The Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas

Written by:
Detlev Koepke

Edited and arranged by:
David Koepke
With a foreword by:
Max Green

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Editor's Note

This material is about the Gospel of Thomas, which may be the original written words of Jesus. It is my obligation to my father and to Western civilization that this material be released in a readable form. It is important because it shows that there was always a spark of humanity within Christianity and not only goodness. The goodness was an ideal and the ideal was Jesus as God on earth. Ideals by definition cannot be human, they are the striving to be more than human somehow. The Gospel of Thomas restores Jesus as a human being, rejecting any pedestal his followers can put him on. He walked among them, yet he thought he had something to tell them about their own humanity.

Many say that the Gospel of Thomas is derivative of the Synoptic Gospels; my father shows something far more significant, that the Synoptic Gospels are derivative of the Gospel of Thomas. This conclusion if widely accepted would force a reckoning never before seen in Christianity, due to an insurrection that was present within the religion even before its inception. The insurrection of Jesus himself. But this is not about saving Christianity, my father never considered himself a Christian. This material rescues Jesus from Christianity. It shows that he was not, and never was, a Christian. And if Christianity can't rest on Jesus for much of its foundation, what does it have? And if Jesus isn't really who he is portrayed to be in the New Testament, who was he?

I never fully understood my father's motivations for leaving so much behind, culminating in this book, since although he attended Harvard Divinity School with intentions of becoming a minister, he left the school and taught university and community college part time for a career. Before that he had rejected a History PhD track at Columbia although he did get a Masters out of it (which he said he learned nothing from). He wanted to live his own life, on his own terms. He had two children and became active in his community. In addition to a very bohemian, bachelor lifestyle through his 30's, he started a community garden that still thrives today and worked intensely on a co-operative market project. He began amassing a huge personal library, which I think was his real academic education. In his 40's he began writing, and although he made a few attempts at being published, it seemed to be (with hindsight) mostly his way of cathartically trying to make sense of the world as he knew it. I think that is the impulse that drove the writing process of this material, not fame, not really academic esteem, certainly not fortune, but a personal exploration.

While it is true that he did have hopes of being a serious academic writer since he had obvious talent and interest in his fields, he never wanted to play "the game" to their satisfaction. And even though taking the road less travelled is full of many doubts and "what-ifs", from the perspective of having life-long aspirations of being a fully-fledged academic, I consider this work a vindication of his path being the fruitful one.

I had a dream 7 years ago where Jesus, my father, and I were walking up a winding staircase single file towards the top of what seemed like a watermill or windmill, stone and circular. At the top of the staircase before the door, Jesus stopped and outstretched his arm and lowered his eyes as we moved past him to exit the doorway into the bright light, and the dream ended. And so I am very pleased to be able to finally release this book, what can be termed as my father's life work, to as wide an audience as possible.

David Koepke
September, 2016

Foreword

In the Fall of 2009, on Tuesday evenings, I attended an adult education class in a suburb outside of Boston. The topic was the Gospel of Thomas and the teacher was Detlev Koepke. During the first class, sitting in hard-backed chairs in a semi-circle, the five of us introduced ourselves. One described herself as a recovering Catholic. A middle-aged man with creased chinos said, in a foreboding tone, he was "intrigued" by the course description; an older woman said she signed up because her daughter wanted her to be more social; a woman in her twenties wearing a black-and-yellow leotard said the Zumba class was full, but this class also seemed interesting.

If most of us were somewhat bleary-eyed from the day, Detlev didn't seem to mind. With unconcealed delight, he handed out the class materials (syllabus, contact information, etc.) along with copies of a Gospel of Thomas manuscript he had recently authored. It had the weight of a telephone book. We later found out this book, which focused on the Gospel of Thomas as a spiritual guide, was actually the first of a two volume work. The book you have in your hands, The Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas, is volume two.

To say Detlev embodied characteristics he ascribes to Jesus's followers ("non-conformist, maverick, anti-institutional, individualistic and downright anarchistic") is true, but it's also incomplete. A free-thinking spirit animates his writing, but it's subordinate to the discipline of historical scholarship. For instance, one of Detlev's commentaries sees Jesus as upending the belief that the Lord is a Good Shepherd. In Detlev's interpretation, Saying 107 of the Gospel of Thomas suggests precisely the opposite: instead of protecting the sheep, the Lord abandons 99 of them in favor of one who goes astray. This wandering sheep is not a sinner; it is the "largest, strongest, and most valuable." One might expect Detlev to conclude with this celebration of non-conformity, but instead he points out that the Greek word "para" also means "beside, alongside," suggesting that the Good Shepard desires the large, wandering sheep in addition to—not instead of—the others. Suffice it to say, the strong opinions voiced in The Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas are always in service of—and occasionally put in check by—a rigorous scholarly approach.

Despite the constraining effect of Detlev's academic approach, there is little question that The Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas is outside mainstream writing on the topic (in our evening class, the middle aged man with the chinos lasted a little over a month). This is quite fortunate, since most accounts of Jesus's life are marred with distortions. Detlev is hardly alone in questioning

the New Testament's historical accuracy; perhaps the best known of New Testament skeptics is Thomas Jefferson. Disgusted with the "superstitions, fanaticisms, and fabrications" of the New Testament writers, whom he called "ignorant, unlettered men," Jefferson created a personal account of the life of Jesus by cutting and gluing sections from the King James Bible. Jefferson said he had an easy time separating what Jesus actually said as opposed to what was ascribed to him. As he described it to John Adams in a letter on October 12, 1813, it was like identifying "diamonds in a dunghill."

Others have similarly rewritten accounts of Jesus's life to compensate for deficiencies in the New Testament. Albert Schweitzer, best known as a humanitarian, wrote Quest of the Historical Jesus in 1906, causing a stir because it left Christ without a resurrection. More recently, scholars such as Geza Vermes have popularized the search for the historical Jesus, spawning a body of literature that ranges from Stephen Mitchell's The Gospel According to Jesus to John Shelby Spong's Tales of a Jewish Mystic to Reza Aslan's Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth. In 2007 the Jesus Project collected 32 scholars from around the world to determine what, if anything, could be known about this historical Jesus. Claiming to employ the highest standards of scholarly inquiry, the scholars halted the project in 2009 when the Committee's chair said historical research was impossible because "the gospels were written at a time when the line between natural and supernatural was not clearly drawn."

How is Detlev Koepke able to reconstruct Jesus's life, where other scholars have failed? And even if it is possible to make inferences into Jesus's life, what can be said that hasn't already been said? The Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas satisfies both questions with a single stroke: by drawing on the Gospel of Thomas as source material, Detlev is able to offer a fresh, trustworthy vantage point from which we can reassess Jesus's life. And while the bio-graphical information in the Gospel of Thomas requires additional detective work, its spiritual teachings—even better than Jefferson's "diamonds"—hold up to the present day, sometimes shockingly so. Discovered in Upper Egypt in 1945, the Gospel of Thomas includes sayings from Jesus as spoken to—and recorded by—his disciple, Didymos Judas Thomas. Its 114 sayings are intended for Jesus's inner circle of disciples. Although some scholars date the gospel to 140 CE, others believe it was written in the second half of the first century. Since very little of the Gospel of Thomas appears elsewhere in the four Gospels—and when it does, its multi-layered spiritual truths are typically flattened and watereddown—some scholars

equate it with the hypothesized Q source, the common material found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Despite the Gospel of Thomas's proximity to its subject, it's not a simple matter to reconstruct Jesus's life from it. For one thing, many of its sayings are written like Zen koans. Still, it is possible to use the gospel to cast a new light on—and provide a measure of skepticism for—aspects of Jesus's life we've accepted uncritically. For example, in Saying 55 of the Gospel of Thomas Jesus refers to "carrying one's cross" as a metaphor for the sacrifice necessary to become a disciple. By itself, this use of such a metaphor doesn't rule out the possibility that Jesus was also the victim of a real-life crucifixion under Pontius Pilate, but it does arouse one's curiosity over the possibility of a misinterpretation. Since the synoptic gospels frequently literalize—and oversimplify—metaphors from the Gospel of Thomas, it's worth wondering whether, here too, a metaphor was turned into a story.

There's more to The Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas than conjecture based on the Gospel of Thomas. While Detlev employs the Gospel of Thomas as a guiding light for his analysis, he also relies on historical sources to recreate Jesus's life. Similar to Joseph Atwill, Detlev sees the Flavians—the Roman dynasty that ruled the Roman Empire between 69 CE and 96 CE—as inventing a fictional Jesus that embodied religious beliefs and personalities in the first century. By weaving fact with fiction—and employing useful characteristics like "turning the other cheek"—the Romans created a meek, passive messiah whose followers would obediently tolerate the injustices of Roman law.

Once, on a Saturday afternoon in an arboretum near his home, Detlev decried the number of books on the life of Jesus. "Guess how many books there are!" he exclaimed. "I looked it up: 198,620. Can you believe that? 198 thousand books. All about one guy." The fact that Detlev was finishing his own book on Jesus—thereby adding to the glut—was, of course, part of the joke. But it begs a final question: why does Jesus still inspire so many writers to retell his story? Why do we care about this obscure figure from 2,000 years ago?

One answer is Jesus's extraordinary sensitivity and insight into what it's like to be human. Jesus's understanding of the human condition is steeped in our lost potential: we are "this great richness" that has "dwelled in this poverty." As he explains in Saying 28:

1 Jesus said,
2 "I stood firmly in the midst of the world
3 and I manifested to them in [[the]] flesh.
4 I discovered them all drunk;
5 I discovered no one among them thirsty.
6 And my soul was in pain for the sons of the men
7 because they are blind men in their heart,
8 and they do not see that empty they came into the world
9 [[and]] empty they seek once again to come out of the world.
10 Except that now they are drunk.
11 Whenever they shake off their wine,
12 then they will transform their awareness."

Here, Jesus bluntly expresses his sorrow over humanity's blindness. He implies it is our responsibility to transform our awareness; if not, we will stay ignorant. "There is no shortcut to this higher awareness," Detlev writes. "Here you have to do the work for yourself." Fortunately, the Gospel of Thomas is essentially a manual for attaining this higher awareness; put into practice, one experiences a state of tranquility.

It is no surprise that Jesus's message of personal transformation is unknown to most people. The New Testament deliberately obscures it: instead of catalyzing people to purge themselves of delusion, the New Testament exchanges one delusion (our innate human blindness) with another (the belief in salvation through Jesus). After two millennia, this fiction has the resonance of truth. In 2011 Detlev wanted to start Gospel of Thomas chapters throughout Boston to reclaim Jesus's message; two years later, he gave up. "I always liked the guy," Detlev said ruefully. "But they won—the bastards."

The Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas is that rare work that can purify one's understanding of Jesus, as well as oneself. With Detlev's passing in 2015, it is a great joy that his son David is releasing this book for publication.

Max Green
August, 2016

Introduction by the Author

If someone told you that all our generally accepted ideas about Jesus and Christianity are wrong, would you believe that person? Surely you would respond that it is a settled matter that the New Testament tells the story of Jesus Christ, that he claimed to be the Messiah, that he had twelve disciples, that he preached the coming of the end of the world, and that he was sentenced to die on the cross by the Jewish High Priests and by Pontius Pilate. And yet remarkable ancient documents have come to light since World War II that contradict the truth of all of the above and that show that Jesus was indeed not a Christian by any definition of the word. Instead he was a Graeco-Roman philosopher who drew on classical and Jewish ideas and images but reshaped them to create a unique spiritual philosophy with a strong mystical and Buddhist/Taoist bent.

That is the unmistakable picture of Jesus that we get in the most remarkable document of them all, the Gospel of Thomas. This document may well be - and I think it is - the true, authentic words of the historical Jesus, written down just as he said them. There is only one complete copy in existence, found by Egyptian peasants in a cave near Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945, and written in Coptic, the latest form of ancient Egyptian and now used only as a liturgical language by the Coptic Christian Church. And this copy has lain buried in a cave since the 4th century and has not been tampered with or edited in any way since then. The same is true for the Greek fragments of the Gospel of Thomas found by Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt in what was ancient Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, in 1896-1897 and 1903: the three fragments containing the prologue and 20 sayings did not differ much from the Coptic document found later.

I have always been interested in questions of God and religion and for that reason I had read the whole New Testament several times. But I was never happy with the person of Jesus as he was portrayed there. There was something very rash, extremist, and angry about the New Testament Jesus; statements such as "if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out" bothered me. The more I looked into it, the more I realized that the four Gospels don't agree on Jesus' life and personality and even the basic facts of his birth and biography. I found out that Jesus is not mentioned by any contemporary historians, even historians such as Josephus who mentioned everything else that ever happened in 1st century Judea, which is a very small place. And then in the fall of 1983 I took a course that changed my life forever. I was attending Harvard Divinity School, studying for the Unitarian ministry, and I took a course from George MacRae called "Gnosticism". I knew nothing about the subject beforehand, but as I started reading the documents and listening to the lectures I was enthralled. And what particularly caught my attention was a little document called the Gospel of Thomas.

The Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas is a very different Jesus from the one of the New Testament: much less political, much less troubled by anger, fear and paranoia, much more inclusive of women, much more mystical, and much more in line with the teachings of all other great religious teachers and mystics throughout history. There is no life story, no theology, there are no miracles, there are only 114 rather cryptic sayings arranged in what seems to be a random order. The Gospel of Thomas resembles Lao Tzu's Tao te Ching much more than it does the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

But why has a view of Jesus as an eclectic classical spiritual philosopher not become widespread yet? That is because the Gospel of Thomas has been consistently translated and interpreted with a Christian bias and has been turned into a Christian document - and it very much is not one. I am the first scholar to translate the original Coptic using only the literal words as they are given in the manuscript, without changing, adding to or leaving out any of the original text. Almost all other translators are so disturbed by the radical, paradoxical, puzzling and unfamiliar nature of what Jesus is saying that they rewrite the text to suit their own assumptions or prejudices. There are very few people in the world outside of Coptic priests who have studied Coptic and these Coptic scholars tend to come from the field of New Testament studies. Thus, almost unintentionally a Christian bias creeps into every translation and interpretation of the Gospel of Thomas.

But once the text is correctly translated according to all the standard Coptic dictionaries and grammatical authorities, one finds absolutely nothing Christian about it. Once the words are truly understood then whole worlds of deep and potentially life-changing meaning open up that go far beyond any particular ideology. And then we find that Jesus emerges not as a pseudo-pagan dying and rising god figure but as one of the great sages of history who is able to pour layers of profound wisdom into a few lines of text.

As I studied the Gospel of Thomas, I began to see the method in the seemingly random madness of sayings. When the 114 sayings are put together in a logical order, they spell out a coherent spiritual philosophy and offer a guide to practical application. So many people, especially young people, left Christianity starting in the 1960's because it did not offer them a true spiritual guide. Instead they sought the wisdom of the East in order to have a practical path to follow.

Yet we have had our own Western spiritual path all along - it has simply been kept from us. From the first to the fourth century Jesus' sayings enjoyed widespread popularity and were quoted and requoted by many others. But once the New Testament was issued and his sayings were embedded in a very different and much distorted ideology, his true teachings have been

lost.

As a result the Gospel of Thomas has barely penetrated into institutional Christianity and is not mentioned in most churches. It is known only to a few academics and specialists. That is a great shame. I believe the Gospel of Thomas is the authentic and true teachings of the philosopher and teacher Jesus and has been effectively suppressed by Christian churches for 1600 years.

Now however it is out in the public again and now has come the time for spiritual seekers to rediscover this powerful set of teachings. The people who fled to Eastern teachings for their spiritual sustenance can find a teacher from their own Western tradition in the Gospel of Thomas and Christians who are dissatisfied with their own churches can rediscover the authentic words of the man they profess to follow.

What I have attempted to do in this book is not only to restore Jesus' luster as one of the great philosophers of history but even more to rescue his reputation as a teacher of spiritual wisdom. Jesus was not an abstract theologian or speculative theorist but was deeply concerned with giving practical guidance for his disciples to follow to attain a higher level of spiritual attainment. He is not interested in belief but in everyday practice. The emphasis in the New Testament on blind belief in Jesus as a divine figure is completely antithetical to the true spirit of Jesus. His teaching is for those who are serious about the spiritual path: this fundamental nature of his mission has been suppressed by the Catholic Church since the 4th century and my aim is to bring it back to our awareness.

There have been other studies of the Gospel of Thomas which are sensitive to the spiritual nature of his teachings, such as books by Christian Amundsen, David Capp, Hugh Ross and Jean-Yves Leloup. But they are limited by their reliance on standard translations and by their lack of scholarship in Jesus' contemporary culture. What I have done is unique: systematic and comprehensive scholarship in the background of every single saying coupled with a consistent focus on the spiritual level of the teachings and an abiding appreciation for the challenges of paradoxical thinking.

Because the Gospel of Thomas is so cryptic and hard to understand, you the reader need a guide, you need someone to help you decode what Jesus said. Many of the allusions he makes are to ideas and images known to people during his day but unfamiliar to us - we need to know the history of those ideas in order to understand them. And his words are highly spare, compressed and concise. If we were his direct disciples, we could ask him to explain what he mean, but we do not have such good fortune. We are therefore left to figure his meaning out by ourselves.

I have spent the major part of five years trying to do just that, and I would like to share what I have learned with you. I am sure there is much that I have not understood or even misunderstood, but I feel confident in asserting that my lack of Christian bias, my training in history and philosophy and my own familiarity with Eastern spiritual practice has enabled me to see deeper truths than many other people have seen.

I have also given much closer attention than anyone else to the precise words that Jesus uses and to the internal structure of his sayings as an invaluable aid in deciphering his meaning. Once a reader understands the key, then the meaning of the whole document falls into place and Jesus' teachings become clear and consistent.

Thus my aim in this book is to use Thomas to construct a coherent, consistent philosophy and guide to life that both individuals and groups can use. A whole new movement could easily arise based on following these principles. This movement would be consistent with the principles of all the great teachers throughout history. The major religions all disagree but the mystics all over the world, in all cultures and in all ages, teach a very similar philosophy. And that includes Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas. My late teacher Swami Satchidananda said: Truth is one, paths are many. The mystics all teach a similar truth, but the path one chooses should be congenial with one's background and culture. Thomas may offer that path for people from a Western background. I would like to make it possible for all seekers to begin to embark on that path. Now more than ever in these troubled times it is time to return to the true teachings of the true Jesus.

In Volume I of this book I would like to show the following basic points about the historical Jesus and the Gospel of Thomas:

1. The Gospel of Thomas is the authentic record of the true historical Jesus and may well be an exact transcript of his words. It is also likely that it was not the only such record and that one of the other ancient Gospels, if they are not all the same one, may be at least one other authentic source.

2. There is nothing even vaguely "Christian" about Jesus' philosophy, and Christianity as a theology did not finalize its theology until the 4th century. The New Testament is not an authentic original document and is a much later and heavily edited version incorporating pieces of the Gospel of Thomas as well as many other documents. Over and over, the wording of the Gospel of Thomas is consistently quoted by both Christian and Moslem commentators in preference to the wording of the New Testament. This indicates that it was seen as the true source of Jesus' words.

3. The philosophy of Jesus, who was clearly a well-educated man, is steeped

in a mixture of classical and Jewish learning and culture but ultimately his synthesis is unique to him. If he has to be categorized, he could be called a classical Jewish mystical philosopher. He can only be called "Gnostic" in the very broadest sense of that term but not in any truly meaningful way with regard to other Gnostic philosophies.

4. Jesus' philosophy is systematic and multi-layered with precise technical terms and resonant cultural images. These terms and images have a history in classical and Jewish thought and must be studied in order to understand his allusions.

5. To a large extent, Christian commentators and scholars have downplayed the true epochal importance of the Gospel of Thomas. Hardly any scholar is willing to accept it as the original source of Jesus' teachings and the farthest anyone will go is to admit that it is an older independent source parallel to the Synoptics. Yet scholars spend most of their time reconstructing the completely mythical and fictional Q of which not a single shred of documentary evidence has been found rather than taking the Gospel of Thoams seriously as an authentic document. What is particularly amazing about this is that the Gospel of Thomas, as well as the Gospel of the Ebionites, the Gospel of the Egyptians, th Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Nazoreans, are mentioned by name by the Church Fathers, but nothing even resembling Q is ever mentioned.

6. The story of Jesus in the New Testament is largely fictional and the true story of Jesus as well as his twin brother Judas Thomas, his colleague John the Baptist and his Messianic briother James is vastly different. In this book I will also try to do justice to the remarkable women in Jesus' life, his wife Mary Magdalene and his lover Salome, both teachers in their own right.

Volume II focuses on the history of the New Testament and its true authors and aims. I would like to show the following points:

1. The New Testament is a late and and heavily edited document with no authoritative version, constantly revised to suit the changing needs of church dogma.

2. Based on an analysis of contemporary references and the style of the Gospels, Mark, Matthew, Luke and John are not its authors and there is little historical evidence for their existence.

3. The real purpose of the New Testament was an attempt at the Roman imperial court of the Flavian emperors to create a new religion for the masses which would counteract the revolutionary aspirations of its oppressed peoples and make an example of the one people who had the courage to revolt against the Empire, the Jews.

4. Paul was one of the main authors of the New Testament and is not at all what he claims to be in his writings; his collaborators in the writing of the New Testament were the philosopher Seneca and the Jewish historian Josephus.
5. The New Testament is a clever amalgamation of texts drawn from many different sources with an imperialistic political agenda hidden behind the guise of a spiritual religion.
6. The "fall" of the Roman Empire and the destruction of classical culture was to a large extent due to the actions of fanatical Christians who succeeded in setting back European progress by 1500 years. The find of the Nag Hammadi Library in 1945 is a symbolic recovery of some of that destroyed tradition, especially the recovery of the one manuscript of the Gospel of Thomas in existence.

The following first volume contains the original Coptic of each saying in transliteration, an analysis of translation issues from the Coptic, structural analysis of each saying, textual parallels from other writings, much more extensive commentary using the scholarly literature on Thomas and more in-depth analysis of the New Testament use of each saying. The total bibliography of books that I have used in my research comes to about 100 pages. Every statement in this book that is not sourced is based on that research and has a source in the original document.

I can honestly state that I have read and incorporated every single article and book that has ever been written about the Gospel of Thomas in the four languages I read fluently, English, German, French and Spanish, plus a few articles in Dutch which I can get the gist of. The scholarly literature was not as useful for understanding the spiritual meaning of the sayings as I had hoped, due to Christian bias and a lack of understanding of poetic style as well as of spiritual truth, but I did glean much useful historical and textual information from it. This was of course supplemented with a large number of other scholarly books on every relevant subject.

I know that both my books contain some information and conclusions that may shock the average reader, but be assured that everything I say is based on in-depth research in all the sources available. As a Harvard alumnus I have had the good fortune of access to Harvard libraries which contain practically everything that has ever been printed, so no stone has been left unturned. I particularly enjoy the treasure hunt of tracking down references in obscure sources and research on this project has been a great pleasure. You the reader are getting the fruits of uncountable hours spent in the greatest libraries of the world on a topic that can only be researched by physically

combing through dusty old tomes, and not by sitting comfortably in front of one's computer at home. But the point of all this research is not knowledge for its own sake, but a deeper understanding of one of the greatest minds of all time so that we can follow his teachings.

Note: All translations from articles and books in foreign languages are my own unless there is an already published translation. I take full responsibility for all errors and infelicities.

Translation of the Gospel of Thomas

This is a new translation of the Gospel of Thomas directly from the original Coptic. I have consulted every available Coptic dictionary and grammar book and I have carefully compared 50 existing translations in English, German, French and Spanish.

I have also had the benefit of an extensive and detailed correspondence with the great Coptologist Peter Nagel, now in Bonn, Germany, who has affirmed to me that I have gone deeply into the grammatical issues though he does not agree with all of my readings.

This final version of my translation has some unique features that most translations don't have. When two translations of a line are equally possible, I give both, rather than making an arbitrary and subjective decision for one or the other. If I think one is the more likely one, I put that one first and I indent the alternative. If I think both are equally indicated, I indent all the variants together. For some sayings there are so many possible alternatives that I give a separate alternative translation with the first one being the most likely. For other sayings there are two equally good versions of the whole which I indicate as Version 1 and Version 2.

I take the same approach to translations of individual words. If one translation seems the strongest but alternatives are possible, I indicate the alternative with parentheses. If two translations are equally good I give both words with a forward slash /. Unclear antecedents of pronouns are also indicated with parentheses.

Guide to symbols

( ) Alternate and clarifying translation of the word

< > Literal translation of the Coptic original

[ ] Physical gap in text, with conjectured missing words

« » Words added that are not in text to complete sentences

[[ ]] Section added from other documents but not in the original Gospel of Thomas manuscript

In commentary:

{ } Original Coptic and Greek word (Greek words in bold-face)

Prologue
1 These are the sayings which are secret/hidden
2 which Jesus who is living spoke
3 and he wrote them, namely Didymos Judas Thomas.

Saying 1
1 And he said,
2 "He who will discover the interpretation of these sayings
3 will not taste the death."

Alternative translation
1 And he said,
2 "He who reaches/attains to the interpretation of these sayings
3 will not taste the death."

Saying 2
1 Jesus said,
2 "Let him who seeks not cease to seek
3 until he finds,
4 and whenever he finds,
5 he will be disturbed,
6 and if he is disturbed,
7 he will be amazed,
8 and he will be king over the All.
[[9 and when he is king,
10 he will repose]].

Saying 3
1 Jesus said,
2 "If those who beguile/persuade/go before you (pl) say to you,
3 `Behold, it is in the sky that the Kingdom is,'
4 then the birds of the sky will be first before you.
5 If they say to you,
6 `It is in the sea,'
7 then the fish will be first before you.
8 But the Kingdom is in your inside

9 and it is in your outside.
10 Whenever you know yourselves,
11 then you will be known
12 and you will be aware that you are the children of the living Father.
13 But if you will not know yourselves,
14 then you exist in a state of poverty
15 and it is you who are the poverty."
15 and the poverty is you."

Saying 4
1 Jesus said,
2 "The man old in his days will not delay
3 to ask a little young child of seven days
4 concerning the abode of life,
5 and he will live.
6 For many of the first are going to become last,
7 and they are going to become a single one."

Saying 5
1 Jesus said,
2 "Know (sg) what is in front of your face
3 and what is hidden from you will reveal itself to you:
4 for there is nothing hidden which is not about to manifest
[[5 and there is nothing buried that will not awaken."]]

Saying 6
1 His disciples asked him, they said to him,
2 "Do you wish that we should fast?
3 and in which way shall we pray,
4 in which way shall we give alms
5 and what diet shall we observe?"
6 Jesus said,
7 "Do not tell lies,
8 and that which you hate, do not do it,
9 because all things are revealed out before the heaven.
10 For there is nothing hidden that is not about to manifest

11 and there is nothing covered
12 that will remain without being revealed (uncovered)."

Saying 7
1 Jesus said,
2 "Happy is the lion, him whom the man will eat,
3 and the lion becomes Man;
4 and abominated is the man whom the lion will eat,
5 and the lion will become man.

Saying 8
1 And he said,
2 "The Man is comparable to a fisherman, a wise man;
3 this one cast his net to the sea.
4 He drew it upward from the sea,
5 being full of small fish.
6 Within them he discovered a large fish,
7 being a good one, namely the wise fisherman.
8 He cast all the small fish
9 out down to the bottom of the sea;
10 he chose the large fish
11 without weariness/suffering.
12 He who has ears to hear,
13 let him hear."

Saying 9
1 Jesus said,
2 "Behold, the sower came out.
3 He filled his hand;
4 he threw.
5 Some, however, fell upon the road;
6 the birds came,
7 they gathered them.
8 Some others fell upon the rock
9 and did not plant roots downwards to the earth
10 and did not send spikes of wheat upwards to the sky.

11 And some others fell upon the thorn bushes (acacias);
12 they choked the seed
13 and the worm ate them.
14 And some others fell upon good earth
15 and it gave good fruit upwards to the sky.
16 It bore sixty per measure and one hundred-twenty per measure."

Saying 10
1 Jesus said,
2 "I have thrown a fire upon the world,
3 and behold, I am guarding it
4 until it is ablaze."

Saying 11
1 Jesus said,
2 "This heaven will pass by
3 and the heaven above it will pass by,
4 and those who are dead do not live,
5 and those who are living will not die.
6 In the days when you (pl) ate what is dead,
7 you made it what is alive.
8 Whenever you come about in the light
9 what is that you will do?
10 On the day when you are One,
11 you made the two.
12 But whenever you become two,
13 what is it that you are about to do?"

Saying 12
1 The disciples said to Jesus,
2 "We realize that you will go from us;
3 who/what will become great above us?"
4 Jesus said to them,
5 "The place there you have come;
6 it is to Iakobos (James) the Just (Righteous) that you will go;
7 it is for his sake, this one, that the heaven and the earth came about."

Saying 13
1 Jesus said to his disciples,
2 "Make (pl) a comparison to me
3 and tell me: `I resemble whom?'"
4 Simon Petros said to him,
5 "You resemble a just angel (messenger)."
6 Matthaios said to him,
7 "You resemble a philosopher, a wise man."
8 Thomas said to him,
9 "Teacher, my mouth will entirely not receive
10 that I should say: `You resemble whom?'"
11 Jesus said,
12 "Myself, I am not your (sg) teacher;
13 because you (sg) have drunk,
14 you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring,
15 the one that belongs to me that I gush out.
15 this one that I came and gushed out.
16 And he took him, he withdrew,
17 he spoke three words/sayings to him.
18 When Thomas came to his companions,
19 they asked him,
20 "Jesus said what to you?"
21 Thomas said to them,
22 "If I tell you one of the words/sayings which he said to me,
23 you will take up stones,
24 you will throw them against me;
25 and fire will come out of the stones
26 «and» will burn yourselves."

Saying 14
1 Jesus said to them,
2 "If you (pl) fast,
3 you will beget a sin to yourselves,
4 and if you pray,
5 you will be condemned;
6 and if you give alms,

7 you will do harm to your spirits.
8 And if you enter every land
9 and travel in the places
10 if they receive you,
11 whatever they set before you, eat it.
12 Care for (heal) the sick among them.
13 For that which goes into your mouth
14 will not defile you,
15 but that which comes out of your mouth,
16 that is what will defile you."

Saying 15
1 Jesus said,
2 "Whenever you (pl) see him
3 who was not born from <the> woman
4 prostrate yourselves upon your faces
5 and worship him:
6 he who is there
7 is your father."

Saying 16
1 Jesus said,
2 "Perhaps they think, the people,
3 that it is a peace which I have come to cast upon the world,
4 and they do not realize
5 that it is divisions that I have come to cast upon the earth:
6 a fire, a sword, a war.
7 For there will be five in a house;
8 three will be over two
9 and two over three,
10 the father over the son
11 and the son over the father,
12 and they will stand firmly as monachos."

Saying 17
1 Jesus said,
2 "I will give you (pl) what the eye has not seen

3 and what the ear has not heard
4 and what the hand has not touched
5 and what has not lifted up in the heart of man."

Saying 18
1 The disciples said to Jesus,
2 "Tell us: it is in which way that our end will occur?"
3 Jesus said,
4 "Have you (pl) indeed revealed the beginning
5 in order that you may seek after the end?
6 For in the place there which «is» the beginning
7 there the end will be.
8 Happy is he who will stand firmly in the beginning,
9 and he shall know the end
10 and he shall not taste death."

Saying 19
1 Jesus said,
2 "Happy is he who came into being beforehand
3 before coming into being.
4 If you become disciples to me
5 «and» you listen to my words,
6 these stones shall serve you.
7 For there are five trees for you in paradise
8 which do not move in summer, in winter,
9 and their leaves do not fall away.
10 He who will know them
11 shall not taste death."

Saying 20
1 The disciples said to Jesus,
2 "Tell us: `To what is the Kingdom of the heavens comparable?'"
3 He said to them,
4 "It is comparable to a grain of mustard,
5 being small beside all the seeds.
6 But whenever it falls upon the earth

7 which is worked,
8 it (the earth) is wont to send forth a large branch
9 and it (the branch) becomes a shelter of birds of the sky."

Saying 21
1 Mariham (Mary) said to Jesus,
2 "Whom do your disciples resemble?"
3 He said,
4 "They resemble little children
5 who are dwelling in a field
6 which is not theirs.
7 When the masters of the field come,
8 they will say,
9 `Release our field to us.'
10 They strip naked in their presence
11 that they might release it (the field) to them
12 and that they might give their field to them.
13 For this reason I say:
14 `If the master of the house is aware
15 that the thief is coming,
16 he will keep watch before he has come
17 and he will not permit him
18 to cut into his house of his kingdom
19 that he might carry away his vessels.
20 You then keep watch before the world;
21 gird up your loins with a great strength
22 so that the robbers will not discover the way
23 to come towards you,
24 because the advantage you expect,
25 they will discover.
26 Let him be in your midst,
27 a man of knowledge.
28 When the fruit had ripened,
29 he came in a hurry,
30 his sickle in his hand,
31 he reaped it.

32 He who has ears to hear,
33 let him hear.'"

Saying 22
1 Jesus saw little ones receiving milk.
2 He said to his disciples,
3 "These little ones who are receiving milk are comparable to
4 those who enter into the Kingdom."
5 They said to him,
6 "Surely, being little ones,
7 we shall enter into the Kingdom?"
8 Jesus said to them,
9 "Whenever you (pl) make the two One,
10 and when you make the inside part like the outside part
11 and the outside part like the inside part
12 and the upper part like the lower part,
13 and in order that you will make the male and the female
14 into a single one
15 so that the male is not made male
16 nor the female made female;
17 whenever you make eyes in the place of an eye,
18 and a hand in the place of a hand,
19 and a foot in the place of a foot,
20 an image in the place of an image;
21 then you shall enter into [the Kingdom]."

Saying 23
1 Jesus said:
2 "I shall choose you (pl),
3 one from a thousand and two from ten thousand,
4 and they will stand firmly,
5 being a single one."

Saying 24
1 His disciples said,
2 "Teach us about the abode where you are,

3 for it is necessary that we should seek after it."
4 He said to them,
5 "He who has ears to hear,
6 let him hear.
7 There is light existing within a person of light
8 and it shines on the whole world.
9 When it does not shine,
10 it is a darkness."

Saying 25
1 Jesus said,
2 "Love your brother
3 like your soul;
4 watch him
5 like the pupil/child of your eye."

Saying 26
1 Jesus said,
2 "The speck which is in your brother's eye,
3 that you see;
4 but the beam which is in your eye,
5 that you do not see.
6 Whenever you cast out
7 the beam from your eye,
8 then you will be able to see to cast out
9 the speck from your brother's eye."

Saying 27
1 "If you (pl) do not fast the world,
2 you will not discover the Kingdom;
3 if you do not make the sabbath Sabbath,
4 you will not see the Father."

Alternative translation
1 "If you (pl) do not fast to/from/concerning the world,
2 you will not discover the Kingdom;

3 If you do not make the week Sabbath
3 if you do not make Sabbath from the sabbath,
4 you will not see the Father."

Saying 28
1 Jesus said,
2 "I stood firmly in the midst of the world
3 and I manifested to them in «the» flesh.
4 I discovered them all drunk;
5 I discovered no one among them thirsty.
6 And my soul was in pain for the sons of the men
7 because they are blind men in their heart,
8 and they do not see that empty they came into the world
9 «and» empty they seek once again to come out of the world.
10 Except that now they are drunk.
11 Whenever they shake off their wine,
12 then they will transform their awareness."

Saying 29
1 Jesus said,
2 "If it is for the sake of the spirit that the flesh has come into existence,
3 it is a marvel.
4 If the spirit, however, «has come into existence» for the sake of the body,
5 it is a marvel of marvels.
6 But I, I marvel about this:
7 how this great richness
8 has dwelled in this poverty."

Saying 30
1 Jesus said,
2 "The place «where» there are three gods,
3 there they are gods.
4 The place «where» there are two or one,
5 I myself am with him."

Saying 31
1 Jesus said,

2 "There is no prophet accepted in his town;
3 a physician does not heal those who are acquainted with him."

Saying 32
1 Jesus said,
2 "A city being built on top of a high mountain,
3 being made strong,
4 it is impossible for it to fall
5 nor will it be able to hide.

Saying 33
1 Jesus said,
2 "That which you (sg) will hear, that,
3 within your ear,
4 within the other ear,
4 in another place speak!
5 proclaim from it upon your (pl) roofs.
6 For one is not wont to light a lamp
7 and put it under a measure of grain
8 nor is one wont to put it in a hidden place,
9 but it is on the lamp-stand that he is wont to set it
10 in order that everyone
11 who goes in
12 and who is about to come out
13 will (may) see its light."

Saying 34
1 Jesus said,
2 "If a blind person beguiles/persuades a blind person,
3 both together are wont to fall down to the bottom of a pit."

Saying 35
1 Jesus said,
2 "It is not possible for one to go into the house of the strong man
3 and take it/him by force,

4 unless he binds his hands;
5 then he will move out his house."

Saying 36
1 Jesus said,
2 "Take no thought (have no concern)
3 from morning until evening
4 and from evening time until morning:
5 what will you put on yourselves?"

Saying 37
1 His disciples said,
2 "It is on what day that you will manifest forth to us
3 and it is on what day that we will see you?"
4 Jesus said,
5 "Whenever you strip yourselves naked of your shame,
6 and you take your garments
7 and you put them under your feet
8 like little young children
9 and you trample (tread) on them,
10 then [...][you will see/come to] the son of him who is living
11 and you will not fear."

Saying 38
1 Jesus said,
2 "Many times you have longed to hear these words/sayings,
3 the ones which I say to you,
4 and you do not have any other
5 from whom to hear them.
6 There will be some days you will seek me
7 «and» you will not discover me."

Saying 39
1 Jesus said,
2 "The Pharisees and the scribes

3 have taken (received) the keys of gnosis
4 and have hidden them. 5 They did not enter into the interior,
6 and those who desired to enter
7 they did not allow.
8 But you (pl) be sensible as the serpents
9 and pure as the doves."

Saying 40
1 Jesus said,
2 "A grapevine was planted at the outside of the Father.
3 And being not strengthened,
4 it will be plucked by its root
5 and it will perish (be destroyed)."

Saying 41
1 Jesus said,
2 "He who has in his hand,
3 it shall be given to him,
4 and he who does not have,
5 even the little he has shall be taken from him <his hand>."

Saying 42
1 Jesus said,
2 "Become (pl) wanderers."
2 "Become passers-by."
2 "Become yourselves by passing away."
2 "Become yourselves while passing by."

Saying 43
1 His disciples said to him,
2 "Who are you, saying these things to us?"
3 "From the things I say to you (pl)
4 you are not aware:
5 who am I?
6 But you,
7 you have become like the Jews.

8 For they love the tree,
9 they hate its fruit;
10 and they love the fruit,
11 they hate the tree."

Saying 44
1 Jesus said,
2 "He who will speak blasphemy about the father,
3 it shall be forgiven him,
4 and he who will speak blasphemy about the son,
5 it shall be forgiven him,
6 but he who will speak blasphemy about the pure spirit,
7 it shall not be forgiven him, neither on earth nor in heaven."

Saying 45
1 Jesus said,
2 "Wine grapes are not wont to be gathered from thorn bushes,
3 nor are figs wont to be picked from camel's thistles;
4 for they are not wont to give fruit.
5 [...] A good man is wont to bring forth good from his treasure;
6 an ill man is wont to bring forth misery from his corrupt treasure
7 which is in his heart
8 and he speaks misery.
9 For out of the abundance of the Heart,
10 he is wont to bring forth misery.

Saying 46
1 Jesus said,
2 "From Adam to John the Baptist,
3 among those born of women,
4 there is none higher (more exalted) than John the Baptist,
5 so that his eyes will not break/be broken.
6 But I have said,
7 `He who amongst you (pl) shall become a little one
8 shall know the Kingdom,
9 and he shall be higher than John.'"

Saying 47
1 Jesus said,
2 "It is not possible for a man to mount two horses and to stretch two bows;
3 and it is not possible for a servant to serve two masters;
4 or he will honor the one
5 and the other one he will ill-treat.
6 A man is not wont to drink old wine
7 and immediately he longs to drink young wine.
8 And they are not wont to cast young wine into old wineskins
9 so that they will not burst
10 and they are not wont to cast old wine into a young wineskin
11 so that it will not destroy it.
12 They are not wont to sew an old patch onto a new garment,
13 because there is going to be a break."

Saying 48
1 Jesus said,
2 "If two make peace with each other
3 in this single house,
4 they will say to the mountain,
5 `Move away',
6 and it will turn/change."

Saying 49
1 Jesus said,
2 "Among the happy are the monachos and the chosen
3 for you (pl) will discover the Kingdom.
4 Because you «are» from the heart of it,
5 it is to there that you will go again.

Saying 50
1 Jesus said,
2 "If they say to you (pl),
3 `From where have you come into being?'
4 say to them,
5 `It is from the light that we have come,

6 the place where the light came forth into being
7 through itself <its hand> alone.
8 It stood firmly
9 and it manifested forth in their image.'
10 If they say to you,
11 `Is it you?'
12 say,
13 `We are its children
14 and we are the chosen of the living Father.'
15 If they ask you,
16 `What is the sign of your Father who is in you?'
17 say to them,
18 `It is a movement and a repose.'"

Saying 51
1 His disciples said to him,
2 "It is on what day
3 that the repose of the dead will occur
4 and it is on what day
5 that the new world is about to come?"
6 He said to them,
7 "That (repose) which you (pl) look forward to has come,
8 but you, you do not realize it."

Saying 52
1 His disciples said to him,
2 "Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel
3 and they all have spoken in you <in your heart>."
4 He said to them,
5 "You have let go the one who is living in front of you
6 and you have spoken about those who are dead."

Saying 53
1 His disciples said to him,
2 "Is circumcision of use or not?"
3 He said to them,
4 "If it were of use,

5 their father would have begotten them circumcised from their mother.
6 But the true circumcision in the Spirit
7 has found all profit.

Saying 54
1 Jesus said,
2 "Among the happy are the poor,
3 for yours (pl) is the kingdom of the heavens."

Saying 55
1 Jesus said,
2 "He who will not hate his father and his mother
3 will not be able to become a disciple to me;
4 and he who will not hate his brothers and his sisters
5 and who will not carry his cross in my way
6 will not become worth as much as I."

Saying 56
1 Jesus said,
2 "He who has known the world
3 has discovered a corpse,
4 and he who has discovered a corpse,
5 the world is not worthy of him."

Saying 57
1 Jesus said,
2 "The Kingdom of the Father is comparable to a man
3 who had a [good] seed.
4 His enemy came in the night,
5 he sowed a darnel with the good seed.
6 The man did not permit them to pluck the darnel (sg).
7 He said to them, `Lest in any way you go, saying:
8 ``We will pluck the darnel''
9 and lest perchance you pluck the wheat (sg) with it.'
10 For on the day of the harvest
11 the darnel are going to manifest forth;

12 they will pluck them;
13 they will burn them."

Saying 58
1 Jesus said,
Version 1:
2 "Happy is the man who has suffered/labored
3 «and» has discovered the life."
Version 2:
2 "Happy is the man who has suffered/labored;
3 he has discovered the life."

Saying 59
1 Jesus said,
2 "Take heed of (pl) that which lives
3 that you may live
4 so that you may not die,
5 and (so that) you may not seek to see it
6 and you will not be able to see."

Saying 60
1 A Samaritan was carrying a lamb
2 «and» was going into Judea.
3 He said to his disciples,
4 "That man from the vicinity «is» with the lamb."
5 They said to him,
6 "So that he may kill it «and» eat it."
7 He said to them,
8 "As it is alive
9 he will not eat it,
10 but «only» if he kills it
11 and it becomes a corpse."
12 They said,
13 "Otherwise he will not be able to do it."
14 He said to them,
15 "You yourselves, you seek an abode for yourselves

16 within repose,
17 so that you do not become corpses
18 and be eaten."

Saying 61
1 Jesus said,
2 "Two are going to rest there on a bed;
3 one is going to die; one is going to live."
4 Salome said,
5 "Who are you, man?
6 As if from One
7 you have gone up/lain on my bed
8 and you have eaten at my table?"
9 Jesus said to her,
10 "I am he who is
11 from the one which makes equal.
12 It has been given to me out of that which is my Father's".
13 "I «am» your (fem) disciple."
14 "Because of this, I myself say,
15 `Whenever he is desolate,
16 he will be filled «with» light,
17 but whenever he is divided,
18 he will be filled with darkness'."

Alternative translation
1 Jesus said,
2 "Two are going to rest there on a bed;
3 (the male) one is going to die; (the female) one is going to live."
4 Salome said,
5 "Who are you, man?
6 As if from One/blasphemy
7 you have gone up/lain on my bed
8 and you have eaten at my table?"
9 Jesus said to her,
10 "I am he who is
11 from the one which makes equal.

12 It has been given to me out of that which is my Father's".
13 "I «am» your (fem) disciple.
14 Because of this, I myself say,
15 `Whenever he is desolate,
16 he will be filled with/die in light
17 but whenever he is divided,
18 he will be filled with/die in darkness'."

Saying 62
1 Jesus said:
2 "I tell my mysteries
3 to those [who are sons] of [my] mysteries.
4 That which your (sg) right (hand) is going to do,
5 do not let your (sg) left (hand) be aware:
6 `It does what?'"

Saying 63
1 Jesus said,
2 "There was a wealthy man
3 who had many resources.
4 He said,
5 `I shall use my resources
6 in order that I may sow and reap and plant
7 and fill my storehouses with fruit
8 so that I shall not want for anything'.
9 These were his thoughts on these matters in his heart.
10 And in that night he died.
11 He who has ears,
12 let him hear."

Saying 64
1 Jesus said,
2 "A man had some visiting strangers
3 and when he had prepared the dinner,
4 he sent his servant
5 that he might invite the visitors.

6 He went to the first; he said to him,
7 `My master invites you.'
8 He said,
9 `I have some money for some merchants.
10 They are about to come to me in the evening;
11 I shall go, I shall give orders to them.
12 I beg off from the dinner.'
13 He went to another; he said to him,
14 `My master has invited you.'
15 He said to him,
16 `I have bought a house
17 and they request me for a day.
18 I shall not have time.'
19 He came to another, he said to him,
20 `My master invites you.'
21 He said,
22 `My friend is going to marry
23 and it is I who is going to make dinner.
24 I shall not be able to come.
25 I beg off from the dinner.'
26 He went to another; he said to him,
27 `My master invites you.'
28 He said to him,
29 `I have bought a village,
30 I am about to go to get the rent.
31 I shall not be able to come.
32 I beg off.'
33 The servant came; he said to his master,
34 `Those whom you have invited to the dinner have begged off.'
35 The master said to his servant,
36 `Go to the outer parts to the roads,
37 bring those whom you will discover
38 so that they may dine.'
39 The buyers and the traders [will] not [go
40 into] the abodes of my Father."

Saying 65
1 He said:
2 "A [...] man [good man][usurer] had a vineyard.
3 He gave it to farmers
4 so that they would work it
5 and he would receive his fruit from their hands.
6 He sent his servant
7 so that the farmers would give him the fruit of the vineyard.
8 They seized his servant,
9 they beat him,
10 a little more, they would have killed him.
11 The servant went,
12 he told his master.
13 His master said,
14 `Perhaps he did not know them.'
15 He sent another servant;
16 the farmers beat another one.
17 Then the master sent his son.
18 He said,
19 `Perhaps they will be ashamed before him <his heart>, my son.'
20 Those farmers there, because they realize
21 that he is the heir to the vineyard,
22 they seized him,
23 they killed him.
24 He who has ears,
25 let him hear."

Saying 66
1 Jesus said,
2 "Teach me about the stone,
3 this one which they have rejected,
4 namely those who build.
5 It is that, the cornerstone/levelling stone."

Saying 67
1 Jesus said,

2 "He who recognizes the All,
3 lacking One,
3 lacking himself alone,
3 while he has lacks himself,
4 lacks the whole place."

Saying 68
1 Jesus said:
2 "You (pl) are among the happy
3 whenever they hate you and seek after yourselves;
4 and they will not discover «the» abode
5 in the place where they have sought after yourselves within your heart."

Saying 69
1 Jesus said,
2 "Among the happy are they
3 who have sought after themselves within their heart.
4 It is they
5 who have known the Father in Truth.
6 Among the happy are those who are hungry,
7 in order that they will satisfy the belly of him who desires.

Saying 70
1 Jesus said,
2 "Whenever you (pl) give birth to that which is in you,
3 this which you have will save you.
4 If you do not have that in you,
5 this which you do not have in you will kill you."

Saying 71
1 Jesus said,
2 "I will overturn [this] house
3 and no one will be able to build it [again?]."

Saying 72
1 [A man] s[aid] to him,

2 "Speak to my brothers
3 so that they will divide/cut up the vessels of my Father with me."
4 He said to him,
5 "O man, who has made me a divider/cutter?"
6 He turned to his disciples,
7 he said to them,
8 "I am not a divider/cutter, am I?"

Saying 73
1 Jesus said,
2 "The harvest is indeed great,
3 but the workers become few.
4 However, ask the master
5 so that he will cast «a» worker out to the harvest."

Saying 74
1 He said,
2 "O Master, there are many «turning» around the penetration/well
3 but there is no one in the misery/well."

Saying 75
1 Jesus said,
2 "There are many
3 «who» stand firmly at the entrance of the door,
4 but the monachos
5 «are» those who will go into the bridal chamber <place of marriage>."

Saying 76
1 Jesus said,
2 "The Kingdom of the Father is comparable to a man,
3 a merchant who had merchandise
4 «and» discovered a pearl.
5 That merchant was a wise person.
6 He sold the merchandise,
7 he bought this single pearl for himself.

8 You (pl) also, you, seek after his treasure
9 which is not wont to perish,
10 persevering outside in the place
11 which the moth is not wont to approach inside,
12 which they are not wont to eat,
13 nor is the worm wont to destroy."

Saying 77
1 Jesus said,
2 "It is I, the light, that which is above them all.
3 It is I, the All;
4 out of my mind/heart the All came forth
5 and toward me the All reached.
6 Split wood,
7 I am there;
8 raise the stone,
9 and you (pl) will discover me there.

Saying 78
1 Jesus said,
2 "Why did you (pl) come out to the field (country)?
3 To see a reed moved by the wind
4 and to see a [man] having soft garments on him?
5 [...][There are your] kings and your nobles,
6 these have soft [garments] on them,
7 and they [will] not be able to recognize the truth."

Saying 79
1 A woman in the multitude said to him,
2 "Blessed is the womb which bore you (sg)
3 and the breasts which nourished you."
4 He said to [her],
5 "Blessed are those who have listened to (heard) the logos of the Father
6 «and» have guarded it in truth.
7 For there will be days you (pl) will say:
8 `Blessed is the womb, this one which has not conceived,

9 and the breasts, these «which» have not given milk.'"

Saying 80
1 Jesus said,
2 "He who has known the world
3 has discovered the body,
4 but he who has discovered the body
5 the world is not worthy of him."

Saying 81
1 Jesus said,
2 "He who has become rich,
3 let him become king,
4 and he who has a power,
5 let him refuse.

Saying 82
1 Jesus said,
2 "He who is near me
3 is near the flame,
4 and he who is far from me
5 is far from the Kingdom."

Saying 83
1 Jesus said,
2 "The images manifest outwardly to people,
3 and the light which is in them (the images) is hidden in the image.
4 By the light of the Father he will reveal himself,
5 and his image is hidden by his light."

Saying 84
1 Jesus said,
2 "The days when you (pl) see your likeness
3 you are wont to rejoice.
4 But whenever you see your images
5 which came into being in you beforehand

6 - they are neither wont to die nor to manifest outwardly -
7 oh how much will you bear?"

Saying 85
1 Jesus said,
2 "Adam came into being from a great power
3 and a great richness,
4 and he did not become worthy of you (pl).
5 For had he been worth as much,
6 he [would] not [have tasted] the death."

Saying 86
1 Jesus said,
2 "[The foxes have] their h[oles] (dens)
3 and the birds have there their nest,
4 but the son of the Man does not have a place
5 to bend his head and to rest himself.
Saying 87
1 Jesus, namely he, said,
2 "Hard-pressed is the body
3 that hangs from a body,
4 and hard-pressed is the soul
5 that hangs from these two."

Saying 88
1 Jesus said,
2 "The angels are about to come to you, and the prophets,
3 and they will give you those things which are yours,
4 and you yourselves, those things which belong in your hands,
5 give to them.
6 Say to yourselves,
7 `On which day will they come
8 «and» receive (take) what is theirs?'"

Saying 89
1 Jesus said,

2 "Why do you (pl) wash the outside of the wine cup?
3 Do you not discern
3 You do not discern
4 that he who created the inside
5 is also he who created the outside?"

Saying 90
1 Jesus said,
2 "Come (pl) to me,
3 for of good service is my yoke,
4 and my mastery is a gentle one,
5 and you will discover repose for yourselves."

Saying 91
1 They said to him,
2 "Tell us who you are
3 so that we may believe you."
4 He said to them,
5 "You (pl) make proof of the face of the sky and of the earth,
6 and you have not known what is in front of you,
7 and you do not recognize this critical moment
8 to make proof of it (what is in front of you)."

Saying 92
1 Jesus said,
2 "Seek and you (pl) will find.
3 But those «things» which you asked me in those days
4 I did not tell you on that day.
5 Now I am willing to tell them
6 and you do not seek after them.

Saying 93
1 "Do not give that which is pure to the dogs,
2 so that they do not throw them on the dung heap.
3 Do not throw the pearls to the pigs,
4 so that they do not make it [...][to mud]."

Hypothetical revised version of 93
1 "Do not give that which is pure to the dogs,
2 so that they do not make it [...][to mud]."
3 Do not throw the pearls to the pigs,
4 so that they do not throw them on the dung heap.

Saying 94
1 Jesus [said],
2 "He who seeks shall find
3 and to him [who knocks] inward it shall be opened.

Saying 95
1 [Jesus said],
2 "If you (pl) have <the> monies,
3 do not give at interest,
4 but give [the monies/them]
5 to him from whose hand you will not receive them."

Saying 96
1 Jesus [said]:
2 "The Kingdom of the Father is comparable to [a] woman:
3 she took a little colostrum,
4 she [hid] it in the flour,
5 she made it into some large loaves.
6 He who has ears,
7 let him hear."
Saying 97
1 Jesus said,
2 "The Kingdom of the [Father] is comparable to a woman
3 carrying a [jar] full of flour
4 walking [on a] distant road.
5 The handle of the jar broke,
6 the flour poured out behind her [on] the road.
7 She did not realize it;
8 she did not understand toil/about toil/to toil.
9 When she reached <into> her house,

10 she put the jar down,
11 she discovered it empty."

Saying 98
1 Jesus said,
2 "The Kingdom of the Father is comparable to a man
3 wishing to kill a noble.
4 He drew out the sword in his house,
5 he pierced it, the wall,
6 so that he might be aware that his hand was going to persist.
7 Then he murdered the noble."

Saying 99
1 The disciples said to him,
2 "Your brothers and your mother are standing firmly on the outside."
3 He said to them,
4 "Those who are in these places who do the wish of my Father,
5 they «are» my brothers and my mother.
6 These are they
7 who will go into the Kingdom of my Father."

Saying 100
1 They showed Jesus a gold [coin]
2 and they said to him,
3 "Those who belong to Caesar demand/extort the taxes from us."
3 "They demand/extort the taxes, those which belong to Caesar, from us."
4 He said to them,
5 "Give to Caesar those things which belong to Caesar;
6 give to God those things which belong to God;
7 and what is mine, give it to me."

Saying 101
1 "He who will not hate his [father] and his mother in my way
2 will not be able to be a [disciple] to me;
3 and he who will [not] love his [father and] his mother in my way

4 will not be able to be a [disciple] to me,
5 for my mother [...][gave birth to me],
6 but [my] true [mother] gave me the life."

Saying 102
1 Jesus said,
2 "Woe to them, the Pharisees,
3 for what they resemble is a dog
4 lying (sleeping) upon the cattle manger,
5 for neither does he eat,
6 nor does he [let] the cattle eat."

Saying 103
1 Jesus said,
2 "Happy is the man who recognizes
3 in which part the robbers are about to come inside,
4 so that he will arise,
5 gather his [...][strength]
6 and gird up his loins beforehand
7 before they come inside."

Saying 104
1 They said [to him][to Jesus],
2 "Come, let us pray today and let us fast.
3 Jesus said,
4 "Which then is the sin that I have committed
5 or it is in what that I have been conquered?
6 But whenever the bridegroom comes out of the bridal chamber,
7 then let them fast and let them pray."

Saying 105
1 Jesus said,
2 "He who is going to know the Father and the Mother,
3 will they call him: `the harlot's son'?"

Saying 106

1 Jesus said,
2 "Whenever you (pl) make the two One,
3 you will become the sons of the man
4 and if you say,
5 `Mountain, move away',
6 it will turn/change."

Saying 107
1 Jesus said,
2 "The Kingdom is comparable to a man, a shepherd,
3 having a hundred sheep.
4 One among them went astray, the largest.
5 He left the ninety-nine;
6 he sought after that one
7 until he discovered it.
8 When he had toiled,
9 he said to the sheep,
10 `I desire you more than the ninety-nine.'"

Saying 108
1 Jesus said,
2 "He who will drink from my mouth
3 will become like me/intoxicated.
4 I myself will become he, what he is,
5 and the hidden things will manifest to him."

Saying 109
1 Jesus said,
2 "The Kingdom is comparable to a man
3 having a treasure [hidden] in his field
4 about which he is ignorant.
5 And [after] he died, he left it (the treasure) to his [son].
6 His son did not realize,
7 he took that field,
8 he sold [it].
9 And he who bought it came.

10 While plowing he [discovered] the treasure.
11 He began to lend money at interest
12 to [whomever] he wished.

Saying 110
1 Jesus said,
2 "He who has found the world,
3 has become rich;
4 let him deny the world."

Saying 111
1 Jesus said,
2 "The heavens will roll back and the earth
3 in front of you (pl),
4 and he who lives from that which lives
5 will not see death."
6 Does not Jesus say to that,
7 "He who alone will discover himself,
8 the world is not worthy of him"?

Saying 112
1 Jesus said,
2 "Woe to the flesh,
3 that which hangs from the soul.
4 Woe to the soul,
5 that which hangs from the flesh."
Saying 113
1 His disciples said to him,
2 "It is on what day that the Kingdom is about to come?"
3 «He said», "It is not by an expectation that it is coming.
4 They will not say,
5 `Behold, it is in this direction,'
6 or `Behold, this is the time.'
7 But it is upon the earth that the Kingdom of the Father is spread out
8 and people do not see it."

Saying 114

1 Simon Petros said to them,
2 "Let Mariham come out from amongst us,
3 for women are not worthy of the life."
4 Jesus said,
5 "Behold! I myself shall draw her
6 so that I shall make her male,
7 in order that she herself will become a living spirit,
8 resembling you, the males.
9 For every woman who will make herself male
10 will go into the kingdom of the heavens."

Guiding principles of my translation

When I first began writing this book, I completely deferred to the knowledge of Coptic scholars and used standard translations. But as nagging issues kept arising and I noticed disagreements about the meanings of grammatical phrases and words, I knew I had to learn Coptic myself and to do my own translation. This has been a delightful and rewarding undertaking and I have been supremely fortunate in this work to have the outstanding Coptic collection of Harvard University at my disposal which can answer any grammatical question. After several years of diligent study using this excellent collection and with the help of experts such as Professor Peter Nagel, I feel confident in my knowledge of the subtleties and intricacies of Coptic, though as always there is much still to learn.

I do not rank myself among the great accomplished Coptic scholars of the world and I am sure I have made some errors in judgment that Coptic experts could point out and that I hope they will. Nevertheless, in my attempt to get as close to the true meaning of the original text as possible I have taken great pains and much time to pore over every possible meaning of all the words of the Gospel of Thomas and I have extensively consulted all authoritative Coptic dictionaries and grammars in the writing of this book.

My facility with languages has made this task much easier: besides English, French and German, the three languages I know fluently, I am fairly fluent in Spanish and Latin and know the basics of Hebrew and Greek. I do apologize for being presumptuous in challenging standard translations by eminent Coptic scholars who have studied the language longer than I have. But in my quest to penetrate into the deepest meanings of the text, I found it imperative to do so.

What I found, overall, is that the translations are all competent but do not always render the subtleties and shades of meaning of the text well and do not pay attention to the precise way words are used in Coptic, especially the differences between two words with a similar meaning. Nor do they translate the great variety of Coptic verb tenses accurately. They also tend to use the New Testament wording even when it does not fit the Coptic. One recent German translation (Berger and Nord) even goes so far as to insert references to God into the text where they do not exist, such as translating "Kingdom" as "God's reign" (see Berger).

All these tendencies are, unfortunately, especially true of the modern American translations which tend to read easily and be elegantly phrased but are too glib and ignore many of the underlying subtleties and distinctions in the text. Moreover, they tend to force the paradoxical nature of the text into

strictly linear renderings which destroy the deep inner meaning of Thomas. Here is a case where new is not necessarily better, as some of the older translations are actually more accurate.

Thus there is not one English translation which can be relied on to be precise in all respects, and it is this deficiency that my translation is intended to fill. I am partial to the translation by Hugh McGregor Ross (based largely on Gillabert) as he understands the spiritual depth of the text and his renderings, though idiosyncratic, are illuminating. However, he is still too influenced by the New Testament versions of the text and his is not a completely literal translation of the words as they stand, but a very perceptive interpretation.

For my basic text I rely to a large extent on the French edition by Emile Gillabert et al of the Association Metanoia, the basic text of which correlates well with the standard editions by Bentley Layton and the official facsimile edition. This is an invaluable edition which contains the original Coptic in Greek letters, its transliteration into our alphabet and a very accurate word-for-word translation. It also contains a useful concordance to key words and a rather vague commentary which is less useful. Thank you, Messieurs Gillabert, Bourgeois and Haas! What the world needs is a similar edition in English. Whoever has ears should hear!

In general, I have found the older German and French translations as well as Emile Gillabert's new translation to be more precise and accurate than the English ones in conveying the true words of the text but that does not help those not fluent in French or German. The French translators in particular are the least likely to impose their own viewpoints onto the words of the text, perhaps because the French overthrew the power of the Catholic Church in the Revolution in 1789! Here Gillabert's and Suarez' versions are the most accurate, and Rodolphe Kasser is quite precise as well, although his commentary tends toward an excessively "Gnostic" interpretation.

Of the German translations I must particularly commend the three editions by Johannes Leipoldt who, despite his Christian proclivities, is honest about the real meaning of the text and does not try to force his views onto the words. He very candidly admits that he does not understand the text but leaves it as it is. That is scholarly integrity. Quecke's version is quite reliable as well.

I have had the pleasure and great profit of an extensive correspondence on translation issues with the great Coptologist Professor Peter Nagel who has produced an impressive corpus of scholarly work and I have learned much in the process. I have been gratified that Professor Nagel has accepted some of my divergent readings of the text as being grammatically justified,

though he may disagree with the interpretation. I was flattered by his comment in one of his letters that he does not know anyone who has gone into such depths into the semantic subtleties of this text: that has indeed been my aim.

The guiding principles of my translation are as follows:

1. The Gospel of Thomas is a sacred text, and a very difficult and complicated one at that. Unless the translator thoroughly understands the text, he or she should not take liberties with it. And in particular a translator should not impose his or her own world view on the text. We do not really understand why the sayings are phrased the way they are. But it is clear that the poetry is so concise and compressed and the structure is so carefully thought out and mathematical that every word matters and has meaning. A translation should not leave out or change a single word.

Therefore I have opted for the most literal translation possible, even if a certain elegance of style may have to be sacrificed. When a literal translation is too awkward, the translation is amended but the literal translation is given in parentheses. I have also resisted the temptation to throw in connecting "and"s and other conjunctions. There is a rhythm to the language and that rhythm needs to be preserved exactly as it was written.

There is a tendency by many scholars to decide that sections in the text that are difficult to understand or seem redundant must be the result of a scribal or copying error. There may indeed be errors having nothing to do with the original document since it is clearly a copy, and maybe even a copy of a copy. And the original document is damaged in some places. But it is better first to rack one's brain for a while to figure out if the text can make sense as it stands before arbitrarily deciding to leave something out or edit it.

This is especially true because of the parallel structure of the poetry; a repeated phrase or word is usually necessary for the rhythm and structure of the stanza. And often the same word is used twice with intentionally different meanings. I have found that practically all of the passages that are considered errors have meaning as they stand, with only a few exceptions (saying 74 is definitely an example, 65 might be). Let the words be as they are, even if they seem incomprehensible and don't make sense. We are not Jesus and don't have his level of understanding.

I do not quite see why it is so difficult for our translators simply to render the sayings of the Gospel of Thomas as they are, without having to tamper with the text to make it say what they think is more logical. And the only reason they do that is to force a poetic, metaphorical and paradoxical

text into some boring, pedestrian, mundane meaning, such as feeding the hungry with food in saying 69 or a woman putting leaven into dough in saying 96. If Jesus had really gone around making statements that were either nonsensical or simply obvious such as our translators put into his mouth, he would have died unknown and forgotten. It is doing our many interested readers a grave disservice if they are not getting what this critically important gospel really says.

2. Words that are the same in the Coptic are translated with the same word in English, and two different words in Coptic, or a word in Coptic and in Greek, that seem to have the same translation in English are translated with two different words. This is particularly important in concepts such as "place", "know", etc. Good Coptic and Greek dictionaries are imperative for accurate translation. Appendix III lists the key words in Thomas that have particularly deep meanings and gives a basic dictionary to the unique coinages of Jesus' language. Very often there are two words which most translators translate with the same English word but one word in Thomas has a more superficial meaning and another that has a deeper one.

3. In the original document in the Nag Hammadi library the text was continuous without any breaks between words or even between different sayings. But let us not forget that this is a copy of a Coptic translation of an Aramaic original that is grounded in rhythmic patterns of sacred Hebrew poetry. And we have to assume that the scribes who copied these texts were trying to save space on expensive papyrus scrolls by cramming everything together.

This, therefore, does not mean that the text itself is a continuous prose text. Rather, it is poetry of the highest order, as we can tell from the parallelisms, doubled words, word plays, repeating metric phrases, compressed content and carefully selected key words with layers of meaning. We know that poetry is always written in stanzas and short lines. It is for that reason therefore that my translation is given in poetic stanza form, based on Gillabert's, Bourgeois' and Haas' edition, and using their ordering and numbering of the lines, with a good bit of emendation to make the lines more consistent.

My general principle on line separation is first to let each clause or sentence with its own verb be a separate line. Doing this establishes a nice symmetrical structure and internal parallelism in most cases, and if not, a line might have to be further divided. The principles of great poetry are always the prime criteria to follow here. I have found that from the examples of Thomas rendered into Aramaic, Jesus' native language, that there is much

more internal rhyme and a better meter in Aramaic than in Coptic. I would love to see a competent Aramaic scholar retranslate all the sayings of Thomas into Aramaic; the results, I think, will be startling.

I would not say that this particular ordering of lines is the last word on the subject and I could probably see some changes being made but it's a very workable division for right now that makes sense of the internal structure. I would like to see other scholars pay attention to this issue and to make suggestions of their own.

What is amazing that once you study the Gospel of Thomas structurally, each saying turns out to be highly mathematically ordered, with layers of numerical meaning; the analysis of the numerology is given in Appendix V. And the structure of each saying gives great insight into the content. I would indeed say that one cannot even understand these sayings without understanding their poetic structure.

In addition, while there is no discernible order to the sayings there is an order based on catchwords that connect one saying to the next; this analysis is given in Appendix IV.

4. For each and every saying, I have consulted exactly 50 translations in English, German, French and Spanish, the languages I am fluent in, in my work on each saying in this book; they are listed in the bibliography. Good reasons for doing this are because different people notice different issues and questions in the text that I may not notice and because a word can be translated in very different ways by different people, depending on what shade of meaning they see in it and its context. This has been tedious but very helpful. Many minds are better than one.

I am well aware of the difficulty of translation, having worked as a free-lance professional German translator since 1979. In my translation I have used the words that I have found to be the most accurate, after a careful comparison of all the translations and after consulting the standard Coptic dictionaries and grammars for the most debatable sections. However, sometimes I include other words in parentheses that translators have used and that could bring out more shades of meaning of the Coptic. And sometimes there simply are several ways to translate a saying and a translator should not arbitrarily choose one: I give alternative translations when that is the case.

5. Coptic is very rich in verb tenses, most of which do not exist in English. One of my goals as a translator has been to render these accurately and consistently, and they make a big difference in the meaning. In order to do so, however, I have had to use some rather old-fashioned turns of phrase: "wont to" for the habitual tense, "about to" for the future circumstantial and the

somewhat awkward "it is" for the 2nd present tense. For example, in Saying 113 line 2 is "It is on what day that the Kingdom is about to come", perhaps not elegant but accurate. See Appendix II for a full discussion of these issues.

6. I have scrupulously avoided using loaded words that have Christian meanings, such as "repent," "blessed", "holy", "heaven", "sin", "reveal," "righteous" etc. The Gospel of Thomas is not a Christian text at all and there are far more accurate English equivalents for the Coptic. On the other hand, the Barnstone/Meyer translation bends over backwards in the other direction by Hebraizing "Jesus" into "Yeshua", "Thomas" into Toma etc. and that is not in the original either, which is clearly based on Greek terms.

7. I have retained the old-fashioned distinction between "shall" and "will." The rules for "shall" are as follows:

In the 1st person: simple futurity

In the 2nd and 3rd persons:

a. determination or promise

b. inevitability

c. command

d. compulsion

In all persons: indefinite futurity in conditional clauses and in clauses expressing doubt, anxiety or desire.

"Will" is used in the opposite way: to express simple futurity in the 2nd and 3rd persons and to indicate one of the other conditions in the 1st person. (AmHer 1189) Ross says: "`Shall' is used not only as the future tense, but also with its legitimate coloration of promise or assurance. This derives from its early English usage of being a command. Thus on each occasion the reader may feel a sense of authority, certainty and conviction." (Ross 100)

Side note:

In what follows all quotes from articles and books by French, German and Spanish scholars which do not have an existing English translation are in my own translation, and I take full responsibility for any errors of which I hope there are none.

Also, what used to be called B.C. (Before Christ) is now more corrrectly called B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) and A.D. is now C.E. (Common Era), common to Jews and Christians rather than strictly being a Christian appellation. However, citations from older boooks may still contain B.C. and A.D.

Unit I

Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas

Chapter 1:
Language of the Gospel

The very first complete copy of the Gospel of Thomas re-emerged in 1945 near Nag Hammadi, Egypt. But its existence had already been known. There are 19 references to its existence in Christian writers from the 3rd to the 11th century: 2 in Hippolytus attribute it to the Naassenes, with one direct citation (Ref. 5.7.20) and one citation without naming Thomas, 8 attribute it to the Manicheaeans, 5 call it "heretical" or "disputed" and 4 simply mention it (Attridge Greek Fragments 103-109). There are also a number of unattributed citations that turn out to be from the Gospel of Thomas. From the 6th century to the last citation in Pseudo-Photius in the 11th century Thomas is invariably attributed to the "accursed" Manichaeans, and this may indicate that the Catholic Church had been so successful in eradicating all the copies of it that only those outside its borders, namely the Manichaeans of Persia, Turkestan and China, still had copies.

I will show later that copies of Thomas continued to exist in the Islamic world and among the Cathars or Albigensians, but in the territory under Christian control every copy was destroyed by the Catholic Church and its very existence was forgotten for a thousand years after the last Christian acknowledgment.

Then in the winter of 1896-1897 a British archeological expedition headed by Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt discovered the first documentary evidence of the Gospel of Thomas near the ancient town of Oxyrhynchus, now the Egyptian village of Behnesa, where "the rubbish-heaps of the ancient city proved to be thickly packed with fragments of papyrus, so near the surface that they might almost be kicked up with the foot" (Cotton Greek 159). As they tell the story: "In the rubbish-heaps of the town were found large quantity of papyri, chiefly Greek, ranging in date from the first to the eighth century, and embracing every variety of subject. No site, with the possible exception of Arsinoe, has proved so fertile in this respect...The document in question is a leaf from a papyrus containing a

collection of Logia or Sayings of our Lord, of which some, though presenting several novel features, are familiar, while others are wholly new. It was found at the very beginning of our work upon the town, in a mound which produced a great number of papyri belonging to the first three centuries of our era" (Grenfell Sayings 5-6).

