



# The Gnostic Crucifixion

*George Robert Stowe Mead*

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The Gnostic Mystery of the Crucifixion is most clearly set forth in the new-found fragments of The Acts of John, and follows immediately on the Sacred Dance and Ritual of Initiation which we endeavored to elucidate in Vol. IV. of these little books, in treating of The Hymn of Jesus.

The reader is, therefore, referred to the "Preamble" of that volume for a short introduction concerning the nature of the Gnostic Acts in general and of the Leucian Acts of John in particular. I would, however, add a point of interest bearing on the date which was forgotten, though I have frequently remarked upon it when lecturing on the subject.

The strongest proof that we have in our fragment very early material is found in the text itself, when it relates the following simple form of the miracle of the loaves.

"Now if at any time He were invited by one of the Pharisees and went to the bidding, we used to go with Him. And before each was set a single loaf by the host; and of them He Himself also received one. Then He would give thanks and divide His loaf among us; and from this little each had enough, and our own loaves were saved whole, so that those who bade Him were amazed."

If the marvellous narratives of the feeding of the five thousand had been already in circulation, it is incredible that this simple story, which we may so easily believe, should have been invented. Of what use, when the minds of the hearers had been strung to the pitch of faith which had already accepted the feeding of the five thousand as an actual physical occurrence, would it have been to invent comparatively so small a wonder? On the other hand, it is easy to believe that from similar simple stories of the power of the Master, which were first of all circulated in the inner circles, the popular narratives of the multitude-feeding miracles could be developed. We, therefore, conclude, with every probability, that we have here an indication of material of very early date.

Nevertheless when we come to the Mystery of the Crucifixion as set forth in our fragment, we are not entitled to argue that the popular history was developed from it in a similar fashion. The problem it raises is of another order, and to it we will return when the reader has been put in possession of the narrative, as translated from Bonnet's text. John is supposed to be the narrator.

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