The Historical Jesus and the Literary Imagination
1860–1920
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Paul was a cosmopolitan and Jesus was a provincial. Had they ever met in person, they would presumably have had little to say to each other […]

Gerd Lüdemann, *Jesus After Two Thousand Years*

By the early twentieth century, the Gospels had undergone imaginative treatment in poetry, prose fiction and dramatic scenarios, but any ambitions to present them on stage were held firmly at bay by the rigid adherence of successive Examiners of Plays to the Theatres Act of 1843. Prohibiting dramas adapted from the Scriptures and placing an outright ban on the depiction of Christ or the Deity on stage, the legislation proved a more or less insurmountable barrier to aspiring religious dramatists – orthodox and unorthodox – and a bone of contention for members of the artistic community.¹ Encounters with the censor, such as Wilde’s over *Salome*, prompted a variety of public reactions, including a series of articles published in the *New Review* in 1893. Speaking for the traditionalists, F. W. Farrar insisted that:

> The events narrated in the Bible are associated with the deepest and most sacred of our religious feelings. They have entered into our religious teaching from earliest childhood [...] It seems altogether undesirable that they should be set before us amid the inevitable surroundings of the stage. Their representations in plays would be mixed up with questions of literary taste, or journalistic criticism, of the dress, the appearance, the success or the failure of particular actors.²

Putting the case for the liberals, Henry Arthur Jones argued:

> I see no reason why the great human stories of the Bible should not be utilised on our stage. I am speaking here with the utmost rever-
ence for a Book, or rather Books, which I have clearly loved and constantly studied from my childhood [...] The English theatre could not make a worse use of the Bible than the sects have done, or misunderstand it so completely.3

As the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth, so the Theatres Act appeared more and more an anachronism to all but the staunchest traditionalists, prompting satirical responses such as this by the writer and civil servant Humbert Wolfe:

C is for Censor  
Who keeps the stage clean  
By ruling out God and the Crown as obscene.4

As with any law commonly regarded as otiose and outdated, various attempts were made to circumvent it. One of these was to revive the mystery and morality plays that had enjoyed great popularity from the thirteenth century to the Reformation, and that were exempt from the current legislation. However, it was not an option that held much appeal for those with radical new ideas, aspiring to create a drama for the modern age. A more artistically satisfying way round the problem was the establishment of private theatre societies, as these did not require stage licences to mount productions. Two dramatists who took advantage of this loophole in the law were Laurence Housman and Mabel Dearmer. Housman formed the Bethlehem Society for which he staged his nativity play, *Bethlehem*, in 1902, the same year that it had been denied a licence by the Examiner of Plays. Following suit in 1911, Mabel Dearmer founded The Morality Play Society which presented her own works, *The Soul of the World* (1911) and *The Dreamer* (1912), and works by others, including W. B. Yeats’s *The Hour Glass* (1904) and Lady Gregory’s *The Travelling Man* (1909). This means of evading the censor was not without its drawbacks. Prohibited from taking any form of financial reward from performances, such companies were commercially unattractive and, for the majority of playwrights, economically impossible.

By far the most popular way of staging religious subjects while still staying within the stage law was a dramatic sub-genre that came to be known as ‘toga drama’: plays set in the era of the Primitive Church. The well-known actor, dramatist and stage manager Wilson Barrett was the foremost exponent of these religious melodramas, enjoying
great popular success in the late 1890s with his production of *The Sign of the Cross*. Set in Rome in the days of the Early Church, Barrett’s play tells the tale of the Roman prefect, Marcus, who falls deeply in love with the Christian heroine, Mercia, and accompanies her to her death in an amphitheatre of hungry lions. Barrett’s decision to set his drama in post-crucifixion days ensured that it would not upset the Examiner of Plays, at the same time capitalizing on the interest in the Primitive Church that had featured prominently in theological works of the final thirty years or so of the nineteenth century. *The Sign of the Cross* played to great acclaim in both the United States and Great Britain, gaining plaudits from clergymen and the more conservative elements of the press. Yet it was not without its detractors. G. W. Foote considered the play ‘as primitive as the religion it advocates’, and George Bernard Shaw wrote about finding in the play ‘a terrible contrast between the Romans […] with their straightforward sensuality, and the strange, perverted voluptuousness of the Christians, with their shuddering exaltations of the longing for the whip, the rack, the stake and the lions’. While the toga play would enjoy considerable popular success in the emerging world of cinema, by the second decade of the twentieth century it was clear that it had outstayed its welcome in the theatre.

In the Edwardian period, then, the restrictions placed upon the performance of religious plays were both highly inconsistent and highly frustrating for those with ambitions to stage biblical drama. On 27 October 1907, 71 authors expressed such frustration publicly by signing a letter to *The Times* as a formal protest against the ‘power lodged in the hands of a single official – who judges without a public hearing, and against whose dictum there is no appeal’; its signatories included Laurence Housman, John Masefield, G. B. Shaw and W. B. Yeats, all of whom produced some form of biblical drama in the course of their writing careers. Two years later, a Joint Select Committee was set up to examine the Theatres Act of 1843 and to gauge its suitability for the new century. With the publication of the Committee’s report, following three months’ consideration and consultation, it was clear that few concessions would be afforded to the anti-censorship lobby. With regard to the dramatization of religious subjects, the Committee recommended that the strict regulations concerning the representation of scriptural characters should be relaxed, at the same time advising that dramas should not ‘do violence to the sentiment of religious reverence’. It was in this
prevailing climate of artistic restriction that George Moore wrote *The Apostle: A Drama in Three Acts* (1911), a work that certainly held the potential to ‘do violence’ to traditional notions of the Gospels.

Regarded as a minor work in the canon of Moore’s writings, *The Apostle* tends to be treated only fleetingly by his critics and biographers. Yet, though the drama has never been performed, it marks the genesis of one of the twentieth century’s most significant fictional representations of Jesus: *The Brook Kerith: A Syrian Story* (1916). A brief survey of Moore’s *oeuvre* up to this point in his career reveals an engagement with a variety of literary movements and causes, and yet, whether in the grip of Naturalism, writing a polemic against the three-volume novel or experimenting with literary Wagnerism, his interest in the religious temperament is ever-present. In Susan Mitchell’s acerbic monograph on the author, published in 1916, she recalls that

it was once said of Mr. Moore by a member of his family that he would end his days as a monk, and it is certainly true that his later writings show the attraction of religion drawing him closer and closer. It seems, however, to be an attraction of repulsion and to consist rather in renunciations than confessions of faith.9

Though Mitchell was far from a reliable recorder of Moore and his work, she was, in this instance, close to the truth. Moore was indeed both attracted and repelled by religion. He devoted a significant proportion of his work to religious subjects, and never held back from criticizing what he saw as its inadequacies. Writing a heterodox fifth Gospel such as that sketched out in *The Apostle* offered Moore the opportunity to indulge his life-long fascination with the religious temperament and to satisfy his almost compulsive instinct for troublemaking.

