

Holy Historical Biography!

The Ancient World. At dinner time.
Three masters of the art of rhyme
were in a tavern eating feta,
wishing epic verse paid better.
Their names were Matthew, Mark and Luke,
collaborators on a book,
when Lo, there comes another writer
whose name is John, whose mood is brighter:
“Hey, listen, apostolic folk,
you’ll never guess: I met this bloke
who runs a literary agency -
I think he called it PFD -
he says that he’s the ideal fella
to make our book a million seller.
All we’ve got to do, it seems,
is find a more appealing means
of courting public sympathy.
He recommends biography.”

“Biography?” Mark turned violet,
“Who’d be the subject? Pontius Pilate?
Who? Caesar? Cleopatra? Herod?
I wish they all were dead and berod.”
“They are,” says Mathew, “metaphorical-
ly speaking they are all historical.
But there’s nothing wrong with history
it pays much more than poetry -
and what is more, you don’t get sued
even if your work is lewd.”
Said Luke: “That’s it! *A life of sin:
Memoirs of Mary Magdalene!*
Matthew frowned. “Look, this is serious.
You know there is an obvious genius...”
“Barabas?” “No! The Nazarene...”
“That chap who used to sell ice cream?”
“NO!!! The kid from Nazareth,
with greasy hair and desert breath.
He made the dumb to talk, the lame
to walk and leave behind their shame
and kick the sticks of blind old men
who promptly learnt to see again.
“What was his name?” “Oh, Jesus Christ.
Something like that.” “So *you* think, priced
at nineteen-ninety-nine or less
this guy’s life-story will impress
the punters in the weald of Kent?”
“Of course”, said John, “it’s heaven-sent.
A golden opportunity.

Just sign this contract here and we
will make the charts, do interviews
appear on Radio Devon News.
sign autographs, and, best of all,
perform at Cheltenham Festival.”

They looked from one unto each other.
“Where do we start?” “Well, with his mother.
I think they cut his umbilical cord
in Bethlehem neo-natal ward.”
“Oh, no! His birthplace was a stable.”
“Fiddlesticks! That’s just a fable!
“It doesn’t matter. I have no doubt
there’s no one left to point it out.
We’ll make it up as we go along,
and who’s to know if we are wrong?
Poetic licence. He was born
upon a cold and frosty morn
in mid July, while shepherds watched
their genetically-transfigured flocks
and wise men journeyed from the east
(in flight from Turkey’s nice police).
“Okay, but how to do the ending?
It will not do to have clothes rending
and screams descending from the cross
and crowns of thorns and copious loss
of blood.” “You’re right,” said Mark, “the movie
must make Golgotha seem real groovy.
Luke jumped up: “I see it now!
Let’s sacrifice a sacred cow!
Let thousands follow him in line
with water they want turned to wine.
There’ll be a party. Let’s have nude
fishermen supply the food
and cast their nets on dancing girls
replete with Graeco-Roman curls,
and let Barabas be the bouncer;
at the end he could announce a
short respite before the birth
of Jesus, once more, on the Earth!
Then Calgary will ring with laughter
and Christ reign happily ever after.”

“Thank God,” said Mark, “the laws of libel
do not protect those in the bible...”

Happy Christmas 2003
From Ian