevertheless the point of focus and the imaginative material is to a large extent built around it.

2. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.

Such Biblical material as is presented in the novel is in keeping with the letter and spirit of the Biblical record. The imaginative reconstruction in no way distorts or destroys the significance of the Biblical facts.

3. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

The first part of this novel is set against a

. . . . .

1. Cf. D. C. Wilson: *The Brother*, p. 229.

2. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

3. Cf. *loc. cit.*

4. Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 215-216.

background of restlessness and revolt under harsh Roman dominion. It pictures vividly the revolt of Judas the Galilean and his bitter defeat at the hands of the Romans.<sup>1</sup> Aside from this there is little attempt to root the Biblical episodes in a general historical background. There is some elaboration of conditions reported in the Bible such as the preoccupation of the Pharisees with the minutiae of the law and their observances.<sup>2</sup> In general, the historical background given serves to heighten the Biblical material presented but is too limited in its scope to give the reader a broader general understanding of the period.

4. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

The imaginative material in this novel serves well to heighten one's conception of the chief Biblical characters. This is particularly noticeable in the first section of the book dealing with the youth of Jesus and James. Throughout this section the picture we have of Jesus is one wholly in keeping with the spirit of what facts we have of his later years. In this connection we find him befriending the ostracized child who was being tormented by his brother James and his friends. We find him wondering if God is not so much like Sinai - "thundering and belching out smoke and sometimes even boiling over the top

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1. Cf. Wilson: *op. cit.*, p. 39 ff.  
2. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107, 110.

and killing people,"<sup>1</sup> as he is like Mt. Hermon - "quiet and serence and shining and patiently willing to wait."<sup>2</sup>

The character of James is in like manner amplified by the imaginative material that represents him as a fervent upholder of the law from early childhood when at the age of six in his parents' absence he refuses to let the Sabbath observance be foregone.<sup>3</sup> This is the zeal which he manifests throughout the book and which sets him against his Brother in spite of the great love he bears him - a zeal that remains with him until the shock of his Brother's death brings him to the realization that the condition of the spirit, not ceremonial observance, is of supreme importance. Accused of being unclean after having assisted in the burial of his Brother, and urged to change his clothes, he cries out, "'You think it matters what clothes I wear when my spirit is bowed beneath sackcloth and ashes? Of if I cleanse these hands when the stain of disloyalty is on my soul?'"<sup>4</sup> And this is the dawning comprehension of his Brother's way that leads him finally to the realization that the hatred that has burned in him for so long can only kill. His Brother's had been the right way - the way of love. And this now would be his way.<sup>5</sup> As with the charac-

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1. Wilson: op. cit., p. 28.
2. Ibid.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 9 ff.
4. Ibid., p. 302.
5. Cf. Ibid., p. 324.

ter of Jesus, the imaginative reconstruction of James' life has made him a living figure wholly in keeping with the Scriptural facts.

5. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

As we read The Brother, we are struck with passages such as the one in which Judas the Galilean, fighting for the freedom of Israel, seeing in the eyes of the young Jesus a fire which he feels resembles that in his own heart, urges him under no circumstances to let it be quenched.

"It is far better to be consumed yourself than to let the inner fires go dead."<sup>1</sup> Or this in which Mary, the mother of Jesus, sits distraught and bewildered at the suffering brought upon Galilee by its rebellion under Judas, and the author, recording her thoughts says, "Some sure, instinctive wisdom deep within her told her that bloodshed was not the way to win freedom."<sup>2</sup> We set this beside Jesus' continuing refusal to join the ranks of those who seek to win Israel's freedom by force and our thoughts are immediately turned to the history of our own time and Mary's "wisdom" strikes a responsive chord in our own hearts. One further discovery

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1. Wilson, D.C.: The Brother, p. 30.
2. Ibid., p. 47.

of Mary's that springs from the constants of experience lies in her sudden realization after prolonged suffering over the inexplicable ways of her son, Jesus, that it was not necessary to "comprehend, to understand completely... all that was necessary was to love."<sup>1</sup> And when her sister, sensing a difference in Mary's attitude toward him, asked how she had come to understand him, she replied,

"I don't...The things he does and says are as strange to me as every line and feature of his body are familiar. When I try with my mind to follow the way he has chosen, it is as if I were groping in the dark. But it doesn't matter any longer. I don't have to understand. All I have to do is to love."<sup>2</sup>

This, too, strikes in us a responsive chord and turns us to consideration of this truth in a day in which the wisdom of the intellect is more often acclaimed than is the wisdom of the heart. It is in this association between the principles involved in the situation of the narrative and our own problems to which the same principles apply that this further basis of judgment may be set up. For in this we can grasp Biblical truths in terms of our own experience.

#### 6. The artistry of the novel.

Unlike The Apostle, The Brother is simple in its style. The story is comparatively free from detailed de-

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1. Wilson, op. cit., p. 282.

2. Ibid., p. 285.

scriptions that tend to interrupt the progress of the plot. Its language and sentence structure is less complex than that of The Apostle, and yet lacks the vigor that characterized Asch's novel. While the novel is well constructed the style tends to detract somewhat from the force of the story. One characteristic of Miss Wilson's writing which tends at times to destroy the reality of her work is the use of words and phrases that are distinctly products of our own times. In The Brother we come with a slight shock to the words of Joseph, "You think...I'm a back number", and again "...you were something - something pretty special".<sup>1</sup> Phrases such as these seem inappropriate because they are in the popular mind uniquely associated with our day and for this reason they tend to create a certain unreality in the atmosphere of the novel. This quality of Miss Wilson's writing, and the lack of vigor in her style detract somewhat from the forcefulness of her work.

#### D. Summary and Conclusion

In the preceding study we have made an analysis of two of the books of those to be surveyed in order to discover what particular characteristics of the historical novel determine the value of the books from the standpoint of

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1. Wilson: op. cit., p. 56.



the degree to which they contribute to an understanding of the Bible.

On the basis of this study we found the following considerations of primary importance:

1. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.
2. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.
3. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.
4. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.
5. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.
6. The artistry of the novel.

In the study of these two books we have seen that the degree to which they fulfil these general criteria varies. Therefore, in order to present a more thorough analysis of the selected books it seems advisable to break down these general topics into a detailed scale of value. On the basis of the preceding study we have set up the following detailed scale of evaluation. The values in this scale are set up in light of the problem we are seeking to meet - that of familiarizing people with as much Biblical material as possible and in such a way that their understanding and appreciation of it will be enhanced.

1. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.
  - a. The narrative incorporates to a great extent the Biblical material available on the subject.
  - b. In view of a specific purpose the author has used Biblical material but with a high degree of selectivity that represents a single aspect of the life of the Biblical character presented.
  - c. Biblical material serves as a point of focus but the bulk of the material is purely imaginative.
  - d. Biblical material is used as a point of departure and the focus of attention is on extra-Biblical material.
2. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.
  - a. The narrative presents Biblical material accurately and in its imaginative recreations maintains carefully the spirit of the Scriptural context.
  - b. Biblical material is accurately presented but its context in the novel tends to distort its meaning.
  - c. Such Biblical material as is incorporated is accurate but significance is destroyed by an incomplete or biased presentation.
  - d. Biblical facts are misrepresented and the spirit of the Biblical narrative is destroyed.
3. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.
  - a. Biblical material is related intimately to its historical background in such a way that the significance of the Biblical narrative is heightened and one is led to a richer understanding of the period.

- b. The narrative moves in a limited historical setting which tends to create atmosphere rather than to enrich general understanding of the period.
  - c. The Biblical narrative is presented with no attempt to root it in an historical setting beyond that given it in the Bible.
  - d. Historical setting predominates with little of the Biblical narrative presented.
4. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters:
- a. The Biblical account of the character's life is adhered to and the imaginative reconstruction by which he gains stature is in keeping with the facts known and heightens one's appreciation and understanding of the character.
  - b. The Biblical account is adhered to but the author has refrained for the most part from introducing extra-Biblical, imaginary material which would amplify the characters.
  - c. The Biblical account is adhered to but the imaginary reconstruction of the character and his motives are not compatible with the known facts.
  - d. The Biblical account is distorted and a false representation of the character is given.
5. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.
- a. Biblical incidents are presented in such a way that they are seen in terms of fundamental principles of action and thought and are applied directly or indirectly to universal and timeless problems.
  - b. Biblical truths are presented, but in a more or less philosophical manner which

lacks the force of a more experiential presentation.

- c. Biblical incidents are related without any insight into their significance and no basic truths are drawn from them.
  - d. Biblical truth is distorted by false interpretation that destroys significance of the novel.
6. The artistry of the novel.
- a. The novel is well-constructed and the narrative develops with force and realism.
  - b. The novel is well-constructed but its power is weakened by a faulty style.
  - c. The novel is well-constructed but the force of the work is weakened by poor character delineation.
  - d. The force of the novel is destroyed by poor construction - by Biblical material arbitrarily injected into the narrative rather than being an integral part of it.

CHAPTER II  
THE EVALUATION OF SELECTED  
HISTORICAL FICTION

## CHAPTER II

### THE EVALUATION OF SELECTED HISTORICAL FICTION

#### A. Introduction

In this chapter we shall evaluate the selected books in terms of the values set up in the preceding chapter. Preceding the analysis of each book, we shall give a brief synopsis of the novel in order to present some idea of the scope and content of the work. A summarizing rating graph will be included at the end of each analysis.

#### B. The Innovator - J. B. Robey

##### 1. Synopsis.

The Innovator does not pretend to be a work dealing primarily with Biblical material. It is a "story not of Christ but of the men who planned to destroy Him."<sup>1</sup> It is a study of the reactions of the various members of the Jewish Council to the threat of revolution which to them seemed to be inherent in the Galilean's movement. Covering the period of the Passion Week up through Jesus' trial before the Council, it deals intimately with the fears, the ambitions, the greed, the personal animosities of the members of the

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1. J. B. Robey: The Innovator, p. xi.

Council. The novel presents a vivid picture of a corrupt and fearful Sanhedrin, destroying in its own interests Him whom they considered not the Messiah but only another of many messiahs who had met similar fates.

## 2. Analysis.

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

Because of the limited period this novel covers and because it is preoccupied with Christ's contemporaries rather than with Christ, the book contains very little actual Biblical material. There are only infrequent references to the teachings of Jesus and his activities in Jerusalem as they touch the lives of some of the characters.

There is Susanna, inspired by the words

"the Saviour, the Son of God had spoken. That he was the shepherd and they the sheep. 'I am the Good Shepherd,' he had said, 'and ye are my Sheep.'<sup>1</sup>

Susanna is again filled with joy as she remembers the blessed sermon on the Mount and the words he had spoken which had struck a ringing chord in her own heart.<sup>2</sup> Later the author gives glimpses into the reaction of the Sanhedrin to reports concerning his questioning by the scribes and Pharisees in the Temple<sup>3</sup> but beyond these and Jesus' trial, there is

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1. Robey: op. cit., p. 38.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 39.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 79, 99, 101.

little Biblical material incorporated in the novel.

From the standpoint of familiarizing the reader with a quantity of Biblical material, this novel has little to offer.

Rating: 1 d.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.

What portion of the Biblical narrative is presented is wholly in keeping with both the letter and spirit of the Scriptural accounts. In spite of the fact that Jesus is for the most part viewed through the eyes of those who fail to understand him and see him only as a messiah, a threat to Israel's leadership, there are represented some who see in him his divine Sonship. Thus we have the picture that Scripture presents - the picture of Christ, rejected by jealous and fearful leaders, drawing to himself many of the common people and even penetrating the hearts of certain members of the Sanhedrin.

Rating: 2 a.

c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and seems to enhance the Biblical narrative.

In a sense The Innovator is primarily a novel dealing with backgrounds. It is in keeping with the author's purpose that he should be more absorbed in the



state of the people and their attitudes than with the figure of Jesus. The novel presents an impressive picture of the Jewish Council - torn apart by rivalries and self-interest, corrupt and murderous - uniting only long enough to destroy their common enemy. The background material deals almost wholly with the condition of Jewish leadership of the period, and this not directly - as historical setting - but rather, indirectly, as the outcome of personal ambitions of the individual members.

As a picture of the state of Jewish leadership the book has real value - but because of its absorption with persons and personal responses to a single individual, it makes no attempt to present more than a small part of the total historical picture of the period.