The shaping of a Protestant identity: Moore’s entry into theology

In the first twenty years or so of Moore’s literary career, his interest in religion manifested itself largely by way of individual characters in his novels and short stories. *A Modern Lover* (1883), *A Mummer’s Wife* (1885) and *Esther Waters* (1894) all explore the female religious temperament through the struggle of the heroines to come to terms with the conflict between their religious upbringings and their natural
desires. From out of this early exploration of women’s spirituality developed a more specific study of conventual life in works such as *A Drama in Muslin* (1886), *Celibates* (1895), *Evelyn Innes* (1898) and *Sister Teresa* (1901). It is not, however, until *The Lake* (1905) that we see any clear indications that Moore’s religious interests had widened to include biblical criticism. A few years prior to the novel’s publication, the writer and critic Edouard Dujardin, to whom *The Lake* was dedicated, had turned his attentions to biblical exegesis, his researches being published in *La Source du fleuve chrétien* (1904), a volume that served to quicken Moore’s interest in theology. Regarded by Moore as his ‘master in exegesis’, Dujardin appears in *The Lake* in fictional form as the theologian Walter Poole, and it is through this character that the author is able to debate issues such as the debt theology owes to history, the authorship of the Gospels and the relationship between the teachings of Christ and those of Paul, all of which were to preoccupy him throughout the next ten years or so.

In addition to serving as one of Moore’s major sources of knowledge about the Bible, Jewish and Roman history and the Higher Criticism, Dujardin introduced him to several other writers engaged in biblical studies who would influence his future fictionalizing of the Gospels. Moore encountered the work of the French modernist theologian Alfred Loisy in 1904, when he translated Dujardin’s article on his influential study *Les évangiles synoptiques*. While it cannot be assumed that Moore went on to read Loisy’s work in its entirety, there is no doubt that he would have been drawn to a writer who strongly believed that ‘the adaptation of the gospel to the changing conditions of humanity is as pressing a need to-day as it ever was and ever will be’, and who had been excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church Moore so despised. It was also through Dujardin that Moore was to make the acquaintance of the freethinker Joseph McCabe, the translator of *La Source du fleuve chrétien*, as well as studies by rather more influential (and able) modernist theologians such as Albert Kalthoff and Arthur Drews. In a letter to Dujardin, Moore recounts his first meeting with McCabe in May 1911, describing his new friend as ‘a very pleasant fellow, very much alive, keen and a great scholar’.

The first two decades of the twentieth century was an invigorating time to be considering the figure of Jesus, as Moore no doubt realized.
In *The Life of Christ in Recent Research*, William Sanday expressed his belief that ‘the year 1906 may be said to mark the turning down of one page in the history of English theology and the opening of another’. It was no coincidence that this was the same year that Albert Schweitzer’s ground-breaking work *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* was published, an event that may well have contributed to Sanday’s view that a profound shift was happening in the study of the Gospel narratives. And it was not only theology that would introduce new perspectives on the figure of Christ and Christianity. By the time *The Apostle* was a work in progress, Nietzschean philosophy was very much of the moment and works such as *The Antichrist* offered a harsh reappraisal of the principal characters in Moore’s play. Anthropology held even more dramatic possibilities concerning the origins of Christianity, most especially in Sir James Frazer’s highly influential study of primitive rites and belief systems, *The Golden Bough*. First published in 1890, this vast undertaking included one particularly contentious chapter entitled ‘Killing the God’, which drew parallels between Christ’s crucifixion and pagan and Semitic rituals, and which would be developed more fully in the Second Edition of 1900. In setting out on his own exploration of the figure of Jesus, then, Moore was responding to the lively intellectual climate of the early twentieth century, as well as to the interests and preoccupations of his immediate circle of friends and acquaintances.

### Reading the Bible for the first time

In 1904 Moore converted to Protestantism, an event dismissed by his friend W. K. Magee as ‘a piece of play-acting which impressed no one’. In a similar vein, Joseph McCabe commented that Moore professed ‘genially to be a “Protestant” – solely because he hates Catholicism’. Certainly, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that McCabe was right in his opinion that Moore’s embracing of Protestantism was little more than a means of casting off the faith of his birth. Responding to news of his brother Maurice’s engagement to a Catholic, Moore wrote to his younger brother Julian: ‘my hatred of Catholicism is limitless; it is the strongest fibre in my nature’. It was an aversion that Moore would express time and time again with the same animus, and often very publicly. For example, when in 1910 the *Irish Times* published an obituary notice for his brother, Augustus,
that stated that the deceased came from ‘an old Irish and Roman Catholic family’, Moore penned a furious letter in response, stating:

I take this opportunity of telling that my family was Protestant until my great grandfather went to Spain [...] My grandfather was a man of letters [...] He was a disciple of Gibbon, and many passages in his published writings show him to be an agnostic. Of my father’s beliefs I know nothing; he went to Mass on Sundays, so I suppose he was a Catholic [...] I shall have no hesitation in leaving any money I may have on the condition that my heir shall carry on the Protestant traditions of the family.21

Moore’s understanding of these Protestant traditions was, to say the least, somewhat eccentric. He had a tendency to form his own notion of Protestant doctrine by creating a crude dichotomy whereby ‘Protestants and Catholics are [...] two eternal attitudes of the human mind’.22 Protestantism, Moore avows in *Hail and Farewell!,* ‘leaves the mind free, or very nearly’, and this freedom of mind is considered to stem mainly from the unrestricted reading of the Bible and the religious discussion it generates.23 Moore claimed that his own reading of the Scriptures began when, already in middle age, he received a Bible from Mary Hunter, the dedicatee of *The Brook Kerith,* which he claimed led him ‘into the society of scholars’.24 Verging on the solipsistic, his version of Protestantism defiantly overlook the literal-mindedness of certain evangelical readers of the Bible, such as those chronicled in his friend Edmund Gosse’s autobiographical novel *Father and Son*; instead it was made to bolster his own self-image, becoming synonymous with free-thinking, scepticism and, most importantly, great literary creativity.25 In ‘Epistle to the Cymry’ Moore explains how ‘every Protestant invents a religion out of the Bible for himself, and that is one of the reasons why Protestants are more literary than Catholics’.26 Maurice Moore was particularly well versed in this somewhat dubious theory, thanks to his brother’s fondness for expounding it in his correspondence. In a letter of 1904, for example, George explains to his younger brother that ‘Catholicism is compatible with existence, and so is alcoholism; but life, the creative energy is almost wholly with agnostics and Protestants [...] There is some life in the convert, but in the born Catholic hardly any.’27 To support his highly questionable generalizations about the relationship between faith and creativity, Moore supplied some equally question-
able statistics. In the first edition of *Salve*, the second volume of his autobiographical trilogy *Hail and Farewell!*, he relates a conversation with George Russell regarding the connection between religion and literary talent, in which he insists that ‘ninety and five per cent. of the world’s literature was written by Protestants and agnostics’. Moore also tried out his religio-aesthetic theory on his friend Joseph McCabe, who relates the following anecdote in his memoirs:

I was dining one night at George Moore’s with the French novelist Edouard Dujardin and, the talk falling upon Newman, I confessed my literary hero-worship. Moore, whose blood-pressure rose whenever he heard this literary praise of Newman, jumped up from the table with his customary bluntness and fetched his copy of the ‘Apologia’, with a marked page. ‘Read that,’ he said truculently, ‘and tell Dujardin how many mistakes there are in that one page.’ I read it through. ‘Eleven,’ I confessed. ‘Thirteen,’ Moore snorted.