This discovery generated huge excitement in the scholarly world, inducing Grenfell and Hunt to return for further excavations in 1903 where by good fortune they found two more papyri containing sayings from the Gospel of Thomas. In all, the prologue and sayings 1-7, 24, 26-33, 36-39 and 77a were found, though most of the papyri were in a very fragmentary state. The three papyri fragments are now dated as follows: P. Oxy. 1 after 200 C.E. as it is from a codex and only then did papyrus codices begin to be used; P. Oxy. 654 from the middle of the 3rd century and P. Oxy. 655 from between 200-250 C.E. (Attridge 96-98).

Though the connection to the complete Gospel of Thomas was not definitively established until after the Nag Hammadi find, Grenfell and Hunt already suspected as much in 1904. This is what they say, in arguing against Harnack's suggestion that the sayings came from the Gospel of the Egyptians or the Gospel of the Hebrews: "It is very difficult to believe that an editor would have had the boldness to issue extracts from such widely known works as an independent collection of Sayings claiming the authority of Thomas and perhaps another disciple...It is obvious that the introduction would suit a series of extracts from the Gospel of Thomas much better than one from the Gospel according to the Hebrews. The Gospel of Thomas is known to have existed in more than one form, namely as an account of Jesus' childhood... and as an earlier gospel condemned by Hippolytus...If the Sayings are to be derived from it, the current view of the Gospel of Thomas must be entirely changed; and it is very doubtful whether this can be done except by postulating the existence of an original Thomas Gospel behind that condemnation by Hippolytus" (Grenfell New 30-32).

Certainly that opinion was not shared by the subsequent commentators, many of whom rejected this attribution to the Gospel of Thomas and considered the sayings to be extracts from the canonic gospels or at most an independent edition of the canonic version, such as the Gospel of the Hebrews or the Egyptians. These scholars' reconstruction of the gaps in the Greek texts tended toward highly Christian texts and were far off the mark from the real text of the Gospel of Thomas found later. In that initial assessment they agree with the consensus of modern scholars, the vast majority of whom would not ascribe the sayings of the Gospel of Thomas to Jesus himself and are either quite ready to dismiss them with the dreaded

label "Gnostic" or are only willing to see them as an independent version behind the canonic sayings.

But it is remarkable to me that among these initial commentators on the Greek fragments there were also some who went far beyond modern scholars in accepting the sayings as genuine to Jesus and who understood their spiritual depth. Clyde Votaw, writing in 1905, did not hesitate to ascribe the sayings to the first century, something that only a few scholars today are willing to do: "A consensus of opinion has been reached that the Sayings of 1897 do not show any doctrinal bias in the interest of or in opposition to any of the great controversies of the second and third Christian centuries. This means that they were traditional rather than manufactured for particular purposes. There is no sufficient ground for denying them a first-century origin. The same is true of the Sayings of 1903...While...we cannot expect a complete agreement of scholars, there is good reason to predicate substantial authenticity of all the Oxyrhynchus Sayings (Votaw Oxy 81-83).

I am particularly impressed by what Edwin Abbott said in 1898: "A review of these `Sayings of Jesus' as a whole strengthens the impression that they are not Judaistic or gnostic inventions, but approximate representations of words actually uttered by our Lord. They are far deeper and more spiritual than any of the gnostic utterances assigned to him in the Pistis Sophia, or even in the Acts of John...They have a continuity and rhythm that imply, not a mere compiler, but an inspired disciple. Free from controversial allusions, obscure but deep, liable to misunderstanding, yet capable of being understood in the purest spiritual sense, the two most important of the new Logia are precisely such as Christ himself might have uttered, and such as the orthodox church might have been forced to explain and tempted to subordinate or ignore" (Abbott 25).

The story of the discovery and publication of the Nag Hammadi Library, of which the Gospel of Thomas is a part, is an exciting one and raises many still unanswered questions. In December 1945 in the region of Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt, which is now a provincial administrative center about 370 miles south of Cairo on the right bank marking the limit of the Nile Valley and the arable land between Chenoboskia and Paau, two peasant brothers, Muhammad and Khalifah Ali, were looking for nitrates to use as fertilizer for their fields in the face of a cliff called the Jabal al-Tarif. This cliff contained about seven 6th dynasty tombs from the reigns of Pepi I and II (2350-2200 B.C.E.) which had long since been robbed, and as Doresse, who visited the site, describes it, below them the face of the cliff was "pierced by many narrow, deep cavities in which bodies had been summarily interred. Tombs are scattered about to as far as a hundred yards from the base of the cliff, even into the sands of the desert, where a

great number of excavations show how much they have been pillaged by the peasants, greedy for the natural manure...Here, then, was the ancient cemetery, which served as such for the city of Diospolis Parva, and then for the little town of Chenoboskion; a vast but poor necropolis where bodies were deposited, each in its shroud, at the bottom of a hole." Only with the spread of Christianity was this pagan cemetery moved to the proximity of the churches (Doresse 133).

It was in this ancient pagan necropolis, used both for royal tombs as well as a common cemetery, that the find of the Nag Hammadi Library was made (a bit misnamed since Nag Hammadi itself is actually 13 km away). As the peasant brothers dug around the base of a boulder that had fallen from the face of the cliff, they unearthed a sealed jar containing twelve leather-bound books or codices made of rolls of 20-40 papyrus sheets and written on both sides, plus a fragment of a thirteenth (Robinson NHL 22). By the time these codices were finally properly preserved in the Coptic Museum, they had lost more than 10% of their intelligible text: the sand no doubt took better care of these documents than people have done since.

Current calculations indicate 1313 pages were originally buried of which 1139 survive and of which only 794 are in good condition (Robinson Fasc 13). Muhammad Ali's widowed mother burnt most of Codices XI and XII, but the loss of Codex XII is mitigated by the fact that the two identified tractates survive elsewhere. However, individual leaves are missing in Codices II, III, VI, VIII and IX, probably left behind by the discoverers, and these have not been replaced (Robinson BA 214). Those codices that have sustained the greatest loss are IV, V, VIII, IX, X, XI and XII; the best-preserved one is Codex VII (Pearson NH 985). Some of the remaining deterioration is simply due to the ravages of time, but much of it is due to excessive handling by too many careless hands.

What is still unknown is whether there is a thirteenth codex: "The discoverer, Muhammad Ali, consistently maintains that thirteen bound books were found in the jar. But what is now referred to as NHC XIII consists of eight leaves of papyrus that had been ripped out of a codex in antiquity and stuffed into the cover of Codex VI." This therefore cannot count as the thirteenth codex. The question is: did Ali's mother burn a complete codex in her oven, together with leaves of papyrus from other codices that are now incomplete? Or does someone still have it out there? (Pearson NH 985)

What is remarkable and disconcerting is how long it took - over 30 years! - to get this entire spectacular find, now called the Nag Hammadi Library, into the hands of the proper experts and to translate and publish it. Since the finder, Muhammad Ali, had been involved in a blood feud

concerning revenge for the murder of his father and his home was being searched every evening by the police for weapons, he entrusted the books to the local priest, whereupon, due to the fact that the priest's brother-in-law recognized their value, one of the codices, Codex III, ended up being purchased on October 4, 1947 by the Department of Antiquities of Egypt.

But the other ones were bartered to or purchased by illiterate Muslim neighbors for trifling sums and three groups of them had long adventure stories through various reputable and not-so-reputable dealers and merchants with the prices constantly being marked up before ultimately ending up in the Coptic Museum of Cairo. To a large extent because of Gilles Quispel's efforts, most of Codex I was purchased in 1952 by the Jung Institute of Zurich and eventually returned to Cairo.

It was not until 1956 that Pahor Lahib, the director of the Coptic Museum, published the complete Coptic text of the Gospel of Thomas, and not until 1959 that it was finally published in an English, German and French translation, though not as the critical scholarly edition that had been intended by the responsible scholars Antoine Guillaumont, Henri-Charles Puech, Gilles Quispel and Walter Till. And the complete 12-volume facsimile edition of the Nag Hammadi codices did not begin to be published until 1972 (completed in 1984), with an English translation in 1978.

There were innumerable reasons for the delays. The first was the fact that the library had been split up among a number of dealers, with the antiquities dealer Phokion Tano acquiring the lion's share, and with the authorities at first not even suspecting the existence of other codices besides Codex I. Secondly, three of the codices had been offered at a ridiculously low price of 110 Egyptian pounds to a scholar who refused them as being of no interest yet mentioned them to no one else (Doresse Secret 119).

Thirdly, Tano waged long court action to try to keep possession of the codices. Robinson relates: "He was pressured into entrusting them for safe-keeping to the government, which ultimately nationalized them instead, and deposited them in the Coptic Museum. The long and drawn-out but ultimately unsuccessful legal proceedings that Tano undertook to repossess his property made the bulk of the codices inaccessible throughout the 1950's" (Rob NH 1st 8).

In addition, political events intervened to delay the acquisition and study for seven years: the assassination of the Prime Minister Nokrachi Pacha on December 28, 1948, the death of the first director Togo Mina and the long delay in finding a successor, the delay in submitting a law for the nationalization of the documents until 1952, the Egyptian revolution of July 23, 1952 which resulted in a reorganization of the Department of

Antiquities and the Coptic Museum, and the Suez Crisis in October 1956 which made it impossible for the international committee to meet (Doresse 123-124). Finally in 1956 after long court action and negotiations over price the codices, which had been placed in a suitcase by Jean Doresse in 1949 and kept sealed while funds for their purchase were being sought and the issue of ownership was being negotiated, were declared national property of Egypt with the Coptic Museum as their repository (Robinson Facsimile 2).

Even then the publication of the entire library was held up by the fact that the new Egyptian government had a strong distrust of Western and particularly of French involvement (Van Unnik 18). The French-dominated International Committee only managed to award the publication rights for the Gospel of Thomas to itself and was never reconvened (Robinson NH1st 8). In addition, by 1961, for political reasons, Lahib had assigned individual tractates to several East German scholars to publish separately, plus a few others, one of whom, Kendrick Grobel, was not even aware of his assignment until 3 years later, shortly before his death. These scholars jealously guarded their rights and would not allow others access, including the greatest living Coptologist of the time, Hans Polotsky. Thus the still French-dominated International Committee meeting in 1961 could only plan to publish a facsimile edition and not a translation (Robinson NH1st 8, Facs 8-9).

Another obstacle was simply the lack of enough competent Coptologists to translate the texts, a task made more difficult by their linguistic complexities. And another was the fact that the photography of the less well-preserved Codices IV and VIII-XII, though contracted out in 1962, was not finished until 1965! The only reason that the Cairo/Paris monopoly was broken is that in 1966 James Robinson managed to copy the photographs already made in Cairo and Paris but not published and distribute them to other scholars (Robinson NH1st 10-12). Finally agreement was reached to have James Robinson and the Coptic Gnostic Library Project publish the entire Library in English translation in 1978, for the Berliner Arbeitskreis under the direction of Hans-Martin Schenke to do the same in German, and for the team of the Universities of Laval and Strasburg to publish in French under the direction of Jacques Ménard (Krause Texte 217-220).

Thus, for many years it was only scholars who were aware of the existence of these documents and while there has been much written on them, most of it is in scholarly books and articles that the general public does not read. It is only in the last decade or two that the general public has become aware of the existence of the Gospel of Thomas, and the publication in 1992 of The Complete Gospels by the Jesus Seminar was certainly a

welcome milestone in that it included the Gospel of Thomas as well as other "apocryphal" gospels. The standard Nestle-Aland edition of the New Testament began to include the Gospel of Thomas starting in 1995 and we even now have editions of Thomas referring to it as "the fifth gospel" (in 1998 by Stephen Patterson, James Robinson and Hans-Gebhard Bethge).

Even so, this awareness has not penetrated most divinity schools and churches. If one were to take a representative sample of any given Sunday's sermons, one would most likely not find the Gospel of Thomas mentioned very often from the pulpits.

Despite the delays, the politics, the ego clashes of scholars and all the other human frailties, the world can be thankful that the unsuspecting Arab peasants were digging for fertilizer in that cave near Nag Hammadi and that certain scholars like Jean Doresse and Gilles Quispel understood the inestimable value of the finds and made sure they were preserved. It is only to these efforts that the words of Jesus which had lain buried in the desert for 1600 years have come back to life again, in the only complete copy of the Gospel of Thomas in existence.

Dating the Gospel

But what is it about the Gospel of Thomas that scared the Catholic Church so much that it was determined to suppress and destroy it so thoroughly as to leave no copy? There is much evidence that the Gospel of Thomas dates to the early first century C.E., which makes it contemporary with the life of Jesus. Grenfell and Hunt, the first discoverers, dated it no later than 140 C.E. and probably much earlier (Logia 16), yet this date of 140 came to be accepted by most scholars as authoritative. As Fallon and Cameron say: "Although some of their suggestions became the subject of considerable debate, it is striking that the conjectured date of composition did not. In fact, the date of 140 became so widely accepted as the operative consensus of scholarship that it is still repeatedly asserted in the literature today, without any evidence or argumentation. It should be noted, however, that Grenfell and Hunt thought the year 140 was the latest possible date of composition. They actually preferred an earlier date, not later than the end of the first or the beginning of the second century" (Fallon/Cameron 41-42)

For years Christian scholars held on to the later date in order to preclude the possibility that the Gospel of Thomas could be older than the canonic Gospels, but over the last 20 years there have been several important scholars who ascribe it at least to the middle of the first century. Helmut

Koester first argued in 1989 that it could date "possibly even in the first century AD" and that "the materials which the Gospel of Thomas and Q share must belong to the very early stage of the transmission of Jesus' sayings." (Intro Layton Nag Hamm 38, Ancient 95) John Crossan says the first layer "was composed by the 50's C.E., possibly in Jerusalem, under the aegis of James' authority...A second layer was added, possibly as early as the 60's or 70's, under the aegis of the Thomas authority." (Hist Jesus 427) Richard Valantasis agrees that the oldest core dates to 60-70 (Val 13).

Stevan Davies goes the furthest, dating it to 50-70 C.E. and announcing in 1992: "A consensus is emerging in American scholarship that the Gospel of Thomas is a text independent of the Synoptics and that it was compiled in the mid to late first century. It appears to be roughly as valuable a primary source for the teachings of Jesus as Q, and perhaps more so than the Gospels of Mark and John...The Gospel of Thomas should be viewed as a text deriving its special ideas in the main from the wisdom tradition... a text of christianized Hellenistic Judaism, sharing with such authors as Philo and Aristobulus various principal approaches...The Gospel of Thomas is to Christian Hellenistic Judaism what Q is to Christian apocalyptic Judaism" (Davies GTCW 146-147; Christ 663-664, 682).

Other evidence places the Gospel of Thomas even earlier. Saying 46 refers to John the Baptist as if he were still alive. He died in 36-37 C.E. so this saying has to be older than that year. Saying 12 refers to James, the brother of Jesus, as being alive, however he died in 62 C.E.

Saying 89 refers to a first century dispute between the rabbinical Houses of Shammai and Hillel over the washing of a container. As Falk explains the issue: "According to the Talmud, meals of the Pharisees would begin with the drinking of a cup of wine, after which they would break bread together. Bet Shammai held that the hands must be washed before filling the cup of wine, whereas Bet Hillel ruled that the washing should take place later, before partaking of the bread...Bet Shammai were concerned that the cup of wine might become ritually unclean from the hands, whereas Bet Hillel held that it was permissible to use a cup which had become unclean from the outside" (Falk 150). Therefore the followers of Shammai would wash the outside of the cups before using them while the followers of Hillel would not. Neusner concludes that this reference to a first century dispute shows the saying to date before 70 C.E., "from the period of Shammaite predominance" (Neusner "First" 494-495).

The final bit of evidence for the early dating of Thomas is the particular use of Coptic dialects. Egypt, being a long narrow country of 625 miles from the southern border to the Nile Delta, it follows that the Egyptian language would have many regional variations, consisting

of five basic dialects. The Gospel of Thomas is mostly written in Sahidic, the standard dialect of the later Christian Bible, but there is a significant proportion of non-Sahidic forms, primarily Subachmimic.

Codex II of the Nag Hammadi tractates, of which the Gospel of Thomas forms a part, is written by the same scribal hand in a particularly unique mix of dialectical forms not found anywhere else. As Nagel concludes in his grammatical study of Codex II: "In its total character the language of Codex II...is distinctive as against all dialects and manuscripts...In Codex II we find a stage of language of Coptic in which none of the dialects had as yet become standardized. Particularly in the upper Egyptian region from Achmim to Thebes the dialects overlapped each other" (Nagel Gramm 467-468).

From a thorough linguistic analysis Arthur concludes that the present manuscript shows evidence of an original archaic Subachmimic version whose dialectical variants were not always understood by the much later Sahidic copyist and editor. The repeated occurence of wordings from the non-canonical "Western" text and the use of Subachmimic dialects which had become archaic by the time Sahidic became the standard dialect indicates the antiquity of the linguistic version in Thomas: "The evidence is quite convincing that Thomas witnesses to a very early type of Coptic text. There are some indications that the antiquity of the allusions predates the formation of the Sahidic version" (Arthur 107).

Arthur suggests that the Subachmimic dialect was deliberately used to give an archaic character to a spiritual document and shows similar uses of Achmimic dialects for religious contexts in other Nag Hammadi documents (122-145): "As the Achmimic dialects were replaced and died off in upper Egypt, their effect lingered on in religious language. In particular, Achmimic features seem to have been used in certain contexts for archaic effect...There is also a good possibility that many of them hearken back to Achmimic or Subachmimic texts of the scriptures which are no longer available to us" (Arthur 110-111). However, when the original Subachmimic manuscript of Thomas came to be edited and copied by a Sahidic scribe, he had great difficulty with the dialectical variations which were unfamiliar to him. It seems clear from scribal corrections in the original manuscript that by the time of this particular copy the scribe was no longer familiar with many of the Achmimic and Subachmimic forms that he found. In sayings 18, 45, 56, 63 and 76 the scribe began to write the Sahidic forms and then corrected them to the Subachmimic ones, such as the Sahidic pentahe in saying 56 corrected to the Subachmimic pentahhe: "All of these corrections are identical in that they show the scribe correcting his proclivity for Sahidic and

restoring Achmimic forms which in all probability belonged to the vorlage" (Arthur 238).

In summary: "We suppose the present form of these documents to have been made by Sahidic-oriented scribes, possibly native Greek speakers, who encountered some difficulty with the Achmimic features in what to them were archaic documents. In many instances they allowed Achmimic features to remain in their revisions as marks of the antiquity of the documents. In other instances they mistranslated or brought in unaltered Achmimic forms through ignorance or carelessness. On this view, a host of Achmimicisms in a given document would tend to indicate a relatively early transcription into Sahidic of that document. Later copies would weed out the Achmimicisms and update the language and orthography to the proper Sahidic standard" (Arthur 149-150). By that criterion the present document of the Gospel of Thomas is thus an early rather than late transcription because of the large number of Subachmimic forms and certainly predates the date of 350 C.E. usually assigned to the manuscript itself.

The fact that the Gospel of Thomas was originally written in Subachmimic has two major implications. One is that the archaic nature of the dialect indicates that the translation was not into Sahidic, the standard language of Egyptian Christianity, and points to an older date for the Coptic translation. It also may indicate that the original translation was not done under the auspices of official Christendom whose Coptic dialect was Sahidic. The second point corroborates the first. Note that Subachmimic was primarily used to translate Manichaean and Gnostic literature which was later deemed heretical by the official Church. Thus Thomas is closely allied with the dialect of heretical literature and not with the dialect of Christian literature, another indication that there is nothing "Christian" about Jesus and his teachings. This is also true for the other Nag Hammadi writings which refer to Jesus, as they do not depict him in any orthodox Christian manner. Even when he is seen as a cosmological figure, it is as a revealer of gnosis, not as a Messiah dying for people's sins.

Despite the claims of Christian scholars, Coptic itself, the final stage of ancient Egyptian, was not invented by the Christian Church either. The need for a new way of writing Egyptian came about because of Alexander the Great's conquest of Egypt in 332 B.C.E. and the continued rule of Greek by Greek kings as well as the Roman rulers from 30 B.C.E. on. For two centuries, after about 50 C.E., the majority Egyptian population had no way of recording its own language in writing, as hieroglyphics had faded out but the new Coptic writing system had not yet become widespread enough to take their place. Thus they had no choice but to use the language

of their conquerors, and much Greek vocabulary was introduced into spoken Egyptian from 332 B.C.E. on, including Greek technical, legal and commercial terminology but also verbs, prepositions, conjunctions and other particles: 900 such loan words have been counted in the Sahidic New Testament. Often Greek words were used in extant texts even when Egyptian equivalents existed and were completely naturalized into Egyptian grammar.

To remedy this severe deficiency, as early as the 3rd century B.C.E. rough and unsystematic attempts were made to transcribe the very difficult Egyptian script into the Greek alphabet. At some point under Roman rule Egyptians started writing the language using 24 letters from the Greek alphabet with the addition of 7 signs taken from demotic for sounds not found in Greek. Yet Coptic is not exactly the same as Demotic Egyptian and is thus a true language of the people and in many ways a unique creation. Indeed, it is rare and remarkable to have the opportunity to create a new and logical phonetic system for an ancient language and to create entirely new letters for it as well (Kasser Dial Copt 72).

Some of the earliest Coptic texts are Gnostic, Hermetic and Manichaean ones. Indeed, Egypt is the only country in which original Gnostic texts have been found: the link to Egyptian culture is indicated by the ancient Egyptian ankh symbol for life and the sun. What we are seeing is a creative attempt to create an entirely new national language and literature but on a highly syncretist linguistic basis, using several dialects of Egyptian as well as Greek loan words, and the Nag Hammadi Library is part of that effort. And the effort most likely came from educated people rather than the general population, accounting for the large number of Greek words in Coptic; as Girgis points out: "So extensive is this use of Greek loan words that certain scholars have expressed doubts whether Coptic was ever really a colloquial language and not a literary dialect" (Girgis 63).

In the Gospel of Thomas Greek is used to express philosophical or abstract concepts that are not found in Egyptian. Thus, the beauty of the innovative language of these texts is that they contain both the advantage of the earthiness and concrete precision of Egyptian along with the loftiness and abstract precision of Greek, an unbeatable combination. As Orlandi says: "The birth of the Coptic literary language and consequently of the Coptic literature is due not so much to the desire to provide comprehensible text for those who did know Greek, as to a conscious cultural process which involved the Egyptian and Greek languages and cultures" (Orlandi 328).

Indeed, whoever wrote and collected these texts may have been at the forefront of the effort to create a new native Coptic literature, as Leipoldt observes: "The ancient Coptic texts... often lack consistent spelling

and a secure knowledge of grammar. The interest of these texts is in the fact that we can here observe the new birth of a written language. But we must also conclude that there is as yet no ordered Coptic schooling" (Leipoldt Koptisch 105). Khosroyev too notes that the chaotic mixture of dialects seems to indicate "an artificial linguistic written construct rather than a living spoken language" (KhosBiblio 57), showing that it could indeed well be an attempt by pioneering thinkers to unify the Egyptian language and create a linguistic as well as a philosophical Egyptian synthesis.

Coptic had a powerful appeal among spiritually-minded people, and that is the prestige that Egypt had in spiritual circles as an ancient repository of esoteric knowledge. As Emmel says: "We have to do with the products of a kind of Egypt-wide network (more or less informal) of educated, primarily Greek-speaking (that is, having Greek as their mother tongue), philosophically and esoterically-mystically like-minded people, for whom Egypt represented (even if only vaguely) a tradition of wisdom and knowledge to be revered and perpetuated....Once the idea of written Egyptian, in the form of standardized Coptic, became current (in the third century, let us say), it is easy to imagine a kind of rush to create a new `esoteric-mystical Egyptian wisdom literature'" (Emmel Coptic 48).

My only caveat is that they need not all be Greek speakers and given the enormous respect for education among native Egyptians, a high proportion could easily have been Copts. Thus, when Coptic later became an exclusively liturgical and religious language, Christianity might well have been co-opting the efforts of these linguistic pioneers to create a unique spiritual language out of the synthesis of the ancient Egyptian language and Greek philosophical terminology. Without Christianity, this vital new literary language could easily have continued to inspire much great writing and could have taken its place among the great literary languages of the world.

Could Jesus and his brother Thomas have spoken Coptic as well and perhaps even have been part of this creative effort to create a new spiritual language? The Gospel of Thomas was most likely originally written in Aramaic, the native language of Palestine, though no Aramaic version or even fragment has ever been found. This is not just a hypothetical supposition: much scholarship, especially by Guillaumont, has shown a whole array of Semiticisms in Thomas, unique and colorful expressions that are common in Hebrew and Aramaic but not in other languages. Aramaic reconstructions especially of New Testament parallels to sayings in Thomas by Dalman, Black and Burney show consistent poetic elements such as alliteration, internal rhyme and equal length of lines.

Aramaic was the common daily language of the ancient Near East from at least the 8th century B.C.E. and in Palestine proper it is attested

from the middle of the 9th century B.C.E. onward. Aramaic is one of the North Semitic language branch which includes Babylonian-Assyrian, Canaanite and Hebrew, the South Semitic branch being Arabic and Ethiopian. Hebrew of course was the language of the Bible and of religious literature. And after the conquest by Alexander Greek was the language used at all levels of government and there are no references to translations being used in discussions between Jews and government officials: thus anyone with any official business would have had to know Greek (Safrai 225). The colloquial Aramaic and even the new Hebrew used by the rabbis came to contain a good number of Greek words and many people had Greek names rather than Aramaic ones. First-century Palestine was thus in large part a tri-lingual culture in which any educated person and many non-educated ones would have spoken and read three languages, Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek. This mixture of languages in Judea is shown on many ossuaries of Jews: "the Hebrew or Aramaic name is put first there and below it the Greek equivalent; more rarely is the reverse order to be found" (Dalman Jesus 7).

Thus, many scholars agree that in all likelihood Jesus himself was fluent in at least these three languages. It is hard to say what his mother tongue was, i.e. the language he spoke at home. It has always been assumed that his first language was Aramaic, but if, as seems likely, he was from an upper-class background and was raised by priests, possibly even in Jerusalem, then he would have spoken Hebrew at home. Safrai thinks so: "Jesus probably spoke Hebrew within the circle of his disciples, and since the thousands of parables which have survived in rabbinic literature are all in Hebrew, no doubt he likewise told his parables in Hebrew...It is especially clear that in enlightened circles such as those of Jesus and his disciples, Hebrew was the dominant spoken language" (Safrai 232, 234).

His religious education would of course have been in Hebrew in any case. He would certainly have known Aramaic, since he was a teacher of the public. And he would have learned Greek in order to communicate with the authorities and with both foreigners and urbanized assimilated Jews. Kee concludes that "for Jesus to have conversed with inhabitants of cities in the Galilee, and especially of cities of the Decapolis and the Phoenician region, he would have had to have known Greek" (Kee 21).

It is therefore particularly interesting that in our present Coptic version of the Gospel of Thomas there are a large number of Greek words. Practically all scholars from the earliest commentators until today automatically assume that the Coptic is a translation of a Greek original, but that may not be true and is most likely due to inherent bias in favor of the Greek New Testament.

For in 1960 the French scholar Gérard Garitte, on the basis of detailed analyses of the wordings of the Coptic as compared with the Greek, made a persuasive case that in actuality the opposite is true: "In all the passages examined (which are extraordinarily numerous, considering the brevity of the Greek fragments) one finds: in Coptic a normal text; in Greek a text either deprived of meaning or offering internal anomalies (matters of language) or external ones (deviations in comparison with Greek text known from other sources). All these anomalies of the Greek can be explained very naturally as transpositions of Coptic expressions, not hypothetically, but attested by the Gospel of Thomas; but they remain without satisfactory explanation if one pretends that the Greek fragments represent the original of which the Coptic is a translation" (Garitte Logoi+Apocry 171).

One such example is in the Prologue to the document. Here the Coptic text says "Didymos Judas Thomas" but in the Greek text, though it is fragmentary, there is no room for the word "Didymos" and only for "Judas". This seems particularly odd because of the three names Thomas, Judas and Didymos, this is the one in Greek, so one would think that it would be included in a Greek text. Nagel concludes from this fact: "This much is certain, that this Greek version can in no way have been the model for the translator - which then affirms our conception that there was an Aramaic original" (Nagel Erwag 386). But Nagel is essentially contradicting the now standard scholarly dogma that the Coptic is a translation from the Greek: here it is certainly not. Does that have any implications for the rest of the document?

And given what we know about the bi- or trilingual nature of Jews in Judea and Jesus himself, it is not logical to assume that Jesus would express his thoughts solely in Greek. It is actually much more likely that the Coptic is a direct translation from either Hebrew or Aramaic, and that the same words that are Greek in our present texts may well have been Greek in the original. Like Aramaic, Coptic is a highly descriptive, pictorial and semantically literal language and is especially rich in verb forms. But it is less rich in philosophical and metaphysical vocabulary and those are the words that it borrowed from Greek. This mixture of precise and subtle words for everyday states of being as well as abstract Greek words makes Coptic a highly expressive vehicle for conveying Jesus' complex and many-layered philosophy, and I suspect it loses little in the translation.

We could even speculate that Jesus spent some time in Egypt, known as a place to study esoteric secrets and spiritual truths, particularly Alexandria, the home of the great Library with possibly three quarters of a million volumes. Plato himself got his story of Atlantis from Solon who had visited Egypt and the Egyptian priests considered the Greeks as mere

children in knowledge compared with themselves. It would make sense for Jesus himself to have studied in Alexandria or perhaps Thebes, and the strong Eastern tinge to his philosophy could easily have come from his contacts there, as representatives of all religions of the Hellenistic world from India westward were found there. Indeed, as early as the 3rd century B.C.E. Ashoka had sent Buddhist missionaries to Egypt and Indians were a clear presence in Alexandria: Buddhist influence has even been suggested for the Essenes of Palestine and the Therapeutai of Egypt (Bell Cults 48).

And if he did study there, then one would have to assume that he learned or knew Egyptian. Someone who knows three languages can easily learn a fourth, especially someone brilliant like Jesus. Perhaps he even used one of the first forms of Coptic to write or translate what would later become the Gospel of Thomas!

Chapter 2:
Jesus The Apostate

Let us now examine who Jesus really was and what he really taught, as shown by the Gospel of Thomas. And here we cannot avoid one particularly startling conclusion: Jesus was not a Christian! Nothing that he taught has any relation to what later was called Christianity, and indeed his teachings are antithetical to Christianity in all important respects. Nor did he have much respect for the Hebrew Bible as he criticizes it several times in the Gospel of Thomas.

Most people would agree that in order to be called Christian a person would have to believe the following items of faith:

1. Jesus was the son of God but was born to a human virgin through a miracle.
2. Jesus was divine, being the second part of a divine Trinity, but took form in a human body in order to save humans from their sins.
3. Jesus proclaimed himself the Messiah predicted by the Jewish prophets.
4. Jesus was physically resurrected three days after being crucified.
5. At the end of days, in an eschatological age, Jesus will return as the Messiah and those who are believing Christians will be saved forever.
6. To be a good Christian requires a basic practice of prayer, attendance at church services and observance of Christian holidays.

But absolutely none of this is in the Gospel of Thomas. Moreover, Jesus explicitly denies and rejects every single one of these beliefs! And the only way to make the Gospel of Thomas Christian is to mistranslate it and misinterpret it, as many Christian scholars have done. In Sayings 6, 12, 13, 16, 19, 30, 37, 44, 52 and 91 he rejects every element of Christian belief. In Sayings 18, 51 and 113 he rejects all eschatology and belief in end times. In Sayings 3, 37 and 85 he rejects the Jewish Bible. And in Sayings 14, 39, 43, 53, 55, 60, 79, 102 and 104 he rejects the basic customs and beliefs of Judaism, most of which were taken over by Christianity, and indeed his own Jewish identity. Let us look more closely at some examples of what Jesus rejects.

Christian belief

The Christian reading of Saying 30 is that Jesus is talking about the Christian Trinity here. But there are two problems with that view. The first is that the Christian Trinity did not even exist until the 4th century C.E. and did not become a dogma until 380 C.E. It is never mentioned in the New Testament and the present Trinitarian reference in Matthew 28:19 ("go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit") is clearly a later interpolation. For Eusebius cites it simply as "go forth and make disciples of all the nations in my name" and that is the way it is used even after 335 C.E. in the tricennal speech to Constantine (Usener 39).

The second problem is that Jesus refers to "three gods" and the Trinity is never referred to quite so polytheistically. Christian scholars are uncomfortable with this and have suggested that the word "gods" should be changed to something else such as "godly ones" or "people" or "judges". But the Coptic means "god" and only that.

Read the way it stands, the statement "the place where they are three gods, there they are gods" is not only not Trinitarian, but it is an implied criticism of this whole idea of a Trinity. It is indicative that he refers to the place where they are with the Coptic ma rather than the Greek topos: ma is generally used for a lower-level, more physical place, and topos is invariably used for a higher-level, more spiritual place. One would think that gods would be deserving of being assigned a higher-level place, but not in Saying 30. That is not so in the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 20:24, Psalms 82:1, and Midrash 196a) where the word "place" is used specifically to indicate God's presence or God's name so Jesus is clearly subverting Jewish tradition here. He might even be poking fun at the idea of God's place by calling it a place of three gods: any imputation of polytheism is considered blasphemy in Judaism.

One could thus paraphrase what Jesus is saying as follows. The belief in three gods is indicative of a lower-level spiritual reality nor is the place of the Biblical God any higher than that of the pagan gods. And he is slyly connecting the rabbinical traditions of God's Presence among the "three" studying the Law with the many pagan Trinities current in the Roman Empire at the time, as if to say: how do you know the Shekhina of Yahweh came down as opposed to some pagan Trinity descending upon you? Then he finishes off his argument by saying "there they are gods" which I think implies "they are merely gods".

So all your elaborate belief systems, all your trinities, he says, are just concepts in your mind, just "gods" and nothing real. That is why his

statement "where there are three gods, they are gods" sounds like nonsense: it is meant to. Jesus is showing how little there is that you can say about such a nonsensical concept as "gods" that all he can do is to make a tautology: the gods are gods. There is a good reason why our theologians want to change this text: it is radical stuff and not fit for Christian churches.

Equally, Saying 44 cannot refer to a Trinity either. And when Gnostics and Christians spoke of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, they meant it metaphorically , not as any kind of dogma that anybody would be punished for disputing. As far as blasphemy goes, the Hebrew Bible in Leviticus and Deuteronomy defines it as cursing God and saying his true name and punishes it with death by stoning. But as Sanders says, these passages "would lead later readers to say that blasphemy requires the explicit use of the Proper Name of God, which modern scholars reconstruct as Yahweh. By the first century it was no longer pronounced (except by the high priest on the Day of Atonement) and thus there was no unbroken tradition to tell us how it was said" (Sanders Law 57). As a result, by the time of Jesus the rabbis insisted on a strict definition of the offense: "'The Mishnah tractate Sanhedrin, which is marked by extreme leniency, requires for conviction that the `one who curses', to be guilty, must explicitly pronounce the Proper Name of God" - which no one knew anyway (Sanders Law 60).

Even when the rabbis defined it in a broader way, they still did not hold that any blasphemous words or actions were unforgivable. They emphasized the mercy of God, greater than the mercy of humans, and they spoke of the forbearance of God even when he is being blasphemed: "God hears how the nations blaspheme Him, and he is silent" (Montefiore 460). Therefore, Jesus is on good Jewish ground when he says blasphemy about the Father is forgivable. In this he simply shares the opinion of most rabbis and certainly aligns himself with the lenient school of Hillel. Thus, he is telling the disciples not to worry: the Bible has trouble defining the concept, the rabbis don't want to punish it too harshly and offer many ways to repent and so as far as Jesus is concerned, they should simply speak freely. Moreover, Jesus shares some of the Gnostics' distaste for the God of the Old Testament and clearly does not mind this God being criticized.

So much more the case for the Son, which as a concept goes back to pre-Christian Gnosticism. What is striking from a Christian point of view - and I am surprised that not a single Christian scholar has picked up on this - is that if Jesus were truly the Son of God as Christians say, why on earth would he be so liberal with blasphemy against himself? Wouldn't this be a good time to say that blasphemy against the Son cannot be forgiven? But he doesn't. Later on the Church would certainly burn you for many centuries

for denying the divinity of Jesus - but he didn't claim it as we have seen many times already.

It is only the pure spirit they are not allowed to criticize in any way and doing that is not forgivable, "neither on earth nor in heaven". To Jesus Spirit is both a vital principle of the universe and a manifestation of the divine behind all things as well as denoting the divine and immortal part of ourselves which is the source of higher knowledge. He is not a theist and he is not interested in theological speculation which is why ultimately the Father and the Son mean little to him. But the Spirit is something fundamental within ourselves and to the universe around us and that can be experienced, deepened and cultivated.

Saying 12 certainly contradicts all the Christian teachings on Jesus being the Messiah and predicting his crucifixion. Here his disciples make a rather mysterious statement about Jesus leaving them. People of a Christian bent naturally assume that this means Jesus is about to go to Jerusalem where he has predicted that he will die, but of course in Thomas there is no reference to any of this narrative of the New Testament. Indeed, in the New Testament when Jesus goes to Jerusalem the disciples go with him and that is not the case here in Thomas. As we have seen, there is much reason to doubt the whole story of the crucifixion under Pontius Pilate and if we go by Thomas there is no historical correlation strictly from internal evidence.

In the saying Jesus is clearly leaving the disciples voluntarily, not by coercion. In the Coptic 1st future tense, as Plumley says, "the action was regarded as so certain of achievement, that, already, in the speaker's mind it was visualized as completed." (Plumley 96) Something that certain has to be planned, and thus it seems that Jesus had already announced his departure date to the disciples.

In addition, it is clear that he had no intentions of being their teacher for an unlimited amount of time. He is here for a short time - he took his stand in the midst of the world, as Saying 28 says - but he is not interested in creating an institutional structure with him at the top or any kind of lasting structure at all. He is here to teach for a while and then he moves on, either to another place or perhaps into seclusion in the mountains to meditate, as is the habit among the yogis and swamis of India.

It is worth pointing out that there are many parallels for Jesus' actions in the ancient world, and it was considered a sign of great wisdom for someone to have tremendous power, use it only in a benevolent way to do good and then to relinquish it voluntarily. The greatest example in history is that of Solon who came to power in 594 B.C.E. at a time of great economic and social crisis in Athens: great disparity between rich and poor, increasing debt slavery and landlessness for small farmers. Solon passed major reforms,

including the establishment of true democracy, the cancelling of debts and mortgages, and the fixing of a limit to the amount of land that could be owned by a single person. Though given dictatorial powers, he gave them up after doing his work, "thinking that the reforms would work better in the absence of the reformer", and left Athens to travel for ten years. (Bury 173-180) A famous example from Roman history is that of L. Quintius Cincinnatus who lived in his farm, cultivating the land with his own hand: called from the plough in 458 B.C.E., he saved Rome by defeating the threatening Aequi and though offered the dictatorship of Rome, he kept it for only 16 days and returned to his farm (Class Dict 149).

Saying 13 is another strong testimony that the Messianic story of the Gospels has no basis. Jesus does not ask the disciples who he is, as Matthew 16:13-20 has him saying, but he asks them to make a comparison to him. It is a bit odd that Jesus would even ask his disciples to characterize him in the first place. Usually he is the one giving sayings, admonitions, parables and the like. And usually his teachings make a strong point of being beyond categories. Yet here he has asked his disciples to categorize him.

We have an important clue in the fact that he uses the Coptic word for "resemble" rather than for "compare". "Compare" is always used in connection to the Kingdom while "resemble" is used in a negative way to characterize the Pharisees in Saying 102.3 and used in Saying 21.2 with an implied criticism in Mary's question about the disciples. Moreover, Jesus distances himself from the question about resemblance by putting it in quotation marks, almost as a signal to the disciples that this question has a more negative connotation. Indeed, it is as if he were making fun of himself for even asking it.

Is he making fun of his disciples as well? Jesus has essentially asked them a trick question: is he setting them up? If it is a trick, then Matthew and Simon Peter fall for it. The former sees him in the framework of religion and the latter in the framework of philosophy. They give highly flattering answers, but Jesus completely ignores them. He doesn't put them down, mind you, nor does he contradict them, but he doesn't bother correcting them either. One would think that since he is the one who asked the question it is reasonable for the disciples to respond and that the teacher would acknowledge that. And it is noticeable that Simon Peter and Matthew certainly don't call him the Messiah or the Son of God or by any such title; all they say is that he is a "just angel" and a "philosopher, a wise man". Jesus doesn't even accept those appellations; to Thomas he rerfuses even to be called Teacher and he says the disciples are intoxicated by his teachings and are applying them much too personally to himself. This is about as antithetical to standard Christianity as one can possibly get.

One might think that Saying 28 is a Messianic statement about Jesus incarnating from the realm of God into flesh in order to save sinful man. Akagi says the saying "clearly presupposes the early Christian belief in the pre-existence of Christ in heaven and his incarnation in the world" and the "reference to `flesh' in Saying 28 is more in line with the positive evaluation of `flesh' frequently found in the New Testament than with the negative attitude...common in Gnostic thought-systems" (Akagi 189, 194). In addition, many Gnostics took the Docetist view that Jesus did not really suffer in the flesh whereas Saying 28 "takes the orthodox position" (Davies 40) while DeConick even thinks the reference to "pain" "seems to be an allusion to Jesus' crucifixion" (DeC 133). Davies says that the idea of wisdom appearing in the flesh is "nowhere mentioned in the Jewish wisdom material" and "seems to be a particularly Christian idea...the Jesus of Thomas is not a hypostasis but an incarnation" (Davies CW 88).

But Christian theologians also find themselves acknowledging that no specific elements of Christian theology can actually be found in Saying 28: no claim of being a Messiah or Savior, no laying down of his life for people's sins, no references to any distinction between the celestial and earthly Jesus etc. (Bruce 126, Dunderberg Uro Crossroads 46-49). And Gärtner says "the expressions `drunk' and `empty' are far from being typical New Testament words...On the other hand, both these terms...are typically Gnostic" (Gartner 191-2). The clinching argument is, of course, that the New Testament never quotes this saying, as it definitely would have had it been a clear Messianic statement (see above).

Saying 23 contradicts the Christian idea that Jesus came to offer salvation to all and that his teachings were directed at the masses of people. The numbers "one from a thousand and two from ten thousand", found in Deuteronomy 32:30, Ecclesiastes 7:25-28 and Sirach 6:6, clearly indicate that only few people seek wisdom and enlightenment, and that is exactly the sense in which Ecclesaiastes uses it.

The meaning is that only some people will seek wisdom, but it does not mean that Jesus has set an arbitrary ratio that he will rigidly adhere to. Nor has he set any preconditions. In the Jewish Wisdom tradition only those who have Torah are the elect, but here anybody can be a seeker. However, only a few will do so, as few as one in a thousand, but that is only because few want to do the hard work that is necessary for the spiritual path, not because Jesus excludes anyone. Other sayings, including 62, 73, 74 and 93, have the same message: only a few will choose to follow the path of a seeker and only a few will understand and respect these teachings. Thus, when Jesus says he will choose one from a thousand to be his disciple, it is because only one from a thousand actually wishes to be his disciple.

Eschatology

There are several sayings in which Jesus directly denies the belief in apocalypse, eschatology and the end of the world that is an integral part of Christian teaching. In these sayings it is the disciples that seem wedded to apocalyptic notions and Jesus continually corrects them. In Saying 18 the disciples are obsessed with future end times and they want to know in which way their end will occur. They seem to think Jesus has knowledge of the future and can even give them exact details, for they want to know the exact way that the end will happen, emphasized grammatically by the 2nd future. And they are confident that he can give them an answer.

Instead, Jesus denies the idea of the end of humans as a whole and defines the concept of end and beginning on a cosmological and philosophical level, indicated by the Greek term arche. This term in Greek philosophy means "beginning, starting point, principle, underlying ultimate substance, ultimate undemonstrable principle" and was the subject of much disagreement by the Greek philosophers. So when Jesus asks "have you revealed the arche" he is alluding to the fact that all the great Greek philosophers could not agree on what arche represented and he is asking whether the disciples had reached a superior understanding than they. And then he gets into his own metaphysical teachings which are not Christian at all.

In Sayings 51 and 113 Jesus both overturns Jewish teachings and does not teach anything resembling Christianity. The disciples are essentially asking whether Jesus agrees with any of the ideas from other religions about the afterlife and the apocalypse. They are asking whether he agrees with the ideas about the end of the world of the Jewish mystical and apocalyptic literature, the Hermetic and the Gnostic writings, the idea of the repose of the dead from Greek tradition, and the idea of the last judgment from Persian influence. And they want to know the exact day that all this will happen.

Jesus rejects all of these ideas and doesn't even deign to deny the apocalyptic idea of a new world. His teaching is simple: don't even bother thinking about the future but focus on the present, on your inner peace and tranquility. This state is attained through awareness that it exists and the desire to experience it. No other mystical experience is necessary.

Jesus is thus telling us that we do not need to die in order to experience a higher state of being. The major religions are so obsessed with the afterlife and what we need to do in order to have a better one that they

ignore this present life. Jesus is much more practical and tells us that our heaven and our hell, our resurrection and our new body, are all right inside ourselves at all times. It is silly to wait passively for death and to think that your prayers and Hail Marys are going to get you a coveted spot in some imaginary heaven. You have work to do right now, every moment of your life, and you do not need to be misled by speculative fantasies of the future that may be mostly in your imagination anyway. Ironically, the day that the disciples ask about happens to be every day.

In both sayings 51 and 113 the disciples are quite obsessed with wanting to know the exact day that the apocalyptic events they are asking about are going to take place - and the 2nd tenses make clear that temporal emphasis. However, the disciples do distinguish two different types of events. The first event, the repose of the dead, they see as happening in the distant future. But they expect the second event, the new world, any day now, in the immediate future, and they may well be drawing on the apocalyptic speculations of Jewish mystical literature of the time, the non-canonical texts called "pseudepigrapha" such as the Sybilline Oracles, the Book of Enoch, the Apocalypse of Baruch and the Apocalypse of Ezra (Esdras).

So what the disciples are assuming with their question "what day will the repose of the dead occur" is that the dead are not in repose. In that case they may be in some sort of Greek Hades, leading a rather restless afterlife down below. But they also want to know whether the Gnostic idea of an inward resurrection precedes the repose of the dead and whether the Persian notion of a last judgment will still take place afterwards in which the righteous will be selected out for eternal repose. These two questions thus imply an interesting synthesis of assumptions from the Jewish apocalyptical, the Gnostic, the Greek and the Persian religious traditions.

Jesus doesn't even feel he has to respond to the question about the new world; he rejects it out of hand and the saying gives the answer to the question internally by use of the word kosmos. The word kosmos or "world" is generally used in Thomas in an ambivalent sense, with both negative and positive uses, so there is already an implied criticism through the word itself. In other words, "world" being ambivalent to begin with, it makes no difference whether the kosmos is old or new, and whether the old one is destroyed at all.

What Jesus is interested in is anapausis or repose, an important and central concept in Thomas. And here he emphatically rejects any future apocalyptic state and says nothing will happen in the future that the disciples should look forward to. Indeed, what they are looking forward to has already happened and they don't even realize it. He even repeats "you" in order to hammer the point home. As Jesus defines it in Thomas, "repose" always

means a state of great peace and tranquility. Thus he is telling them that they already have inner peace within them and that it is a state of consciousness and not a place or time. And contrary to the Jewish apocalyptic and mystical literature, Jesus is not advocating a mystical experience replete with God on his throne and angels standing around him.

The fact that Jesus rejects future eschatology so unequivocally should come as a shock to anyone steeped in New Testament theology. Ever since Johannes Weiss' work of 1892 and Albert Schweitzer's seminal 1906 book The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Christian interpreters have emphasized the power of apocalyptic belief in Jesus' thinking. Johannes Weiss says "Jesus' idea of the Kingdom of God appears to be inextricably involved with a number of eschatological-apocalyptic views" as "his activity is governed by the strong and unwavering feeling that the messianic time is imminent" and when the Kingdom of God comes, "God will destroy this old world which is ruled and spoiled by the devil, and create a new world." (Weiss 129-131)

Schweitzer says: "The eschatology of the scribes, as it is preserved for us in the Apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra, distinguishes two Kingdoms, that of the Messiah, which is limited in duration and takes place before the general resurrection of the dead, and the eternal and completely supernatural Kingdom of God, which appears after the resurrection. Jesus, on the other hand, like the prophetic books of the late post-Exilic period and the Books of Daniel and Enoch, knows only the Kingdom which follows upon the resurrection" (Schweitzer Kingdom 92-93).

But if Jesus rejects all the aspects of apocalyptism, including the imminent destruction of the old world and its replacement with the new Kingdom, the last judgment and the resurrection and immortality of the righteous, then he can't be an apocalyptic prophet, can he? Instead, he speaks of peace and serenity within, like any good yogi or Buddhist.

It is therefore amazing that so many Christian theologians in their commentaries on Saying 51 do their utmost to rescue Jesus from the clutches of Asian heathen ideas and to save him for Christianity. Hogeterp refuses to accept Jesus' clear denial of future eschatology: "The `repose of the dead' may however denote an intermediate stage preceding the end of days which is characterized by the Resurrection...Jesus' words in this Saying therefore make clear that certain conditions are already fulfillled in the present (realized eschatology) but this does not necessarily contradict a future dimension to the end of days (future eschatology). For one thing, the Saying does not state that the Resurrection has already taken place or is a present reality" (Hogeterp 393).

Yet if we consult Christian scholars who have actually studied the specific subject of resurrection and eschatology in Thomas in depth, we see

rather different conclusions. Riley says flatly that "the Gospel of Thomas refutes directly the conception of an eschatological resurrection of the dead at the end of the age" and "`realized eschatology' has no need for physical resurrection" (Riley Resurrection 131-132).

I should think that Riley's summation would be definitive and that there should be no more talk of Jesus the apocalyptic prophet. Perhaps we can also get rid of the term "realized eschatology" for that too is misleading. Christians too would benefit, as yogis and Buddhists clearly have, from a more inward spiritual practice, more meditation and more focus on the Here and Now rather than the Future. As a Buddhist abbott I once heard speak at Arlington St. Church in Boston said so memorably with regard to meditation: "Try it. If you like it, good. If you don't like it, that's good too."

Jewish Bible

In Saying 3 Jesus draws on Biblical images of birds of the sky, and fish of the sea found in Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Samuel, Job, Psalms and Baruch and associated there with the glorification of God. But Jesus turns these images on their heads: he seems to be mocking the people pointing up at the sky and down at the sea and he accuses them of beguiling or misleading the people. What he disagrees with is that the Kingdom can be localized in a particular place, either above or below the earth, either in Heaven or the Underworld.

Indeed, he is essentially denying the whole concept of heaven and underworld and he is using Biblical imagery to subvert it. He is making fun of it by saying that if you think heaven is in the sky, the birds will be there first long before you, and if you think there is an Underworld, the fish will be there long before you. It is funny for him to say that the fish will swim there as this deliberately mixes up the concept of sea and Sheol or Hades. And he is slyly equating those "who go before you" with the birds and fish who are "first before you": thus he is calling the proponents of Heaven and Hades birds and fish! So he is making fun of both Jewish monotheism and Graeco-Roman paganism all in the same few lines!

In both these comparisons he is not only challenging the idea of a physical afterworld, he is also making fun of the monotheistic idea of human superiority. In the very quote from Genesis that talks about the fish of the sea and the birds of the air man names all the animals and was given the

earth to "subdue and dominate" but here Jesus says the birds and fishes are superior to humans and will be first! He may even be making fun of Deuteronomy 30 as his imagery and question-answer parallelism is similar to it and yet he rejects its whole idea of finding God in the heaven and following his commandments: so much for the midrashic tradition!

The striking image in Saying 37 - "strip yourself naked of your shame" and be like little children - is strongly reminiscent of the Biblical story of Adam and Eve in Paradise. Yet in reality Jesus is subverting this story rather than making it the basis of his teaching. Remember that in Genesis Adam and Eve became ashamed of their nakedness as a result of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and therefore covered themselves with clothing. But here Saying 37 specifically says that what you strip yourselves of is your shame, and in the very next sentence it links "shame" with "garments", practically equating them. This is subversive! Jesus is saying flat out that it is clothing that should make you feel ashamed, not nakedness: he is turning the story of Adam and Eve on its head! And the only reason commentators miss this is because so many translators mistranslate line 5 as "when you strip without being ashamed" which implies that one should be ashamed after stripping: the exact opposite of what Jesus is saying here! Once again Christian interpretations are forced onto the text.

And then he says not only should you take off your clothes, but you should take them, put them under your feet and trample them to make sure that they can never be worn again. You should do this to become "little young children" - and anyone who has been around small children knows that they hate to wear clothing and that if they could, they would simply run around naked all day. Their mothers spend much time and energy just trying to get them to keep their clothing on, never mind keeping them clean. Eventually, of course, they become like Adam and Eve and are socialized to feel ashamed every time they show their naked bodies.

There is no doubt that Jesus means this literally, and not just in connection with any Adam and Eve imagery, but simply as a critique of the constraints of civilization and the artificiality of our external encumbrances. It is particularly interesting that the Coptic word shtén used in Saying 37 specifically means "tunic" (Crum 597a), is used in the Sahidic Old Testament to mean "coat, robe" and in Isaiah 3:16 specifically denotes fancy dress which Isaiah is castigating. Yet there are two other more general words for clothing in Coptic which are also used with a general meaning in the Sahidic Old Testament: hôbs, "covering, garment, linen" (Crum 660a) and jinj, "clothing, vestment" (Crum 769b). Jesus may thus be making a specific comment against the fancy clothing of civilization rather than body covering in general.

There is quite a bit of humor in the first sentence of Saying 66. Here is Jesus, who is a master teacher himself, asking to be taught, as if he were a rabbinical student asking for instruction about the interpretation of a scriptural passage (Quispel Mak 80). This setting is clearly indicated by the almost verbatim quote of Psalm 118, showing that this is indeed a kind of Biblical commentary. But we know that normally Jesus is quite scornful of Jewish practice and of the Old Testament. So he is making fun of himself pretending to ask to be taught about a passage that he is actually reinterpreting, another of the many examples of Jesus' complex sense of humor.

The Psalm he is quoting is a processional hymn for the feast of Tabernacles, set in dialogue form, and in it a man, possibly a king, is speaking for the entire community who is in the procession. After describing his desperate state at the hands of his non-Jewish enemies, he describes how God gave him victory over them and he expresses his thanks. Then when he asks to be admitted to the Temple, he is refused because he is not righteous enough, and he compares himself to a stone which the builders rejected. He argues that through his devotion to God he has become a cornerstone rather than a rejected stone, similar to his state of desperation at the hands of his enemies. This convinces the voices within the Temple and he is allowed in.

The same image of a devout and pious Jew being a cornerstone is also used in Isaiah, and here someone who follows the path of righteousness and justice will become such a foundation for the entire community. In Job, on the other hand, the cornerstone is not in humans at all but in the physical world that God has created.

In Saying 66, however, Jesus cites Psalm 118 only to reinterpret it in his own inimitable way, neither Jewish nor Gnostic and certainly not Christian. The builders are not the unbelieving pagans but the forces that maintain and perpetuate the physical world which the Gnostics personified into the archons but which Jesus does not. And the cornerstone is not the devout and pious Jew who smites the unbelievers but the hidden spiritual reality that lies behind the apparent physical reality. But Jesus does not teach an unbridgeable gulf between the two the way the Gnostics did: the spiritual world lies right behind and around the physical one, always ready to be discovered. The disciple should indeed ask to be taught about it as Jesus does in his humorous way.

And when he or she asks, the message is: do not get caught in the material world, the world of growth, decay and death, the "built" world that then becomes "unbuilt." Fix your sights on the stable, permanent, self-generated Higher Realm of the Father's Kingdom.

Jewish customs and beliefs

In Sayings 6, 14 and 104 the disciples assume that Jesus is in favor of basic Jewish religious practices and the issue is only the manner thereof. The Jewish teachings of the time on the four questions they ask were as follows. On fasting, the Bible prescribes only one fast, Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement. Fasts were also done to mourn, to obtain special favor, to show contrition and to atone for individual sins. On prayer, the standard practice was individual rather than communal prayer, normally twice a day, morning and either afternoon or evening. Only the Qumran community, or the Essene movement, had set texts prayed in unison. For alms, Biblical law required the farmer to give a tenth (a tithe) of his crop to the priests, the Levites and the poor. Most years it went to the priests but every 3rd and 6th year the tithe was given to support the Levites and the needy (Deut 14:27-29, Lev 19:9). The Jews had a reputation throughout the pagan world for philanthropy. And on diet, kosher laws are prescribed in the Bible and are still being observed by observant Jews. Only certain animals, those that chew the cud and have cloven hoofs, and only fish that have fins and scales, are allowed as food. Pork is prohibited. In addition, consuming the main fatty parts of an animal and its blood is forbidden. And eating meat and dairy together in one meal is also prohibited. (Sanders Jewish Law 72-77, quotes 73, 77, 81-82, Judaism 146-148, 214-217, 230-232)).

It is odd that the disciples should ask these questions at all. Anyone growing up Jewish would know that a Jew fasts on Yom Kippur, prays every day, tithes to the priests and the needy and keeps kosher. These are not disputable esoteric points. These were and still are fundamentals of Judaism. We must therefore conclude that the disciples are either not Jewish or they are thoroughly Hellenized and assimilated Jews who did not grow up Jewish - or perhaps these are rhetorical questions so Jesus can give his answers.

Jesus' answers in Saying 14 are uniformly shocking to both Jewish and Christian sensibilities. He essentially rejects all the basic practices that make up what we call religion. Why? It has been said by many people that Jesus wanted to breathe life and spirit back into a moribund, rule-bound religion obsessively concerned about punctilious adherence to laws. It is the interior attitude that mattered to Jesus, not the exterior action. Yet this is completely the wrong picture of first century Judaism. As Sanders says incisively: "In accord with the general development of life and thought in the Mediterranean, Judaism had become increasingly individualized and interiorized...the idea of God's covenant with a group, the people of

Israel, was very strong in the first century, but individuals were increasingly expected to accept the spirit of the law within and to orient their own lives in accord with it" (Sanders Judaism 231-232). As we have seen above, fasting was only prescribed once a year and was otherwise up to the individual and prayer was an individual and not a communal practice. Why would these observances be considered so onerous by Jesus?

And yet onerous they are in Saying 14. Fasting causes nobe, which means sin or fault, and so Jesus is essentially telling his disciples not to observe Yom Kippur or to atone for their transgressions. Notice that this is a complete upending of Jewish teaching where not observing Yom Kippur or atoning for one's transgressions is a sin. Praying leads to condemnation or judgment against someone, the Greek katakrino: a very severe word. This is partially in reaction against the Jewish idea that every deed is judged by God at all times even in the moment it is carried out; thus prayer makes one aware of that severeness of God's condemnation, and Jesus rejects that idea.

Alms (the Greek eleemosune which has a broader meaning of "pity, mercy") cause "harm to your spirits" or pneuma, which is the highest spiritual part of the self. The word for "harm" here is kakos which means "bad, ill, evil; woe, distress, loss" and seems to cover every kind of harm imaginable. And the disciples
are enjoined to wander through the countryside and eat anything set before them, without paying any attention to kosher laws. Indeed, the very word used in the question in Saying 6 for "observe a diet", the Greek paratereo, is already a criticism, as it means "to watch closely or narrowly; to observe superstitiously" which is a negative slant on kosher laws. Instead of worrying about what food to eat or not to eat, they are to give their attention to taking care of the sick, and this means complete care, not just medical care: the Greek therapeuo means "wait on, attend, serve; take care of, provide for, tend the sick, treat medically, heal, cure." The disregard for food seems to be a contradiction to the fact that Jesus and his followers were vegetarian, but clearly this is trumped by the rule of accepting hospitality.

Notice that each practice which is supposed to lead to favor with God and in normal religious wisdom would make a person pious instead does the opposite of what it is supposed to do. Fasting is intended to atone for sin yet brings it on. Prayer is supposed to lead to God's mercy yet brings condemnation. Alms are supposed to give you a good conscience yet cause harm to your soul. There is no way to mitigate the impact of these statements: Jesus completely rejects Jewish religious practices. And shocking as this is to anyone brought up a Christian, he therefore rejects the standard observances of practically all Christian churches as well.

In Sayings 39 and 102 Jesus directs his criticism not against the Pharisees as a whole but against the ruling school of Shammai who had taken over the Jewish establishment. At the same time it is important to note that he is giving the Pharisees a great compliment, as he is saying that the Pharisees are actually capable of having access to gnosis, which is for Jesus is the highest form of knowledge. That access may have something to do with the fact that the Pharisees claimed knowledge of the oral tradition rather than merely the written
tradition, and by this time that oral tradition also included the Jewish apocalyptic and mystical literature that Jesus must certainly have had respect for.

But that praise actually sharpens his criticism, for then he says that they have received the keys to gnosis but refuse to use them for themselves. "The scribes and the Pharisees refuse "to enter into the interior": that is, they spend their time merely interpreting the externalities of the Bible and the minutiae of the Oral Law, but they refuse to go into the deeper interior of the meaning of the Law nor are they willing to go into their own interior and experience the inner world.

Originally, the Pharisees had the laudable aim of bringing God's realm down to humanity in a flexible and liberal way in order to allow people to be more in touch with the divine. Halachah was supposed to emphasize the inward purpose behind the outward act, yet the Pharisees then ended up getting caught up in the minutiae of the law and in unending arguments with the Sadducees and amongst themselves about the correct ritual observances, laws of purity, capital and non-capital cases and Temple ritual. As an example: the Pharisees held that the meal-offering during a sacrifice should be wholly sacrificed but the Sadducees said it should be consumed by the priest. The House of Hillel said a person offering peace offerings on a festival day may lay his hands on them, but the House of Shammai said he may not. (Klausner 219-221, Herford 116-118, Neusner 107) So to paraphrase Jesus, the Pharisees are standing outside the door, arguing about what the right way to lay their hands on a sacrifice is, and they forget to open the door itself and go deep inside themselves, into the interior.

In Saying 43 Jesus seems to deny that he is Jewish at all: "But you, you have become like the Jews." He uses the Greek ioudaios which goes back to the tribe of Judah who occupied the mountain ridge between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea and whose name became the name of the southern kingdom, but later came to be applied to the entire Jewish people both as individuals and as the whole people. However, in the Biblical period the term came to be used in a "derogatory or even contemptuous sense" and thus the polite term ebraios came to be used "to denote Jewish nationality or

religion in passages which wish to avoid the deprecatory element that clings so easily to ioudaios" (Kuhn Kittel 368).

Thus ioudaios was only used in the post-classical period by foreigners for the Jewish people and often had a specific meaning "to denote Jewish religious adherence irrespective of nationality." Because it was "the normal term used by foreigners for the Jewish people, the Jews of the Diaspora soon adopted it as a name for themselves" (Gutbrod 369-370). In sum, ioudaios is a term either used by Gentiles for Jews or a general term for people following the Jewish religion used by Diaspora Jews, but not for natives of the Holy Land, and it has a history of being used in a derogatory or contemptuous way.

Jesus is extremely sensitive to being rejected as an outcast and a mamzer and when the disciples question his authority, they are calling attention to his dubious origin. Jesus knows that he has had powerful experiences of spiritual insight and enlightenment, just as the Buddha did, and he knows he has vitally important truth to communicate. But he does not have the social position to make people accept him unquestioningly.

Thus, ultimately his reference to "the Jews" is also personal. Just as the village rejects its prophet and his family rejects the healer, so did the Jewish society he grew up in make it clear to him that he did not fully belong, that he was an outcast. "Hate" is a strong word, which some translators try to tone down (Ross calls it "dislike"), but Jesus clearly means it. He feels that his people rejected and hated him and now he is experiencing the same from those he thought understood him, the disciples. And so when he calls them ioudaios, he is loading several meanings onto the charge: he is expressing his resentment as a Galilean against the Judeans who think they are superior, and as a Palestinian Jew against the Diaspora Jews who are richer and more powerful, but he is also incorporating the derogatory and contemptuous meaning of the term as a way to criticize them back.

In Saying 52 the disciples are reflecting a Jewish eschatological expectation of the time, awaiting the return of Moses himself or Elijah or Enoch. Yet Jesus' answer is a very surprising and unequivocal "No". From a Christian point of view one would think he now has the perfect opportunity to demonstrate that he is the Messiah, the one to die for people's sins and offer them salvation. He certainly doesn't say that. But he doesn't claim to be the Jewish Messiah either, the "anointed one", foretold by all the prophets who would free the Jewish people from the oppressive rule of the Romans and who would restore the holy theocratic state desired by the prophets. What does he say?

Thus, Jesus is saying that by speaking about the prophets of old the disciples have let go of the spiritual reality that is right in front of them and

all around them. They have not rejected it outright, they have not abandoned it or any other such term; no, they have let something go that they already have and that they can easily find again once they seek it again. But for the moment they are preoccupied with that which is dead rather than with the great immortal stream of spiritual existence all around and within them. They are immersed in ancient writings and in eschatological hopes for the future rather than delving into their own experience here and now.

Jesus' answer here shows a pattern that is consistent in the rest of Thomas: a skeptical attitude toward institutional religion, traditional texts and ritual practices. What Jesus teaches is an individual, solitary and inward religion that does not even require a community, despite the emphasis on the Thomasine community in much recent scholarship. Jesus knows he has wisdom to give and wants his disciples to pay close attention to it, but ultimately they must pursue the spiritual path themselves.

In Saying 53 the disciples ask an odd question: whether circumcision is of use or service or help. They don't ask whether it is good or holy or prescribed by God or necessary for Jewish identity or a fitting tradition. They seem to ask an entirely utilitarian question: is it of use to anyone?

The fact that they even ask such a critical question is quite radical considering the cultural background. So by questioning circumcision the disciples are actually in keeping with the first century trend in Judaism as a whole which was already feeling ambivalence about the rite. It is even possible that without Emperor Hadrian's ban the general trend of assimilation and public opinion might have caused the rite to die out on its own. Jesus was not alone in his opposition.

Thus, Jesus' re-interpretation of circumcision as a spiritual one is not quite as anti-Jewish as it may seem, for in the Bible too there is a tradition of using circumcision as a spiritual metaphor in Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and the Odes of Solomon from the Jewish Wisdom tradition. The original meaning of the word in both Hebrew and Greek is "to cut round, to encircle with a view to taking away" with the sense of sacrificing that which is cut as an offering to God, and in the citations above there is indeed the sense of offering something vital of oneself to God (Meyer 73). There were Jewish circles in Alexandria and even Palestine who had stopped practicing the actual physical custom and already considered circumcision in a spiritual and metaphorical sense.

Jesus' answer in Saying 53 argues that circumcision is unnatural: for if it were natural, then babies would be born circumcised. The implication is that something natural is by definition useful. We have seen other evidence that Jesus has high respect for the laws of nature and rational science and this is in keeping with that premise.

In Sayings 55 and 101 Jesus' rejection of any allegiance to parents, using the strong word "hate", is entirely not in keeping with the spirit of Judaism which considers honoring one's parents almost the highest commandment and greatly emphasizes family. It is a shocking and radical sentiment. No close parallels exist in rabbinic Judaism and "such a call to discipleship has no real parallel in Judaism, whether of Jesus' own time or of the time preceding". Even in the Qumran literature "these parallels speak of the existence of family divisions in the end time either as an evil which ought not to occur or as due to certain members of the family reacting against the evil behavior of other members" (Stein 188-189).

Hating their parents means that someone has committed themselves exclusively to a spiritual path and that their family therefore becomes a hindrance to that goal. This rejection of family life was endemic in the Graeco-Roman era of Jesus. It was particularly in vogue to reject family life for the sake of the philosophical path. Socrates was certainly the model for this path and set a standard both in his life and in his remarkable death for all future philosophers and the Cynics, both the Greek and the later Hellenistic/Roman ones, rejected possessions, marriage and family life entirely. But this position is completely at odds with the basic teachings of Judaism.

Equally, in Saying 79 Jesus responds in an entirely un-Jewish way to a woman's praise of him. Blessings on one's mother for having given birth to a person were common in Jewish culture, and there are many examples in the Rabbinic literature. Jewish law, both Biblical and rabbinic, consistently elevates marriage and children as the highest ideal. The Talmud says: "He who does not engage in procreation is as if he committed murder" and "when a man is brought to judgment, he is asked: `Did you deal honestly in commerce? Did you devote time regularly to the study of Torah? Did you undertake to fulfill the duty of procreation?'" "Spiritual marriage", highly touted in Christianity where a man and woman live together without sexual intercourse, was considered unthinkable in Judaism (Feldman 47-48, 61, 66, 70).

How shocking, then, is Jesus' response to a very well-intentioned compliment! He refuses to agree to any praise of his own mother, though neither does he disagree with the statement outright, as he does in Luke's version. But his silence does convey his attitude toward his mother, and he implicitly rejects child-bearing and motherhood in general, and thus Jewish tradition as well. Once again, we are back to that sneaking suspicion we had in Saying 114 that Jesus is not completely comfortable with women and the female world. And does this not seem almost derogatory to himself if he rejects the very childbearing that brought him to life as well? Notice that,

despite the Catholic doctrine of virgin birth, the woman clearly assumes that Jesus was born through normal means from a woman's womb and nursed from his mother's breasts. Jesus neither confirms nor denies this assumption.

Now Jesus really stands Jewish tradition on its head. Rather than women with children being specially blessed by God, Jesus is saying that days will come when women who do not have children will be considered more truly blessed. No wonder the Pharisees didn't always approve of him and why the Talmud considers him a renegade Jew. In addition, he personalizes this seeming prophecy by suddenly addressing his listeners and saying "you will say."

In the ancient world the existence of birth control and abortion actually go back to the ancient Egyptians and the Roman Empire had a highly developed medical system. Thus there was indeed a possibility of voluntary childlessness without necessarily being celibate. Becoming male for a woman thus meant not using the female body for bearing children, which is something men cannot do.

For anyone versed in Jewish theology, Saying 85 is a startling inversion of Biblical and rabbinical teachings about Adam, the Perfect Man. At first Adam is highly praised but then Jesus' disciples are being held up to be higher than Adam himself, a statement which comes perilously close to blasphemy. The praise for Adam, the archetypal Man, in Jewish teaching is high indeed. According to Graves, "God had given Adam so huge a frame that when he lay down it stretched from one end of Earth to the other; and when he stood up, his head was level with the Divine Throne. Moreover, he was of such indescribable beauty...(that his) heels - let alone his countenance! - outshone the sun. (Graves/Patai 61-62). All these qualities of Adam - his radiance,
beauty, spiritual unity, androgyny, perfection, immortality and saving power - are referred to in Saying 85 in speaking of his "great wealth."

Knowing these strong associations with Adam as a great archetypal human figure, it is certainly not in keeping with Jewish teachings to hear Jesus proclaim that, "Adam did not become worthy of you", meaning the disciples who are apparently being placed at a superior level even to the most perfect Man in history! People of a monotheistic bent immediately answer, "because Adam sinned and was therefore punished by God." Notice that given the Messianic associations with the Second Adam, Jesus could easily have said, as the Church claims, "I am the Second Adam and you should therefore believe in me." The fact that he does not indicates that there is nothing "Christian" about him in Thomas. His focus is on the spiritual potential of the disciples and how they can realize it, not on setting himself up as an object of faith.

As you can see from this discussion and from reading the Gospel of Thomas yourself, it is radical stuff. I've read countless commentaries on Thomas and what is really funny is that New Testament theologians who like to derive Thomas lock stock and barrel from the New Testament don't even notice how Jesus is making fun of their most basic religious assumptions: not just disagreeing, mind you, outright making fun. It is easy to see why the rabbinical literature unanimously condemns Jesus as a magician and heretic who tried to lead Israel astray. But it is not easy to see how Christian churches could appropriate his name and construct a huge complicated theological and ritual edifice out of these radical teachings.