Rating: 3 b.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

As has been stated, the author is not pre-occupied with Christ himself, nor with his teachings, but rather with Jesus as the figure of an innovator and men's reactions to such a man. For this reason he deals always with Jesus indirectly through the eyes of one of the major characters. To those who are sympathetic toward him, he appears to be a "man of infinite compassion,"<sup>1</sup> one who

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1. Robey: op. cit., p. 292.

speaks "with unbelievable authority,"<sup>1</sup> the "Saviour, the Son of God."<sup>2</sup> Before the Chief Priest

"It was as though, forseeing everything, there remained to him nothing but calmness and submission - not to the dictates of Annas and Caiaphas but to some inner will which transcended everything and everybody in the Council hall."<sup>3</sup>

Wherever Jesus appears in the narrative he is presented with fidelity to Scriptural accounts, but because the focus of attention is elsewhere, his character and work fail to assume the proportions one would desire if the book were to be used for heightening one's understanding of Christ and his work among men.

Rating: 4 b.

e. The extent to which it is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

This quality to a great extent depends upon the degree to which the author bares the underlying principles and basic truths that are present in the Biblical history related. The theme of The Innovator is a "timeless one of the reaction of men in authority to the threat of revolution."<sup>4</sup> Throughout this book basic principles are presented in such a way that they stand out strikingly as

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1. Robey: op. cit., p. 101.
2. Ibid., pp. 209-210.
3. Ibid., p. 289.
4. Ibid., p. ix.

relevant to present day problems. In dealing with the fundamental issues of the antagonism of the Jewish leadership for Jesus and his followers, a member of the Council strikes at the heart of the problem when he says that basically it is a conflict between faith and organized religion. Faith precedes organized religion and is codified by it. Legalism takes the place of the spirit of God's laws. God's laws are set aside. Speaking of the Jewish religion, he says,

"Take your Ten Commandments. Well what has happened? Nobody pays any attention to them. Annas murders Ben Israel, Matthan sets fire to Aziz' Folly, Porphirios reduces to starvation any one who gets in his way; those are the leaders, and it's typical of everyone. The really important things in the eyes of the authorities are in any case not the Commandments but the Mishnah and the Talmud. What we have to respect and obey is not the Commandments of God but the discussions of the rabbis and the commentaries of the scribes. Oh no. It's not the faith that people want to change; it's the religion."<sup>1</sup>

Considering the possibility that the messiah's aim is to break the "'spiritual strangle hold'"<sup>2</sup> of the hierarchy - to free the Jewish religion from its "'provincialism and obscurantism,'"<sup>3</sup> maintaining all its essential principles and yet molding it to the needs and temper of the Graeco-Roman world, the Counsellor foresees the possibility that

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1. Robey: op. cit., p. 209-210.
2. Ibid., p. 211.
3. Ibid.,

it would become not only a Jewish but a world faith. This is the threat to the authorities and against this they struck out violently.<sup>1</sup>

This is a problem from which the church is not yet always free - the problem and threat of men's wisdom being set up against God's and being forced upon people in the name of God. Wherever we find dogma exalted above personal experience of Christ, or, as is sometimes the case in our own time, of church organization and function receiving more attention than the spiritual welfare of individual Christians, we find to a degree similar problems arising.

Another instance of the timeless aspect of the problems dealt with lies in the vision inspired by Jesus' reply to the young man's question as to which is the first of all commandments.

"It made me see a new world," he cries, "A world without violence. A world without fear and envy and hate...a world where the guiding force of each is love of all, where all the energies we now devote to hating, cheating and working against each other are devoted to an unselfish helpfulness."<sup>2</sup>

In our war-torn and strife-ridden world we can share with this young man the inspiration and the longing aroused by Jesus' words. These and other instances in which the author sets forth fundamental issues that strike us as they strike

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1. Cf. Robey, op. cit., p. 212.
2. Ibid., p. 101.

his own created characters make this book a valuable contribution in as far as it stimulates the reader to think through present-day problems in light of similar problems imbedded in Biblical history.

Rating: 5 a.

f. The artistry of the novel.

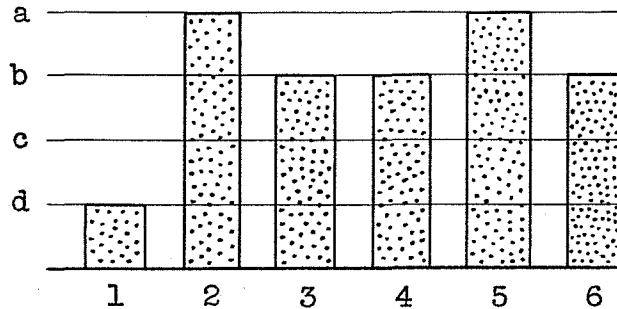
Essentially a character study, this novel moves slowly. The fastidious reader will probably find the language and general mode of expression prevalent in the book disconcerting. The author has made no attempt to create an impression of antiquity in his choice of words. He uses the modern vernacular and the reader is continually struck with such anachronistic words and phrases as "hamstrings,"<sup>1</sup> "bloody suspicious," "soft job,"<sup>2</sup> and other words which to the modern mind are intimately bound up with the present day and bring him back to the modern world with something of a start. While it was the purpose of the author to present his story from a contemporary point of view, this characteristic nevertheless spoils the artistry of the work and detracts considerably from the reality of the novel. While the book is well organized and effectively presents its characters, the anachronistic language in which it is couched destroys much of the force of the work.

Rating: 6 b.

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1. Robey: op. cit., p. 7.
2. Ibid., p. 66.

Summary rating graph: For values see detailed scale in Chapter I.



C. The Lance of Longinus - Hubertus zu Loewenstein

1. Synopsis.

The Lance of Longinus is a short novel covering the last week of Jesus' earthly life. It treats of Jesus for the most part indirectly and is concerned chiefly with the character of Longinus - the centurion who pierced the side of the crucified Jesus. The novel introduces him as he enters Jerusalem filled with the pride and self-satisfaction of a seasoned Roman soldier. In Jerusalem, from a fellow soldier, he learns of the unusual and arresting character of a "revolutionist" whom some call the Son of David. The narrative is dominated by the struggle that follows as he is irresistably drawn to the one of whom he has heard, is shamed and horrified at the injustice with which he is condemned, is forced, by his loyalty to justice and the Emperor, to put to an end what he believes to be a plot to save this "revolutionist", and finally pierces the

side of the crucified Jesus, sealing forever the certainty of his death. Out of this struggle grows ultimately his faith in the Risen Lord.

## 2. Analysis.

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

Comparatively little Biblical material is incorporated into this novel. Such as there is is related to the Roman trial of Jesus and his crucifixion. The focus of the novel is on Longinus' reaction to what he hears of Jesus and he hears relatively little. There is some emphasis on the Hebrew tradition that looks for a redeemer<sup>1</sup> with little elaboration as to how Jesus serves as this redeemer. References to him and to his work are casual and unexplained. Such statements as "'What would you say about a man...who could have been king any moment he chose, and yet refused?'"<sup>2</sup> and "'I would have told you what I have heard about remission of all guilt, here and beyond.'"<sup>3</sup> are typical of the manner in which the author treats his Biblical material for the most part - unelaborated suggestions of the character and work of Jesus.

The general impression with which one is left

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1. Cf. Hubertus zu Loewenstein: The Lance of Longinus, p. 40.
2. Ibid., p. 51.
3. Ibid., p. 74.

is that the author is primarily absorbed in the character of Longinus and places him against a background drawn in part from the Biblical record. Here the Biblical narrative serves as a point of focus, but the material is predominantly imaginative.

Rating: 1 c.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.

Where Biblical material is used, there is no question as to the accuracy of its use. It is wholly in keeping with both the spirit and the letter of the Biblical account. What amplification there is of setting and characters not elaborated in the Biblical account is wholly in keeping with the facts available.

Rating: 2 a.

c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

The immediate historical setting of this novel is strongly emphasized - the significance of Roman dominion, the corruption of Herod and Pilate, the illegality of the entire "trial" proceedings. Here, however, is no general background but only such as is immediately related to the Roman trial of Jesus. While this is valuable, it fails to present the broader background that includes those factors which precipitated Jesus' trial and



crucifixion.

In spite of the fact that the historical background is limited in scope it by far predominates in the content of the novel and relatively little Biblical material is used.

Rating: 3 d.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

In this novel there is little treatment of outstanding Biblical characters. Pilate and Herod are presented in such a way that their characters are wholly in keeping with Biblical tradition, but with little of the re-creation which would heighten the impression of their characters. Jesus' character is also in accordance with Biblical tradition but, viewed always through the eyes of one of the characters, he never assumes real proportions. Even at the time of his scourging, when we see him most directly there is an air of unreality that destroys the force of the picture.<sup>1</sup>

Of all the Biblical characters, Mary, the mother of Jesus seems to receive the greatest amplification. One feels that she is given undue significance when she is presented as she is through Longinus' wondering eyes:  
"All races and nations, men, women, and children, present and future, seemed to be passing by, each and all permitted

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1. Cf. Loewenstein: op. cit., p. 99.

to call her mother."<sup>1</sup> Another time she is revealed as bestowing by her blessing repose on Longinus' torn and hate-filled soul.<sup>2</sup> These and other similar emphases give to Mary a role that does not seem warranted by the Scriptural accounts.

In the general view this novel could in no way be said to enhance or illumine Biblical characters with which it deals.

Rating: 4 b.

e. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

Because the experience of the growth of faith in Christ is common to all ages and because the message of forgiveness and salvation through the risen Christ upon repentance and faith is a message for all men, this book is grounded in universal experience and in this respect has great significance for our day.

Rating: 5 a.

f. The artistry of the novel.

The style of this novel is comparatively simple but is characterized by a studied imagery and mode of expression that at times destroys the force of the narrative. Such expressions as "...the shutters of his soul were

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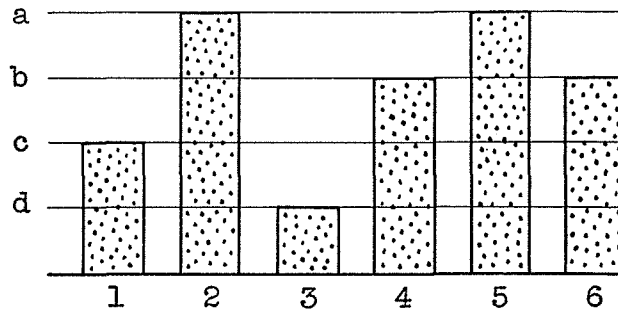
1. Loewenstein: op. cit., p. 101.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 102.

pried open by the two streams of grace which had touched him... The light shining into his darkness grew bright like a star freed from the opaque veils of a dense nebula",<sup>1</sup> tend to becloud rather than clarify the issues involved. This preoccupation with words and mode of expression tends to give much of the novel a vagueness and lack of clarity that detracts considerably from the power of the novel.

Rating: 6 b.

Summary rating graph:



D. Barabbas - Emery Bekessy

1. Synopsis

Emery Bekessy has selected Barabbas to epitomize the power of evil that wars in this world with that of good. Throughout the novel Barabbas and his principles of hatred and violence are contrasted with those of love and the power of the spirit as taught by Christ. Barabbas, a murderer and robber who lends prestige to his exploits

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1. Loewenstein: op. cit., p. 151.

by professing to be striving for the deliverance of the Jews from under the yoke of Rome, hears of the Galilean who has gained such a following and seeks to win him to his cause. Realizing, after talking with Jesus, that they have nothing in common, he departs from him filled with contempt for one who preaches of love and gentleness in a world of violence. Going his way of hatred, Barabbas' path and that of his followers cross that of Jesus and his disciples continually and always there is the conflict between the two ways of hate and love. The novel closes with Barabbas, his most faithful friend having found in Jesus the true way, going out into the world, in a passion of bitterness - an "apostle of hate for all ages and nations".<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Analysis

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

With the exception of the material relating the trials and crucifixion of Jesus, the majority of the Biblical material incorporated into this novel is that dealing with Jesus' teachings on love - for God and for one's neighbor. Teachings such as, "Who lives by the sword shall perish by the sword",<sup>2</sup> "Love God, thy Lord... Love

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1. Emery Bekessy: Barabbas, p. 324.

2. Ibid., p. 7.

thy neighbor as thyself... Do good to those who hate you.." <sup>1</sup> are dominant throughout the novel. Of the many incidents that marked Jesus' life before his "Triumphal Entry" only his encounter with the Samaritan woman, <sup>2</sup> his raising of Lazarus, <sup>3</sup> and his healing of the two blind men <sup>4</sup> are related. Mr. Bekessy is absorbed with the respective power of the two forces of hate and love and has selected his material accordingly.

As a consequence of the high degree of selectivity employed by the author, the Biblical material included in the novel is limited in scope and represents only one aspect of Jesus' ministry.

Rating: 1 b.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.