And so, in asserting what he believed to be his innate Protestantism, Moore convinced himself that he was also taking on the spirit of great writers, and *The Apostle* was no doubt his way of paying homage to what he saw as the intellectual freedom of his newly declared faith.

*The Apostle* started out as a brief ‘Prefatory Note’, published in *The English Review* in June 1910. Moore introduces what amounts to work in progress – a deposit for the published drama a year later – by explaining his main reason for putting such rudimentary writing in print; namely, to claim ownership of an idea:

The story of ‘The Apostle’ is one of those striking stories that one is tempted to relate to amuse one’s friends after dinner, and I have related it sufficiently often to invite collaboration [...] our friends have their friends, and a story wanders far like thistle-down, and somebody hearing it [...] might unexpectedly feel himself called upon to write it.

And, true enough, the idea of fictionalizing a meeting between Jesus and his apostle was already being contemplated by fellow writer Frank Harris. Joseph Hone, Moore’s authorized biographer, recalls how Moore and Harris were both ‘on the trail of the same subject – a post-Crucifixion meeting between Jesus and St. Paul’. It was a state of affairs that developed into what Samuel Roth described as Harris’s
famous disagreement with George Moore’, and that is well documented in the writings of the two opponents and those of their friends and enemies. Harris puts on record what he believed to be the origin of Moore’s Jesus-and-Paul scenario in an article wryly entitled ‘George Moore and Jesus’:

‘Please tell me before you go,’ he persisted, ‘where you got the idea that Jesus didn’t die on the cross. That interests me enormously…’

‘Jesus is said to have died in a few hours,’ I said. ‘That astonished even Pilate and so I thought –’

‘Oh,’ cried Moore, disappointed. ‘It’s only a guess of yours; but why take him to Cæsarea? Why bring Paul there? Why…?’

I knew he was merely informing himself in his usual dexterous way, so tried to cut him short.

‘An early tradition,’ I cried; ‘my dear fellow, an early tradition’, and ever since Moore has talked about this ‘early tradition’, though it would puzzle him to say where it’s to be found.

Moore’s version of finding inspiration for his New Testament fiction is, as might be expected, somewhat at odds with Harris’s. It is detailed in ‘A Prefatory Letter on Reading the Bible for the First Time’, first published in The English Review in February 1911, and later forming the introduction to The Apostle. In this letter Moore recalls meeting his friend W. K. Magee, librarian of the National Library of Ireland, and hearing from him about a work by a French medical doctor that put forward the view that ‘it was some cataleptic swoon that Christ had suffered, and not death on the Cross’ (PL 464). Adverted to again in Moore’s preface to the 1921 edition of The Brook Kerith, this was evidently a memorable meeting for the author, though the actual title of the book under discussion is not mentioned in any account of it. One possible contender for Moore’s inspiration was Jésus de Nazareth: Au Point de Vue Historique, Scientifique et Social by Paul Régla, a practising physician. The main thesis of this work is that Jesus was educated in an Essene community and that his life and ministry were driven by Essenian ideals and religious teachings. Yet despite affording the library incident a certain significance by including it in the Prefatory Letter, Moore goes on to insist that the French doctor’s study had done no more than jog his memory, his being already acquainted with the theory that Christ survived the cross and that ‘he had been supposed by many to be an Essene monk’
It was Moore’s decision to fictionalize this Essene theory that gave his play – and the novel that grew from it – a strong claim to originality.\textsuperscript{37}

The Prefatory Letter to \textit{The Apostle} serves as a declaration of Moore’s newly awakened interest in the Bible and modernist theology, as well as an admission of his fledgling knowledge of both. Additionally, it functions as an autobiographical frame through which the play can be read and interpreted.\textsuperscript{38} What is immediately evident from the letter is that the playwright’s response to the Gospel narratives is almost entirely literary. The New Testament authors are likened to established writers or characters from their fictions: Mark is the Maupassant of the Evangelists and Paul is Don Quixote to Peter’s Sancho Panza (PL 458, 459). These allusions to literary artists recall the intertextuality of Victorian liberal Lives of Jesus, where unattributed words from Shakespeare and Milton frequently interweave with those of Christ; a likeness that sits rather oddly with Moore’s avowedly heterodox intentions. But Moore’s foregrounding of the literary aspects of the Gospels and his decision to ‘put the man of letters in front of the Biblical critic’ (PL 454) comes more from necessity than choice. Joseph Hone states emphatically in his biography that his subject was, at this time, ‘without scholarship’, an observation that several of his compatriots took pleasure in pointing out in their writings about the author and his work.\textsuperscript{39} Virginia Woolf’s analysis of Moore as ‘at once diffident and self-assertive’ seems especially perceptive when applied to his attitude to religious scholarship.\textsuperscript{40} In the Prefatory Letter, his ‘self-assertive’ side is very much in evidence as he challenges the theological experts to sneer at his lack of learning:

If this prefatory note should fall into the hands of [...] learned German critics I will ask him [\textit{sic}] to smile indulgently at the criticism of a man of letters who reads the Bible for the first time, and who, through no fault of his own, has been committed to record his impressions. But why should the fear of writing something silly or commonplace stay my pen? (PL 458)

However, in a personal letter to his German translator and friend Max Meyerfeld, Moore reveals his more diffident side. Having made a number of rudimentary theological errors, Moore admits that he is ‘quite ignorant of documentary evidence’ and that he ‘should have
kept to literary criticism – how the Bible narrative appears to a modern story-teller”. While there is no doubt that Moore’s theological insights made around this time were indeed ‘commonplace’, gleaned, as he readily admits, from erudite friends rather than his own reading, his intellectual grasp of the Bible far outweighed that of some of the more popular writers of religious fiction. Tracing his correspondence through the first two decades of the twentieth century reveals an author steadily acquiring Higher Critical knowledge, knowledge that would shape his religious drama and fiction – for better or worse.

About half of the Prefatory Letter is devoted to Paul and his writings. Moore’s discussion of the apostle, like his discussion of the Evangelists, is unquestionably thin on theology and heavy on personal interpretation. In his analysis of Paul, Moore brings together three of his most abiding interests: the Protestant temperament, sexuality and literary style. The apostle is the archetypal Protestant because he holds that ‘it is in ourselves that we must seek salvation and not in ritual’ (PL 461), unlike Peter, who is defined as a pious Jew, dependent on religious ritual and dogma and, therefore, the pattern of the first Catholic temperament. Whereas Peter represents all that is outmoded and backward-looking, Paul ‘talks to us about the very things we are debating to-day, what the newspapers call sex problems’ (PL 461). Borrowing rather ineptly from the final act of Shakespeare’s Othello, Moore warms to the human frailties of the apostle who ‘loved St. Eunice not wisely but too well’ (PL 461), arguing that Paul’s ‘thorn in the flesh’ lent him an invaluable insight into the human condition and, as a consequence, endowed him with the power of a great writer. In Moore’s view, the Pauline Epistles are the ‘most natural literature in the world’ and ‘in none other do we hear the voice of a man so clearly’ (PL 461). He describes how the author ‘flashes across his page perceptions that elude the words of every other writer’ (PL 462), imagery that conjures up a picture of Paul as not so much an itinerant preacher as an inspired man of letters. In his later writings, Moore would attempt to define the power of Paul’s prose: it was a quality that came from personal passion and that was ‘not eloquence, nor rhetoric, nor vehemence, but heat’. This ‘literary heat’, Moore believed, would go on to influence great writers, a theory that harmonized conveniently with his claim that only those of the Protestant spirit could produce fine literature.