Everything that he taught is at odds with any organized and institutional religion. There is no prayer, church service or mass, salvation, or any other Church doctrine anywhere in these teachings. There is no heaven, there is no God in the sky, there is no resurrection or Messiah or end of the world or anything that could possibly pass for Christianity. In Sayings 6 and 14 he rejects anything that can be called religious observance: fasting, prayer, charity, dietary laws. He rejects the idea of external duty and obligation and says that you should not do anything that you hate to do. At the deeper level he rejects the whole concept of sin and the anthropomorphic idea of a God who sees and knows our transgressions.

Just from these sayings alone, it is hard to see Jesus as a founder of any religion or church, let alone a Christian one. Clearly Christianity is based on Paul and not Jesus. It is not a great surprise that once Emperor Theodosius finally turned the fanatic Christians loose in 380 C.E., they wasted no time ferreting out every last copy of Thomas and destroying it.

Chapter 3:
Orientation With the Gospel of Thomas

The Gospel of Thomas is a difficult and cryptic text that does not make its meaning clear in a normal linear way. It is certainly not a theological treatise and Jesus does not explain his beliefs and teachings in a straightforward way. In addition, he has created his own language with original words and expressions that only a follower of his would understand. The sayings are riddles that have to be contemplated and puzzled over and only yield their meanings after much effort. They also contain cultural and philosophical allusions that contemporary listeners or readers would have understood but that we no longer do. These facts alone makes it unsuitable to be the founding document of an institutional religion and for that and many other reasons it is no great surprise that the Christian Church rejected its use for that purpose.

But once we understand the unique nature and language of the Gospel of Thomas, then we are well on the way to deciphering its riddles. These are the prominent characteristics that I have discovered about this fascinating document:

1. The world of Thomas is internal and not external. What seem like external events as described in the sayings are really metaphors for inner states. Almost no real, historical events are described in Thomas. Metaphysical and metaphorical interpretations are more likely to penetrate to the kernel of the meaning than purely external, historical or political interpretations.

2. The images in the sayings are not to be taken literally. They are intended to be poetic, metaphorical, symbolic and allegorical. They are similar to the images in poems, dreams, myths and fairy tales. They need to be interpreted and they do not tell a surface story. Moreover, there are repeating images over several sayings and there are images that are similar in meaning to other ones. As Gillabert et al say, "Jesus uses his parables to take us from a world of images to a world without images." (179)

3. At the same time, Jesus borrows images with very particular mental associations from many sources in his culture, and the history of those images is vital to understanding them, as we no longer have the

same associations today. The work of many scholars is immensely helpful in understanding this history. Jesus' images are drawn from a rich array of sources which together form a synthesis of the best of ancient culture: the Hebrew Bible, Jewish wisdom literature, possibly Jewish apocalyptism, Gnostic writings, the Greek philosophers, especially Plato, Greek and Roman writers including Aesop and Lucian, current history and the Palestinian countryside. Yet he takes these images and forms them into a completely unique world view of his own.

4. The literary and poetic structure of the sayings is very important and has to be taken into account in understanding their meaning. Knowledge of the basic rules of poetry in general and of Hebrew/Aramaic poetry in particular is important for understanding the sayings. Some sayings are structurally and numerologically extremely complicated and form a visual graph of ideas. Tinsley says pertinently: "It is strange how little attention has been paid by theologians to the relevance of the poetic imagination for an understanding of the mind of Jesus." (Tinsley 165)

5. The exact words are meaningful and multi-layered. Words that repeat over several sayings have similar implications. Thomas is written very concisely, like all great poetry, and every word counts and often has many levels of meaning, with a large number of word pairs that have important differences in meaning. A commentator needs to spend some time poring over the exact meanings of the words: Thomas cannot be read in a hurry.

6. The teachings in Thomas stand on their own merits and do not need to be explained through either Christian, Gnostic or encratite ideas. Jesus is not a Gnostic but he is not a Christian either as we understand the word. I have tried to delve into the world view of Thomas and understand it within itself. I have also stayed clear of the endless scholarly discussions about the externalities of Thomas and I take no sides in any factional disputes nor do I have any intention of starting my own faction. In particular, I am much more interested in the teachings of Thomas on their own terms than I am in the connections of Thomas to the Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament: that topic has been thoroughly exhausted by now. As Doran rightly says, "the primary concern in looking at the parables in Thomas has been to investigate their authenticity, to see whether they are pre- or post-synoptic, whether they preserve an independent tradition or not. The parables have attracted little literary attention and almost no effort has been made to read them in and of themselves" (Doran 347).

7. The concepts of Thomas are similar to the teachings of other great sages and philosophers throughout history. The context of the teachings is not so much Christian or Gnostic as it is the great universal stream of philosophical and mystical insight that runs through all of human culture. Above all, Jesus is a great sage of the highest order with a level of profound insight that none of us can even come close to. His ideas do not need to be derived from anything else or any other source; they stand sui generis, on their own. He does not need to be compared with thinkers of a lesser order but only with his peers, and that is Buddha, Lao Tzu, Socrates and Patanjali.

There are two important aspects of the Gospel of Thomas that I would like to discuss in greater detail: one is its use of poetic forms and the other its use of paradoxical logic.

Poetic forms

In the original document in the Nag Hammadi library the text was continuous without any breaks between words or even between different sayings. But let us not forget that this is a copy of a Coptic translation of an Aramaic original that is grounded in rhythmic patterns of sacred Hebrew poetry. And we have to assume that the scribes who copied these texts were trying to save space on expensive papyrus scrolls by cramming everything together.

The manuscript itself has misled scholars into concluding that it is a prose text and thus practically every translator gives it as prose (except for Emile Gillabert, Philippe de Suarez and Willis Barnstone). And practically every interpreter tries to find statements of belief in it and insist on seeing it as a literal, linear document of theology, like the New Testament. But what is always overlooked is like so much other sacred literature throughout history, the sayings are really written in separate lines of poetry and follow the principles of poetic structure, particularly the poetic forms of the Hebrew Bible. Its closest equivalent is not the New Testament at all but rather the Tao te Ching by Lao Tzu. It is poetry of the highest order, as we can tell from the parallelisms, doubled words, word plays, repeating metric phrases, compressed content and carefully selected key words with layers of meaning.

And the main reason it is written as poetry is that its subject is the metaphysical realm. Jesus, like Lao Tzu, was a wise man and knew that this realm is not dierctly describable by words. Yet since he needed to use words, the only way to convey what he meant was through metaphors and

through paradox. And understanding metaphor and paradox is the key to understanding the Gospel of Thomas.

The reason it almost never is read this way is that New Testament scholars, in contrast to Old Testament ones, have no training in poetic analysis. As Fokkelman says: "Within the Bible, poetry is almost exclusively confined to the Old Testament. Although poetic lines do occur regularly in the Gospels and the letters of the New Testament, they are actually quotations from the Psalms and the Prophets (Luke 1:46-55 and 68-79).

I know only one text that is original to the New Testament and may be read as poetry: Paul's famous text about love in 1 Cor 13."[1] In contrast, of the 1574 printed pages of the Hebrew Bible more than 37% or 585 pages contain poetry: "Psalms, Proverbs, the Song of Songs and Lamentations consist exclusively of poetry, the book of Job almost exclusively. The books of Isaiah and the 12 so-called minor prophets (bar one) were also largely written in poetry. Finally, there are a number of individual poems, distributed throughout the narrative prose." Even in the Hebrew Bible, only the most recent editions (1978 and 1985) observe the distinction rather than printing all the texts continuously as did the older translations.[2]

A significant proportion of the sayings in Thomas are structured according to the principles of parallelism derived from Hebrew poetry (see Appendix I for a more in-depth discussion). One can assume that Jesus grew up hearing and memorizing the poetry of the Hebrew Bible and there is no doubt of its influence on the sayings of Thomas. Parallelism is unique to Jesus, at least as compared with the rabbinical literature; as Neusner says: "The proverbial sentence, with its parallel sections, its rhythms, and its formal unity thus by and large is not replicated in the rabbinic moral sayings attributed to Pharisees, which tend to ignore parallelism, to exhibit no rhythm scheme, and to be discrete."[3]

What this parallelism relies on is the basic characteristic of Hebrew poetry that it makes a pause between each line rather than extending a thought over two lines. This gives it its distinctive rhythm in which each sentence is a complete thought within itself, so that the hearer gets the full meaning before going on to the next thought. It is the repetition that gives the poem its rhythm rather than any sort of meter which is difficult to determine. The origin of this characteristic may well be in an oral tradition in which shorter sentences with repeated elements were easier to comprehend,

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1 J. P. Fokkelman, Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 1, 321

2 Ibid., 1-3

3 Jacob Neusner, "Types and Forms in Ancient Jewish Literature: Some Comparisons," History of Religions 11.4 (1972): 360.

as well as in the ease of memorization. This feature is a useful guide to poetic division of the lines of Thomas which in the original manuscript had no breaks between words: thus the principle is to make each thought or sentence one poetic line.

Much of the parallelism is in paradoxical form. An excellent example is Saying 43:

8 "For they love the tree,
9 they hate its fruit;
10 and they love the fruit,
11 they hate the tree."

This is saying two contradictory things at the same time in perfect parallel form. Notice, however, they are not exactly the same: in line 9 we have "its fruit" and line 10 we have "the fruit". These kinds of differences are clues to resolving the paradox.

Parallelism is a perfect vehicle for Jesus' philosophy as it stresses the contrast between duality and unity, an important concept in Jesus' philosophy, and the equivalence of opposites to create a greater unity. Thomas is a good instance of style and content being merged toward the same end to set up complex meanings within the very structure of a sentence. We can also see the influence of the spare, concise Hebrew style on Jesus' own style and there is no doubt that Jesus must have absorbed Biblical Hebrew poetry all his life and subconsciously made the style his own.

The most important poetic aspect of the Gospel of Thomas that is vital to its proper interpretation is the metaphorical nature of the images and stories of Jesus. In many sayings Jesus does not express himself through direct, literal language but by use of two aspects of poetic speech, metaphor and symbol. Metaphor, from the Greek meta, involving change, and pherein, "to bear, transfer", is defined in the dictionary as "a figure of speech in which a term is transferred from the object it ordinarily designates to an object it may designate only by implicit comparison or analogy, as in the phrase `evening of life'.[4]

But the association between the one and the other thing is not one of mere equivalence or logical identity; metaphor is more subtle than that. As Whalley defines it: "Metaphor establishes a relation between things not normally (logically) connected; thereby it illuminates a fresh relation between the metaphorical image and the poet, and in turn between the image and the

4 William Morris, ed., The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (New York: American Heritage Publishing, 1969), 825.

reader."[5] Metaphor is beyond logic and exists at a deeper emotional level: "By transferring portions of his feelings to the words and images with which they have associated in his memory and imagination, the poet prevents the feelings from attenuating and eroding...Metaphor is the means by which feelings can be fused without losing their individual clarity...the fundamental mode for transmuting feelings into words."[6]

In classical literature metaphors were used more in a stylistic and ornamental sense, as a mode of expression external to the thought rather than as the thought itself. As Innes says, "its use does not change the essential meaning of a passage, but substitutes one term for another to set up a comparison of two things which are perceived to be alike."[7] Aristotle recommended metaphor to give a pleasing degree of ornamentation from the unusual to a prose style of ordinary words. Later classical theoreticians give many rules for their use - they must not be unsuitable nor far-fetched nor obscene nor too frequent nor packed too closely together - but these warnings are necessary precisely because poets regarded them merely as ornaments of style and overused them.[8]

Jesus, on the other hand, makes the metaphor central to his teaching: practically every image and story in Thomas is metaphorical rather than literal and these are intended to stand for something else than the surface meaning.

Another poetic device in the Gospel of Thomas is the use of symbol, from the Greek sumballein, "to throw together, compare", is "something that represents something else by association, resemblance or convention; especially, a material object used to represent something invisible."[9] Symbol and metaphor are closely related but are not the same: symbols stand for something individual and specific, whereas metaphors can stand for an idea or concept in a more general sense.

To quote Whalley's insightful analysis again: "Symbol proves to be a special kind of metaphor and the myth proves to be a cluster of symbols brought into resonance by the process of metaphor...It is a disaster then that critics should ever have used the word symbol as though a symbol were an indicating mark standing for something other than itself, a sign for unambiguous substitution...The word symbol...implies throwing together, chance encounter, conflict, union in tension...The root-sense of symbol is

5 George Whalley, Poetic Process (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 146.

6 Ibid., 141-142

7 Doreen Innes, "Metaphor, Simile, and Allegory as Ornaments of Style," in Metaphor, Allegory, and the Classical Tradition: Ancient Thought and Modern Revisions, ed. by G. R. Boys- Stones (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7-8.

8 Ibid., 12-17.

9 American Heritage Dictionary, op. cit., 1302

admirably suited to the process of metaphor: a clashing together, collision, meeting, dialectic and - by implication - concentration and focusing...Every metaphorical expression has symbolic character; every charged or resonant image is potentially a symbol and strives toward full symbolic status... Symbol - which is always in any case paradoxical and ambivalent - manifests itself...as the quality of a poetic event, and as the focal image around which the whole event crystallizes and orientates itself...A symbol, like a metaphor, does not stand for a `thing' or for an idea, it is a focus of relationships."[10]

This is an excellent description of what we encounter in the Gospel of Thomas which is not symbolic in a literal sense where one thing always stands for another. Rather we find a much more ambiguous world: the clashing tensions brought about by metaphorical juxtapositions that on the surface don't seem to fit, the symbolic images that can be read literally and make a certain amount of sense but contain internal contradictions and paradoxes that can only be resolved when read at a metaphorical level, and ambiguously charged symbols and metaphors that can be read in several ways, both grammatically and contextually, and on several levels.

Ultimately, the language of metaphor and symbol is intended to appeal to our deeper sub-conscious selves rather than merely to our analytical minds. Jesus' intention is to awaken the spiritual self slumbering within us and that can only be done through a non-linear and poetic language. As Bachofen says: "The symbol (i.e. mythological symbolism) awakens intuition where the language of abstraction can only offer rational explanation. The symbol addresses every side of the human spirit whereas the language of abstraction is bound to confine itself to a single thought. The symbol strikes a chord in the very depths of the soul, whereas the language of abstraction touches only the surface of the mind like a passing breeze. The one is directed inwards, the other outwards...Words reduce the infinite to finitude, symbols lead the spirit beyond the bounds of the finite into the infinite world of abiding truth."[11]

Jesus also uses images in particular contexts and juxtapositions that together create what we call an allegory, another literary form in which the meaning is not what appears on the surface. His teachings which use allegory can be delineated from those which use metaphor. The word "allegory" stems from the Greek allos, "other", and agoruein, "to speak in public," in other words, "to speak figuratively, speak in other terms". The dictionary defines it as a "literary, dramatic, or pictorial representation the apparent or superficial sense of which both parallels and illustrates a deeper sense, as for

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10 Whalley, op. cit., 164-166.

11 Hans Werner Bartsch, ed., Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate (London: S.P.C.K., 1953 [1948]), 159.

example the story of the search for the Holy Grail may illustrate an inner spiritual search."[12]

What is true allegory then? Tinsley shows that it is not merely an ornament of style: "An allegory where the details or characters really are separate from the main plot is one that has broken down. The whole point of allegory is that both plot and details should have a convincing coherence."[13] Thus a real allegory is not susceptible to allegorical exegesis!

Lowth in his analysis of Hebrew poetry points out the double level of meaning, both literal and allegorical, found in the Hebrew prophets: "The third species of allegory...is when a double meaning is couched under the same words...These different relations are termed the literal and the mystical senses...The mind of the author may embrace both objects at once, so that the very words which express the one in the plain, proper, historical and commonly received sense, may typify the other in the sacred, interior and prophetic sense...The exterior or ostensible image is not a shadowy coloring of the interior sense, but is in itself a reality; and although it sustains another character, it does not wholly lay aside its own."[14]

Whalley expands on this definition of allegory: "In allegory two levels of attention and action operate simultaneously. Different features of the individual soul are personified and the personifications take on individual identity and acts out the inner drama in a discursive (usually epic) narrative... Allegory reveals by dissection: it separates out prominent psychic elements and personifies them as dramatic characters. And this substitution, which is cyphering or embleming and not symbolization, makes allegory extremely unstable; for it establishes an unpoetic coherence at variance with the integrity of consciousness...True allegory - allegory as a symbolic mode - is therefore a very rare achievement."[15]

Both these definitions give an excellent summary of the nature of Jesus' allegories. On the surface his images and stories stand on their own and have a ring of reality, of verisimilitude. But looked at more closely there is always some element that is jarring or absurd or simply does not ring true in a realistic sense. Only when the story is interpreted allegorically as standing for something else, which in Jesus' case is always an admonition to spiritual effort and insight, does the story actually make sense. And this demonstrates Whalley's observation of the unstable element in allegory: the external story always threatens to fall apart and the internal story is hidden. I would, however, venture to claim that the sayings in Thomas that fall into this category are

12 American Heritage Dictionary, op. cit., 34.

13 Ibid., 177-178.

14 Lowth, Lectures, op. cit., 88-89.

15 Whalley, op. cit., 190-191.

indeed true allegories and are thus a "very rare achievement": an illustration of the supreme mastery of Jesus' mind.

Many of Jesus' parables fall under this general category of allegorical teaching, but also other sayings which tell simple stories that cannot be interpreted literally. Their interpretation is effected not so much by finding some external equivalent but by looking at the relationships between the parts of the image and the exact language describing them. As Goethe said: "Allegory transforms the phenomenon into an abstract concept, the concept into an image, but in such a way that the concept can still be expressed and beheld in the image in a clearly circumscribed and complete form."[16]

For a good hundred years there has been a lot of discussion in the scholarly literature as to the definition of a parable, whether parables are allegories, and what the dividing line is between a parable and an allegory. Part of what has confused the issue is that the Synoptic Gospels treat Jesus' parables as though they were allegories that needed decoding, told that way to the masses so that they would not understand the true meaning but told plainly to the disciples. Thus the editors of the Synoptic appended rather clumsy allegorical interpretations to them once Jesus' words became the text for a mass religion.

There is a way to resolve this dispute, however, and that is to reject the simplistic and tendentious Synoptic view of allegory in favor of a more subtle, complex and paradoxical view as we have discussed above. The Gospel of Thomas makes clear that the real Jesus did not "allegorize" in the sense of a simple substitution of meanings but told his parables as they were and expected people to expend some effort to penetrate into their meanings.

The argument whether a plot is concrete and realistic and thus to be taken literally as "true", or abstract and unrealistic and thus to be taken as an invented and "untrue" allegory, sets up a false dichotomy. In the Gospel of Thomas Jesus tells stories that seem perfectly realistic on the surface but contain some absurd or illogical or unexpected element that points to the need for a deeper interpretation. The parable is still a "realistic" story but it also contains "unrealistic" elements: both are true at the same time.

For the purposes of this book, I see parable as the external form of a saying whereas allegory is the broader literary type that may express itself as a parable among many other options. Jesus' parables take two forms: story parables which simply tell a story in what seems to be chronological time sequence and simile parables which make an overt comparison to something. It is Lowth who defined parable as a sub-type of allegory in 1753 in

16 John Dominic Crossan, In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 9.

his seminal work on Hebrew poetry: "Another kind of allegory... consists of a continued narration of a fictitious event, applied by way of simile to the illustration of some important truth...It is the first excellence of a parable to turn upon an image well known and applicable to the subject, the meaning of which is clear and definite; for this circumstance will give it perspicuity, which is essential to every species of allegory...The imagery from natural objects is superior to all others in this respect; for almost every picture from nature...has its peculiar beauty."[17] Weder also makes clear that the imagery of a parable is intrinsic and not extrinsic to its meaning: "The parable does not just say old things in a new way or rather put truth in pictorial language, but the truth expressed by it can only be rendered pictorially. The content given verbal expression in parables can thus not be separated from the form with which it is expressed."[18]

What is remarkable about the history of these parables is that Jesus seems to have invented the form, the story parable in particular. In Greek parabole, composed of para, "beside" and ballein, "throw", means "to set beside" indicating similarity or parallelism, but from Aristotle on is not a genre and rather an illustrative parallel or comparison. This term is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew mashal (plural meshalim) which does not signify a specific literary genre either. The category mashal indistinguishably includes proverbs, riddles, metaphors, fables, allegories, parables and sentences of the wise.[19]

Yet the parable as Jesus tells it is not found in this whole heterogenous Jewish tradition. Neusner shows that in those documents that can be isolated as belonging to the Pharisees before 70 C.E. there are no parables: "As to the other sorts of Wisdom literature, such as riddles, parables, fables of animals or trees and allegories, we find nothing comparable in the materials before us."[20] Even the stylistic elements of Jesus' parables are not found in the Pharisaic material: "As to similitudes and similar forms, we find no equivalent...We do see the use of paradox in some apothegms...but paradox is not a dominant characteristic of the Pharisaic-rabbinic sayings and does not occur in stories as the primary vehicle for narrative. Hyperbole and metaphors are not common. As to such similitudes

17 Lowth, Lectures, op. cit., 83-85.

18 Hans Weder, Die Gleichnisse Jesu als Metaphern: Traditions- und redaktionsgeschichtliche Analysen und Interpretationen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 64.

19 Gary Porton, "The Parable in the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic Literature," in The Historical Jesus in Context, ed. by Amy-Jill Levine, Dale Allison and John Crossan (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), 206; Bernard Scott, Hear then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) 7, 20; McCall 27-28.

20 Neusner, "Types", op. cit., 360.

as master/servant...lost sheep/lost coin...leaven, seed growing of itself, treasure in the field, pearl of great price, fish net...and the like - we have nothing of the same sort."[21]

Anything that can be called a parable is therefore later than Jesus' time. This raises the question: did Jesus invent the parable? This is indeed what McArthur and Johnston conclude: "We are safest in concluding that the narrative mashal-parable is a creation of Palestine in the first century C.E...If we limit ourselves to what we can know from the records (and if we accept them at face value) we can say only this much: The first known teacher who used narrative parables of the mashal type was Jesus....From R. Johanan b. Zakkai (ca. 70 C.E.) onward, if attributions are to be trusted, parables become increasingly more common...Mashal-parabling remained an almost exclusively Palestinian practice. It did not take root elsewhere... Others elsewhere...were happy enough to import the products of Palestine, so that parables are scattered throughout the Babylonian Talmud, and indeed throughout all the classical rabbinic literature until the Middle Ages."[22]

But if Jesus invented the parable, did the rabbis copy from him? McArthur et al find this unlikely "because of the antagonism that existed between them and the Jesus tradition - although some borrowing might have occurred. Probably both Jesus and the later Rabbis drew on a common stock of metaphors and symbols." But is it possible that the antagonism was not directed at the real Jesus but at the later Christianity which distorted his teachings into an anti-Semitic direction? We know Jesus' brother James was highly respected in normative Judaism, and it is also interesting that the quite Gnosticized Apocryphon of James is the only Nag Hammadi document besides the Gospel of Thomas to contain parables. Despite the fact that Jesus was at odds with Jewish teachings and the Jewish establishment during his lifetime, is it perhaps possible that Jewish sages nevertheless recognized his genius after his death and borrowed his innovations? We can certainly not rule this out.

In sum, to understand the general sayings as well as the parables of the Gospel of Thomas requires a sensitivity to the use of parallelism, metaphor, symbol and allegory. The world of poetry is quite different from the world of prose and follows different rules and here Fokkelman's comment

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21 Ibid., 376.

22 Harvey K. McArthur and Robert M. Johnston, They Also Taught in Parables: Rabbinic Parables from the First Centuries of the Christian Era (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1990), 105-108.

on poetry is particularly pertinent for the Gospel of Thomas: "Poetry creates density. Poetry is the most compact and concentrated form of speech possible. By making the most of his or her linguistic tools, the poet creates an immense richness of meaning, and this richness becomes available if we as readers know how to handle the density."[23] Well-said, Dr. Fokkelman! It is this poetic density and richness that contains the paradox, the difficulty, the delight and the transcendent insight of Thomas. And understanding it is critical to be a true follower of Jesus' teachings.

Paradoxical versus linear logic

One of the reasons the Gospel of Thomas is difficult to understand is because much of the content and many of the structural elements follow rules of paradoxical rather than linear logic. But at the same time there are also strictly linear logical propositions and arguments, and knowing the difference between them is critical to an understanding of the sayings. The ancient Greeks placed much value on logic and rhetoric and there were many teachers issuing rulebooks and making a living from teaching the proper methods of rhetoric. Orators were judged on their elegance of expression and competence in ornaments of style. All the indications from the Gospel of Thomas are that Jesus was classically educated and well-versed in Greek philosophy, rhetoric and aphoristic style.

Jesus' sayings include both statements that are not based on logic and those that are. A statement is one thought making either a factual or a normative declaration: factual statements are either true or false and can be so determined by empirical means, while normative or value judgments cannot be determined to be true or false. A logical argument is a series of related statements leading to a conclusion in which one statement builds on the other and in which all assumptions can be shown either to be factually true or logically reasonable.[24] What we find particularly in Thomas are conditional propositions (If...then statements) and hypothetical syllogisms (If P, then Q; if Q, then R etc.).

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23 Fokkelman, op. cit., 14.

24 Anthony Falikowski, Experiencing Philosophy (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2004), 140-142

But Jesus goes beyond the principles of Greek logic and relies even more strongly on paradoxical logic or reasoning. From our examination of poetic structure we have already seen the pervasive nature of paradox in the Gospel of Thomas but now let us define paradoxical reasoning a but more closely.

The Western world follows Aristotle's principles of linear logic which briefly are as follows:

1. the law of identity (A = A): That everything is what it is.
2. the law of contradiction (A is not non-A): That a thing cannot both be and not be so and so.
3. the law of the excluded middle: (A cannot be A and non-A, neither A nor non-A): A thing either is or is not so and so. (see Fromm Art 73, Melhuish 13)

In linear logic each thing, substance or entity can only be itself; it cannot be a different thing at the same time and it cannot be its own opposite. Time is considered to be chronological and past, present and future are separate entities. Spatial relations are governed by the laws of geometry and one separate place cannot be the same as another separate place. And the laws of causality provide for one entity to be a cause and another to be an effect; they cannot be both at the same time.

However, paradoxical logic follows different rules. It is difficult to find any systematic discussion of these rules, and standard logic books do not include paradoxical logic at all. Melhuish says in his book The Paradoxical Universe: "Throughout the history of philosophical studies and likewise in the general analysis of phenomena, it is strange how great has been the fear of the paradox. It would seem that this fear has been in considerable measure promoted by a too hasty identification of the paradox with a blank, equivalent to a pure nothingness, or to something amounting to an absurdity" (Melhuish 9). This fear, however, is found much less in Eastern thought and in the Greek Pre-Socratics. In addition, quantum physics accepts a basic paradoxical universe and this is also the nature of dreams, myths and fairy tales, as well as a good bit of great poetry. One can even argue for the law of paradox in human psychology.

I.
Paradoxical thinking

To quote Olin: "A paradox is an argument that appears flawless, but whose conclusion nevertheless appears to be false...In paradox, what appears to be cannot possibly be...Paradoxes present us with apparently impeccable operations of reason that nonetheless lead to apparent absurdity. They are upsetting because, while the illusion persists,we have a challenge to the supposed veracity and reliability of reason...Let us consider the question of why we feel a pressing need to untangle a paradox...An unresolved paradox is a threat to the trustworthiness of reason" (Olin 6, 9, 15, 19).
Some rules of paradoxical thinking are as follows:

1. Presence also implies absence.
2. What appears to be one thing is also something else.
3. Whatever something is has in some manner already given way to something else.
4. All statements about anything are inherently ambiguous and biased.
5. Nothing can be conceived without its opposite. (Melhuish 19-27)

II.
The nature of matter

Quantum physics has entirely overturned the stable world of Newtonian physics when scientists thought the universe ran like a well-oiled predictable machine. It turns out that paradox is built into the very foundation of reality. Here are briefly some of the major insights, culled from books such as Capra, Talbot and Zukav (see Bibliography).

1. Matter is largely empty space. The atom in reality consists of vast empty regions of space in which incredibly tiny particles, the electrons, orbit around a nucleus. The atomic nucleus is only 1/100,000 of the atom and yet it contains almost the entire mass of the atom; the electrons have almost no mass and yet it is they that make things seem solid.
2. Matter is instantly created and instantly destroyed from pure energy: subatomic particles are destructible and indestructible at the same time. Particles are created, annihilated and created again.
3. Since matter is constantly in motion, nothing can be located with certainty at any given place at a given time nor can the behavior of any particle be predicted ahead of time. The subatomic world is ruled by the principle of indeterminacy.

4. Subatomic units of matter appears sometimes as particles, entities confined to a very small volume, and sometimes as waves, entities spread out over a large region of space. The same is true of light.
5. Time is both chronological and simultaneous. The present can be defined in two opposite ways: it exists at all times since everything is always in the present, and it does not exist at all as the future is instantaneously transformed into the past.
6. Time is the 4th dimension of space and space-time is curved because of the effect of the gravitational force.
7. The observer is also a participant in reality: it is impossible to observe anything without affecting it.
8. Chaos is an integral aspect of reality: nature is mostly regular but there are unpredictable patches of nature that are simply chaotic and follow no pattern or order.

III.
Eastern philosophy

Fromm has an excellent summary of the contribution of Eastern philosophy to paradoxical thought in his The Art of Loving:

1. Something can be and not be at the same time: It is and it is not.
2. Something can be indescribable by any category: It is neither this nor that.
3. Something can be one yet be divided into two conflicting opposites at the same time.
4. Something can have a certain quality yet at the same time does not: Heraclitus: "We go into the same river, and yet not in the same; it is we and it is not we."
5. Something can be in full motion yet still at the same time.
6. Something can be real and unreal at the same time.
7. The perceiving thought must transcend itself to attain reality.
8. The perceiver can identify and unite with the perceived.
(Fromm Art 73-76)

IV.
Poetry

Many of these aspects of paradox in poetry are from Cleanth Brooks' insightful essay.

1. The common is really uncommon, the prosaic is really poetic: Wordsworth said his general purpose was "to choose incidents and situations from common life" but so to treat them that "ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect." Coleridge added that he wanted "to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us." (Brooks 42)
2. Poetry is based on "the perpetual slight alteration of language, words perpetually juxtaposed in new and sudden combinations" (T.S. Eliot). "The tendency of science is necessarily to stabilize terms, to freeze them into strict denotations; the poet's tendency is by contrast disruptive." (Brooks 44)
3. Metaphors do not fit neatly: "All of the subtler states of emotion... necessarily demand metaphor for their expression. The poet must work by analogies, but the metaphors do not lie in the same plane or fit neatly edge to edge.. There are...necessary overlappings, discrepancies, contradictions." (Brooks 45)
4. The mind of the poet at moments gains an insight into reality, reads Nature as a symbol of something behind or within Nature not ordinarily perceived.
5. The mind of the poet creates a Nature into which his own feelings, his aspirations and apprehensions, are projected. (Brooks 57)
6. There is an inherent tension in poetry: "Poetic works by tensions and collisions, by paradox and controlled ambiguity, by conflict, harmony and resonance; it goes beyond meaning without abandoning meaning, it fuses the individual elements of a poem without destroying their individual clarity; by a compulsive but deliberate forward movement it arrives at a stasis which is the contemplative expression of that movement". (Whalley 132)

V.
Dreams

Dreams are replete with paradoxical elements and like the Gospel of Thomas take place on multiple levels: multi-level actors, setting, content, plot and time frames. Composites of two different people, two settings and past mixed with present are common. Dreams may have several layers of narrative: you may dream that you are dreaming, or that you are recounting your dream or writing it down. You may also dream that you have the power to change the ending or outcome and you may go back in the narrative and

dream a different outcome. I will cite Freud's pioneering analysis of some of the mechanisms.

1. Condensation: There is a great lack of proportion between dream-content and the dream-thoughts. "Dreams are brief, meager and laconic in comparison with the range and wealth of the dream-thoughts...It is in fact never possible to be sure that a dream has been completely interpreted...The possibility always remains that the dream may have yet another meaning" (VI.A)(313).
2. Displacement: "The elements which stand out as the principal components of the manifest content of the dream are far from playing the same part in the dream-thoughts, and conversely: what is clearly the essence of the dream-thoughts need not be represented in the dream at all" (VI.B) (340).
3. Over-representation: "Dreams have no means at their disposal for representing these logical relations between the dream-thoughts. For the most part dreams disregard theese conjunctions, and it is only the substantive content of the dream-thoughts that they take over and manipulate...What is reproduced by the ostensible thinking in the dream is the subject-matter of the dream-thoughts and not the mutual relations between them" (VI.C) (347-348).

a. Dreams reproduce logical connection by simultaneity in time: they combine the whole material into a single situation or event.

b. For causal relations, the dream introduces the dependent clause as an introductory dream and the principal clause as the main dream (349).

c. The alternative "Either-or" cannot be expressed; the dream fulfills all possibilities (351).

d. Contraries and contradictions are disregarded: dreams "show a particular preference for combining contraries into a unity or for representing them as one and the same thing" (353).

e. "The relation of similarity, consonance or approximation ...is capable of being represented in a variety of ways". The dream may create a composite figure of two persons or places, one of which appears in the manifest content while the other is implied. Or the dream may combine features of both in a composite figure (355-356).

f. Reversal, turning a thing into its opposite, is one of the means of representation most favored by the dream-work, including both reversal of subject-matter and chronological reversal (362).

VI.
Myths and fairy tales

Langer makes this interesting remark in her study of Cassirer's work on myth: "The `dream work' of Freud's `unconscious' mental mechanism is almost exactly the `mythic mode' which Cassirer describes as the primitive form of ideation, wherein an intense feeling is spontaneously expressed in a symbol, an image seen in something or formed for the mind's eye by the excited imagination" (Langer 395). Let us therefore look at some properties of paradoxical thinking in myth. Images in symbolic thinking may be "a vision, a gesture, a sound-form (musical image) or word as readily as an external object" (Langer 396).

1. "The word which denotes that thought content is not a mere conventional symbol, but is merged with its object in an indissoluble unity...The potential between `symbol' and `meaning' is resolved...we find a relation of identity, of complete congruence between `image' and 'object', between the name and the thing" (Langer 396-397 quoting Cassirer).
2. "There is a complete lack of any clear division between mere `imagining' and `real' perception, between wish and fulfillment, between image and object...There is but a continuous and fluid transition from the world of dream to objective `reality'" (Langer 397 quoting Cassirer).
3. "Images are charged with meaning but the meanings remain implicit so that the emotions they command seem to be centered on the image rather than on anything it merely conveys".
4. Many meanings may be concentrated and many ideas telescoped and interfused into one image.
5. Incompatible emotions may be simultaneously expressed.
6. People may become their opposites: the hero may become the villain, for instance.
7. Minor actions turn out to have profound consequences.
8. Time and space may shift suddenly.
9. Humans may transform into trees, animals, natural substances or trees without explanation (Kirk 267-269).
10. Plots may have a concrete universality but in reality be entirely metaphorical and symbolic: the words may have concrete meaning "whereas the logical terms...in it together with the logical propositions...are vehicles of abstract meaning."
11. There is a fertile tension between a clear and vivid literal meaning that is "perhaps shocking for everyday standards of probability" and the

transcendental, metaphorcial, allegorical or symbolic deeper meaning (Sebeok 159-161, 167).

VII.
Human psychology

Most human behavior is essentially paradoxical which is why psychologists never seem to get anywhere when they try to apply scientific principles to the study of people. Running rats through mazes simply doesn't tell us much about people.

1. The nature of desire is paradoxical: getting something one desires does not bring happiness but only leads to more desire and dissatisfaction with what one has attained. Happiness is more likely to come from seeking and searching without ever attaining.

2. The less attached we are to what we want, the more likely we are to get it. Good things usually come not when we are looking for them but when we are not.

3. Love always contains hate and the stronger the love the stronger the hate. The greater the attraction, the greater the repulsion. This is attested by the outright viciousness and hatred that erupts in the vast majority of divorces: the same people who once swore on the altar that they would love each other till death do us part are now determined to destroy each other.

4. When people don't need anyone and are perfectly happy with themselves, people want to be with them and potential mates are interested. When someone actually needs others or is in want of a mate, people avoid them as they seem "needy".

5. The higher you rise, the quicker you fall. Every success carries within it the seed of failure.

6. Wealth is only relative to what others have: if others are equally poor or rich, the person feels wealthy; if someone else has more, the person feels poor.

7. The people who talk the most about emotions or sensitivity are not necessarily the most emotional or sensitive ones: quite the opposite. The people who talk most about God or morality are not the most inwardly religious or moral. The same principle is usually true for most things. The truly inward is difficult to express; what is most talked about is mostly the image we want to project to other people.

8. Those who claim to be wise are usually not; those who are truly wise don't claim to be. Those who talk the most have the least to say; those who have something to say talk the least.

9. Those who seek the most eagerly to convert others to their beliefs usually have the most doubts about their beliefs. They seek to assuage their doubts by persuading others.

10. That which we criticize in others we do not like in ourselves. If we do not like someone it is often because we are envious of them.

11. The greatest power is that which is kept in reserve and not used. When you overuse your power, you dilute it and ultimately lose it.

We could synthesize the following basic elements from the above as the main characteristics of paradoxical thought:

1. Opposites are contained within each other, occur simultaneously or are equated with each other.

2. All terms and images are inherently ambiguous and multi-layered. There is always a manifest, concrete meaning and a hidden, metaphorical meaning.

3. All possibilities or outcomes of any event of image exist at the same time.

4. Words and images are compressed and spare to contain maximum ambiguity and layers of meaning.

5. The juxtaposition of unexpected or seemingly contradictory words and images can lead to higher insight.

6. That which seems absurd or contradictory contains a higher meaning when its inherent riddle is solved.

This is the logic that we find in much of Thomas and it is the only kind of logic that can even begin to express spiritual truths. As Robert Slater says in his study of Burmese Buddhism, Paradox and Nirvana: "Man... is compelled by his knowledge to recognise the limitations of his knowledge. He is obliged to express his knowledge in apparently contradictory terms, but he is also obliged to hold these terms together in precarious synthesis by the fact that Reality thus intimated is not itself contradictory...Religious paradox therefore signifies both human insight and human incapacity, and the insight signified is both stimulated and challenged by human logic. Paradoxical expression in this connection is inescapable" (Slater 116).

It is interesting that the religious milieu of Egypt that at least the Coptic version of Thomas comes out of also displays paradoxical logic. The Egyptian pantheon of gods is actually not polytheistic but, like Hinduism, is

henotheistic, meaning that the great variety of gods is ultimately considered to be but various manifestations of one deity or divine essence behind all things, for instance Atman or Brahman in India. As Hornung says in his excellent study: "In the act of worship...the Egyptians singled out one god, who for them at that moment signifies everything; the limited yet colossal might and greatness of god is concentrated in and focused on the deity who is addressed... According to the principles of western logic it would be an impossible contradiction for the divine to appear to the believer as one and almost absolute, and then again as a bewildering multiplicity; we find it surprising that in Egyptian thought these two fundamentally different formulations are evidently not mutually exclusive but complementary." (Hornung 236-237)

In Egyptian thought "the greatest totality conceivable is the existent and the non-existent... Oppositions such as these are real, but the pairs do not cancel each other out; they complement each other...The Egyptian script, in which individual signs had always been able to be both picture and letter, illustrates how ancient this principle is." (Hornung 240-241)

It should not be so surprising that in this milieu, follows principles of paradoxical logic. Here are some of the characteristics you will encounter:

1. A word or two similar words can have two opposite meanings, usually a positive and a negative one, or a spiritual versus a physical one:

world versus world
intoxicated versus drunk
flame versus fire
place (spiritual) versus place (physical)
outside versus outside
mountain versus mountain
hand versus hand
repose versus rest

2. Opposites are equated with one another:

two = one
Kingdom within you= Kingdom outside of you (3)
first = last (4)
many = single (4)
death = life (11)
beginning = end (18)
small = large (20)
inner = outer (22)
above = below

male = female
movement = repose (50)
happy = hated (68)

3. A statement can function on many levels of meaning that are all equally implied and that may seem contradictory. There is not one answer or interpretation to any given statement.

4. Many words have built-in ambiguity in that they can be interpreted in several different ways or seemingly opposite ways. A word may have a grammatical peculiarity that allows it to be read with several different meanings. Because of the agglutinative property of Coptic in which all the component parts to a word are put together as one, longer Coptic words can often be read very differently, depending on where the dividing lines between the components are drawn. From working extensively with , I have come to the conclusion that all this ambiguity is not due to careless wording but is intentional.

Paradoxical logic allows us to get beyond the stale dualistic, either/or disputes that infest academia, philosophy, politics, religion and so much of daily life: nature versus nurture, heredity versus environment, evolution versus special creation, matter versus spirit, soul versus body, intellect versus emotion, optimism versus pessimism, pro-choice versus pro-life, science versus religion ad infinitum. Does any one side have to be right and the other one wrong? Maybe all the arguments are equally true and none exclude each other. Maybe each side only sees one small fragment of the immense universe around us and takes their piece of flesh as the whole elephant. Maybe the world consists of all opposites at once.

I always like to say when two people argue they're both right and they're both wrong. They're both right because it is a fact that they each see something a certain way and since they both exist as part of the universe, therefore their particular point of view exists as well. But they're both wrong because they each take their very limited, biased, self-serving point of view to be the sum total of all truth.

In a world of conflict and strife paradoxical logic is more needed than ever. It is the logic of dreams, fairy tales and myths; and it is the logic of poetry and of highly compressed, concise sacred scriptures such as the Tao te Ching and the Gospel of Thomas.

Tao te Ching XXXVI:

What is in the end to be shrunk
Must first be stretched.
Whatever is to be weakened
Must begin by being made strong.
What is to be overthrown
Must begin by being set up.
He who would be a taker
Must begin as a giver.
This is called 'dimming' one's light.
It is thus that the soft overcomes the hard
And the weak, the strong.

Chapter 4:
A Grain of Mustard

Jesus used an astounding variety of sources in creating his sayings. Some of these borrowings are quite certain, others are more speculative. Here is a list of all such sources:

Hebrew Bible
Exodus 2:13: 72
Deuteronomy: 23 (32:30), 64 (20:5-8), 3? (30:10-15)
1 Kings 17:8-16: 97
Isaiah: 27 (58), 111 (34), 107 (13), 40? (5:1-7)
Jeremiah 23: 107?
Ezekiel: 32 (40:2), 83? (1:26-28), 107 (34), 40? (19:20-24)
Joel 2:15-16: 49, 75
Psalms: 66 (118:20-23), 111 (102), 49, 75? (19:1-5), 69? (17:13), 107? (23, 119)
Proverbs 8:34-35: 58
Ecclesiastes: 23 (7:25), 77? (10:9)
Sirach: 23 (6:6), 58? (51:26-27)
Wisdom literature: 28?
Greek culture and philosophy
Aesop: 8, 82
Pythagoras: 16
Pre-Socratics (esp. Empedocles): 17?, 30?, 50?
Plato: 7, 74, 83, 84, 34?
Xenophon: 34?
Herodotus: 8?
Zenobius: 74
Diocles: 62
Plutarch: 26?
Greek proverb: 102
Soma, psyche, pneuma: 29, 87, 112
Latin literature
Horace: 34?
Musonius: 26?
Seneca: 26?
General mythology

Lion myths: 7
Tree mythology: 19
Persian man of light myths: 24
Question texts: 50?
Isis aretalogies: 77?

Considering this great variety of sources, it is hard to classify the Gospel of Thomas as being either Jewish or classical. One thing it is clearly not is Christian: there is no narrative of divine origins, no claims of Messiahship, no Passion story, no crucifixion, no resurrection. If it is to be classified at all, it may be considered to be part of what is called the Jewish Wisdom literature which focuses more on philosophical seeking rather than religious faith in God.

The usual scholarly view is that though the sayings in the New Testament are not necessarily in the original wording, they represent unique coinages of Jesus. At the same time, the assumption is that Jesus was an uneducated carpenter who drew his wisdom from homespun observations of daily life. Close examination of the Gospel of Thomas shows that neither of these assumptions is true. From working intensively with the Gospel of Thomas, I have found that Jesus' philosophy is systematic and multi-layered with precise technical terms and resonant cultural images. These terms and images have a history in classical and Jewish thought and must be studied in order to understand his allusions. This shows that Jesus was clearly a well-educated man who is steeped in classical and Jewish learning and culture. At the same time, what he does with his learning is a synthesis that is unique to him. If he has to be categorized, he could be called a classical Jewish mystical philosopher. Despite the many scholars who call him "Gnostic", he can only be called that in the very broadest sense of that term but not in any truly meaningful way with regard to other Gnostic philosophies.

In the Jewish Bible the Wisdom Literature includes Job, Ecclesiastes (which does not even mention God), and Proverbs, as well as Baruch, Ben Sirach, and the Odes of Solomon. As Davies explains it, Wisdom is something separate from the works of creation; it signifies something like the meaning implanted by God in creation, the divine mystery of creation. At the time of the writing of the Wisdom of Solomon Wisdom is not only said to have been active at Creation, it is said to permeate all the world, organizing and underlying all ordered phenomena. As God created the world by means of Wisdom, all persons derive their origin from God through Wisdom and indeed claim an inherent essential kinship with Wisdom. In Ben Sirach Wisdom is said to be infused in all of God's works, as a capacity of the human mind and a force within the world akin to the Greek concept of

logos. He also claims that persons have Wisdom created with them in their mothers' wombs; all have the capacity to choose to become wise and it is Wisdom within which is that capacity (Davies CW 42-45).

Yet the word "Wisdom" itself is not used in Thomas , even though that is perhaps the world view. The word "God" is also not used, and God is after all the focus of the Wisdom Literature. So ultimately the Gospel of Thomas cannot be put into any category and must stand on its own: a unique synthesis straight out of Jesus' mind, incorporating classical and Jewish themes and images, drawing on Jewish Wisdom literature but not really of it.

Saying 82 is a good example of how Jesus synthesizes his sources. First he takes an original Greek proverb by Aesop ("Whoever is near Zeus is near the lightning bolt") and changes it to fit his own philosophy. He changes what was symmetrical parallelism to a much more interesting antithetical parallelism. He draws on the allusion to Zeus but eliminates its sense of danger and threat and changes its focus in an ambiguous way both to a personified Wisdom and to himself as a person. He draws on Hebrew allusions to God's punishing fire, as in Isaiah 6:15-16: "For the Lord will come in fire, and God's chariots like the whirlwind, to pay back God's anger in fury, and God's rebuke in flames of fire. For by fire will the Lord execute judgment..." But Jesus reduces the raging fire down to a steady flame. He draws on the Greek philosophical tradition which sees fire as symbolizing spirit. And then he adds the analogy to the Kingdom which is his ultimate point.

Let us now take a systematic look at Jesus' philosophy. The 114 sayings of the Gospel of Thomas are not in any particular thematic order. There is an underlying order but it has more to do with catchword associations and numerology than with content per se (see Appendix III). We will examine the sayings that deal with the fundamental philosophy and cosmology underlying the teachings, the philosophy of Light and the Kingdom, and we will find that there are many congruencies with ancient spiritual teachings as well as with modern quantum physics.

What we do not see in is the typical dualistic thinking of Christianity and even of the Qumran writings; as Sellew says: "Nor does the distinction of light from darkness in function in the typically apocalyptic fashion as a mere symbol for insiders and outsiders: `children of light' and `children of darkness' (meaning `us' and `them')" (Sellew Thomas 46). Some of this radical dualism stems from Chaldaic religion and from Gnosticism in which divine light alone, which was man's true home, counted as light while earthly light was only darkness (Bultmann 346-349).

Light is not contrasted with darkness at all but stands on its own as something real and not symbolic. There are three kinds of light in Thomas:

1. The uncreated light - the fundamental substance behind universe
2. The created light - the active creative principle
3. The mystical inner light

The uncreated light is discussed in Saying 77 where Jesus is not speaking for himself in any Christian sense as embodying the divine behind all things. Rather the light is speaking as an allegorical personification. Here light is both the underlying substance as well as the conscious creative principle behind the universe and can be experienced behind all material phenomena

Thus its nature is paradoxical, being both equivalent to the All as well as being above the All. When Jesus says light is the All, he is incorporating the Greek, especially Stoic, idea of light as the underlying principle of consciousness in the world, the nous, as well as the later Jewish idea of light as the original substance of God out of which the universe was created. This side of God or light can be known through an experience of mystical unity. But when he says light is above them all, he is referring to the Hellenistic idea of light as a cosmic principle which is found in the heavenly realm rather than in the earthly realm as well as the Jewish idea of God shining light from his countenance as the creator of the universe. This side of God can be known through a visionary ascent.

Thus God both permeates all creation in the form of light as well as being outside of creation as a fundamental organizing principle of cosmic thought. This paradox is what we call panentheism rather than pantheism. In pantheism God or the ultimate force behind the universe is contained within nature or the universe, but in panentheism the Ultimate is both within and outside of nature. As Schmidt explains it, the All "does not mean the visible universe, the shining garment of stars of divinity, but the living spirit which moves the All and is concealed behind the visible cosmos...Thomas is not a pantheist... but like all mystics and awakened ones, is a panentheist, who sees God in all things and in the All but at the same time above the visible All as the guiding Mind" (Schmidt 176).

Because panentheism is so difficult to understand, Jesus phrases Saying 77 as a personification to illustrate the idea that the paradox of God and light can only be embodied in and transmitted through a living person, a teacher. Light is thus equivalent to Pure Mind which underlies the universe and that is hidden in all animate and inanimate creation, including stone and wood. A disciple needs to work and put out effort in order to uncover that fundamental light that is hidden and to understand the fundamental unity of all things.

The created light is discussed in Saying 50. Humans are formed of and suffused by the active created light and understanding the nature of light and the paradox of movement and rest allows a disciple to attain divine immortality. All humans come from the created light which manifests as an active principle as images and forms and which "takes its stand" in everyone equally. The only reason Jesus' disciples are at all special is because they understand their true light nature and therefore their fundamental immortality in the living Father.
The true sign of that fundamental nature is movement and repose, the ultimate paradox in the universe in which everything is always in flux yet ultimately is only a manifestation of the eternal calm of the Pure Mind behind the All.

And Jesus teaches about the mystical inner light in Saying 24. Here he says that when people manifest the light within themselves they will apprehend the light within all the things of the world and illuminate the whole world. But as with everything he says, he means this to be not an article of faith or dogma but something scientifically sound and empirically testable. His disciples have shown that they are serious about making spiritual progress: they ask for guidance and he gives it. These are his four propositions:

1. Light exists within humans;
2. those who seek can discover their inner being of light;
3. they can radiate light out to the whole world; and
4. the fact that they do is crucial for the well-being of other people.

Proposition 1 is supported by the empirical evidence of electro-dynamic fields, Kirlian auras and etheric bodies that emanate light that can even be detected with modern equipment. Proposition 2 is supported by the personal testimony of thousands of spiritual seekers throughout history who have discovered their inner "man of light", as did Mary in the Pistis Sophia, and who have found this to be an overwhelmingly transformative experience. Proposition 3 is supported by the extraordinary capacity of advanced spiritual seekers, whether shamanic, Hindu, Buddhist or Christian, literally to radiate light in such a way that others can see it. And Proposition 4 is shown by the magnetic attraction ordinary people have for these seekers: they want to be in their presence and they want to come close to that radiant source of light. This is what Jesus teaches you: cultivate the light within, intensify it within yourself, and let it shine on others.

These teachings of the three levels of light are summed up in the very complicated but precise Saying 83. It is clear that Jesus is influenced by

Plato, as his message here is that a seeker needs to train his spiritual sight to advance beyond the level of external images to the level of Absolute Forms and ultimately to experience the light of the Father. He gives five levels of spiritual reality here:

1. the images - the outward reality of material forms;
2. the Image - the absolute Form or Idea behind a collection of similar images;
3. the light in the images - the fundamental force in the universe that all forms are made from, the created light that Philo refers to;
4. the light of the Father - a much more intensified, concentrated form of the general diffuse energy of light, described in the Hermetic and Jewish mystical literature as the radiance or brilliance of God; and
5. his image - the Great Mind and Intelligence of God which has the power of using fundamental light energy to first create an Absolute Form in the spiritual realm from which all clusters of relative forms in the universe emanate.

The only level which is thus truly visible to us is the level of images, and all other levels are hidden. What is interesting here is that the light of the Father can far more easily be apprehended than the light within the images. And that is because, as Davies says, "seeing always in an ordinary way, by ordinary sunlight, precludes seeing the primordial light that permeates all things" (Davies Christ 669) but seeing the light of the Father involves closing off the outer senses and going inward. As Doresse summarizes: "It is a question apparently of opposition between the images down below and those of the world on high, the world of the light. In the case of the images which in this world manifest to humans, the light which resides in them stays hidden. But in the world of light it is quite different: when the father manifests himself, the light which is in him, far from being hidden by his image, shines and prevents us from seeing his image." (Doresse Livres 192) So spiritual sight is ultimately easier than physical sight!

And that is why a true seeker - or a true philosopher in Plato's teaching - will strive to train his or her understanding to an ever greater and more subtle degree that he can climb ever higher levels of perception. The only level that we will never be able to experience is the very highest, for the image of God is hidden by the brilliance of God's light. But just perceiving the absolute Forms would be considered by Socrates and Plato to be a great accomplishment, enough to be called a true philosopher, and experiencing the Light within all things is the goal of every mystic.

In contrast to much of the mystical Jewish literature, Jesus does not say that one needs to die in order to have this experience. Look at the parallelism between lines 2 and 4: the Father will reveal himself as surely as the images manifest to people. And look at the contrast between line 3 and line 4: it will be easier for you to perceive the light of the Father than the light within the external images. Experience the Light and the Father will reveal himself: that is the promise.

We are in for many surprises when we look at what Jesus teaches about the nature of God and ultimate reality. For one thing, in Saying 30 Jesus rejects belief in gods or even God as an empty concept and teaches the paradox of dual principles or forces within fundamental unity. If you did not know by now that Jesus was a philosopher of a quite mystical bent, and not a founder of a religion, this saying should convince you. He specifically rejects a belief in a Trinity of any sort, whether it is one that has three separate gods like pagan trinities or one where the three are part of One, like the Gnostic and Christian Trinity. He makes fun of the belief in gods at its very basis and implies that it is nonsense. He also makes fun of the Jewish idea of God being present in his "place" among people by implying that the Jewish God could just as well be three pagan gods.

Instead, he points to the philosophical "place" - not a spiritual realm like the Kingdom, but a place of the mind - where you can meditate on the paradox of the Two and the One that is behind the very nature of the universe. This paradoxical teaching is found in the great pre-Socratic philosophers that Jesus surely knew: if he studied Plato, which is clear from these sayings, then he studied the pre-Socratics as well. And he says that he himself is with the person who can think in those terms, not in any supernatural sense, not as any sort of Shekhina or divine presence but simply mentally and existentially.

Being able to think paradoxically is a basic requirement for being Jesus' disciple, as the very nature of reality is paradoxical and Jesus' teachings follow paradoxical rather than linear logic. That is the person Jesus is with: the person whose mind is supple enough to hold two opposites at the same time and see their unity - Two or One which do not add up to Three. It may seem like nonsense on the surface but it makes a much deeper sense.

In Saying 15 he continues on to say that the ultimate reality is not anthropomorphic or biological and should not be visualized in any way, even in a mystical experience. Ultimately, it is hard not to see the word "Father" as completely metaphorical. Jesus plays with a very concrete metaphor and describes the experience of worship of this reality (prostrating yourself on your face) in a concrete way only to undermine the very concreteness of it

at the same time. He uses the language of Jewish mysticism and the Hebrew Bible to conjure up a set of associations that he then deftly dispels. And he uses the very maleness of the metaphors and the
male longing for a non-female reality as a way to critique the gender basis of religion. He does all this in a few compressed words of poetry. (see Martin 85)

Thus, he does not denigrate the mystical journey and the rituals of adoration and he understands that the disciples need to do it this way, but ultimately he does not think it is the real path. And that is because it involves visualization and images and even a political parallel to the worship of a king, and to Jesus the ultimate reality is beyond the realm of images, ideas and forms. "God" is only a word for it and though Jesus uses the rather misleading metaphor "Father" he is well aware that it is only a metaphor and nothing more. "He who is there" is ineffable, indescribable and inconceivable and no ritual or physical worship will do it justice.

Moreover, in Saying 17 he shows that the ultimate reality is a realm of thought which is paradoxically both beyond the senses and capable of being made into a sensory experience. The eye has not seen it, thus it is not visual in any way. The ear has not heard it, so it makes no sound. The hand has not touched it, so it is not physical or material. And the last sentence is the most striking: it has not "lifted up" in the heart. We speak of emotions welling up, flooding the heart, breaking the heart, bursting the heart. "It" is nothing emotional and is not a feeling inside ourselves. Clearly Jesus is speaking of something spiritual, at such a level that it has no physical elements at all, even in a vision or imagination.

But the fact that he uses the past tense implies that there is a reality that the eye has not seen but can and will see, the ear can hear, the hand can touch and the heart can feel. So this reality has a seemingly physical component but it is clearly not the physical world that we know. We now have what seems like a contradiction: a formless spiritual reality beyond any perception by the senses that at the same time can appear in a physical way and can be felt.

Modern descriptions of out-of-the-body experiences relate this kind of reality: a world of pure thought beyond the senses and emotions that nonetheless takes on physical form for the comfort of those who need a sense of materiality. But it is the mind that creates physical form so that what Jesus says is both true and not true: the eye sees it but in reality it is only in the mind, the ear hears it but the sound is not material, the hand touches it but it is a purely spiritual reality.

Even though this reality is hard to understand, it remains experiential and not an article of faith, as Jesus says in Saying 44. All blasphemy about

God and the Son can be forgiven because it is not theology about God that matters but an inner experience of pure spirit. This saying does not refer to the Trinity because the Trinity was not an established dogma that anyone could even blaspheme nor was the idea of blasphemy ever considered unforgivable in Judaism. Thus Jesus' view of blasphemy is not something spoken against a well-established theological doctrine, but a more general definition of irreverence or impiety towards established views of God. And that is exactly what Jesus' followers do: they are not actively in conflict with any established doctrine and no one considers them heretics but they have removed themselves from society and are following a mystical path.

To Jesus "Father" and "Son" and all other categories are just figures of speech, personifications and creations of our mind in order to express the Ineffable in words and they are really unimportant. Jesus is essentially not only arguing against the idea of the Trinity, as he does in Saying 30, but against any kind of theology at all. What does matter is the inner experience of the pure Spirit flowing through the universe, and that is the one thing to be held sacred.

Jesus' teachings on the nature of the Kingdom are just as subtle as his teachings on light and God. In contrast to what the New Testament says, the Kingdom is not a physical location at all but rather a state of consciousness. It is based on a deep inner experience of overcoming the egocentric predicament and uniting the perceiving self with the world perceived. In Saying 3, Jesus shows humor containing sly jabs at the Hebrew Bible that the Kingdom is not in Heaven or in the Underworld and the religious leaders who say so are misleading the people. The true Kingdom is not a physical place but is a state of higher consciousness that results when you bridge the chasm between the subjective world inside and the world of perception and unite the two into one.

In Saying 20 he uses a striking analogy to a grain of mustard to define the Kingdom. In this saying When we think "Kingdom" we think a magnificent room with an ostentatiously dressed king sitting on his throne and when we think "heaven" we might think about an ethereal place where angels flutter about and God sits on his unimaginably brilliant throne. But here the Kingdom is an unwanted and invasive weed. Jesus slyly upends all our conventional expectations of what the Kingdom of Heaven might be like. What a radical thing to say! And not in keeping with the Jewish tradition either: there is "no reference to the mustard plant in the OT or OT Apocrypha even though the plant flourished in Palestine long before the NT period" (MacArthur 202).

And yet the metaphor fits. This shows you the genius of Jesus' mind, that he could come up with such a far-fetched comparison. And yet it must

have made sense to his listeners who were most likely familiar with the properties of mustard and could see the connection. We today have to do extensive botanical research to be able to understand what he means.

His parables are drawn from such homely details of the everyday life that an ordinary person would not have to be educated at all to understand them. And for someone more educated, they could catch the allusions to Platonic Absolute Forms and the symbolism of birds and understand the parable at an even deeper level. This quality of appealing to all levels at once places Jesus in the company of the greatest thinkers and poets of the ages: Lao Tzu and Buddha as religious teachers and Shakespeare and Goethe as poets.

In Saying 96 Jesus uses an even more shocking analogy to colostrum to make a similar point. This has of course been consistently mistranslated as "yeast", starting with the New Testament, but the Coptic clearly and indubitably says "colostrum", that is the mother's first milk after a baby is born. Jesus intends colostrum to be a spiritual metaphor.

The deepest spiritual reality is like colostrum: special, rare, all-sustaining, all-protective and closely tied to the creative force of the universe. But by itself it is not accessible or available: it only appears for a few hours early in one's life and then it is gone. First it is replaced by ordinary breast milk which is not quite as powerful and then we are weaned off it altogether and never get it again.

So the only way to get it back is to take a very small amount and mix it with the general raw materials for the food of life. That is not yet enough either, for work and effort has to be added in order to make that raw material palatable and accessible so we can "eat" it. The image of the nursing woman tells us also that this spiritual substance is meant to be shared and given out freely to others, without preconditions. Just as a nursing baby is not asked for anything in return, so should no one ask for anything in return when they are sharing their spiritual world. They should be feeding the world with the most life-giving substance they have.

It is intriguing that it is this whole process that is being compared with the Kingdom, not any one part in particular. The Kingdom is thus not something absolute that exists in some localized place and that we need only to see. It is a state of mind and consciousness that slowly begins to manifest as we do spiritual work. As we are caught in the everyday "flour" of life, we need to remember that there is a powerful life energy that brought us into being, the colostrum, and we need to stay in touch with that energy in order to shape ourselves into "large loaves", like the large branch of Saying 20, i.e. a person who stands out and is noticeable for their inner radiance, peace of mind and tranquility.

In Saying 76 Jesus shows the Kingdom to be the only place of permanence in a world in which everything is subject to biological decay and death; thus it should be sought above all else. He elucidates its characteristics by way of an analogy with the pearl: "seek after this treasure / which is not wont to perish...."

Continuing the same theme, he says in Saying 66 that the world has no sustenance and permanence unless it is grounded in the Kingdom, but it is not a dualistic separation. He cites Psalm 118 only to reinterpret it in his own inimitable way, neither Jewish nor Gnostic and certainly not Christian. The builders are not the unbelieving pagans but the forces that maintain and perpetuate the physical world which the Gnostics personified into the archons but which Jesus does not. And the cornerstone is not the devout and pious Jew who smites the unbelievers but the hidden spiritual reality that lies behind the apparent physical reality. But Jesus does not teach an unbridgeable gulf between the two the way the Gnostics did: the spiritual world lies right
behind and around the physical one, always ready to be discovered. The disciple should indeed ask to be taught about it as Jesus does in his humorous way.

And when he or she asks, the message is: do not get caught in the material world, the world of growth, decay and death, the "built" world that then becomes "unbuilt." Fix your sights on the stable, permanent, self-generated Higher Realm of the Father's Kingdom.

How should we fix our sights? In Sayings 5 and 91 he stresses that the discovery of this hidden Kingdom which is right in front of us should be approached in a rational, scientific way but is much more important than the study of the outside world and cannot be put off. Right away in Saying 91 he says is not asking anyone to believe in him or to take his words on faith: in the original document the questioners are simply asking him to prove his credibility so that they can believe what he says about spiritual reality, not that they can worship him as a divine figure. Jesus responds that the same rational and scientific approach of observation and inquiry with
which to study the outside material world is to be used with the spiritual world as well: once again he is not asking anyone to take him as an authority but to test for themselves what he says.

But the search for the spiritual realm cannot wait; the critical moment is now. The hidden realm is not in some esoteric realm; it is in the study of one's own mind in order to remove the illusions and mental blocks that keep us from seeing the true depth of reality. But when that reality opens up, it will be in the form of a powerful vision in which the world of

surfaces and shadows will come to life and the underlying life force and pure consciousness behind all things will reveal itself.

Chapter 5:

Seeking a Hidden Kingdom

A major theme in the Gospel of Thomas is discipleship: its requirements, the obstacles standing in its way, and the way of life that a disciple needs to practice in order to attain the highest spiritual development. Most of the sayings are framed as conversations between Jesus and the disciples and even when they are not mentioned it seems clear that Jesus' teachings are directed at them. In contrast to the picture of Jesus in the New Testament as speaking to large crowds, many of whom did not understand what he said, in the Gospel of Thomas he speaks only to a select few who are deeply interested in following his teachings. The questions they ask indicate that they are familiar with the religious teachings of the time and that they want to know where Jesus stands. He takes all their questions seriously, never rebukes or criticizes them as he is shown to do in the New Testament, and always gives them an answer, though it is not usually one that they might have expected.

In short, Jesus has a selected group of followers whom he is trying to guide to a higher state of enlightenment. In no way is he trying to save the masses of people from their sins and to offer salvation to all. For his path is a deeply individual one and requires hard work and effort; there is no instant salvation here. In many ways the term "Gospel" of Thomas is false and misleading: "Gospel" is a Christian term and means the good news of salvation. It rather ought to be called the Bad News of Jesus, for here you have to do the work yourself, no one is selling a shortcut to heaven.

At the very beginning of the document Jesus makes a promise: you will experience an inner spiritual transformation if you are willing to do the work of truly understanding his teachings at a higher level of consciousness. To do that one first has to interpret his sayings, his meaning is not just handed down. Jesus has uttered divinely inspired wisdom but it is the task of Jesus' brother Thomas to mediate that wisdom and make it accessible to others so that they can learn from it, like Aaron to Moses.

The interpretation is already contained within the word, just as Thomas is twin brother to Jesus, and the task for the disciple is not so much deducing something extraneous but uncovering what is already there. Once

one uncovers the interpretation, the hermeneia, one "will not taste the death". This has two levels of meaning: that one's inner awareness is itself not functioning or "dead"; and that what one is aware of when one turns inward is not truly flourishing and vibrant; it tastes of something dead rather than something alive.

If one does not "taste the death", conversely one lives from within one's inner awareness, and that awareness is always in the present. As Ross says incisively, "it may be considered as referring to a Life that is unrelated to time (and hence to death) and is therefore attainable as an immediate experience in the here and now." (Ross 91)

The relationship between teacher and disciple is not an easy one, as Sayings 38 and 92 show. It is intense, emotionally charged and often ambivalent. Sometimes the disciple is ready and the teacher is not and sometimes the teacher is ready to teach but the disciple is not ready to hear. The relationship has many elements of a sublimated love or romantic relationship, but ultimately Jesus, being wise, knows that neither he nor the disciples should personalize what should remain an individual search for wisdom without dependence on a teacher. For Jesus' aphorism "Seek and you will find" in line 2 of saying 92 does not imply dependence of the seeker on any one else: he or she must do the seeking himself and only that active seeking will result in the finding.

Jesus continues to make it very clear in Saying 13 that the disciples are meant to learn for themselves and not depend on him as the teacher. He asks the disciples either to make a comparison to him, which preserves

his uniqueness, or to say whom he resembles, which limits it. Matthew and Simon Peter categorize him in the framework of Hebrew prophetic religion and Graeco-Roman philosophy, and Jesus does have many similarities with the Cynic philosophers. But Jesus does not want to be limited by any category and sees his teachings as an original synthesis. The only disciple who truly understands him is Thomas.

There is a particularly humorous dialogue going on between Jesus and Thomas in which Jesus quotes himself asking, "I resemble whom?" and Thomas responds by saying his mouth is incapable of saying "you resemble whom?" even though he has just said it. Moreover, by saying this he is quoting himself refusing to quote himself quoting Jesus quoting himself. They are having a merry little game here! The other disciples obviously can't keep up and Jesus clearly respects Thomas' wit and presence of mind. This is reflected in the question-and-answer structure of the saying:

1-3: Jesus - "I resemble whom?"
4-7: disciples - You resemble...
8-10: Thomas - "You resemble whom?"
11-15: Jesus - You resemble me.

Jesus and Thomas are set parallel to each other in the poetic structure itself: 3 lines for Jesus at the beginning followed by 4 for the disciples and answered by 3 lines for Thomas.

What is interesting is that they are making fun of the nature of ontological reality and how we perceive it. They are ribbing on the idea of the self, whether it exists and whether it resembles anything at all. And they are mocking themselves in the process and refusing to take the whole issue seriously.

As a result, the last phrase of Jesus ("I am not your teacher") is addressed specifically to Thomas, and the "you" is singular here. Jesus is giving Thomas a high compliment by placing him, and only him, equal to himself. Jesus does so precisely because Thomas refuses to claim wisdom for himself. As Socrates said in his Apology, "Well, I am certainly wiser than this man. It is only too likely that neither of us has any knowledge to boast of; but he thinks he knows something which he does not know, whereas I am quite conscious of my ignorance. At any rate it seems that I am wiser than he is to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I don't know" (Apology 21, p. 401). Or with Confucius, "Shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, to recognize that you know it, and when you do not know a thing, to recognize that you do not know it. That is knowledge" (Analects II.17). In Saying 13 Jesus makes clear that the goal of discipleship is to transcend the need for mental categorization and comparison and to become equal to the teacher Jesus by imbibing his wisdom which is itself uncategorizable.

So too in Saying 108 Jesus promises that the disciples may become as wise and knowing as he is and the wisdom he gives accordingly aims at a complete transformation of the seekers' inner beings. Here he lays out four stages necessary to attain mystical insight:

1. imbibing wisdom orally and with one's whole being (drinking from my mouth);

2. becoming so full of wisdom that one becomes intoxicated and reaches a higher state of awareness;

3. having wisdom permeate down to one's fundamental inner Being and one's essential Higher Self; and

4. having one's awareness break through the superficial layers of reality to that which is hidden beneath.

Ultimately these four stages have nothing to do with Jesus as such and are steps that any seeker must take in order to find insight. That is why in this saying Jesus can either be a personal teacher or he can be Wisdom personified.

What does it take to be a seeker of the Kingdom? Saying 82 says that aspiring seekers need to cultivate their inner flame and their inner intensity if they want to attain Jesus' high state and if they want to attain the Kingdom. And the way to do that is to follow the teachings he gives us in the Gospel of Thomas. Secondly, one needs a strong desire to enter the Kingdom, readiness to look inward, and a willingness to help others on the spiritual path.

In Sayings 69 and 94 Jesus outlines a path to attain the Kingdom which consists of the following steps:

1. Hunger - a deep inner desire to seek spiritual growth that takes over and won't abate.
2. Seeking - the active consequence of that desire but directed inward into self-knowledge.
3. Finding - the discovery of a higher inner state, such as one gets from meditation and true objectivity about oneself.
4. Helping others - the ability to influence, inspire and guide someone not as far along as the seeker to get them to experience the same hunger and to start seeking.
5. Knocking - a strongly expressed desire to follow the spiritual path with full commitment, leaving worldy pursuits behind.
6. Opening - a profound experience of clarity and insight in which a higher reality manifests on a more continuous or regular basis.
7. Knowing the Father in Truth - an experience of the fundamental force or energy behind all things, the Light, the Source, in its full reality and truth.
8. Happiness - a sense of bliss and tranquility, represented in Buddhism by the beatific smile of the Buddha.

These two sayings don't speak of the ultimate stage of happiness for they only promise that you will be "among the happy". But other sayings give

you the way to anapausis, ultimate tranquility. This is the path Jesus wants us to follow. Seek and you shall find!

Thirdly, a seeker needs to be able to separate the rational from the non-rational in order to have a transformative experience that is a prerequisite for being an initiate in Jesus' mystery teaching. Like the Greek mystery religions to which the saying refers, Jesus teaches initiatory knowledge to selected disciples whom he takes through a process until they reach gnosis. And then he tells these initiates the secret to gnosis: they need two kinds of knowledge from two parts of their consciousness, but in particular they need to let the intuitive mind show the way to higher insight without interference from the intellect. And that is one of the ultimate keys to the mystery.