In this novel the author has maintained to a high degree the spirit of the Biblical narrative. There is much material that is pure fiction but it in no way distorts the significance of the Biblical record which is incorporated into it. We discovered only one instance in which a Biblical quotation was used in a questionable manner. Jesus is quoted by one of his followers as having said "'If I wished I would destroy this temple that was

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1. Emery Bekessy: op. cit., p. 21.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 131.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 33.
4. Cf. Ibid., p. 154.

made by men's hands and within three days I would build another made without men's hands.'<sup>1</sup> Used by Jesus' followers in this instance as an evidence of his power, it is not at all in keeping with the spirit of the passage in John 2:19-22 in which Jesus refers to his resurrection. It is, of course, possible that many of Jesus' followers failed to appreciate the full significance of his statement but one feels that if this is such an instance, some recognition of the fact should be evidenced.

There seems to be only this one questionable passage in the novel, and the spirit of the Biblical narrative is maintained carefully elsewhere.

Rating: 2 a.

c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

The novel opens with a graphic picture of conditions existing in the mills, where merciless Roman overseers drive Jewish convicts under forced labor until many of them die from exhaustion and ill-treatment.<sup>2</sup> From this beginning the novel moves against an ever-present background of bitterness and hatred on the part of the Jews toward their Roman masters. To this embittered nation Jesus preaches his

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1. Bekessy: op. cit., p. 198.

2. Ibid., pp. 1-11.

revolutionary doctrines of love. The clarity and power with which the state of the Jewish nation is presented in its relationship with Rome emphasize in a vivid way the uniqueness of Jesus' teachings. It can be said that the historical background presented here enhances in a real way the significance of the Biblical narrative.

Rating: 3 a.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

The author of this novel is primarily interested in the principles which Jesus and Barabbas proclaim. For this reason there is less emphasis on the full character development than there is on attitudes and teachings. Of the two, Barabbas is a far more fully developed character than is Jesus. In spite of his own hatred and violence, Barabbas is drawn to Jesus and more than once is moved momentarily to seek to know more of this strange man.<sup>1</sup> He has moments of kindness and a sort of love that is evidenced in his deep concern for his faithful friend who is, at one point in the novel, ill and troubled and afraid.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus, on the other hand, possibly to heighten the contrast between the characters, is pictured as gentle and loving, and moves through the narrative in a kind of ethereal glow.<sup>3</sup> Nowhere does he assume noble proportions.

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1. Cf. Bekessy: op. cit., p. 133.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 107.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 51, 133.

In emphasizing the love of Jesus, Bekessy has failed to present that side of Jesus' character evidenced whenever he powerfully attacked that which was evil. There is relatively little imaginative material added to the Biblical accounts where Jesus is immediately concerned. He is a far from convincing figure - little more than a mouthpiece for his teachings.

This one-sided picture of Jesus results from over-emphasis on one aspect of his teaching tends to distort the character of the Jesus of the Gospel narratives.

Rating: 4 d.

e. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

Because many people yet believe that force is the answer to the world's problems, this book has a timely interest and significance. These would say with Barabbas that "In this world hate will always survive love, for hate is stronger than love and violence stronger than goodness."<sup>1</sup> But violence breeds more violence and over against this darkness and at times even overcoming it is the power of love as exemplified in the lives of those who followed the teachings of Jesus: Lazarus, whose love for the Master

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1. Bekessy: op. cit., p. 322.



made it impossible for him to lie and disobey him even at the risk of his own life;<sup>1</sup> Mary and Martha, whose obedience to Jesus' command to love one's enemies, began the process of redemption in Barabbas' friend, who, like him, was filled with burning hatred.<sup>2</sup>

In this study of the constant conflict between the way of love and the way of violence and hate there is left no doubt as to which is the true way. The power of love is not expressed only in philosophical concepts but is wrought out in the lives of the characters in a manner that lends great force to the argument. The timelessness of the problem and the way in which it is worked out in the lives of the characters gives this book great significance for our strife-ridden world.

Rating: 5 a.

f. The artistry of the novel.

As we have already mentioned, the character delineation in this novel is for the most part unconvincing. For this reason much of the force of the work is lost. Barabbas alone stands out as a three-dimensional figure. The portrayal of Jesus fails to measure up to that of Barabbas and since it is the power of love that is triumphant it is unfortunate that its chief exponent should be so lacking in force. The novel is well-constructed and is

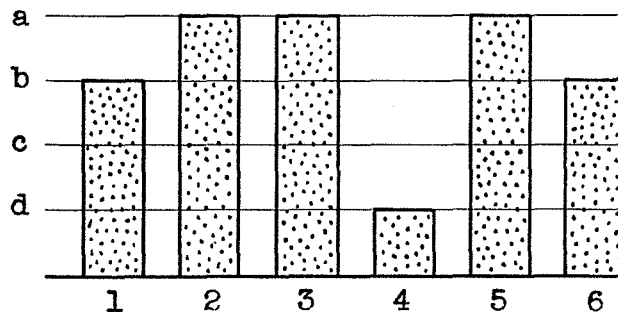
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1. Cf. Bekessy: op. cit., pp. 112-115.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 107.

in many points exceedingly forceful, but the failure to create a vital Jesus, a vigorous exponent and living example of the power of love, lessens the impact of the argument of the book.

Rating: 6 c.

Summary rating graph:



E. In the Years of Our Lord - Manuel Komroff

1. Synopsis.

In the Years of Our Lord is a highly imaginative account of the life of Jesus, based partly on legend, partly on the Gospel records and woven together with much that is purely fictional. Beginning with the return of the Magi to report to the Eastern stargazer who had sent them in search of the child whose birth the stars foretold, it closes with the presence of the same stargazer, Xado, in Jerusalem seeking one of the eleven to whom Jesus has appeared after his resurrection that he might confirm these events which the stars have told him. And as Xado leaves Jerusalem, Matthew, in Galilee begins work on a record of the life of the Risen

Lord. The incidents by which the novel is developed are selected almost wholly from the Gospel records and their chief emphasis is on the life of Christ.

## 2. Analysis.

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

In developing his novel, the author seems to have selected representative incidents in the life of Jesus to serve as the framework of his narrative. Opening with his birth and the flight into Egypt, the novel continues with the return to Palestine, the boy Jesus in the Temple,<sup>1</sup> the temptation of Jesus,<sup>2</sup> the healing of the ten lepers,<sup>3</sup> the call of Matthew,<sup>4</sup> the story of the prodigal son, presented as an incident in Jesus' life rather than as a parable,<sup>5</sup> the raising of Lazarus,<sup>6</sup> the triumphal entry,<sup>7</sup> the betrayal and crucifixion,<sup>8</sup> and the report of his resurrection appearances.<sup>9</sup>

The author has used Biblical material as the focus of his work but the bulk of the material is fictional.

Rating: 1 c.

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1. Cf. Manuel Komroff: In the Years of Our Lord, pp. 76-85.
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 86-99.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 117-125.
4. Cf. Ibid., pp. 126-138.
5. Cf. Ibid., pp. 139-148.
6. Cf. Ibid., pp. 189-201.
7. Cf. Ibid., pp. 215.
8. Cf. Ibid., pp. 261, 271.
9. Cf. Ibid., pp. 302, 304.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.

Much of the imaginative re-creation that Komroff inserts into his narrative tends to distort the significance of the Biblical incidents. For instance, he ascribes Jesus' journey into the wilderness to Jesus' desire to find the One of whom the prophet John has preached - "the one who is mightier than all."<sup>1</sup> For forty days he wanders in the wilderness in search of this mighty One, tempted of Satan he overcomes him and departs and is met by John who explains to his followers:

"This is the one of whom I spoke...He went into the wilderness to seek the one I spoke about. For forty days and forty nights he wandered in the desert and in the end he found himself. And that is more than any man has ever found. Let us be the first to give him faith!"<sup>2</sup>

Separated from the time of his baptism (an account which fails to point out God's acknowledgement of Jesus as his Son)<sup>3</sup> by a trip back to Nazareth, this fictionized account of the temptation in no way carries the significance of the Biblical account which portrays Jesus, following his baptism driven immediately by the Spirit into the wilderness where, conscious of his relationship to God and the power

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1. Komroff: op. cit., p. 87.
2. Ibid., p. 99.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 87.

with which he is endued, he is tempted to use it for personal gain.<sup>1</sup> None of Jesus' self-consciousness is evidenced here.

This incident and others of a similar nature that occur throughout the book misrepresent Biblical facts in such a way that the spirit of the Scriptural account is destroyed.

Rating: 2 d.

c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

The narrative moves against a limited historical background that serves rather to create atmosphere than to root in history the events that occur. Preoccupied with the characters of his people and their personal relationships, the author makes little attempt to recreate a picture of the total historical setting. However, glimpses into the caravan life of the period,<sup>2</sup> the corruption of the temple traders,<sup>3</sup> the Roman games,<sup>4</sup> and similar characteristic aspects of the times heighten somewhat one's appreciation of the period. The novel is, however, limited in the scope of the historical setting.

Rating: 3 b.

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1. Holy Bible: Luke 3:21-22; 4:1-13; Matt. 3:16-4:11; Mark 1:11-13.
2. Cf. Komroff: op. cit., pp. 4 ff., 88-89.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 18 ff.
4. Cf. Ibid., pp. 176 ff.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

The imaginative re-creations of character in this novel are frequently out of keeping with the characters as the Bible presents them. We have already cited an instance where the invented material failed to present a true picture of the self-consciousness of Jesus. We find in another instance a quality in Jesus which hardly seems in keeping with his character as we know it in Scripture. In relating the incident of the prodigal son, the author presents Jesus in conversation with the boy whom he discovers is looking for him in the hope that he might tell him what he must do. Listening to the boy's story, Jesus, refraining from revealing his identity, sends him to the foot of the hill, where he says the Prophet, Christ of Nazareth, may often be found, and there, as he searches, the boy finds and is reunited with his father.<sup>1</sup> One finds it impossible to believe that Jesus would use subterfuge of this sort to accomplish his ends.

For the most part the Biblical facts available on the life of Jesus are adhered to, but too frequently there are instances such as this in which imaginative material is incompatible with these facts.

Rating: 4 c.

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1. Cf. Komroff: op cit., p. 148.

e. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

This novel fails to present forcefully truths that are significant today. Incidents are related without serious attempt to draw out of them the fundamental principles involved. There are instances in which truth strikes home as it does in the case of the ten lepers, who having been outcasts for so long, fear that they are no longer capable of adjusting to society. To them Jesus says,

"You who have suffered will understand those who are now suffering...Each man has a wilderness within him. Go, comfort those in need and remember the long dark years of your lives. Thy faith will make thee whole."<sup>1</sup>

In our world where differences between men are so greatly emphasized and the phrase "we have nothing in common" is so prevalent, it is well to remember that some things we all have in common, suffering among them, and that even suffering may enable us to "comfort those in need."

While the author at times strikes a universal chord, he does so only rarely, and what truths he presents are for the most part expressed as principles of action and are not wrought out in lives in a way that gives them force and reality, heightening their significance for us today.

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1. Komroff; op. cit., p. 124.

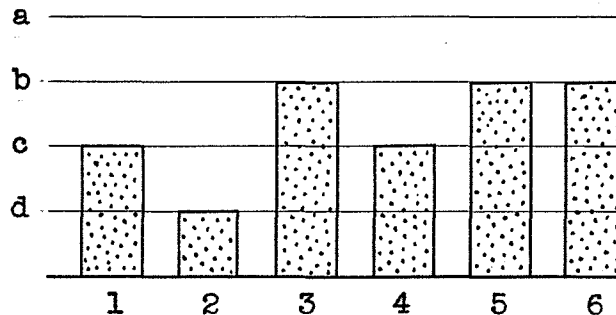
Rating: 5 b.

f. The artistry of the novel.

The novel is well-constructed and from a literary standpoint merits attention. However, the tendency of the author to intertwine legend and fact frequently destroys the force of his narrative. This is particularly evident in the case of his relating the resurrection appearance of Jesus to the disciples through the mouth of Xado, the Eastern oracle, who declares that all this he has learned of through his careful reading of the stars. This characteristic of his style detracts to some degree from the power of his novel.

Rating: 6 b.

Summary rating graph:



F. The Scarlet Lily - E. F. Murphy

1. Synopsis.

In this fictional presentation of the life of Mary Magdalene, the author has conceived of her as having witnessed as a young child the ruthless slaughter of her mother and tiny brother during the mass killing of the



infants at the time of the birth of Christ.

"Still a child, the girl had become, in a single night, a woman; yet one without a woman's trust and faith; one without love and with an abiding hate."<sup>1</sup>

Incapable of love, and filled with bitterness at the wretchedness of life, she comes into contact with Jesus and through him finds meaning and purpose in her life, and freedom from the barren hatred that had devastated her. Living with Mary, the mother of Jesus, she serves her Lord with all the devotion of which her passionate nature is capable.