It is characteristic of Moore that he interprets such a famously
complex figure with absolute certainty, perceiving no grey between
the black and the white. He remained unconcerned by the highly
contradictory nature of the Pauline Epistles and uninterested in the
theological problems that biblical exegesis had worried away at for
decades, such as Paul’s attitude to the Judaic law and its place in the
new religious order. Instead, Moore created an apostle in his own
image: an innate Protestant, a gifted writer and a man susceptible to
the charms of the female. Reading the Prefatory Letter alongside *The
Apostle* reveals how Moore believed his literary sensibilities gave him
insights beyond the reach of biblical scholars whom, he once
pronounced, were but ‘children in aesthetics’. While acknowledging
that he is a newcomer to Pauline writings, he nevertheless has the
confidence as a creative artist to go against the theological grain and
pronounce that ‘a very considerable portion of the Acts must have
been written by Paul himself’ (PL 459). Writing to Dujardin, he
boasted that the Prefatory Letter had procured him ‘a little renown for
exegesis’ and, though it is tempting to dismiss this as wishful thinking
on the part of an author prone to self-aggrandisement, it appears to
have had some substance. In the introduction to the 1916 edition of
F. W. H. Myers’s popular poem *St Paul*, E. J. Watson names Moore as
a Pauline expert, paraphrasing words from the author’s Prefatory
Letter that insist that the Epistles ‘portray a human soul more vividly
than ever a human soul has been portrayed in literature’.

**Finding a form**

Moore took some considerable time in selecting the best artistic form
for his Gospel story. In his article ‘George Moore and Jesus’, Frank
Harris recalls how Moore had had trouble deciding whether to write
his scenario of Paul and Jesus in the form of prose fiction or drama;
and it is clear from his correspondence with Max Meyerfeld that he
also had ambitions for an operatic treatment. In the spring of 1910, he
wrote to Meyerfeld:

In the June number of the English Review I am publishing a
scenario entitled ‘The Apostle’. ‘The Death of Jesus’ would be a
better title – Paul and Christ face to face. The scenario cannot fail to
interest you, and it might provide Strauss with the subject of an
opera.
Some years earlier, Moore had shown an interest in Richard Wagner’s scenario for an operatic life of Jesus, originally sketched out in the 1840s but never developed into full opera form. In a letter of 1895, he thanks Lena Milman for her translation of the piece, adding: ‘It interested me very much. It seems to be a divine arrangement […] It will come in useful some day.’ Moore may well have felt that that day had come with his composition of *The Apostle* and that, in choosing Richard Strauss as his musical collaborator, he had the opportunity of repeating the *succès de scandale* enjoyed by the composer’s version of Wilde’s *Salome*. Though Moore persisted with his operatic ambitions until the autumn of 1910, by November he had settled on the form of a dramatic scenario and found a publisher in Maunsel and Company; it is with evident mischievous delight that Moore writes to Meyerfeld: ‘The Dublin publisher called last night beaming at the thought of publishing the little booklet. I suggested Christmas as a suitable time, and he very innocently said that he thought Easter would be a better time. I agreed with him.’

Not everyone was quite so pleased. James Joyce was most put out by Maunsel’s decision to publish Moore’s ‘little booklet’, making his feelings felt in a broadside addressed to Maunsel shortly after they had refused to publish *Dubliners*. In it he cites *The Apostle* as a work that managed to pass their censorship regulations thanks only to the fact that it was written by ‘a genuine gent / That lives on his property’s ten per cent’. Whether Joyce was right in his contention is difficult to judge for sure, though it is true to say that Moore’s rather slight work was very much a niche publication, unlikely to attract a wide enough readership to whip up any real controversy.

*The Apostle* joined a rather eccentric literary sub-genre: the biblical play, constructed with the stage in mind but, given the laws of censorship, destined solely for the private reader. While never destined for the mainstream, the genre was already represented by works such as George Barlow’s verse drama *Jesus of Nazareth*, published in 1896. In its ample preface, Barlow acknowledges that his play is unlikely to be performed in 1890s’ England, yet he also insists that he has ‘been careful to throw it into an actable form’ in an attempt to counteract ‘the irreparable harm […] done to the stage and to literature by the complete divorce which has for some time existed between the plays which are written to be acted and the plays which are written to be read’. Moore was certainly acquainted with Barlow when living in London in the early 1880s. In a letter of 1883, Barlow congratulates Moore on the *Spectator*’s favourable review of his novel *A Modern
Lover, and invites him to call on his return to town. It is uncertain whether Moore ever encountered Barlow’s play (the author was, in fact, much better known for his poetry), though if he had, he would have realized that *The Apostle* would appear positively restrained by comparison. Barlow’s drama presents a torrid mix of sexual desire and intrigue, featuring such show-stopping scenes as the Magdalene stabbing to death the chief rabbi and Judas in quick succession, before instigating a fraudulent resurrection and making off to a distant land with Jesus as her husband. Though Barlow insists in the preface that he has cast the piece in ‘actable form’, the chances of it ever escaping the censor’s blue pencil were negligible.

*The Apostle* does not read like a drama written in ‘actable form’. Its Prefatory Letter is aimed more at the reader than a theatre director, and the slight play-script that follows consists of speeches interspersed with lengthy blocks of expository prose, hovering in a kind of theatrical limbo between dialogue and stage directions. Indeed, the play opens with just such a passage:

It was the practice among the Essenes that an elder monk should read the Scripture and interpret obscure or difficult passages. We gather from the talk between two monks, Manahem and Sadduc, who enter, that they have left their brethren still engaged in disputatation. ‘May we,’ asks Manahem, ‘regard the passages in Scripture in which God is described with human attributes as allegorical?’

Even while it contains a rudimentary stage direction indicating that the play should open *in medias res*, followed by Manahem’s opening line, if removed from its context this extract could easily be mistaken for prose fiction. What is clear from this introductory passage is that Moore was exercised as to how to dramatize the rather basic theology he had at his disposal, and he continues to wrestle with this difficulty throughout the three acts of the piece. Conveying Pauline theology on stage proved particularly challenging: the apostle is burdened with speeches so prolix they would be beyond the range of even the most charismatic of players, and would leave the other actors on stage with little option but to stand still and listen. Yet however provisional the script appears, Moore seems to have worked on it with some hope of performance. His correspondence with Meyerfeld, who translated the scenario into German and transformed some of its summaries into dialogue, suggests that it was primarily intended for the stage; and
likewise a letter written to Dujardin shortly before completing the scenario, in which he asks ‘The play will not be produced here, on account of the Censor, but in Paris it would certainly be a success [...] Could you not find someone to undertake the translation?’ It is clear from this that Moore realized that his play was only likely to be staged in Continental Europe. Though the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain did not extend to Ireland, the Lord Lieutenant had the power to withdraw the patent allowing performance rights should a production be deemed offensive and, given Moore’s literary circle, he would have been more than usually aware of the unofficial censorship at work in his home country. As things turned out the *The Apostle* never found its way onto any stage – French or otherwise – and joined the already substantial list of Moore’s stage plays never to be performed.