Listening to higher wisdom is not an intellectual exercise, and enlightenment cannot be attained through rational calculation and reasoning. Wisdom has to be taken in through the sub-conscious and through the higher faculties of the mind. The left and the right must always be in the moment of receptivity, taking wisdom in without preconceptions or judgment. And then Jesus ends the whole saying with his question posed by the left to the right: it does what? This question is a pun on the meaning of "mysteries" in the first line:

Line 1: I tell my mysteries
Line 6: it does what?

And there is the ultimate paradox: the mystery is that it can't be described. That is why there is no Bible in the Greek mystery religions and why the initiate is forbidden from speaking about his or her experiences. The experience is deeply internal and can not be communicated. The mystery will remain a mystery. It can only be experienced.

Fourthly, a seeker needs to be receptive and to have a good heart. Then the teachings of wisdom have the power to awaken his or her spiritual potential and to bring the seeker closer to perfection. The parable in Saying 9 describes four kinds of seekers, three of whom are not receptive to the teachings of wisdom. They are those who are hard-hearted and closed-minded and won't accept them at all, those who are willing to listen but who are essentially indifferent and won't let wisdom thrive in themselves, and those who are downright hostile, destructive and self-destructive. The striking metaphor of the sower contains allusions to God, Wisdom and classical ideas of education while sowing draws on Jewish and classical ideas of sowing the chosen people, righteousness, justice, knowledge and wisdom.

Wisdom is sowed equally and impartially to all; those who are receptive are self-chosen.

Here only the fourth person had "good earth" for the seed to fall upon and give "good fruit". This means that receptivity to spiritual wisdom requires moral goodness which allows a person to recognize his or her spiritual potential and to cultivate it in order to ascend to a higher spiritual state. That cultivation of inner potential can lead closer to a perfect state of unity (symbolized by the numbers 60 and 120) with the fundamental essence of the universe, with the final goal being the ultimate union with the All, the sum total of all space, time and consciousness.

Sayings 73 and 74 are short and pithy but they too emphasize how rare the genuinely aspiring seeker is in the world. The two sayings use different metaphors to say something similar. In Saying 73 the harvest is the fruit of spiritual attainment. The workers becoming few have two levels of meaning: a lack of people willing to do the hard work of the spiritual path, and conversely the final goal of the process of overcoming inner separation.

The master rules the physical, material realm but the one hard-working, spiritually aspiring worker is cast out of the physical realm so that he or she can devote his or her full energies to the spiritual path. That worker has indeed become few but not in the sense of quantity of people, but in the sense of inner oneness. It is amazing what profundity Jesus can express with so few words in a rich verbal subtlety. What seemed so simple at first turns out to be multi-layered and complex once the words are properly understood.

In Saying 74 Jesus once again exercises his creative genius: he takes two proverbial Greek sayings, quoted by Plato and Zenobius, adds Hebrew metaphorical allusions, and makes deliberate grammatical errors in order to create a compressed saying containing two opposites. His basic theme is the necessity of spiritual work to reach enlightenment which he describes by contrasting opposite approaches. Since all of his words have both a positive and a negative meaning, it seems that all at once he is outlining two kinds of paths people follow, and two kinds of people.

The first group have no real purpose and go around in circles in their lives. They are always in danger of falling into misery and sickness and not being able to get out. When they do fall, the others just like them lack the courage and altruism to help them out. They do not have the understanding to recognize the spiritual path and the route to enlightenment and gnosis, and so they will not even begin the quest. Instead, they congregate together at the surface of life, refusing to explore the depths of existence. And when they do follow a spiritual path, more often than not they are taken in by

charlatans and by the externalities of religions which don't offer true spiritual depth.

The second group seriously pursues the path of initiation in a dedicated way and is willing to do intense strenuous work to attain enlightenment. They understand that the path will not be easy and they will have to overcome inner and outer obstacles as they pierce through the walls of resistance and penetrate the true source of spiritual truth. They are willing to take risks in order to look beneath the surface of life and to reach its true depths. They have the insight to recognize a true path and to distinguish it from one that is only illusory.

Jesus, in his very compressed and cryptic way, is giving you a choice: which group do you want to be in? As Plato says, "the wand-bearers are many, but the initiates are few." So be an initiate, not a wand-bearer, jump into that well: you may find the path to enlightenment in there.

What do seekers need to do in order to attain the highest realm of pure consciousness? Saying 88 tells us that we first need to give up entirely the idea of a separate individual self and to do so there are three stages of spiritual development necessary to enter the realm of the angels. By communing with messengers of higher consciousness we become aware that there is a deeper spiritual reality slumbering within us that we need to awake. When we become aware of the ephemeral nature of the physical, material self in comparison with that within us that partakes of the angels, we are glad to hand it over and eventually stop being attached to it. And as we advance in our spiritual practice, we come closer to the day on which we finally let go our false sense of being a separate, distinguishable Self, and we are finally willing to exist at the pure, uncorrupted light plane of the angels without the need for an individual identity. By achieving the state of No-Self (annatta in Buddhism) we finally achieve the highest state of consciousness.

But along the way there are invasive and disharmonious thoughts and feelings that interfere with true understanding and self-knowledge. For these Jesus analyzes seven stages of spiritual development in Sayings 21 and 103. At first we hoard our spiritual self without developing it ("dwelling in a field which is not theirs"). Then we begin to listen to the call of the Higher Self to realize our potential ("the masters of the field come") and we begin releasing the stranglehold of inner blockages, fears and other obstacles that get in the way of inner development ("strip naked" and "release the field"). We let go conscious control of our inner self in favor of the Higher Self ("give their field to them").

Yet being aware of our higher Self and spiritual nature, we are still consumed with anxiety about losing it, misinterpreting inner wealth as material desire and mistaking the superficial outer world for the fundamental

inner world (the thief, the house of his kingdom and the vessels). We need to marshal all our strength to master the invasive and disharmonious thoughts and feelings inside ourselves in order to have inner peace (keep watch, gird your loins with a great strength, the robbers). And finally we become a person of understanding and wisdom
who has done the hard work necessary to achieve an inner breakthrough and reap the fruit of his lifelong practice (man of knowledge reaping the ripened fruit).

In Saying 21 Jesus elucidates the obstacles and points out the difficult inner work of dealing with the "thieves" and "robbers" of our mind. And in Saying 103 he expands the metaphor of "robbers" in order to teach the steps a disciple must take in order to acquire self-knowledge. He points out the need for close introspection to know the source of inner disharmony and he shows the necessity of one-pointed concentration of mind and emotion in order to become an integrated being which is master of itself and no longer subject to invasive forces. And it is those who, through self-knowledge and observation of their own minds, become masters of their internal robbers who attain happiness.

It is interesting that he uses the same metaphor of "gathering your strength" and "girding up your loins" twice. Normally one's inner strength is dispersed, scattered, not unified, just as the mind is restless and scattered. In order to have inner harmony, a person needs to focus their inner energy. That concentration is what will keep the "robbers" away. "Girding up your loins" means preparing oneself for strenuous action. The work of self-knowledge is no less strenuous than the hardest physical work and a spiritual seeker needs to be prepared for that fact. It takes constant probing into oneself and vigilance in order to be a master of one's mind and emotions so that one's thoughts and feelings are in harmony with one's spiritual path and not acting independently and impulsively to torpedo all one's good intentions. Inner work is not like a dramatic external battle where there is a clear victory for one side. It is a constant, ongoing struggle that one is never sure has ended. But when it does finally end, true serenity of the highest, most unimaginable order ensues.

Jesus, however, is disappointed that unfortunately so few people are willing to take this path of discipleship. In Saying 28, like a good physician, he takes the pulse of humanity, pronounces it sick and prescribes a cure. And he does so with compassion and sympathy, actually feeling our mostly self-induced pain himself. His diagnosis is that the people are drunk. They are not in possession of their faculties and they are literally out of their senses and mind. The problem is that they are blind. Because their judgment is clouded and their clarity of thought and perception is impaired, people do

not understand their deficient condition and refuse to accept the need for them to change. The cause is that they are empty.

But Jesus always offers a solution and here it is the very evocative Greek word Metanoia: "transformation of awareness". The only path to spiritual growth is to strive for clarity and objectivity and to have a transformative inner experience where the illusions that hold one back are stripped away. Jesus appears in our lives not to take the burden of spiritual development off our shoulders and to promise us a deceptive shortcut to salvation and immortality, but to remind us of the true path of wisdom. He is not a savior or redeemer or divine figure but a true philosopher who shows us the way and hopes that we will take up his call to begin the long process of working on ourselves. And if we don't, we will remain drunken, blind and empty all our lives.

Saying 97 gives a striking metaphor of this emptiness, but in an almost unimaginable paradox two opposite readings of the same saying are possible here. Read one way, the empty jar describes the spiritual emptiness of being too caught up in the outside world and of not cultivating one's inner self. The woman lost her essence of life by letting it flow out of the jar; she was too unaware even to notice and not until she got home did she even discover that the jar, her inner self, was empty.

But the problem with this reading is that the whole story is a parable of the Kingdom and that is only used for higher spiritual states. In addition, the unrealistic nature of the handle of the jar breaking, which would not cause the flour to pour out, is a deliberate clue to alert us that the surface meaning of the story doesn't add up. So there is also a higher state of emptiness of letting go of mental concepts, categories and endless inner chatter to attain true consciousness. When the woman comes to the end of her road (her life), she attains serenity (being beyond toil), she reaches into her house (her inner self) and finds emptiness (readiness for a higher spiritual state).

Saying 34 describes three levels of blindness: cosmic, external and internal. Cosmically, we are imprisoned in the material world, blind to our true home, at the mercy of blind and uncaring deities who rule this world for their own benefit. Externally, we are the mercy of devious and power-hungry religious leaders who abuse the natural desire of humans for spiritual truth. Instead of true insight, they spread politicized distortions that give divine rationalization to their own power. And internally, we are at the mercy of our own egos driving us to aggrandize ourselves in the world and to shut out anything that gets in the way of that, including any spiritual search that is not materially rewarding.

Jesus is telling us all to be aware of all these sources of blindness and not to succumb to their beguilement. He says: open your eyes, look inside, look around you, discover the truth for yourself, don't rely on any outside authorities but observe yourself carefully too. Remember, there is an inherent blindness in the nature of human beings and the created world, and people have difficulty recognizing a wise person who will lead them out of that state: choose wisely or else you will simply be led down into the bottom of a pit.

If one does take Jesus' path of discipleship, how do you deal with others who are not on the path? In Saying 68 Jesus warns that you may evoke highly ambivalent responses in others, deep hatred and hostility, as well as admiration and a strong desire to follow your example. Thus any hatred you may encounter is never absolute and fixed but is often mixed with admiration and a desire on the part of the hostile person to be convinced and to follow a purer path. Consequently, the disciple can turn one emotion into its opposite.

But there are two kinds of people with whom seekers should not share their deepest experiences and insights, and that is those who are consumed by lust. In Saying 93, dogs represent coarse, unevolved people with a high degree of sexual lustfulness whose motives are often deceptive and opaque. They might also be flatterers who try to manipulate others or they might be gossips who try to "dig up dirt" on others and muddy their reputations. Pigs are power-hungry people with a tendency toward destructiveness who have an incapacity to discriminate and tend to make rash judgments. They thus might react violently to anything they don't understand or to anybody they feel could be superior to them. These two sets of associations are not chosen at random, for sex and power are two of the main driving forces of human beings and also two of the main stumbling blocks to spirituality. How many spiritual teachers and gurus have fallen for precisely these two reasons: either having affairs with female disciples or letting their own power go to their heads. Jesus knows whereof he speaks. Jesus aims to give advice for living, not theology.

The experience of the Higher Self is the theme in Saying 8 which ends with the phrase "he who has ears let him hear", something Jesus says when he has something particularly important to say. The true theme of the story of the wise fisherman who keeps only the large fish is to describe the essential and ideal nature of human beings, in the Platonic sense of the Ideal Form or quintessence of humanity, and to show a process of attaining it. Fish have a long positive symbolic association in many Western religious traditions with mystical helpers from the beyond, saving the lives even of gods and goddesses as well as doing favors for ordinary mortals and conducting them to the afterworld.

Fishing in the sea can reliably be seen as a metaphor for inner exploration of the sub-conscious and the inner self. The small fish are the many aspects of the self that we identify with - feelings, thoughts, images, moods, sensations and perceptions - but the large fish is the Higher Self, the core self, that part of the Self that exists at a fundamental level of consciousness and merely observes.

This Higher Self has the following qualities:
a. it is the supreme good to be sought beyond all else;;
b. it is the true identity of oneself;
c. it is a realm of unity rather than separation and fragmentation;
d. it is buried in midst all the superficial aspects of ourselves;
e. it is a realm beyond the endless chain of suffering and labor; and
f. it can only be attained when seekers free themselves of their desires and participation in the chain of suffering.

Thus, the attainment of wisdom requires the rejection of the superficial and external parts of the self in favor of the Higher Self hidden inside.

But this Higher Self cannot be recognized without self-knowledge, and that involves two aspects: acknowledging the mixture of good and bad within us and understanding our tendencies to project our own qualities onto others. In Saying 57 the metaphor of the wheat and the darnel (zizanion) is an ingenious depiction of the mixture of good and bad: darnel resembles wheat to such an extent that it is practically indistinguishable yet it is a noxious and invasive weed without nutritional qualities that will crowd out and even strangle the real wheat once it is allowed to grow unchecked.

Instead, good and bad are inextricably mixed together in the world and in ourselves and are difficult to separate. Often we are confused which is which and this often leads to hypocrisy and self-righteousness. The humorous lines 7-9 where Jesus quotes a man quoting what someone might have said but didn't seems to be a description of the constant internal debates and dialogues going on inside ourselves between the different voices pulling us in different directions.

Yet many people have a simplistic mentality and think that the two can easily be separated. It takes wisdom to know that opposite qualities are paradoxically intermingled. Ultimately, however, if one wants to make spiritual progress one has to face up to the negative and shadow side of oneself which is always there, under the surface. There comes a moment at which a seeker must simply take decisive action against the negative qualities

within him- or herself (plucking and burning the darnel on the day of the harvest).

This is the path of self-purification and renunciation. It is at that point that a seeker has begun the path of purification and the Kingdom will manifest. Thus, the comparison in Saying 57 to the Kingdom is to the whole process of insight and self-knowledge that Jesus outlines here.

A similar theme is discussed in Saying 26 where Jesus gives you a whole textbook of psychology in just a few short phrases but with a decidedly different goal. Using the metaphor of the speck in your brother's eye and the beam in your eye, Jesus says that humans suffer from our tendency to project, attributing our own flaws and deficiencies to others. In particular, we find it difficult to accept the shadow side of ourselves and mistakenly blame others for its existence. This inner dishonesty leads to blocked vision, where we literally do not see the

world because it is only an extension of ourselves. In order truly to see, we need to break down the illusion of our ego and to stop projecting ourselves onto others. When the false self crumbles, it will lead to a temporary inner crisis.

Saying 7 is highly metaphorical and cryptic and one has to understand the ancient associations with lions and especially the relevant discussion in Plato, but its theme is the need for reason to exercise restraint over the passions. In ancient mythologies lions, who were an actual physical threat to humans, represent a paradoxical opposition of ferocity and tenderness, terror and beneficence, destruction and mercy. In the myths humans find eternal life and vitality by being symbolically devoured by the lion and at the same time the lion is also symbolically killed, confirming man's triumph over death and destruction. The lion is glad when the man will eat him because the man represents the guiding hand of collected reason bringing emotions under control and moderating their effect. If the lion will eat the man, that means that the irrational forces of the lower mind completely dominate and swallow any hint of reason or spirit and the man becomes something abominated.

Thus, those same emotions and that same life force that can be ennobled and raised to a higher level under the guidance of reason and spirit can prove destructive and drag the person down to a low ethical and spiritual level if they are allowed to dominate the entire personality. This too is an important prerequisite for the path to the Kingdom.

A fifth prerequisite is the need to acknowledge and experience suffering and by so doing discover the source of inner vitality that confer

immortality. In Saying 58, Jesus is giving you a choice of two paths (indicated by the grammatical ambiguity of the language) to take which will both lead you to happiness. One (to suffer and also discover the life) is to acknowledge and accept both the everyday suffering and pain of living and the existential suffering underlying human existence. By so doing we realize that happiness and suffering stem from the same source which is our inner vitality and the flow of the great current of life. Once we experience our inner vitality, then we discover that which is indeed the source of our spiritual permanence, what we call our "soul".

The other path (to suffer and thereby discover the life) is to delve deeply into our experience of suffering, as counter-intuitive as that might seem. The more we experience this deep sense of existential alienation and estrangement from the world, the more we fix our concentration on that spiritual permanence within us that does not partake of the external world. That concentration, when practiced regularly and consistently, will allow us to discover the eternal life within. It may be a long, slow process and in the meantime we have to continue to feel the searing sense of not belonging. But the final result will be far greater than anyone tied to the world will attain.

In any case, the great paradox Jesus wants to leave us with is that suffering will lead to cessation of suffering. Don't repress and deny the existence of suffering, delve into the experience and you will find startling results.

The final requirement for discipleship, thinking for oneself, is spelled out in the famous parable of the shepherd and the sheep in Saying 107. Jesus says here that the spiritual path requires a willingness to think for oneself rather than following the majority and one must guard against both the arrogance of thinking one has attained perfection and the willingness to settle for less. He makes it clear in his story of the sheep and the shepherd.

The true theme of the saying is the search for spiritual perfection and the pitfalls along the way. The two main pitfalls Jesus discusses are quite opposite to one another: a premature conclusion that you have already reached perfection when you really have not (thinking you are a hundred when the vital One is already missing); and conversely a willingness to settle for much less than perfection (a willingness to let One add to 99 rather than deciding to pursue One only).

But the sub-theme is a sly critique of the demands of religion for conformity and group thinking (being a sheep). The real hero of this story is the large sheep, the one who goes astray and follows his own path, away from the crowd; that is why the shepherd desires him. This is very much at odds with the Jewish and Christian story where the one that goes astray is

the sinner and deviant who needs to be brought back into the fold and taught to think like everyone else and to obey authority.

Here in Saying 107 we have a sheep who doesn't obey authority, and notice very importantly: it doesn't say anything about the shepherd bringing him back! It only says he desires him more. It doesn't say the shepherd went back either: all the Biblical versions always end with God collecting the entire flock back together again, including the errant ones. This is a very different and quite subversive ending. The implication is the shepherd left his flock for good and followed the path of the large sheep which ultimately leads to spiritual perfection.

And taking that path is where the Kingdom is: the lonely path by oneself, away from the group, away from society, away from conventional expectation. That path indeed involves suffering and toil but it ultimately leads to a much greater feeling of Oneness than one would percieve within a group. So the final answer to the question of whether he is a good or bad shepherd is: he is no shepherd at all. He has stopped herding the sheep, stopped being part of the herd, and he is now following, and becoming, the One large sheep.

The spirit of Jesus' followers was non-conformist, maverick, anti-institutional, individualistic and downright anarchistic. These wre not people who ran with the flock. The last thing that Jesus wants you to be is a little sheep. He instructs each of us to find our own path.

Chapter 6:
Harmonic Discord

The theme of attaining Oneness both within and without is a powerful one in the Gospel of Thomas and Jesus examines all its ramifications. Unity should be sought in one's perception of reality and othe spiritual realm. Internal divisions between body and soul must be bridged by the unifying power of spirit. Seekers must become like children to regain their eternal spiritual essence and their natural receptivity. The ultimate goal is to become a monachos, someone who has accepted their existential loneliness, overcome their inner divisions and achieved complete inner and outer unity.

The fundamental reason Jesus stresses the search for unity is that the spiritual realm is One, inexhaustible and indivisible and it is a misunderstanding to think that it can be divided in any way. This is stated in a striking way in Saying 72 where Jesus practically coins a new word "divider" to get his meaning across, a word that has led to constant misunderstanding and misinterpretation by practically everyone ever since. He uses this metaphor to make a number of points. Firstly, he has no authority over the spiritual realm in any way and he cannot control things of the spirit, break them into smaller pieces and divide them up. Secondly, no one can do spiritual work for anyone else and everyone has to do it themselves. Thirdly, the rewards of spiritual work are not like material things that can be divided up and shared and lastly, it is Jesus' mission to guide people from the multiplicity and fragmentation of the physical realm to the great Unity of the spiritual realm.

Only a few people are willing to follow Jesus' teachings, but by so doing they will attain spiritual permanence and inner unity and that is the message in Saying 23. Even though only some people will seek wisdom, "one from a thousand and two from ten thousand" does not mean that Jesus has set an arbitrary ratio that he will rigidly adhere to. In the Jewish Wisdom tradition only those who have Torah are the elect, but here anybody can be a seeker. However, only a few will do so, as few as one in thousands, but that is only because so few want to do the hard work that is necessary for the spiritual path. Other sayings, including 62, 73, 74 and 93, have the same message: only a few will choose to follow the path of a seeker and only a few will understand and respect these teachings. "Standing firmly" here means standing behind one's spiritual path with dignity, and conviction because

one has returned to one's true essence, one's connection with the light of the kingdom. A single one is someone who has become a true individual, someone that is deeply themselves but also very much alone.

A major prerequisite for this state of unity is the inner union of body, soul and spirit: this theme is so important to Jesus that he addresses it in 3 sayings, 29, 87 and 112, slightly differently in each one. His main teaching is that the tenuous connection of body and soul causes suffering which can only be transcended through their unification by spirit, the fundamental force in the universe. Yet if spiritual seekers overcome inner divisions, attain Unity and purify themselves to their human quintessence, they may achieve divine transformational power, as we learn from Sayings 48 and 106.

Scholars generally interpret these sayings in terms of a world view by which Jesus elevates the soul and the spirit over the body and the flesh. But such a view did not exist in all of classical Greek and Biblical thought, and does not really come about until the Jewish apocrypha, the neo-Pythagoreans and the Gnostics. Jesus does not express hostility or contempt toward the body in any of these three logia and in his use of the four terms to denote the different levels of the self he accepts the definitions that classical Greek thought had developed.

However, Jesus' philosophy does differ from Greek and Hebrew thought and thus his views follow neither the idea of body-soul continuum nor the idea of body-soul dualism. The inner split within humanity comes about not because of the existence of flesh and body, but because of the tenuous and unnatural connection between flesh and soul. They do not have much in common with one another and they have to strain so hard to remain connected that it causes pain and misery to the person. The flesh is doomed to die but the soul is easily led astray from its true purpose by being too closely tied to the flesh.

Using the powerful image of the mountain moving away, Jesus lays out three steps for a disciple to attain the ultimate spiritual power:

1. First seekers must unify the disparate and opposite elements within themselves - id and ego, emotion and reason, intuition and language, sub-conscious and conscious, subjective and objective, selfishness and altruism, body and spirit. Ultimately feminine and masculine must be united into a higher form of androgyny.

2. Then seekers must reunite with the higher, celestial, Platonic Ideal Form of the quintessential human within them. They must strip off all the ephemeral, transient parts of themselves - age, race, gender, social class, external personality, nationality, name, ethnic group, heritage - and identify

only with that which truly makes them human, at its most exalted and radiant: becoming a son of Man.

3. Once seekers have attained that state, they will acquire the power of God to be in a constant state of transformation while remaining solid, permanent and integral, like a mountain that moves and changes yet retains its own essence. And like a mountain they will constantly aspire to rise to higher and higher planes of spiritual development until they become one with the divine and leave behind the physical mass of the mountain altogether.

Equally, it is painful and difficult work to sustain the connection of the physical body with society and the cosmos around it. Jesus rejects the idea of man as the microcosm as simply an analogy and says that there is no real connection. Nor can this idea of social and cosmic connection truly sustain the soul, even though it may seem that it would.

And finally, it is neither in flesh, body or soul that a seeker should seek happiness, but in pneuma, the great dynamic and intelligent force behind all things in the universe that alone animates both our body and soul. Jesus finds it amazing that this spiritual energy cannot simply manifest as itself but needs the vehicle of body and soul as its vessel.

Jesus' role is to help seekers free themselves from their state of division and open up their internal and external barriers which keep them from attaining a state of unity. His famous metaphor in Saying 71 of overturning the house has nothing to do with the Temple as the New Testament interpreted it but is an inner metaphor. Here he says that his mission is to be a catalyst for internal change and for a loosening and dissolving of the mental and emotional walls that keep people in a state of division and separation.

Equally, he wants to help people break down the rigid world of thinking in categories that keep us from regaining our original state. Still, despite a spiritual interpretation, the overt content of this saying is radical and shocking: Jesus will destroy this house/world in such a way that no one will ever be able to buld it again. This is strong stuff and not for the faint-hearted. To be a disciple of Jesus, you must be made of stern material.

The final goal is a state of ultimate Oneness, a vibrant being in tune with itself and the universe. But to get there takes a long process of inner harmonization and elimination of inner discordances. Jesus uses the metaphor of musical intervals to show how inwardly cacophonous and disharmonious we really are. Notice the mathematical progression if we give the numbers over each other: 5/1, 3/2, 2/3, 1/2, 2/1 and finally 1 at the end of the saying. This shows how we can slowly get ourselves closer to the

perfect fifth and ultimately to become one great resounding pure tone. And then the fire will have burned us down to the Essence of Pure Light.

Jesus is much more concerned about the internal state of mind of his disciples than he is about their actual habits. He might actually have cared a lot less about their sexuality than most people think and even if he did, his whole style is non-interventionist and non-authoritarian and he would not have laid down any coercive rules. Contrary to what most scholars say, the monachos in Sayings 49 and 75 does not have anything to do with celibacy, asceticism and monkhood. Indeed, it is not so clear that he was all that ascetic himself.

In these two sayings Jesus lays down a series of steps for a seeker to follow to attain this level of enlightenment, speaking directly to the reader or listener. The first step is to face up to and accept your loneliness, as it is the separation between your consciousness and the outside world. And only by accepting it will you be able to bridge and achieve a connection with what is outside of you.

A true seeker also shows the level of diligent, persistent and committed effort that entitles you to be one of the chosen, those who are dedicated to the spiritual path. With these two steps, you will see that you are from the heart of the Kingdom, because by facing your existential loneliness you will discover your inner core, your Higher Self, the indestructible essence of You. It is that Essence that can unite with the essence of the outside world, and that union is what Jesus calls the Kingdom. Once you discover that, you can return to that experience of your own Essence time and time again.

And that experience places you among the happy which confirms the basic paradox at work in the universe: you must experience both opposites in order to attain peace and tranquility. Your experience of loneliness will bring you happiness, and both together will bring you closer to repose. By transcending one set of contradictory opposites, you become capable of transcending one of the most fundamental ones: the division into the sexes. As you become a spiritual being within, you ultimately transcend your own biological nature and you become capable of the divine, heavenly marriage with the Essence of all things. This cannot, however, be done through suppressing your sexuality and your biological urges; they have to fall away on their own. That is why you have to become a monachos before you enter the bridal chamber; you need physical, emotional, mental, psychological, epistemological and ontological unity before you can conquer such an intrinsic part of your nature.

The fundamental meaning of the word monachos is the attainment of Oneness, overcoming inner divisions and splits as well as the ontological

separation between personal consciousness and the world outside symbolized by the search for the Kingdom. Jesus coined this word, based on an original Greek word, its Hebrew equivalent and its use in many texts, and it contains the following set of meanings:

1. people who are single and unmarried, or living in a spiritual or platonic marriage;
2. those who simplify their lives and renounce the physical and material things of the world;
3. those who follow a path which separates them from others and isolate them from the world; those who feel "different" from others, mavericks and non-conformists;
4. those who accept their existential loneliness and basic solitariness and do not attempt to cover it up by constantly seeking the company of others;
5. those who seek and attain a greater sense of unity within thmselves and with others because of their heightened understanding of their inner loneliness;
6. those who aspire to transcend gender and reach an undifferentiated state of inner unity without social and biological constraints; and
7. those who aspire to become a "single one," to return to the original state of complete sense of oneness with the essential energy in the universe, with the light behind all things and with God, as symbolized by the state of man in Paradise.

Another metaphor Jesus uses to express the search for unity is the idea of "becoming a child". In Saying 37 Jesus says that a seeker must shed the artifical social and external self and, becoming as natural as a naked child, reconnect with his or her eternal spiritual essence. The disciples ask what seems to be one of their usual externally-oriented questions, but on close analysis they can't be asking when they will see Jesus externally, but only internally. And thus they are asking when they will see his true inner nature, his deepest self. Jesus answers this question very carefully and precisely. With an ironic reference to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he says that the disciples should cast off their external and social encumbrances and become naked like little children. Adam and Eve weren't ashamed because they were naked; rather, clothes were their shame and once they were naked they were no longer ashamed.

This means as well that the disciples should throw off the false fronts, the social masks and disguises, the pretenses and hypocrisies that mark people in civilization. Their selves should be as naked as their bodies.

And ultimately this practice of pure unembarrassed inner nakedness will lead to an encounter with the pure essence of fundamental life and immortality deep inside themselves, and then they will cast off all the fears that hold them back from the highest step in spiritual attainment.

This vivid imagery of Jesus was then used extensively in Christian and Manichaean baptismal rituals to symbolize the rebirth of the initiate and in Gnostic visions of heavenly ascent and liberation of the spirit from the physical body, showing once again the powerful influence of the Gospel of Thomas.

Saying 22 is an even more comprehensive statement of this same theme of becoming a child. Jesus is struck by the openness, receptivity and trustingness of nursing babies and compares a "little one" receiving milk to a spiritual seeker receiving wisdom and insight that will eventually open up the Kingdom for him or her.

Jesus outlines what his disciples need to do to attain the Kingdom. They need to achieve complete transparency and honesty of their inner and outer selves. They need to understand that the Kingdom is undivided and exists in a fundamental state of union all around them. Next they need to unite the male and the female, not by denying and repressing sexuality or by subsuming thre female into the male but by uniting male and female characteristics into a higher state of androgyny. Ultimately, they need to create an entirely new being and a new body, the spiritual body that survives death.

By doing these things one becomes a child in the highest sense: a being living at a higher state of unity and innocence, existing in an androgynous state before the divisiveness of gender sets in, and undisturbed by lust and sexual desire. This then is the way back to the original state of true mystical Oneness with the fundamental source of all things.

There is one other major step Jesus asks his disciples to take - and that is to understand that their spiritual journey takes precedence over their family ties. As we have seen, he himself was not on good terms with his family, especially his mother but also most of his brothers except for Judas Thomas. Nor does he seem to have gotten much understanding from his immediate community. But Jesus strives hard to transmute this estrangement into a higher spiritual principle.

Jesus teaches his disciples not to expect too much positive support even from people close to them. In Saying 31 he says that spiritual seekers and healers will not be understood or accepted by their family or original community but should also understand that true seeking and healing comes only from within a person. Normally, the prophet and the physician are not

connected with each other in either the Jewish or the Hellenistic tradition. But Jesus has purposely put two originally separate aphorisms together and for him the physician and the prophet perform complementary functions. The physician diagnoses your spiritual ailment and prescribes the remedy, and the prophet helps you open up a connection with the great source of divine energy and consciousness behind all things that will fill your spiritual void.

Both prophet and physician thus draw on deeper and higher powers in order to have their effect on others, and their power is undermined if they are too familiar. They need to be willing to be a blank slate for others to project their own needs and desires and their own healing energies upon them, and ultimately they can only facilitate rather than create ongoing internal processes in others. Thus seekers need to overcome their own egos and their own need to be needed by others. An enlightened person cannot enlighten others until they are ready to take that next step.

Sincere seekers must become their own physician and prophet and must diagnose their own condition and open their eyes to true reality and to the Kingdom within them and all around them. At that point all the memories of being misunderstood by your families and hometowns, all the resentments against the people in your lives who did not accept or understand you, fall away, and you are no longer concerned what people think of you, for good or for bad. You are on a path which will lead to enlightenment and you will follow it as far as it takes you.

A seeker must replace the earthly parents with spiritual ones. In Saying 79 he teaches that a seeker needs to transcend attachment to earthly existence generated by the mother in favor of spiritual rebirth by the Father. On the surface Jesus seems simply driven by his resentment of his mother that we have seen very strongly in several sayings. But he transmutes this resentment into an emphasis on philosophical contemplation and spiritual seeking as being superior to the mere physical and earthly. It is not asceticism and an anti-sexual attitude that he advocates as much as voluntary childlessness: the energy devoted to raising children is so great that it interferes with the spiritual path. He is also making a symbolic point about the physical and the spiritual using the categories of female and male.

The parallelism of the 3 strophes makes his point clear. If we graph each parallel set together we get:

mother's womb	logos of Father	= childless womb
nourishing breasts	truth	= breasts without milk

Jesus seems to be replacing the female world of child-bearing and physical nourishment with the male world of spiritual seeking and intellectual nourishment. A male cannot generate life, as his womb is childless and his breasts without milk, but he can generate knowledge and truth. Thus, instead of a human mother, a seeker is reborn from a spiritual father, and instead of human milk, a seeker should receive divine milk, the logos.

Similar points are made in Sayings 55 and 101. Becoming Jesus' disciple requires leaving one's family of origin, accepting the trials and difficulties of discipleship and focusing on the spiritual rather than the biological mother and father. There is much about these two sayings that is personal to Jesus but just as in the other sayings Jesus is able to transcend the merely personal. The theme of the two sayings is what is required to be Jesus' disciple and to become equal to him, especially with regard to their families, and here Jesus' own personal hurt and ambivalence toward his own family plays a major role. He uses the strong word "hate" to express this hurt but at the same time his use of Hebrew parallelism points to a similar use of "love" and "hate" in the Hebrew Bible in which "hate" means to love less, to leave behind and renounce, rather than vehement anger and aggression. This use of "hate" is found in Genesis 29:30-33 where Leah is called "hated" because Jacob loved her less, even though the loved wife, Rachel, was barren, and Leah was fertile (also in Deuteronomy 21:15).

A person must fulfill three requirements in order to be considered worthy to be Jesus' disciple: leave their family of origin, accept the burdens of discipleship, and focus their energies exclusively on the spiritual world. During Jesus' time the pursuit of philosophy was highly popular but involved leaving one's family to attach oneself to a charismatic philosopher or to a philosophical school; Jesus might well have done so himself. Yet he is only against leaving one's family of origin, not the family one has founded, and so this is not a prescription for asceticism.

Jesus contrasts the rejection of biological parents with the embrace of the spiritual parents which in Gnostic speculation of the time consisted of a divine dyad of the cosmic principle of the Father and the divine spirit of the Mother. The physical parent is equated with the fertile but unloved wife in the Torah while the spiritual parent transcends biology and is barren but is truly loved. Ultimately the disciple must find that principle in the world, the true mother, which embodies and encompasses all paradoxes and dualities into One.

Chapter 7:
The Golden Rule

Jesus' ethical teachings in the Gospel of Thomas are a direct consequence of his philosophical and spiritual teachings and are consistent with his emphasis on spiritual attainment rather than social and political involvement. He rejects all external practices and rituals in favor of a deep inward commitment to spiritual truth. He continually counsels against involvement with worldly affairs and rejects all pursuit of wealth and power as antithetical to the spiritual path. Ultimately the true ethical path for Jesus consists of the understanding of the divine unity behind all things and the manifestation of that divine unity through the expression of universal love.

In a series of sayings (6, 14, 39, 53, 89, 102, 104) Jesus makes clear his rejection of all Jewish rules mandating external observances; rather, the path of purity and wisdom is a surer way to gnosis than the punctilious observance of laws and rules.

In Sayings 39 and 102 Jesus sharply criticizes the Pharisees yet first century Pharisees were not a monolithic group and the contemporary sources use different names for them that don't all refer to the same people. Jesus most likely was an adherent of Hillel, who counseled leniency and forbearance rather than rigid adherence to formal rules, and was critical of the school of Shammai which he found to be rigid, legalistic, harsh and without compassion for people's real lives. Ultimately he speaks more for the social and religious outcasts and non-conformists, whether they be his disdained provincial countrymen of Galilee, the Essenes or the perushim, those who separated themselves from the mainstream to achieve greater holiness.

Yet his critique of the Pharisees is a strange mixture of insult and praise: he praises them for being aware of true gnosis but attacks them for withholding it from others and being like contemptible dogs. I think there is a love-hate relationship here: in some ways Jesus' teachings are very close to Pharisaic ideals and there are many scholars who call him a Pharisee. It is a truism that we often criticize those closest or most similar to us more strongly than those with whom we have little or nothing in common. Jesus expects more from the Pharisees because they are basically idealistic and well-intentioned. He is thus disappointed that they have gotten too caught up in the externalities of religion and have neglected the internal experience and

this disappointment gives a tone of bitterness to his criticism: "Woe to the Pharisees!"

The path that he teaches is one of high awareness as well as deep inner purity, and this combination could be said to be fundamentally Pharisaic. For the Pharisees too aimed at purification of one's everyday life coupled with a gerat awareness of the Law. But Jesus' radical innovation is that he does not see the Torah as necessary to the achievement of the goal of the Pharisees, and that marks a fundamental and unbridgable difference between them and him. Ultimately the Pharisaic ideal involves a strong Jewish identity which to Jesus is irrelevant to the universal inner work needed to be done by anyone and everyone. The parting of the ways is here irrevocable.

This is illustrated even more strongly in Sayings 6, 14 and 104 in which Jesus criticizes the Jewish religious observances of fasting and prayer are a hindrance standing in the way of true spiritual attainment which depends on inner and outer honesty and lack of hypocrisy. All three start out with a simple question by the disciples on whether they should pray, fast, give alms and keep kosher dietary laws. If they were observant Jews, none of these questions would make any sense, but they are clearly aware of Jesus' position and they want to know if he approves of any external observances at all.

Jesus issues a categorical rejection of Jewish ritual practices and turns them on their head, saying piety, which is supposed to absolve sin, leads to its opposite. External observances merely lead to hypocrisy and outward show and away from a reliance on the inner self, and cause seekers to think they are progressing spiritually when they are not. Most importantly, fasting, prayer, almsgiving and diet do not affect the level of compassion, love and benevolence that is in your heart and that is what matters the most. Jesus tells the disciples that they are not to teach others outward observances but to reach into their inner being with teachings that are tailored to their level of receptivity.

Jesus teaches an abbreviated version of the Golden or rather the Silver Rule, which is found in practically every Western and Eastern philosophical and religious tradition, but contrary to the New Testament his version is in the negative form. Moreover, his version puts the focus not on the effects of one's behavior on others, as standard ethical principles do, but only on not doing what one oneself hates to do. Thus, ethical behavior should not be from a sense of obligation or duty but only if it comes from within. The incentive for ethical behavior is to be truthful, not to lie and above all not to be a hypocrite, because the truth about oneself will always come out and be revealed before heaven.

Not only does Jesus not teach original sin, he rejects the entire concept of sin altogether, both the Jewish sense of a social and ritualistic transgression of God's commandments as well as the Greek sense of falling short from ignorance. He insists on the Socratic view of someone who understands himself and is master of himself and is therefore beyond sin. Finally, Jesus concludes with the image of the bridegroom as someone who has attained the ultimate level of inner unity in the bridal chamber as a state of rapture at the highest level of spiritual knowledge. Thus, a disciple who has attained that state of inner unity does not need any external observances at all.

In Saying 27 Jesus gives his stand on fasting as well. Rather than merely externally fasting, abstention from food and work should be taken to a higher level of non-attachment to the outside world and mind control. The goal is to enter an enduring state of permanent sabbath and inner peace. Jesus coins unique and distinctive terms in both parts of this saying that cannot be read literally and absolutely require a metaphorical interpretation. Jesus' statement on fasting is not a polemic against Jewish practices which were not onerous anyway nor is it an injunction to asceticism, and his view on sabbatizing the sabbath is neither a command to scrupulous Sabbath observance nor its opposite, a rejection of Jewish observance.

Both fasting and sabbatizing require self-restraint and abstention, the one from food, the other from everyday mundane activities: "The practice of keeping the sabbath is also a form of fasting, for to keep the Sabbath one refrains from work, just as one refrains from food in order to fast." (Davies 38) Both mean a separation from the world: "Fasting from the world means abstaining from the material things that the world has to offer; keeping the sabbath a sabbath seem s to imply that one should rest in a truly significant way and separate oneself from worldly concerns." (Meyer 93)

But the connection with Isaiah 58 makes clear that both fasting and sabbatizing are to be raised to a much more permanent enduring level. At the most basic level the connection is with the most important Jewish fast, Yom Kippur, which can be called the Great Fast as well as the ultimate of all sabbaths, as Berlin pointed out in 1897 (Berlin Logia 190). Connected with this is the idea that the Great Fast and the Great Sabbath should be beyond time: as Abbott says, "it is consistent with all his doctrine that he should use the words spiritually, meaning that his disciples were not to fast merely on Tuesdays and Thursdays, as the Pharisees did, but...all through worldly time, and that they were to sabbatize, not merely the seventh day, but the whole of the Sabbath of God, that is to say, the whole of spiritual time" (Abbott 8).

Thus, the general tenor of Jesus' teaching here is that his disciples need to do regularly and habitually what ordinary people only do sporadically

and occasionally. In order to experience the kingdom, a disciple needs to lead an abstemious, simple life and needs to not get caught up in the pleasures of the world. In order to see the Father, a disciple needs to transcend the need for purely physical rest and concentrate on attaining inner tranquility and peace, anapausis.

These two requirements are not synonymous at all but rather they are different levels of spiritual attainment. Experiencing the Kingdom is the first step; for that turning away from the physical and social world and cultivating a practice of inner withdrawal is necessary. But seeing the Father is a much higher step and much harder to attain. And that requires a complete inner transformation in which all imperfections are purified away and all ties to the normal cycle of getting, resting and getting again fall away - until all that remains is a completely quiet mind free of desire and attachment in which there is a perpetual Sabbath of repose.

And to round off Jesus' ethical teachings on specific Jewish observances Saying 89 deals with cleanliness. What seems like a simple saying about cleanliness becomes much more complicated once looked at closely. Here Jesus says that a seeker should transcend details of daily observance in favor of the ultimate unity of the divine behind all things. Contrary to Christian insinuations, Jesus does not reject the Jewish laws on cleanliness and he does not advocate being physically dirty.

The superficial allusion of the saying is to a specific dispute between the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai over whether the outside of a cup needs to be washed first in order for the cup to be ritually pure, with Jesus, like Hillel, taking the less burdensome approach.

There is, however, a much deeper and metaphorical meaning. Jesus says that the outside world should not be considered as negative or impure but at the same time it should not be an end in itself. Rather, it should lead to the inner world, the world of spirit, the wine of enlightenment. Neither part of the world is unclean and both are made by divine crerativity, and it takes a higher level of intuition to perceive this. The world is all interconnected and ultimately a seeker should strive for a union of its opposites so that the inside and the outside become One.

Jesus' teachings here are so much more subtle and complex than the coarse dualism of orthodox Christianity which merely opposes matter and spirit and proclaims the body to be sinful and impure. His teaching in Saying 89 is much more akin to Taoist thought than anything in Christianity.

Many of the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas have to do with the theme of transcending the external world and the sheer incompatibility of a spiritual and a worldly path. The most succinct and at the same time multi-layered statement of that theme is in Saying 42. What is most amazing about

this saying is that it consists of only two words - the Coptic shope which means "become" and the Greek parage which means "to pass by, pass on one's way; pass away" - yet allows for four different translations. Yet all four are variations on the idea that seekers must recognize the transient nature of the world and of their own lives and must concentrate on their true immortal inner selves.

At the first, most external level - "become wanderers" - Jesus is telling the disciples not to tie themselves down to a settled abode. Thus disciples are not to be attached to home or family but are to live as wandering mendicants without attachment to the material world. This is quite reminiscent of Buddhist monks who go about with a bowl begging for food or of wandering yogi sadhus who live on very little food and meditate all day. It is interesting that the Greek parage is used in the Septuagint (for example Psalm 129:8) to translate the Hebrew `ober which has the meaning of "wanderer" but from which the word "Hebrew" is also derived. Thus Jesus may also be saying, assuming knowledge among his listeners of the Hebrew roots of the Septuagint term, that being Jewish in its true origin means being a wanderer and not settling down to an institutional, fixed, legalistic religion. He may be exhorting his disciples to be mindful of their nomadic desert origins in which God was worshiped outside and not in temples and shrines.

Atr the second level - "become passers-by" - the idea is to exercise great care not to make this world one's settled abode, as if it were the end of this journey of one's life. One's attitude toward the external world should be to be in it but not of it, developing a "quality of disengagement, of distance, of non-involvement in the world... Withdrawal does not imply that the seekers depart from the world, but that they disengage from it...It is a freedom, fully involved, yet not fully engaged, in the world" (Val 118). By being a passer-by, one is not overly involved in all the goings-on of the world and so one can cultivate a spirit of objectivity:

The theme of being a temporary sojourner on earth, a traveler temporarily staying in an inn or guest-house, a pilgrim in a vestibule waiting to enter the true banquet hall, is repeated many times in many sources: the Hebrew Bible, the Stoic philosophers, Philo, the Jewish-Christian literature, the rabbinic literature and early Syrian Christian writings such as Addai and Ephrem. This emphasis on the ephemerality and transience of the world seems to be particularly pronounced in the late classical period, in the Age of Anxiety as Dodds calls it, and it is quite possible that there is some influence from Indian religion here.

Both Hindu and Buddhist philosophy teaches that the material world is maya, illusion. The yogi teaching on non-attachment is that one

should not define yourself by one's external status, personality or possessions because there is a greater and higher self within that is beyond the external manifestations. Buddhism is even more radical and say your whole notion of self is an illusion, annatta, and it is our attachment to the false idea of ego that leads to all the conflict, strife and unhappiness in the world.

As the Lankavatara Sutra says: "See the world always as a mock show (maya), a corpse animated by a ghost, a machine, a dream, lightning or a cloud...And do not employ any representation, but regard it like a mirage in the air. When one thus discerns dharmas, there is nothing that one recognizes as real. All this is but words and thought-construction. Its distinguishing marks have no existence...The variety of things is like a hair-net, a mock show, a dream, a fairy city. A firebrand or mirage. It is not, it is just a way of talking among men" (Conze Texts 214).

So if life is a dream, as the Spanish playwright Calderon de la Barca entitled his most famous play, and if the world is an illusion, then there is no point in becoming attached to it: you are merely passing through until the illusion stops and you see what is really behind it. Or to take a metaphor from American culture, you have to spend your whole life travelling through Oz to find the all-powerful wizard and to perform onerous tasks for him until you finally awake and become enlightened and realize that he is a fraud.

Artists and thinkers have expressed this feeling since time immemorial. William Wordsworth says, in one of my favorite poems:

> The world is too much with us, late and soon;
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
> Little we see in Nature that is ours;
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
> This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
> The winds that will be howling at all hours,
> And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
> For this, for everything, we are out of tune. (Wordsworth 206)

Another common theme is that life is only a play: we are an actor on a stage and we should not identify overly much with our roles. The Stoic philosopher Epictetus said: "Remember that you are an actor in a play, and the Playwright chooses the manner of it: if he wants it short, it is short; if long, it is long. If he wants you to act a poor man you must act the part with all your powers; and so if your part be a cripple or a magistrate or a plain man. For your business is to act the character that is given you and act it well; the choice of the cast is Another's" (Manual #17, Oates 472). William Shakespeare said in As You Like It Act II Scene 7:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.

Henry David Thoreau wrote similarly in his journal on August 8, 1852: "I only know myself as a human entity, the scene...of thoughts and affections, and am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote from myself as from another. However intense my experience, I am conscious of the presence and criticism of a part of me which, as it were, is not a part of me, but spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it, and that is no more I than it is you. When the play - it may be the tragedy of life - is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, so far as he was concerned" (Journals 148).

We are merely passing through; we are assigned a part and our job is to play our part as well as we can and to immerse ourselves in it. Earth is a school and we proceed through many levels of growth and development; and if you believe the theory of reincarnation, then we come back many times to continue our learning. Each of our assigned roles is important and necessary for us to learn our lessons and to move on to a higher level. But think about an actor on a stage; there is a double level in his or her mind. Actors must act as if they were completely the person they are playing, but at the same time they know they are acting and they must go through prescribed motions. Those are the two levels of life too: you are only passing through and your temporary identity does not encompass your deepest self yet you must act your part fully and well: a paradox but an important one to observe.

At the next level- "become yourselves, by passing away" - the passing is not through physical life but from life over to death. It might even be referring to reincarnation, which we know Jesus teaches in Thomas. If you want a Gnostic interpretation, then you can turn to the writings of Valentinus who wrote: "You are immortal from the beginning, and you are children of the eternal life, and you wish to distribute death among you in order to annihilate and devour it, so that death may die in you and through you. For when you break down the world, but are yourselves not broken down, then you are lords over all creation and mortality" (Fragment 4: Clement of Alexandria, Stromata IV, 89.1).

Thus, when you recognize your true origin in the world of light and you realize that you are originally immortal, then you become yourself and your true self comes into being, and it is only then that you are

able to transcend death. When you then pass away, you will not die like unenlightened people, but you will move on to a higher spiritual level. The world, however, is transient, ephemeral and ruled by the Archons and that world will pass away. However, contrary to orthodox Christianity, the passing away of the world either in Gnosticism or in Thomas is not cataclysmic and apocalyptic; it is simply because it is ephemeral and insubstantial to begin with: this is a big difference! By telling us to "pass by" Jesus is telling us that there is a higher place beyond death. Here his use of the word parage relates to its use in Saying 11, where he tells us that the heaven and that above it will pass away but "the living do not die." By passing by death, or passing away beyond life, you too become "living" and will not die.

And at the fourth level of interpretation - "become yourselves while passing by" - the saying calls on us to reach our highest potential, emotional, mental and spiritual, in this life while we pass through this existence. At the same time, it asks us to remember that the world is only temporary so that we should not get too attached either to it or to our external selves and egos. The Self that we are asked to become is not the ephemeral self that we define by gender, race, nationality, age, class, status, occupation or all the other external markers. No, it is the eternal Self, the Higher Self, the Self that outlasts death and reincarnates into another body and finally is freed from the cycle of birth and death altogether. That is the Self we need to become while we are caught in this transitory passing world.

In summary, in Saying 42 Jesus says that in order to attain true gnosis and enlightenment aspiring seekers must take distance from the external world of society and lead a more solitary and less materialistic existence. They must also cultivate mental non-attachment to the world and must realize that this material world is a temporary place of sojourn and not the final stage. They must understand their egos and personal selves as hindrances to the goal of letting their deeper, truer and higher Self unfold. And they must see themselves as actors in a play playing their role while they concentrate on what is important, cultivating the light within themselves and creating a strong spiritual self that outlasts physical death. All this in a simple two words: such is the penetrating genius of the great master and philosopher Jesus.

Saying 47 emphasizes that seekers cannot pursue a worldly and a spiritual path at the same time and should not begin a spiritual path unless they are committed and inwardly ready. Here Jesus presents us with seven different kinds of people and their differing reactions to and needs for spiritual teachings:

1. two horses: those who are driven by their passions and emotions and who cannot control their mind;

2. two bows: those living in the tension of trying to master opposite and contradictory impulses;

3. two masters: those who are torn between two paths and two parts of their inner self and who are not master of themselves;

4. young wine: those who are tempted by the superficial blandishments of the world but who resist them;

5. young wine in old wineskin: those who are corrupted by the temptations of the world;

6. old wine in young wineskins: young aspiring seekers who are destabilized and destroyed by teachings they are not ready for;

7. old patch on new garment: those who are fairly contented with their state and do not need spiritual teachings.

All these people are in incomplete spiritual states and they all need wisdom in order to progress to a higher level. In logion 47 everything they do is in the negative and Jesus is telling them that it does not work. The opposites and inner contradictions they are caught in are ultimately impossible to sustain and they need to get out of duality into a higher sense of unity.

But all these people are also different and they have different needs. There is no one-size-fits-all wisdom. Jesus is not a missionary trying to convert everyone nor he is an encratite trying to scare people away from the big bad world out there. No, he takes people as they are and gives them the wisdom they need at the stage of development in which he finds them. And he counsels the rest of us to do the same. Don't force anything on anybody; don't thrust your ideas on others if they don't ask; look inside yourself first and become master of yourself before you go persuading other people of your beliefs. And don't start the spiritual path before you are ready. It is better to be fully in the world and live in it well and contentedly than to force yourself into a path that you secretly hate.

As a practical example of his teachings, Jesus responds to the timely issue of whether to pay taxes to the hated Romans in Saying 100. He is in agreement with the revolutionary demand not to pay taxes to the Romans or to the collaborationist Temple, but ultimately the issue is irrelevant and the spiritual path is much more important. For upon close examination, Saying 100 is not what it appears. It seems to be about the payment of Roman taxes but it has a number of incongruities: the gold coin is exaggerated, it talks about God in a different way than all other sayings, it uses Caesar as a proper name instead as a title, and the grammar of the "give" imperative is unusual. The historical setting is the rapacious Roman tax policy in conquered Palestine and the need for Jesus to take a stand on it. But his emphasis is not

on taxes at all and instead on the question of the world to which a spiritual seeker truly belongs. Jesus slyly tells people not to pay their taxes to either the Romans or the Jewish Temple authorities, though he appears to be saying the opposite, but his real point is that it is the spiritual path that is the most important.

That path involves no money at all, not a single coin, but only wholehearted devotion and an inner commitment. And that is why a seeker should more than gladly give his or her coins to the authorities for money does not matter anyway. His main point is to let those who covet money have what belongs to them; but a spiritual seeker has something much higher and more valuable: the Kingdom within and without.

In Saying 36 Jesus teaches that a true spiritual seeker should learn to detach from external needs such as clothing, should practice mindfulness and should prepare to give up the material body altogether. This saying is short but when looked at closely contains three levels of meaning:

1. Jesus is telling the disciples to take no thought for the externalities of their life and to disregard the superficialities of clothing and adornment. This does not necessarily mean monkhood but does mean to focus one's mind on what is important and disregard what is not.

2. At the mental level he is telling them to have as still a mind as possible without thoughts at all (no thought), especially not worry and anxiety. The focus should not be on what is put on the ourttside but on the mental attitude of mindfulness within.

3. And at the spiritual level clothing represents the physical body and the goal is not to put one on at all, to escape the cycle of reincarnation altogether. At the very least one should be able to rest from being in a body in between cycles of materialization.

It is characteristic of Jesus that he ends Saying 36 with a question: what will you put on yourselves? And just as he subverts his own negative command in the first line with a positively charged word, he slyly expects you to answer the question in the opposite way it was framed: with a resounding "nothing". You will put on nothing: no attachment to clothing (perhaps you will draw the line at complete nakedness while living in this society!), no mental disturbances that get in the way of your inner peace, no physical body that interferes with your spiritual self. The logion starts with a Coptic word meaning "there is not". And it ends with an implied answer: Nothing.

In Saying 54 Jesus teaches that voluntary poverty is a prerequisite for finding ultimate spiritual happiness, but by itself it is not sufficient to attain

the highest spiritual levels. In contrast to the Beatitudes in Matthew and Luke, the original teaching of Jesus on poverty was much more nuanced and ambivalent. Only on the surface does it seem that he is praising poverty as the absolute way to get into Heaven. And one can only read it this way if the saying is carelessly or deliberately mistranslated to conform with the much simpler Synoptic dogma.
This is what he is really saying about poverty in relation to classical and Jewish tradition:

1. The Coptic héke which has a connotation of hunger and famine is the equivalent of the Greek ptochos, also used in the New Testament, but this refers to beggars possessing no property and completely socially marginalized. The Graeco-Roman writers express no sympathy and much contempt for this state of poverty.

2. However, it seems that Jesus is proclaiming a Kingdom of destitute beggars rather than Kingdom of the poor. This is not only in contradiction to the prevailing attitudes of the time but also to his own use of the term "poverty" in as a state of spiritual ignorance.

3. Thus, he is really referring to his followers called "the poor" or Ebionites and to a lifestyle of voluntary poverty for spiritual reasons rather than involuntary poverty out of material desperation. This coheres well with later Jewish attitudes upholding poverty for the sake of wisdom as righteousness and with the equation of voluntary poverty with virtue by the Cynics and Stoics.

4. At the same time, Jesus expresses a strong reluctance to make poverty by itself a sign of spiritual attainment. He indicates his ambivalence in three ways: by making it a makarism (involving the Greek word makarios or "happy") which are usually used in a paradoxical and ironic way; by phrasing his makarism as "among the happy" which undercuts the equation of poverty with happiness; and by granting the poor only the Kingdom of the heavens, a lower and more ephemeral level below the Kingdom of the Father.

On the same subject Saying 63 says that seekers should concentrate on spiritual rather than physical wealth and at a high enough state of inner riches they may escape the cycle of life and death altogether. This saying too can be read at three different levels, depending on the perspicacity of the hearer or reader. It can be a satire on the rich and an outlet for the poor to laugh at the follies of their betters. Yes, the rich have all the wealth and power in the world but they do not have even have common sense and they are so greedy they waste their time pursuing castles in the sky.

It can be an admonition not to concentrate on material wealth. Time is short, death comes soon and one should not put off spiritual growth for while one is busy accumulating wealth in one's storehouses one may have a heart attack and die. So don't put off attending that yoga or meditation class you were going to do but have never gotten around to do. Life may creep on you and then you may never do it.

The deepest meaning is that spiritual wealth will free you from the burdens of this material life and allow you to reach a state of contentment and repose where you need nothing and you need no longer to suffer and labor. You may be like the rich man who has everything he needs and whose storehouses are full of fruit.

And ultimately you will leave the entire repetitive cycle of reincarnation in the material plane behind forever and never have to endure any more Hamlet's "slings and arrows" and the "sea of troubles" that "this mortal coil" and this "flesh is heir to."

Saying 64 makes a strong statement that a seeker needs to be willing to stop all worldly pursuits at a moment's notice in order to enter the Kingdom yet the Kingdom is closed to those involved in business. This could be considered a midrash on the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition yet also a reinterpretation of it. In Deuteronomy the excuses of Saying 64 disqualify people from the obligation of going to war for secular but not religious reasons: but Jesus tacitly equates the need to attain gnosis and the Kingdom with holy war and correspondingly makes no exception to exempt someone. In a similar Jewish story of Rabban Johanan the emphasis is on repentance before death strikes: but Jesus strips away the eschatological connection and offers gnosis at any time to anyone who is willing to take the consequences. In the story of Bar Ma'yon an act of charity outweighs observance of the law but without charity punctilious observance of the law is an absolute requirement: but Jesus urges a seeker to leave both behind if they want to attain righteousness and the Kingdom.

From a Jewish point of view, Jesus' teaching is radical indeed. This is what he asks of seekers in Saying 64:

1. The call to gnosis and the Kingdom can come unexpectedly and at any time. A wise person will heed it when it comes.

2. This call is issued to every single person individually; notice how the servant repeats his invitation to every person. As Lindemann points out: "Every single person is being personally invited to the meal and thus directly confronted with the decision whether he will accept this invitation

or not...The invitation to gnosis comes entirely unexpectedly and it demands an immediate decision for this invitation and thus against the world" (Lindemann "Gleichnis" 230).

3. Yet a sacrifice is demanded in order to heed the invitation: the obligation to quit all commercial and business activities. Even if one is in the middle of pressing business, the call to spiritual development should take priority.

4. The only reason to decline the invitation is if one is already on a spiritual path at an even higher level, such as the man preparing a wedding feast.

5. Even those at the lowest spiritual level are higher than those pursuing business, especially those who own property and who are absentee landlords exploiting others.

6. There are clear gradations of readiness for the Kingdom as follows, from lowest to highest:

a. Person #2, the buyer of the house - an arrogant selfish person who repeatedly refuses all attempts to interest him in spiritual growth;

b. Person #4, the buyer of the village - also a selfish person but at least aware of his deficiency

c. Person #1, the customer of the merchants - a person without overriding moral failings is aware of his spiritual wealth and is trying to increase it; and

d. Person #3, the friend of the groom - a person at a very high state of spiritual attainment, able to create a wedding of opposites, who is the only person here who does not need the dinner of gnosis.

The path is clear: give up attachments to worldly business and develop yourself to a higher spiritual state.

Saying 78 says that the pursuit of wealth and power leads to the oppression of others but the powerful are inwardly weaker than they seem and the ultimate liberation is to transcend the physical world that they rule altogether. Jesus does it again: he gives you a short saying which is actually extraordinarily complex and can be read at three different levels. Arrange this saying by any pattern you wish: every sentence ties together with every other sentence and supports its meaning. What seems at first reading like a series of contradictions resolves into an organic unity, a consistent philosophical outlook and guide to spiritual attainment.

Saying 45 is a summary of the internal emphasis of Jesus' teachings, that the inner state of the heart and the mind is much more important than the actual external observance. The gist of the saying is that only a properly cultivated and nurtured heart will produce spiritual sustenance and ethical behavior and that must ultimately be grounded in something greater than oneself. Looked at superficially, the saying seems to consist of a number of separate pieces, but is very much of one integral unit and all three strophes are necessary to make Jesus' point. Indeed, the final strophe is vital to explain what the first strophe meant. The habitual tense creates a sense of inevitability about causes and consequences: inner misery will habitually and repeatedly lead to the creation of outer misery. And thus we have a powerful statement of an existential human condition and a triumphal statement of the solution.

Jesus first introduces two kinds of people who cannot attain spiritual truth: a person who seems spiritual on the outside and says the right things but only seeks external knowledge and lacks true inner spirituality, like a plant which seems useful but is deceptive and ultimately disappoints; and a person who has no spiritual aspiration and does not even try, like an invasive and useless plant.

The real treasure is within oneself and everything one says and does is but a projection of that. If there is goodness inside, then the "fruit" of the person will be good. However, if people are lacking goodness, that does not mean they are existentially evil or bad. They have merely allowed their inner treasure to deteriorate so that it has become corrupt and thus they are consumed with inner pain and misery which they then project outward in their speech and action.

Yet none of this misery is necessary and the solution is to understand and dip into the inexhaustible abundance of the great Heart of the universe. Thus ultimately one cannot just harvest one's own grapes from one's own heart or one's figs only form oneself: one has to connect and unite with the source of all spiritual energy all around one.

You notice how much more subtle and psychological the meaning becomes when we get away from those words "bad, evil, wicked, sinful" etc. Jesus is never judgmental and condemnatory, in great contrast to the falsified way he is portrayed by the compilers of the New Testament, and he always has compassion for the ignorant state of human beings. Jesus does not think dualistically and he always understands the ambivalent and mixed nature of human desires and aspirations. The "bad" person in this saying is not inherently bad; he or she simply needs more knowledge and a deeper spiritual practice. And that is why the Gospel of Thomas exists: to help us attain that

knowledge so we can grow out of our state of ignorance and misery into a state of contentment, bliss and serenity.

Chapter 8:
The Spiritual Teachings of Jesus

And now we come to the culmination of Jesus' teachings: his spiritual teachings. Many of the themes here are also touched upon in other sayings, but these sayings make the strongest statements of his spiritual philosophy. His basic emphasis is on the creation of an inner immortal spiritual energy, which Jesus says is not a given but has to be cultivated by the individual seeker. By doing so one enters into a realm of timelessness which enables one to transcend the cycle of reincarnation. This transcendence brings one into the true Paradise that is metaphorically described in the Jewish Bible. And one of the most improtant prequisites for being in this state of Paradise is to be a strict vegetarian, neither killing nor eating any animals. By escaping the eternal cycle of suffering one can finally attain a true state of permanent repose, akin to the Buddhist nirvana.

Let us take each element of this philosophy in turn. We have seen in other sayings that Jesus rejects apocalyptism; here in Saying 51 he teaches that spiritual seekers should focus on attaining inner peace in every moment of the day rather than on the afterlife or the end of the world. The disciples are essentially asking whether Jesus agrees with any of the ideas from other religions about the afterlife and the apocalypse. They are asking whether he agrees with the ideas about the end of the world of the Jewish mystical and apocalyptic literature, the Hermetic and the Gnostic writings, the idea of the repose of the dead from Greek tradition, and the idea of the last judgment from Persian influence. And they want to know the exact day that all this will happen.

Jesus rejects all of these ideas and doesn't even deign to deny the apocalyptic idea of a new world. His teaching is simple: don't even bother thinking about the future but focus on the present, on your inner peace and tranquility. This state is attained through awareness that it exists and the desire to experience it. No other mystical experience is necessary.

Jesus is thus telling us that we do not need to die in order to experience a higher state of being. The major religions are so obsessed with the afterlife and what we need to do in order to have a better one that they ignore this present life. Jesus is telling us that you have work to do right now, every moment of your life, and you do not need to be misled by sapeculative fantasies of the future that may be mostly imaginative. Ironically, the day that the disciples ask about happens to be every day.

In Saying 113 he describes this everyday reality more closely; the gist is that the Kingdom is a deep present reality beyond time and space and in the very core of being. Saying 113 can also be joined to the other sayings in that describe the Kingdom in non-spatial, non-temporal terms. Here he rejects any kind of eschatological character to the Kingdom and emphasizes that it is not to be found either in any mental category or in a spatial location or in any sequence of time. He compliments the disciples for understanding the non-eternal character but he cautions them not to have any attachments to any particular day on which they will gain final enlightenment. And finally he emphasizes that spirituality is not to be sought in some nebulous nether sphere but right here within life on this physical earth. These are all good solid teachings which he reiterates from different angles in other sayings.

Moreover, he is also telling you that this planet Earth is deeply sacred, that God is not to be searched for in the sky, that you should find your happiness right here in woods and rivers and rocks and hills. Think about the devastating effects that the idea of God being separate from nature has had: if God is in heaven, then nature is not sacred and we can do to nature whatever we like as long as we sit in a tower-like structure on Sunday and look up at God in the sky. If people had been following Jesus' true teachings, that dichotomy would never have taken place.

The Kingdom is thus found right behind and around the everyday mundane world, as Saying 3 also states. And insight is gained precisely by understanding the paradox of the sacred within the mundane, the Kingdom that is spread all over Earth.

Yet people do not see this simple fact and continue to look for their salvation in the most unlikely places. Throughout history people have been obsessed with looking for God in the sky and in most polytheistic pantheons the sky God is the supreme deity. People continue to live in the illusion that this God or gods will take a personal interest in their lives and will come down to take care of them, and so continue to look up day after day, waiting, watching. In the meantime they forget all about the true Kingdom all around them: it does not need to come for it is already here.

Saying 18, though short, gives a complicated view of the paradoxical nature of time: it is absolute, cyclical as well as simultaneous. A seeker must understand this in order to attain timelessness and defeat death. Once again, Jesus shows his mastery of language: in a few brief lines he encapsulates an entire spiritual cosomology.

The key to his answer is the cryptic and multi-layered phrase: "for in the place there which is the beginning there the end will be". Here he links time and space and is alluding to three paradoxical levels of time:

Absolute time: God's time; the space-time continuum behind all things

Cyclical time: birth, death and reincarnation; the mythical and cosmic time of all societies; the return to ther Biblical Paradise

Simultaneous time: the present both does and does not exist; time which is always in the Now as it is in "primitive" societies

Only when a seeker learns to live in the time less present can he attain happinesss and get out of the never-ending cycle of relative time back into divine absolute time. Jesus clearly has studied the Greek philosophers and is familiar with their cosmological speculations. And this is his answer to the age-old conundrum of the true nature of the animating principle behind the universe. In his utterances he is no less concise and pithy than Heraclitus and Empedocles. But his aim is different than the Greek philosophers, being ultimate spiritual enlightenment and immortality rather than mere knowledge. Saying 18 is a worthy statement of that philosophy.

Saying 84 also makes sense only with reference to reincarnation. The gist here is that experiencing one's Higher Self is a joyous experience, but experiencing one's past lives may be an upsetting and traumatic one. Jesus presents a very complicated teaching that represents a synthesis between the ideas of Plato and the beliefs in a personal double from Jewish, Greek and Gnostic thought, but recast to focus on his teachings of reincarnation. His terms align with those of Saying 83 but with a different focus: not so cosmological and more personal. He teaches a four-fold division of the human being in both sayings, as follows:

1. One's physical appearance and nature: the images
2. One's Higher Self, the observing mind behind the perceiving mind: your likeness
3. One's spiritual self or soul that reincarnates from one life to the next, that is consequently immortal yet invisible: your images
4. The divine origin and nature of that soul: his image.

Most people are of course caught only in the first level, the level of images and reflections, the artificial light of Plato's cave. Some people advance to see their "likeness" and they rejoice.

Saying 19 continues in the same vein: In order to attain a final state of repose and immortality, seekers need to experience a higher state in between reincarnations and they need to connect with the great force of life,

fertility and immortality behind all phenomena. I am always amazed how many ideas from how many sources Jesus synthesizes into such short pithy phrases. Here he is alluding to the story of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil from Genesis, pulling in metaphors about the righteous being like trees of life from the Jewish apocrypha, incorporating a long mythological tradition of several kinds of metaphorical trees that ultimately become One Cosmic tree, and drawing on Jewish and Hermetic speculation about the need to return to the original undivided pre-Adamic state of Paradise. And he does all this by coining an entirely new phrase with clear numerological references - "the five trees of Paradise" - that brings all these ideas together and continues to be quoted by Gnostic and Manichaean groups for centuries afterwards. Remarkable!

The greatest happiness is thus found in between reincarnations on the spiritual plane where people perceive the true nature of being and exist once again in their original, pre-Adamic, perfect absolute human forms which are undivided, androgynous and luminous, before having to divide and separate again and climb down into this bifurcated earthly existence. Only someone who successfully masters the spiritual realm at a lower level (the stones) will be able to attain spiritual immortality and generate enough spiritual energy in order to reincarnate.

The goal of the whole cycle of reincarnations is to find final repose in the original Paradise at the center of the great cosmogonical tree which links the entire cosmos and embodies the creative power of the Great Goddess, unites the masculine and the feminine in a creative tension, confers immortality, offers a visionary ascent to heavenly realms, contains all knowledge, contains timelessness beyond time and incorporates all cycles of history. Here the five physical senses are transmuted into higher mental and spiritual senses and ultimately become one-pointed into the deepest core of pure consciousness, just as the five symbolic aspects of the tree are transmuted into the One Tree of the Cosmos.

Saying 85 continues the theme of Paradise. Here, in order to attain immortality, seekers need to reunite with their original spiritual archetype and to return to the original undivided state of humans symbolized by Adam. Jesus uses the Greek philosophical concept of dynamis that meant an active potentiality inherent to the universe and united it with the Jewish teachings on the pre-existent Adamic figure before he incarnated on earth. He then uses references to God's great power in the Hebrew Bible and the Samaritan literature to coin an entirely new term, "the great power" to describe the enormous God-like potential inherent in that undivided, unitary Adamic state that encapsulates the quintessence of being human.

But here on earth humans in general are divided: their physical selves are separate from their spiritual selves, their entire being on earth is separate from the great human archetype underlying them, and to compound the lack of integration they are divided into two sexes. To achieve immortality, a spiritual seeker needs to undo the three separations that plague humankind. The seekers need to do three things: recover the original androgynous state of the first Adam before s/he was divided into two genders; reunite the physical and spiritual part of themselves, the "great wealth" lying slumbering within. All of Jesus' teachings are designed to do just this, but it takes sustained daily practice to attain such a reintegration of the body, heart, mind, soul and spirit; and ultimately reunite themselves with the great celestial human archetype, the Absolute Form of the Primal Man, the "great power" from which the many ephemeral and transient human manifestations on earth are made: this will happen only after death, but only when a seeker has reached a high enough spiritual state by attaining the other goals within this existence.

Surpassing Adam, however, is only the first step toward a final transcendence of death, for it enables seekers to awake from their deep sleep and to reconnect with their fundamental spiritual nature: they will not taste the death of the physical body but they have far to go before they attain a permanent immortal state.

As Davies aptly summarizes it: "Adam is contrasted with you, the implied audience of these sayings. You are superior to Adam despite his creation by God, the source of enormous power and wealth. You will not die even though Adam did, and you are therefore of a different nature than Adam. If you are constituted as the image of God, as saying 84 hints, then you pre-existed Adam, and like God's immortal Image you will live forever" (Davies 108).