## 2. Analysis.

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

Having little Biblical material to work with, the author has effectively associated Mary with the events of Jesus' life from his birth, which indirectly affected so harshly her own life, to his crucifixion. In so doing, he has been able to incorporate into the novel a fair amount of Biblical material. However, he is primarily interested in the development of Mary Magdalene from an embittered and frustrated harlot into a devoted and selfless follower of Christ. Concerned chiefly with Mary, he has of necessity been highly selective in his use of Biblical material.

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1. E. F. Murphy: The Scarlet Lily, p. 38.

Except in cases where he assumes Mary to be directly involved as at the anointing at the home of Simon the Pharisee,<sup>1</sup> the anointing at Bethany,<sup>2</sup> the crucifixion,<sup>3</sup> and in several other instances, he inserts Biblical material in the form of occasional reports of episodes in Jesus' life.

The necessary selectivity has limited the quantity of Biblical material incorporated into the novel.

Rating: 1 b.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented in both letter and spirit.

The novel maintains carefully the spirit of the Biblical material incorporated. With the exception of the undue significance given to Mary, the mother of Jesus, the spirit of the imaginative material is wholly in keeping with that of the Biblical account. The novel is written by a Roman Catholic and the Catholic influence is strongly evidenced in the importance of the role given Jesus' mother's actions. "'Truly, the mother of our Lord has fostered yesterday's and this night's happenings,'" says Mary Magdalene as she talks with the widow of Nain about the raising of her son.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Cf. Murphy: op. cit., p. 130.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 220.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 230 ff.
4. Cf. Ibid., p. 138.

In other respects, however, the spirit of the Biblical narrative is maintained.

Rating: 2 a.

c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

This novel contributes but little to an understanding of the period of history with which it deals. Not only so, but historical background is so little emphasized that even the state of the Jewish leadership and the currents of feeling that led to the crucifixion of Christ are scarcely evident.

Rating: 3 c.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

Concerned chiefly with Mary Magdalene, of whom Scripture holds only a brief sketch, the author, in this novel, has made use of a great degree of material that is almost wholly imaginative. Insofar as fictional material is used to amplify the character of Mary of Magdala it appears to be in keeping with the spirit of what little we know of her from the Biblical record. However, as we have previously stated, the fictional material employed in the amplification of the character of Mary, the mother of Jesus, attributes to her a significance not found in the Gospel records. These two characters dominate the novel and though the power of Jesus in their lives is evident

throughout, as an individual, he appears infrequently on the scene. For the most part it may be said that the author's fictional elaboration of his characters is in keeping with the facts of the Biblical record.

Rating: 4 a.

e. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and is significant for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

Because our world is in many respects similar to the world of Mary Magdalene, we can understand and in a sense share with her the feelings that make her wonder, as she gazes over the thronging market place at Jerusalem, whether the time will ever come "when men would toil to satisfy something other than the bodily, the noble rather than the brute, hunger of the race."<sup>1</sup> She sees before her "everything to enfold the mortal flesh; nothing for the nakedness of the eternal spirit,"<sup>2</sup> everything with which to adorn the body but nothing to counteract the basic shabbiness and self-centeredness of lives.<sup>3</sup> Later, listening to faint sounds of gaiety from the city, she wonders if its moods are not like her own, "a futile attempt to forget the fundamental horror of life in spasmodic bursts of

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1. Murphy: op. cit., p. 52.
2. Ibid., p. 53.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 53.

living."<sup>1</sup> Through the love of Christ Mary comes to know that there is no need for life to be thus tragic and meaningless. His death, she learns, brings life, "the only life worth living; the life of the spirit,"<sup>2</sup> to all who are of a contrite heart.

Mary's search for the meaning of life is common to men of all ages. Like her, men must find its meaning in Christ. This great truth of human experience is wrought out forcefully in Mary's life and thus presented through the experience of an individual it is deeply impressive. "Rooted in the constants of experience,"<sup>3</sup> it is highly significant for us today.

Rating: 5 a.

f. The artistry of the novel.

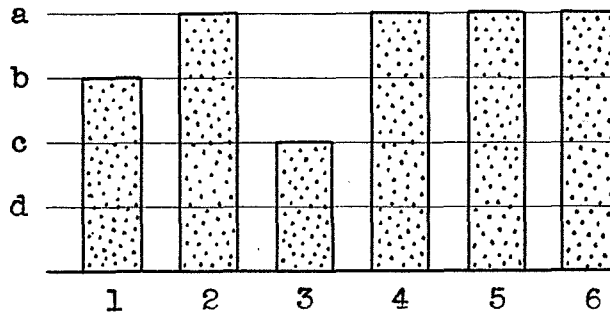
This novel, largely fictional, through which the Biblical narrative has been effectively woven, is a well-constructed work. Its style is clear and forceful and its delineation of character is excellent.

Rating: 6 a.

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1. Murphy: op. cit., p. 61.
2. Ibid., p. 239.
3. Ante, p. 9.

Summary rating graph:



G. The Big Fisherman - Lloyd C. Douglas

1. Synopsis.

The Big Fisherman is a story of the life of Simon Peter. Actually it is two stories - the one dealing with the lives of Peter and Jesus and the other disciples, and the other, a story of high adventure and love dominated by the figure of Fara, vengeful daughter of Herod Antipas, and his rejected Arabian bride. Fara, fleeing secretly to Palestine to avenge her mother by killing Antipas, becomes associated with Simon and through him, with Jesus. Learning from Jesus a way of life hitherto unknown to her, she becomes his devoted follower, renouncing her plans of vengeance.

The "Simon story," introducing Simon just before he meets Jesus, presents him as highly scornful of the "cracked Carpenter"<sup>1</sup> of whom his friend John has told him.

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1. Lloyd C. Douglas: The Big Fisherman, p. 125.

Later, won wholly to Jesus, he becomes the Simon of the Scriptures. The story follows closely the Biblical narrative and closes, after a brief account of Peter's experience with Cornelius, the Roman centurion,<sup>1</sup> with Peter's imprisonment and death in Rome.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Analysis.

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

The novel makes use of a quantity of Biblical material. It may be said that generally speaking the focus of attention is on material gathered from the Biblical record. This is especially true of that portion which deals directly with Jesus and his disciples. The bulk of the imaginative material is found in the "Fara story" but even here, since the two narratives are interwoven, that which is purely fictional is often brought into focus through the use of Biblical material. Fara, wandering in the wilderness en route to Galilee, encounters John the Baptist and is bewildered by his thunderous warnings of judgment upon the wickedness of his generation. Meeting her the following day, he talks with her of "The Anointed One in Galilee,"<sup>3</sup> urging her to see him and warning her against taking into her hands vengeance which

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1. Cf. Douglas: op. cit., p. 543 ff.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 567 ff.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 112.

is God's prerogative alone.<sup>1</sup> This and similar incidents tie much of the Fara story closely to the events of Biblical history. Because of this, and the fact that the Simon story is grounded in Biblical material, the novel serves to familiarize the reader with a large section of Biblical material.

Rating: 1 a.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and spirit.

While the author has made use of a great amount of Scriptural material, he has often distorted its significance or in some cases destroyed it altogether by his inaccurate representation of the facts. In relating the incident of Peter's visit to Cornelius,<sup>2</sup> he fails to depict the joy with which the message was heard by Cornelius and his servants, nor does he acknowledge the gift of the Spirit that, according to the Biblical record, was poured out upon all who heard.<sup>3</sup> Nothing in the novel account points to the fact that this was a crucial point in the spread of Christianity and that the gift of the Spirit to these Gentiles was certification of the fact that Christ's kingdom was to be universal in its scope. In this instance the deep significance of the Gospel narrative is lost altogether. In another

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1. Cf. Douglas: op. cit., pp. 106 ff.
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 543 ff.
3. Cf. Holy Bible: Acts 10:24-48.



instance, where he recounts the feeding of the five-thousand, the author changes the Biblical record, explaining away the miracle. In his account, the people, shamed by the generosity of the young boy who offered his loaves, brought out their lunches, sharing them with one another until all were filled.<sup>1</sup>

The liberties the author takes with the Biblical text are not always of such a serious nature though often for no apparent reason he departs from the Scriptural facts. In the case of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, where the Biblical account pictures her as rising immediately and preparing supper,<sup>2</sup> the novel pictures her as arousing from her fever and drifting off into a sleep from which she awakes sometime later.<sup>3</sup>

Not only are incidents often misrepresented in this novel, but they are commonly placed out of their chronological order. Andrew, instead of leading Simon to Jesus as he does in the Scriptural account, is more or less amused at Simon's attachment to the Carpenter. It is when Simon brings Jesus to supper that Andrew first becomes acquainted with him, recognizes that he is "in the presence of a new kind of man,"<sup>4</sup> and joins the ranks of his followers.

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1. Cf. Douglas: op. cit., p. 415.
2. Cf. Holy Bible: Matt. 8:14; Mark 1:30; Luke 4:38.
3. Cf. Douglas: op. cit., p. 334.
4. Ibid., p. 324 ff.

While many of the changes the author makes in the Biblical account are relatively insignificant, others, as we have seen, distort or destroy the true significance of the episodes related. It cannot be said that The Big Fisherman maintains a high degree of accuracy either in the letter or in the spirit of the Biblical narrative.

Rating: 2 d.

c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

This novel contributes relatively little to an understanding of the general period in which its scenes are laid. Nor does the history incorporated in it enhance to any great degree the Biblical material included in the narrative. What historical setting there is, is related to the "Fara story" primarily. Concerned chiefly with people and their relationships to one another and to Jesus, the author for the most part does not attempt to ground them in their particular setting.

The novel is not, however, without historical significance. It presents a picture of the Jewish-Arab hostility that branded the half-caste Fara and characterized the period.<sup>1</sup> It gives us a fleeting glimpse of decadent

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1. Cf. Douglas: op. cit., p. 83.

Rome.<sup>1</sup> It paints a vivid picture of the extravagance, the corruption, the depravity that characterized Herod Antipas and his rule in Galilee.<sup>2</sup> These and other similar sections give glimpses into the life of the times, but they do not present an integrated picture.

It is to be noted that in several instances the author has twisted historical facts to serve his own ends. History tells us that Herod Antipas was deposed and banished to Lyons.<sup>3</sup> In this novel he is killed on his return from Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> He sets the date of Peter's death during the reign of Caligula (37-41 A.D.).<sup>5</sup> Accredited tradition, however, would set the date of Peter's martyrdom during the Neronian persecutions.<sup>6</sup> These are some of the more obvious discrepancies. Without making a more detailed study of the historical background, we cannot determine whether more inaccuracies are present in the historical picture he paints.

On the whole it seems that the author does not attempt to create a general background that would heighten one's understanding of the times as much as he seeks to

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1. Cf. Douglas: op. cit., pp. 48 ff.
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 363 ff.
3. Cf. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Fourteenth Edition, Vol. 11, p. 511.
4. Cf. Douglas: op. cit., p. 494.
5. Cf. Ibid., p. 568.
6. Cf. S. M. Jackson, Ed.: The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, "Peter the Apostle", Vol. VIII, p. 481.

create atmosphere and provide a degree of motivation for his "Fara story" plot.

Rating: 3 b.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters in this novel adds little to the stature they gain from the relatively unadorned Biblical account. The author has not dealt to a great degree with motivations, with the psychology of his characters. The fictional material used fails to add appreciably to the stature of the Biblical characters. One feels that the Peter of the Gospels is a far more three-dimensional figure than "The Big Fisherman."

The figure of Jesus gains little stature in the novel's interpretation of him. In an attempt to re-create the effect that Jesus had on those who knew him, the author lays great stress on the quality of his voice and its effect. "The man has a compelling voice...a unifying voice,"<sup>1</sup> says one in speaking of him. "...It was a haunting voice, a magic voice that stilled and soothed and comforted..."<sup>2</sup> Throughout the novel, there is repeated emphasis on the effect of his voice on those who heard him. His associates seem to sense a uniqueness in him that they find difficult to explain. Andrew, trying to put into words

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1. Douglas: op. cit., p. 322.  
2. Ibid., p. 203.

this feeling says, "He is a soul - with a body."<sup>1</sup>  
Creating impressions of Jesus by references to such aspects of Jesus' character as uniqueness, power of his voice, the author fails to analyze and elaborate on the total personality of the Master. In so doing he fails to portray a convincing Jesus. The full power of his vibrant personality is lost. While those who hear him are enthralled, rapport is rarely established between the reader and the figure of the Master.

On the whole, the treatment of outstanding characters cannot be said to contribute to a heightened understanding and appreciation of them on the part of the reader.

Rating: 4 b.

e. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its applications of Biblical truths.