As an author in his sixties, with a substantial number of failed plays behind him, it must have been tempting for Moore to eschew the theatre altogether. His choice of the dramatic form for his first attempt at fictionalizing the Gospels is, then, an intriguing one. In writing *The Apostle*, Moore seems to have been picking up creative threads from the very earliest stage in his career. As a young writer in Paris, he had embarked on a quest to set the theatrical world alight with a dramatic representation of a great Protestant figure in a verse drama entitled *Martin Luther*, co-written with the French author Bernard Lopèze. Its gestation is outlined in a sequence of stilted, highly artificial letters that form its preface. Shavian in length, if not in intellect, this correspondence between co-authors reveals Moore’s utter lack of dramaturgical know-how and his jejune belief that a French audience would be shocked by a theatrical depiction of a Protestant hero. The finished play-script was published in 1878 but, luckily for theatre-goers, never produced. While its contorted blank verse and melodramatic scenes would prove profoundly embarrassing to Moore in future years, its significance for his later work should not be underestimated. *Martin Luther* contains the first signs of Moore’s predilection for mixing historical fact with fiction and looks forward to his treatment of major religious figures; it also exhibits the pungent anti-clericalism and fascination with the issue of celibacy that would surface in later works. There are plainly discernible links between *Martin Luther* and *The Apostle*, not least in their dramatizing of Moore’s typological vision: Paul is the type of true Protestantism and Luther the antitype who would deliver Christians from the dogmatic grip of Catholicism.
In the fifteenth letter of the preface to Moore’s first ever theatrical piece, the author inserts a poem he has penned entitled ‘The Dream’, which describes how Shakespeare had appeared to him in a vision and bemoaned the parlous state of the English stage. The dream progresses in a manner reminiscent of Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, with Shakespeare taking Moore to the Adelphi Theatre to see an unconscionably dull nineteenth-century play. It concludes with Shakespeare’s despairing verdict that ‘the drama no longer exists in England’ and the dreamer is left to ponder what might be done to breathe new life into the nation’s theatre.63 In the 1890s, as a rather more mature writer, Moore had entered into ongoing debates about the ‘New Drama’, penning a number of articles and essays about the future of the theatre in England. In ‘On the Necessity of an English Théâtre Libre’, he defined the type of plays that needed to be written and produced if the English drama were to develop:

Plays in which the characters, although true to nature, are not what are known as ‘sympathetic characters’, plays in which there are no comic love-scenes – plays which contain no comic relief – plays which deal with religious and moral problems in such ways as would not command the instantaneous and unanimous approval of a large audience drawn from all classes of society – plays in which there is no love-interest, plays composed entirely of male or entirely of female characters, etc.64

Here, then, Moore places the responsibility for good drama squarely on the audience; it is they who determine what is written. It was an opinion to which he would hold fast, telling Meyerfeld in 1910:

As you say the Censor is not responsible for the decadence of the English stage. We do not want to see serious plays, and as only serious plays are literature there is no dramatic literature in England, and can be none until a change comes over public taste [...] I believe, or think I believe art to be a thing of spontaneous growth, and that it is impossible either to encourage or repress art.65

It is clear here that, despite his earlier zeal in campaigning against the censorship of the circulating libraries, he was not to be counted among those lobbying for the liberalization of the stage and, indeed, his signature is conspicuously absent from the list of 71 who made their protest
in the pages of *The Times*.

For all its artistic flaws, *The Apostle* fulfils most of the artistic criteria laid out by Moore in ‘On the Necessity of an English Théâtre Libre’: it deals with serious religious questions, attempts to depict biblical figures in a realistic, flesh-and-blood manner and steers clear of any romance or comedy. However, stage censorship would prevent it from ever having the opportunity to provoke the displeasure or otherwise of a large audience, and the slight critical attention it received from readers was mildly disapproving rather than outraged. The *Athenaeum*, for example, while expressing reservations about the suitability of the play’s theme for dramatic presentation, and judging the depiction of Paul not to be ‘in good taste’, adopts a measured, even wryly amused, tone when describing Moore’s ‘ingenuous’ contribution to biblical criticism.66 The play written to be read was, after all, a relatively inoffensive form, and it would be several years before Moore could develop it into something rather more provocative.

**The strange meeting of Jesus and St Paul**

*The Apostle* gives us a fictional meeting of two New Testament giants, transformed through Moore’s imagination into a clash of opposites. Paul’s vociferousness and enormous physical energy are contrasted with Jesus’s self-effacement and quiet resignation. Differing as noticeably in their vision of God and the religious life, the only belief they hold in common is that Peter was ‘a parcel of ancient rudiments’ (A 94). The contradiction of Paul’s passionate preaching of the Resurrection to a community that houses the ultimate proof of its falsity gives rise to a sequence of dramatic ironies. Inevitably, given the extreme nature of Moore’s revision of the New Testament story, there are several points in the play when the ironies appear all too obvious. Towards the end of the second act, for example, Paul defines his Saviour in a speech redolent of the Apostles’ Creed:

Son of the living God, that took on the beggarly raiment of human flesh at Nazareth, was baptized by John in the Jordan, thereafter preached in Galilee, went up to Jerusalem, and, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, was crucified by order of Pilate between two thieves on Mount Calvary; the third day he rose from the dead – (A 68)
This fervent declaration of faith, so close to that intoned in Christian churches down the centuries, is cut short by Manahem’s disclosure that a member of the brotherhood has lived the same life, suffered the same fate, but has survived to tell the tale. From this point in the play, Paul is confronted with material evidence that the Essenian Jesus is one and the same as his ‘risen’ Christ. Whereas in Frank Harris’s ‘The Miracle of the Stigmata’, Paul is only brought into the presence of Jesus after he has died of natural causes, Moore pushes the scenario one step further by keeping Jesus alive and capable of refuting Paul’s story with the evidence of his own body. The moment when the marks of the cross are exhibited to the incredulous Paul is captured in one of the play’s most detailed stage directions:

Taking Jesus’ hands he looks at them and finds the marks of the nails, and looking upon his brow he finds traces of where the crown of thorns had been placed; so he is taken by a great fear and raves incoherently and dashes about and seems to lose his senses, and would strike Christ down, but at that moment falls on to a seat overcome. (A 71)

To conjure such a scene in the imagination is one thing, to put it on stage quite another. The unpolished nature of the play-script is nowhere more evident than at this moment of crisis, when Paul’s reactions threaten to tip the drama over into melodrama, if not farce. After this steadfast refusal by the apostle to believe that his Saviour has survived the cross, the drama takes on a cruel and mocking trajectory, with Jesus forced to ‘go to Jerusalem to save the world from crimes that will be committed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth’ (A 99). Christ’s ministry seems destined to go into reverse. Whereas once he sought to convince the people of his divine purpose, he now seeks to convince them that he is merely human. Jesus’s threatening to announce his survival to those newly filled with the glorious news of the resurrection prompts Paul to violent defensive action. In an audacious final scene, he strikes Christ down with his own hand, at the same time declaring that he does so in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, Moore’s ultimate touch – or hammer blow – of irony.67 Moore insisted to Meyerfeld that Paul’s killing of Jesus is a result of his temperament which ‘revolts and denies the evidence of his senses’; it is not, as might be assumed, a conscious and deliberate act, carried out to protect the faith that the apostle had so successfully built up. Moore’s explanation of the final scene continues:
We cling to our ideas despite evidence to the contrary. The climax as described in my manuscript is that Christ having heard Paul’s doctrine of faith decides to go to Jerusalem and denounce Paul, and in the struggle which follows Paul, half-accidentally, half in passion, strikes Christ with his staff and kills him. He then says that Christianity has been saved, meaning thereby that if the man were an imposter Christianity had been saved. The further question whether the man be Christ Paul does not consider. The situation seems to me an exceedingly human one, and the more you think of it the more humanity you will perceive in it.68

For Moore, then, Paul takes on heroic status through his humanity and a conviction so strong it transcends all empirical reality.