And then you will reverse the process of degeneration that began with the Fall from Paradise, for "in the Old Testament people were thought capable of living forever and it was their own fault if they did not" even though "Enoch and Elijah are the only examples of those perfect enough to never taste death" (Novak 136). As Psalm 22:28-29 says: "For dominion belongs to the Lord...before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and he who cannot keep himself alive." It is Jesus' aim to make you one of those who can keep themselves alive.

Saying 60 is a very powerful statement of the necessity of vegetarianism for true spiritual immortality. In order to reach true repose, seekers must stop their participation in the chain of suffering and abuse

by becoming vegetarian and ultimately transcending the body's need to eat food at all. This is a difficult but critical saying with many levels of historical allusion and symbolic meaning underlying its deceptively simple and disarming dialogue. Here Jesus uses the example of the Samaritans, who are rejected and shunned by Jews, to make the point that even they do not go far enough in rejecting Jewish animal sacrifices. Both Jesus and the disciples use innocent, non-judgmental questions and observations to bring out obvious aspects of human treatment of animals that people generally like to gloss over. In particular, they point out that a living being has to be a corpse for people to eat it, for otherwise they will not.

There is a well-attested history of vegetarianism in the early Christian tradition, including Jesus himself, John the Baptist, James, the Jewish Christians (Ebionites etc.), and it was widespread throughout the ancient world. Vegetarianism is a logical outcome of Jewish kosher laws as well as being biologically natural and a realization of the ideal of peace and non-violence of the prophets who constantly protested against animal sacrifices.

The strong commitment of Jesus and his followers to vegetarianism has been consistently ignored in the vast literature on early Christianity and by practically all Christian priests, ministers, pastors and preachers (except for Seventh Day Adventists) and I am glad to see that Keith Akers' fairly recent book The Lost Religion of Jesus sets the record straight. It is clear from reading any book or article on the Jewish Christians that they were committed vegetarians and the more one looks the more widespread vegetarianism appears among thoughtful people in the ancient world. Jesus' teacher John the Baptist, by all accounts, was vegetarian and though the Gospels mention him eating locusts, the Greek word for tree fruits, akrodua, is very close to the word for locusts, akrides, "suggesting the possibility of an accidental or malicious scribal error." In addition, both the Greek church tradition and the Slavonic Josephus specifically says he did not eat any animal food.[26]

All the sources agree that Jesus' successor, his brother James, and the Jewish followers of Jesus, the Jewish Christians, were strict vegetarians. The Christian theologian Epiphanius reports that the Ebionites rejected bloody sacrifices and believed that their abolition and the prohibition of the eating of meat were part of Jesus' mission.[27] In the Ebionite gospel Jesus says, "I have come to abolish sacrifices and if you do not stop sacrificing the wrath will not cease from you." A few passages down Epiphanius reiterates that Jesus was vegetarian by the fact that he refuses to eat meat for Passover, even though Epiphanius of course says this statement was falsely added by the Ebionites.

Interestingly enough the real target of Jesus in the cleansing of the Temple, as John 2:14-15 makes clear, was not the money-changers per se but the animal dealers and butchers who sold animals to be offered as sacrifices!

Jesus makes the simple observation that if one kills an animal and eats it, one too will become a corpse and be eaten: the law of karma. Anyone who seeks immortality and seeks to cultivate and sustain a permanent soul in repose must free himself from the endless vicious cycle of living matter becoming food for other matter. And in order to do that one must stop feeding on life-imbued matter oneself. At the metaphorical level eating living things does not just apply to physical food but emotional, economic and psychological exploitation. And it could even be said to be a fundamental principle in our material world, as the Gnostics pointed out.

The highest level is to live entirely on light, as Saying 11 advocates. Seekers need to ascend to the very highest level of the heavenly light realm in order to enter a realm of permanence and inner unity where they can live directly on light, yet there is a struggle to keep the mind from sliding back into artificial duality. The saying, which seems at first reading to be a disjointed collection of separate thoughts, turns out to have a unifying theme: what a spiritual seeker must do to attain a sense of inner unity and how s/he must be watchful to keep from backsliding into an artificial sense of polarity.

The saying describes the experience of mystical ascent through a series of heavens, an image drawn from Greek astronomy and Jewish mystical thought, and says that a seeker needs to ascend to the very highest level to escape the realm of transitoriness and death and to enter into the realm of the permanent and the living. At that point the seeker will be able to take the next step beyond vegetarianism and live directly on light without having to eat at all and without having to partake of the eternal cycle of eat and be eaten. He will understand how his own mind created the sense of duality that kept him from reaching the highest levels and how that oneness was there all alone. He needs to be ever alert that he does not slip back into a less enlightened state of duality and even when she does so temporarily she needs to know how to regain inner unity.

There is no indication in Saying 11 that this struggle refers to an apocalyptic or eschatological state. As Buckley says, "Jesus tells his hearers... they can turn dead matter into live substance. This indicates nothing less than a transformation from death to life here on the earthly level. Jesus is not speaking of events to come in an eschatological future; he stresses the disciples' capacity in the present" (Buckley "114" 251).

Jesus is always very practical and down-to-earth, even though he is speaking of mystical ideas. Everything he teaches can and should be

practiced right now, in the present: not after death or after the end of time. Nor does he recommend any ascetic practices or self-denying rituals. It is pure internal mental and spiritual work that is required. The question is: what do you do to attain a state of unity? He asks it twice in a slightly different way because it is a fundamental goal of a spiritual seeker. And all of is the answer.

In several sayings Jesus outlines the process necessary to create an immortal soul that is capable of reincarnating. Saying 111 says that though the external world is caught in a repetitious cycle of the destruction of ages, a seeker who connects with the inexhaustible source of energy both outside and within will attain true immortality. Once again, what seems like apocalypse really isn't, nor what seems like Christology. Saying 111, translated correctly, isn't actually that complicated in content and ties in well with Jesus' teaching throughout. The heavens and earth roll back because they are on a continuing cycle of destruction and creation, thus illustrating the ephemeral nature of the world.

But there is an inexhaustible source of eternal life in the universe right around us, and one who draws from that can gain true immortality. And by feeding on what is alive and not what is dead, that is plant life rather than animal flesh, one helps bring about the return of a permanent state of Paradise. Jesus then comments on his own commentary by drawing a parallel between the internal and the external: the same energy that is outside is also inside, and it is that source of energy that will ultimately prove superior to the vicissitudes of the world.

Saying 59 continues the theme by saying that a seeker cannot attain true immortality without a focused spiritual practice during life, and assuming that death alone will open one's eyes to the spiritual realm is an illusion. It is amazing what we can learn from Saying 59 once we shed our preconceived notions of what it should say and simply read the original text. It turns out to be an extended syllogism with three premises and a conclusion, as well as a negative conclusion.

A spiritual seeker must learn to pay attention to the existence of the spiritual realm but also to "gaze behind" it, to look beneath the surface and superficial impressions into its deeper levels. Once that becomes habit, the person can attain immortality and escape the cycle of reincarnation. But death by itself cannot give seekers any spiritual insight that they have not attained while in life. Anyone who thinks death will open up spiritual worlds to them will truly die, and only those who have already attained such insight while alive will not die at a fundamental level.

And only those who give up their attachment to spiritual visions, mystical ascents and embodied saviors will attain true spiritual insight.

Those who remain fixated on some discernible external experience, whether mystical or eschatological, will eventually lose any capacity for true spiritual insight.

If you haven't realized yet that Jesus wasn't a Christian, maybe this saying will convince you. It is rather amazing that the meaning of his words is distorted into a Christian framework, but to me he seems quite explicit: if you die and seek to see the Living One embodied in a person, you will not be able to see at all. Let that be a warning against any and all Savior religions.

Saying 40 says that the only way to attain immortality is to anchor oneself firmly in the spiritual reality of the Father and to strengthen one's soul so that it survives death. Though Jesus uses Biblical imagery, he significantly changes the focus. He does not believe in mass salvation of an entire people and he does not believe a whole nation can be chosen. The spiritual vine in the vineyard of the Father can only be an individual soul, and each individual must do their own work in order to attain salvation. Not following the given rules of your society or even the ethical commandments attributed to God is not what denies you spiritual immortality, as Judaism teaches. Rather, it is when you do not do the work of cultivating your inner self and intensifying your spiritual energy, and that is your choice and yours only. And once you get attached to the external world and forget about the inner one, you are inexorably on the path to the death of your soul and to the loss of immortality.

In Saying 70 the theme is that the conscious intensification and self-generation of the spiritual energy within oneself is necessary for ultimate immortality and otherwise the soul will not be able to resist entropy and thus death. Jesus makes a contrast between inward richness which leads to immortality and inward emptiness which leads to death. He sets up three gradations of people based on whether they develop their inner potential:

1. people who do not have any inwardness at all (line 4): those people will suffer permanent death of their spiritual being and will not even reincarnate.

2. people who have inwardness but do not develop it in any way: those people will not reach the highest level and may still not be saved from death but continue to have chances to develop themselves once they realize they need to;

3. people who "give birth to" their inward self: these people, just as the verb says, will transcend death and gain eternal life for themselves.

I know that this vocabulary of "eternal life" gets us perilously close to dogmatic Christian vocabulary, but in Thomas that eternal life has nothing

to do with belief in Jesus as the Savior. It is all a result of the individual's own effort and practice, as everything Jesus teaches throughout Thomas is.

In Saying 109 finding the kingdom within, even after several lifetimes, results in a surplus of inner energy which one can then give to others. This saying is another example of the creative genius of Jesus who takes stories from the classical and Jewish traditions which have real-life applications and gives them unexpected, paradoxical and puzzling twists that elucidate a deeper truth. Here he takes a popular tale of hidden treasure, which corresponds to everyday reality in turbulent, insecure and war-ridden first-century Palestine, and puts it on a spiritual rather than literal level.

Saying 109 has elements parallel to all these stories but cannot ultimately be considered a version of any of them. Some of these parallels are: the metaphorical equation of treasure with wisdom (the Jewish Wisdom tradition); the idea that one should pay attention to what one already has; the teaching that true treasure cannot be sought for directly but comes as a side effect of the way one lives one's life, especially the moral quality of it (the world folk tradition and Midrash Leviticus Rabbah); the emphasis on the need for labor to realize one's potential once one has discovered it (Aesop's fable, Philo and Midrash Rabbah Song of Songs); and the idea that labor should finally produce ease or rest (Horace and Porphyry).

But he adds several twists to the basic story. Saying 109 is in the form of a parable, like many of the rabbinic stories, but in it the hidden treasure is compared with the spiritual Kingdom. The man has a hidden treasure but contrary to all the other stories he knows full well of its existence. He is simply ignorant of its true nature and value. The "son" to whom he leaves this treasure is not a biological son nor is the leaving a standard inheritance; rather, the son represents his next existence in the cycle of reincarnation, another twist that is not found in any of Jesus' sources, if sources they are.

Once we translate Saying 109 correctly and read it at the proper metaphorical level rather than literally, it turns out to be one of the most powerful of all of Jesus' parables.in the first lifetime the person is simply ignorant; in the second he is greedy and materialistic as well as ignorant; but in the third he finally learns to cultivate his inner spiritual energy to the point at which he has a surplus that he can give to others. Thus in order to learn what his inner treasure truly is he needs to sink to the bottom and almost destroy it in order to appreciate its true value.

In Saying 95 Jesus teaches that those who have attained inner spiritual wealth should give of themselves freely and unconditionally to others lacking in spirituality. Once this saying is translated correctly, we see that it is much more interesting and multi-layered than at first appears. At the external social level Jesus is taking a strong stand against the charging

of interest by anyone to anyone else. He is thus returning to an ancient principle of fair and equal reciprocity and mutual aid practiced by all tribal peoples, the ancient Egyptians, the pre-Islamic Arabic tribes and the ancient Hebrews. But this principle came under severe attack in the increasing commercialization of the Middle East, being entirely abandoned in Mesopotamia and being ever more qualified and limited by Jewish religious authorities. Jesus' position takes the prohibition even beyond its application to countrymen and extends it to strangers as well.

At the metaphorical level "monies" becomes a symbol of spiritual rather than material wealth and Jesus is telling the disciples to give freely of their inner wealth without charging for it financially or indebting the receiver in any way. It is precisely to those who have nothing to give that such inner wealth should be given, for they need it the most.

We can now see the genius of even a short saying like Saying 95. In a few spare, compressed words Jesus manages to make both a social and political commentary at the surface level while also giving spiritual guidance at the deepest metaphorical level. And he is able to make the same word ("interest") bear both a negative connotation at a literal level while giving it a positive connotation at the metaphorical level. Only a master is capable of such a feat.

The ultimate culmination of Jesus' spiritual teachings is his examination of the experience of Oneness and the final state of repose. Saying 67 is cryptic and compressed, but understood correctly it makes the statement that an experience of mystical Oneness is more important than intellectual knowledge about God and the universe and without it seekers are in a state of emptiness and deficiency. To understand the many layers of this saying, it is necessary to read all three versions of line 3 at once.

Jesus assumes the tripartite view of the nature of the universe of the Greek philosophers, which is taken over by Christian and Gnostic writers, but he adds as the highest level a mystical experience of Oneness. Thus we have, from high to low:

	Greek	Thomas,	Christian	Gnostic	
				oua =	(One, mystical experience of Oneness)
hen	= pma térf	= theos			(the One, the whole place, God)
holon	= ptérf	= ta panta			(the whole, the All)
pan	= kata meros	= panta			(the total, all parts, everywhere)

The mystical experience of Oneness is more important than any other kind of knowledge about the universe. You may have a deep intellectual

understanding about the balance of the universe between the whole and the parts but you cannot speak with true knowledge about the Oneness behind it all until you have experienced it yourself. And that applies to what religions call God as well: you cannot know God intellectually but only experientially.

There are two further steps before seekers can have this deep experience of Oneness. They need to accept their existential aloneness and truly experience Oneness with themselves. And they need to overcome their driving needs, wants and desires that overpower them and lead them to a sense of inner poverty and deprivation. As long as you have wants, you have lacks, and as long as you have lacks, you will be deprived of the experience of Oneness.

What an incredible genius to be able to say all this in three short lines with a total of nine words! How extraordinary to make so few words convey so many different ideas! Here is your choice: poverty, emptiness, deprivation, division, separation - or Oneness with yourself, knowledge of the All, inner fullness due to the overcoming of desire, and ultimate union with the hidden Oneness behind the universe.

Saying 32 is another important statement of the theme of spiritual aspiration. Here the steady efforts of many seekers will ultimately lead to a permanently more harmonious and spiritually elevated world that realizes the highest potential of all humans. In this saying Jesus constructs an indelible image possibly originally based on the conjunction of "mountain" and "city" in Ezekiel 20:40 and then combined with the powerful associations behind the Greek polis and the symbolic cosmic mountain. He compresses this heritage of ideas into a utopian vision and asserts his confidence that his highest vision of humanity will ultimately prevail and encompass all humankind: it is impossible for it to fall.

This vision of the city upon a mountain has been an inspiration throughout the ages. But utopian visions often founder on the sheer imperfectability of humans and on the hidden agendas of their creators. Plato's Republic was essentially a totalitarian dictatorship where an absolute ruling class had all the rights. The Greek polis was constantly undermined by aristocratic attempts to overthrow it and disintegrated through petty feuding and inability to unite. The Christian City of God, in Augustine's term, became a realized version of Plato's dictatorship but rarely by the wise. The Puritans are today known less for their utopian vision than for their religious intolerance, viciousness toward native Americans and dour joylessness. And underneath John Kennedy's rhetoric was an expansionist American imperialism which thought nothing of assassinating foreign leaders and invading small countries to pursue its aim of global domination.

Jesus' polis on a mountain is not intended to be any of the above. His focus is on the spiritual development of the individual, not on the large-scale transformation of masses of people. A spiritual seeker may aim to build a city of like-minded seekers and thus transform society. But if one succeeds in building only one's internal spiritual house rather than a whole city, one has still created something that will not fall and will be evident to others, possibly even inspiring them to do the same. Grand social utopia may never arrive and it may even be entirely suspect, but an inner utopia is clearly within reach.

In Saying 86 Jesus says that spiritual seekers need to learn to develop the archetypal highest human potential that they are heir to (the son of the Man) so that they can transcend their essential homelessness in the physical realm. "The son of the Man" is a unique coinage by Jesus which before him did not exist in Aramaic and was unusual in Hebrew. Jesus translated the Hebrew term into Aramaic and gave it a complex set of meanings that was drawn from the Hebrew usage both in the Hebrew Bible and in Jewish apocalyptic writings; some of these meanings persisted for centuries in the Aramaic rabbinic literature.

Indeed, all the meanings implied by the term "son of the Man" are contained within its use in Saying 86: as a self-designation, as a reference to a community of people, as a reference to humans as a whole and as a symbol of the soul lost in the material world. But the most important way that Jesus defines "son of the Man" is to refer to spiritual seekers who have understood that they are not merely material bodies existing on this earth. Rather, they originate from a perfect and absolute archetype, both in a deeply Platonic sense and in the sense of
the Jewish and general Middle Eastern teaching of the original Primal Man, and that it is their goal to reunite with that archetype and attain a higher state of perfection.

The Primal Man embodies all the potential and ideal aspiration of humans and it is that potential which the "son of the Man" is striving to fulfill. In so doing, he is certainly much above the sly, materialistic foxes who live below the earth, but he may even rise above the spiritual level of the birds of the air. And then he will return to his true home which is neither in a hole or in a nest but in the higher levels of consciousness where one can truly bend one's head in awe and attain true rest.

Saying 2, a very important saying, looks closely at the nature of seeking and finding and shows what happens when a seeker actually does find. It outlines a step-by-step process that a spiritual seeker needs to follow to get to the final goal and it sums up all the major themes of the whole document. Jesus does not go into detail into each of these five steps. But it is

startling to find so many equivalents in both the earlier classical and Jewish literature as well as the contemporary and later Gnostic literature.

Step 1: Seek and find.

We have already seen in all the other sayings what the seeker hopes to find: the original light from which we derived, the Kingdom that is right in front of us and inside ourselves, the experience of unity rather than duality, the experience of pure consciousness of the present moment beyond labels and categories. And we have already also seen that the seeker needs to have a burning desire, a hunger and a thirst, that will not stop until it is filled and quenched, and that he or she needs to be willing to work and put in effort to achieve the goal.

Step 2: Find and be disturbed.

We must assume here that Jesus meant an inner rather than an outer state of disturbance. Mystics throughout the world have spoken of the joy, bliss and contentment that can arise from profound insight and an experience of true union between self and world. But they have also spoken of the "dark night of the soul" and the equally profound shattering of the self and even depression that can occur: "Illumination...is followed - or sometimes intermittently accompanied - by the most terrible of all the experiences of the Mystic Way: the final and complete purification of the Self, which is called by some contemplatives the `mystic pain' or `mystic death', by others the Purification of the Spirit or Dark Night of the Soul. The consciousness which had, in Illumination, sunned itself in the sense of the Divine Presence, now suffers under an equally intense sense of the Divine Absence... Now the purifying process is extended to the very centre of I-hood, the will. The human instinct for personal happiness must be killed. This is the `spiritual crucifixion' so often described by the mystics: the great desolation in which the soul seems abandoned by the Divine. The Self now surrenders itself, its individuality, and its will, completely."[28]

Why these dangers in a transformative mystical experience? Our minds have imposed a certain order on the world around us, taught to us by our society and reinforced continually by our language and our culture. In our culture we make certain assumptions: we conceive time as linear and chronological, material things as having absolute existence, the world outside as being separate from the world inside, our consciousness being limited to

our brains, and the process of perception as being unerring in reproducing reality.

But what if all if those assumptions prove to be wrong? Wouldn't that be a shock to us? That is exactly what happens in an experience of mystical unity, and that sense of a very different world is reinforced by every new experience of mystical unity that we have. A person who has these experiences begins to question everything that he hitherto took for granted and slowly begins to adopt a completely new world view. But that person can also have his complete sense of reality shattered by the experience and not be able to cope with it. That is why most cultures and religions are more afraid of the mystical experience as a threat to their control than of practically anything else and go to all lengths to suppress it.

Step 3: Be disturbed and be amazed.

Once you have finally gone beyond the difficult stage of inner shock and disturbance at the new insights and views of the world that have penetrated your consciousness, then you are ready for the long process that leads to the goal of final union, the sense of wonder and amazement at the new world that opens up, the "joyful consciousness of the Transcendent Order."[29] This sense of wonder is described in Greek philosophy as the hallmark of the philosopher that will eventually take him or her to wisdom: Plato said "philosophy begins in wonder" and Aristotle saw the philosophical spirit in a sense of amazement at why things are the way they are.

There is an extraordinary description of such an experience in the Hermetic writing The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth from the Nag Hammadi Library:

"For already from them the power, which is light, is coming to us. For I see! I see indescribable depths. How shall I tell you, my son?...How [shall I describe] the universe? I [am Mind and] I see another Mind, the one that [moves] the soul! I see the one that moves me from pure forgetfulness. You give me power! I see myself! I want to speak! Fear restrains me. I have found the beginning of the power that is above all powers, the one that has no beginning. I see a fountain bubbling with life. I have said, my son, that I am Mind. I have seen! Language is not able to reveal this...And I, Mind, understand" (VI.57.30-58.22).

Step 4: Be amazed and be king.

Once you are amazed, you will become king over the All. We have encountered the All before, in sayings 67 and 77. In both, the All has paradoxical qualities: in Saying 67 it is the balance between the fundamental energy behind the universe and its physical manifestations so it partakes of both, and in Saying 77 the All both is equivalent to pure light which is behind the entire universe as well as being separate from it. So becoming king over the All means becoming ruler of the paradoxes inherent to the nature of reality. And we have seen that both disturbance and amazement have the same root in the comprehension of the paradox of the universe. Ruling the paradox means that the linear brain is no longer frightened of the paradox and no longer attempts to reduce it into some neat categorical package. It means that one has accepted the many-sided contradictions of reality and is no longer weighed down and disturbed by them.

And being king is clearly connected with Jesus' use of the term "Kingdom" to denote a higher state of consciousness. Being king then means that one exists in that higher state, the Kingdom, that so many sayings in describe from so many different angles. Thus being a king means that one is no longer a slave to one's physical self and to the physical world but has achieved true self-mastery and self-transcendence.

Step 5: Be king and attain repose.

The attaining of repose (rest) is only in the Greek versions of Saying 2 and not the Coptic, but anapausis is certainly a major concept in many sayings as well as in the Jewish Wisdom literature. Once the mind is free of its attachments and prejudices, once it becomes truly objective and detached, then it finally attains the capacity to be quiet and undisturbed, and that is what is here called repose, a recurring theme in. Repose means an ultimate state of peace and tranquility: the Buddhist nirvana, the Stoic ataraxia, the yogi samadhi.

UNIT II:

THE PRIMACY OF THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

Chapter 9:

The Priority of the Gospel of Thomas over the New Testament

Christian scholars, with the notable exception of Stevan Davies, continue to insist that the Gospel of Thomas is a version of the similar sayings in the New Testament or at most an independent version of the same underlying document Q. But there is an extraordinary amount of evidence that this is simply not true. I have analyzed every single saying of the Gospel of Thomas and read the entire scholarly literature for every saying, and it is clear to me that the wording of the Gospel of Thomas is continually cited by ancient versions of the New Testament rather than what we regard as the authoritative wording. In addition, the sayings of the Gospel of Thomas are cited continually in early Christian, Gnostic, Manichaean and Hermetic writings, are picked up again in Muslim literature and are cited as late as the Cathars (Albigensians) in the 12th and 13th centuries. Even the most revered Catholic theologians often cite the wording of the Gospel of Thomas over the New Testament. And once one studies the history of the New Testament one finds that there are good reasons for this: only in the last few centuries has there actually been an authoritative version of the New Testament!

Thus, if the Church theologians are not quoting the "canonical" Gospels, then what are they quoting? Careful research has shown the answer: the Gospel of Thomas. Gilles Quispel in particular has done exhaustive research to compare the quotes of the sayings common to the New Testament and the Gospel of Thomas in ancient editions of the New Testament and in Church theologians. He has concluded that time and time again the wording quoted is that of the Gospel of Thomas and not of the present-day Gospels.

I would like to show in a little more detail what Quispel and other scholars have discovered about the primacy of the Gospel of Thomas over the New Testament in quotations in ancient Bibles, the Church theologians, Christian commentators and various versions of the Diatessaron in many languages extending well into the 14th century. I can obviously not go into

every saying and the research I have done on every saying, but a few select examples will illustrate the general point. These are the sayings of Thomas that are quoted by ancient Bibles as well as by the New Testament: 1, 6, 8, 9, 10, 16, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45, 47, 54, 55, 57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 65, 68, 72, 76, 78, 79, 86, 89, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 100, 101, 104, 107 and 113.

Here is a breakdown of the sayings:

Total sayings of Thomas quoted by the New Testament: 76
Of these, sayings quoted also by ancient Bibles: 47 (29 not)
Sayings of Thomas not quoted by the New Testament: 38

Thus, in almost 62% of the sayings of the New Testament that come from Thomas, the ancient Bibles quoted the wording of Thomas rather than the present-day wording of the New Testament.

One of the earliest Bibles to do so is Tatian's Diatessaron, literally "through four gospels". Tatian was a Syrian from Mesopotamia who arranged the gospels into one single narrative around 172 C.E., omitting only very few sections. Petersen says: "The Diatessaron is the most extensive, earliest collection of 2nd-century gospel texts extant. Since it incorporated virtually the entire text of the four canonical gospels, as well as some material from extra-canonical gospels, its comprehensiveness far outstrips the scattered parallels of other early sources. And as a creation of the mid-second century, its antiquity surpasses all other sources" (Koester ancient 403). What is particularly interesting about his work is that he seems to preserve many readings from the Gospel of Thomas as well; as a matter of fact, Victor, bishop of Capua in Italy from 541-554, called a copy of Tatian's work that he found a Diapente, "through five gospels", indicating clear knowledge that Tatian used a well-respected and non-canonical gospel (Koester ancient 405). Quispel suggests that Tatian "used an Aramaic Gospel of Jewish Christian origin as his fifth source" (Diat+Hist 466) which he thinks Thomas used as well, but considering the large number of agreements between the Diatessaron and the text of Thomas one might as well say Tatian used Thomas rather than postulating an unknown gospel no one has ever found.

For example, here is Tatian's description of his conversion to Christianity: "I was persuaded because of...the easily intelligible account of the creation of the world, the foreknowledge of the future, the remarkable quality of the precepts and the doctrine of a single ruler of the universe...Now that I have apprehended these things I wish to strip myself just as little children"

(Oratio ad Graecos 30.7-17). This imagery of stripping as little children is a striking and distinctive phrase whose first use was in Saying 37. Similarly Diatessaron 40.44 says: "Woe to you, lawyers! for ye have hidden the keys of knowledge; ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter." This is a verbatim quote of Saying 39, and not in the New Testament.

The Diatessaron had an enormous influence and "was the most widely read book after the Bible during the early Christian period and the Middle Ages" (Quispel General 787). Petersen says: "The most casual reading of the Old Syriac Gospels...shows that they have already been influenced by the textual variants and harmonistic readings of the Diatessaron. And in the 4th century, many of the gospel quotations of the Syrian writers Aphrahat (Aphraates) and Ephrem are in the form of the Diatessaron" (Koester 406). In order to reconstruct the Diatessaron readings today, there are a large number of ancient Gospel harmonies available: the Persian, Arabic and Old High German harmonies, the Codex Fuldensis harmony and no fewer than 17 other Latin harmonies including Codex Sangallensis and Casellanus. Quispel has done much of his work on the Dutch harmonies, including the Liège Harmony and 7 other Middle Dutch manuscripts as well as 10 manuscripts in Middle High German. There are also 14th-15th century medieval Italian harmonies, both a Venetian and a Tuscan manuscript, a Middle English Pepsyan Harmony from about 1400 and an Old Saxon poem, the Heliand, written about 830 C.E., which also contain variant readings (Koester 413-419)

Though Tatian was a committed Christian and made his gospel harmony for the precise purpose of creating a unified Christian truth out of the discrepancies of the four gospels and though Clement of Alexandria had even claimed him as one of his teachers, he still fell afoul of dictatorial Christian dogmatism. For one thing he was too philosophical for the tastes of the authorities, teaching the free search for truth rather than reliance on Messianic salvation, and he also veered dangerously close to docetism and Gnostic ideas (Elze 98-99, 127). And the fact that he used the Gospel of Thomas as one of his sources made him highly suspect and the Church was determined to get rid of anything that would make people question the canonic gospels.

Thus even when Christian theologians condemned Tatian they universally refused even to mention the Diatessaron by name. The only Church Father who sometimes quoted it, without attribution of course, is Augustine, especially when he is quoting from memory (Quispel General 794). It is astounding when one reads Irenaeus' condemnation of Tatian as a Gnostic

heretic how little he actually knows about him and how he simply suspects heresy behind all philosophical speculation (Elze 108-110). An authoritarian institution can never allow even one iota of thinking.

And it is even more astounding that the Church would be so opposed to his harmony when the fact that there were so many contradictions among the four canonical gospels was already such a source of embarrassment and fodder for the critics of Christianity. Even Origen was disturbed by this fact and said that "if the disparity cannot be solved, one has to give up one's (historical) trust with respect to the Gospels" (Baarda Essays 32). Yet rather than seeking a rational solution such as Tatian did, the Church ultimately preferred to keep the discrepancies and contradictions and simply to make sure that no one except priests was allowed to read the Bible for themselves: it is easier to burn than to persuade.

Consequently, the Church expended great effort in rooting out and destroying every copy of the Diatessaron and was so successful that not a single complete copy exists today. The only original document is a small fragment found in 1933 in an archeological dig in Dura-Europos. Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus in the Euphratas from 423 C.E. on, discovered that many copies of the Diatessaron were in use in his diocese and destroyed all of the copies he could find, more than 200 according to his own count. He then put in their place the separate canonical gospels (Metzger 89, Speyer 146). And there is no doubt that many other bishops must have done the same thing.

It is, however, remarkable that mainstream scholars have taken the same position as the Church without the fear of being persecuted and burnt: old dogmatic habits die hard. They have largely ignored Quispel's painstaking work and the interesting Diatessaron parallels and have blithely continued to call Thomas inauthentic without even attempting to look at the documentary evidence. As Quispel says, "some people abhor the idea that the Diatessaron and the Gospel of Thomas are nearer to the source, Jesus, than the ecclesiastical Gospels" (Quispel general 790). Indeed, despite the progress of intellectual enlightenment since the 18th century, this idea still seems to constitute heresy in theological circles. I have however found Quispel's research of great value in showing the dramatic extent to which the Gospel of Thomas is the primary source of Jesus' teachings and the Synoptics largely secondary.

Let us look at the quotes of Thomas by the ancient Christian writings in more detail. An excellent example is Saying 8 of Thomas. It is clear that Christian writers and Biblical compilers considered Saying 8 indeed to be the original text superior to Matthew's version for they universally cited it. The number of wordings of Matthew 13:47-48 quoted in ancient sources that are clearly from Saying 8 rather than from Matthew's later version is astounding,

as follows:

1. "fisherman" rather than "fishnet" - Heliand 2629, the Armenian Commentary of Ephrem, Aphraates, Philoxenos of Mabbug (458-519 C.E.), Macarius, Clement of Alexandria.

2. "who cast his net" rather than "which was thrown" - Heliand 2629, the Armenian Commentary of Ephrem, Clement of Alexandria;

3. "he drew it up" rather than "men drew it ashore" - Greek and Latin Codex Bezae, Dutch, Venetian, Tuscan, Persian and Arabian Diatessaron, Heliand 2631, all Vetus Latina but Codex Colbertinus, Bezae Cantabrigiensis and Redhigeranus, Armenian Commentary of Ephrem, Syrus Sinaiticus and Curetonianus, Peshitta, Sahidic and Bohairic Bible, Philoxenos.

4. "from the sea" rather than "ashore" - Dutch, Venetian, Tuscan and Persian Diatessaron, Heliand, Armenian Commentary of Ephrem, Syrus Sinaiticus, Bohairic Bible, Philoxenos, Ludolph.

5. "full" rather than "filled" - Dutch, Venetian and Tuscan Diatessaron, Codex Claromontanus.

6. "of small fish", omitted in Mt - Dutch, Venetian, Tuscan, Old High German and Persian Diatessaron, all Vetus Latina except Codex Aureus and Bezae Cantabrigiensis, Codex Sangallensis, Philoxenos, Clement of Alexandria.

7. "he chose" rather than "he collected" - Codex Alexandrinus, Dutch, Tuscan, Old High German, Latin, Persian and Arabian Diatessaron, Armenian Commentary of Ephrem, Syrus Sinaiticus and Curetonianus, Peshitta, all Vetus Latina except Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis, Palatinus and Bobbiensis, Vulgate, Philoxenos, Clement of Alexandria, Chrysostom.

8. "the good fish" rather than "the good" - Dutch Diatessaron, Syrian Commentary of Ephrem, Syrus Curetonianus, Syrus Sinaiticus, Peshitta, Codex Vercellensis, Veronensis and Claromontanus, Aphraates, Philoxenos.

9. "large and good fish" - Venetian Diatessaron, Philoxenos.

10. "down into the sea", omitted in Mt - Heliand 2634, Macarius. (Quispel Tatian 53, 176, GnSt 58-59, Heliand 96)

In a close analysis of all these quotations Quispel shows that there are too many variants among the manuscripts for them to be quoting from each other. If one puts together all these variant readings above that are not in Matthew, one already has a significant proportion of Saying 8 of the Gospel of Thomas and he does not think it is possible that these can all be coincidences.

The Heliand alone, an Old Saxon poem dating to 840 CE, has three variants in common with Tatian's Diatessaron and four with the Gospel of Thomas, showing how long knowledge of Thomas endured (Quispel Heliand gnSt96): the latest citation is in Ludolph which is 1350! Quispel's analysis also shows that "the Diatessaron originally spoke about a fisherman but...a conflation with the canonical version, the parable of the fishnet, has taken place" (Tatian 101), changing the parable from one about wisdom to one about eschatology.

Clement's quotes are significant in that he mentions "the most beautiful fish" in the singular in one quote and compares the kingdom of heaven "a man" rather than "a net" in another quote, all indications of Saying 8. These are the two quotations: Stromata 1.1.16: "In sum, just as in a quantity of small pearls one stands out, and in a large catch of fish the most beautiful fish stands out, so, with time and hard work, and with adequate help, the truth will shine out"; Stromata 6.11.95.3: "I pass over in silence at present the parable which says in the Gospel, `The kingdom of heaven is like a man who cast a net into the sea and out of the multitude of fish caught makes a selection of the better ones'." Notice how Clement refers only to the "Gospel" as the source.

In his thorough study of Clement's New Testament quotations Mees is willing to see parallels to Thomas and concludes that Clement borrows "extra-canonical traditions" for his wording (Mees 197-198). Quispel attributes these variant readings "to the fact that in Alexandria an extra-canonical tradition of Jewish-Christian origin was also available" (Tatian 104-105).

Quispel concludes: "There are still scholars who believe that this parable of `Thomas' is a `perversion' of Matthew's version. I must confess that I find it difficult to understand them. `Thomas' is so much simpler, and in its paratactic construction so much nearer to the Aramaic structure of language...`Thomas' has not the allegorical interpretation which Matthew has added to his parable...In the Jewish-Christian source the parable was already sapiential. Moreover, it was not eschatological, but proclaimed a realized eschatology. Bliss is already there, here and now." (Tatian 105-106) "We see then that, both in Egypt and Syria traces have been preserved of the very primitive parable of the wise fisherman, originally written in Aramaic and transmitted by the heirs of the congregation of Jerusalem; this parable is both in form and in meaning very different from Matthew, because its logical subject is the fisherman, not the fishnet, and because it stresses the wisdom of man, not doomsday...The parable of Thomas...teaches eternal wisdom, not linked with any historical event or any special nation" (Gnosis 275 or GnSt 192).

It would be tedious to cite such in-depth analysis for every single saying, though I have done this in my original research. But here is a brief summary of the findings for a few others. Saying 6 has the Golden Rule - "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" - in the negative form, the so-called Silver Rule: "That which you hate, do not do it." Yet oddly enough, out of 27 citations in Christian literature, 17 are also in the negative form, 3 are mixed and only 7 are in the positive from. The ones in negative form include 4 by Philoxenus which he emphatically ascribes directly to Jesus (Dihle Goldene 107). Those 17 citations cannot therefore be quoting the New Testament and must be quoting Thomas or some other source, such as Hillel.

For Saying 9, the wording "on the road" of the Gospel of Thomas rather than "along the road" in the Synoptics is cited in amazingly late sources: in an 8th century Arabic source who one would think would already know the New Testament as well as in a 12th century Christian source, Zacharias Chrysopolitanus (c. 1130 C.E.), at a time when one would think the Gospel of Thomas did not even exist any more (Quispel "Clement" 183 or GnSt 18-19, 27, "NT" 201 or GnSt 12-13, "Heliand" GnSt 92-93, Tatian 176) This indicates that they are quoting Thomas, not the New Testament.

For Saying 20, many Biblical editors did not find the notion in Matthew 13:32 of a mustard seed growing into a tree to make much sense, for they consistently cited "a great branch" from Thomas instead. For Saying 32, practically every quotation of the relevant passage clearly presupposes Thomas rather than Matthew 5:14, as they all use an equivalent for "build" rather than "set" in Matthew, and the 9th century Old Saxon Heliand refers to "high mountain" which is not in Matthew either (Quispel GnSt Heliand 89)

For Saying 33, the number of ancient Christian sources which use the wording of Thomas rather than that of the Synoptics is astounding, and it shows once again that Thomas was widely known. Even the Church Fathers quote it: Tertullian in De Praescriptione Haereticorum 26.2 uses "roofs" {tectis} instead of "housetops" in citing this saying and Clement in Stromateis I.56.2 refers to "whispered in your ear" which is not in any of the Synoptics and which he must have gotten from Thomas.

For Saying 44, the lateness and lack of originality of the Synoptic version is convincingly demonstrated by both the Tuscan and Venetian versions of Tatian's Diatessaron which clearly use Saying 44 as their source: they quote both the phrase "whoever blasphemes against the father" which is not in the Synoptics and they say "the son" instead of the Synoptic "the son of Man" (Quispel Tatian 181). Amazingly, the Tuscan Diatessaron, "preserved

in many manuscripts, the oldest of which are from the 14th century", has an almost verbatim version of Saying 44, and there is only a slight change in the last sentence: "in this world nor in the other" (Quispel Tatian 54, Lat Tatian GnSt 167). One would think this Tuscan document could have substituted the Synoptic version of the saying but it did not and must reach back to the oldest documents of Tatian. As Quispel says, "it seems reasonable to suppose that by some channel or another the wording of this Logion has influenced the Italian text" (GoT+NT 192).

For Saying 54, there are several citations of the expression "kingdom of the heavens" in connection with the Beatitudes in Christian literature dating after Thomas (Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions, Aphraates) and these have to come from Thomas rather than from the New Testament, for this expression is not found in the Synoptics. An interesting citation is in Tertullian (160-221 CE) where he clearly says "kingdom of the heavens" (coelorum regnum) though in an earlier quotation he says "Kingdom of God" (Baarda 34-35, 49).

For Saying 57, even though Matthew uses the plural zizania (darnel) all the way through, both Clement of Alexandria in Excerpta ex Theodoto and Irenaeus in Against the Heresies use the singular zizanion, just as does Saying 57 (Schoedel 555). The large number of wordings in the corresponding New Testament citations in ancient documents constitute almost the entirety of Saying 57. Saying 57 is also quoted in the Old Saxon poem Heliand of about 830 CE, and in three Dutch Diatessaron versions which date from the 14th century, Liège from 1325 C.E., Stuttgart from 1332 CE and Theodiscum from 1350 CE! (Quispel Hel 94)

For Saying 63, the Synoptics leave out the characteristic final sentence "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" in 4 out of 5 cases where it is in Thomas, but as many as 18 9th and 10th century manuscripts of Luke 12:16-21 have this sentence: this is not in the present version of Luke but it is in Thomas and must have been taken from it (Birdsall 333-334). Wilson asks: "Have we here the influence of an apocryphal tradition upon the manuscript, or did the formula belong here in Luke or in his source?" (Wilson "Thomas+Growth"238, Wilson 135).

Even the very long Saying 65 is so extensively cited in ancient Biblical citations that if you put all the wordings together, you have most of the saying.

For Saying 68, the very strong word "hated" which is not in the present New Testament but is in Thomas was nevertheless quoted in ancient Biblical citations of Matthew 5:11 in the following documents: the Dutch, Tuscan, Arabian and Latin Diatessaron, Heliand 1322, Syrus Sinaiticus, Codex

Sangermanensis (Vetus Latina), the Pseudo-Clementines, Didache and the Acts of Thomas. It is also in Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians 12.3 where it says "pray...for those who persecute and hate you": the closest equivalent Matthew 5:44 only has "persecute" whereas Luke 6:27 only has "hate" (Quispel Tatian 185, EvselTh+Cl 191 or GnSt 25, GnSt 66-67).

Saying 86 also has an impressive number of wordings cited in ancient sources that are not in the present-day New Testament version. Amazingly, Thomas' version is even found as late as the 14th century, in a 1350 C.E. edition of Vita Jesu Christu by Ludolph of Saxony: "Vulpes foveas habent, ad quiescendum et latitandam, et volucres coeli nidos habent ad quos ascendunt et confugiunt. Filius autem hominis... non habet domiciliam proprium, ubi capum suam reclinet, ad pausandum" (II.6). The most interesting part of this is the last phrase "to rest" which is not in the New Testament but it is in Thomas. Quispel says "it has been proved decisively that Ludolph used a copy of the Diatessaron...Therefore, it seems quite possible that Ludolph's, like all the versions of the Diatessaron, has preserved some traces of that very primitive anad archaic tradition" (Tatian 82-83). The Arabic citation in al-Ghazali (1059-1111 CE) also contains the wording "rest" in what seems to be a direct quote of Saying 86 placed in a narrative context.

For Saying 89, many versions of the Diatessaron as well as other sources use the simple word "wash", taken from the Coptic eiô of Thomas, rather than the more technical word "purify", taken from the Greek katharison of the New Testament. These include: the Venetian, Tuscan, Arabian, Dutch, Persian (13th cent.) and Liège (11th-13th cent.) Diatessaron, Aphraates, the Liber Graduum, Macarius and Marcion. Baker concludes: "We can say that all the major witnesses to the Syriac version of the Diatessaron outside the actual text of the Syriac N.T. concur in having `wash' in one or both places." Clearly these works are not quoting the New Testament (Baker "GoT and Diat" 449-452, Quispel Tatian 187). Even Church fathers quoted "wash" rather than "purify": Tertullian once and Augustine once. And so does the Acta Archelai by Hegemonius which not only has lavatis but also aut nescitis quia ("do you not know that?") which is only in Thomas and not in the New Testament (Baker 452).

What is particularly interesting about the early Christian theologians is when they want to cite the words of Jesus that they constantly cite the Gospel of Thomas without ever calling it as such, and indeed often call it by something else altogether: the Gospel of the Egyptians, the Gospel of the Hebrews or simply the Gospel. This does however seem to indicate that they considered the Gospel of Thomas the authoritative source for quotes from Jesus. There are 30 sayings of Thomas quoted fully by the Christian theologians: 3, 8, 21, 22, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 37, 38, 45, 46, 52, 53, 57, 62, 66,

68, 72, 77, 81, 82, 86, 93, 95, 104, 107, 113. Add to this 3 sayings (9, 36, 39) whose wordings of Thomas they quote, as discussed above.

Clement of Alexandria (died before 215 CE), in Stromata 3.92.2-93.1, quotes the Alexandrian theologian Julius Cassian quoting a saying of Jesus which seems to be an amalgam of Saying 37 and Saying 22 and which Clement says is found in the Gospel of the Egyptians: "Therefore Cassian now says: When Salome asked when what she had inquired about would be known, the Lord said, `When you have trampled on the garment of shame and when the two become one and the male with the female [is] neither male nor female'. Now in the first place we have not this word in the four Gospels that have been handed down to us, but in the Gospel of the Egyptians. Further he seems to me to fail to recognise that by the male impulse is meant wrath and by the female lust."

Now it is conceivable that something called the Gospel of the Egyptians existed and was another source of Jesus' sayings for it is quoted a number of times but only by Clement of Alexandria. But it is striking how similar the two documents are and the citation attributed to the Gospel of the Egyptians is an exact quote of Saying 37. As MacDonald says: "Almost everything known about the Gospel of the Egyptians is similar to the Gospel of Thomas, and since so little is known, these similarities are as sugestive as they are striking" (MacDonald There 49). It is highly likely that Clement amalgamated two sayings from Thomas and that he attributed them to a non-existent Gospel of the Egyptians in order to hide the fact that he was quoting Thomas. It is also interesting that there is another completely different Gnostic document called the Gospel of the Egyptians in the Nag Hammadi Library which has none of these quotes: Clement may thus be leading someone on a merry goose chase!

Just to make things even more confusing, he changed his misattributions periodically to the equally non-existent Gospel of the Hebrews, as in this quote from Stromata 2.9.45.5: "Wonder at the world is the first step to knowledge, as Plato says in the Theaetetus...Similarly, in the Gospel according to the Hebrews it is written, `The man with a sense of wonder shall be king; the man who has become king will be at rest.' It is impossible for an ignorant person, as long as he remains ignorant, to be a philosopher." This quote is clearly from Saying 2 and there is an even more complete quote in Stromata 5.14.96.3 where in a discussion of Plato's Timaeus he adds: "He, who seeks, will not stop till he find; and having found, he will wonder; and wondering, he will reign; and reigning, he will rest." It is hard to believe that Clement does not know what he is citing, so one must conclude that he is

hiding his source.

In Stromata 5.10.63.7 his deception is quite clear: "It is only for a few to understand these things. For it is not in the way of envy that he says the Lord announced in some Gospel, `My mystery is for me, and for the sons of my house'." Clement clearly indicates that this is a quote from Jesus, but it is not in the New Testament and it is only found in Saying 62; here he does not even bother to create a false name but merely calls it a Gospel. In his quote of Saying 27 he gives no source at all. But we know that Clement of Alexandria is quoting Saying 27 when he uses the very distinctive construction "fast the world" or "fast to the world" which is also found in 5 citations in the Syrian Liber Graduum.

He also appears to be quoting Saying 68 in his Stromata 4.6.41.2: "`Blessed are those who are persecuted for my sake, for they will have a place where they will not be persecuted'" for he uses the word "place" which is not used in the New Testament, though he changes the pronouns from the 2nd to the 3rd person. In addition he admits that he is citing another source of Jesus' words, though of course he refuses to cite the Gospel of Thomas by name: "as some of those who transpose the Gospels say". Clement lived ca. 150-215 C.E., a good bit after the writing of Thomas but before the present-day gospels became a canon, he says flat out that the canonical Gospels are not his source and the wording matches Thomas.

Augustine, just like Clement of Alexandria, had a habit of quoting the Gospel of Thomas and misattributing it to other sources. In Contra adversarum 2.4.14 PL 42:647 he quotes a Marcionite tract that he read at the oceanfront in Carthage in 420 CE: "But when the Apostles had asked how they should regard the prophets of the Jews, who are thought to have prophesied in the past about his coming, he answered, surprised (or annoyed) that they still harbored such an idea: You have let go the Living One who is before you, and talk idly about the dead (dimisistis vivum qui ante vos est et de mortuis fabulamini)." This is a direct and exact quote from Saying 52 which is not in the New Testament; however, he attributes the quote to the Marcionites. Is he being honest here?

I find it hard to believe that the Marcionites, based on the teachings of Marcion (c. 130-180 CE), would claim Jesus' words as their own, as in many respect they were quite Christian in their views and could just as well have become the orthodox view as anyone else. They saw Jesus as a Savior who died on the cross for mankind's sins, though they denied his physical reality and resurrection. They saw themselves as the only true Christians and believed that only Paul knew and kept the true traditions of Christ. They rejected the Old Testament God as

a Demiurge, as well all the New Testament Gospels except Luke, whom they radically edited to suit their views (Christie-Murray 27-28, O'Grady 56-59).

All that being the case, one has to assume they must have given special respect to the Gospel of Thomas as adhering closely to the original pure Christianity. And in the source that Augustine read they most likely credited Thomas: thus he deliberately concealed that fact by attributing Saying 52 to the Marcionites.

Augustine does the same thing in his quotes of Saying 72; there are six such citations in six different sermons, one being "Sermon (358) De pace et charitate": "Who made me a divider of inheritance over you?" (quis me constituit divisorem hereditatis inter vos). Twice he leaves out hereditatis and once he adds iudicem aut, "and judge". (Quispel St. Aug 377, Baarda Luke 156-158). It is possible that Augustine split Luke's phrase "judge or divider" from later editions, such as the Vulgate; for example, he might have been quoting from memory, and Baarda thinks "one should not a priori reject... his abbreviation of it" but finds no stronger argument than that (Baarda 158). Quispel, however, says "that is impossible because Augustine keeps going back to this verse frequently and always cites it in this form" (St Aug 377). It is also possible that he is citing the one Sahidic Coptic New Testament version that has "divider" in it, but that is highly unlikely: Quispel says, "the Latin text of the Gospel of Thomas, which Augustine read as a young Manichee, was not influenced by the Coptic version of the New Testament" ("West Text" 57). Thus he is most likely quoting Saying 72 without attributing it to its source.

But it is clear that Augustine knew the Gospel of Thomas. In De sermone domini in monte II.17 (ch. 5) he says: "For God is not contained in space. For the heavens are indeed the higher material bodies of the world, but yet material, and therefore cannot exist except in some definite place; but if God's place is believed to be in the heavens, as meaning the higher parts of the world, the birds are of greater value than we, for their life is nearer to God." (sed si in caelis tamquam in superioribus mundi partibus locum dei esse creditur, melioris meriti sunt aves, quarum vita est deo vicinior). This is a direct quote from Saying 3.

Here Augustine even seems to agree with Thomas that God should not be seen anthropomorphically as living in the heavens for otherwise the birds who are closer to the sky have more merit than humans do. Augustine rejected the overly corporeal view of God of the Manichaeans and argued for a spiritualized, almost neo-Platonic view of God and a non-spatial divine realm. He of course does not credit Thomas but the quote is after all in a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, indicating that Augustine con-

nects it directly with Jesus. Quispel says "the passage presents striking analogies" with Saying 3 and there are no other passages in the Patristic literature with the same analogy of the birds: "for that reason one is inclined to suppose that the passage indicates a certain familiarity on the part of St. Augustine with the Gospel of Thomas" (Quispel St. Augustine 376).

We may add Origen (185-254 CE) to our list of deceptive Christian theologians. In Homilies on Jeremiah 3.3 he says: "I read somewhere that the Savior said (and I question whether someone has assumed the person of the Savior, or called the words to memory, or whether it was true what he said), but the Savior himself says there: He who is near me is near the fire; he who is far from me is far from the kingdom." This is an exact citation of Saying 82 of the Gospel of Thomas and just to show that this is not a fluke, he quotes it again in Homilies on Joshua 4.3.

Just like Clement of Alexandria and Augustine, Origen must have known very well where he read this quote, as it is not in the New Testament and the Gospel of Thomas was well-known. Moreover, the same quote is given as the words of Jesus in four other Christian sources: Didymus the Blind (d. 398 C.E.), the Syrian Exposition of the Parables of Our Lord, an Armenian text from the monastery of St. Lazzaro, Venice and Pseudo-Ephrem. Thus we can only conclude that he is hiding his source as he does not want to mention the Gospel of Thomas.

All other theologians merely quote Thomas without attributing it to any source. The very cryptic Saying 7 is quoted by Didymos the Blind (313-398 C.E.) in Commentary on Psalms 44:12: "After he (the uncooperative pupil) has been eaten by the teacher and become a meal for him, he is no longer a lion. That is why he is blessed and praised as blessed, not because he is lion, but because he has become human. But if a reasonable human with reasonable drives has been eaten by a rough and wild person or by an evil power, then he will become a lion and he is miserable; for `woe to the human whom a lion eats.'"

Saying 21 seems to be quoted both in the Book of Revelation and by the Egyptian abbott Shenoute (d. 451 or 466 C.E.):

Revelation 16:15: "Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!"

Shenoute, Homily 25.16-26.1: "Let your loins be girded, while your lamps burn, and be like the servants who wait for their master, saying to themselves, `When will he return from the bridechamber?' that they may open to him immediately whenever he comes and knocks...Behold in a town

today a man whom people know has much wealth. If he sleeps at night and relaxes, the thieves will come and rob him and take all his wealth. If, however, they come and find the lamp burning in the house, they will be afraid that the people are awake." (Young 132)

From his analysis of Shenoute's citations Young concludes that Shenoute is indeed quoting Saying 21: "The abbott's familiarity with details in the Gospel of Thomas comes to the fore in a homily addressed to his fellow-monks...In spite of...essential differences, because of two additional factors Shenoute's treatment is unquestionably cognate to that in Thomas. For one thing,they share a feature which is not found in the related New Testament passages...The two works have the same concern, and this can be readily explained if we are willing to admit Shenoute's dependance on Thomas" (Young "Milieu" 131-133). Shenoute also cites Saying 47 with the same order as Thomas rather than what is in the New Testament, which is another indication that he knew Thomas (Arthur 85).

While Saying 22 is quoted in the New Testament only in distorted form, parts of it are quoted quite accurately by many other Christian writers who attributed it to Jesus directly, though not to the Gospel of Thomas. The fullest quotations are in 2 Clement and Clement of Alexandria, but the idea of making the above like the below and the outer like the inner is also found in the Acts of Peter, the Gospel of Philip, the Acts of Philip and the Syrian Testament of our Lord. And we get strikingly similar vocabulary in the Nag Hammadi document Thunder, Perfect Mind and the Acts of Thomas.

For Saying 38, there are three quotes of the exact wordings in Cyprian, Epiphanius and Irenaeus. Epiphanius quotes in Panarion 34.18: "Often I have desired to hear one of these words, and I have no one to tell me." The 2nd century Gnostic Marcosians, according to Irenaeus, quoted something which was similar to Thomas: "Many times they desired to hear one of these words, and they had no one to tell them." The German theologian Harnack commented in 1904 that this quote in Irenaeus, which later turned out to be Saying 38 and which does not agree with that of the New Testament, must be considered older than the canonical Gospels due to its "pithy formulation" and greater liveliness in expression and "they must have derived it from a gospel unknown to us which was greatly related to the canonical ones but also differed from them" (Harnack "Einige" 188). Precisely: namely the Gospel of Thomas.

Even though Saying 77 was not quoted in the New Testament, it seems to have been quoted in other Christian literature. Reitzenstein has found direct Greek citations of line 8 "raise the stone" in several early sourc-

es: Etymologicum Guadianum, Suidas "Herodian Epimerisms" and Zonaras (605 C.E.). He says: "Use of the New Testament in lexical grammatical writings is hardly thinkable before the 5th or 6th century. At this time our sayings (or the Gospel with which they are connected?) must still have been widely read" (Reitzenstein 203). Reitzenstein was aware of the Oxyrhynchus papyri and assumed the quotes were from those; one could say that the citations are presumably from the same Greek translations of the Gospel of Thomas that appear in these papyri.

Almost all the Christian theologians seem to be quoting Saying 93, as the wording they use when referring to the pearlas is "the pearls", which is in Thomas, rather than "your pearls" which is in Matthew. The only sources which clearly cite Matthew's wording are Origen and Tertullian De baptismo, though Clement of Alexandria also includes the part about pigs turning and attacking you and Liber Graduum, mentions "trampling" which is in Matthew. But all the other sources leave out the "your" and only have "the" pearls or just "pearls": Clement, Epiphanius, Hippolytus, Tertullian De praescriptione, Liber Graduum and the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions. There is even a late Muslim source, Al-Zuhd, that quotes the same wording. Quispel shows that the same is true in even more sources that I have not cited, including the Venetian Diatessaron, Syrus Curetonianus, the Syro-Palestinian Lectionary, Bohairic Bible, Basil of Caesarea, Athanasius and Chrysostom (Quispel "Clement's" 186 or GnSt 21, Tatian 188, GnSt 68-69). This is not conclusive proof that all these sources are citing Thomas as they may have just left out the "your" themselves. But it is highly suggestive.

Tertullian (160-221 C.E.) without a doubt quotes Saying 107 in On Penitence 8, mixed in with the Synoptic version: "That one is sought out; that one is desired above all others...it had suffered much in straying."" None of these wordings are in the Synoptics.

It is also interesting that when a quote of Jesus comes perilously close to revealing its source as being the Gospel of Thomas, the Church theologians go to great lengths to deny it.

There is a famous quote by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:7-9 which contains a phrase attributed to Jesus in a written source that can only be from Saying 17: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him." Hegesippus criticized this citation and said "these things were said vainly, and those who said them lied against the divine Scriptures" (Stone 72). The Church Father Jerome said the saying was from the Apocalypse of Elijah (Epistle LVII.101) while Origen (On Matt 23:37, 27:9) and Georgius Syncellus (IV.d.2) said it

was from the Apocrypha of Elijah. The latter work no longer exists and the existing Coptic copy of the former does not contain the saying.

Origen's theory, which was once "the most popular view", has enormous problems, as Verheyden shows: "He apparently sees no difficulty in suggesting that Paul would have quoted as Scripture what in fact seems stems from an obscure apocryphon...There is no reference to an Elijah apocryphon before Origen...In its actual form it is clearly a Christian text, which originated in Egypt, probably in the third century...The evidence of an Apocalypse of Elijah does not reach back to the time of Paul, and Origen is at best a witness to the existence of an Elijah apocryphon in the third century. But...there is no such quotation in the extant text of the Apocryphon of Elijah...The indications for the existence of a second work `of Elijah' beside the Coptic ApocEl remain highly disputable." (Verheyden 499-500, 505).

Thus, since Origen and Jerome attributed Paul's quote of Saying 17 to sources such as the Apocalypse/Apocrypha of Elijah, where it cannot be found, they may have known very well what the true source was and refused to say so. What is even more odd about all this is, as Resch points out, that Jerome admits quite openly that both the Elijah texts are "not just harmless apocryphal literature, but heretical works...It is also known how Gnostic and other teachers were misusing 1 Cor 2,9 and were attempting to justify the mysteries of their boundless speculations" (Resch 158). Why would two highly respected Church theologians attribute a saying by Jesus to a heretical source, knowing full well that the very same citation was being currently used by other "heretics"? The motivation to hide the true source in the Gospel of Thomas must have been so powerful as to override all other considerations, even to the extent of casting doubt on Paul, the very founder of Christianity.

Thomas is cited especially often in the Syrian literature which includes Pseudo-Macarius, Ephrem, Aphraates, Philoxenus, Liber Graduum, the Old Syriac Exposition of the Parables of the Lord and the Syrian Didascalia. Many scholars think the origin of Thomas is to be found in Syria, and there is certainly a strong connection between the figure of Thomas himself and Syria, especially the town of Edessa. The Thomas literature, including the Acts of Thomas, the Book of Thomas and the Book of Thomas the Contender, is centered on Syria. Added to this are the Syrian versions of the New Testament which are Syrus Sinaiticus, Syrus Curetonianus, the Peshitta and the Palestinian Syriac Lectionary.

Sayings 48 and 106 are an example of how the Syrian tradition stayed more true to the Gospel of Thomas than much other Christian literature. These sayings are quoted in the two versions of the liturgical Didascalia; the

Syrian version (ca. 250 C.E.) says: "If two shall agree together, and shall ask concerning anything whatsoever, it shall be given them. And if they say to a mountain that it be removed and fall into the sea, it shall be done" (15). The Latin Didascalia 31 says: "It is written in the Gospel: If two shall agree together and shall say to this mountain, take and cast yourself into the sea, it will happen." (quoniam scriptum est in Evangelio: duo si convenerint in unum et dixerint monti huic, tolle et mitte te in mari, fiet)

Hedrick says "only Thom 106 and the Syriac Didascalia XIV preserve the saying in its radical core form without conditions. In these two sayings the only condition for `moving mountains' is that one speak the word." This radical character is very much lessened in the Christian versions which add the requirement of having faith without any doubt: "One is led to conclude that the saying likely subverted early Christian faith. Rather than discard the saying, early Christians found ways to adjust it to their own Christian understanding of reality" (Hedrick 230-231). Moreover, in a doctoral dissertation on the Didascalia at Harvard University in 1973 James Cox concluded: "I doubt seriously that the Greek Didascalist cited immediately from any of the canonical gospels...All of the logoi analyzed in these `studies' probably derive immediately from collections of logoi Jesu...much like Q and the Gospel of Thomas...And this should not surprise us, since Syria, the home of the Didascalia, was the home of just such collections (`gospels') from the earliest period" (Crossan Fragments 300).

Quispel adds: "The Didascalia quotes a Saying of Jesus in a form very different from the canonical Gospels but almost identical with...Saying 48... There is nothing to show that he knew and used the Gospel of Thomas. But he may have been of Jewish origin and knew Jewish Christianity very well. He introduces the Saying with the words: quoniam scriptum est in Evangelio. So he must have taken it from a written gospel, probably the apocryphal Gospel of the Nazorenes or another Jewish Christian Gospel." (Quispel Diatess+Hist 465). It is, of course, even easier to conclude that the Didascalia used Thomas directly, as did the canonical Gospels.

Even when there are not exact citations, it is interesting to find very similar vocabulary as Saying 58 in the Syrian Book of Steps or Liber Graduum: labor forever as long as you are in this world, toil with sufferings, truth and knowledge so that you may live forever. This sums up the essential message of Saying 58 and perhaps was influenced by it: at the very least it is part of a similar world view, though probably more ascetic than the people Jesus was addressing.

In conclusion: what all this diligent research shows is that over and over again, ancient editions of the Gospels, Christian theologians, Christian

commentators and Christian liturgical literature cite the wording of the Gospel of Thomas over similar versions in the present-day New Testament. All the evidence shows that Christians knew the Gospel of Thomas well into the Middle Ages and that it continued to be regarded as the authoritative source for Jesus' words.

Chapter 10:
The New Testament as a Secondary Distortion of the Gospel of Thomas

Now that we have seen the inordinate resistance to the Gospel of Thomas and continuous attempts to deny and suppress it on the part of ancient Church theologians, Church authorities and extending well into modern Christian scholarship, it should come as no surprise that the model for this suppression was given by the very New Testament itself. The New Testament quotes 76 sayings so one can see that the Gospel of Thomas represents an important percentage of the material in the New Testament relating to Jesus (here are the 38 sayings not quoted: 7, 11, 15, 18, 19, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 42, 43, 49, 50, 53, 56, 59, 60, 67, 70, 74, 75, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 88, 97, 98, 102, 103, 110, 111, 112, 114. This includes 3 of the parables: 60, 97 and 98). Yet it almost never quotes Thomas exactly (only the quote of Saying 6 is accurate in Matthew 10:26, Mark 4:22 and Luke 12:2), it often misunderstands the sayings, and the changes to the sayings are usually in an ideological and political direction. Christian scholars invariably used to say that these differences are due to the Gospel of Thomas merely quoting the New Testament but close analysis of the texts by modern scholars shows that this simply cannot be true.

Here is one example. The New Testament versions of Saying 54 begin the famous Sermon on the Mount but with changes driven by their ideology. Matthew 5:3 says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Luke 6:20 says: "And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, `Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.'" Christian scholars such as Grant and Schrage used to insist that Saying 54 is a combination of Matthew and Luke, since both Thomas and Luke use the 2nd person as opposed to the 3rd person in Matthew, while the "Kingdom of the heavens" is in both Thomas and Matthew. But Crossan argues cogently": "One would have at least to argue that Thomas a) took the third person `the poor' from Matthew, then b) the second person `yours' from Luke, and c) returned to Matthew for the final `Kingdom of Heaven'. It might be simpler to suggest that Thomas was mentally unstable" (Crossan Four 19).

Thus, careful and comprehensive studies by John Sieber and Stephen Patterson in particular of all the relevant sayings of Thomas have established beyond doubt that Thomas cannot be derived from the New Testament. As Patterson says: "The parallels between Thomas and the synoptics are due

to a common shared oral tradition...The evidence for this hypothesis is as follows: 1) Close, detailed comparison of sayings contained in both Thomas and the synoptics reveals that Thomas preserves them in a form that is more primitive than the synoptic form...2) Literary dependence of one text on another often shows up in the ordering of material ...This is not true of Thomas and the synoptics. There is between them virtually no shared order. 3) If Thomas were later than the synoptics one would expect it to have a form reflective of this later time period. It does not. Rather, it is cast in the form of a sayings collection...This evidence has convinced most current Thomas scholars that the Gospel of Thomas is basically independent of the synoptic gospels" (Patterson Got+Jeus 112-113).

Close analysis of both Thomas and the corresponding Gospel sections leads to the conclusion that Thomas is primary and the New Testament is secondary, and even many Christian scholars now agree that Thomas is more "primitive". There are several sayings that illustrate this process particularly well. Saying 1 has the phrase "taste death"; the closest New Testament equivalent is John 8:51 which has "see {theôrese} death." But right afterward in John 8:52 he quotes "the Jews" as quoting Jesus saying "If any one keeps my word, he will never taste {geusetai} death." Why did John change the quote from "see" to "taste"? especially when the Jews were quoting something Jesus just said? Was this intentional? or did he or whoever last edited this document slip up? It looks to me that he had the Gospel of Thomas in front of him, meant to change both verbs to "see", but for some reason neglected to do so in the second quote.

The other possibility is that both verbs were originally "taste" and a later editor changed one and not the other. In either case the "taste" could only have come from Saying 1, as the rest of the quote is fairly similar. Clearly John wanted to change the meaning of Thomas to something more theologically Christian. To "see" death means a literal death, as opposed to Saying 1 where the term "death" is figurative and internal.

The expression "cast fire" (pyr balein) used in Luke 10:49 does not occur either in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, or in Greek literature and must be considered to be a translation from Aramaic or Syrian (März 498). This same exact expression is found in Saying 10 which is clearly Luke's source.

Another saying where linguistic evidence shows Thomas to be primary is Saying 32. Matthew 5:14 has "a city set on a hill" while Saying 32 has "a city being built on top of a high mountain." Matthew uses the Greek word keimene while the Greek manuscript of Saying 32 uses oikodomene, "to

build a house" which is not found in any Biblcial mnauscript. Oddly enough, there is a difference of only one letter in Coptic between kô, "set", and kôt, "build" (Garitte logoi doxy 342-343). Thus Matthew, or some translated version that Matthew relied on, read the Coptic version of Saying 32, not the Greek version, and read the word wrongly as "set" that he then translated into an equivalent word in Greek. For if he had read the Greek version he would have had a ready-made word in oikodomene that one might think he would have quoted. And if this is the case, then one would have to assume the Coptic version as being the original one.

Very interesting evidence has come to light that almost assures that Saying 36 is the original version. The Greek version of Saying 36 in the Oxyrhynchus fragment 655 adds a section that is not in the Coptic but is cited in the New Testament: "You are much better than the lilies which do not card nor spin." In Matthew 6:28 and Luke 12:27 that same phrase translates as "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin"; here "grow" adds nothing to the point being made. In addition, while the saying about the birds of the air in Matthew 6:26 has three negatives ("neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns"), the reference to lilies has one positive and two negatives, breaking the exact poetic parallelism that must have originally existed (Robinson/Heil Lilies 15-16, Say 825).

It turns out that the Greek for "grow", auxanei, is very similar to the phrase "neither card", ou xainei. It also turns out that when the distinguished British papyrologist T. C. Skeat studied the scribal corrections in the 4th century Codex Sinaiticus under an ultraviolet lamp, he found that this ancient codex also originally said "do not card, nor spin, nor work" in Matthew 6:28. But the "card" had been erased and replaced by "grow", most likely to bring it in concordance with standard Biblical wording (Robinson Written 65-66, Say 781-782). So once again the editors of the New Testament had simply misread the original of Saying 36 and had introduced a scribal error that persisted through every edition.

James Robinson, who has devoted many scholarly articles to this analysis, concludes that "P.Oxy. 655 presents a more original reading than what is familiar to us from Q" (Pre-Q 179, Say 774) and that "the Gospel of Thomas was not a secondary abridgment of Matthew, Luke, or Q, in none of which the correct reading is attested. Rather, it preserved the original reading, and so must have been based on a very ancient tradition" (Robinson Written 66-67, Say 783). Or rather it was the very ancient tradition, though Robinson is not willing to go this far. And this is why: "Of course anyone can sense the awkwardness of conceding that a saying ascribed to Jesus is corrupted by a scribal error in the familiar canonical texts of Matthew and

Luke (not to speak of Q) while being preserved free of that scribal error in a non-canonical texts with which no one is very familiar" (Robinson Pre-canonical 517-518, Sayings 847). It is only awkward because it casts the primacy of the New Testament in doubt and makes the Gospel of Thomas a superior source of Jesus' words, not because it is not clearly demonstrated by the evidence.

That Luke 12:13-15 is a translation of Saying 72 is indicated by the word "divider". In the Coptic the word porj takes on a metaphorical sense but the Greek translation meristes makes little sense "in the Lukan dispensation", according to Gregory Riley, "either as a title for Jesus or a title for Jesus to deny...The term simply means nothing in the Lukan view of the religious world...Gos. Thom. 72, on the other hand, makes the term `divider' the very point of the saying" (Riley 231). Luke is so bothered by the word that he adds "judge" to it to put it squarely in a legalistic sense, to make clear a difficult expression by a familiar one (Bovon 52). And many of the early manuscripts of Luke leave out the word "divider" altogether (Baarda Luke 114-118).

In the case of Saying 89, there is more linguistic evidence from a translation mistake in Luke 11:41 that Luke is not writing a primary source. The context is: "You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give for alms those things which are within, and behold, everything is clean for you." The last sentence makes absolutely no sense and he meant to say katharison, "to cleanse", as in Matthew, instead of eleémosynen, "to give alms". Here the author of Luke must have been using an Aramaic source, for he confused two Aramaic words dakkau (to cleanse) and zakkau (to give alms). The correct word is dakkau, as shown in the Aramaic text of Matthew (Black Aramaic 2, Winterhalter 97, Uro "Washing" 313, Wellhausen Einleitung in die ersten drei Evangelien (1911) 27). Even a number of Christian interpreters have been forced to come to the conclusion that Luke simply did not understand the saying he borrowed from Matthew (Uro "Washing" 312).

In the case of four more sayings (33, 40, 66 and 94) it is clear that the New Testament used consecutive sayings of the Gospel of Thomas, as they appear together in the New Testament though without having much in common thematically. Matthew 5:14-15 mixes its metaphors between those of Saying 33 and the preceding Saying 32. Not only do the metaphors not fit, but he also greatly narrows the meaning: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Here Thomas' words are interpreted strictly in terms of "good works."

Matthew 15:12-13 directly connects Saying 40 with the Pharisees ("Let them alone, for they are blind guides"), even though there seems to be no inherent connection: but note that Saying 39, directly before, is about how the Pharisees hid the keys of knowledge! And note also that the context is the issue of food purity and the Pharisee reaction to it, and the quote from Saying 40 seems like an obtrusive insertion which doesn't fit the theme at all, stuck in only because it followed Saying 39.

Equally, every reference in all three Synoptic gospels connects Saying 66 (the corner stone) with Saying 65 (the parable of the tenants). Right after their version of the parable of the tenants they cite Psalm 118, both of which they interpret as referring to the Jews and Pharisees. Mark 12:10-12 connects the two citations with the Pharisees trying to arrest Jesus without further comment, but Matthew and Luke give two different interpretations: Matthew 21:43 says "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it", clearly aimed against the Jews, and Luke 20:18 says "every on who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but when it falls on any one it will crush him", also aimed at those who reject Jesus. Why would they string the two ideas together like this unless they had taken both of these citations straight from Thomas? The two citations otherwise have nothing to do with one another.

This is the conclusion Stevan Davies comes to in his close analysis: "The passage is not really appropriate for that purpose as the whole apparatus of the parable (vineyard, tenants, servants, master) is replaced with another allegorical apparatus (builders, cornerstone). Unless one is told that the Psalm citation comments on the parable, as one is told in the synoptics, one would hardly be expected to think that either of the two has anything to do with the other" (Davies I 313).