Apart from the actual teachings of Jesus, there is relatively little in this novel that strikes us forcefully as being significant for our time. There is one truth, however, that the author seems bent on impressing upon his reader. Recurring throughout the book is the fact of the unity that comes about through a mutual absorption in Jesus. In picturing the effect of Jesus upon one of the many throngs

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1. Douglas: op. cit., p. 328.

that continually surround him, the author writes,

"The Carpenter held up an outspread hand, and there was silence...a vital, unifying silence that made them kin. They did not shrug from the accidental touch of a neighbor's elbow, though the stranger had a ragged sleeve."<sup>1</sup>

The common love of Jesus brings about a new kinship between Simon and Andrew.

"No one had ever heard Simon speak a harsh word to Andrew, but no stranger would have suspected that they were of the same flesh and blood. Their acquaintance with Jesus had somehow made them kin, Simon showing a new affection and Andrew beaming in the warmth of it."<sup>2</sup>

The unusual friendship of Fara and Peter - Fara having been brought up with all the cultural privileges vouchsafed the daughter of a princess, and Peter a "huge, blustering, untraveled, uneducated fisherman"<sup>3</sup> testifies to the unifying power of love for Jesus.

"Simon Peter had had no use for Esther, nor she for him, until their boundless devotion and tireless service to Jesus had made them kin...If they loved him, they would love one another. Jesus had said so - and these two understood what he meant."<sup>4</sup>

This truth stands out clearly, because it is rooted in the experience of various of the novel's characters. On the other hand, the majority of the truths presented through the teaching of Jesus lack real force since for the most part they are not wrought out in lives. The truths are here but

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1. Douglas: op. cit., p. 216.
2. Ibid., p. 328.
3. Ibid., p. 422.
4. Ibid., p. 422.

they lack the forcefulness that comes from a more experiential presentation.

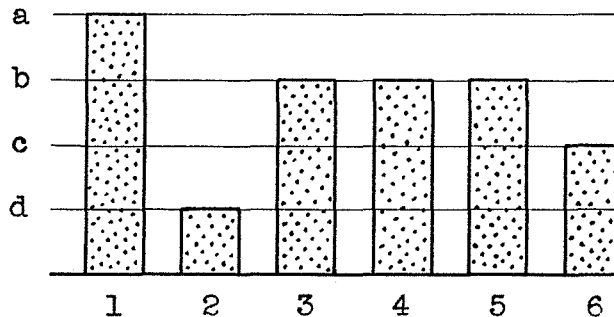
Rating: 5 b.

f. The artistry of the novel.

The Big Fisherman is not a forceful book. As we have previously noted, the characters are poorly delineated, and this would seem to be the primary failing of the work. The Fara story is touched frequently with melodrama as when Fara, at her birthday party, before the Arabian court slashes her arm and signs with her own blood her vow of vengeance.<sup>1</sup> There is something incredible about the angelic rider on the white horse that appears to each of those to be present at the meeting on the day of Pentecost and summons them to the place of meeting.<sup>2</sup> While these qualities tend to distract the reader, it is the poor characterization that destroys the power of the work.

Rating: 6 c.

Summary rating graph:



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1. Cf. Douglas: op. cit., p. 77.  
 2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 506 ff.

CHAPTER III  
THE EVALUATION OF SELECTED  
HISTORICAL FICTION, CONTINUED



CHAPTER III

THE EVALUATION  
OF SELECTED HISTORICAL FICTION  
CONTINUED

A. Bold Galilean - LeGette Blythe

1. Synopsis

This novel is the story of the lives of three Romans in Palestine during the time of Christ's earthly ministry - Gaius, a centurion at Capernaum, Marcus, a wealthy and worldly merchant of Tyre, and Lucius, a tribune. In character, at the opening of the book, they have relatively little in common. Gaius believes that there are deeper values in life than those commonly accepted by the materialistic world of his day. His association with the Jews of Palestine has awakened his interest in the religion they profess - interest that has expressed itself in his helping the Capernaum Jews build their synagogue,<sup>1</sup> interest that has been heightened by the reports he has had of a young Jewish rabbi who teaches that the God of the Jews is not only a justice-dealing God, but also one who loves and shows mercy toward his people.<sup>2</sup> Marcus, on the

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1. Cf. Le Gette Blythe: Bold Galilean, p. 8.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 16.

other hand, looks with scorn on such foolishness.

"'My god'", he says, "'...is substance, money - silver, gold, ships, merchandise, slaves...my beautiful glass, my gorgeous textiles. These are material. You can hold them in your hand, feel them, count them, gloat your eyes upon them, yes, and sell them for money. And money is power. Give me money and I can get anything I want'".<sup>1</sup>

Lucius is a soldier. He obeys. It is difficult for him to think abstractly and Gaius' philosophical turn of mind baffles him.

"'Few soldiers of Rome talk about such - such intangibles...As for me, I want something I can get my fingers upon, something I can come to grips with - a sword in my hand, a horse between my legs...Give me my legionaries and a good stiff fight now and then, and you take the philosophy, Centurion'".<sup>2</sup>

This is the spirit of Lucius.

These three go their separate ways, and meet again at the birthday feast of Herod Antipas. Again separating they meet finally before the Cross on Calvary. Gaius during the preceding years has come to know Jesus and, though not wholly understanding him, has grown to trust him and love him. Marcus, has been ruined by his faithless overseer and, discovered to be a leper, has spent the last year among the outcasts until, healed by the man on the cross before him, he, too, has come to love him. Lucius' has been the duty of carrying out the crucifixion of Jesus

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1. Blythe: op. cit., p. 13. ff.
2. Ibid., p. 14 ff.

and he has been stricken with the certainty that this is no ordinary man and that, in the words of Marcus, he has "'killed a god'".<sup>1</sup>

The novel covers the last two years of Jesus' ministry and follows closely the life of Jesus, closing with his resurrection appearance to Mary of Magdala.

## 2. Analysis

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

There is relatively little extra-Biblical material in this novel. With few exceptions the contents of the novel is extracted from the gospel records. The majority of the fictional material incorporated serves to elaborate on the incidents as they are given in the gospels, and the focus of attention is predominantly on the facts of the Biblical record.

Rating: 1 a.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.

For the most part the author has maintained satisfactorily the spirit and letter of the Biblical record. In several instances, however, he has misrepresented the Biblical facts in such a way that the significance of

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<sup>1</sup> Blythe: op. cit., p. 302.

them has been distorted or destroyed. In the account of the transfiguration, Jesus is represented as talking with his disciples on the mountainside. Becoming increasingly absorbed in his message,

"He seemed to gather strength and vibrancy and power, and a glory sat upon his very countenance until he was transfigured before them. And to his three companions, his three most intimate friends, it seemed that he was not only their friend and brother and leader, but also the ancient lawgiver Moses arisen to give them a new law, the all-powerful, the all-embracing law of love...likewise he appeared to them...the great Elijah himself...they thought they heard a voice...they fancied that the voice was the Voice of the Father..."<sup>1</sup>

This is a far cry from the Biblical account which represents Jesus as talking with Moses and Elias, and in no way makes it appear that the disciples only "thought" they heard a voice or "fancied" that it was the voice of God.<sup>2</sup> In the Biblical account this is an overwhelming experience. In the novel the facts are distorted and the force is lost.

There are several other instances in which the author has altered somewhat the Biblical material to suit his own ends as when in the account of the healing of the ten lepers, he has the Roman, Marcus, instead of the Samaritan of the Biblical narrative,<sup>3</sup> returning in gratitude to Jesus.<sup>4</sup> In view of the quantity of Biblical material in-

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1. Blythe, op. cit., p. 194 ff.
2. Holy Bible: Matt. 17:1-13; Mk. 9:2-13; Lk. 9:28-36.
3. Cf. Ibid: Lk. 17:12-19.
4. Cf. Blythe, op. cit., p. 249.

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corporated in the novel, the number of distortions of this sort is almost negligible and there seem to be none other than that of the transfiguration of major significance. Generally speaking the author has presented Biblical material in a manner that adheres to the letter and the spirit.

Rating: 2 a.

c. c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

In setting the narrative of Bold Galilean against the background of the corruption of the Roman empire, the author heightens to a great extent the significance of the message of his novel. Jesus teaches the way of love, of faith in God in a world where materialism is rampant and military might, not love, is the dominant factor directing the course of nations. The author paints a vivid picture of the Roman world - a world in which there is little recognition of human worth and slave trade is prevalent<sup>1</sup>, a world filled with intrigue, where sycophancy is the key that opens doors to power.<sup>2</sup> Into this world Jesus brings his message of righteousness and truth and love for God and one's fellow man. The historical setting of Bold Galilean serves a two-

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1. Cf. Blythe, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

2. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

fold end. It enhances the message of the book by emphasizing the desperate need for such a message, and it heightens greatly our understanding of the period.

Rating: 3 a.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

Bold Galilean presents a very sympathetic treatment of the character of Jesus. It follows carefully the Biblical record of his life and its fictional elaboration is compatible with the facts of his life and character as the Bible records them. The imaginary material lends stature and dimension to the character of Jesus and we come to a richer understanding of him because of it. A striking example of the effectiveness of the imaginary reconstruction of an individual's experience is found in the struggle and victory of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane<sup>1</sup>. The author depicts at length the soul-shaking struggle that Jesus undergoes before he comes to the place where his will is wholly resigned to that of God. The voice of the one who had tempted him in the wilderness seeks one last time to turn him from his purpose.

"'You are young, and good, and strong, and you have lived nobly and in perfect righteousness', the voice was saying, 'You deserve not to be sacrificed, you

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1. Cf. Blythe, op. cit., p. 282 ff.

deserve not ingratitude and shame and suffering and death. You have done only good, you have dealt out only love; why should not these things be returned to you?..."<sup>1</sup>

"'A kind Father would not hold such a bitter cup to your lips. You are misinterpreting the will of the Father. Your mission is to serve. How can a dead man upon a cross serve his fellows? How can the life of one young Galilean atone for the sins of the world.'"<sup>2</sup>

These, and other temptations of a similar nature, are the cause of the agonizing prayer in the garden. Through the imaginative insight of the author, the reader gains a deeper understanding of this great time of temptation that preceded Jesus' arrest.

The author of Bold Galilean has made effective use of the imaginary reconstruction of character, of motives and feelings and, consequently, the figure of Jesus attains, to a high degree, a three-dimensional quality that makes him a dynamic personality.

e. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

Because this novel deals with such age-old problems as the power of love versus the power of arms, the source of true happiness, the rightful object of one's allegiance, it is a book of significance for us today. Marcus,

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1. Blythe, op. cit., p. 283.
2. Ibid., p. 285.

convinced that only in the amassing of money lies happiness, develops leprosy and discovers that there are truly some things money cannot buy. Healed through the love and compassion and divine power of Christ he finds that Christ has healed his heart too, and that though he has not even a denarius, he has a "better feeling inside".<sup>1</sup> Happiness lies not in material possessions but in love. Jesus' doctrine of love for God and for one's fellow man is the answer to the world's problems. Force begets only greater force. But love will "solve all the trouble between races and peoples everywhere".<sup>2</sup> This was a message desperately needed by the pagan world of the first century and it is as desperately needed in our own war-ravaged generation.

Rating: 5 a.

f. The artistry of the novel.

This is in general a well-written novel. Its construction is good. In its delineation of the character of Jesus it presents him clearly and forcefully as a man of many dimensions. Much of the novel is in the form of dialogue, the style of which is stilted and forced and without vigor. Because of the extensive use of dialogue in the novel, this defect of style detracts markedly from the force-

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1. Blythe: op. cit., p. 310.

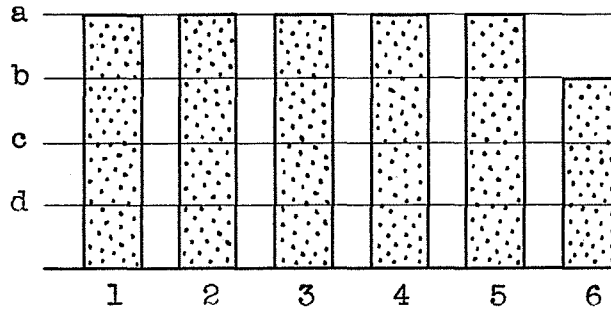
2. Ibid., p. 309.



fulness of the book.

Rating: 6 b.