Moore’s choice of Paul as his eponymous hero could not have been confidently forecast from his early musings on biblical drama. In the novel Mike Fletcher, for example, the hero might be seen to speak for his creator in sketching out his plans for a trilogy of plays outlining the life of Christ. Following a strictly chronological sequence, Mike Fletcher explains how the first play will focus on John the Baptist, the second on Jesus and the final one on Peter. While Paul does not feature in this post-crucifixion drama, the germ of The Apostle can be discerned when Fletcher goes on to outline his third play, which ‘ends in Peter flying from Rome to escape crucifixion; but outside the city he sees Christ carrying His cross, and Christ says He is going to be crucified a second time’.69 By the time he embarked on The Apostle, Moore’s personal admiration for Paul was very much in tune with the contemporary theological climate. Humbert Wolfe points out in his study of Moore and his work that ‘Paul and not Jesus was the Christ of Victorianism’ and this interest in the apostle endured well into the twentieth century.70 F. W. Farrar would choose Paul as the obvious subject for a sequel to The Life of Christ and, moving into the twentieth century, the more controversial theologian, Albert Schweitzer, would follow his Quest of the Historical Jesus with a study of Paul and his interpreters.

Magee believed that ‘Paul surely never had a stranger champion than Moore’, an understandable view considering the author’s rabid anti-clericalism and frequent vows of allegiance to paganism, and it is perhaps the passion with which Moore champions his hero that is partly responsible for the artistic shortcomings of his dramatic scenario.71 Moore demonstrates his veneration of the Epistles by
weaving quotations from them into Paul’s speeches. Verses from Romans, Galatians and 1 and 2 Corinthians are paraphrased or, less frequently, rendered verbatim by the fictional apostle, a transtextuality that leaves exposed the seams between textual quotation and fictional language, and undermines the credibility of his spoken presence. Paul’s speeches are verbose, contorted and unnatural, one reviewer likening them to ‘the sermonizings of a Salvation Army convert’.72 Equally unsuccessful is Moore’s endeavour to bring Paul to life on stage by emphasizing his corporeality. He is conceived as ‘a thick-set man, of rugged appearance, hairy in the face and with a belly’ (A 51), a description to which Frank Harris took particular exception, accusing Moore of ‘travestying’ his own portrait of Paul in ‘The Miracle of the Stigmata’.73 It is a physicality writ large when Paul delivers the death blow to Jesus. However, the quality of immediacy derived from this emphasis on Paul’s fleshiness is counteracted by the unnatural rhythms of his speech, laden as it is with cumbersome scriptural citation and pseudo-archaisms.

If Moore’s personal attachment to Paul is responsible for leading him into theatrical excess, his more detached attitude to Jesus helps him to a somewhat happier outcome. In contrast to the detailed description of Paul’s physical features, we are told nothing of Christ’s appearance, a surprising omission considering the play’s insistence on his mere humanity. Another writer might have withheld this information out of a sense of respect or reverence, but this is highly unlikely in the case of Moore, who had no qualms about shocking his public. It is possible, though, that he wanted to avoid at all cost what he described as the ‘ringleted, unctuous, almost delightful’ Christ of Gallic persuasion, and had not yet settled on the alternative physical image that he would present in The Brook Kerith.74 Jesus’s stage movements are entirely consistent with his rather shadowy physical presence: he chooses to sleep in ‘an obscure corner of the room’ (A 51) and his calm demeanour is highlighted by the ‘doves [which] flutter round him, lighting on his shoulder’, in a manner reminiscent of Francis of Assisi (A 45). Yet if Moore seems to be uncharacteristically sentimental in creating this image of Jesus at peace with himself and the world around him, it is only a means to a much less sentimental end. Such a picture of tranquillity makes the impact of Paul’s arrival all the more unnerving, exposing as it does the pain of the suppressed memories that lie at the core of Christ’s passivity.

Moore’s Jesus figure does not conform to the nineteenth-century
stereotypes of the charismatic teacher, the social reformer or the great poet. Flying in the face of such conventions, he presents a traumatized, mentally complex figure, more in line with the psychiatric studies of Jesus that had emerged in the early 1900s. Several of these studies attempted to prove that Christ had been of unsound mind, putting forward a variety of mental diagnoses to explain how he ended up on the cross: paranoia, megalomania and delusional psychosis being the most common. Albert Schweitzer took the authors of such works to task in The Psychiatric Study of Jesus, first translated into English by W. Montgomery in 1913, under the title ‘The Sanity of the Eschatological Jesus’. In it, Schweitzer refutes some of the best-known psychopathological studies of Jesus, exposing their poor grasp of theology and, in particular, the historical life of Jesus. While Moore is unlikely to have encountered these, he would certainly have been aware of the emerging discipline of psychiatry. Not bound by the rules of scientific or theological method, Moore is free to explore the mind of Jesus through imaginative means, his extra-biblical story of the fate of a crucifixion survivor providing a particularly interesting psychiatric case. The assertive physicality and confidence of Paul contrast emphatically with Jesus’s damaged, reclusive nature, a contrast that Humbert Wolfe expresses in terms of gender characteristics, conjecturing in his monograph on Moore that the author perceives Paul as ‘the man-god of Protestantism as opposed to the woman-god of Catholicism’. The more the apostle persists in his deluded notions of a resurrected Saviour, the more Jesus’s mental reserves are stripped away, and traumatic memories return to him. In addition to this burden, he is faced with the fear of a second crucifixion as he sets out for Jerusalem to deny his own divinity and ‘to save the world from crimes that will be committed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth’ (A 99).

The Apostle and The Brook Kerith

Moore’s imaginative leap from the ‘swoon theory’ to an actual meeting between Paul and Jesus delivered up a dramatic situation beyond his – and most dramatists’ – theatrical capabilities. As a play-script, The Apostle is an abject failure and Moore realized this before the ink was dry on the manuscript. While he put a brave face on it in his correspondence with Dujardin, claiming that he had ‘never had less
trouble in writing anything’, he had given a very different version of the play’s gestation to Magee just a month earlier. In a letter of April 1911, Moore writes to his friend:

I am much obliged to you for looking through the proofs. But your letter leaves me perplexed and wondering if I am to interpret your silence regarding the dialogue as a condemnation [...] It would be necessary to spend three months upon it, reading the while Plotinlus and the New Testament. One of these days I shall try to work up each scene, but it may be that I shall not be able to do this. In prose narrative I know I could, but to press all the subtleties with which the subject is replete into dialogue seems to me a little beyond my talent.78

Moore’s artistic humility here suggests that his writing of a biblical scenario had been a salutary experience. Jean C. Noël’s opinion that ‘Le Brook Kerith ne doit guère à The Apostle que l’hypothèse du sommeil léthargique de Jésus sur la croix et l’hypothèse esséniennne’ [The Brook Kerith owes barely anything to The Apostle except the theories that Jesus only swooned on the cross and that he was taken in by the Essenes] underestimates the significance of the play as a foundation for the novel.79 Drafting the drama brought Moore to realize that, if he hoped to take on the challenge of exploring the inner turmoil of a failed Messiah, he would need the narrative freedom of the novel form.