Saying 94 is used in Matthew 7:7-8: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." The funny thing is that this quote from 94 follows directly on Saying 93 and before that 26. The implication is that Matthew copied the exact order of Thomas in compiling his edition. Luke 11:9-10 repeats Matthew but without 93 before which he does not use at all. Saying 94 is clearly the shorter version here, and the Synoptics expanded it by essentially repeating the same thought, in order to stress the universal nature of Christianity.

Another bit of evidence that the New Testament used Thomas rather than the other way around is that pieces of several sayings of Thomas are split up and quoted in different sections in the Synoptics. It stretches logic to assume that the editor of Thomas would search through the Synoptics

and stitch together bits and pieces into cohesive sayings. It is much easier to assume that the Synoptics took bits and pieces from Thomas and inserted them into their narrative wherever they felt those pieces would fit.

The Synoptic editors repeat the 2nd and 3rd lines of Saying 5, but leave out the important first line that really frames the meaning. These two lines are then jumbled together with pieces from other Thomas sayings so that none of them really make sense. Mark 4:22 puts together the lamp part of 33, then 5 and then 41; Matt 10:26 takes 5, then the housetops from 33, then 87 and then a reference to sparrows that is not in Thomas; Luke 8:17 starts with the lamp part from 33, then 5 and then 41; and Luke 12:1-3 starts with 5 and ends with 33. All of these are missing key sentences that are integral to the meaning, and they are clearly thrown together ad hoc without any understanding.

Saying 14 is split up as follows:

fast - Mt 6:16
pray - Mt 6:5
give alms - Mt 6:2
walk in the country - Mt 10:11
eat what is set before you and heal the sick - Mt 10:8, Lk 10:8-9
what goes into your mouth - Mt 15:11, Mk 7:15

Even Christian scholars have to concede that direct use by Thomas of the Gospels is rather improbable: "If Thomas had a copy of a canonical gospel in front of his eyes, how can it be explained that the order of the sayings in the gospel has left so few traces on his editing work?" (Uro "Secondary" 322-323) Why?

Saying 33 was also used piecemeal. In Mark 4:21 (also Luke 8:16) Saying 33 is combined with pieces of Saying 6: "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not on a stand? For there is nothing hid, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." These are in the context of a number of parables which Jesus prefaces by saying that no one will understand them, and we assume Mark and Luke did not either. That seems clear from the way Mark mixes metaphors between the parable of the sower and the image of the lamp. As Davies says: "Mark's rhetorical questions follow very clumsily after the parable of the sower unless we assume that Mark considers the lamp's illumination to be an equivalent for sown seed,

which is in turn metaphorical for the spreading of Jesus' message. This is not difficult to assume, but one might wonder how Mark got the idea to shift metaphors from seed to lamp" (Davies II 247).

Matthew 10:27 (also Luke 12:1-3) borrows the reference to the "housetops" and mixes it with parts of Saying 6 as does Mark: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." This is a completely politicized application of Thomas' mystical words, in order to say that the hidden hypocrisy of the Pharisees will be exposed.

Saying 34 occurs twice in the New Testament in slightly different versions and contexts. In both cases Matthew 15:14 and Luke 6:39-40 have taken various originally separate sayings from Thomas and connected them. Luke follows 34 with 26, 45 and 32, while Matthew strings together 14, 40 and 34.

The citations of Saying 35 are even more of a mish-mash:

Mark 3: 35, 44, 99
Matt 11: 61b, 90
Matt 12: 35, 99
Luke 10: 61b, 73, 14, 39
Luke 11: 35, 79
Luke 12: 72, 63, 21, 103, 10, 16, 91

It is hard to see why Thomas would go to the trouble of rearranging all these bits and pieces: it is much more logical to see it the other way around, and even the Jesus Seminar agrees with this assessment of authenticity (Funk 493).

Saying 41 is placed in Mark 4:25 as part of a mish-mash of quotes from various sayings to make the point that no one understands Jesus' parables and moreover that he tells them for outsiders not to understand. 4:14-20 starts with Saying 9, 4:21 is part of Saying 33, 4:22 is the end of sayings 5 and 6, 4:23 is "ears to hear", followed by our quote from Saying 41 and then by Saying 21 in 4:26-29 and Saying 20 in 4:30-32. Even though Saying 41 isn't a parable at all and doesn't fit, Mark decided to stick it here anyway, probably because he doesn't really understand the meaning and needs someplace to insert it: as Taussig admits, "Mark is straining to make any sense of it" (Taussig 37). Luke 19:11-27 keeps the first part of Mark's

compilation but instead of quoting Saying 21 after 41, he quotes Saying 99 instead.

Even Saying 76, which tells a very coherent story, is split up by Matthew into two different sayings, while Luke has only one part in abbreviated form: Matthew 13:45-46: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Matthew 6:19-21 (Luke 12:33-34): "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Looking closely at the context, we see that the first one is one of a smorgasbord of parables, all taken from Thomas and all run together with no real relationship among them. And the second citation is part of the Sermon on the Mount, equally run together with other snatches from sayings in Thomas.

Both Matthew 11:7 and Luke 7:24-25 use parts of Saying 78 and then join it with Saying 46 to make 78 apply to John the Baptist. Yet this is not warranted by any source; as Patterson says, "it seems very unlikely that Thomas has taken a saying that originally referred to John and recast it to refer now to Jesus" (Patterson 78). Luke turns Saying 78 into an amazing smorgasbord:

7:24-25 - Introduction added to link the subsequent portions with John the Baptist; quotes from Saying 78;

7:26 - added material about John introduced by "yes, I tell you";

7:27 - a combination quotation from Exodus 23:30 and Malachi 3:1 (also appears in Mark 1:2), which "explicitly identifies John as the precursor of Jesus and implicitly identifies him with Elijah redivivus": "the intrusive character of 7:27 is widely recognized";

7:28 - quotes from Saying 46 "to mitigate the high estimate of John given in 7:26"; and

7:29 - parenthetical explanation linking the preceding to the Pharisees (Kloppenborg Formation 108-109).

Saying 79 is parceled out in two different places with very different meanings. Luke 11:27-28 cites lines 1-6: "As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, `Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!' But he said, `Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" And Luke 23:29 cites lines 7-9: "But Jesus turning to them said, `Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but

weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, `Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!'"

We have shown from linguistic and other evidence that in cases of similarity of material the New Testament is directly reliant on the Gospel of Thomas as its primary source. But even when it does quote the sayings of Thomas, it continually misunderstands and garbles them, usually in the service of its ideological agenda. Let us cite a few examples.

Rather amazingly, the New Testament versions of Saying 9 (Mt 13:3-8, Mk 4:3-8, Lk 8:5-8) have even Christian scholars convinced that the Synoptics did not understand this parable at all and that Thomas has the older version, particularly because it is simpler and lacks allegorization and interpretative comment. As Koester says, "that Thomas preserves a more original stage of that source of Mark is strikingly demonstrated by a comparison of the two versions" (Koester ancient 102). Even Tuckett, who thinks Thomas is a "gnosticizing redaction" of the Synoptics, calls Mark's version "long and cumbersome" (Tuckett Thomas 154-155).

Horman asks "why is it necessary for Mark (and Matthew) to point out twice that there is little soil when it is already obvious that this is the case from the fact that the seed had fallen on rocky ground?" (Horman 341)

Morrice notes that the "version in Thomas is less awkward than those in the Synoptic gospels and makes better agricultural sense" (Morrice 73). Cameron points out that Mark disrupts Thomas' carefully composed 3-fold structure and presents two conflicting images, immediate "scorching" of the seed and eventual "withering", two images that together don't make any sense. Mark and Luke give different reasons for the withering, Mark because it had "no root" and Luke because it had "no moisture". "The version in the Gospel of Thomas, by contrast, is straightforward and succinct." (Cameron Par 20) The New Testament also has the seeds falling "beside the road" or "by the wayside" which makes no sense, especially because Luke has them being "trodden under foot" which would not happen off the road.

Horman shows that in Saying 9 there are 28 words in Coptic with exact equivalents in Greek but 22 words have no Greek equivalent, which might explain the difficulties that the Synoptics had with the text (Horman 334). In sum, Loisy concludes that "no other section of the Gospel is so awkward literarily and logically" (Brown 41).

The Gospel compilers may have realized that they did not understand this parable and garbled it which is why Matthew 13:10-15 and Mark 4:10-12 have Jesus say that he tells his parables in an incomprehensible way so that people don't understand, but then in Mark 4:13-20 and Luke 8:11-15 he

proceeds to explain the parable anyway. He does so by bringing in outside agents who take away the word that is sown, Satan and persecution: again an externalizing interpretation very foreign to Thomas. Even Christian interpreters like Brown think that given the large number of details that "receive an allegorical explanation,...this seems a bit too complicated for Jesus' simple preaching." (Brown Parable 40)

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the Gospel compilers took Thomas' spare parable, cluttered it up with extra details in order to make it what they thought would be more intelligible, but realized that it was even less understandable and finally added their own interpretations. This might not all have been done at once, but as the product of several editions of the Synoptics. Most Christian scholars, of course, are very resistant to any suggestion that Thomas might be original, but Crossan essentially makes this argument in a backhanded kind of way. He says "the original version of the Sower is best reflected in the pre-Markan text, that is Mark 4:3-8 without the insertions in 4:5-6 and 4:8" (Crossan Parables 44). But once you strip all the insertions away from Mark, you have Thomas!

Saying 10 is essentially turned to nonsense in Luke 12:49: "I came to cast fire {pyr balein} upon the earth. And would that it were already kindled!" In contrast to Thomas the fire is not kindled yet which may be why Christian interpreters can see an eschatological meaning in it, since it will be kindled in the future. But it appears that Luke has used Thomas as his source and has misunderstood it. We have already seen that pyr balein is not a Greek expression and had to have been translated from Aramaic or Syriac. But the original expression "cast fire" is a Semitism that actually means "to kindle a fire" and is really wrongly translated (Bauer NT Apok 38, Jeremias Parables 163n). Thus what Luke's version is actually saying is: "I came to kindle fire upon the earth. And would that it were already kindled!" This is clearly nonsensical and shows that he did not understand what he was reading; just as clearly something nonsensical cannot be the original version. So also the apocalyptic interpretation rests on a misunderstanding of a mistranslation.

Equally, Saying 20 is turned to gobbledygook in Matthew 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32 and Luke 13:18-19. In all three versions the mustard seed is sown deliberately, and in Luke it is sown in a man's garden. But mustard is a weed and usually not sown at all; even if it is, definitely not in gardens. Accuracy is here subordinated to theology, i.e.the sowing of the word, and this theme is so important to Mark that he mentions "sowing" twice quite redundantly, interrupting his narrative in an awkward way. Such awkwardness is fairly typical of Mark's gospel, "whereby Mark makes an insertion into his source text and then repeats after it the phrase which

preceded it" (Crossan Parables 46).

The result of this patchwork editing, as Crossan shows, is that "the grammar of Mark 4:31-32 is notoriously bad...the worst Greek" of all the seed parables (Crossan seed 256). These translation difficulties stem from editorial tampering with the original text which, as Davies concludes, was Saying 20: a comparison of the three versions "reveal(s) what appear to be redactional alterations by Mark to the Thomasine original" (Davies Mark II 251).

The most jarring incongruence in the Synoptic versions is the escalation of the "branch" in Thomas into a full-grown "tree" in Matthew and Luke. Mark calls it "greater than all the herbs", using the Greek lachanôn which specifically refers to garden herbs rather than wild ones (Liddell 408a) but mistranslated in the English Bibles as "shrubs" and in the King James version vaguely as "plants". And in addition all three Synoptics change the birds having shelter in Thomas to the birds making nests.

So when Mark has birds nesting in the large branches of this garden herb, the image becomes patently absurd and nonsensical. One can possibly see a mustard plant sheltering birds but it certainly isn't strong enough for nests. This is clearly why Matthew and Luke add the detail of the garden herb becoming a tree, but that is botanically even more absurd. Crossan rightly asks: "Why begin with a mustard seed if one intends to end with a tree rather than a bush? why use a mustard plant if one intends to have birds nesting in its branches? Or if one intends an eschatological image at the end, why choose such an ambiguous one?" (Crossan Seed 255)

The reason is the Synoptics' intentional reference to Ezekiel 17:22-23, 31:6 and Daniel 4:20-21, in which the chosen people Israel is compared with the mighty cedar of Lebanon which was used to build the Temple of Solomon: "in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest." So one has to conclude that either the Synoptics are denigrating and making fun of Old Testament prophecies about the Jews as the chosen people, or they are awkwardly trying to force eschatological imagery where it does not fit. And the real question is whether the Synoptic editors, in trying to burlesque the Old Testament, are not inadvertently burlesquing themselves, due to their own poetic and literary clumsiness.

It is astounding how badly the New Testament distorts Saying 22. Here is Matthew 18:1-6 (also Mt 19:13-14, Mk 9:36-37, 42, 10:13-16, and Lk 9:47-48, 18:15-17): "Truly I say unto you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like a child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have

a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." This is followed by the threat of hell and rather violent actions to take against body parts that sin: "And if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away." The emphasis here is on the humility of children, not the primal sense of unity as in Thomas, on sin rather than spiritual evolution toward a more unified being and on punishment and fear of hell rather than spiritualizing the body. The subtle teaching against thinking in dichotomies is of course completely missing, for the New Testament is fundamentally based on dichotomous thinking.

It is quite possible that the fulminations against sinning hand, feet and eyes are taken in a grossly distorted fashion from lines 17-19 of Saying 22 but the message is hardly recognizable. And Mark may even have applied Saying 22 in 10:2-9 to make a statement against divorce: "Mark may have revised Thomas 22b away from commending the abstract idea of making the two one and making the male and female one and the same, into a reference to Genesis 2:24, 5:2, in support of a prohibition against divorce, one applicable to all people" (Davies use 326). And clearly neither the New Testament nor later Christian theologians found any use for the ideal of androgyny in their theology, for the New Testament does not mention the union of male and female and the Church Fathers, such as Augustine and Eusebius, emphatically rejected the idea of an original androgynous Adam (Dietrich 330-332).

Luke 4:23-24 mixes a part of Saying 31 with a very popular Greek proverb without making the connection between them very clear: "And he said to them, `Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, `Physician, heal yourself; what we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here also in your own country." And he said, `Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country.'" The proverb "Physician, heal yourself" was extremely well-known in the classical world, being quoted 25 times in some form by many writers, including Homer, Euripides, Aristotle, Aeschylus, Ovid, Cicero, Dio Chrysostom, Pliny, Pindar, Apollonius, Hippocrates, Galen, Simplicius, Lucian and the rabbis of the Talmud (Wettstein 409, 681). Despite the great variety of contexts of these quotes, the general meaning is that a doctor who professes to heal others but cannot or will not heal himself or keep himself healthy is a hypocrite or maybe a greedy incompetent.

Yet in this context the issue at hand is not whether Jesus can heal himself but whether he has the power to heal others in his own hometown rather than in a strange place. Why would Luke take a part of Saying 31 that fits the context and replace it with a well-known non-Christian saying that does not? This is probably because he is uncomfortable with the statement in Saying 31 that Jesus cannot heal those who know him: saying this would contradict the fundamental basis of Christian claims for the saving power of

knowing Jesus. So he would rather replace it with a non sequitur based on a pagan proverb than include something so potentially subversive (see Noorda 464-465).

Saying 41 is quoted in Matthew 13:12 as an illustration of why Jesus speaks in parables: "For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance, but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away." This makes absolutely no sense in the context and this quote could be taken out without affecting the meaning of what precedes and follows. Just like Mark, Matthew did not understand Saying 41 but wanted to insert it somewhere anyway.

Not satisfied with one rather distorted rendition of the saying, Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:11-27 then proceed to cite it again but to append an entirely different explanation to it in the form of the very long parable of the talents. Here two servants added to the money given to them but the third one did not and hid it in the ground. He is rebuked, told he should have invested it and his money is taken from him and given to the others. Not satisfied with that, Jesus condemns the "worthless servant" to be cast "into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Matt 25:30).

This use of Saying 41 sounds like a rather crude capitalistic message which is the exact opposite of what Jesus clearly means in Saying 41, but of course the import is the return on the investment of believing in Jesus as the Messiah. This divergent use of Saying 41 for different purposes shows that none of the Gospel editors really understood the subtle, multi-layered and sophisticated saying in Thomas.

The New Testament versions of Saying 47 (Mk 2:21-22, Mt 9:16-17 and Lk 5:36-39) are much longer than Thomas because of explanatory material, and the poetic parallelism is lost. Unfortunately the more the Gospels try to explain the metaphors of Saying 47 the more of a conceptual mess they make of it. What for example does it mean to say as does Mark 2:21-22: "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; if he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but new wine is for fresh skins." What does any of this have to do with the question on fasting which is what Jesus is answering here? and how does the lengthy explanation of the skins bursting contribute to answering that question?

As Davies says: "The material in Thomas is proverbial, simple and its contrasting parallel structure is evidence of a barely elaborated oral tradition. Mark omits half of the parallel-structure proverb and elaborates

at considerable length on the remaining half in a manner that is needlessly redundant (if a wineskin bursts it does not require saying that both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined)." Davies also suggests that the reason Mark changed the order of the quotation from Saying 47 is so that he could end with the triumphal statement touting the superiority of Christianity over Judaism: "New wine is for new wineskins" (Davies "Mark's use" 238).

Neither Matthew nor Luke end their citations very concisely and lose their points along the way. Luke in particular does not seem to be convinced that the garment and wineskin material has anything to do with the question on fasting and separates it by adding "He told them a parable also". Then, even more inexplicably, he undercuts the basic point of the superiority of the new over the old by adding "the old is good" at the end. Riley says Luke "contradicts the very point of the saying" and Kee states that "the ending which Luke added...destroys the meaning of the parable or any interpretation" (Riley Infl 233).

As for Saying 62, the New Testament takes a high-level, profound and cryptic teaching of inner balance of insight and intellect and turns it into a mundane teaching about alms-giving: Matthew 6:3: "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." The meaning of this is clear, that one should not brag about giving alms, but how exactly does the metaphor of right and left hands work here? Since Matthew tends to take things literally, then how is it possible that your left hand does not know what your right hand is doing when you are clearly handing out money? It makes no sense in Matthew's context and it indicates that he took Thomas' metaphor out of context and inserted it where he thought it would sound mysterious and profound.

Here's a little exercise that will convince you of this: take the part about the hands out and what you have left still makes sense: "But when you give alms, let your alms be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." This is perfectly clear and requires no metaphors. Try this with all the New Testament sayings; it will work most of the time. In Thomas, however, the metaphors are integral to the meaning of the saying; take them out and you have nothing left.

The parable of Saying 63 is only found in Luke 12:16-20 in the New Testament and there are a number of significant changes. The rich man already had an abundant harvest but he had nowhere to store his crops so he decided to pull down his barns and build larger ones. He does this so he can store his goods for many years and "take his ease, eat, drink and be merry." This is almost as absurd a story as Thomas' seems to be, for as Hedrick says,

it was the "virtually uniform advice of Roman manuals...that the farmer should not overbuild the productivity of his land" and "while it is plausible that a farmer might need to tear down existing storage facilities and build larger ones, it is virtually inconceivable that he would do so with his ready-to-be-harvested crop sitting in the fields" (Hedrick 158).

So here we have another farmer burlesque: at the very least a bad manager, who fails to foresee the need for additional storage space, and a farmer who appears inept and foolish, even humorous. The difference is that Thomas' farmer can be accused of greed, but Luke's farmer only of stupidity. Yet in contrast to Thomas, Luke brackets this whole story with much commentary to make sure the reader gets the point: "Take heed and beware of all covetousness" and "God said to him, `Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." This seems a bit harsh for someone who is merely trying to enjoy his life; even tearing down his barns and rebuilding them might make sense under certain circumstances.

But the odd thing about Luke's editing is this: why would Luke take a story which makes fun of an apparently greedy farmer and change it in such a way that the farmer becomes simply incompetent and pleasure-loving without really being greedy, but then he appends quite moralistic commentary accusing him of greed? It is as if he had originally written the commentary for Thomas' story and decided to change the story after the commentary was already written because it was too "Gnostic" for him but didn't want to bother to go back and change the commentary too. In the meantime any deeper spiritual meaning is hard to find in Luke's revised version.

Saying 69 is in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:6 in a severely abbreviated form: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (also repeated in a shorter form in Luke 6:21). Here Matthew and Luke replace "the Father" with "righteousness". Remarkably, they also use a very odd Greek construction for "they will be satisfied": chortas phesontai. Chortazô means "to feed or fatten in a stall" (Liddell 787a) and is always applied to animals (Morrice 88). This term seems completely out of place here, certainly for the spiritual metaphor of the original in Thomas but even for the idea of hungering for righteousness. There are other words in Greek for "to satisfy," such as arkei. Either the compilers of Matthew and Luke simply did not know their Greek very well, or they were making fun of those who seek righteousness, or their thinking was on a very crude level and they really do mean an animal level of satisfaction.

Equally bad Greek is found in the New Testament version of Saying 73. Word-for-word Luke's version in 10:2 reads "the indeed harvest much, but the workmen few" (o men therismos polés oi de ergatai oligoi). Blass' grammar points out that the 3rd person singular of the verb "to be" can be omitted, as is done twice here, but "closely related elements in the sentence, eg. noun and attributive...are usually placed together" (Blass 70, 248), which makes "the indeed harvest" faulty grammar. It is hard to imagine that a subtle and high-level document like Thomas would derive from such fractured language.

Matthew's version in 9:37 starts with "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" but changes the end to "pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." One can see why he changes "ask" to "pray" but why "his" harvest? You'd have to really strain to make sense out of this, but it may lend itself to an eschatological meaning. It comes right after a section on miracle healing and it is hard to see what the harvest image has to do with that. Matthew may have just inserted it there to have a place to put it, as he obviously doesn't understand its meaning.

Saying 76 is split up between Matthew 6:19-21 and 13:45-46 but neither citation in Matthew ends up making much sense. The adjective "wise" is left out (and it is only used twice in the entire New Testament in Mt 11:19 and 11:25) and Matthew does not understand that the wisdom of the merchant lay in his concentration on the one pearl, as he has him "in search of fine pearls." Moreover, he sells everything he has rather than the other merchandise; doing this cancels the point of the whole story.

In the second part of Saying 76 Matthew has "rust" instead of "worms"; the Greek is brosis, meaning "food; eating into, corrosion, rust." This is probably a misunderstanding of Thomas, based on the idea of "eating into" and the oldest Latin manuscript of the Gospels gives it as "devourer". Consider the absurdity of a treasure that can be consumed by both moth and rust: if it rusts, it is metal and cannot be affected by moths; if it can be eaten by moths, it cannot rust nor would it be a very tempting target for thieves.

Saying 86 is changed to such an extent that it no longer makes sense in its context. In Matthew 8:19-20 (also Luke 9:57-58) we read, "A scribe ("man" in Luke) came up and said to him, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever I go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to bend the head'." Over all, the changes introduced by Matthew and Luke take the spiritual meaning out of Saying 86 and are an attempt to make it more literal and understandable in a linear way.

However, given the contexts that Saying 86 is placed in, what

remains of its meaning is lost. If the scribe and man is willing to follow Jesus, then what does it matter that he has no settled abode? If Jesus is talking about being an itinerant wandering teacher, then wouldn't he be happy that someone wants to follow him and live the same lifestyle? Why is he then trying to dissuade the man from following him by lamenting his homelessness? But that is certainly not the case since right after the citation of Saying 86 he says to another man in Luke 9:59 "Follow me", which then leads to his (quite shocking) refusal to let him bury his father (also repeated in Matthew).

It is hard to escape the conclusion that either the Gospel compilers merely inserted the citation from Saying 86 fairly randomly into their text here because they did not know what to do with it or that they tried to construct a narrative out of it but failed to understand what it actually says. Either way their context is absurd and Jesus' response is a non sequitur.

Saying 96 is another example of a saying of Jesus turned into nonsense by the New Testament. Matthew 13:33 (Luke 13:20-21) says: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till it was all leavened".

The Synoptics of course do not like the word "colostrum" and arbitrarily turn it into "leaven" for which there is no linguistic basis in the original. Then they compare the Kingdom to the leaven instead of to the woman, but as we have seen before, leaven was a symbol for corruption in the ancient world. They also omit the contrast between "small" and "large" in Thomas but they keep the mention of "hiding" the leaven which in this context makes no sense. Morrice thinks three measures (Hebrew seahs) of flour is a "ridiculously large amount" and a "strange addition". This is 50 pounds, sufficient to feed about 160 people, yet for the parable to make sense that large amount should be the end result, not the starting point (Morrice 81, "New" 21).

He rightly asks "did you ever hear of any housewife using 56 pounds of flour in one baking?" (Morrice "New" 21) The phrase "three measures" has nothing to do with history anyway, for it comes from Genesis 18:6 where Abraham instructs Sarah to make cakes from three measures of flour.

The same compulsion by the New Testament editors to make arbitrary quotations from the Old Testament is evident in the phrase "until it was all leavened" which comes from Hosea 7:4 who means by it the inevitability that all will be corrupted (Scott 327). This phrase thus makes double nonsense out of the parable: if something is all leavened, then there is no difference between the leaven and the flour, and so what is the point of the parable? And if the leaven is supposed to represent the Kingdom of God,

then why would you draw in a reference to complete corruption to illustrate that idea?

In sum, the editors of Matthew and Luke clearly did not understand Thomas' parable and the more they tinkered with it, the more nonsensical they made it. By changing "colostrum" to "yeast" and adding non-applicable quotes from the Old Testament in order to prove the equality of the New Testament to it, they reduce the parable to nonsense.

As for Saying 104, the context for its citation in Mark 2:18-22, Matthew 9:14-17 and Luke 5:33-39 is a question why the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees fast and pray but why Jesus' disciples don't, a connection not found in Thomas. The bridegroom imagery is then distorted to make it eschatological: "The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days". An expanded version of Saying 47 is then added, to stress the new dispensation of Jesus over the old one of the Pharisees, but the metaphors don't fit the metaphor of the bridegroom very well.

As Davies says: "Mark evidently revised Thomas 104 by specifying the questioners (John's disciples and Pharisees), shifting the focus from Jesus to disciples of Jesus, eliminating reference to prayer altogether, and taking the opportunity to have Jesus hint at his crucifixion while validating the practice of fasting in the post-Easter church...Because GThom 104 is the more primitive version on form-critical grounds, there appears to be a causal arrow pointing from Gospel of Thomas to the Gospel of Mark" (Davies "Mark Pt 2" 236).

Saying 107 is quoted twice in the New Testament. Here is Matthew's version in 18:10-14: "If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray." Luke 15:7 adds: "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." By eliminating many of the elements of Saying 109 - it being a parable of the Kingdom, the lost sheep being the larger, the shepherd suffering and desiring the large sheep - Matthew and Luke turn this very complex parable into a simple one-dimensional story about God forgiving sinners and wanting them to return to the Christian path.

But what is odd about their versions are the strongly charged Greek words that are usually translated with the bland "leave": Matthew uses aphiémi, "to leave alone, let loose, send off, neglect" and Luke uses kataleipô, "to leave behind, forsake, abandon, leave in the lurch."

As Christian commentators have consistently interpreted the shepherd as God or the Church (see Beyschlag 128-129), don't these words give a rather negative picture of both: God and the Church abandon and neglect those who follow and believe in them in favor of those who don't? Christian commentators, both ancient and modern, have been greatly troubled by this implication of the shepherd as neglectful and uncaring and have tried mightily to dispute it. So Irenaeus insisted that the sheep "continued within the fold", Cyril asserted that "they are in security, guarded by His Almighty hand" and Gregory the Great compared the 99 with "lofty choirs of angels in heaven" (Molinari 306-307). Clearly something doesn't add up, which illustrates how little the editors of Matthew and Luke understood the material they were reworking.

The version of Saying 109 in Matthew 13:44 is different enough that there has been a vigorous discussion whether the two versions are related to each other at all: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." Here Matthew turns the spiritual seeker of Thomas into a person who is downright immoral.

The man found the treasure in land that wasn't his and covered it up, implying sneaky and deceptive behavior and also possibly illegal activity. If he is covering it up, then the treasure is no longer hidden and the man become a hoarder, wanting to keep others from finding it. Only after he finds the treasure does he buy the land without telling the owner, the opposite of Saying 109, which makes him doubly deceptive and dishonest. This is set in the context of other parables (76, 8) which are given eschatological interpretations about the "close of the age" in which the good and the evil will be sorted out.

The interpretation that the reader is thus asked to take of this parable is that the coming kingdom is so important that any kind of behavior is excusable in order to be ready for it. It is no wonder that so many commentators are struck by the immorality and downright despicable behavior of this protagonist: "The finder of the treasure is an immoral hero. He acquires his find craftily if not to say deceitfully; the owner is unclear about the true value of his field, and he must realize after the conclusion of the sale that he has been deceived and duped" (Schramm 44). Crossan too acknowledges "it is not exactly what one would boast of having done except in carefully chosen company" and there is no reason to admire the finder, contrary to other similar folk tales (Crossan Raid 155).

Because of this questionable quality of Matthew 13:44, the early Church Fathers who cited it (Aristides, Tatian, Irenaeus and Clement of

Alexandria) were so embarrassed by the content that they did not cite it fully and did not discuss the exact way in which the treasure was acquired: "What seems to have caught their imagination and held their memory is the phenomenon of hidden treasure and its finding and not the method of obtaining the hoard. They ignore...where it was discovered and how it was actually secured" (Crossan Finding 103). Naturally, for they could easily be accused of promoting immorality. Clearly Matthew 13:44 did not reflect well on Christianity.

It is also instructive to look at the sayings that the New Testament does not use from the Gospel of Thomas. One of these examples is Saying 82 which even Christian scholars think sounds like a genuine saying of Jesus. Jeremias says "in its form it has the sound of a genuine saying of Jesus. Jesus loves to express his thoughts in such sharp juxtapositions; the frequency of antithetic parallelism is almost a characteristic of the manner of speech of Jesus." (Unbek 70) And Higgins says it is "characteristic of the style of Jesus in its antithetic parallelism and Semitic structure" (Higgins GoT 41, Non-Gnostic 303), Hofius ranks it among the sole nine from Thomas he accepts as authentic (UNbekannte) and Lane considers it to be the only authentic one: "there is little reason why this agraphon cannot be authentic" (Lane "critique" 35). Most likely the New Testament does not include it because of its origin as a pagan Greek proverb.

One of the most important sayings that is not included is Saying 28 and here it is rather remarkable that despite superficial parallels in John, there is no direct use of it anywhere in the New Testament. One would think that the saying would lend itself well to a Christological reinterpretation, with Jesus as the divine savior taking his stand in the flesh in the midst of the world. And the last line calling for repentance, at least in the Christian translation of it, is excellently suited as well. Moreover, wouldn't it be comforting for a believing Christian to know that his or her savior actually felt the pain of the sufferings of humans in his own heart and had sympathy and compassion for them? And wouldn't someone who was willing to die for your sins need to feel that? But nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus express himself in these words which are clearly so close at hand. It is rather astounding that no Thomas scholar has asked this obvious question.

One can only conclude that the philosophy of Saying 28 is much too honest and individually empowering to suit the New Testament. Jesus speaks too personally to be suited for the mythological, cultic figure that Pauline Christianity turned him into, and teaching people about metanoia, the original deeper meaning of transforming one's awareness rather than the later Christian one of repentance, is not at all in keeping with the ideology of belief and obedience to received dogma that the New Testament inculcates.

If someone has a transformative inner experience, they might realize that the whole ideological edifice of institutionalized Christianity is an illusion too! Perhaps it suits the Church well to have people stay drunk, blind and empty!

Chapter 11:

The Political Use of the Gospel of Thomas Within the New Testament

It is manifestly evident that Paul knew the Gospel of Thomas, though just like the Christian theologians, he never quotes it by name. 1 Corinthians 4:8 says: "Already you are filled! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you!" The vocabulary is so reminiscent of Saying 2 that it would be hard to call this a mere coincidence. In 1 Corinthians 13:2 Paul refers to the idea of faith removing mountains: he might well have gotten this from Saying 48 and 106. In 1 Corinthians 5:6 and Galatians 5:9 Paul adds the word "little" to "leaven", a word that is not in the Synoptics but that is in Saying 96.

Paul also shares the concept of spiritual circumcision with Saying 53 in the Gospel of Thomas. The many references include Romans 2:25-31, 3:1, 3:30, 4:9, I Corinthians 7:19, Galatians 6:15, Philippians 3:2-3 and Colossians 2:11. Suggestively enough, Paul uses the exact same phrase as in Saying 53 with the same Greek verb: "circumcision profits {ophelei}." It is an unusual phrase and one strongly suspects that he got it from Thomas.

Acts demonstrates that it was precisely Paul's opposition to circumcision that marked his decisive break with the Jewish-Christian followers of Jesus headed by his brother James. In Acts 21:18-21 James and the elders criticize Paul for telling Jews in the Gentile world "to turn their backs on Moses, telling them to give up circumcising their children and following our way of life." It is for this that the Ebionites or Jewish-Christians called him an apostate, as attested by Irenaeus in Against the Heretics 1.26.2. And if Paul qualified his position, he did so only because he knew the extent of opposition to him in the Jewish world: thus I do not think Gathercole's dating logic holds up.

It is quite likely that Paul felt he was putting into effect Jesus' true position on circumcision by his own opposition to it. Yet in all of the Synoptic Gospels Jesus never expresses any opposition to it and Luke 2:21 even mentions that Jesus himself was circumcised: clearly by the time the New Testament was written this was no longer an important issue. Where else would Paul have gotten this notion if not in the Gospel of Thomas?

Circumcision was a controversial issue in early Christianity but is hardly mentioned in later writings. As Schäfer says, "one knows what

struggles it took for Paul to assert the freedom of the Gentile Christians from law and circumcision. If a saying by Jesus such as Saying 53 of the Gospel of Thomas had existed, then the whole dispute would have been superfluous" (Schäfer "ThEv" 72). Clearly it did exist and most likely guided Paul's thinking on the subject of circumcision. However, the dispute with the Jewish Christians under Jesus' brother James who followed Jewish law could not be avoided, and in this regard Paul may actually be closer to Jesus himself than to James.

The example that clinches the idea that Paul knew the Gospel of Thomas is Saying 17. The striking phrase "what the eye has not seen, and what the ear has not heard, and what the hand has not touched and what has not lifted up in the heart of man" is cited in some version at least 25 times in Christian, Manichaean and Gnostic literature, including citations in Persian and Turkish as far away as Chinese Turkestan in central Asia (Klimkeit 155, Jonas Gnostic 41). Only the Manichaean texts and one Christian source quote the phrase "what no hand has touched" and that is indubitably from Thomas.

Paul cites the same phrase in 1 Corinthians 2.7-9: "But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, `What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.'"

Here Paul himself admits that he is quoting a written source which contains the true sayings of Jesus. His quote is strikingly similar to Saying 17, with the exception of the last phrase. It is this last phrase that indicates whether later citations are from Saying 53 or from Paul: 15 such citations are from Thomas while 10 are clearly from Paul.

Paul must have known full well what he was citing and he certainly cites it in connection with Jesus. Paul was a master of rhetoric who borrowed stock phrases and expressions from many sources without attribution, so for him to quote someone else is a clear indication that he thought the source was widely known enough that his borrowing would be obvious. He also uses the citation in a definite political context to assert his legitimacy as against the leadership of James the brother of Jesus: he claims to offer secret knowledge conveyed to him by the spirit of God rather than hearing it directly from Jesus as James and Thomas did. And so he adds a sentence "what God has prepared for those who love him" which is not in Thomas but which sets his claim to the rewards promised to the believer who follows his words.

This example illustrates the process by which the New Testament was written. Phrases are taken from the Gospel of Thomas as being recognizably the true words of Jesus. These phrases are then twisted into a ideological or political direction and are combined with citations from other sources to help create the theology of the New Testament. And since there is no narrative in Thomas, shockingly enough images and metaphors from Thomas are used to create whole new narrative situations that are essentially fictional but help create a life of Jesus which fits the ideological thrust. Let us examine both these processes.

Creation of narratives from Thomas

Stevan Davies has shown convincingly in two articles in the journal Neotestamentica that the standard practice in Mark is to construct narrative contexts around pure sayings of Jesus, and often the bits of narrative that tie sayings together are awkwardly enough constructed to make the practice clear. As Davies says, "It was...Mark's purpose to construct a narrative `biography' and he does not seem to have had at hand a wealth of material to draw upon. Accordingly, his narrative context for sayings, and conceptions of the reactions of Jesus' audiences, are generally drawn from his own speculations" (Davies Mark II 253).

The first example is the New Testament's use of Saying 8. We have already pointed out that the Greek word thalassa used in both Saying 8 and in the New Testament was only used for true seas or oceans and not for lakes. Thus it is possible that the Gospel editors took Saying 8, constructed a narrative of fishermen around it and applied the word thalassa in it directly to their stories about Lake Gennesaret, even though the lake was never called by that name. It may well be that the stories in Mark 1:16-20 and Matthew 4:18-22 of Jesus finding fishermen and telling them that he will make them "fishers of men" are constructed around Saying 8, and significantly Luke, who does not have these stories, uses the correct word for "lake".

From a purely realistic point of view, it is a little odd that most of Jesus' disciples should be fishermen. As a matter of fact, Lake Gennesaret is never mentioned in the Old Testament in connection with fishing, only with boundary issues. Only a few of the 25 species of fish, mostly tilapia and sardines, are even edible. Today 1300 tons of fish are caught there annually (Handbuch 502), a fair amount but not a major industry.

But there is no doubt of the strong symbolic associations to fish in early Christianity and it is highly plausible that all the talk of fish in the Synoptics has nothing to do with real fishermen and lakes but is strictly

symbolic. In a number of Roman catacombs and chapels dating from the 1st to the 3rd century a sacramental fish meal is depicted on the walls, always involving fish, bread and a sacred drink, either wine or water; these same joint images of fish and bread also occur not infrequently in early Christian funeral inscriptions (Eisler Messianic 494-496). In the San Callisto fresco, for example, a man is standing before the table taking hold of a fish and a woman is bending in an attitude of blessing over the fish. An early Christian epitaph found at Autun in 1839 says: "Divine trace of the Heavenly Fish, among all the mortal ones, take and taste the [one] immortal spring of the god-given waters; Refresh, O Friend, thy soul with the ever-flowing flood of blissful wisdom. Take the Saviour's honey-like food, the meat of the Saints" (Eisler 503-504).

That very same imagery is found in the New Testament (Mk 6:34-44, 8:1-9, Mt 14:15-21, Lk 9:12-17 and Jn 6:1-15) where Jesus feeds the multitudes with fish and bread, incorporating the sacred cosmic numbers seven (loaves) and twelve (baskets). Eisler says: "Even the most perfunctory comparison of the monuments from the Roman catacombs with the cited texts will convince the reader that these earliest extant pictures of the sacramental fish-meal are by no means illustrative of the evangelical tradition of such an incident in the history of Jesus. In none of the pictures do we find one of the persons distinguished in such a way as to suggest the artist's intention of characterizing the Saviour himself...What they portrayed was simply a ritual fish-and-bread meal, as the Christians still used to celebrate it at the time when these pictures were made" (Eisler Messianic 500-501).

Cumont finds himself mystified as to the origin of this custom which died out after the 4th century; but there is no doubt that already by the turn of the 2nd century Christ was depicted as a fish throughout the Roman Empire wherever Christians were found (Pauly 848-849). This connects well with the ancient associations between fish and immortality and wisdom which were merely transferred to Christ, though some have also argued that there is astrological significance to the fish as the beginning of the Age of Pisces which, depending on how one counts the processions of ages, Jesus may have ushered in.

Yet it is still a little odd that Christians universally called Jesus the "pure good large fish". Could Saying 8 in the Gospel of Thomas have had any influence on this usage? If one considers often and how much of it was quoted in versions of the Bible, in the Diatessaron and by Christian writers, one can see the powerful appeal of the imagery of the good large fish drawn from the deep sea of the subconscious. Thus a sacrificial fish ritual with deep roots in Babylonia and Syria may have merged with the fish imagery of

Saying 8 to create the fish symbolism around Jesus and the fish-and-bread meal of early Christianity. The New Testament then merely reflected already existing practice by incorporating this symbolism in all four gospels and by borrowing the geographically incorrect term thalassa from Saying 8 for its symbolic fish stories centered around Lake Gennesaret.

The same process applies to Saying 31, which the Synoptics clearly expanded to create their narrative. This is Bultmann's conclusion, seconded by Dibelius (106-107): "This seems to me to be a typical example of how an imaginary situation is built up out of an independent saying" (Bultmann Synoptic 31).

Mark 6:1-6 begins the process, as Davies describes: "The author of the Gospel of Mark created a life of Jesus from the sources available to him, few of which were narratives...Mark set out to construct a biography partially from isolated decontextualized sayings. We can follow him doing so as he creates his Gospel's chapter 6:1-6 from this proverb, writing of Jesus' return to his home town, their rejection of him as a prophet, his failure to heal those who knew him, and then concluding with Jesus speaking a version of this very saying" (Davies 44). Clearly Mark's version is a free rewording of Saying 31, elaborating on the brief saying in 31: "And Jesus said to them, `A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin and in his own house.' And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:4).

It is possible that Mark constructed the entire Temple scene of Jesus driving out the money-lenders from the last sentence of the Saying 64. Goguel suggested this possibility in his life of Jesus first published in 1933: "At the outset the record must have been a great simpler than it is now. Originally it would have said that Jesus protested against the presence of the sellers of merchandise and money-changers in the Temple...The saying of Jesus was transformed into an incident and, at the third stage of development, the saying and the story to which it had given rise were combined" (Goguel Jesus and Origins 2.415).

But Davies greatly elaborates this argument which is well worth quoting here: "The whole Markan pericope is summed up at the beginning `Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there' (Mk 11:15-19) which appears to be a narrativisation of Thomas 64b `Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my Father.'...Whatever `places of my Father' may have meant to the compiler of Thomas, the applicability of the phrase to the Jerusalem Tample seems obvious ...Mark constructs a narrative (as he does with Thomas 31 to

construct 6:1-6)...moving then to the description of the activity, adding scriptural citations to provide apparent motivation, incorporating as he often does a plot by Judean leaders who are contrasted to inoffensive crowds, and finally framing the whole with the figtree incident to allow for broader symbolic interpretation" (Davies "Mark II" 256).

And the Gospel of John may well be doing the same thing. Beare points out that "the closing saying is itself probably a distorted reminiscence of the text Jesus quoted to the money-changers in the Temple: `Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise' (John 2:16 - not in the Synoptics)" (Beare 109) - or rather the other way around. And Brown points out that the Greek topos is also the name for the Temple in John 11:48, thus it may well be that John does the same thing as Mark (R. E. Brown "St. Johns" 170).

This seems like a shocking conclusion to me. The story of Jesus overturning the money-changers' tables is an entrenched part of the narrative and seems to have a real historical ring. Could it really be that Mark and John just made it up in order to expand on Thomas? What does that say about the veracity of all the other stories in the New Testament?

Similarly, the New Testament compilers use Saying 71 to create their stories about Jesus predicting the destruction of the Temple. To accomplish this, they change the critical word "house" to "temple" in order to fit it into their narrative and their theology. All in all, in the New Testament Jesus is recorded as having predicted the destruction of the Temple five times, combined with an actual attack on the Temple in Mark 11:15-19. However, the only direct source quoting Jesus is in John 2:18-21: "The Jews then said to him, `What sign have you to show for doing this?' Jesus answered them, `Destroy (lysis - dissolve, set free) this temple and in three days I will raise it up.'...But he spoke of the temple of his body." John then makes clear that Jesus was referring to his body, which fits the real meaning of the verb lysis as well. Even in the Latin of Jerome soluite from solvo still means "loosen, dissolve, release, break up" rather than "destroy".

The other references to destruction are all secondary: Mark 14:58 (also Matth 26:61, 27:40, Acts 6:14): "And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, `We heard him say, `I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" In all these citations the verb is kataluo, "to dissolve, put down, make an end of", whose meanings really don't fit the idea of physical destruction but do fit a more inward meaning. However, in Latin this becomes destruere and that is where the misinterpretation starts, based not on the direct citation of Jesus but on the indirect ones. Thus, in the Greek New Testament is Jesus really speaking of the Temple? Moreover, the indirect

citations of Jesus are labeled as false rumors. Jesus does say in Mark 13:2 (Matt 24:2, Luke 21:6) with regard to the Temple: "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down" but here he does not claim that he is the one who will do it.

It looks like the later New Testament compilers are trying to have it both ways. They are citing Jesus' remarks as if he were speaking about destroying the Temple but at the same time trying to connect his words with his impending resurrection which is important to their theology. And then they also cite his prophecies about the destruction of the Temple as if to imply that the remarks are the same even though here he makes no claims for himself. So in reality Jesus never claims in the Greek New Testament that he will destroy the Temple and the word only begins to be used in Latin to fit the evolving Church theology. This leads Crossan to conclude that Saying 71 is "the most original version we have" rather than the New Testament references (Crossan Hist Jesus 356) and it leads Aune to say that "that claim is attributed directly to Jesus only in the Gospel of Thomas 71" (Aune 173). Yet that is also only when it is mistranslated and in actuality not so either.

What is even more odd about the New Testament story is that not only are the sayings of Jesus claiming to destroy the Temple dubious, yet it is those very questionable sayings that are the basis for his trial and execution. As Arnal points out: "When Jesus is brought to trial the accusation against him is not that he performed such an anti-temple activity, but that he uttered a saying (a saying Jesus actually did utter according to Mark 3:2) in which the destruction of the Temple was predicted (Mark 14:58), a charge that is repeated as Jesus hangs on the cross (15:29). Thus the gospel of Mark implicitly contradicts itself on this point insofar as the charges against Jesus at the trial rather nonsensically focus on a relatively innocuous saying made privately rather than a blatantly insurgent action supposed to have taken place publicly" (Arnal Major 207).

The whole story of the cleansing of the Temple is highly unrealistic. It is Passover and a tense and revolutionary time in Palestine, thousands of Roman troops are stationed in Jerusalem expecting trouble from the masses of pilgrims converging from the entire Jewish world, and Jesus has just marched in and has been proclaimed the king of the Jews. Yet the authorities do not even react when he launches an attack on the Temple and he walks away as if nothing had happened, even calmly discussing it afterwards. In particular, the chief priests don't react which one might logically think they would considering it is their Temple. Many scholars therefore conclude that this story is a narrativization of what was originally only a saying. Arnal says "Jesus is presented as acting in a way which embodies his own teachings"

(Arnal Major 209) and Mack says that "the temple act cannot be historical. If one deletes from the story those themes essential to the Markan plots, there is nothing left over for historical reminiscence. The anti-temple theme is clearly Markan and the reasons for it can be explained...The conclusion must be that the temple act is a Markan fabrication" (Mack Myth 292).

Though Arnal thinks that anti-Temple utterances of Jesus are reliably attested in the tradition, one may even question that assumption and one may wonder whether even all of these did not simply have their origin in a deliberate or mistaken misinterpretation of Saying 71. Interestingly, Josephus cites a prophet named Jesus ben Ananus, active ca. 62 C.E., who frequently predicted the fall of the city and the Temple: "There was one Jesus the son of Ananus, a plebeian and a husbandman, who, four years before the war began...began on a sudden to cry aloud, `A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house...He every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, `Woe, woe to Jerusalem!' (Whiston 6.3).

Thus, not only did the New Testament most likely borrow all of Jesus' `prophecies' about the Temple from Josephus, and fabricated the whole story of the cleansing of the Temple in order to make real those invented prophecies, but it also pressed Saying 71 into service for the same purpose, even though the Saying never had anything to do with the Temple. Saying 71 may well have been the original basis for the entire story, but only when mistranslated and stripped of its spiritual meaning.

The ideological politicizing of quotes from the Gospel of Thomas

Not only does the New Testament create whole scenes from sayings of Thomas, it also uses distorted citations to achieve several ideological purposes: to inculcate blind belief as opposed to free knowledge, to teach an eschatological view of death rather than a cyclical one, to show Jesus as promoting conflict rather than harmony, to foster hatred for Jews and the view of Judaism as a superseded religion, and to put forth a consistent pro-Roman point of view. What is most startling about these aims is that they represent the exact opposite of what Thomas stands for: the New Testament takes the Jesus of Thomas and turns him into his diametrical opposite! This seems deliberate and possibly downright malicious. Let us look at some examples of each of these aims.

Blind belief over free knowledge

Saying 2 emphasizes free inquiry and its attending difficulties: "Let him who seeks not cease to seek until he finds, and whenever he fidns he will be disturbed..." The Synoptics (Mt 7:7-8, Lk 11:9-10), however, connect their version of this saying ("For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks find, and to him who knocks it will be opened") with blind belief in God, and leave out the part that acknowledges the possibility of inner disturbance and that urges people to be a king over the All. The former would contradict the "good news" of the Christian revelation and the latter would contradict the orthodox emphasis on the Savior as the king.

Moreover, Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:8 most likely refers to Saying 2 as he criticizes people who are seeking salvation outside of the faith in the saving power of the death of Jesus Christ that he offers and who think they are wise as a result.

As Patterson says: "According to Paul, that which has been revealed is not the knowledge that has `puffed up' the `wise' in Corinth, but the crucifixion, the `word of the cross' as Paul puts it (1:18)...The views one finds Paul opposing in 1 Corinthians cannot be far from those of Thomas Christianity. They, like Thomas Christians, were clearly interested in the saving power of secret words of wisdom. Furthermore, because of the immediacy of insight as a vehicle of salvation, they have jumped ahead of Paul's time table: `already you have become kings!'" (Kloppenborg/ Meyer QThomas 113). Clearly Paul knows Saying 2, but he is just as clearly interested in suppressing its message and using its vocabulary against his critics.

This Christian attempt to suppress free inquiry is discussed in an interesting Nag Hammadi text called Authoritative Teaching (VI.3) in which the writer complains that "the adversary" is not interested in seeking and in inquiry and that they suppress those who are: "If they find someone else who asks about his salvation, their hardness of heart sets to work upon that man. And if he does not stop asking, they kill him by their cruelty, thinking that they have done a good thing for themselves" (32.15-25). Koschorke shows that this is a Gnostic criticism of the Church in that Church Fathers such as Tertullian rejected precisely this passage about seeking in Matthew and Luke which the Gnostics claimed as their own. The Church claimed that it had already found the truth and seeking was no longer necessary; therefore everyone should merely follow its orders. As Tertullian said: "One must seek until one finds and believe when one has found and then there is

nothing more to do but to hold fast." Any more seeking only led to heresy (Koschorke suchen 58-60). But for spiritual seekers as for philosophers seeking was a life-long endeavor, a claim that marked one as an immediate target of Christian heresy-hunters (Koschorke suchen 63-65).

The use of Saying 3 is also instructive. Practically all quotes of it, even in Gnostic writings, only use half of the original saying "The Kingdom is in your inside, and it is in your outside." This has become the much less paradoxical "the Kingdom is within you" but even that phrase is translated by most Bibles as "in the midst of you". The Greek entos humon was originally translated as "within you" in the early Church Fathers as well as in classical sources but that was too introspective for the later Church and they re-oriented the phrase to external belief (Rustow 218-220).

In Luke 17:20-21 the saying is embedded in a quite antithetical context to the meaning in Thomas: "Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them: The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is !' or 'There!' for behold, the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you." Not only does Luke leave out the second phrase of Saying 3, but he also sandwiches the idea between a story about faith-healing and a prophecy of Jesus' death. With this jumbled lack of context even if one did manage to read the words "the Kingdom is within you" the point would be lost.

The New Testament quotes the saying about moving mountains several times from Sayings 48 and 106 but narrows its meaning considerably. Matthew 17:20, 21:21 and Mark 11:22-23 use it with the authoritarian slant of having unquestioning faith and never doubting one's beliefs. Matthew 17:20: "For truly I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain `Move {metabaino} from here to there' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." Matthew 21:21: "If you have faith and never doubt..if you say to this mountain, `Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will be done." This interpretation is precisely the opposite of the Gospel of Thomas, for here mere faith will never get you into the Kingdom of Heaven; it is gnosis or knowledge and constantly applied inner work that will eventually lead to enlightenment. In addition, without the clear metaphorical meanings of Thomas the images in the New Testament don't make any sense when taken literally: Luke 17:6 takes the image to even more absurd levels by saying "you could say to this sycamine tree, `Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea'" which sounds like complete nonsense.

Characteristically, when the New Testament quotes Saying 108 it uses the same metaphor of drinking water to support its focus on belief and obedience to the person Jesus rather than to the teachings. John 4:13-14

says: "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 7:37: "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, `out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'" (Other uses of the metaphor are in 1 Cor 10:1-4, Rev 21:6 and 22:17).

On the surface the phrasing of John and Thomas looks the same. But any closer reading shows that the two versions are diametrically opposed and what the New Testament particularly opposes is any idea of the mystical union of the disciple with Jesus. As Koester says, "drinking from this spring results immediately in inspiration...even more, it establishes a reciprocal identity wit the revealer and the communication of secret knowledge. It is especially this latter understanding that the complex reformulation of the saying in John 7:37-38 wants to avoid...The purpose of the saying's alteration is evident: Scripture confirms that Jesus remains the source of living water. The believer does not achieve mystical identity with the revealer" (Koester ancient 116).

Saying 23 was attributed by Irenaeus and Epiphanius to the Egyptian Gnostic Basilidean sect but they criticized it stridently as being elitist, and they said that the Gnostics were withholding knowledge ("I shall choose you, one from a thousand"). One would therefore think that the New Testament, which proclaims the exclusive saving power of Jesus for the masses of the entire world, would take a more expansive view of the secret teachings than Thomas does, but surprisingly that is not so. Matthew 22:14 says, "For many are called but few are chosen."

In Matthew 13:13-17 (also Luke 10:23-24) we read: "This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand... But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it , and you hear what you hear, and did not hear it." In Luke 8:10 we read, "And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, 'To you it has been given to know the secret of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand'" (similarly Mark 4:11). This quote seems to be a version of Saying 17, as the order of eyes, ears and understanding is the same.

In other words, the Jesus of the New Testament says that only the twelve disciples will ever know the true secrets, even though they have continually shown themselves to be utterly uncomprehending, while the

parables are made to be obscure so that the vast majority of people will not understand them and thus they will have to take his teachings on faith. That is an astounding admission. Ironically, right after this he proceeds to explain a parable that they don't understand. This is of course the exact opposite of the Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas.

The Synoptic Gospels quote both parts of Saying 62 but they separate them and change their contexts. For the first part, Mark 4:11-12, Matthew 13:11-17 and Luke 8:10 have, as an answer by Jesus to the disciples' question as to the meaning of the preceding parable: "To you it has been given to know the secrets {mysteria} of the kingdom of God"; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." The significant change from Thomas is that the Synoptics add "of the Kingdom of God" which narrows the definition away from the original context of initiation into mystery religion. Moreover, the Synoptics then make a contrast between the disciples who know the secrets and everyone else who is "only" given parables that they are not intended to understand. Matthew then buttresses that with a quote from Isaiah 6:9-10 originally intended as a warning and an expression of anger by the Lord against sinful people.

Notice the logic: Jesus tells parables so that people will not understand them because they are sinful anyway and need to be punished by being kept in ignorance. And only the immediate disciples are told the mysteries. This is a complete perversion of the whole idea of a parable which is meant to be a story that teaches insight and should be reflected on. Is this because the editors of the Gospels did not understand Jesus' parables taken from Thomas because they are too subtle and multi-layered and thus they denigrate them? It certainly seems that way.

Meagher in his study of Mark also finds this strange: "It is a curious policy: a public instruction that does not instruct because of deliberate concealment, supplemented by private disclosure available only to the few. The point of teaching in public at all is hard to grasp, if it is calculatedly unsuccessful; and the reason for the concealment seems clearly unjust and cruel...And yet the special tutoring, once we get the parable explained, is rather disappointingly bland and obvious, hardly seeming to be a dramatic exposition of the mystery otherwise hidden" (Meagher 85-86).

In addition, Davies makes the excellent point that "when Mark characterizes sayings as `parables', in every instance he does so in reference to material that is found in the Gospel of Thomas" (Davies II 247). When you connect that with his reiteration of the idea that the parables are not meant to be understood and are nonsensical, the implication is that the writers of

the Gospels are attempting to dissuade people from reading Thomas. We know Thomas circulated widely and copies of it persisted well into the 13th century. Thus, since orthodox Church leaders could not eradicate it, instead they resorted to maligning it as incomprehensible.

Look at the political implications of this as well: the Church is essentially justifying keeping people in ignorance and refusing to allow them any higher spiritual truth by distorting Jesus' words. Nowhere in Thomas does Jesus advocate keeping people in ignorance. Quite the contrary: in Saying 28 he laments that people are blind and drunk and he would like nothing better than everyone embarking on a spiritual journey. And in Thomas the parables are a poetic and metaphorical way to describe the mysteries, certainly not a way to obfuscate them.

Eschatology versus a cyclical view of time

In the Gospel of Thomas Jesus argues quite forcefully against any belief in eschatology, the end of the world, and in Saying 113 he says that "the Kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth" instead. But the New Testament continually twists his teachings in an eschatological direction.

In Saying 4 the idea of "the first and the last" is used in the context of the paradox of the old man and the child to refer to reincarnation and the great cycle of life, death and rebirth. But the New Testament, which uses this phrase four times, puts it strictly in an eschatological context, about the day of judgment. For example, Luke 13:27-30 says: "Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity! There you will weep and gnash your teeth...And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." None of this is remotely in Thomas.

Saying 8 is turned from a beautful spiritual parable of self-knowledge into a rather vicious apocalyptic doomsday scenario. Matthew 13:47-50 makes major changes: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." First, he changes the "Man" to the Kingdom of heaven, eliminates the object of comparison being the wise fisherman, makes the fisherman plural in order to downplay the idea of gnosis even more and substitutes the net as the object of comparison. He also eliminates the idea of the one fish being of greatest value.

In Thomas there is no indication that the small fish are in any way bad or worthless and no judgment is made on the actions of the fisherman. But Matthew imposes a simplistic good-versus-evil dichotomy and reduces the kingdom to a simple day of judgment; he seems to take great delight in describing the sufferings of the evil in the furnace of fire. It is hard to believe that the real Jesus would have talked this way; it all sounds rather sadistic, something emanating from some uneducated Bible Belt fundamentalist church and not from one of the greatest spiritual teachers of all time.

The two parts of Saying 21 quoted in Matthew 24:43 (Luke 12:39-40) and Mark 4:29 are placed in an eschatological context of the coming of the Son of Man and the final redemption of mankind and both of them prescribe watchfulness: "therefore you must be ready, for the son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." This context is not found at all in Thomas and clearly the New Testament is not interested in the other subtleties of Saying 21, only in those images that serve its apocalyptic ideology. The image of the day of the Lord coming like a thief (in the night) is quite popular and is found in Rev 3:3 and 16:15, 1 Thess 5:2, and 2 Pet 3:10, but that has very little to do with Thomas. One notices, for example, that nowhere does the New Testament cite the image of the disciples stripping naked in a field!

The pithy phrases of sayings 38 and 92 were clearly popular and were quoted by many other texts. But the New Testament takes them completely out of the context of the teacher/ seeker relationship and gives them an apocalyptic meaning. It is interesting that the New Testament has taken one quote from Saying 38 ("there will be some days you will seek me and you will not find me") and repeated it several times in different places (Lk 17:22, Jn 7:33-36, 8:21, 13:33). This is surely an indication of the cut-and-paste working methods of the editors. One quote from Saying 92 ("those things which you asked me I did not tell you") is also cited in John 16:5. Christian scholars like to say that John must have gotten different variants from an independent tradition, but the only source we know is Thomas: it is John who created the variants (Quispel John GnSt 219-220).

Saying 44 is made much more harsh and judgmental by the New Testament. Matthew 12:31 (partially in Luke 12:10) says, "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever says a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come." Matthew adds "he who is not with me is against me", he replaces "either on earth or in heaven" with "in this age or the age to come" which makes it eschatological and extends the lack of forgiveness into infinity. Of course he does not mention

blasphemy against the Father as this does not fit his monotheistic orientation.

Mark 3:28 distorts the saying even more: "whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin," which makes the punishment much more severe and drastic. Neither of them understand Jesus' real point and both turn a Jesus who is very forbearing in Saying 44 into a harsh, judgmental figure.

Equally, the New Testament takes the gentle and beautiful teachings of Saying 45 and turns them into scenarios of apocalyptic doomsday and last judgment pervaded by hostility against opponents: quite a perversion. Matthew 7:15-20, as part of the Sermon on the Mount, says: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad {sapron} tree bears evil {poneros} fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits." The translation does not do justice to the Greek words at all: sapron does not mean "bad" but "rotten, decayed, unsound" and poneros has more a connotation of "pain, hardship, misery" than "evil." Yet many generations of Christians have only known Jesus' words in the simplistic dichotomy of "good" and "evil."

Matthew 12:33-37 continues the same tone, using Saying 45 as base material to launch another (unwarranted) attack on the Pharisees, to whom the true Jesus actually was quite close: "You brood of vipers! how can you speak good when you are evil {poneros}? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter..." Luke 6:43-45, who makes a slightly different mixture from Saying 45, also presses the images into the service of an attack on "hypocrites."

In both these excerpts, notice the obsessive repetitiveness; notice the one-dimensional application of Jesus' images in the service of an attack on false prophets and Pharisees; notice the vindictiveness in the tone; notice the lack of spiritual content in what had been soaring uplifting images in Thomas; notice also the over-simplification in all the translations of the original Greek words into a simple "good" and "bad". This is not Jesus; certainly not the non-judgmental, gentle, accepting, multi-dimensional Jesus of Thomas. I find it hard to believe that people would call this perverted Jesus the Prince of Peace and the Teacher of Love.

The New Testament turns Saying 51 into a complete opposite of

itself. Matthew 24:3-6 (Mk 13:4, Lk 21:7) quote the question but not Jesus' answer: "The disciples came to him privately, saying, `Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and the close of the age?' And Jesus answered them, `Take heed that no one leads you astray...For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs...But he who endures to the end will be saved." In Thomas Jesus says "that repose which you look forward to has come but you do not realize it", a thoroughly non-apocalyptic reply. Here, however, he answers a very similar question in a very different way: fully apocalyptically, with graphic descriptions of the trials and tribulations of the end of the world.

The same contrast applies to Saying 57. The version in Thomas is non-dualistic and uses the example of the wheat and the darnel, which are very similar in appearance, to emphasize the way in which "good" and "bad" are always mixed. Matthew 13:24-30 with an appended interpretation in 13:36-40 instead reduces the parable to a classic conflict between the good Jesus and the evil Satan, the angels and the devils. At the close of the age the righteous, the good seed, will go into heaven, and the evil-doers, the darnel, will be gathered by angels who will "throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth."

Matthew spells out all the little details that are simply assumed in Thomas and that are not really germane to the fundamental metaphysical issues and he gives understandable motivations to his protagonists. He also won't let the listener dwell on the paradox of the good and the bad seed being so similar and have them perhaps wonder about the relevance of that to the human condition, so he adds enough detail about the harvest to make the man not seem so dumb after all for refusing to pluck the darnel. And to make doubly sure that even the dullest and most unimaginative mind could not possibly fail to grasp the point of this parable, he appends his apocalyptic interpretation.

One would not expect the New Testament to quote Saying 61, as the depiction of Jesus and Salome on a bed together is much too scandalous. Yet somehow Luke 17:34-35 succeeds in making lines 2-3 from it apocalyptic after all: "I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left." Matthew 24:40-41 alters it even more: "Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left." Luke and Matthew have thus taken a saying about the inner conflict between the physical and the spiritual and turned it into an apocalyptic saying about the coming of the son of man and a warning to people to believe before it is too late. None of this is found in Thomas.

The New Testament uses the same metaphor as Saying 91 and gives it a more physical and eschatological interpretation as well as connecting it with the Pharisees. In Matthew 16:1-4 the Pharisees and Sadducees try to test Jesus by asking him for a sign from heaven, he answers by making weather references and then he says: "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given it except the sign of Jonah." Luke 12:56-57 makes the context a bit more neutral, with Jesus speaking to the multitudes, but then he makes Jesus' discourse harsh again by prefacing it with "You hypocrites!" In the context, the signs of the times are the end of the world: "unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

This is the complete opposite of the meaning in Thomas: where Jesus tries to empower the disciples to conduct their own search in a scientific and rational manner in Thomas, in the Synoptics he only hurls threats of punishment and eternal damnation against the entire people, especially the Pharisees and the Jews. What a complete perversion of the true teachings!

Oddly enough, Jerome in his Commentary on Matthew says "what is marked with an asterisk (Matthew 16:2-3) is not found in other manuscripts, also it is not found in the Jewish Gospel." Is this an admission that all these harsh and eschatological embellishments of Saying 91 were simply invented by the writers of the Synoptics?

Characteristically, Matthew replaces the verb in Saying 91, peirazein, "to put to the proof", with diakrinein, "distinguish, determine", watering down the idea of skeptical questioning. Luke comes closer with dokimazein, "to prove, examine, test", but still with not the same scientific implication. Not coincidentally, dokimazein is related to the root verb dokein of that very essential Christian word "dogma". Modern translators, of course, translate Saying 91 as if it said dokimazein.

The most direct use of Saying 113 is in Luke 17:20-21: "Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you (within you)." Luke is clearly mixing a phrase from Saying 3 with a phrase from Saying 113. But this is all in the context of faith healing and of future predictions about the death of Jesus, precisely what Jesus in Thomas is arguing against. The New Testament also likes the quotation "And they will say to you, `Lo here' or `Lo there'" and uses it in several other places: Luke 17:23, Matthew 24:23, Mark 13:21. But these citations have little to do with the content of Saying 113.

Conflict versus harmony

Over and over again, the New Testament introduces conflict and violence into its quotations from Thomas, either by greatly exggerating metaphorical references to inmner conflict or by newly inserting it where the original sayings had none. This goes along with the change in tenor of Jesus' utterances to a much harsher, more vituperative and more accusatory tone.

The intimation of conflict in Saying 16 is sharpened to an exaggerated degree by the New Testament. Matthew 10:34 and Luke 12:51-53 start similarly but then they use different parts of Saying 16, a good indication that Thomas was their source. The rest of the saying has been changed to further emphasize conflict and downplay any possible philosophical implications of Thomas' subtle teachings: Matthew 10:35: "For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes will be those of his own household"; Luke 12:53 adds: "father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." It seems clear that the Synoptics have expanded Thomas by adding a citation from Micah 7:6: "for the son treats the father with contempt, the mother rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men in his own house." Luke most likely did not understand the numerological symbolism of the number five and added the extra family members in order to explain it.

Matthew includes Saying 26 in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:1-5 (also Luke 6:41-42) and prefaces it with "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get." Jesus of Thomas could have said something like this, except that he would have worded it more gently or metaphorically. The New Testament always manages to make Jesus sound strident, accusatory and harsh and I doubt whether he would have had such a following if he had constantly spoken that way. The rest of the Saying is quoted fairly accurately, but the question is repeated twice, which is redundant, and the answer repeats the question with the usual harsh addition of "you hypocrite". This makes what was a solution to an existential human condition in Thomas merely an accusation in the New Testament.

The New Testament changes the meaning of Saying 35 into a more violent direction. The verb "move out" is changed to "plunder" to make it more readily understandable to a simple linear mind: Mark 3:27 (also

Matthew 12:29): "But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then he may plunder his house." Secondly, this quotation is placed in the context of "Satan casting out Satan" in Matthew, Satan rising up against himself in Mark, and Jesus casting out demons in both, and is followed in Matthew by the saying "He who is not with me is against me." The subtle inward meaning of Saying 35 is completely lost in this array of aggressive, restrictive and violent images.

The New Testament also makes Sayings 55 and 101 harsher and more restrictive. In Matthew 10:37-38 the quote comes right after his citation of Saying 16: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Luke 14:26-27 says: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Noticeably, both Matthew and Luke add the family of choice (Matthew adds "son or daughter", Luke adds "wife" and "children") to Thomas' list of people a disciple must hate. That is requiring a person not only to leave his family of origin behind, which might only cause emotional harm, but also to abandon the family he created, which would cause economic and social harm as well. In Thomas Jesus wisely refrains from demanding an action like this which could be considered unethical and not spiritual at all.

Luke also broadens the extent of hatred by including the disciple's own life. In Thomas Jesus never asks for that kind of self-hatred; it is foreign to his teaching. Matthew also asks for more than is asked in Thomas: in Thomas the disciple is asked only to leave his or her parents; in Matthew the disciple is asked to have an exclusive allegiance to Jesus and to no one else. This is truly cult-like and never demanded in Thomas. And most significantly, Jesus' paradox of both hating and loving one's parents is completely missing here, and thus the reference to the divine father and mother. This is not surprising considering the Catholic Church's systematic excision of all that is female from Christian theology.

In Saying 68 the Greek verb dioko that simply mean "seek after" is changed to mean "persecute" and thus we have Matthew 5:10-11 (Lk 6:22) in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you." Gone is the ambiguity and careful analysis of inner ambivalence and division of

Saying 68. Instead there is an emphasis on hostility and the masochistic delight in being persecuted that Jesus is specifically warning the disciples against in Thomas. In the New Testament the disciples are just supposed to endure it and wait for their reward after death, instead of learning to develop their inner strength. It is clear that the Synoptic editors did not understand or want to understand the complex, subtle message of Saying 68.

The New Testament introduces an element of violence into Saying 93 that was not in the original. Matthew 7:6 says: "Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you." Where the pigs of Thomas only use the teachings for a toilet, the pigs of Matthew commit violence. This fits the general tendency of the New Testament to flatten the subtlety of Thomas into as literal a direction as possible and to stress hostility and animosity whenever possible.

Anti-Semitism and the superseding of Judaism

Though the New Testament contains a contradictory mix of pro-Jewish and anti-Jewish statements, overall the prevailing tone is the latter. That is certainly true of the New Testament editing of many sayings of Thomas which acquire an ant-Semitic tone not found in the original.

We have already seen how much of a nonsensical mish-mash the New Testament makes of pieces of sayings of Thomas jumbled together. But often when it does try to give a meaning to these assemblages, it is with some antagonistic sense against Jews. The use of Saying 5 in Matthew 10:26, wehich is then followed by a jumble of quotes from other sayings of Thomas, is in the context of persecution arising from all the towns of Israel and is set in a long speech from 10:5-42 directed against presumably hostile "lost sheep of Israel" whom the disciples of Jesus are supposed to convert. The qupte in Luke 12:2 is in teh context of the usual target, the Pharisees: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." What a mangling of a beautiful and profound saying!

Amazingly, the Gospels manage to put even the adage to love one's neighbor in Saying 25 in an anti-Semitic context. This is quite popular in the New Testament, being repeated four times in brief (Matt 19:19, Rom 13:8-10, Gal 5:13-15 and James 2:8) as well as in a longer version. For once, the New Testament has Jesus giving statements that are squarely within the Jewish tradition and conform with Thomas. Matthew 22:36-40 (Mk 12:28-31, Lk 10:25-27) sounds like something Hillel would say, "`Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' And he said to him, `You shall love

the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and prophets.'" Mark even adds the Jewish Shema, the fundamental prayer, to the list, though Matthew 5:44-48 expands this idea even further to include loving enemies which is not in the Jewish tradition

However, the Gospels put all this in the context of "scribes" or "Pharisees" asking him this question in order to test him and trip him up. And right afterwards in Matthew 23:2-7 (also Mark 13:38-40) Jesus launches into a tirade against the scribes and Pharisees, calling them hypocrites who "preach but do not practice." So even a beautiful Jewish teaching on love has to be placed in the context of hostility and conflict with the Jews. And none of the rest of Thomas' subtle spiritual teaching in Saying 25 is preserved in the Synoptics, only what will serve their ideological ends.

Saying 34, which originally had nothing to do with Pharisees, is politicized by Matthew 15:14 and directed against the Pharisees: "The disciples said to him, 'Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?' He answered'...Let them alone'; they are blind guides. And if a blind man lead a blind man, both will fall into a pit." Kloppenborg says the context is clearly secondary and "there is no reason to constrict its application to the Pharisaic opponents of the community" (Klop 184).