Summary rating graph:



B. Judas - Eric Linklater

1. Synopsis

The events of this novel are those which occur during the Passion Week. Opening with the Triumphal Entry of Jesus, it presents Judas filled with fear at the people's reception of Jesus. If they set him up as king, he fears that the Temple rulers "would see in such a claim the challenge it was, see it in rebellion, and meet it with war".<sup>1</sup> The novel develops as Judas, at heart a desperate coward and filled with terror at the thought that Jesus' course will inevitably lead to war, is torn in a death-struggle between his love for Jesus and his fear. In the grip of this fear, Judas' faith in Jesus is finally shattered and, con-

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1. E. Linklater: Judas, p. 10.

vinced that, if Jesus continues to live, Jerusalem will be thrown into civil war, he betrays him to the high priest. By turning Jesus over to the priests he feels that he is serving the people - insuring peace. He sees himself as "the saviour of the people".<sup>1</sup> But after Jesus' death the picture changes. Judas comes to see that he has sought not so much to save his people as to save himself from the perils of war. So again he is filled with fear and remorse - fear because he sees looming large the monstrosity of his deeds,<sup>2</sup> and fear because he realizes that the thousands of those who loved Jesus are now his enemies. So still ravaged by a fear he had thought to escape, he takes his life.

## 2. Analysis.

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

Concerned chiefly with the character of Judas and the conflict waged in him between faith and reason - between his fear and cowardice and his confidence in Jesus, this novel includes little of the Biblical narrative. What incidents are related are tied up intimately with this fear of Judas'. The attack upon the money changers in the Temple<sup>3</sup>

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1. E. Linklater, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
2. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
3. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 38 ff.

filled Judas with fear in that to his mind it was an act of open rebellion. Further it struck at the heart of all that had meant most to him, for to him money gave life its meaning. This senseless destruction was loathsome to Judas.

"This was no vision of ineffable majesty, but power reduced by action to a human dimension. And in such a scale it seemed mere wantonness, the meaningless destruction of all that made the daily business of living comprehensible."<sup>1</sup>

Such was the significance of the Temple cleansing to Judas - and this with the entry into Jerusalem, the "wasteful" anointing of Jesus by Mary, the supper and betrayal, and Judas' death comprise the majority of Biblical material in the novel.

Rating: 1 b.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.

Viewed through the eyes of Judas the significance of the Biblical incidents related in this novel is sometimes distorted or lacking altogether. The fact of the Last Supper is recorded but for Judas it is simply an opportunity to gather information as to where Jesus and the disciples will spend the night.<sup>2</sup> None of the incidents of the supper are related except that Judas departed early.<sup>3</sup> At another

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1. Linklater: op. cit., p. 40.
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 146 ff.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 150.

point Judas, rebelling against the unbridled excitement of the multitude acclaiming Jesus in drunken joy observes that

"...some of them were drunk in fact, for little fat Zacchaeus, his head swollen because Jesus had spent the night with him, had started the day by giving wine to anyone who wanted it. Because his house had been blessed, he said, it must be open to all. And like a fool he had given..."<sup>1</sup>

In these and other instances Judas' point of view, coloring the incidents, tends to distort their true significance.

Rating: 2 c.

c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

There is little emphasis on historical background. A limited picture is given of the corrupt state of the Sanhedrin.<sup>2</sup> The temper of the crowds, their hatred of Rome, of the rich,<sup>3</sup> is pointed out to some extent but beyond this there is no attempt to provide an historical setting.

Rating: 3 c.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

There is little elaboration of any of the novel's characters other than Judas. He assumes broad dimensions

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1. Linklater: op. cit., p. 10.
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 19, 86 ff.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 33-35.

and the imaginary reconstruction of his character seems to be in accord with the few facts we are given in the Bible account. It is not difficult to understand how a man such as Judas, for whom peace was a basic need, would come to follow Jesus. In explaining his love for Jesus, he says,

"He can drive out the poison that makes us all so miserable, and keeps the world full of fear and hatred. He's reduced...the Commandments to two simple words: You must love God, and love your neighbor...It means peace and happiness for everyone. And it's peace that I want. Peace and security. I've always been afraid...I loved him because I thought he could turn the world into what I want it to be."<sup>1</sup>

This, too, explains his turning from Jesus when it appears that he would not bring peace but revolution.

With the little Biblical material upon which to build, the character of Judas, the author has created a character who fits the facts as we know them and whose needs and motivations could very plausibly be those of the betrayer of Jesus.

Rating: 4 a.

e. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

The significance of this novel for the present day lies in its presentation in the character of Judas of the

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1. Linklater: op. cit., pp. 20 ff.

age-old conflict between faith and reason - reason which is imperfect and distorted by personal predilections. In a sense Judas is less of an individual than he is a type. A long and bitter struggles between his faith and his reason tears at him constantly - a struggle that is as characteristic of men today as it was then. Judas has believed in Jesus, but the actions of Jesus fail to make sense. If Jesus wants to save the souls of men - if he loves them - why does he not do it quickly for he has the power?<sup>1</sup> Why does he permit such waste of money as he did in commending Mary for her anointing of him? Judas cannot reconcile Jesus' behavior with his own human standards and in consequence it is not until he has destroyed him that he realizes what he has lost. Then, too, he sees the error of his reason that has been so much impaired by his own fear and hatred.<sup>2</sup> Judas' experience is in some degree common to all men and for this reason the book has significance for each of us.

Rating: 5 a.

f. The artistry of the novel.

This novel is essentially a character study. From meagre facts of Judas' life, the author by the power of his imagination and his psychological insight, has created a vital and forceful character.

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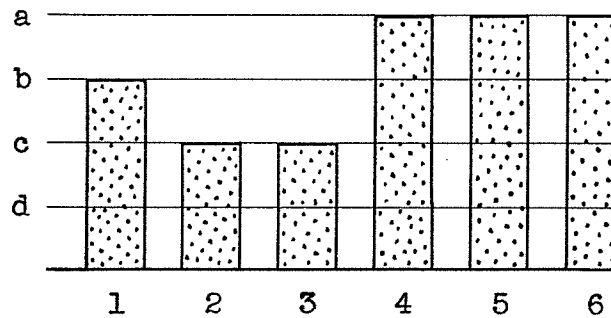
1. Cf. Linklater: op. cit., p. 66.
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 196 ff.

For the most part the novel is well written. At times, particularly when he portrays the crowds, the rabble, the author puts into their mouths language so closely associated with the present time that it destroys to some extent the realism of the narrative.

However, while this is true, it is not significant enough to destroy the impact of the novel except possibly for those who are exceptionally critical of this form of anachronism.

Rating: 6 a.

Summary rating graph:



C. The Emperor's Physician - J. R. Perkins

1. Synopsis.

The Emperor's Physician is the story of two great physicians engaged in a medical mission to Palestine during the period of Jesus' earthly ministry. The emperor's physician is a highly trained, scientific, skeptical Roman - naturalistic in his philosophy. Luke Galen, his colleague,

equally trained, has in him a mixture of Greek and Semitic blood and is of a more religious nature than his friend. Going about their work throughout Palestine, their paths continually cross that of the Galilean Healer who on many occasions has healed completely those whom the physicians have treated more or less in vain. The novel develops through these meetings with Jesus until both the skeptical, prejudiced Roman and sensitive, religious Luke Galen are won to Jesus.

## 2. Analysis.

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

The Biblical material in this novel consists chiefly of the miracles of Jesus. The physicians are seeking to bring relief to the suffering thousands in Palestine and find that this Galilean Healer is meeting the same need but in an incomprehensible manner, that, if not a hoax, is apparently beyond the realm of human skill. The emperor's physician, with his wholly naturalistic philosophy, considers the healings a hoax, and the Galilean a faker.<sup>1</sup> Luke Galen was less prejudiced and more willing to believe but he, too, failed to understand. The author has sought to portray the growth in belief in the two men as it is related to this

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1. J. R. Perkins: The Emperor's Physician, p. 36.



problem of miraculous healing, since healing is their major interest. Consequently, the novel hinges on twelve of the miracles of Jesus and the reactions of the physicians to them. Some other Biblical material is used to enable the physician to understand something of the nature of this Healer. The young Galilean is identified with God - his will is that of his Father.<sup>1</sup> His relation to men is that of a Shepherd to his sheep and like a good shepherd he will lay down his life for his sheep.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the fact that the miracles play such a prominent part, the bulk of the material is purely fictional.

Rating: 1 c.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.

Where Biblical material is used, it is used accurately and in keeping with the Spirit of the Biblical record. We discovered only one instance in which there was a false interpretation of a miracle and that was the occasion in which Peter extracted from the fish the coin with which to pay the tribute. This both physicians considered undeniably a hoax in view of the fact that Peter winked knowingly at them as he performed the "miracle."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Cf. Perkins, op. cit., p. 216.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 226.
3. Ibid., p. 142.

With this exception the Biblical material was in accord with its usage in Scripture.

Rating: 2 a.

c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

This novel is not in historical background and deals chiefly with the sociological and pathological conditions prevailing in Palestine during the Roman dominion. It links the misery of the diseased masses with the heedlessness of the Romans, who, "indifferent to all things in Conquered Palestine except its wealth, have permitted the common people to sink into unspeakable poverty, misery, and disease."<sup>1</sup> It points up the changes that had taken place in Jewish life "since the baleful spirit of the Herodian family burned its baleful way into the very soul of Semitic Society,"<sup>2</sup> a change that made possible the juxtaposition of the theater of Pilate, the seat of pagan amusements, and the "Temple of Judaism - symbol of the soul of a people who had search immemoriably for holiness and not for pagan beauty."<sup>3</sup> It pictures vividly the architecture and general character of the city of Jerusalem where "India met Gaul,"<sup>4</sup>

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1. Perkins: op. cit., p. 42.
2. Ibid., p. 45.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 37.

"the city that had survived the shock of centuries of war."<sup>1</sup>

It pictures the great disparity between the care for the wealthy sick in the Aesculapian Temple, built by Herod Antipas to match those of Greece, and the absence of treatment for the helpless and hopeless disease-ridden masses of common people.<sup>2</sup>

These and other facts of the historical setting give us a vivid picture of the conditions of the land of Palestine in the time of Christ, and heightens our understanding of his ministry of love and compassion among the scorned multitudes of Jewry.

Rating: 3 a.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

There is very little elaboration of outstanding Biblical characters in this novel. The author is preoccupied with the characters of the two physicians and the character of Jesus is pointed up occasionally through their contact with and interpretation of him and his work. The predominant quality of the Healer that strikes the two physicians is his way of seeming to peer into the souls of men.<sup>3</sup> He was a man whose face "revealed the majesty of a great inner peace that the world...could never bestow."<sup>4</sup>

. . . . .

1. Perkins: op. cit., p. 41.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 50.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 35, 58, 93, 101.
4. Ibid., p. 57.

These and other descriptive phrases record impressions of Jesus but there is little attempt to portray him as a total personality, little imaginative re-creation of the feelings, of the motivations, of the man himself.

Rating: 4 b.

e. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

Some of the questions dealt with are of significance for us today. The problem of intellectual prejudice that blinded the emperor's physician to the nature of Jesus' healing is a case in point, for, in the words of Luke Galen, "here was a dogmatism of learning no less untenable than that of ignorance itself."<sup>1</sup>

Of more importance, however, to the Christian is the fact that the final interpretation of Jesus and his significance, and power does not fully agree with the Christ of the Scripture. His miraculous power is unquestionable but it seems that he has simply "tapped the Source Power,"<sup>2</sup> not that he is identified with God in the relationship of a Son. Luke Galen's interpretation as he talks with the emperor's physician implies the faith evident in Jesus' healing a contributing factor because he is convinced that the

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1. Perkins: op. cit., p. 185.  
2. Ibid., p. 184.

psyche governs men's flesh and when medical science gains this knowledge it will have power over many diseases before which now it stands helpless. In urging the emperor's physician to be willing to believe in God's unseen power, he emphasizes that he would have access to power that would enable him to "approximate the miraculous."<sup>1</sup> In this and other discussions, and because nowhere is Jesus' unique relationship to God pointed out, the implication is that Jesus has laid hold of a truth of which all men are equally capable of grasping and using. Because of this, the true nature of Jesus and his power, his divinity and identification with God is distorted and the fundamental truth of the Gospel records is misrepresented.

Rating: 5 d.

f. The artistry of the novel.

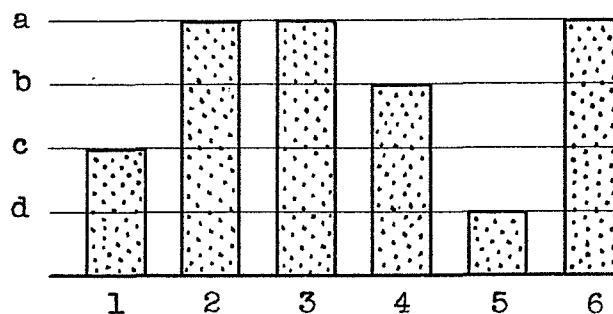
The novel is well-constructed. It is realistic in its treatment of the problem facing the two physicians, the problem arising where a scientifically trained mind is faced with what appears to be supernatural. It is clear in style and its skillful intermingling of history, both Biblical and secular, and pure fiction makes it a forceful book.