Moore’s struggles with The Apostle also seem to have helped him decide which New Testament figures to include, which to leave out and which to make the centre of his prose version. The figure of Paul, having proven too large and dominating a presence in the play, is scaled down in the novel, leaving Jesus as the more prominent and the more psychologically interesting of the two. As John Freeman rightly points out in his 1922 study of Moore, in The Brook Kerith Paul is ‘a secondary figure, and the reader looks at him with the eyes of Jesus, and not at Jesus through the eyes of the Apostle’, a change in perspective assisted by the narrative expansiveness that comes with the novel form.80 Writing under the strictures of a three-act play-script, Moore’s presentation of Jesus’s monastic life amounts to little more than dressing the members of his community in white linen and giving them otiose speeches outlining the community’s belief systems and daily routines. The novel form, on the other hand, allows the daily life
of the Essene brotherhood to be shown rather than told, allowing the reader to understand why this community, with its ritual and security, provides the ideal place for Jesus to recover from the horrors of the cross.

One character that is quite conspicuously struck out of the novel version of Moore’s post-crucifixion story is Mary Magdalene. The figure of the Magdalene featured large in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century biblical poetry, prose fiction and verse drama, often as a source of erotic interest. In Alexandra von Herder’s play *Jesus of Nazareth* (1913), she is the mistress of the high priest Kaiaphas; in Edgar Saltus’s novel *Mary of Magdala* (1891), she proves a fatal attraction for Judas who, jealous of her love for Jesus, betrays him to the authorities, hanging himself shortly afterwards as an act of repentance. Even more daring are those works that present her as sexually desirous of Christ himself. Robert Buchanan’s *The Ballad of Mary the Mother* (1897), for example, features a Magdalene who exclaims ‘O would that I were the Queen o’the King, / Or even his concubine!’; and, as mentioned previously, George Barlow’s *Mary Magdalene* ends up as the actual bride of Christ. In *The Apostle*, prevented from following the established mode of depicting the Magdalene as a femme fatale by a twenty-five-year time gap, Moore chooses instead to show her colourful past in a faded retrospect; she appears in just one brief scene, having been brought to the Essene monastery by Paul to bear witness to the resurrection. Mary’s reunion with Jesus is surprisingly subdued in dramatic tenor. Turned away from the threshold of the monastery on account of her sex, she later encounters the master she has not seen in two decades. In stark contrast to Paul, she is unperturbed by Christ’s explanation of how he was nursed back to health at the house of Joseph of Arimathea. Far from denying this new truth, she implores him to return with her to Galilee where his words are still remembered and his teaching sadly missed. Moore remains true to his conviction that ‘women are natural pagans and have never been Christianized’ in showing the Magdalene as more disturbed at Jesus witnessing her faded physical beauty than by the revelation that her Lord has not risen. Moore presents an aged Mary Magdalene, her bodily deterioration detailed not in stage directions, but through her own description of herself as ‘an old woman, withered and wan, unsightly in all eyes’ (*A 90*), who has ‘rags only enough to cover her deformities’ (*A 91*). In this respect, Moore’s stage character bears a strong resemblance to Donatello’s carved wooden
figure of the Magdalene, described by Lord Balcarres in the first English study of the artist and his work:

She stands upright, a mass of tattered rags, haggard, emaciated, almost toothless. Her matted hair falls down in thick knots; all feminine softness has gone from the limbs, and nothing but the drawn muscles remain. It is a thin wasted form, piteous in expression, painful in all its ascetic excess.  

But if the stark realism of Donatello’s Magdalene beautifully evokes the paradox of ‘ascetic excess’, Moore’s age-ravaged creature suggests a woman entirely defined by her sexuality and devoid of any higher spirituality. Often guilty of prurience when dealing with issues of sexuality, Moore’s treatment of this confrontation between an ageing Magdalene and the Christ-figure proves no exception. Mary’s speech recalling the wiping of Christ’s feet is an example of Moore at his most indelicate:

Draw nearer, master, for I would touch the feet over which my hair descended like a mantle – soft and silky my hair was then. That thou shouldst remember its softness as it flowed about thy feet is a great joy that must remain in my heart […] Look not on me, master, but remember me as I was when I knelt at thy feet. (A 91–92)

Certainly, his decision to remove Mary Magdalene from The Brook Kerith and the two subsequent stage adaptations was a wise one. Insinuating an ageing Magdalene into an all-male environment posed artistic challenges that were likely to defeat even the most accomplished of dramatists. Moore might also have felt that the foregrounding of Mary Magdalene in fictional recastings of the Gospels had become too commonplace – as indeed they had – and that Paul should take her place as the apostola apostolorum.

Regardless of Moore’s avowed Protestantism, The Apostle is an entirely secular and iconoclastic work, pushing hard against the boundaries of biblical drama, boundaries that continued to hold fast despite a period of sustained campaigning for the relaxation of stage censorship in Britain. While the process of writing The Apostle impressed upon Moore the difficulties that inhered in composing New Testament drama, he remained tenacious in his efforts to stage his meeting between Paul and Jesus. In 1923 Heinemann published a full-
length script of *The Apostle*, an extensively revised version of the original, adapted from *The Brook Kerith*. As with the original scenario of 1911, Moore had high hopes for the piece prior to its publication. He boasted to Gosse that he hoped to do for London ‘what somebody did for Oberammergau’, and a few months later he enthused in a letter to Nancy Cunard about how he was about to read the role of Paul aloud to ‘Leslie Faber, one of our best actors’. Seven years later, the play went through a second meticulous revision and was published under a new title: *The Passing of the Essenes*. Lionel Barton, frequently in Moore’s company around the time of this revision, told Joseph Hone that ‘he was most meticulous as to every comma’. Finally, in 1930, just a few years before Moore’s death, these efforts were rewarded with a stage performance. What was by now a twenty-year-old scenario played at the private Arts Theatre in London between 1 and 5 October, with the music of the Chant of the Essenes being supplied by Gustav Holst. Though this production was warmly received, the *Times Literary Supplement* describing Moore’s dramatic mastery as ‘Sophoclean’, it failed to live up to the author’s expectations. Writing just a few years before his death, he complained to Eglinton that he ‘found the play infinitely tedious on the stage […] One man barked, thinking that barking was a good conception of Paul, and the other reduced Jesus to the image and likeness of a monthly nurse.’ Moore may finally have come to realize, then, that the imaginative representation of Jesus was better left to prose fiction, and that he could take consolation in knowing that his decision to transform *The Apostle* of 1911 into *The Brook Kerith* had been exactly the right one.