Luke 6:39-40 throws it in with the other sayings in the Sermon on the Mount and interprets it by relating it to the sayings on judgment in which it is embedded: as Bultmann says: "it comes to mean: how canst thou set thyself up as a judge, who art thyself blind!...there is only one true judicial authority, Jesus" (Bultmann 99). There may also be a similar allusion in Romans 2:17-19: "But if you call yourself a Jew...and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness...you then who teach others, will you not teach yourself?" In both cases, Luke and Paul criticize those who strive to go beyond their master, who they think ought to be Jesus.

The New Testament attempt to politicize Saying 39 against the Pharisees makes nonsense out of it. The first part is repeated in Matthew 23:13 but with a major difference: instead of "they have hidden the keys of gnosis" the New Testament has "because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men, for you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in." Clearly the New Testament does not favor knowledge or gnosis as a means of spiritual attainment. But if you analyze this closely, the change makes the whole sentence nonsensical. The kingdom of heaven in the New Testament definition is generally what a Christian attains after

death, the salvation that comes from the right belief in the saving power of Christ.

But what sense does it make to say the Pharisees do not enter it themselves: does that mean they don't want to die yet? And how do they keep others from going to heaven? It seems to me that the compilers of the New Testament took over Saying 39, changed the part about gnosis and stuck it in their rendition without realizing that it no longer made any sense.

Luke 11:52 does keep the sentence saying "you have taken away the key of knowledge" (in the singular) but he puts it in the context of a very bloodthirsty and vituperative passage against lawyers reproaching them for killing the prophets and asking for their blood. This context completely distorts the meaning and does not fit the quote from Saying 39. What is particularly striking about this is that even Christian scholars have pointed out the un-Lukan nature of the quote. The New Testament only uses the term gnosis twice, both times in Luke and the other use being in 1:77 in the prophecy of Zecharias: it is clearly not a vital Christian concept. And likewise the term "key" appears only once more in Matt 16:19.

The final part of Saying 39 is also used but look at the context in Matthew 10:16: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and flog you in their synagogues..." What follows here is a long litany of how the disciples are going to be persecuted and attacked, but what is Saying 39 doing in the middle of all this? It is a complete non sequitur and it once again seems as if the compiler just stuck it in the middle here because he didn't know what else to do with it. If you left it out, it would not affect the meaning.

Similarly, the New Testament attempt to turn Saying 65 into a parable about the rejection of the Jews destroys the literary structure of the story and makes no historical sense. The Gospel editors (Mt 21:33-41, Mk 12:1-9, Lk 20:9-16) throw in an allusion from Isaiah 5:2 (that the owner built a tower and set a hedge) followed by a quotation from Psalm 118:2 as a metaphor for Israel but the historical details they add contradict the very quote they also add. Their owner goes abroad for a long time but vineyard owners in Judea tended to be urban elites living nearby and the quote in Isaiah above, a call for justice, refers to local elites and thus contradicts this statement of the owner being a foreigner (Herzog 104). The Gospels add another servant to the two sent in Saying 65 simply to fit the general pattern of 3, yet no owner would realistically send more than two, especially when they are getting beaten and killed. And the Gospel tenants think they can inherit the property, thus making a better metaphor, yet research has clearly established

that there is no legal basis for this in 1st century Judea whatsoever.

Then the Gospel editors add on an ending: "What will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others." This ending is intended as an allegorical interpretation of how God has rejected and destroyed the Jewish people for rejecting his prophets and killing his son and is now turning over the spiritual vineyard to Christians: none of this is found in the slightest in Thomas.

Saying 89 also originally had both a historical meaning in terms of a dispute between the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai over cleanliness as well as a metaphorical meaning yet is twisted in a general anti-Jewish direction by the Gospel editors. The original Saying is not directed against scribes and Pharisees, could be addressed to anyone at all and is not even necessarily about ritual purity or morality. Yet the editors of Matthew 23:25-26 and Luke 11:39-41 added opponents in the form of Pharisees, a denunciation and a "moralizing injunction on how to achieve purity of both inside and outside" (Miller "Inside" 92-93) They turn a very dignified and spare poem into something quite harsh and vituperative: "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, for you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity" in Matthew and "full of robbery and evil" in Luke. Would Jesus really have talked this way about the House of Shammai? Would the gentle Hillel? Both Houses were Pharisees and both agreed on the importance of Torah in Judaism; they merely disagreed about interpretation.

The Synoptic Gospels also have Jesus and his disciples refuse to wash their hands before eating in Matthew 15:1-2 and Luke 11:37-38, right before the comment about the cup and the plate. They certainly did not get this from Thomas in which Jesus says nothing about handwashing. And Jesus does not reject Jewish cleanliness laws at all; he only takes sides in a dispute about the washing of the outside of a cup. So is it really true that Jesus refused to wash his hands? It may well not be, and it may be a tendentious attempt on the part of the New Testament to make Jesus as little Jewish as possible: thus the constant atacks on the "Pharisees" which should really be directed against Bet Shammai. As Eisenman says: "Because of an ancient artificer's antinomian bias, poor Jesus is pictured as gainsaying what has become for modern hygiene a fundamental rule...To consider material of this kind either the `Word of God' or a `revelation of the Holy Spirit' is... simply absurd. Rather, it is more edifying to regard it as the mischievous and malevolent polemics it really is" (Eisenman 301).

Whether the rejection of cleanliness derives from Jesus or not, the

de-emphasis of official Christianity on personal cleanliness was to have tragic consequences, and Jesus cannot be held responsible for this. In 380 CE under Emperor Theodosius Christianity was declared the only official religion of the Roman Empire and in 392 CE pagan worship was banned. Immediately a reign of terror broke loose against all pagan institutions and among the libraries, temples, schools, shrines and statues that were attacked and destroyed were also the public baths. As Ellerbe says: "Orthodox Christians taught that all aspects of the flesh should be reviled and therefore discouraged washing as much as possible," extolling celibate monks who never washed as the ultimate ideals. "The extensive aqueduct and plumbing systems vanished...Toilets and indoor plumbing disappeared. Disease became commonplace as sanitation and hygiene deteriorated...Roman central heating systems were also abandoned...From about A.D. 500 onward, it was thought no hardship to lie on the floor at night" (Ellerbe 43-44). Not until the end of the 19th century, 1400 years later, did Western Europeans begin to get back the standard of sanitation and comfort they had once had under the ancient Greeks and Romans: such was the cultural devastation caused by the Catholic Church.

The New Testament quotes Saying 90 once, in Matthew 11:28-30, but it is a famous quote that has been cited by innumerable theologians and preachers: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for our souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

There are a number of differences to Saying 90, apart from the translation "easy" which is an incorrect rendering of the Greek chréstos common to both Matthew and Saying 90. Instead of "mastery, lordship" Matthew has "burden" which is taken from the same words in Isaiah 9:4 and 14:25. This is purely theological, as Isaiah refers to the lordship of a ruler as "the yoke of his burden" and right after this passage makes the famous allusion that Christians have ever interpreted as a prophecy of Jesus: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given" (9:6). Matthew thus attempts to make an allusion to Isaiah's Messianic prophecy by incorporating his words into Saying 90.

Matthew also feels the need to explain the concept of "rest" by adding "all who labor and are heavy laden" to accentuate the saving power of Jesus and he changes "rest for yourselves "to "rest for your souls" which makes the message much more eschatological and soteriological. And of course he emphasizes the idea that Jesus possesses exclusive knowledge that

he will only offer to those who believe in him, a very different twist from the self-empowering message of Thomas.

Despite Matthew's secondary nature, Christian commentators through the centuries have agreed with Matthew's message that the new yoke of Jesus is vastly superior to the old yoke of the Torah and makes the latter redundant. As Montefiore says: "The inference usually drawn from these verses is that Jesus is contrasting his own `yoke' with that of the yoke of the Law. The one is light and delightful; the other heavy and burdensome; the one joyous, the other terrifying. Jesus is supposed...to address 1) those who observed the Law and were weighed down by its burden, its detail, and its minutiae; 2) those who had fallen out of the ranks, and for one reason or another did not, could not, or would not, obey the `endless' injunctions of the Law. Either class would, I imagine, be regarded as...`weary and heavy laden'." (Montefiore Rabbinic 238)

This assumption is wrong on two counts: that the Torah was oppressive and that Jesus' path was easy. It was precisely in the first century that the Pharisees put much effort into lightening the burden of the Law. As Abrahams says: "At every period we find the Rabbis relieving burdens. The process was historically continuous...Hillel (in the reign of Herod) practically abrogated the law of Deut 15:1 in relief of both creditors and debtors...

The general rule established then, and obeyed with reasonable consistency before and after was: `No decree must be made for the community which the majority of the community could not endure'. The tendency of Pharisaism was, in certain very important directions so emphatically toward alleviation that the Rabbinic law practically abolished capital punishment and introduced a whole system of equity by the side of the law" (Abrahams 11-12). Clearly the Christian view is a great distortion of the truth.

Equally, the idea that Jesus' yoke is easy is just as much a complete distortion of Jesus' true teachings, partially based on the Latin Vulgate's mistranslation of Jesus' key word chréstos. Never in Thomas does Jesus promise that the spiritual path is going to be "easy" and never does he offer cheap and instant salvation to anyone who wants it. His criticism of the Pharisees is not that the path of the Law is too difficult and onerous but that it does not lead anyone to true spiritual insight and awakening. And Jesus insists that accepting anyone's authority as their Savior is the antithesis of what is needed for someone to attain a higher spiritual state. Jesus' yoke is only of good service if it is unobtrusive and gentle and soon cast off. But if you want to start an authoritarian mass religion and claim an absolute monopoly over all truth then you have to disguise and distort such a radical

teaching as much as you possibly can, and that is what the New Testament does.

Pro-Roman point of view

Another important characteristic of the New Testament is its consistent pro-Roman point of view and its condemnation of rebellion against Roman rule. This point of view was inserted into the citations from the Gospel of Thomas, a document which though not overtly political, clearly sympathizes with the Jewish opposition to Roman oppression.

For Saying 78, not only does the New Testament chop up the original structural unity of the saying to extract pieces from it, it also greatly plays down its criticism of kings and nobles. All that is left is "Behold, those who wear soft raiment are in kings' houses" in Matthew and "Behold, those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts" in Luke. Clearly by the time the New Testament was officially issued the Church in Rome was not interested in any criticism of the ruling class, since it had itself become one.

Revelations 6:15, however, does not moderate its criticism and it has one of only three places in the New Testament where the word megistanes found in Saying 78 is used, as Wilson points out (Wilson 63): "Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains..." The New Testament, on the other hand, overall is a politically conservative document and tries to hide the true rebellious and revolutionary nature of Jesus' teachings.

The New Testament cites Saying 95 in both Luke's and Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount but greatly dilutes Jesus' sharp prohibition of the charging of interest and hides it in a quite different context. Reading Luke 6:27-36 one gets the impression that the whole long discourse is an elaboration on just Saying 95 as pieces of the saying are scattered from beginning to end. But his theme is loving one's enemies rather than just one's friends, and thus he has Jesus instruct the disciples to lend to their enemies: "And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you?...But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great..." Matthew 5:42 gets rid of the reference to lending altogether: "Give to him who begs from you and do not refuse him who would borrow from you."

In both of these citations the whole point of Jesus' teaching is lost, as the Synoptics cleverly change Jesus' focus from a blanket prohibition of

the charging of interest and narrow it only to one's enemies. Politically this sounds like a way on the part of the Gospel editors to curry favor with the Romans and to preach against revolutionary activity by the masses. The Synoptic parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30 and Luke 19:12-27), which is not in Thomas, makes a special point of valuing interest positively and the nobleman reproaches the servant for not investing his money in the bank and getting interest for it. The first indisputable Christian prohibition of interest is not until the Apocalypse of Peter in the 2nd century (Leipoldt 73).

The Synoptics also rewrote the Lord's Prayer of Jesus to make it more politically palatable, as Horsley shows. The original Lord's Prayer referred to the actual and tangible debts of the peasantry and was a plea for their forgiveness: "Release for us our debts, as we have released our debtors". This goes well with the preceding "give us our daily bread" which is a stark issue for those who are on the brink of starvation, and clearly debt and lack of bread are "the two most serious problems for ongoing life faced by peasants in a traditional agrarian society" (Horsley Spiral 254).

Yet the Synoptic versions (Matthew 6:9-15, Mark 11:25, Luke 11:2-4) go out of their way to hide this radical demand that Jesus so whole-heartedly supported: "Although Luke's length and form may be the more original, he has changed `debts' (opheilémata) to `sins' (amartias) to make this petition more intelligible to Hellenistic readers...He has also made the... whole prayer less concrete and more universal by changing the perfect `we have forgiven' to the present `we forgive' and the more particular `debtors' to the generalizing `everyone who is indebted to us'. Matthew has often kept the more concrete wording but has provided a `spiritualizing' interpretation as well as supplementary liturgical phrases" (Horsley Spiral 253). Once again, the Gospels are on the side of the authorities, not the people, entirely contrary to Jesus' teachings.

The New Testament gives the basic story found in Saying 100 but it extends it quite a bit in a noticeably ideological direction. The most important difference is that the Synoptics (Mark 12:13-17, Matt 22:15-22, Luke 20:22-26) place the question in the mouths of the Pharisees, along with the Herodians, and have them plot how to entrap Jesus in a seditious statement so that the Romans would punish him. They show Jesus as seeing through their "malice" and "hypocrisy" and devising his answer to be a clever response that could not be accused of being seditious. Jesus' answer is also worded differently: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's". And the last part of Thomas 100 is missing, "give me what is mine."

Amazingly, the Synoptics succeed in turning Jesus' message on its

head: instead of having him give a slyly subversive message that tells people not to pay their taxes, they invert it into its reactionary opposite. By leaving out Thomas' third part and changing the verb, they make Jesus essentially tell people to respect the authority of the Roman or any state, as long as they also do their religious duties. Christian theologians usually reject attempts by people like Schweitzer to see his answer as ironic and insist, as Sevenster does, that Jesus is being dead serious here: "the coin with its inscription is a symbol for the warrant of law and power of the emperor" (Sevenster 30-31).

So though the Synoptic version looks similar to Saying 100, it really is not. Firstly, it supports the anti-Jewish, pro-Roman political tendencies of the New Testament. Secondly, it politicizes Jesus' saying and removes the spiritual element from it. Thirdly, it removes the implication in Saying 100 that Jesus might consider himself above God. And fourthly, it continues the obsession with violence, aggression and conflict that is endemic in the Synoptic Gospels.

To sum up this whole discussion, we may cite Saying 64 in which all the types of New Testament editing take place at once: it is garbled, allegorized, turned into nonsense and made more violent, more anti-Semitic and more pro-Roman. Saying 64 is quoted in both Luke 14:16-24 and Matthew 22:1-14 but with major changes. Luke's version is closer to Thomas' than Matthew's is, but his changes are significant: a great banquet instead of a dinner, the three excuses completely different, the host reacting in anger, the servant bringing in the poor, maimed, blind and lame and then forcing even more people in. The point is to elevate the poor and unfortunate above everyone else. Another possible point is to make fun of the laws governing excuses in Deuteronomy (Palmer 242). Crossan says the "moralizing in Luke does not really work" because "Jesus said in 14:12-14 not to invite the rich but to invite the poor in order to be rewarded by God, not man. The parable, on the other hand, tells a story in which the rich are first invited, decline the invitation, and the poor are then invited in second place," certainly a contradiction (Crossan Parables 72).

Matthew allegorizes Saying 64 heavily with such major changes that the story is practically unrecognizable. He combines three different parables into one (the wicked husbandman, the great supper and the wedding garment) but this "inclusion breaks the logical unity of the parable". Other details in what Crossan calls a "heavy-handed" story don't make sense: "Why such violence in declining a dinner invitation, and are we really to imagine the sending of a punitive expedition while the dinner grows cold on the table?" (Crossan Par 71) Of course, all this violence is inserted in order to serve the New Testament's ideological anti-Jewish agenda.

Matthew thus makes the following allegorical equivalents: the King is God, the son is Jesus, the subjects are Jews, the servants are prophets, the city is Jerusalem and the invitations to the others are Gentiles, thus making the political point that the Jews have rejected Jesus' Kingdom which should therefore be reserved for Gentiles (Funk 509). There is nothing in Saying 64 that makes this very ordinary dinner into an eschatological banquet or into God's feast on the day of judgment in which he refuses the Jews who have spurned his invitation; that is all a later invention by an institutional Church for its own political purposes.

The same editing process is visible in the New Testament in the material that is not from the Gospel of Thomas as well. Just to give one example. The parable of the ten maidens or virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 reads: "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom." But another reading was current in the 2nd century as well in several old manuscripts, including the Vulgate and the old Latin version, the old Syriac version and certain Greek manuscripts: "and went forth to meet the bridegroom and the bride." As Hoskyns points out, this version is a spiritual teaching, using a wedding custom as a simile. "The reference is to the ancient custom of the bridegroom going forth to meet his bride and bringing her back to his own house. But the shorter reading is an eschatological twist, meaning Jesus as the coming bridegroom. Did Jesus teach moral and spiritual truths by means of simple stories reflecting common occurrences in the experiences of his hearers or did he only teach the gospel of God which could only be interpreted by the use of eschatological imagery and language?"

The response of the wise to the foolish maidens also has two variant readings that have very different theological implications. The vast majority of Greek manuscripts read: "Never! there will certainly not be enough for us and you." But variant readings in some codices have the answer be: “Perhaps there will not be enough for us and you.” The first reading is stern and unforgiving: the oil which enables the wise to enter with the bridegroom is untransferable oil and there can be no loan or gift of that which secures salvation. The variant reading is gentle and kind and this is most likely the older reading. Just as with the Gospel of Thomas, we see the process by which Jesus’ gentle, poetic, metaphorical and paradoxical teachings are turned into harsh and fear-inducing eschatology and hell-fire and brimstone. (Hoskyns 47-49)

Chapter 12:

The Influence of the Gospel of Thomas

When we look closely at writings that post-date the Gospel of Thomas, we also see the enormous influence of Jesus' words from the Gospel of Thomas on many disparate groups and literatures, including the Clementine literature, the Gnostics, the Manichaeans, the Moslems and the later medieval Albigensians. The Clementine literature, which includes the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions and the Homilies, exists in Greek, Latin and Syriac versions and is a romance centering around Clement of Rome. The story tells of his religious development as a disciple of Peter and his missionary journeys. It probably dates to the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th century and is considerd to be apocryphal rather than orthodox Christian literature. Yet it may well preserve authentic ancient traditions and there may be a 2nd century Jewish-Christian source, the Kerygmata Petrou. (Koester Hist+Lit 205-206) The following sayings of the Gospel of Thomas seem to be quoted in the Clementines: 9, 16, 32, 39, 54, 62, 76, 93 and 95. Here Jesus is quoted as giving certain teachings, the wordings of which are paralleled in the Gospel of Thomas rather than in the Synoptics.

A particularly interesting example is the quote of Saying 62 in the Homilies (19.20.1) which says: "And Peter said, `We remember that our Lord and Teacher commanded us and said: Keep the mysteries for me and the sons of my house. Therefore he also explained the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven privately to his disciples.'" In the one Coptic manuscript of the Gospel of Thomas in existence there is a gap in an important part of the text: "I tell my mysteries to those [...] of [...] mysteries." This text from the Clementines as well as one from Clement of Alexandria helps to support a possible restoration of the gap as "to those who are sons of my mysteries."

Both the Gnostics and Manichaeans were extremely taken by Jesus' pithy and trenchant sayings and used them often. Unfortunately much of the Gostic literature was destroyed by the Church and until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library all that was left was in quotations, mostly hostile and misleading, in the writings of the Church theologians. The Nag Hammadi Library of course gives a wealth of Gnostic literature, or at least what is generally called "Gnostic", even though there is not much agreement among

scholars what Gnosticism really means and whether the category should even be used at all. The following sayings were quoted in what is generally classified as Gnostic literature: 2, 4, 5, 17, 19, 22, 23, 33, 38, 62, 66, 76, 82, 93 and 94.

A particularly interesting example is in Hippolytus, Refutation of all Heresies 5.7.20, the only time any Church theologian cites the Gospel of Thomas by name. He is commenting on the Naassene Gnostics: "And concerning this they hand down an explicit passage, occurring in the Gospel inscribed according to Thomas, expressing themselves thus: `He who seeks me will find me in children from seven years; for there concealed, I shall in the fourteenth age be revealed.'" This is a puzzling reference: it is attributed to the Naassenes, as if they were the authors of the Gospel of Thomas rather than just the users of it, and its exact wording is found nowhere in the present Gospel of Thomas (Akagi 263).

There are three basic similarities between this quote and Saying 4: the idea of something to find, the theme of the child and the number seven designating the child's age (Cornelis 90). In Hippolytus that is "years" instead of "days"; this idea reflects the Hippocratic teaching preserved by the Stoics that a child possesses no reason, no logos, until the age of seven, but develops it afterwards, and at the age of 14 the human logos is replaced by the divine logos (Leisegang 136). Thus the Naassene quote would be logos speaking as an allegorical personification.

The Manichaeans also quoted Saying 4 in a much more recognizable form in Manichaean Psalm-Book 192.2-3: "The grey-haired old men - the little children instruct them. They that are six years old instruct them that are sixty years old." They of course put their own spin on the original: they changed the numbers to six and sixty and "they used the word `child' to mean all the heavenly souls or particles of light imprisoned in man in this world, taken collectively"; that is why the particles of light instruct Man, the "old man" (Gartner 225-226). But the idea of a child instructing an old man is uncannily similar to Saying 4.

Putting all these citations together, we get the sense that there is some original and striking turn of phrase and image that is being quoted in various ways with various changes by different writers. And Saying 4 could well be that original. Even though Hippolytus named the Gospel of Thomas by name, he was not willing to admit its existence as an independent document, certainly not as the authentic words of the true Jesus, but instead falsely attributed it to the Naassenes. But several scholars conclude that the similarities are great enough that the Naassenes certainly had to know Saying 4 (see Hofius "koptische" 34-35).

The same process of groups using Thomas and changing the words to suit their own needs is found in the case of Saying 5. The Gnostic text On the Origin of the World II.125:15-20 has two versions which quote Saying 5. One is: "He said, `There is nothing hidden that is not manifest {ouônh}, and what has not been known {souôn} will be known'" while a Subachmimic fragment of the text says: "`There is nothing hidden that will not manifest {ouônh}, and there is nothing that will not be known {soun}'" (Oeyen 134-135). The Manichaean Kephalaia LXV 163.26-29 qupets it in a different version: "Recognize {eime} what is before your face, and that which is hidden from you will be revealed {côlp} to you." The Coptic verbs are not the same and in the Gnostic documents the verb tenses are also different from those in Thomas.

Is each version trying to translate the original Aramaic tenses and doing so a bit differently? Or are the Gnostic and Manichaean versions quoting Saying 5 from memory and thus altering it? Or were there different versions of Thomas floating around? It does seem that Saying 5 is the longest version, especially if the Oxyrhynchus/burial shroud line is added, and that the Gnostic and Manichaean versions shortened Thomas: they must have felt lines 3 and 4 were repetitive and so On the Origin of the World rephrased line 4 as "what has not been known will be known".

Saying 2 was very popular and is quoted in many writings: The Book of Thomas the Contender (twice), The Dialogue of the Savior, The Second Apocalypse of James, the Acts of Thomas, and the Pistis Sophia. Though it is rare for scholars to credit the Gospel of Thomas as the source of anything, Helmut Koester and Elaine Pagels do indeed come to that conclusion for The Dialogue of the Savior, a 2nd century document in the Nag Hammadi Library. They argue that it is an expanded version of Saying 2 as it contains 16 passages over all which parallel sayings in Thomas (Ancient 180-187). As Koester says: "The saying of GTh 2 was used as the thematic outline for the arrangement of the topics discussed. DialSav 126:5-17 speaks about `seeking and revealing', 129:15 about `seeking and finding'; 134:24-137:2 reports a vision which may represent the theme `marveling'; 138:6-15 discusses `ruling'; 141:3-4 introduces the last part of the dialogue with the question: `Why do we not put ourselves to rest at once?'" (Koester Gnostic 242-243). In sum, "This primary source of the present Dialogue of the Savior may directly continue the tradition of sayings represented in the Gospel of Thomas" (Koester/Pagels Dialogue 68).

It is quite likely that the other quotes from later documents which resemble Saying 2 may well be direct citations from it also. The combinations of elements from Saying 2 are particularly striking: "come to rest" and "become kings" in the Second Apocalypse of James, "receive rest" and "reign

with the king" as well as the mystical idea of being united with the king in the Book of Thomas the Contender, "find rest" and "become a king" in the Acts of Thomas and "seek" and "do not cease from seeking" in Pistis Sophia. The equation of "rest" and "being a king" was especially popular, and that is a unique phrasing of Jesus in Saying 2 without any history in past sources: in the Wisdom of Solomon and in Philo "kingship" is equated with "wisdom", not "rest".

In other citations we see striking phrases from Thomas being repeated in many different Gnostic documents. The "five trees" from Saying 19 are found in three different Gnostic texts. The phrase "one in a thousand, two in ten thousand" from saying 23 is found in the Pistis Sophia and is quoted by both Epiphanius and Irenaues who attributed it to the Basilideans whose founder Basilides flourished in the reign of Hadrian 117-138 C.E. The "cornerstone" of Saying 66 is quoted by Hippolytus in reference to a Gnostic sect. The "moths" and "worms" of Saying 76 are quoted in the Gospel of Truth I.33.15-21: "Do not return to what you have vomited to eat it. Do not be moths. Do not be worms, for you have already cast it off." The Gospel of the Savior quotes Saying 82 almost verbatim. And this is only what has been found so far; a thorough search of the entire Gnostic literature would surely turn up more quotes.

The Manichaeans, who believed in a severely dualistic philosophy in which the world of matter was evil, may have quoted Thomas even more than the Gnostics. Since the Manichaeans spread widely throughout Asia, this literature extends into rather exotic locales and languages such as Iranian, Parthian, Chinese and Sogdian, and it requires research into obscure scholarly articles in order to find these citations. The following sayings were quoted by the Manichaeans but there could be many more: 1, 2, 3, 5, 19, 23, 37, 40, 44, 45, 47 and 69.

There is evidence that Mani, the founder of the Manichaeans, knew the Gospel of Thomas well. Augustine, who had once been a Manichaean, gives a dialogue between him and a Manichaean teacher named Felix which began on Dec 7, 404 C.E. and in which Augustine has Felix read from a letter of Mani called The Foundation: the quote sounds like a slightly modified version of Saying 1 (Answer to Felix, a Manichaean 1.1). And in his Unpublished Letter Mani seems to be quoting Saying 69: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst, for they shall be satisfied." In a Middle Iranian manuscript from Chinese Turkestan there is a fictitious letter of Mani to Mar Ammo which quotes Saying 1; even if it is not from Mani directly, it certainly indicates knowledge of Thomas (Andreas 27.856).

The Manichaeans liked the same phrases the Gnostics liked and

quoted them often. The "five trees" of Saying 19 were even quoted in a Chinese Manichaean treatise, along with two other writings, and the "one in ten thousand" of Saying 23 appears in a Turfan Parthian hymn, along with four other writings. In the Manichaean Psalm Book 160.20-21 it is clear that Saying 3 is being quoted rather than the New Testament because it says: "Heaven's kingdom, look, it is inside us, look, it is outside us." The "outside us" is only in Thomas.

Interesting scholarship has been done on the Manichaean quote of Saying 45 which shows that the Coptic translator of the Kephalaia must have had the Aramaic text of the Diatessaron in front of him and gave a literal rendition of the Semitic pronominal suffix and the Syrian plural without knowledge of the Greek text of Luke (Baumstark 175). The Aramaic Diatessaron may well have had the very original form of Saying 45 in it. Aphraates too must have had this Diatessaron text in front of him for his work in Syrian, and a mistranslation of "bad" to "bitter", which remarkably also occurs in the Arabian Diatessaron, shows that the Armenian translator was using a Syrian rather than a Greek original (184, 187).

Saying 9 is quoted by an 8th century Moslem mystic named al Muhasibi and is attributed to Jesus: "The sower went out with his seed and filled his hand and sowed. Part of it fell on the road and soon the birds came, they collected them." (Asin 348-350) And the Arabic story of Barlaam and Josaphat called Kitab Bilauhar wa Budasf is also attributed to Jesus: "The sower went out with his good seed to sow. When he had filled his hand with it and had strewn the seed, some of it fell on the border of the road, where the birds soon picked it up...A small part fell on good, select soil. This remained healthy, flourished, ripened and multiplied. The explanation of this parable, o son of the King, is: The sower is the bearer of wisdom, the good seed is the true word." (Quispel GoT Rev 231, Spies 283)

Saying 57 is quoted in an Islamic Gospel called the Gospel of Barnabas which is based on a Diatessaron but omits passages offensive to Muslims, especially from the Gospel of John; it has variants in common with the Venetian and Tuscan Diatessaron. The Gospel of Barnabas reads "wilt thou that we go and pull up the tares" which agrees with line 8 of Thomas but not with Matthew 13:24 "wilt thou then that we go and gather them up" (Quispel General 793-794).

Saying 86 is most likely being quoted by Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (1059-1111 C.E.) in The Revival of the Religious Sciences 3.153, "It is recorded that one day Jesus was greatly traoubled by the rain...and he began to seek shelter...He noticed a cave in a mountain, but when he came to it, there was a lion in it. Laying his hand on the lion, he said, 'My God, you have

given everything a resting place, but to me you have given none.' The God Revealed to him, 'Your resting place is in the house of my mercy.'"

Saying 72 appears in a book called The Establishment of Proofs for the Prophethood of Our Master Muhammad folia 53a, : "A man said to him, 'Master, my brother wishes to share with me my father's blessing.' Jesus said to him, 'Who sent me over you in order to determine your share?'" (Pines 249n) (Quispel's and DeConick's translation): "A man said to him, `Master, let my brother share with me my father's wealth.' Jesus said to him, 'Who sent me over you as divider?'" This is an anti-Christian polemic written in 995 C.E. by the well-known Arab Moslem author and official `Abd al-Jabbar al-Hamadani (d. 1024/25 C.E. in Baghdad), who was greatly troubled by the Byzantine victories over Islam and the Fatimid heresy in Egypt. According to Shlomo Pines who discovered the manuscript, al-Jabbar used Christian sources for his polemic that were not of Moslem origin and were not contemporary Christian sources used by other Moslem authors either, but "could only derive from a Jewish-Christian community and were rather maladroitly and carelessly adapted by 'Abd al-Jabbar for his own purposes" (Pines 238).

The wording of the quote is definitely not of Luke: "my father's blessing" sounds very much like "the vessels of my father" and "determine your share" in Pines' translation can be better translated as "who sent me over you as divider". As Quispel says, "it is difficult to deny that the Arab manuscript could contain very ancient traditions" (Quispel St. Aug 377) and he finds this document to be a clinching argument for the independence of Thomas (Quispel GnSt 57). Baarda, who disagrees with any attempts to demonstrate the originality of Thomas, can once again find no stronger argument against this than that "the agreement between Thomas and `Abd al-Jabbar in this regard may be nothing else than an odd coincidence" (Baarda Luke 143).

Pines points out that al-Jabbar's arguments in the immediate context of the saying "to refute the doctrine of the divinity of Christ are largely identical with the parallel arguments with which, according to Epiphanius... the Arians polemicize against this doctrine...It is difficult to escape the conclusion that there must have been some connection between the Arian and Jewish Christian polemics against the dogma of the divinity of Christ. In itself this conclusion is quite likely, as a certain doctrinal similarity between the Jewish Christians and the Arians (who did not observe the Mosaic law) has been often recognized. We may add that in the historical portions of our Jewish Christian texts Arius appears to be regarded with sympathy" (Pines 249).

Schoeps shows that Jewish Christian communities did exist as late as the 4th century in Transjordan, Syria and in Cyprus and that there were

indeed close connections with the Arian party, which began in 319 C.E. with Arius' preaching and which absorbed their writings, at least the Pseudo-Clementines. Schoeps also says that we see their "religious doctrines and views of faith... reappearing - modified and recast to some extent in the direction of a more closely connected system - in Islam" (Schoeps Jewish 37, Rusch 17). So clearly the Gospel of Thomas, as illustrated here by the history of Saying 72, survived the deliberate attempts by the Catholic Church to destroy it utterly, was preserved by the Jewish Christians and Arians, and found its way to the Moslem civilization where it was read and quoted by `Abd al-Jabbar as late as the 10th century C.E.

The most fascinating and remarkable story is that of Saying 42 which appears in an inscription as far away as India and is quoted in a 12th century Spanish document as well. It is worth telling this story in some detail and the rediscovery of its true origin has taken a most circuitous route. In 1849 the Scottish missionary Alexander Duff who lived in India for many years discovered an inscription over the massive main gateway of the great Mosque in the ruined city of Fateh-pur-Sikri, 175 km south of Delhi, built by Akbar the Great Mogul (1542-1605) to commemorate his victories. In 1569 this Mogul had expanded the insignificant village of Sikri into an imposing residential capital in which he lived until 1585 and in May 1601 he held a triumphal procession into his former capital at which time he had the inscription engraved over the gateway: "Jesus, on whom be peace, has said: This world is a bridge. Pass over it. But build not your dwelling there." And he applied a similar second inscription by Jesus on the arcade of the northern wing of the Liwan, the main building (Dunkerley 168, Jeremias Unbekannte 105).

One would think such religious inscriptions would be out of character for a militaristic conqueror, but, as Jeremias says: "Akbar...was an unusual character. Although he was an Oriental despot, filled with a lust for power and a boundless ambition, he was at the same time tolerant in religious matters, mystically inclined, and a sincere seeker after truth. Orthodox Muhammadan though he was, he was continually obsessed with the problem of how to unite an India torn asunder by religious divisions." Thus in 1582 he proclaimed a rationalistic monotheism based on the worship of sun, fire and light which was intended to effect the religious unification of India, with himself as the prophet" (Jeremias "Saying" 7-8, Uber 96-97).

His religious fervor precipitated both the construction of his splendid capital as well as its abandonment. As the English traveler Constance Gordon-Cumming describes it, Akbar had sought out a holy fakir, Sheik Salim, to ask him to intercede with Allah so that he might have an heir, and when the future Emperor Jehangeer was born, Akbar was so grateful that he decided to live permanently near this powerful saint. Unfortunately the feeling

was not mutual: "But alas! all the fuss and bustle attendant on this busy court life disturbed the devotions of the hermit of Sicri, who at last could bear it no longer, and sending for the emperor informed him that one of them must forthwith depart. Akbar was grieved for the fate of his fair new city, but his duty was clear. The aged saint must be left to pray in peace, so court and courtiers...departed straightway...and...built that glorious city of Akbarabad, the modern Agra". And so the new city which covered a circle of 6 miles in diameter, the "endless courts, palaces, gateways, columns", the artificial lake 20 miles in circumference, and the beautiful mosque of three pure white marble domes were simply abandoned to the slow decay of the centuries (Gordon-Cumming 154-55). The inscription had proven to be strangely prophetic, as Akbar indeed could not build his dwelling there!

Where did Akbar get this saying of Jesus? One possibility is that in December 1578, perhaps inspired by his Christian wife Munee Begum and as part of his serious study of the world's religions, he had requested the Portuguese Jesuit missionaries in Goa to send two scholars to him, "bringing with them the books of the Law, but especially the Gospels" (Jeremias Saying 7). Three delegations of Christian scholars arrived, the first staying from 1580-1583, the second from 1591-1592 and the third from 1595-1605, but their high hopes of converting the Emperor were ultimately dashed: while he rejected Islam, he refused to embrace Christianity (Jeremias Uber 96).

The question is whether these scholars perhaps had a copy of the Gospel of Thomas with them or some ancient Biblical version that incorporated this saying. Jeremias rejects this possibility, saying that there is no evidence that the saying was known in the Christian world (Uber 97), but intriguingly it is precisely these Christians of Goa who assert the ancient tradition that Thomas himself founded their community and who venerated his grave. In addition, the Acts of Thomas is a (rather fanciful) description of this missionary journey. So it is not out of the question that they continued to preserve the Gospel of Thomas long after the official New Testament was issued.

On the other hand, in 1602 a Jesuit missionary named Jerome Xavier wrote for Akbar a comprehensive life of Jesus, Historia Christi, which contains many apocryphal traditions about Jesus, but there is not a trace of the bridge saying in this work (Jeremias Saying 8). This might only mean that he did not choose to include the saying since it is not in the New Testament, but it is negative evidence.

Akbar could also easily have gotten the saying through the Moslem scholarly tradition. Careful scholarship, especially by the Spanish scholar Asin y Palacios, has unearthed numerous similar quotations from Jesus in

Moslem sources. It turns out that the wording of the 1601 inscription was cited at least 8 times in Arabic literature, from the 8th to the 11th centuries, and moreover Malik (8th cent.) and Al-Daylami (11th cent.) ascribed it to a 7th century companion of Mohammed named Ibn Omar. This worthy in turn ascribed it to the Prophet Mohammed directly but added that it was also considered to come from Jesus (Jeremias Unbekannte 106-107, Uberlieferung 101-102). And despite the ascription to Mohammed, "the majority of witnesses do not hesitate to attribute the saying to Jesus...the authorship of Jesus being so firmly established that nothing could disprove it" (Jeremias Unknown 102). And that has to mean that since the saying is not found in the New Testament, the source must be in the Gospel of Thomas, and the Moslems must have had a copy of it to quote from - and we have seen similar evidence for other sayings.

It is then due to its popularity in Arabic literature that the saying spread to both Spain and India. In Spain it was cited about 1100 C.E. by Petrus Alphonsi, a Jewish convert to Christianity and personal physician to the King of Aragon, as rediscovered by Harald Sahlin in 1956. Alphonsi, who before his conversion was Rabbi Moise Sephardi and was broadly educated, makes clear in his book Disciplina Clericalis that his source was "Arabic proverbs, sayings of warning, fables and verses" (Sahlin 286, Jeremias Unbek 106). It is well-known that the Moslems were much more tolerant and open-minded toward science and knowledge than medieval Christians were and that Jews were responsible for transmitting much Western knowledge that had been destroyed under the iron rule of the Roman Catholic Church back to the West through translations from the Arabic. And the saying could easily have traveled to India in the 16th century with some scholar attached to Akbar's court, attesting to its enduring popularity; if then the Christian scholars of Goa had shown him the same saying again, he would have taken that as a sign from heaven, leading him to affix it to his mosque (Dunkerley 168-169, Jeremias Saying 7).

Remarkably, the bridge saying is quoted fairly exactly in an early 19th century poem Morgengebet by the German poet Joseph von Eichendorff: is this just great minds thinking alike or did he have access to some source? Jeremias thinks there could indeed be a connection between the poem and the saying by Jesus (Uber 96n). Interestingly, there was a high level of interest among German Enlightenment thinkers in apocryphal traditions: Gotthold Lessing wrote about the Gospel of the Nazarenes and the original Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew in his "Theses from Church History" of 1776 and Johann Herder wrote about Jewish-Christian gospels in his essay on the Letters of James and Jude in 1775. Moreover, collections of apocryphal sayings of Jesus that Herder and Lessing could have known go back to the

end of the 17th century; the bridge saying might be found in one of these (Frey "Lilien" 124-125). Thorough research would have to be done here to find out if the bridge saying is quoted in any of their writings or those of others where Eichendorff might easily have read it.

It is not hard to conclude from all this evidence that the original source of all these quotations has to be Saying 42 in the Gospel of Thomas, in a somewhat expanded form. Indeed, Islam specialist Eric Bishop considers the saying found in India to be the "most picturesque and telling form of `tradition' of Jesus which gained currency in the Near and Middle East" and he, alone among Western scholars, considers Saying 42 to be "a possible original or abbreviated version" of which the bridge saying was an extension (Bishop "Passersby" 337).

And we conclude our survey of the lasting influence of the Gospel of Thomas by looking at the quotes by the Albigensians or Cathars, a mystical sect of Christians in southern France known for their belief in non-violence, vegetarianism, a rejection of the physical world in favor of the spiritual and the dedicated spiritual path of their leaders, the perfecti. These quotes appear only in the 14th century Inquisition records in Latin of Cathars being interrogated, as their own documents were ruthlessly destroyed by the Catholic Church. So far scholarship has uncovered Sayings 30, 39, 44 and 102, but who knows what other treasures lurk in the massive records of the Inquisition.

Peter Maurinus appears to be quoting Saying 30 and attributes his quote to Jesus: "Where there was one of his little ones, he would himself be with him; and where there were two, similarly; and where there were three, in the same way." (Döllinger 210, Badham 809, Grant 145). For Saying 39, most of the following quote -

"Pharisees, hypocrites, who stand in the gate of the kingdom, and entered not the kingdom, nor permitted that those who wished to enter should enter" - could have come from the New Testament but the phrase "who wished to enter" (qui intrare volebant) is not in the New Testament yet is definitely in Saying 39 (Dollinger 181, Badham 808).

Saying 44 is quoted in two separate testimonies, by Raymond Valsiera of Ax, and by Peter Maurinus; the former testimony uses "deceive" instead of "blaspheme" but otherwise the quotes are of Saying 44 (Döllinger 164, 226). Amazingly, the Tuscan Diatessaron, "preserved in many manuscripts, the oldest of which are from the 14th century", has an almost verbatim version of Saying 44, and there is only a slight change in the last sentence: "in this world nor in the other" (Quispel Tatian 54, Lat Tatian GnSt 167). One would think this Tuscan document could have substituted the Synoptic version of the say-

ing but it did not and must reach back to the oldest documents of Tatian. As Quispel says, "it seems reasonable to suppose that by some channel or another the wording of this Logion has influenced the Italian text" (GoT+NT 192). He speculates that the Cathars might have interpolated Saying 44 into the Tuscan text "or that the Tuscan translator inserted this passage, known to him from Provencal sources"; in any case "it may be that they were familiar with the Gospel of Thomas or the Diatessaron" (Quispel Tatian 54-55).

It is startling that even after all the attempts of the Catholic Church to destroy alll copies of the Gospel of Thomas that the Cathars would still have possessed copies of it well into the 14th century. Either such copies continued to be hidden for many centuries or the Cathars got a copy or excerpts back again by way of the Moslems. Southern France is not far from Moslem Spain and we have seen above that Thomas may well have existed in medieval Moslem Spain. Is this one reason why the Church was so determined to wipe the Cathars out, such that it launched a crusade in 1210 which eliminated over 400 towns, massacred tens of thousands of people and led to the cultural devastation of southern France?

We have now seen the enormous influence of the Gospel of Thomas for many centuries after its composition and the continued respect that Gnostics, Manichaeans, Moslems and Cathars had for it as an authoritative source of Jesus' words. And we have seen how the Gospel of Thomas was continually being quoted by Christian theologians and commentators and its wording was used in the ancient editions of the New Testament rather than the standard New Testament wording of today's Bibles. One would think that given this exhaustive scholarship the primacy of the Gospel of Thomas would be securely accepted by modern Christian scholars. But such is not the case.

Chapter 13

Christian Scholarship on the Gospel of Thomas

It never ceases to amaze how extremely reluctant practically all Christian scholars are to accept the Gospel of Thomas as an original source. The dogma of the New Testament is so deeply ingrained that very few can shake it and very few are able to see Jesus' teachings with a fresh view. The Gospel of Thomas was discovered in 1945 and was issued in facsimile in 1956, the first article on it appeared in 1957 and the first published translation in 1959, and it has been discussed continuously and extensively since then. But there is a continuing strong denial of its value and intrinsic worth and authenticity on the part of many scholars, with a number of notable exceptions.

Jesus may well have been speaking of some of our modern Christian scholars when he accused the Pharisees and scribes of hiding the key of knowledge in Saying 39 and when in Saying 102 he accused the Pharisees of being like a dog in a manger who won't eat themselves and won't let the cattle eat either. I would venture to say that scholars have been sitting on one of the greatest treasure troves of spiritual truth for the last 50 years but have to a large extent consistently mistranslated and misinterpreted it. They have gotten themselves lost in arcane debates over external issues that are ultimately tangential to the real meaning of the sayings and have in the meantime not allowed the greater public to be aware of the deeper spiritual truths of Thomas.

It is almost painful to see the slow progress of grudging acceptance of Thomas over the last 50 years and the level of almost unreflective resistance has stayed remarkably strong. Anyone who has grown up on the New Testament and accepts it as Holy Writ simply finds it difficult to accept the very different style, wording and content of Thomas. Patterson says: "Thomas is a gospel, but not canonical...This awkward situation creates a charged atmosphere around the discussion of Thomas...Does it go on the first century side, where all the legitimate historical texts belong, or on the second century side, where the heretical works reside?" (Patterson GoT+HistJes 663-664).

And Carruth says likewise: "What may be most surprising for us is that sayings we thought we understood from the way they are used in our gospels could be so broadly interpreted. Like the Christians who used Q and those who used the Gospel of Thomas, the words of Jesus have authority for

us, and we want them to guide our lives. We are not comfortable with such a wide range of possible meanings...Matthew and Luke have provided...a context for the sayings of Jesus found in Q, and it is precisely because of this context that Q has survived at all. The context for the sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas is other sayings. Again, experience shows that the meaning of a statement is not always best clarified by another statement" (Carruth 94). This need for context and narrative may be a good explanation for the high degree of resistance to Thomas that we have seen for the last 50 years.

It is particularly interesting that when the Gospel of Thomas was first discovered and published many scholars were quite open-minded about it, did not reach negative conclusions and tended to accept that it might contain authentic sayings of Jesus. But then under the pressure of peer dogma some of them, such as Robert Wilson, Otto Piper and Claus-Hunno Hunzinger, soon "recanted" or stopped publishing on the subject. Those who continued to insist on the independence of Thomas were, to some extent, ostracized. This is particularly the case for Gilles Quispel, whose views were at first held in high regard but who did not switch with the prevailing trends and held to his original views quite doggedly and tenaciously.

One may sketch six stages of scholarly attitudes toward Thomas as follows:

Stage 1: Thomas is a late Gnostic distortion of the New Testament, it has no right to be called a gospel and anything in it that is not in the New Testament is not authentic. This first stage is particularly represented by the initial reaction by a number of Christian scholars who reacted with great defensiveness and hostility when the Gospel of Thomas was first discovered and discussed in the press. What they especially resented was the talk in the press about it being a "fifth gospel" which threw the credibility of the New Testament into question. Some choice epithets were uttered against it: "a false Gostic teaching" that "still wreaks havoc" (Reichelt 14) and "a late, secondary and mostly falsifying anthology from earlier witnesses" whose "importance must be denied" (Thieme 309).

Grant said in 1960: "What we find in Thomas is...a warping of the lines laid down in our gospels...Most conspicuously, the warping takes place in the author's rejection of the meaningfulness of historical events. Just the fact that his gospel...consists of nothing but sayings means that he has substituted a kind of spiritual understanding for the gospel of Jesus...He has made the kingdom almost exclusively present...The Church insisted on the reality of Jesus as both human and divine... This grasp of reality is precisely what is lacking in the Gospel of Thomas...We have an inadequate and distorted pre-

sentation of Christianity. The religious realities which the Church proclaimed were ultimately perverted by the Gospel of Thomas" (Grant 111-113).

Stage 2: Thomas is a late Gnostic re-editing of New Testament sayings and represents no significant addition to the New Testament. Here scholars do not change their mind about the inauthenticity of Thomas but decide not to denigrate it so overtly and to adopt a more polite tone. Thomas is invariably called "Gnostic" which is essentially a more polite way of saying "heretical" and though it is conceded that there might be authentic material in it, this is considered unlikely and impossible to prove. The consensus is, as DeConick summarizes it, that Thomas "was written by a Gnostic author who revised Synoptic sayings of Jesus in order to convey an esoteric message to elite religonists": thus "the Gospel was dependent, late and essentially irrelevant to the study of Christian origins" (DeC GOT 2). Tuckett said in 1998: "Nearly all would agree that in its present form the text of the Gospel of Thomas has been overlaid with sayings and ideas placed on Jesus' lips which are somewhat alien to those of the historical Jesus himself...The place of GTh is...in a context of other `gnostic' texts dating (probably) from the second century CE or later, and illustrating the ways in which Jesus traditions...were used by heterodox Christians to develop their own (at times rather strange) ideas" (Tuckett GOT 27, 32).

Stage 3: Thomas is a Gnostic compilation mostly based on the New Testament, possibly with some valuable independent or authentic material, edited in two stages. In this third stage of acceptance scholars are willing to admit that there is a small amount of authentic material in Thomas along with direct use of the New Testament, but that later Gnostic editors folded that material into their tendentious point of view. As Stead said in 1959: "There is, of course, no question here of a `fifth gospel'. It is in fact an anthology, of rather varying import and value, collected by a not very critical compiler... Nevertheless, we find in Thomas a score of sayings and parables which have the stamp of authenticity...It may well be that in a few similar parables and sayings...we have a precious addition to our store of information about our Master's teaching" (Stead New 325, 327).

And Charlesworth in 1994: "Many scholars today are convinced that the Gospel of Thomas contains primitive, pre-synoptic tradition. This may very well be true, but there are numerous difficulties that attend efforts to cull from this collection of sayings material that can with confidence be judged primitive, independent of the intracanonical gospels, and even authentic... Thomas could very well be a collage of New Testament and apoc-

ryphal materials which have been interpreted, often allegorically, in such a way as to advance 2nd and 3rd century gnostic ideas" (Charlesworth agrapha 496-497).

Stage 4: No general conclusion can be reached on independence or dependence and each saying must be evaluated on its own merits. Since many scholars do not want to stick their necks out by claiming Thomas to be authentic and independent (and they see what happened to Quispel), a popular approach is to take a completely non-committal view that each saying should be evaluated separately and no general statements can be made whether Thomas as a whole is dependent or independent. As Robinson said in 1999: "Any one-sided claim that the Gospel of Thomas was, or was not, dependent on the canonical Gospels has come to seem doctrinaire...Each saying must be approached with an open mind, for the pre-history of each saying must be inductively worked out, to the extent possible, one by one, from the text itself" (Robinson Pretext 152-154). Or as Uro said in 2003: "Most of those who have taken a stand in recent years have formulated their views rather carefully and avoided exclusive conclusions. It has almost become a commonplace to emphasize that each saying or unit must be examined individually and, therefore, dependence in one case does not exclude independence in the other or vice versa" (Uro Thomas 106).

Stage 5: Thomas is a non-Gnostic collective work in several stages based on several independent written and/or oral sources predating the New Testament. At the fifth stage of acceptance scholars finally get away from the dreaded "Gnostic" label and realize, as even those clinging to the label admit, that there isn't much that is terribly "Gnostic" about the Gospel of Thomas; as Grobel says: "If Thomas is really Gnostic, it is passing strange that it contains no hint of the exuberant mythology of the second century. There are no aeons, no emanation, no celestial marriages, no Demiurge, no Sophia, no divided Father, no divided Jesus, no polemic against the Old Testament" (Grobel 368). Just because Thomas was found in a collection containing "Gnostic" documents doesn't make it Gnostic.

Helmut Koester is responsible for the widespread acceptance today of the idea that behind Thomas is an independent tradition, despite initial criticism when he first proposed it in 1971: "The relationship of these proverbial sayings to their synoptic parallels is most peculiar. To the extent that they represent sayings which Matthew and Luke drew from Q, their synoptic parallels are usually found either in the `Sermon on the Mount' (Matt 5-7) or the `Sermon on the Plain' (Luke 6)...Since no peculiarities of the editorial

work of Mark, Matthew or Luke are recognizable in these proverbial sayings of Thomas, there is no reason to assume they were drawn from the synoptic gospels. Rather, Thomas' source must have been a very primitive collection of proverbs, a collection which was incorporated into Matthew's and Luke's common source Q" (Koester traj 181-182).

Still, even the most liberal scholar is not willing to call Thomas authentic; as Patterson said in 2005: "Few (scholars) now are convinced that Thomas will yield up a significant number of new sayings to be added to the corpus of the authentic Jesus tradition. Even the Jesus Seminar, in which a majority of Fellows clearly regarded Thomas as basically an independent tradition, did not ascribe any new sayings from Thomas unequivocally to Jesus. But just about everyone agrees that the possibility that Thomas, in individual cases, might preserve an independent version of a saying already known from the synoptic tradition necessitates that one always cast an eye to Thomas when working at cases of tradition history" (Patterson GoT+HistJes 669).

Christian scholars have made some progress over the last 50 years. They started by denying Thomas any sort of authenticity, then grudgingly accepted a few sayings as authentic, then postulated an independent source that Thomas used along with the New Testament and then ended up accepting that all of Thomas comes from an independent source that was also used by Q (Quelle), the source of the Synoptics. But the problem with this hypothesis is that not a single fragment of this hypothetical independent source behind Thomas and Q, nor a fragment of Q itself, has ever been found anywhere, although archeologists have by now thoroughly scoured the most promising places. One would think that the owners of the Nag Hammadi Library who were very keen on saving the important spiritual documents of the time and clearly had high respect for Jesus would have been sure to include that original authentic document of Jesus. But it is not there.

Stage 6: Thomas is the original source of Jesus' sayings and was used by the New Testament. The very last stage is one that few scholars have yet taken yet it follows directly from the problem stated above: no written source for either the New Testament or the Gospel of Thomas has ever been found, not even in fragments. The idea that Thomas is the original source was proposed by Philippe de Suarez in 1974, but among highly respected scholars today it is in particular Stevan Davies who has taken this last and most logical step.

In his book Suarez says that the effect of the publication of the Nag Hammadi Library was “to put the Gospel of Thomas on the same footing as the other less important manuscripts which accompany it. The name

`apocryphal' which was given to this gospel renders it suspect...Indeed, in order to reconstitute the prehistory of the traditional gospels one must have recourse not to the gospels we know but the more ancient ones which constituted their sources, because the editors of the gospels made their own choice from the material which circulated in diverse forms...Is the collection of sayings which constitutes the Gospel of Thomas the source even of the four gospels?...It is likely...that the editors of the Synoptics and John left out the sayings of Jesus that were too difficult to understand. As for the rest, the Gnostic coloration that so many commentators have wanted to see in the Gospel of Thomas does not explain the archaic character of the sayings in comparison with the Synoptics" (Suarez xi-xii, xiv).

Suarez did make a few sensational statements in the French press when his book came out, according to Laurentin: "The Gospel of Thomas is the oldest of the gospels...It alone contains the authentic sayings of Jesus. It alone knows his true face. The Church has deliberately eliminated this fundamental text...Twenty centuries of history have been deceived about tne person Jesus. Here is the public undeceived. This stupendous discovery could well constitute one of the greatest events since the origin of humanity" (Laurentin 733). He elaborated further to Paris Match that the four Church gospels relied on the Gospel of Thomas as their main source to assemble "flashes" of Jesus to create their own collage. And when they were done, the original source, Thomas, was declared heretical because it put too much emphasis on the internal search and could not be fitted into the dogmas of the Church (Serrou 58-59).

But without some of the hype and exaggeration, Stevan Davies essentially takes a similar view. In contrast to most scholars who see Thomas as being put together in several stages of editing, Davies points out that "overall Thomas shows fewer signs of editorial modification than any of the New Testament gospels" and thus "may be our best source of Jesus' teachings" (Davies Thomas 14, 9). In 1983, in his influential book The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom, Davies concluded: "What then is the Gospel of Thomas? It is a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus, some authentic and some not. Its background is that of Jewish Wisdom speculation. It is wholly independent of the New Testament gospels; most probably it was in existence before they were written. It should be dated A.D. 50-70." (Davies GoTCW 146).

In 1992 Davies announced: "A consensus is emerging in American scholarship that the Gospel of Thomas is a text independent of the Synoptics and that it was compiled in the mid to late first century. It appears to be roughly as valuable a primary source for the teachings of Jesus as Q, and perhaps more so than the Gospels of Mark and John...The Gospel of Thom-

as should be viewed as a text deriving its special ideas in the main from the wisdom tradition... a text of christianized Hellenistic Judaism, sharing with such authors as Philo and Aristobulus various principal approaches...The Gospel of Thomas is to Christian Hellenistic Judaism what Q is to Christian apocalyptic Judaism" (Davies Christ 663-664, 682).

And in 1996 and 1997 in two painstaking articles in Neotestamentica Davies went further and pointed out the direct use by Mark of Thomas: "Significantly, almost every saying in Mark's chapter 4 is from the Gospel of Thomas, as is virtually every single saying in Mark's Gospel that is called a parable there...If Thomas was available to Mark, then Thomas (or traditions contained within or deriving from Thomas) may have been available to the two authors who revised Mark: Matthew and Luke...The preponderance of evidence indicates that the Gospel of Thomas served as a source for the Gospel of Mark" (Davies GoT 118, Mark II 260-261). As Davies summarizes: "The Gospel of Thomas was buried away for 1600 years and has been wished away for another 30. It should now be taken very seriously. Not only is it a fourth synoptic gospel - it is a Q too" (Davies Thomas fourth 14).

Chapter 14:
The Gospel of Thomas and Q

It is perhaps time to ask the provocative question that Davies poses: rather than there being a hypothetical source behind both the Gospel of Thomas and the Synoptic Gospels, could one not reasonably argue that the Gospel of Thomas is the source Q? This argument can even be pieced together from the statements of the very scholars who argue for the existence of Q. Let us look a bit at the history of Q.

The postulation of Q is an outgrowth of what is called the two-source hypothesis, that the Gospel of Mark is the oldest of the Synoptic Gospels and was used by Matthew and Luke: of the 661 verses in Mark over 600 of them are substantially found in Matthew and over 300 in Luke. This idea goes back to Karl Lachmann in 1835 and Gottlob Wilke in 1838, but it was Christian Weisse, also in 1838, who expanded the number of sources to include an original collection of sayings mentioned by Papias, which he called "genuine Matthew". According to him, the present Gospel of Matthew thus originated from the amalgamation of the genuine Matthew with the genuine Mark (Stoldt 48-49, Koester ancient 128). Though Weisse recanted his views in 1856, Heinrich Holtzmann followed his lead in 1863 by postulating two underlying sources, a historical source A and a sayings source L, though he was inconsistent in what he considered fundamental and what added (Stoldt 70, 85).

It is Paul Wernle who renamed the sayings source Q or Quelle in 1899 and proposed that it "underwent continuous historical development" into no fewer than seven Q sources "until it was taken up into Matthew and Luke" though he did not think Mark used Q (Stoldt 112, 117). Though Ewald in 1850 had restricted Q to a sayings collection without any narrative content, Q continued to grow into a kind of "Semi-Gospel" which in Bernhard Weiss' view (1908) had to contain a Passion narrative and thus was a hybrid of sayings and narrative (Stoldt 50, 122-123). As Stoldt says critically: "Once a foot was in the door and it became permissible to assign to the sayings source dominical sayings that had been framed and embedded in narrative material, then all doors could be opened....Then practically everything can belong to the sayings document" (Stoldt 56).

Despite its unlimited powers of expansion, Q was merely an assump-

tion until the continuing post-war discoveries of extra-canonical documents forced scholars to confront anew the question of the authenticity of the New Testament and made it seem more imperative to delineate Q in detail (Mack LOst 26). As Robinson said in 1992: "Up until rather recently most scholarship, while affirming the existence of Q, has contented itself with referring to Q without actually quoting it, i.e. by referring to the Matthean and Lukan parallel texts...Q itself has remained for most a fuzzy reality, a Ding an sich in itself unattainable... Perhaps this shadowy existence of Q is comparable to the shadowy status of the First Century text of the New Testament...To be sure, some, perhaps much, of Q is irretrievably lost, given the redactional `improvements' by Matthew and Luke but this need not be used, as it all too often is, to argue that the reconstruction of a critical text of Q is impossible and hence should not be undertaken" (Robinson critical text 310). Building on John Kloppenborg's 1992 edition of Q parallels, Robinson followed up on his promise and produced a critical text of Q in 2000.

In his detailed version of Q Robinson went back to the original 19th century idea of a sayings collection, before Weiss, possibly fearing the implications for Christian belief, muddled the concept by imposing a narrative on it. Here he followed the growing consensus of scholars who no longer saw Q as an amorphous stratum of tradition, as Dibelius saw it, or as dependent on the theology of Mark and a supplement to it, as Wellhausen, Streeter and Manson saw it, but rather as "a carefully conceived document in its own right, with its own theological message, or kerygma, independent of the passion kerygma characteristic of the canonical gospels" (Klopp QThomas 17, 13).

And this denial of the passion narrative was the outcome of the critical attitude of Wrede and Schmidt and the form criticism practiced by Bultmann and scholars following his lead, all of whom had determined that there was no reliable way to write a historical biography of the man Jesus by using the New Testament as a source. In 1901 Wrede demolished even Mark as a a reliable narrative source by showing that the story of Jesus' life was built on the literary necessity of the revealing of the Messianic secret rather than on true historical recollections of his life.

Schmidt then concluded in his 1919 study: "The imbalance of the traditions that are present in it (Mark) shows how the oldest Jesus traditions looked: no continuous report, but a mass of individual stories which...are arranged according to topical points of view...On the whole there is no life of Jesus in the sense of a developing life story, no chronological outline of the history of Jesus, but only individual stories, pericopes, which are put into a framework" (Schmidt Rahmen 317). Robinson too concludes: "One sees an Evangelist creating stories to fill out a theological need...Similarly in the

case of Luke it is today recognized that his intention to present an `orderly account' (Lk 1,3) so as to provide `certainty' (Lk 1,4) has in view theological rather than historiographical accuracy" (Robinson Crit ed 667).

But if, according to Robinson, "Q, in this respect more like The Gospel of Thomas, is largely a Sayings Gospel" (Critic ed 664), then what differentiates it from the Gospel of Thomas? Kloppenborg has postulated that Q existed in three layers, with the earliest and most primitive layer being a sapiential one, a gnomologia or collection of chreiae, similar to other ancient Egyptian, Near Eastern and Greek collections of instructions by a wise man. The apocalyptic themes and the narrative are from a later recension (Klopp Formation 263-328).

However, it looks as if most of this sapiential Q layer comes straight from Thomas. Arnal says: "Of a total of 12 parables or similitudes appearing in Q, fully half are paralleled in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas...The similarity between these collections extends beyond considerable shared content, however, to embrace a common genre, a common predilection for aphoristic and proverbial forms, a common concern with both practical and speculative wisdom, and a surprising lack of interest in the death and resurrection of Jesus...Q and the Gospel of Thomas continued to develop in similar directions even after pursuing separate trajectories" (Arnal Rhetoric 471-473). McLean has calculated that of 114 sayings in Thomas, 68 (59%) have parallels in the New Testament and 40 of these 68 parallels are Q texts, while 28 of these are from the earliest stratum that Kloppenborg has analyzed: a "remarkable overlap" (McLean 333-335). And of Crossan's list of items in the Jesus tradition that he assigns to the first and oldest stratum, a considerable majority (56%) are in the Gospel of Thomas: 10 out of 29 (34%) with multiple independent attestation, 26 out of 36 (72%) with triple and 38 out of 66 (57%) with double; many of the rest (12 in multiple, 2 in triple and 9 in double) are miraculous, apocalyptic or ideological in content and should probably be assigned to a later stratum. That being the case, the percentage in Thomas increases to 68% (Crossan Historical 434-441).

Koester too points out the early nature of Thomas: "It can be said with confidence that the Q parallels in the Gospel of Thomas always represent, or derive from, more original forms of those sayings. Not only is there no trace of redactional features of Q in these sayings of the Gospel of Thomas, but they are also either core sayings of the respective sections of Q in which they occur or free sayings added at a later stage of development of Q...The investigation of the sayings shared by Q and the Gospel of Thomas leads into the very earliest period of the transmission of these sayings...It is remarkable that there is not a single instance of sayings from the Gospel of Thomas paralleled in these sections of the Gospel of Luke that cannot be

assigned to Q with a high degree of probability" (Koester Q+rel 60). And even more strongly: "Numerous sayings were shared by Q and the Gospel of Thomas but...the latter did not reveal any knowledge of the sayings about Jesus as the coming Son of Man. Most of the sayings of Q with parallels in the Gospel of Thomas should therefore be assigned to Q's earliest stage of composition" (Koester sayings of Q 142-143).

Note what scholars have just established:

1. There is a high degree of similarity between the hypothetical Q and Thomas;

2. Close to 60% of Thomas is in the New Testament and over a third of Thomas is in Q;

3. 56% of Crossan's oldest stratum is in the Gospel of Thomas, with a higher percentage (68%) if one limits the oldest stratum only to wisdom sayings and not ideology and narrative;

4. All the texts in Thomas are the most original forms and the earliest transmission of the sayings of Jesus;

5. The sayings in Q with parallels in Thomas are thus in the earliest stage of composition; and

6. No late forms in Luke that are not in Q appear in Thomas.

Pray tell, what is left over for Q that is not in Thomas? If Q exists and contains anything that Thomas doesn't, then it is either a longer form of Thomas or it is a very short document that has what Thomas is lacking. The former would simply be Thomas and the latter might well be the Gospel of the Egyptians or Hebrews that the Church Fathers refer to. In either case there is no need for any new hypothetical non-existent document and the identity of Thomas as Q becomes clear. And with a basic consensus since Dibelius that Q dates from the middle of the first century or even earlier (Robinson Sayings gospel Q 45-46), it would be an easy logical step simply to accept Davies' similar dating of Thomas and to equate the two. But taking this step that all scholarly conclusions point to seems to be too frightening a prospect.

Ingenious arguments are marshalled to avert this possibility. Vielhauer turns the whole argument on its very precarious head by saying that the very existence of a sayings gospel as the Gospel of Thomas proves that "such collections of words of Jesus existed in ancient Christianity even as a literary genre with an official purpose and proves furthermore that the postulated sayings source Q is no product of fantasy, but was a reality" (Vielhauer

THEV 621-622). In other words, something that exists proves the existence of something like it that does not exist?

In order to deny Thomas any claim to being the true source, all three scholars cited above go to great lengths to conjure up even more imaginary documents besides Q. Arnal says Thomas is a composite of two different sets of wisdom and gnostic material respectively, written by a "lower-level scribal group, moderately educated but with little literary sophistication" (Arnal Rhet 476-478, 489). McLean thinks Q and Thomas did not share a documentary source and "the respective compilers of Q and GThom did not have access to an identical collection of sayings simultaneously" (McLean 335, 341).

Koester too postulates that "the Gospel of Thomas knew at least two different parable clusters, one designated as `mystery parables', the other circulating as `parables of the kingdom'. Although Q includes some parables that appear in each of these two collections, it does not seem likely that Q was acquainted with either one of them...Although...Q contains the largest number of parallels to the Gospel of Thomas by any count...it is obvious that the Gospel of Thomas cannot simply pass as a variant or as an early form of the Synoptic Sayings Source, nor is it possible to consider Q as the source of any of the sayings of the Gospel of Thomas" (Koester Q+Rel 55-56). Instead, Thomas "itself is a witness to early collections of sayings that were also incorporated into the first composition of Q" (Koester sayings 139). Yet it is Koester himself who makes a strong case that at least five writings called "apocryphal", including Thomas, should be given serious consideration as being "at least as old and as valuable as the canonical gospels as sources for the earliest developments of the traditions about Jesus...The term apocryphal with all its negative connotations should not prejudice us any longer" - unless something apocryphal is considered to be a direct source! (Koester Apocr 130).

Koester is also not comfortable with the elimination of apocalyptism from the earliest layer of Q, and instead sees eschatology as the core of Q: "From the very beginning, the tradition of sayings preserved in the Sayings Gospel Q is dominated by an eschatological orientation...As far as Q is concerned...its trajectory belongs, from the very beginning, to the interpretation of an eschatological tradition of Jesus' sayings" (Koester Sayings 154). Yet at the same time he does not see eschatology in Thomas: "the typical apocalyptic perspective of the later redaction of Q does not appear in any of these sayings" (Ancient 87).

But the end result is a rather odd one: if both Q and Thomas drew from sets of sayings that were similar as well as different, then Q consistently picked out only those sayings which were eschatological while conversely

Thomas picked out only those that were not. And what kind of a strange source is this, that contains both eschatological as well as anti-eschatological sayings?

It certainly makes more sense to see the eschatology as belonging to a later stage, as McLean, Mack and others posit: McLean says the sayings genre bifurcated in that "GThom remained true to its Gattung" while "the Q^2 redactor subjugated the Q1 sapiential sayings to apocalyptic themes" (McLean 343) and Mack says that based on the fact that "neither the earliest Jesus traditions nor the earliest kerygmatic formulations made use of apocalyptic language...this means that apocalyptic language in the Q tradition is a later, secondary development at a particular stage of social formation and experience" (Mack Lord 8). The need to hang on to the eschatological view of Jesus comes out of the same need to have the canonical gospels be the ultimate authority: even the most enlightened and progressive Christian scholars, such as Koester, instinctively shrink back from the implications of their own findings and prefer to cling to familiar Christian teachings.

And so, despite the general acceptance of Thomas as an independent source, the need to have a different and superior source behind the Synoptics remains so that the New Testament can retain its unquestioned priority. As Cameron says with regard to Crossan: "By conflating sayings from both the formative (Q1) and the redactional (Q^2) strata of Q, together with their parallels in Thomas, into a single first stratum of tradition, and by beginning his discussion with John and Jesus (from Q^2), Crossan simply reproduces the dominant (gospel) paradigm of Christian origins... Accordingly, what Crossan has given us is a theology of Christian origins, not a history of Christian beginnings. For the latter, another kind of comparison will have to be undertaken, which does not start with the historical Jesus, end up at the resurrection, reinscribe orgins,...paraphrase the canonical gospels, and equate theory with method" (Cameron Comparing 69).

Yet what Cameron criticizes is exactly what the entire theory of Q accomplishes: to reproduce the dominant gospel paradigm and claim methodological rigor to boot. For if one looks closely into the criteria for what goes into Q in the standard editions, the basis is the existing New Testament. Kloppenborg says the minimal text of Q is "the verbatim and near-verbatim Matthew-Luke agreements" and the generally accepted extent of Q includes "those portions of text which display a general agreement in sense but not exact verbatim agreement." He acknowledges that "in many instances the choice between Matthew and Luke is not so clear, and decisions regarding the inclusion or exclusion of phrases or verses attested in only one gospel are controverted" but those are the only two choices (Kloppenborg Q parallels xxiii).

Robinson has delineated the process of decision in more detail: "Evidence is collected...for the view that the Lucan reading is the reading of Q. Then evidence is listed to the contrary...Then the same is done for Matthew...If the Lucan reading is shown not to be of Q, it does not necessarily follow that the Matthean reading is that of Q, since it is quite possible that neither reading is that of Q" (Robinson critical text 313). But if Q is nothing but a shorter version of the New Testament, whether just the sayings or the narrative as well, then what exactly does it add to the understanding of early Christianity? And why is Q not allowed to contain wordings from "apocryphal" writings which in the editions of Q are relegated to being mere "parallels" to Q?

Thus much labor and effort has gone into a full written version of an imaginary text which is essentially a pared-down version of Matthew and Luke but which before long will be regarded as if it had always existed. Robinson admits that reconstruction is a bit difficult "in the case of Q where not even a tattered manuscript survives...Such a text of Q with its critical apparatus should never be considered as completed or final but must always remain open for improvement" (Sayings of Jesus 189, 191). And despite his insistence on group consensus and team rather than individual work, "of course all our critical scholarship in a sense consists of hypotheses, with varying degrees of probability, and the existence of Q, like its critical reconstruction, of course shares in this fittingly modest claim" (Robinson critical text 314-315). Kloppenborg too admits that "no two reconstructions of Q will be exactly alike": still "a broad scholarly consensus has been reached on some points" (Klopp QThomas Reader 23).

But at the same time Robinson exults over this self-created document as if he had just discovered a new manuscript of Jesus in some Palestinian cave: "Even if it has survived only incompletely, Q is surely the most important Christian text that we have. This should not be contested...Just as Jesus was not a Christian, and yet is nonetheless above all Christians, Q is not a canonical book, and yet in a way stands prior to and above the canonical books of the New Testament...I hope by the end of the century to be able to have in hand a reconstruction and translation of Q...in order to make available this lost collection of Jesus' sayings which in my opinion is the most important book ever written by a Christian" (Robinson Sayings of Jesus 180, 192).