Rating: 6 a.

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1. Perkins: op. cit., p. 185.

Summary rating graph:



D. According to Thomas - Gladys Malvern

1. Synopsis.

This novel is written in the form of an epistle from Thomas of Antioch to his Christian brethren - a biographical novel which treats Thomas' life from the day on which he first heard of the coming Messiah through the preaching of John the Baptist. Writing to his friends, Thomas relates to them the incidents of his life as they are bound up with the life of Jesus, the Christ. The novel closes with a resume of the roles of the apostle in the spread of Christianity.

2. Analysis.

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

As the title of this novel suggests, it is a presentation of the Gospel by Thomas. Consequently, it follows closely the Biblical narrative. Fictional material is used

almost exclusively for the purpose of amplifying or providing a setting for Biblical incidents. Much of the material is taken from the Gospel of John and emphasizes the identity of Jesus, his work, and his relationship to God. To Thomas, the passionate seeker after truth, this is the important consideration - to establish the identity of Jesus.

As a source of Biblical material, both incidents and teachings revealing the self-consciousness of Jesus, this novel is valuable.

Rating: 1 a.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.

The Biblical material included in this novel seems to be wholly in keeping with both the letter and spirit in Scripture. The imaginative re-creations maintain carefully the spirit of the Scriptural context. The author has made no attempt to change the Biblical record and a great part of the novel consists in paraphrases of the Scriptural accounts.

Rating: 2 a.

c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

This novel is rich in cultural, religious, and historico-geographical backgrounds. It abounds in references to and descriptions of the Jewish traditional practices. It gives a detailed picture of the role of the Jewish rabbi and his relationship to his students,<sup>1</sup> of the scribes with their great scholarship and their arduous task of writing out the Law.<sup>2</sup> It paints a vivid picture of the Jewish yearning for the advent of the long-awaited Messiah.<sup>3</sup> Reflecting the character of the land, the novel depicts the life of Jerusalem with its luxurious mansions of the wealthy and its cramped business section,<sup>4</sup> of Nazareth, untouched by the bustle of the outer world, in spite of the fact that it lay on the caravan route to Damascus.<sup>5</sup>

These are a few of the many references and descriptions which heighten considerably the contribution of the novel to an understanding of the background against which Jesus and his followers live and work.

Rating: 3 a.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

Thomas alone stands out in the novel as a well-developed character. The imaginative reconstruction of this

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1. Cf. Gladys Malvern: According to Thomas, pp. 15, 20.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 117.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 17 ff.
4. Cf. Ibid., p. 29.
5. Cf. Ibid., p. 47



man who must see before he can believe brings clearly to a focus his great longing for truth. This hunger sent him as a young man in search of a rabbi who could fully satisfy his great yearning for truth.<sup>1</sup> Thomas finds his rabbi in Jesus. As the story unfolds his comprehension of Jesus' teachings grows until at last he recognizes him as the long-awaited Messiah.

The vigor, the passion, the deep love for Jesus that characterize Thomas in this novel add much to his stature and would seem to be in keeping with what facts we have of him.

The figure of Jesus is elaborated only slightly. He is presented for the most part as he is in Scripture without any strong emphasis on the emotional tone of the experiences recorded. It is this quality, which, when present, adds much to the vitality of the character portrayed. For the most part this is lacking in Miss Malvern's portrayal of Jesus. This lack destroys to a great extent the vigor of the delineation of Jesus, the central figure in the novel.

Rating: 4 b.

e. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

. . . . .

1. Cf. Malvern: op. cit., p. 17.

This novel is filled with Biblical truth that, because of its very nature, is significant for us today. The truth of Christ's work of redemption and his continuing life is for all men and all time. However, the novelist has made little attempt to work out basic principles of action and thought in terms of the individual experience of the daily living of her characters. The principles remain in terms of more or less intellectual concepts that are not here wrought out in life. While these truths are pertinent to the present time, the way in which they are presented detracts from their forcefulness.

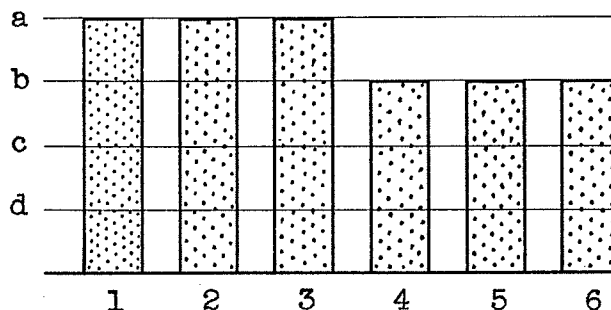
Rating: 5 b.

f. The artistry of the novel.

This is not a work of great literary merit. In her attempt to remain true to the Biblical record, Miss Malvern has combined a simple, unstudied prose style with very strict paraphrasing of the Bible text. Consequently, her style appears erratic and often forced. The novel lacks a basic unity of style and much of the power which characterizes certain episodes is lost in the total picture.

Rating: 6 b.

Summary rating graph:



E. Behold the Man - Toyohiko Kagawa

1. Synopsis.

This novel is a study of the life of Jesus from the time of the death of John the Baptist until his resurrection appearance to Thomas. The book is divided into six major sections, each treating of some phase of Jesus' ministry. The sections are each unified by the predominance of a single figure in a particular relationship to Jesus. In these sections Jesus is portrayed more or less through the eyes of the chief character: Akkud, to whom Jesus presents a sharp and unpleasant contrast to the fiery, condemning John; Judas, who finds Jesus inexplicable and seeks to persuade the disciples to use force in securing Jesus' position in Israel;<sup>1</sup> Joanna, wife of Herod's steward, who, finding in Jesus the way of eternal life, gives up everything she has, including husband and child, to serve him and those he loves.<sup>2</sup> Through

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1. Cf. Toyohiko Kagawa: Behold the Man, p. 116 ff.  
 2. Cf. Ibid., p. 180.

these and other eyes the plot develops until in the last section entitled, "And ye shall know the Truth,"<sup>1</sup> the true character of Jesus is revealed on the cross and in his resurrection to both those who have loved and those who have opposed and misunderstood him.

## 2. Analysis.

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

The question of Jesus' identity and mission is the focal point in this novel. It, therefore, follows closely the Biblical narrative and the majority of fictional material serves to point up or to provide a setting for the Biblical incidents. Thus the somewhat elaborately drawn picture of the luxurious life of Joanna, wife of Herod's steward, serves to heighten dramatically the significance of her renunciation of her wealth and her beloved family that she might worthily follow the Galilean. For she has come to discover that Jesus is the way into the Kingdom of Heaven and that more happiness can come from walking in love and patience the road to this Kingdom than from all the luxury and ease in which she had been living.<sup>2</sup> In this manner throughout the novel, the fictional material serves to

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1. Kagawa: op. cit., p. 30.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 180.

intensify the dramatic appeal of the Biblical narrative rather than to usurp its centrality. The novel has incorporated within its framework much of the Biblical material centering about Jesus' life.

Rating: 1 a.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.

This novel presents an accurate picture of the Biblical material contained in it. The imaginative material included is wholly in keeping with the Scriptural accounts.

Rating: 2 a.

c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

Kagawa is not absorbed so much in the general historical background of the period as he is in individual responses to Jesus. For this reason, there is relatively little emphasis on historical setting. Something of the unrest of the people under the Roman yoke and the activities of the robber Barabbas,<sup>1</sup> something of the ruthlessness of Herod<sup>2</sup> are evidenced from time to time throughout the book

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1. Cf. Kagawa: op. cit., pp. 57 ff.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 167.

but there is no presentation of a broad, integrated background.

Rating: 3 b.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

In spite of the fact that this novel is focused on Jesus, the Christ, the man never assumes real proportions. He is seen for the most part through the eyes of others who bring reports to one another concerning him. Not often does he appear before us "in person" and even at these moments he is hardly a commanding figure. Kagawa is absorbed in the speculations of his characters concerning this Galilean and incidents in Jesus' life are more food for discussion than deeply moving revelations of God's love in Christ. Little imaginative insight is revealed in this novel and Jesus never becomes a three-dimensional figure.

Rating: 4 b.

e. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

The message of this book is that the way of true happiness is one of faith and trust, one of love and patience that leads to God's Kingdom. In the first part of the novel this way is contrasted with the way of Barabbas, the way of force. The problem arises again as Joanna faces the moment of decision that takes her away from all she had loved and

yet fills her with a joy surpassing all she has ever known. There are others like Caiaphas in whom ambition burns high. For them Jesus and his way is a threat and in their greed and jealousy they kill him. And yet in spite of them he returns triumphant while those who have scorned him realize that, after all, his is the true way. Here is a message for all time and for all men, and in this novel the truths are not stated only as principles but are embodied in the lives of its characters and gain force thereby.

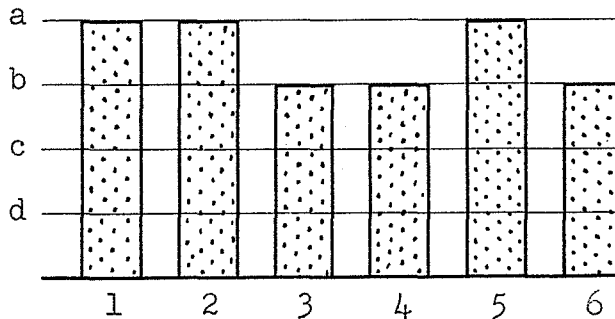
Rating: 5 a.

f. The artistry of the novel.

The form of Kagawa's novel gives it a basic unity that effectively points up its message. While the message is clear, the style of the author detracts from the force of the novel. There is little vitality in his writing and its absence weakens his presentation.<sup>1</sup>

Rating: 6 b.

Summary rating graph:



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1. It should be mentioned in this connection that the novel is not written in the author's native language and that this fact may account for the deficiency in his style.

F. Behold Your King - F. M. Bauer

1. Synopsis.

This novel deals chiefly with the life of Joseph of Arimathea and his nephew from Cyrene who has come to live with him. The focus of the novel is on the young carpenter of Galilee who is gaining wide reputation as a healer. The growing popularity of the young rabbi, his amazing power and claims, are stirring up the Jewish officials, among them Joseph of Arimathea, a devout Pharisee. His nephew Jonathan, becoming attached to the rabbi Jesus, is "buried" by Joseph and the novel progresses with intrigue and romance and finally high adventure as Jonathan becomes one of the rabbi's followers. The family is reunited after Joseph's invalid wife is healed by the Galilean rabbi. The major problem with which the novel deals is that of the identity of Jesus.

2. Analysis.

a. The extent to which the novel makes use of Biblical material.

The content of this novel, while it includes much that is pure fiction, is nevertheless dominated by Biblical material, particularly throughout the latter half of the book. Aside from the numerous New Testament incidents related, in connection with Joseph's life, there are frequent quotations from Old Testament Scripture, particularly those passages which relate to the coming of the Messiah.



In view of these facts the book should be placed high in the scale.

Rating: 1 a.

b. The extent to which Biblical material is accurately presented both in letter and in spirit.

Miss Bauer has maintained the spirit of Scripture throughout her novel. In spite of the fact that much of her material is fictional, the imaginative re-creation of incidents is wholly in keeping with the spirit of the Biblical account.

Rating: 2 a.

c. The extent to which historical background is effectively presented and serves to enhance the Biblical narrative.

The historical background in this novel deals chiefly with the religious practices and customs of the Jews. Miss Bauer has gone to great lengths to re-create the atmosphere that pervaded Jerusalem in the time of Christ. She has taken particular pains to present a sympathetic picture of the Jew, a picture too often neglected. The torment of Joseph, defiled by unholy contacts through no fault of his own, is tragic to see.<sup>1</sup> Miss Bauer paints a vivid picture of the religious backgrounds of the Jews, of the period with

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1. Cf. F. M. Bauer: Behold Your King, p. 61.

their strict observance of the Law and Tradition. Their yearning for the coming of the Messiah whom they expect to deliver them from the yoke of Rome. There are other elements in the novel which relate it intimately to the period, the caravan along the Jericho road under constant threat from marauders,<sup>1</sup> the building program of Herod,<sup>2</sup> the differences between the Jews of the Dispersion and those who remained in Palestine. These and other incidents relate the narrative intimately to its setting.

Rating: 3 a.

d. The treatment of outstanding Biblical characters.