Notes

4 Quoted in *The Lord Chamberlain’s Blue Pencil*, p. 99.
1952), pp. 64–65.
7 See The Times, 29 October 1907, p. 15.
14 *The Source of the Christian Tradition*, trans. Joseph McCabe (London: Watts, 1911). In his autobiography, *Eighty Years a Rebel* (Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1947), McCabe claimed to have written over 200 books, more than any other living author (p. 5). These works focused on topics as diverse as the history of flagellation, existentialism and the writings of Edward Clodd.
15 *Letters from George Moore to Ed. Dujardin*, p. 89.
20 Undated letter to Julian Moore, National Library of Ireland, MS 4479, f. 64. Moore’s spelling and punctuation were frequently inaccurate. Unless otherwise indicated, I have corrected the numerous minor errors that occur in his manuscript
and autograph letters.
21 George Moore to the *Irish Times*, 30 December 1910, National Library of Ireland, MS 2648, f. 21.
24 In a conversation broadcast by the BBC, Larry Morrow related the story of how Moore, while staying as an overnight guest, inquired of his hostess who the author was of the ‘beautifully written book’ on his bedside table, the title of which he pronounced as ‘The Bibble’. It is one of several anecdotes in an extensive Moore apocrypha. See W. R. Rodgers, *Irish Literary Portraits* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972), p. 85.
25 *Father and Son* (London: Heinemann, 1907) tells of Edmund Gosse’s upbringing in a Plymouth Brethren community and reveals how fundamentalists such as the author’s father refused to read fiction, deeming it deceptive, corrupting and in direct opposition to the ‘truth’ of the Scriptures. Moore had been responsible for persuading Gosse to write what was to be his most successful work and was, presumably, well acquainted with its contents.
27 George Moore to Maurice Moore, 11 April 1904, National Library of Ireland, MS 2646, f. 95.
31 Moore, ‘The Apostle By George Moore: Prefatory Note’, p. 564. While Moore’s main concerns doubtless lay with Frank Harris at this time, he may also have in mind a disagreement he had had with W. B. Yeats over the play *Where There Is Nothing* almost a decade earlier. Yeats gives his account of the dispute in *Dramatis Personae, Autobiographies* (pp. 452–53) and refers to it in a postscript to the first published text of the play: “‘Where There Is Nothing” is founded upon a subject which I suggested to George Moore […] but this did not go beyond some rambling talks. Then the need went past, and I gradually put so much of myself into the fable that I felt I must write on it alone, and I took it back into my own hands with his consent. Should he publish a story upon it some day, I shall rejoice that the excellent old custom of two writers taking one fable has been revived in a new form.’ Cited in the introduction to *Where There is Nothing/The Unicorn from the Stars*, ed. Katharine Worth (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press; Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), p. 6.
In an article describing his first and only meeting with Moore, Robert Graves points out that Moore’s thesis ‘that Jesus survived the cross was not new’ and that it had been ‘much more plausibly argued in Samuel Butler’s Fair Haven’. See 5 Pens in Hand (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 124.

While the play itself received scant praise, the introductory material met with approval. One reviewer insisted that ‘the Prefatory Letter [...] is so fine and so exciting that it is worth buying the book for it alone’. See the Irish Review, I (October 1911), pp. 415–16 (p. 416).

Hone, George Moore, p. 311.


George Moore to Max Meyerfeld, 8 December 1910, National Library of Ireland, MS 4460, f. 161.

In a radio broadcast, Richard Best, W. K. Magee’s colleague at the National Library, recalled how ‘Moore hadn’t much of a library [...] He didn’t buy books, and he never really read much.’ See Rodgers, Irish Literary Portraits, p. 85.

Moore had, of course, gained himself a reputation as a writer concerned with ‘sex problems’. In the 1880s and early 1890s he had covered a range of sexual issues including adultery, rape, lesbianism and the effects of celibacy on the individual.


Moore, Conversations in Ebury Street, p. 185.

Letters from George Moore to Ed. Dujardin, p. 88.


Harris, Contemporary Portraits, Second Series, p. 124.

George Moore to Max Meyerfeld, 24 May 1910, National Library of Ireland, MS 4460, f. 139.


George Moore to Max Meyerfeld, 10 November 1910, National Library of Ireland, MS 4460, f. 153.


Barlow, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 13.

George Barlow to George Moore, 23 September 1883, National Library of Ireland, MS 2648, f.2.

Barlow, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 13.


Letters from George Moore to Ed. Dujardin, p. 89.

Moore’s choice of Martin Luther would no doubt have gone unchallenged in France where audiences were accustomed to seeing religious subjects presented on stage. In contrast, stage and film censorship in Britain withheld such treatments from the public. As late as 1929, the British Board of Film Censors banned a film
about Martin Luther as ‘likely to offend a large section of the public’. See Dorothy Knowles, *The Censor, the Drama, and the Film* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1934), p. 238.


61 In her monograph on George Moore, Susan Mitchell records the author’s response to being asked about *Martin Luther*: ‘He instantly sprang from his chair and clutching his flaxen locks walked frantically about his room wailing: “What have I ever done to you that you should remind me of this thing?”’ See Mitchell, *George Moore*, p. 19.

62 Moore extends this typology in the historical romance *Héloïse and Abélard* (1921), the hero of which he regarded as ‘a light before the dawn […] who unlocked the dungeon in which the ecclesiastics had imprisoned humanity’. See *Moore Versus Harris*, ed. Guido Bruno (Chicago: privately printed, 1925), p. 19.

63 Lopèz and Moore, *Martin Luther*, p. 34.


65 George Moore to Max Meyerfeld, 7 April 1911, National Library of Ireland, MS 4460, f. 169.


67 Moore moderated this ending in subsequent versions of the story, with Paul and Jesus parting and going in opposite directions.

68 George Moore to Max Meyerfeld, 5 December 1910, National Library of Ireland, MS 4460, f. 158.


73 Harris, *Contemporary Portraits*, Second Series, p. 127. Paul’s physical appearance seems to have been a popular subject for speculation. In an entry on Paul in *A Dictionary of the Bible, comprising its Antiquities, Biography, Geography, and Natural History*, ed. William Smith, 3 vols (London, 1860–63), John Llewelyn Davies writes: ‘We have no very trustworthy sources of information as to the personal appearance of Paul. Those which we have […] are the early pictures and mosaics described by Mrs Jamieson, and passages from Malalas, Nicephorus, and the apocryphal *Acta Pauli et Theclae*. They all agree in ascribing to the Apostle, a short stature, a long face with high forehead, an aquiline nose, close and prominent eyebrows’ (II, p. 762).

74 *Letters of George Moore, With an Introduction by John Eglinton to whom they were written* (Bournemouth: Sydenham, 1942), p. 52.


77 *Letters from George Moore to Ed. Dujardin*, p. 89.


79 Albert J. Farmer, *Le Mouvement esthétique et ‘décadent’ en Angleterre 1873–1900*


81 Alexandra von Herder, *Jesus of Nazareth: A Poetical Drama in Seven Scenes* (London: Heinemann, 1913). Von Herder wrote eight plays in all, most of which were never performed.


83 Robert Buchanan, *The Ballad of Mary the Mother* (London: Robert Buchanan, 1897), p. 79.


86 George Moore to Edmund Gosse, 20 September 1922, National Library of Ireland, MS 2134.

87 George Moore to Nancy Cunard, 25 February 1923, National Library of Ireland, MS 2648, f. 42.

88 Lionel Barton to Joseph Hone, 17 April 1935, National Library of Ireland, MS 2648, f. 29.

89 *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 October 1930, p. 802.