While Jesus is the outstanding Biblical character treated in this novel, he is not often seen in action. Primarily he is the subject of much speculation. Miss Bauer presents Jesus to the reader in terms of his influence on those who know him and the attitudes of various people toward him. At the times when Jesus is himself present she has succeeded in presenting incidents in an emotional climate which greatly heightens one's concept of Jesus the man.

Rating: 4 a.

e. The extent to which the novel is universal and timeless in its scope and has significance for the present day in its application of Biblical truths.

. . . . .

1. Cf. Bauer: op. cit., p. 30.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 26.

Miss Bauer's novel with its message of faith in Christ has significance for all time. The problem of the novel lies in the desire for faith on the one hand and self-will on the other. This is the problem of Joseph of Arimathea and is responsible for his bitter rejection of Jesus as the Messiah - the rejection stemming not from disbelief but from stubbornness and pride.<sup>1</sup> Joseph is one example of this problem which confronts all men who are brought face to face with Christ. This novel is a study in reactions and as such has significance for the present day.

Rating: 5 a.

f. The artistry of the novel.

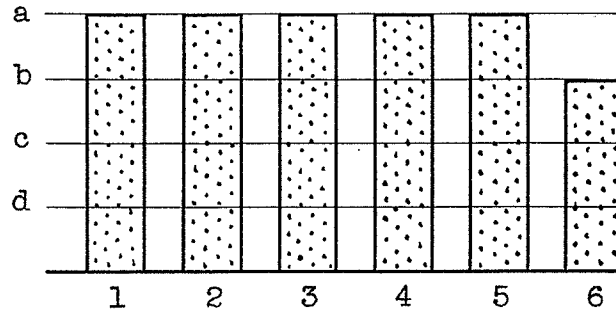
The story of romance and adventure that comprises the major part of this novel is a story well told from the standpoint of plot. However, Miss Bauer's style is lacking in real vigor. There is nothing dynamic in her literary production. Her dialogue is frequently stilted. The style of the book detracts markedly from its forcefulness.

Rating: 6 b.

. . . . .

1. Cf. Bauer: op. cit., pp. 354-355.

Summary rating graph:



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the foregoing study has been to determine in what way historical novels based on Biblical material contribute to an understanding of the Bible. A popular literary form, the historical novel appears to be an effective vehicle for the presentation of Biblical truth. In view of this fact, a careful study was made of two of the works chosen in order to discover those particular characteristics which determine the value of a book in light of the specific purpose stated above. In consequence of this study a scale of evaluation was set up by which the remaining novels were rated.

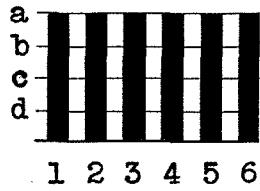
The following graphs present the ratings of the books studied in Chapter II as well as those analyzed in the first chapter. The graphs are set up in terms of the rating scale formulated in Chapter I.<sup>1</sup>

The first series of graphs indicates the individual rating of each book. A further series presents the comparative ratings of the novels in each of the six categories set up in Chapter I and an average rating for each category.

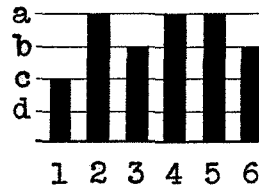
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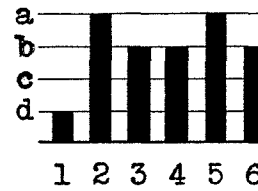
THE APOSTLE



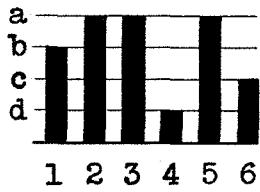
THE BROTHER



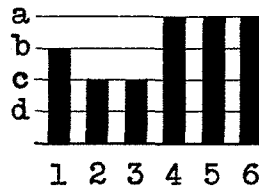
THE INNOVATOR



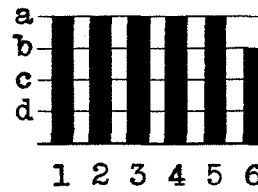
BARABBAS



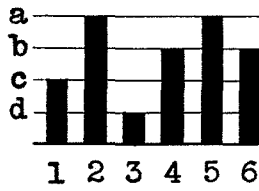
JUDAS



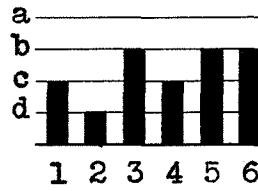
THE BOLD GALILEAN



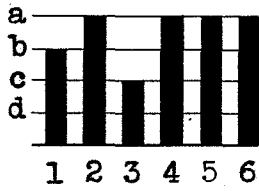
THE LANCE OF LONGINUS



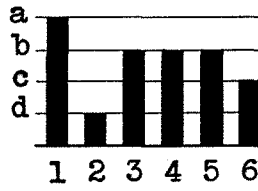
IN THE YEARS OF OUR LORD



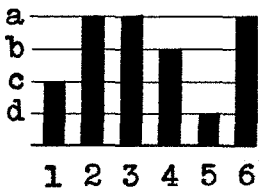
THE SCARLET LILY



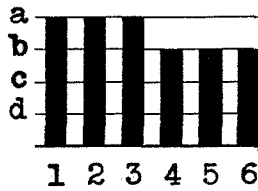
THE BIG FISHERMAN



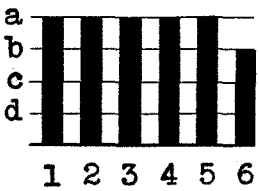
THE EMPEROR'S PHYSICIAN



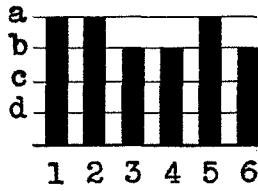
ACCORDING TO THOMAS



BEHOLD YOUR KING



BEHOLD THE MAN

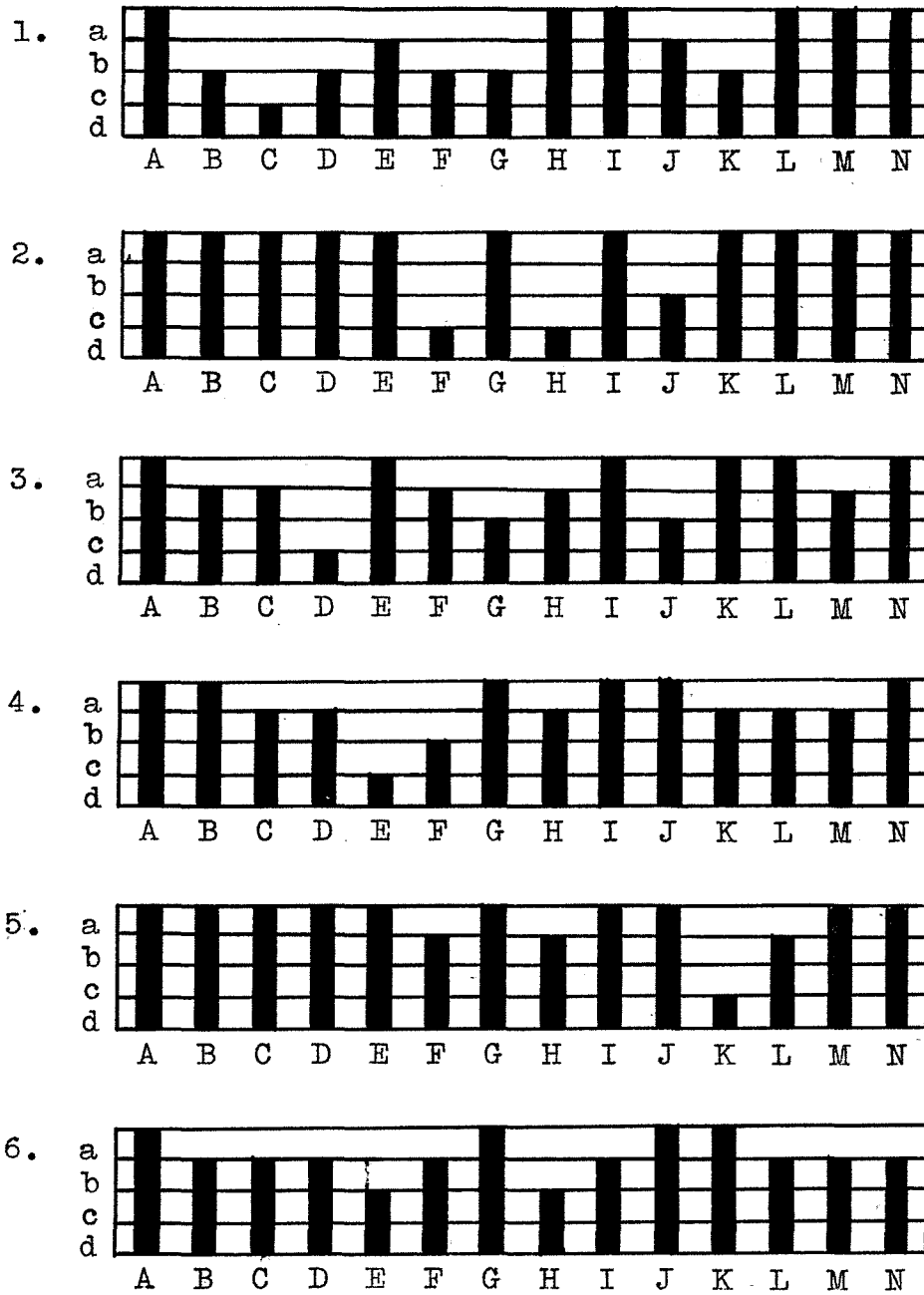


SUMMARY EVALUATION CHART

Books compared in following graphs:

- A. The Apostle
- B. The Brother
- C. The Innovator
- D. The Lance of Longinus
- E. Barabbas
- F. In the Years of Our Lord
- G. The Scarlet Lily
- H. The Big Fisherman
- I. Bold Galilean
- J. Judas
- K. The Emperor's Physician
- L. According To Thomas
- M. Behold the Man
- N. Behold Your King



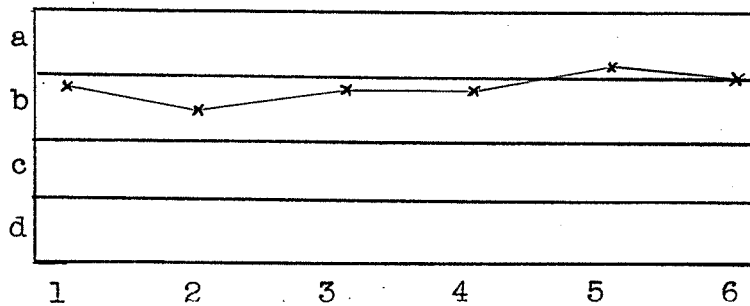


COMPARATIVE RATINGS OF  
SELECTED NOVELS

Assigning values to the letters a, b, c, and d in the preceding scales we arrived at the following average rating for each of the six categories:

1. 2.9	4. 2.9
2. 2.5	5. 3.1
3. 2.9	6. 3.0

Plotted together, the average ratings of the six categories are distributed as follows:



On the basis of this study the following summarizing statements may be made:

1. The amount of Biblical material incorporated in the novels studied varies considerably. In the average novel, Biblical material served as a point of focus but the imaginative material predominated.

With few exceptions the novels maintained the letter and and spirit of the Biblical narratives.

3. There was a wide variety in the degree to which the novels had narratives rooted in the historical background of the period. With one exception, historical background

was subordinated to the Biblical material but was presented in such a way that the Scriptural narrative was enhanced by it.

4. The character delineation, for the most part, was not noteworthy. There was frequently little attempt on the part of the author to re-create on a broad scale the psychological background of his characters. There was a tendency to relate incidents without penetrating into the motivations and purposes that brought about the actions. For this reason few of the Biblical characters assumed full stature.

5. Most of the novels dealt with questions of universal interest in a way that made them real in the modern world. They separated incidents from their underlying principles, thus freeing them from the immediate situations and emphasizing their universality.

The majority of the novels either because of poor character delineation or faulty style failed to meet high literary standards. The vigor and reality of a number of the novels were not destroyed by the presence of these characteristics.

It is evident from this study that few of the novels analyzed embody to a high degree all of the characteristics that make a book valuable as a vehicle for conveying Biblical truth and history. However, it is certain that

they can serve a real purpose. An understanding of historical background often gives new meaning to Biblical passages. Setting Biblical incidents against a background of daily experience and making explicit the emotional overtones that the Bible frequently omits lends Scriptural accounts a new dynamic quality and adds considerably to their impressiveness. For these reasons, and because of the fact that Scriptural material for the most part seems to be handled with fidelity, it appears that historical novels that deal with Biblical history have a valuable contribution to make toward an enriched understanding of the Bible.

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APPENDIX

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