Perhaps our esteemed Christian scholars might consider that to an objective outsider it might appear a bit delusional to believe in imaginary documents when we are surrounded by such a plethora of real and authentic documents in ancient manuscript copies. And it might appear even more delusional to claim one's own invented version of the Gospels as the most

important book ever written by a Christian when there is already a good candidate for that title, probably written by the very first "Christian" of them all, namely the Gospel of Thomas. Nineteenth century scholars who only knew the New Testament can be forgiven for their creative speculations about imaginary documents, but modern ones have had the Gospel of Thomas at their disposal since 1959 and still willfully sideline and ignore it!

UNIT III: THE REAL JESUS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT'S DISTORTIONS

Chapter 15:

Jesus' Life

We have spent a good amount of time examining the ways in which the New Testament distorts the person and the teachings of the historical Jesus and we have seen that the Gospel of Thomas is the true source of Jesus' teachings. We have also examined some of the most important figures in Jesus' life to see to what extent the New Testament has distorted their history. We will now turn our attention to the life of Jesus himself to see what we can learn from the Gospel of Thomas about him.

Thousands of lives of Jesus have been written: it is said that there were 60,000 in the 19th century alone and probably just as many in the 20th century (although I cannot find an exact source for this number). And the more one reads these the more one is convinced that there are as many Jesuses as there are biographers: the person of Jesus is so fluid that anyone can construct him in their own image. Apart from the biographers who deny the existence of Jesus altogether (G. A. Wells, Rylands, John Allegro), broadly the biographies can be broken down into four categories, followed by examples of authors proposing that particular view:

1. Jesus the revolutionary, Zealot, claimant of the Jewish throne (political Messiah): S.G.F. Brandon, Hyam Maccoby, Joel Carmichael, Richard Horsley.

2. Jesus the radical religious reformer of Judaism, eschatological prophet: Abraham Geiger in 1864, Wilhelm Wrede, Samuel Reimarus, Jo-

hannes Weiss, Albert Schweitzer, E. P. Sanders, Michael Grant, Bart Ehrman.

3. Jesus the ethical teacher and rabbi, Essene: Joseph Klausner, Heinrich Graetz, Bruce Chilton, Harvey Falk.

4. Jesus the magician, miracle worker, healer, Hasid or Galilean charismatic, gnostic libertine, Cynic philosopher: Morton Smith, Geza Vermes, John Crossan, Burton Mack, A.N. Wilson, Ian Wilson.

But can one person incorporate every one of these qualities in himself? Jesus would have to be a Superman in order to do so and these four sets of qualities are not necessarily congruent with each other. It behooves us to start from the beginning and to see what can actually be known about his life and what is pure conjecture.

We have seen in Chapter 9 that the New Testament cannot be an eyewitness report of the life of Jesus and that it is replete with so many contradictions and factual errors that it contains little reliable biographical information. In order to construct a life of Jesus, we need to use the Gospel of Thomas and other "apocryphal" writings. The preliminary question is whether there are any contemporary historical references to Jesus in

Roman or other sources. If the Christian claims are correct, then Jesus was a supremely important person and he should have been mentioned in some historically recognized document of the time.

Surprisingly, however, he is not. Of all the great figures in history, Jesus has the least amount of historical evidence for his existence and many of the sources are suspect. The only other great figure who comes close in invisibility is William Shakespeare, in whose case so little is known of the man by that name from Stratford that many have proposed other people as the real author (I personally lean toward the group theory with the Earl of Oxford or the Earl of Derby as the main author).

One can barely fill a page with the historical attestations that are even remotely of a man called Jesus:

1. Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars: Claudius 25.4: "He (Claudius) expelled the Jews from Rome, on account of the riots in which they were constantly indulging, at the instigation of Chrestus." The cause of these riots was most likely the abolition of the Jewish state by Claudius in 44 and the imposition of direct rule, as a result of which riots broke out in several

cities in Palestine. Benko says "Jews living in other areas of the empire felt great sympathy for their compatriots in the `mother country' and the spirit of resistance and revolution spread as far as Rome" (Benko 19). Christian scholars tend to think that `Chrestus' refers to Christ, as Bruce says: "The historian appears to have misunderstood the reference to one `Chrestus' in the police records; he took the reference to mean that this `Chrestus' was actually in Rome as ringleader of the riotous behavior in A.D. 49" (Bruce Jesus 21). But that may be exactly what Suetonius is referring to, as the name Chrestus was very common in Rome (Benko 18-19). In that case this citation offers no value as a proof of the existence of Jesus.

2. Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars: Nero 16.2: "Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a body of people addicted to a novel and mischievous superstition." Emperor Nero blamed the disastrous fire in Rome in 64 C.E. on the Christians and burned many on stakes or exposed them to wild beasts.

3. Tacitus, Annals of Imperial Rome 15.44 (written between 115-117 CE), mentions the fire of Rome and Nero's attempt to blame the Christians, "a class of men loathed for their vices", and goes on to say: "Christus, the founder of their name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a short time, only to break out once more, not only in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in Rome itself, where all the horrible and shameful things in the world collect and find a home." The problem here is that Tacitus does not appear to have any independent sources of information and is merely repeating the Christian story 50 years after the events he is reporting. As Wells points out, he could not have derived his information from a Roman record of the crucifixion as he gives Pilate an incorrect title: "An inscription found in 1961 records the dedication by Pilate of a building in honor of Tiberius and shows that he was `prefect', not procurator, of Judaea... Provincial governors of equestrian status bore the title `procurator Augusti' only from the term of Claudius (i.e. from AD 41). That Tacitus used the term current in his own lifetime suggests, then, that he did not obtain his information from records or archives. The same conclusion is also supported by his failure to name the executed man. He says nothing of `Jesus' and uses the title `Christ' as if it were a proper name" (Wells Did 14).

4. Josephus, Antiquities 18.63ff.: "At about this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if one might call him a man. For he was one who accomplished surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as are eager for novelties. He won over many of the Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. When Pilate, upon an indictment brought by the principal men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him from the very first

did not cease to be attached to him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the holy prophets had foretold this and myriads of other marvels concerning him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has to this day still not disappeared." Josephus was born 37 or 38 CE, the son of a Judean priest and educated as a Pharisee. He defended Galilee against the Romans during the Jewish revolt in 66 CE, but when captured defected to the Romans. As a result of their patronage he had the leisure to write The Jewish War which he completed in 77 or 78 CE, followed by The Antiquities of the Jews 15 years later.

The general consensus is that this passage is a Christian forgery and interpolation, since only a Christian would have written something so laudatory about a rebel against the Romans and Josephus was assuredly not a Christian. Also, without this section 3 the section before and after are thematically connected, but with it there is a breach of continuity.

In addition, it is not found in the early manuscripts, as Barrett shows: "The authenticity of this reference to Jesus as it now stands is very questionable. The passage is found in all the MSS of the Antiquities (but none of these is older than the 11th century) and was known to Eusebius (4th century) but Origen (first half of the 3rd century) does not seem to have read it, since he says plainly that Josephus did not believe Jesus to be the Christ" (Barrett 198-199). Rylands adds: "In the sixteenth century Vossius had a MS. of Josephus from which the passage was wanting. None of the early Christian writers ever quote the passage as evidence in their controversies with Jews and pagans which, had they known it, they certainly would have done" (Rylands 14).

Even if these four citations showed genuine historical knowledge, they wouldn't add up to much. But they don't - and yet this is all that Christian apologists can cite to document the historicity of Jesus. The first century CE was not an illiterate period of Dark Ages: rather, it was the height of the Roman Empire with a high degree of literacy and the writings of many historians. And the vast majority of them do not mention Jesus. As Graham says: "There were many historians just then and some of them the most illustrious of all time - Tacitus, Plutarch, Livy, the two Plinys, Philo and Josephus, among others: and besides these, many men of literary note such as Seneca, Martial, Juvenal, Epictetus, Plotinus and Porphyry. We are all too prone to forget the brilliancy of this period, yet this is the age of Vergil, Horace and Ovid, the latter living till Christ, if real, would have been twenty-two. These were all men of great intellect, and deeply interested in the doctrines and morals of their day. Why then did they not record this wonder-working Savior of the race?...Tacitus...like the younger Pliny, mentions Christ only in terms of the Christians and their beliefs; in other words, these men

were speaking of a new religion not of a historical founder, and for the new religion they had nothing but contempt...One would think the Jewish historians would at least admit so great a personage was of their race. And if anyone would do so, it should be Philo. This philosopher-historian lived both before and after the time of Christ, yet never mentions him" (Graham Deceptions 290-293).

The long list of those who do not mention Jesus includes the Qumran community; as Wilson says: "Although the Essenes were contemporary with Jesus, the Dead Sea Scrolls proved disappointingly to throw little new light on Jesus and early Christianity. They contain no recognizable mention of Jesus, just as the Christian gospels, surprisingly, fail to refer to the Essenes" (AN Wilson 41).

One would think that Paul especially would have information about the historical Jesus, but here too we come up empty. Paul does not name Jesus' parents, where he was born, where he lived, even when he lived. Although his writings comprise a substantial proportion of the New Testament, they contain no mention of Jesus' parables or miracles, no reference to his trial before Pilate, nor of Jerusalem at the place of his execution. Even when he writes of Jesus' death he says nothing of Pilate or of Jerusalem but declares that Jesus was crucified at the instigation of wicked angels "the rulers of this age" (I Cor 2:8). On his own admission, Paul never knew the human Jesus and based his whole faith on a vision he claimed to have received of the resurrected Jesus.

This is the sum total of what we learn about Jesus from Paul. Jesus was a Jew born to a Jewish woman (Gal 3:16, 4:4). He was descended from David (Rom 1:3). He preached only to Israel, according to the promises by God to the Jews (Rom 15:8). He chose apostles (Gal 1:17-19). He was reviled and crucified (Rom 15:3, I Cor 15:3, Gal 2:20, Gal 3:13 etc.) through Jewish malice (I Thess 2:15). He rose on the third day (I Cor 15:4). He showed himself to Peter, the Apostles and others, including Paul himself (I Cor 15:5-8). This isn't much on which to build a biography nor does it indicate someone who knew anything about the living Jesus.

Nor do the rabbinical sources help us much either, even though some of them may well date to the lifetime of Jesus. The Mishnah and Tosefta have a number of references to Yeshu ha-Notzri and Ben Pandira, which must refer to Jesus. There are also Ben Stada references which may or may not refer to him. There are a certain number of interesting historical references in them, but overall they do not add much to the picture; as Morton Smith says: "First, the rabbis are generally ignorant of chronology and constantly guilty of absurd anachronisms. Second, they habitually refer to their

enemies by abusive nicknames and puns, usually bad. Third, in the case of Jesus particularly, this practice of concealed reference has been carried to the extreme by manuscript copyists to avoid censorship" (Smith Mag 47-49).

The references are also very general in nature, limiting their value: he was born out of wedlock, his mother was a hairdresser, he had been in Egypt and had brought magic from there, he was a magician and led astray and deceived Israel, he mocked at the words of the wise and was excommunicated, he was tried in Lud as a deceiver and as a teacher of apostasy, he was executed, either stoned or hung or crucified, in Lud on the eve of Pesah which was also the eve of Sabbath, he was a revolutionary, and he had five disciples. What is interesting in all this is the constant repetition that Jesus was born out of wedlock and that his father's name was Pantera or Pandira, perhaps also that he had been in Egypt. Apart from that, there isn't much that the rabbis could not have gotten from Christian sources. As Rylands says: "The references to Jesus in the Talmud...are all of such a character as to prove that the Rabbis of the second century had no independent knowledge of Jesus and no traditions of their own concerning him... All the knowledge which the Rabbis had of Jesus was obtained by them from the gospels... proved by the fact that they confounded him with another man of the same name, This man, Jesus ben Pandira, or ben Stada, reputed a wonder-worker, is said to have been stoned to death and then hung on a tree on the eve of Passover in the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (106-79 BCE) at Jerusalem" (Rylands 19-20).

There is, however, one interesting Rabbinic citation that has a ring of historical truth, in B. Abodah Zarah 16b-17a and Tosefta Hulin 2.24: "(In reference to Rabbi Eliezer): Once, I was walking on the upper street of Sepphoris and found one of the disciples of Yeshu the Nazarene, by the name Jacob, a man of Kefar Sechanya. He said to me, `It is written in your Torah: Thou shalt not bring the hire of a harlot, etc.' What was to be done with it - a latrine for the High Priest? But I did not answer him at all. He told me, "Thus did Yeshu the Nazarene (or Yeshu ben Pantere) teach me: `For the hire of a harlot hath she gathered them,, And unto the hire of a harlot shall they return, from the place of filth they come, and unto the place of filth they go'. And the saying pleased me and on account of this, I was arrested for Minuth (heresy)." Klausner considers the references to Jesus "both early in date and fundamental in their bearing on the story; and their primitive character cannot be disputed on the grounds of the slight variations in the parallel passages".

R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, who is mentioned in the Mishnah some 320 times and who was a disciple of Yohanan ben Zakkai who was eminent at the time of the destruction of the Temple, was born at least 30 or even

40 years before this destruction. Thus he was a contemporary of Jesus and Klausner thinks he must have encountered Jacob of Kefar Sechanya about 60 C.E. There is also another rabbinic citation from T. Hul. 2.22-23 about a serpent biting R. Eliezer and "Jacob of Kefar Sama (Sekanya) came to heal him in the name of Yeshu ben Pandera". Putting these two passages together, Klausner concludes that this Jacob must have been James the brother of Jesus and that this story has "the stamp of truth" (Klausner Jesus 38-42).

We have seen that the New Testament is not a reliable source of history concerning the historical Jesus and that even the Gospels which purport to give a history are not even cited in the early Christian literature. There is no mention of Jesus in any Roman documents; as Bruce says: "The first Roman literature in which we might expect to find mention of Christ would be the police news. No official record has been preserved of any report which Pontius Pilate, or any other governor of Judaea, sent to Rome about anything. They may have sent in their reports regularly, but for the most part these reports were ephemeral documents, and in due course they disappeared." (Bruce 18-19) When it comes to citations outside the New Testament, the record is amazingly sparse.

1. Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars: Claudius 25.4: "He (Claudius) expelled the Jews from Rome, on account of the riots in which they were constantly indulging, at the instigation of Chrestus." The cause of these riots was most likely the abolition of the Jewish state by Claudius in 44 and the imposition of direct rule, as a result of which riots broke out in several cities in Palestine. Benko says "Jews living in other areas of the empire felt great sympathy for their compatriots in the `mother country' and the spirit of resistance and revolution spread as far as Rome" (Benko 19). The term "Chrestus" could refer to Jewish Messianic agitation, as "Christ" is merely a Greek term for the Jewish "Messiah". Christian scholars tend to think that `Chrestus' refers to Christ, as Bruce says: "The historian appears to have misunderstood the reference to one `Chrestus' in the police records; he took the reference to mean that this `Chrestus' was actually in Rome as ringleader of the riotous behavior in A.D. 49" (Bruce Jesus 21). But that may be exactly what Suetonius is referring to, as the name Chrestus was very common in Rome: "We may, therefore with some justification assume that Suetonius was referring to a person by the name of Chrestus. Demonstrations, street fights and clashes of all kinds involving Jews were not unusual during this time." (Benko 18-19) In that case this citation offers no value as a proof of the existence of Jesus.

2. Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars: Nero 16.2: "Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a body of people addicted to a novel and mischievous superstition." Emperor Nero blamed the disastrous fire in Rome in 64

C.E. on the Christians and burned many on stakes or exposed them to wild beasts.

3. Tacitus, Annals of Imperial Rome 15.44 (written between 115-117 CE), mentions the fire of Rome and Nero's attempt to blame the Christians: "In order to put an end to the rumor (that the fire of Rome had been purposely lit) Nero accused and visited with severe punishment those men, loathed for their vices, whom the people called Christians. Christus, the founder of their name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a short time, only to break out once more, not only in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in Rome itself, where all the horrible and shameful things in the world collect and find a home."

The problem here is that Tacitus does not appear to have any independent sources of information and is merely repeating the Christian story 50 years after the events he is reporting. He does not name the executed man by name and uses Christ as if it were a proper name. He could not have derived his information from a Roman record of the crucifixion as he gives Pilate an incorrect title. An inscription on a stone found at Caesarea Maritima in 1961 records the dedication by Pilate of a building in honor of Tiberius and shows that he was "prefect", not procurator, of Judaea. Provincial governors of equestrian status bore the title procurator Augusti only from the term of Claudius, from 41 CE. (Wells Did 14). Evans, however, says Tacitus' information is not thereby faulty: "A similar looseness in terminology is seen in other authors." (Evans "Jesus" 465-466). In addition, it is not even clear that there was a persecution of Christians under Nero as it is not mentioned in either the letters of Clement of Rome or Ignatius. Even Tertullian had no knowledge of these events and it is possible that this passage is an interpolation.

4. Josephus, Antiquities 18.3.3 §63-64: "At about this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if one might call him a man. For he was one who accomplished surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth with pleasure. He won over many of the Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon an indictment brought by the principal men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him from the very first did not cease to be attached to him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the holy prophets had foretold this and myriads of other marvels concerning him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has to this day still not disappeared."

This short passage, called the Testimonium Flavianum, has occasioned an endless discussion among scholars going back to the 16th century.

As Thackeray, translator of Josephus, says: "Seldom can ten lines have caused such controversy as these. The problem which they present is one of extraordinary difficulty, the arguments on either side being very evenly balanced. For 1200 years, from the time of Eusebius down to the 16th century, the words were unquestionably accepted and treasured by Christians as the testimony of an outsider, albeit perhaps grudgingly given, to the main articles of their creed. Then ensued the age of criticism." (Thackeray 137) There was heavy debate in the 19th century which continued into the 20th, with 87 works from 1937-1980 alone. Most scholars have questioned the authenticity of the passage, either in whole or in part, but a few eminent Christian scholars (Burkitt, Harnack) have argued for its authenticity as a whole. (Mason J+NT 165)

Hardly anyone nowadays believes that Josephus could have written this as it stands, since only a Christian would have written something so laudatory about a rebel against the Romans and Josephus was assuredly not a Christian. Also, without this section 3 the section before and after are thematically connected, but with it there is a breach of continuity.

Whether the original passage or a derogatory version is genuine, then we do have positive and authoritative confirmation of Jesus' historicity from very nearly the best possible independent source, a man who actually lived in Galilee well within the lifetimes of the individuals who would have known Jesus at first hand. But it would still offer absolutely nothing in the way of proof for a historical Jesus. There is nothing in it that could not be obtained from the Gospels or from Christian missionary propaganda and it does not indicate any first-hand knowledge on the part of Josephus. (Hoffmann 54)

There are also other citations considered to have more dubious value: Thallus, Pliny, and Lucian of Samosata, none of whom have information that could not have been derived from Christian sources. One of the most interesting is Mara bar Serapion, letter to his son from prison, in Cureton, Spicilegium Syriacum 73. "For what advantage did the Athenians gain by the murder of Socrates, the recompense of which they received in famine or pestilence? Or the people of Samos by the burning of Pythagoras, because in one hour their country was entirely covered in sand? Or the Jews by the death of their wise king, because from that same time their kingdom was taken away? God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger, the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching of Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise king die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given."

This letter was written in 72 CE after the Romans had conquered the country Comagena and its capital Samosata. The date is right after the defeat of the Jewish revolt. The "wise king" is generally taken to be Jesus, but the dating is not at all correct, as Mara clearly connects the Jewish dispersion with their killing of the king. It is true that Christian apologists later blamed the so-called murder of Christ by the Jews for the calamities that befell the Jews, and this letter could certainly be a Christian forgery. Yet it is not at all Christian to call their Savior "wise", to compare him with pagan philosophers and to say that Jesus lives on in his teaching rather than in his resurrection unless the forger were trying very hard not to sound like a Christian. With all that said I consider it likely that the passage does not refer to Jesus at all but to James the Just, acclaimed as a Messianic figure, whose murder by the Jewish establishment could be considered to have led to the Jewish revolt and to their defeat.

Even if these four citations showed genuine historical knowledge, they wouldn't add up to much. But they don't - and yet this is all that Christian apologists can cite to document the historicity of Jesus. The first century CE was not an illiterate period of Dark Ages: rather, it was the height of the Roman Empire with a high degree of literacy and the writings of many historians. And the vast majority of them do not mention Jesus. As Graham says: "There were many historians just then and some of them the most illustrious of all time - Tacitus, Plutarch, Livy, the two Plinys, Philo and Josephus, among others: and besides these, many men of literary note such as Seneca, Martial, Juvenal, Epictetus, Plotinus and Porphyry. We are all too prone to forget the brilliancy of this period, yet this is the age of Vergil, Horace and Ovid, the latter living till Christ, if real, would have been twenty-two. These were all men of great intellect, and deeply interested in the doctrines and morals of their day. Why then did they not record this wonder-working Savior of the race?...Tacitus...like the younger Pliny, mentions Christ only in terms of the Christians and their beliefs; in other words, these men were speaking of a new religion not of a historical founder, and for the new religion they had nothing but contempt...One would think the Jewish historians would at least admit so great a personage was of their race. And if anyone would do so, it should be Philo. This philosopher-historian lived both before and after the time of Christ, yet never mentions him" (Graham Deceptions 290-293).

The long list of those who do not mention Jesus includes the Qumran community (sometimes called the Essenes) who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. There was great excitement when these documents were discovered as everyone assumed they would shed light on early Christianity, but it turns out they don't. As Wilson says: "Although the Essenes were contemporary

with Jesus, the Dead Sea Scrolls proved disappointingly to throw little new light on Jesus and early Christianity. They contain no recognizable mention of Jesus, just as the Christian gospels, surprisingly, fail to refer to the Essenes" (AN Wilson 41).

Another contemporary historian who should have mentioned Jesus but does not is the historian Justus of Tiberias who lived in the 1st century CE and whose works include a Jewish War and a Chronicle of the Jewish Kings from Moses to Agrippa II. His histories were extant until at least 891 because Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, read them and expressed amazement that they contained not one word concerning Jesus. (Larson Story 304, Wells J Myth 204)

Nor do the rabbinical sources help us much either, even though some of them may well date to the lifetime of Jesus. The Mishnah and Tosefta have a number of references to Yeshu ha-Notzri and Ben Pandira, which must refer to Jesus. There are also Ben Stada references which may or may not refer to him. There are a certain number of interesting historical references in them, but overall they do not add much to the picture; as Morton Smith says: "First, the rabbis are generally ignorant of chronology and constantly guilty of absurd anachronisms. Second, they habitually refer to their enemies by abusive nicknames and puns, usually bad. Third, in the case of Jesus particularly, this practice of concealed reference has been carried to the extreme by manuscript copyists to avoid censorship" (Smith Mag 47-49).

The references are also very general in nature, limiting their value: he was born out of wedlock, his mother was a hairdresser, he had been in Egypt and had brought magic from there, he was a magician and led astray and deceived Israel, he mocked at the words of the wise and was excommunicated, he was tried in Lud as a deceiver and as a teacher of apostasy, he was executed, either stoned or hung or crucified as a false teachr and beguiler in Lud on the eve of Pesah which was also the eve of Sabbath, he was a revolutionary, and he had five disciples who healed the sick inhis name. What is interesting in all this is the constant repetition that Jesus was born out of wedlock and that his father's name was Pantera or Pandira, perhaps also that he had been in Egypt. Apart from that, there isn't much that the rabbis could not have gotten from Christian sources (Klausner 46).

As Rylands says: "The references to Jesus in the Talmud...are all of such a character as to prove that the Rabbis of the second century had no independent knowledge of Jesus and no traditions of their own concerning him... All the knowledge which the Rabbis had of Jesus was obtained by them from the gospels... proved by the fact that they confounded him with another man of the same name, This man, Jesus ben Pandira, or ben Stada,

reputed a wonder-worker, is said to have been stoned to death and then hung on a tree on the eve of Passover in the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (106-79 BCE) at Jerusalem" (Rylands 19-20).

What is particularly difficult for Christian scholars and believers is that Paul, who was a contemporary of Jesus and built a religion around him, has so little to say about the man Jesus. Paul does not name Jesus' parents, where he was born, where he lived, even when he lived. Although his writings comprise a substantial proportion of the New Testament, they contain no mention of Jesus' parables or miracles, no reference to his trial before Pilate, nor of Jerusalem at the place of his execution. Even when he writes of Jesus' death he says nothing of Pilate or of Jerusalem but declares that Jesus was crucified at the instigation of wicked angels "the rulers of this age" (I Cor 2:8).

On his own admission, Paul never knew the human Jesus and based his whole faith on a vision he claimed to have received of the resurrected Jesus. And even though he was in close contact with James and Peter who knew the historic Jesus, he still does take this opportunity to report anything that he might have learned from them about Jesus. In Gal 2:6 he even implies that he did not know that Jesus had had disciples. Most significantly, Paul says nothing of Jesus' ethical teachings nor does he quote his sayings. In Rom 1:17, for instance, Paul quotes Habbakuk but not Jesus to establish that "he who through faith is righteous shall live."

This is the sum total of what we learn about Jesus from Paul. Jesus was a Jew born to a Jewish woman (Gal 3:16, 4:4). He was descended from David (Rom 1:3). He preached only to Israel, according to the promises by God to the Jews (Rom 15:8). He chose apostles (Gal 1:17-19). He was reviled and crucified (Rom 15:3, I Cor 15:3, Gal 2:20, Gal 3:13 etc.) through Jewish malice (I Thess 2:15). He rose on the third day (I Cor 15:4). He showed himself to Peter, the Apostles and others, including Paul himself (I Cor 15:5-8). This isn't much on which to build a biography nor does it indicate someone who knew anything about the living Jesus.

The same ignorance of the historical Jesus is true for the early Christian literature as well. The Pastoral epistles (dated as late as 130 CE), "although hortatory in character, fail to appeal to the words of Jesus even in contexts which clearly invite a reference to his teaching as recorded in the synoptics. I Timothy does affirm that Jesus was a contemporary of Pilate but 1 Peter makes no reference to the historical Jesus or his teachings and in 2:13-14 urges submission "to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong." This author surely knew of no tradition which made Pilate responsible for Jesus' death!

The letter ascribed to James does not even mention Jesus' death and resurrection and points to the Old Testament prophets, Job and Elijah as well as Abraham and Moses, as examples. Epistles ascribed to John (90-110 CE), also "show no knowledge of the historical situation in which the gospels place Jesus, nor of the biographical details of his life." This overwhelming silence is apparent even to Christian theologians: as Teeple says, "If an oral tradition of Jesus' teaching was circulating in the churches, it is incredible that Christian writers did not quote it when they were discussing the same subject." (Wells Did 45-48, 51-52)

As Schmithals asks, why is it that the primitive Christian community, along with the entire Christian literature up to Justin the Martyr and much of it between Justin and Irenaeus, ignores the historic Jesus, and yet that very Jesus becomes the focus of the Gospels and of the Christian religion. If all we had was Paul's letters, we would know almost nothing about the historic Jesus. This problem has not been solved by 200 years of critical historical research; as Schweitzer said: "Those who discover something of this problem only think how to solve it as quickly as possible, instead of elucidating it in its entire scope." (Schmithals 43-48)

This negative evidence has led many scholars over the centuries to conclude simply that Jesus is a fiction and never existed. Yet we have already seen from our close examination of the Gospel of Thomas that Jesus surely did exist, as a Graeo-Roman Jewish philosopher with a mystical bent who had a small following of disciples and published a collection of his sayings along with his twin brother Judas Thomas. So the silence about this Jesus in non-Christian sources indicates that he was simply not well-known or important enough to warrant a mention, especially if he lived a relatively quiet life as a philosopher.

And the silence on the Christian side can only indicate that the Christian tradition, though aware of him, does not consider him integral to its belief system. Even the Jesus of the New Testament took a long time to be considered important enough to mention, and this may well be due to the fact that Christians were well aware that the Gospel of Thomas existed and that there had been a real Jesus who had little to do with the concocted Jesus of the New testament.

This, then, is the totality of all evidence about Jesus from contemporary sources. Clearly, the real Jesus was of no great interest to official Roman historians. And this might certainly be a good argument against the idea that he was crucified as a rebel against the Roman state, for that fact would have made it more likely for a Roman historian to mention him. Even if

he had been a minor rebel or prophet, it is likely that Josephus would have mentioned him, for Josephus' pages are full of obscure brigands, rebels, and self-proclaimed messiahs all through the first century. The omission might also argue that Jesus was simply not all that well-known, if even Josephus does not mention him.

Thus we are left with the Gospel of Thomas as the most reliable source about the life of Jesus. Unfortunately, Thomas does not give us any narrative life story of Jesus as does the New Testament; it is not intended to be a biography or even a narrative, and biographical details are few, so we will have to supplement the few things we learn from Thomas by other sources. However, scattered throughout the 114 sayings there are many hints of a biography of the true historical Jesus which we can supplement with other sources. These sources are limited, but basing ourselves on the basic facts of the Gospel of Thomas and supporting them with data drawn from literary and archeological sources, including a very careful use of New Testament information, we can speculate on what might have been the truth about Jesus. Our results will seem shocking to anyone brought up on the Christian version, but they are simply the result of an attempt to take a fresh and unprejudiced look at our information. This is the a complete listing of factual information contained in the Gospel of Thomas about the life of the true historical Jesus:

1. Jesus is concerned about being called illegitimate (105).
2. Jesus rejects his father, mother and siblings (55, 79, 99, 101).
3. Jesus does not feel accepted in his home town or country (31).
4. Jesus does not identify himself as Jewish (43).
5. Jesus uses the cross strictly as a metaphorical expression and not in terms of the crucifixion (55).
6. Jesus has strong but ambivalent feelings about John the Baptist who is still alive at the time of the saying (46).
7. Jesus takes a sympathetic but ultimately apolitical and non-revolutionary stand on the question of opposition to the Romans (100).
8. Jesus has a close and probably sexual relationship with Salome who is also his disciple (61).
9. Jesus defends Mary Magdalene against her main opponent Simon Peter (114).
10. Jesus says he will leave the disciples (12, 38).
11. Jesus has great respect but also ambivalent feelings for James who is still alive at the time of the saying (12)

12. Jesus feels closest and most spiritually attuned with Didymos Judas Thomas, called his Twin (Prologue, 13).
13. Jesus says he is not the teacher of the disciples (13).
14. Jesus' disciples compare him to an angel or wise philosopher (13).
15. Jesus' goal is to make his disciples as wise as he is (108).
16. Jesus rejects any comparison with the Hebrew prophets (52).

Any biography of Jesus worth its salt should be constructed from these facts. For one, they show that there is no support for the notion that Jesus proclaimed himself the Messiah, the son of God or even a prophet, nor that he engaged in revolutionary activity or that he was crucified in Jerusalem. For another, they show that at least Saying 46 was penned before 37 C.E., the date of death of John the Baptist, and Saying 12 before 62 C.E., the death of James.

The first fact we want to examine is Jesus' parentage and origin. Saying 105 in the Gospel of Thomas astoundingly gives us Jesus' own admission that he was considered illegitimate. When translated correctly, it says: "He who is going to know the Father and the Mother, will they call him: `the harlot's son'?" The meaning is that only the focus on the spiritual Father and Mother will remove the sting of beign called illegitimate on the physical plane. This tradition of Jesus' illegitimacy is so strong that the New Testament essentially admits as much.

The New Testament and the Christian churches like to claim that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus, largely to fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

However, the Hebrew in Isaiah is almah which simply means "young unmarried woman, maiden": as Ian Wilson says, "it carries a general connotation of eligibility for marriage, but not necessarily of virginity." It is in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, that almah was inaccurately translated as parthenos, "carrying with it a strong implication of untouched virginity unintended in the original Hebrew" (Ian Wilson 55). The idea of virginity is thus a much later theological addition, but it is not found in the Bible per se.

The idea of gods impregnating human women who remained virgins was a universal story told all over the world, both the Old and the New. As Doane says: "Immaculate conceptions and celestial descent were so currently received among the ancients, that whoever had greatly distinguished himself in the affairs of men was thought to be of supernatural lineage. Gods descended from heaven and were made incarnate in men, and men ascended

from earth, and took their seat among the gods, so that these incarnations and apotheoses were fast filling Olympus with divinities" (Doane 112).

The list of such figures born of virgins through immaculate conception is endless: gods such as the Hindu Krishna and Indra, the Thai Codom, the Egyptian Horus and Ra, the Babylonian Adonis, the Greek Apollo, Attis and Bacchus, the Persian Mithra, the Mexican Quetzalcoatl and the Inca Mano Capac and the Mayan Zama; founders of religions such as Buddha, Zoroaster and Pythagoras; demi-gods and superhuman figures such as the Chinese Fo-hi and the Greek Hercules, Prometheus and Perseus; kings and emperors such as the Persian king Cyrus who was even called the Christ or Anointed of God, the Macedonian Alexander the Great, and the Roman Romulus, Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar; and even fairly recent miraculous figures such as Aesculapius and Apollonius (Doane 112-130 pass.). Clearly these myths were amalgamated into the Jesus story.

At the same time, however, there seems also to be a historical basis to the fact that Mary was pregnant when Joseph married her, as this is essentially what the New Testament story says and as it was referred to in many documents. Before Matthew even gets to the birth of Jesus, we already see a sure sign that something is not quite right with the story, and that is in his telling of the genealogy of Jesus at the very beginning of his gospel.

Here four women are mentioned as ancestors of Jesus among a long line of men: "Tamar, whose children were born of incest; Rahab, the madam of a brothel; Ruth, a non-Israelite who got her second husband by solicitation, if not fornication...and Bathsheba, whose relations with David began in adultery...That the author of a genealogy for a Messiah should have chosen to mention only these four women requires an explanation. The most likely one is that Matthew wanted to excuse Mary by these implied analogies" (Smith Magician 26). And when Matthew gets to the end of his long list of ancestors, he says "and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ," clearly implying that Joseph was not Jesus' father. Luke 3:23 too says "Jesus being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph").

What makes these admissions even more remarkable is that both genealogies in Matthew and Luke are completely contrived and full of historical and mathematical errors. Historical errors are that Joram did not beget Uzziah but was his great-great-grandfather nor did Josiah beget Jechoniah but was his grandfather (Matt 1:8). Luke has the same list as Matthew from Abraham to David, but after David it traces the descent not through Solomon but through Nathan, another son of David. After Nathan only two

names are the same - Salatiel and Zerubbabel. Luke gives us 56 generations from Jesus to Abraham, while Matthew gives us only 40. From David to Jesus Luke has 42 names and Matthew only 26, a difference of as much as 4 centuries (see Carmichael Death 51-52).

The two genealogies do not even agree on the father of Joseph whom Luke calls Heli but Matthew calls Jacob. But there are political reasons for this, as Rylands explains: "Whereas the Jews expected a Messiah ben David, the Samaritans expected a Messiah ben Joseph (a Messianic title in the Talmud). So, by giving Joseph to Jesus as a father and tracing his genealogy back to David, both expectations were satisfied. Note that the father of the Joseph of the New Testament, like the father of the Joseph of the Old, is named Jacob.

Is this another coincidence? Luke seems to have thought the coincidence too revealing. He changed the name" (Rylands 110). In addition, the Gospels are trying to make a parallel between Jesus and the biblical Joshua of the tribe of Ephraim, a "son of Joseph" (Eisenman 841).

As far as mathematical errors go, even Christian theologians have wondered if Matthew could count; as Brown says: "Although Matthew claims that his list gives three times 14 generations... the arithmetic leaves something to be desired. The first section from Abraham to David provides 14 names but only 13 begettings or generations. From David to the Babylonian Exile 14 generations are given, but in the last section from the Exile to Jesus again there are only 13 generations" (Parrinder 5). The number fourteen is clearly arbitrary yet there might be more to it: Schaberg thinks the real reason is that the name that is missing is the true father of Jesus which Matthew is suppressing (Schaberg 38).

Clearly, as Carmichael says, the point of the genealogies is not historic accuracy but "to prove simply that Jesus had accomplished the sacred destiny of the House of David by realizing the sacred promises made to his ancestor Abraham" (Carmichael 51). But it is precisely because these lists are so completely contrived that one might assume that Matthew and Luke would have hidden Jesus' true ancestry better than they did: why admit descent from sexually disreputable women and why admit that Joseph was not his real father if the point was to prove his Messianic descent from the House of David? And why go to all the trouble of creating long genealogies if Jesus is not the son of Joseph anyway and thus with no right to be the Davidic Messiah? Obviously the truth was too well-known for them to hide it.

One of the most fundamental problems for Christian theology this issue brings out is the whole question of the Messiah's lineage. In Jewish teaching a Messiah has to come from the house of David, and Joseph in this

genealogy does descend from David, but if he is not Jesus' father, then that genealogy is meaningless and Jesus has no right to be Messiah, as the Jews did not reckon birthright through women. So the Church can either have Jesus be the Messiah and Joseph be his father or it can have the virgin birth in order to fulfill Isaiah 7:14, but it can't have both.

In addition, as Ian Wilson says, "it must be remembered that Galilee had been pagan until the second century BC, and only became forcibly converted to the Jewish religion during the Hasmonean period that followed the Maccabean revolt" (Wilson Jesus 141). Why would a descendant of David be from Galilee which never was Jewish? In John 7:40-42 objection is raised to this idea: "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

One consequence of Jesus' illegitimacy, therefore, is that in the New Testament Jesus acknowledged that he was not descended from David and argued that the Messiah did not need to be. In Mark 12:35-37, Matthew 22:41-45 and Luke 20:41-44 he says to a quotation from Psalm 110, "If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?" (Harwood 273) Neither Jesus himself nor any of his disciples actually made the claim of being descended from David. The orthodox Protevangelium of James 10.1 even goes a step further and claims that Mary was one of seven Temple virgins and it is Mary rather than Joseph who claims descent from the line of David. And even the virgin birth story makes a tacit admission that Jesus had no father, not even a divine one: it is ironic that at least in Hebrew and Aramaic the word "spirit", ruach, is feminine, although in Greek pneumatikos is masculine. So since Jesus is born from an Aramaic holy spirit, he is once again born only from a woman and not a man.

Faced with this strong tradition, the New Testament tries very hard to make theological hay out of the difficult parts of Jesus' past. Mary needs to suffer and Jesus needs to be scorned so that he can be the willing sacrifice for the sins of the world. As Schaberg says: "The virgin betrothed and seduced or raped is in the great Matthean paradox the virgin who conceives and bears the child they will call Emmanuel. His origin is ignominious and tragic. But Matthew's point is that his existence is divinely willed and even predicted. That although - or even because - he was born that way the claim of his messiahship...is in some strange way strengthened ...God...sides with the outcast, endangered woman and child. God `acts' in a radically different way, outside the patriarchial norm, but within the natural even of human conception...God's concern for a humble, insignificant woman becomes the sign of God's eschatological act for the world" (Schaberg 72-4).

Try as it might, though, the New Testament simply cannot hide Jesus' illegitimacy, and there are two important references to it. One comes from John 8:39-41 where Jesus is arguing with "Jews who had believed in him" about being Abraham's descendants and "Jesus said to them, `If you were Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did...' They said to him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.'" Not only are they calling Jesus illegitimate to his face, but they are also implying that they have a father whereas he has none. Imagine being a sensitive person and growing up, like Jesus did, and hearing these kinds of insults on a regular basis! The second reference comes from Mark 6:2-3 where the people from Jesus' hometown (not named) refuse to listen to his teachings, saying, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"

This reference to "the son of Mary" is the most precise indication that Jesus was seen as illegitimate. In all of the New Testament Jesus is called "son of Joseph" only twice, both times in the Gospel of John (1:45 and 6:42) and strikingly Mark, considered the oldest gospel, never mentions Joseph at all. The reason this matters is because in Hebrew and Semitic usage a man was always called after his father ([name] son of [name of father]) even if his father had died before his birth. He was named after his mother only when his father was unknown: according to a later Jewish legal principle, `A man is illegitimate when he is called by his mother's name, for a bastard has no father' (Mitchell 23, Stauffer Jesus 16). As a result, as Stauffer says, "the name Yeshu ben Miryam was thought to be such an unbearable insult by the early church that only Mark had the courage to repeat it. All the other Evangelists suppressed it" (Stauffer Jeschu 122).

But references to Jesus' illegitimacy abound in many non-Gospel records as well. In the 233 post-canonical agrapha that Asin collected the expression "Jesus son of Mary" is mentioned 46 times and other forms containing "son of Mary" are mentioned 5 times. Among the Samaritans and Mandaeans Jesus was referred to as the son of Mary, Jesus ben Miriam, with polemic intent, mostly to elevate the claims of John the Baptist. The Koran refers to Jesus regularly, at least 16 times, as Isa ibn Maryam Jesus, the son of Mary, but without polemical intent (Stauffer Jesus 17, Jeschu 126-127).

The greatest number of references are in Jewish sources. Celsus, who was Jewish, of course tells the story, as reported by Origen. Rabbinical sources from the end of the 1st through the 5th centuries spoke consistently of the illegitimacy of Jesus and Christian theologians were often on the defensive about this story. The earliest Talmudic statement (Yeb. IV.3.49a) is one by R. Shimeon ben `Azzai who said: "I found a genealogical roll in Jerusalem wherein was recorded, `Such-an-one is a bastard of an adulteress'",

considered to be a reference to Jesus though many rabbis deliberately did not mention him by name (Klausner 35). Schaberg thinks that the "earlier rabbinic teachers probably knew more about the origins of Jesus than they cared to report or had occasion to express...All the information they did give may not have been preserved; some of it may have been eliminated either by Christian censors or by Jews for fear of censors" (176-177). Schaberg concludes that "the Jewish tradition of Jesus' illegitimacy is a strong one...There are elements that cannot be explained as elaboration of the New Testament narratives, and possibly there is reliance on sources independent of these narratives" (Schaberg 177-178).

Having established the strong tradition of Jesus' illegitimacy that even the Gospels could not suppress, let us thus go back and look at the Gospel story of Jesus' birth more closely. What did Mary do or what happened to Mary that caused such a shameful situation? This is what Matthew 1:18-19 relates: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit, and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly." This story is repeated over and over again with certain variations in Christian, anti-Christian, Gnostic and Islamic sources, and what is particularly pertinent here is Joseph's reaction when he found Mary already pregnant. The documents differ on what this reaction was: did he send her away or leave her, as some of the non-canonical documents say? or did he secretly marry her as Matthew says?

For the case of a betrothed virgin becoming pregnant, Jewish law, based on Deuteronomy 22:22-29, provided different courses of action depending on whether she had been seduced or raped. If the former, she was regarded as an adulterous wife and she was to be stoned to death along with the partner. If she was raped in the city and did not resist or cry out, she was also to be stoned. If however she was raped in the open countryside, only the rapist was to be killed and she was to be spared. However, the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan adds the stipulation that though her life is spared, the raped woman must be divorced and the husband was certainly within his rights to divorce the woman (Schaberg 49-50).

Now, we know that clearly Mary's life was spared, and that would not have been the case if she had committed adultery, unless Joseph was exceptionally saintly and forgiving. This leaves only one alternative shocking to any Christian: Mary was raped! Jane Schaberg gives an exhaustive analysis to show that to be the case, though she does not completely rule out willingness on Mary's part. For one, the verb used in Luke's account of Mary's impregnation by the holy spirit - eperchesthai or "come upon" - has

negative connotations of violence and attack in New Testament Greek and in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Schaberg 113). For another, Mary went to visit Elizabeth meta spoudes, usually translated as "with haste" but "in the Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible it often has overtones of terror, alarm, flight and anxiety...and points toward a situation of violence and/or fear in connection with Mary's pregnancy" (Schaberg 89-90).

Luke also links Mary with the Biblical image of the despoiled daughter of Zion whose violation will finally be at an end and who will be delivered of a savior (Schaberg 120). In Luke 1:38 Mary calls herself doule of the Lord, usually translated as "handmaid" but really meaning "servant, slave", a term referring to those of the lowest social position in any society but also with specific connotations for a female slave of sexual use and abuse. Luke compounds these downright sado-masochistic associations by having Mary say in 1:47-48 (translated literally): "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior, because he looked upon the humiliation (abasement, lowliness) (tapeinôsin) of his slave" (Schaberg 135-136). Jewish traditions agree as well that she was raped: "In only two of the Jewish traditions is the mother of Jesus clearly regarded as the guilty party" (Schaberg 177). All this supports the idea of violence done to Mary.

This is the conclusion Lüdemann also comes to: "A sexual misdemeanor on the part of Mary...may be ruled out, since in that case Joseph would hardly have taken his fiancée Mary into his house...Therefore, shocking though this may seem at first glance, the assumption that Mary was raped almost forces itself upon us as an explanation of this dark streak in her history" (Ludemann Virgin 77-78).

Thus, the answer to the question of what Joseph did may actually be both: he first sent her away to have her child, or he actually left her himself, and later he took her back. Celsus' story, documents such as the Ascension of Isaiah and the late Islamic texts that refer to Joseph sending Mary away may well be telling the truth. There is even a tradition in the Old Saxon Heliand and in the Old German version of Tatian's Diatessaron that says that Joseph thought of "leaving" her and Luther repeats this as well in his Bible translation (Bauer Joseph 219-220). In the Old Syrian text of Tatian's Diatessaron the same expression may be rendered as "leaving her" and "sending her away" and six of seven deviations from the New Testament text that were only found in the Diatessaron appear in a 9th century Islamic version that is probably based on the Syrian, indicating the strength of this tradition (Baumstark arabisch 170-172). The story of the angel appearing to Joseph and convincing him otherwise may well have been invented to hide the disturbing fact that Joseph was not as accepting as he has been portrayed in the

New Testament.

If Mary was betrothed to Joseph and was raped during that time, it would be extremely difficult for any man to be a step-father to a child of such a union, and Jewish custom spoke against it. As Schaberg says, "analysis of how the legal situation would have been evaluated in the first century C.E. indicates that home-taking would remove the suspicion of seduction/ adultery but would not remove the suspicion of rape" (Schaberg "Feminist" 54). Nevertheless, it does appear that Joseph did eventually take Mary back, particularly because Luke 2:7 refers to Jesus as her "first-born" (protokos) son which would make no sense unless she had more children.

It is therefore most likely that Joseph left her or sent her away, that Mary gave birth to Jesus on her own, that she left him with someone else but later returned to Joseph, with whom she then gave birth to a number of other children. The story gets even stickier if it is true that Judas Thomas was Jesus' actual twin: then there are two illegitimate children to find homes for, and society would have had an even more negative reaction, probably drawing on superstitious fears of twins being cursed. An indication that Jesus did not grow up with his parents is in Luke 2:41-51 which tells the story of what has to be Jesus' bar mitzvah (traditional Jewish coming-of-age ceremony) at the Temple: he was 12, he "went up according to custom" and he obviously had some high-placed connections to be able to have his ceremony at such an exalted place.

A telling detail is that "his parents did not know it but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey" and were not there, a shocking and unheard of absence in any Jewish tradition which shows that they were not involved in his life. Otherwise, the Gospels are almost completely silent on the first 30 years of Jesus' life and the Infancy Gospels are too fanciful to offer any real history; thus we have no idea of who really raised him. The fact that there is silence might well mean that Joseph refused to take him back along with Mary and that Jesus and Judas Thomas did grow up with someone else.

A good candidate for a surrogate parent might be John the Baptist's mother Elizabeth, who is called "kinswoman" to Mary. One assumes this means a cousin, as they are of the same generation, unless the New Testament is hiding something again and they are actually sisters: it does arouse suspicion that Luke does not use a more specific term of kinship and is being evasive. It is interesting that Luke, who alternates the stories of the two births of Jesus and John, has Mary visiting Elizabeth "with haste" sometime in her pregnancy and then staying with her "about three months": this certainly could be a good indication of Mary giving birth to Jesus at Elizabeth's

house, staying for three months to nurse Jesus and then entrusting him to Elizabeth while she returned to Joseph.

It is remarkable that Luke spends so much time in his gospel (all of Section 1) on Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy and all the prophecies around John. Perhaps Jesus and John, apparently born 6 months apart, grew up together and he considered Elizabeth to be his mother, and this might explain Jesus' and John's closeness. The fact that Elizabeth's father Zechariah was a priest might also explain Jesus' connections with the Temple that allowed him to have his bar mitzvah there. Notice that if Mary and Elizabeth were cousins and Elizabeth's father is a priest, then clearly he is Mary's uncle and thus she comes from a priestly family herself: even more so, of course, if they are actually sisters, which is likely.

If all this is true, then Jesus' hometown was clearly in or near Jerusalem. We have already seen that the supposed hometown of Jesus, Nazareth, did not even exist in first century Palestine. But if Jesus did grow up with John the Baptist, then we can place him more precisely. As discussed above, traditionally John the Baptist's birth-place and hometown is said to be Ein Karem, a village right to the west of Jerusalem, and this association is supported by Mandaean traditions.

It is interesting that in the New Testament Capernaum is mentioned more often than Nazareth (Mt 4:13, 8:5, 11:23, 17:24, Mk 1:21, 2:1, 9:33, Lk 4:23, 4:31, 7:1, 10:15, Jn 2:12, 4:46, 6:17, 6:24, 6:59), a total of 16 times as compared to 10 for Nazareth. When Jesus condemned the towns that had rejected him, he gave top billing to Capernaum (Mt 11:23) but he made no mention of Nazareth, even though Luke identified Nazareth as the place where an enraged mob tried to lynch him (Lk 4:29). It was at Capernaum that Jesus was assessed for Antipas' taxes (Mt 17:24-27) and that he had his home.

Neither Mark 6:1 nor Matthew 13:54 give a location when they say he went "to his native town" where the people were skeptical of his claims as they knew his family background, while Luke 4:16ff. places it in Nazareth, but in John 6:42 the same story and the same objection as in the Synoptics ("Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know") is very definitely located in Capernaum. Are Mark and Matthew hiding something and is John letting the truth out? Interestingly, the "heretic" Marcion rejected both Bethlehem and Nazareth as having anything to with Jesus and says that the heavenly Jesus "came down to the Galilean city of Capernaum." (Kennard Cap 141)

In addition, Marcion has Jesus giving his famous Sermon on the Mount not outside on a mountain, which makes little realistic sense, but in

the synagogue in Capernaum, a much more appropriate setting for a homily on ethical behavior (Lührmann Fragmente 58). Is it perhaps possible that Capernaum, which did not exist, is actually a code name in the New Testament for Ein Karem, Jesus' true hometown?

Given all this background, who then was the real father of Jesus? Strangely enough, the Talmud often refers to Jesus as Jeshu ben Pandira, or just Ben Pandira, meaning "son of Pandira", and both ancient Jewish and Christian stories agree that this name refers to a Roman soldier named Panthera. First century Judea was a violent time, with constant rebellions against the hated Roman occupation and Roman occupation troops committing havoc against the local population, to such an extent that Judean laws became more lenient in cases of extramarital pregnancy (Schaberg 43-44). The story of Panthera (or Pandera, Pantera) is mentioned in many sources, both Jewish and Christian. The most extensive and clearly datable mention is by the Christian theologian Origen in Against Celsus 1.28-32, written in 248 C.E., a counter-polemic against the work of the pagan author Celsus, True Discourse, a polemic against Christianity written around 178 C.E. Celsus claimed to have heard the story from a Jew, and thus "we may presume that such a story was already circulating among certain Hellenistic Jews of the Diaspora around the middle of the 2nd century" (Meier Marginal 223).

It is mentioned in several early rabbinic sources, as early as the end of the 1st century CE and Klausner says that "from an early date the name `Pantere' or `Pandera' became widely current among the Jews as the name of the reputed father of Jesus" (Klausner 38). One passage concerned "heretical" teaching told in the name of Yeshu ben Pantere by a Galilean to Rabbi Eliezer who was about 50 years old in 70 AD; this Galilean was called "one of the disciples of Yeshu ben Pantere" and he said "thus Yeshu of Pantere taught me" (Schaberg 170). The story was certainly still in circulation about 198 CE when Tertullian quotes it from a fanciful Jewish work, the Toldot Yeshu.

There are many Ben Pandira texts in the rabbinic literature as late as the 5th century; a 4th century Talmudic source suggests that "Pandira" was the lover of Miriam the hairdresser (the word being Megaddela which is close to Magdalene who is being confused with Jesus' mother) (Schaberg 173). The story was so widespread that Christian theologians found it necessary to explain it away: they said it was a mocking corruption of parthenos by the Jews and both Epiphanius (Haeres. 66.19.7-8) and Origen said that James, the father of Jesus' father Joseph, was called by the name Panther, making it Jesus' family name (Eisenman 780, Klausner 23-24).

Amazingly, historical evidence has brought to light that such a Ro-

man soldier Panthera actually existed. Adolf Deissmann first reported in 1906 that a first-century tombstone was found in Bingerbrück, Germany, just 12 miles north of Bad Kreuznach, where the Nahe River meets the Rhine, with an inscription that reads: "Tiberius Julius Abdes Pantera of Sidon, aged 62, a soldier of 40 years' service, of the 1st cohort of archers, lies here." This soldier was transferred in 6 CE from Syria, exactly in the right place and right time (Deissmann 873).

As Tabor shows from his further research into this story, his various names are all significant: Tiberius Julius are acquired names, indicating that he was not a native-born Roman but a former slave who became a freeman and received the rights of Roman citizenship for his 40-year service in the army. The name Abdes is a Latinized version of an Aramaic name `ehed meaning "servant of God", indicating that Pantera was of Semitic or even Jewish background. The name Panthera is Greek, though in 1891 a first-century Jewish tomb was found just north of Jerusalem of a Joseph, son of Pentheros, indicating that the name Pantera was used in the time of Jesus by Jews as well as Romans (Tabor 69).

Could this really be the father of Jesus, as explosive an idea as that might be? Deissmann points out that this name was by no means rare from the 1st to the 3rd centuries, especially for Roman soldiers, and was used by both men and women: he reports finds for the man's name from Pisa, Pompeii, Mediolanum and Brittany and for the woman's name numerous inscriptions from Dalmatia, Italy and Gaul (Deissmann 874-875). But Tabor thinks the Bingerbrück man cannot be ruled out: "Pantera was a Roman soldier, possibly a Jew, he was a native of Syria-Palestine, just north of Galilee; and he was a contemporary of Mary, mother of Jesus. So we have the right name, the right occupation, the right place, and the right time" (Tabor 70).

Moreover, there is a curious story in Mark, the gospel which never mentions Joseph or Jesus' birth, where in 7:24 Jesus abruptly takes a mysterious side trip while he was around the Sea of Galilee: "And from there he arose, and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house, and would not have anyone know it; yet he could not be hid." As he returned he went through Sidon back to the Sea of Galilee, not the most direct route (7:31). This story is also in Matthew 15:21, 29 but he leaves out the house and the reference to Sidon. Note that Tyre and Sidon are not Jewish cities, Jesus has no disciples there and no motive is given for his trip. The question presents itself: given Jesus' secrecy and given the reticence of the Gospel accounts, could it be possible that Jesus was visiting his father Julius Abdera Pantera who was stationed in Sidon? (Tabor 72)

No matter what the truth is about his real father, what is especially

important here is that Jesus, without a doubt, was a mamzer, an illegitimate child, and that fact had a powerful impact on his personality and outlook on life. The term mamzer did not refer to someone who, in the modern sense, was born out of wedlock, but referred "specifically to a child born of a prohibited sexual union," not sex before marriage per se but sex with the wrong person, especially a Gentile and certainly a Roman soldier (Chilton Jesus 13). As Mitchell says, "if someone wished to choose the most difficult starting point for a human life, short of being born diseased or deformed, he might well choose to be born illegitimate. In the ancient world, both Jewish and Roman, illegitimacy was considered one of the most shameful of human conditions" (Mitchell 24).

This shamefulness is clearly expressed in Deuteronomy 23:2 which says: "No bastard shall enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord." This law is the basis for the legal situation in Judaism, as Schaberg summarizes: "The mamzerim were forbidden marriage with priestly families, Levites, legitimate Israelites, and even with illegitimate descendants of priests. At the end of the 1st century C.E. their rights to inherit from their natural fathers were in dispute. They could not hold public office, and if they took part in a court decision, the decision was invalidated. Their families' share in Israel's final redemption was vigorously argued. The word mamzer was considered one of the worst insults to a man. Mamzerim were among those called the `excrement of the community'" (Schaberg 57). As the Wisdom of Solomon 3:16-17 says: "But children of adulterers will not come to maturity, and the offspring of an unlawful union will perish. Even if they live long they will be held of no account, and finally their old age will be without honor."

In Saying 105 Jesus clearly alludes to the shameful names he was called throughout his life: "will they call him the harlot's son"? What makes this particularly poignant is the Greek word for "harlot" used here: porne. In Greek usage a porne was the lowest form of prostitute, a woman paid only for sex, a common street walker or one living in a cheap brothel, a porneia. She was even considered below prostitutes sitting in oikema, cubicles, and certainly to the middle level, various categories of hetaerae, paid for companionship who plied their trade independently and could sometimes ask high prices: the mistharnousai, women hired for the evening or longer as escorts, and the mousourgoi or flute-girls paid also for music. At the very highest level were the pallakai or concubines (Davidson Courtesans 73-74, 90-92, Hauck porne 583). So to have his mother be called a porne is the greatest form of insult imaginable to a woman and by extension to himself.

What makes his situation even worse is that despite all the attempts by the Gospels to portray him as a poor carpenter, tantalizing bits of evi-

dence point more to him being from an upper-class educated family, increasing his frustration at his exclusion. We have already seen that his mother is from a priestly family, but his step-father Joseph may well be also. There are only two New Testament references to his background: Mark 6:3 "Is not this the carpenter" and Matt 13:55 "Is not this the carpenter's son". The Greek word used for "carpenter" is tektôn but it has a much broader range of meanings than what the Biblical translations give: "a worker in wood, a carpenter, joiner, builder, ship-builder; any craftsman or workman, a master of any art; hence of the art of poetry; a planner, contriver, plotter, generally, an author" (Liddell 696).

Thus the word not only means a craftsman of the hands but of the mind as well, and the same is true of the Aramaic. As Vermes explains: "Those familiar with the language spoken by Jesus are acquainted with the metaphorical use of `carpenter' and `carpenter's son' in ancient Jewish writings. In Talmudic sayings the Aramaic noun denoting carpenter or craftsman (naggar) stands for a `scholar' or `learned man':

`This is something that no carpenter, son of carpenters, can explain' (yYeb. 9b)

`There is no carpenter, nor a carpenter's son, to explain it' (yKid. 66a)

Thus, although no one can be absolutely sure that the sayings cited in the Talmud were current already in first-century AD Galilee, proverbs such as these are likely to be age-old" (Vermes Jesus 21-22).

It is interesting that in all three Synoptic Gospels a Joseph of Arimathea, called "a rich man" in Matt 27:57 and a respected member of the council" in Mark 15:43, meaning either the city council of Jerusalem or the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court, asks Pontius Pilate for the body of Jesus and buries him "in his own new tomb which he had hewn in the rock" (Matt 27:60). Now, throughout human history people are always buried with their families in their family graveyards and tombs, and it is family members who bury them; that is one of the most important requirements in Jewish law. If a Joseph is burying Jesus in his own new tomb, then doesn't that tell us that this Joseph must be his step-father? The Gospels are clearly trying to hide this fact by calling him "a disciple of Jesus" and someone "looking for the kingdom of God".

In addition, by choosing the names Joseph and Mary the Gospels may also be making an allusion to a contemporary Joseph and Mary story involving Herod: Herod charged his favorite wife, the Maccabean princess

Mariamme, with unfaithfulness with his brother Joseph as a way of getting rid of her, and killed their two children as well, the last Maccabean heirs. This is, by the way, the origin of the story in the Gospels of Herod seeking to kill all Jewish children: it was his own that he killed (Eisenman 48-49).

Thus, on his step-father's side Jesus' family was of a highly distinguished origin, and clearly a member of the council would be a learned scholar and not a mere carpenter. And we can now see that if Joseph has an eminent position the pregnancy of his fiancee Mary and the presence of an illegitimate son would be much more of an intolerable scandal for him than it would be for a carpenter. Thus there is no doubt that he would have emphatically rejected Jesus and refused to take him into his home.

As a result, Jesus grew up as a social outcast, feeling rejected at a fundamental level by the society around him and its religious traditions and by his eminent family who all claimed prominent roles in the political activity of the day. Whatever his true hometown was, he must have experienced a great deal of social ostracism and self-righteous moralizing directed against him while growing up. Any establishment position was closed to him and his future prospects were limited. His brother James, being of Davidic descent, would be given a special place in Israel while Jesus' "claim to that birthright was always challenged" (Chilton Jesus 15). It is therefore not surprising that he would become a rebel against official Judaism, that he would surround himself with unconventional, marginal people and that he would have great sympathy for the downtrodden, the afflicted and the suffering.

To summarize: here is Jesus' family as we have determined it. His mother was Mary (Miriam), possible daughter or at least niece of the priest Zechariah, sister or cousin to Elizabeth. His closest siblign was his twin brother Judas Thomas (Yehuda). His cousin was John (Yohanan) the Baptist with whom he grew up. His biological father was the Roman soldier Tiberius Julius Abdes Pantera of Sidon, but his step-father was Joseph (Yosef), member of the Jewish Sanhedrin and educated and affluent heir to a distinguished and probably Davidic and Maccabean family. His step-brothers were the eldest brother James (Yakov), and the other brothers Simon (Shimeon), Joseph (Yosef) and Matthew (Matityahu).

There is another aspect to Jesus that the New Testament and especially its modern translations disguise by the constant repetition that Jesus was born in Nazareth, and that is his lifelong dedication to the holy path of a Nazirite or Nazarene. Oddly enough even the New Testament is ambiguous about the existence of Nazareth. Most New Testament translations, older as well as modern ones (with the American Standard Version being a notable exception), hide this fact by translating a number of different words simply

as "Nazareth" but these are the actual expressions the New Testament uses in the original Greek:

Nazareth tes Galilaias - Mt 2:23, 21:11, Mk 1:9, Lk 1:26, 2:4, 2:39
Nazareth - Lk 2:51, Jn 1:45, 46, Acts 10:38
Nazara - Lk 4:16, Mt 4:13
Nazoraios (Jesus as) - Mt 2:23, 26:71, Mk 10:47, Lk 18:37, Jn 18:5, 18:7, 19:19, Acts 2:22, 3:6, 4:10, 6:14, 22:8, 26:9
Nazoraios (one of) - Acts 24:5
Nazarenos - Mk 1:24, 10:47, 14:67, 16:6, Lk 4:34, 24:19

Thus there are far more references to Jesus as a "Nazarene" than to him being from "Nazareth". 13 references to Jesus say Nazoraios in Greek or "Nazarene/Nazorean", there is one Nazoraios reference to Nazarenes in general, and there are six references to Nazarenos (a Latinized form) with two in the vocative Nazarene. In addition, there is a variant Nazorenos found in Codex Bezae where in modern Bibles Nazaranes appears (Guignebert 82n). If you add up these Gospel references, there are 20 references to "Nazarene/Nazorean" as opposed to 10 to "Nazareth", and two more to "Nazara". The problem here is that the Greek forms are grammatically wrong: Nazoraios is a noun but Nazarenos is an adjective and cannot be used to mean "Jesus the Nazarene" and certainly not "Jesus of Nazareth", only to mean "Nazarene Jesus" in which being Nazarene is a quality of Jesus (Moran 329-330). Celsus even used Nazoraios as an adjective, calling Jesus ho nazoraios anthropos, the "Nazarene man" (Moran 334). Thus even the New Testament practically admits that the more important statement is not that Jesus is from Nazareth but that he was a Nazarene or Nazorean and that a Nazarene was not a title but a descriptive quality of a person. And just as with John the Baptist and James, a Nazarene or Nazirite was someone who was dedicated to a holy path from birth.

What else can we know of the true life story of Jesus? As we have seen above, Jesus grew up with John the Baptist who became an impressive figure in his own right as well as a lifelong Nazirite. It seems highly likely that John was Jesus' teacher and master and that Jesus spent a good bit of time with him in the wilderness, living like he did: "Jesus appears to have taken over many of John's ideas and continued them in his own life and teaching" (Taylor 277-278). It is obvious, at least from the Gospels, that Jesus' career is dependent on John, for three reasons: it was his fame that drew Jesus to the banks of the Jordan; John's arrest propelled Jesus into a public career in order to carry on John's role; and Jesus became aware of his calling

after being baptized by John (Carmichael 68-70).

Contrary to the three days of the Gospels, Jesus taught for a much longer period of time as an assistant and disciple of John, as John 3:22-24 indicates. "In Judaea...Jesus exercised a ministry which was both contemporary with, and identical to, that of John the Baptist. This is so much at variance with the entire gospel tradition that the possibility of late date and redactional creation can be categorically excluded...The obvious implication of John 3:22-24 is that the ministries of John and Jesus were a coordinated campaign among Jews and Samaritans", with John taking the harder task of persuading the Samaritans (Murphy-O'Connor 363-366).

Even Jesus' ministry in Galilee may well still have been as a disciple of John. Herod Antipas could only have arrested John the Baptist in Peraea and in Galilee, the territories he controlled. John had already preached in Peraea and Samaria, the only province left being Galilee which is where he must have gone. Thus Jesus must have followed John to Galilee: "This would mean, of course, that Jesus' initial ministry in Galilee was the baptizing ministry of John, which he had already exercised in Judaea". Only if Jesus had acted similarly to John would Herod even have thought, as Mark 6:16 reports, when hearing about the miraculous doings of Jesus that "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised" (Murphy 368-372).

At some point, however, Jesus diverged from John in his teachings and there seems to have been a rupture between them. It is instructive that Matthew 11:2-3, where John questions whether Jesus is really acting as his disciple, has this question coming from prison while Luke 7:18-20 leaves out the part about the prison: clearly this incident happened while they were both actively teaching. Yet he was afraid to confront Jesus himself and sent his disciples instead, a clear sign of growing estrangement. Hollenbach thinks Jesus had a "dramatic, unexpected, spontaneous experience laden with revelational significance for Jesus that was the real turning point in his early public life" and that is what induced him to strike out on his own path. This new path meant that "Jesus focuses now...wholly on the present and all interest in the future is beside the point. Jesus does not any longer look for any kind of messianic figure", as opposed to John who was hoping for a radical transformation of society (Hollenbach Conversion 215-217).

All these aspects of the relationship between John and Jesus come out in Saying 46. Amazingly, Jesus refers to John in the present tense here, implying that he is still alive: notice the consequences of that statement for the dating of the Gospel of Thomas, as John died in 35-36 CE!! And he is paying homage to John as someone greater than all since Adam: greater, mind you, than Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon and all the prophets of

Jewish history (but not greater than Adam). That is the highest praise, the kind of praise a student would shower on his teacher whom he admired beyond all else. One might almost say it is excessively enthusiastic praise coming from someone inflamed with adoration.

There is much in Jesus' philosophy and lifestyle that he has in common with John. Jesus too teaches that the ego, the drive for power and the craving for possessions should be eliminated, Jesus too acts humbly and does not claim power over his disciples, Jesus too teaches that inner purification and spiritual attainment is much more important than external observances and rituals. Jesus too is vegetarian, lives and dresses simply and accepts any sincere person as his disciple. John's true theme, like Jesus', may also have been the immediacy of the Kingdom and the necessity of a concentrated spiritual path to learn to be in it, a message that Jesus took over but that the New Testament then distorted into eschatology. In short, the similarities between Jesus and John are manifold and far-reaching.

One of the greatest similarities between John and Jesus is their shared opposition to animal sacrifices and it may have been that stance that forced them to leave Judea and Jerusalem and to move to Galilee. Jesus' opposition is made clear in Saying 60. Here he chooses a Samaritan as the protagonist of his story: a rebel, heretic, individualist and purist from a people who are detested by both the Jewish establishment and the various autocratic monarchs of the day; he does it again in his Good Samaritan parable in the New Testament. Here in Saying 60 Jesus and his disciples are having an apparently naive and guileless conversation about the fact that the Samaritan is about to offer a lamb for sacrifice at his temple. The assumption is, however, that they are all surprised and shocked that the Samaritan would do something violent like that.

The shock is even greater that it is a Samaritan doing it, with whom Jesus and his disciples have many reasons to feel commonality. But it is also a statement that even despite the Samaritan rejection of theocratic Judaism, they do not go far enough in also rejecting animal sacrifices. And there is an implicit parallel set up between the Samaritan going into Judea where he was considered an enemy and the Samaritan being an enemy to the lamb. The implied criticism is that the Samaritan is doing the same thing to the lamb that the orthodox Jews are doing to him.

Thus, what Strophe 1 does is to set the stage to call into question two commonly accepted practices in the society of their time: Temple animal sacrifices, for one, but at a much more general level, the killing and eating of animals, for another. The saying raises these doubts in a quiet, subtle manner by having Jesus and his disciples make seemingly naive observations that

strongly imply that they do not accept what they see.

The strong commitment of Jesus and his followers to vegetarianism has been consistently ignored in the vast literature on early Christianity and by practically all Christian priests, ministers, pastors and preachers (except for Seventh Day Adventists), and I am glad to see that Keith Akers' fairly recent book The Lost Religion of Jesus sets the record straight. It is clear from reading any book or article on the Jewish Christians that they were committed vegetarians and the more one looks the more widespread vegetarianism appears among thoughtful people in the ancient world. Jesus' teacher John the Baptist, by all accounts, was vegetarian and though the Gospels mention him eating locusts, the Greek word for tree fruits, akrodua, is very close to the word for locusts, akrides, "suggesting the possibility of an accidental or malicious scribal error." In addition, both the Greek church tradition and the Slavonic Josephus specifically says he did not eat any animal food (Akers 43).

All the sources agree that Jesus' successor, his brother James, and the Jewish followers of Jesus, the Jewish Christians, were strict vegetarians (the Ebionites were the most important of these Jewish Christians but there were also the Elkesaites, the Nazoreans and the Ossaeans). The Christian theologian Epiphanius reports that the Ebionites rejected bloody sacrifices and believed that their abolition and the prohibition of the eating of meat were part of Jesus' mission (Pines 248). In the Ebionite gospel Jesus says, "I have come to abolish sacrifices and if you do not stop sacrificing the wrath will not cease from you." A few passages down Epiphanius reiterates that Jesus was vegetarian by the fact that he refuses to eat meat for Passover, even though Epiphanius of course says this statement was falsely added by the Ebionites. Moreover, Epiphanius also writes that the Nazoreans rejected sacrifice (Panarion 28.1.4) as did the Elkesaites (Panarion 19.3.6). And in the Jewish-Christian Pseudo-Clementine writings there are several warning against animal sacrifice quoted as coming straight from Jesus (see above).

All these original followers of Jesus considered vegetarianism to be an intensification of the Mosaic kosher laws and based themselves on Genesis 9:4 and on the fact that Adam and Eve in Paradise were strict vegetarians and lived in peace with all animals. In the original state of Paradise humans were essentially immortal and did not die. Death only entered human life after the Fall and even so the long Biblical lifespans showed that it took a while for humans to degenerate afer the Fall to our present-day short lifespans. According to the Bible humans were not allowed meat at all until the Great Flood when Noah emerged on Mount Ararat and there was no vegetable food to be had, and even here animal food was only meant to be a temporary measure, as the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Abraham Kook, has

repeatedly argued.

The Mosaic kosher laws, as many important later rabbis argued, have as one of their main purposes to encourage people to eat as close to vegetarianism as possible by severely restricting the kinds of animals one could eat and by making meat consumption cumbersome, requiring all meat to be drained of blood. For instance, there is no blessing in the Jewish religion recited before eating meat or fish, only for bread, fruits and vegetables. The easiest way to keep kosher is simply to be vegetarian, in keeping with the truest and highest ideals of the Jewish tradition. The Ebionites thus merely took the Mosaic laws to their logical conclusion by banning the meat as well as the blood of animals (see Schwartz Judaism 1-12, Schoeps 81-82).

Vegetarianism was also widespread among many other spiritual groups and leading thinkers in the ancient world. Such spiritual groups include: the Palestinian Essenes with whom Jesus may have been associated, the Egyptian Therapeutae mentioned by Josephus (see Aspects 31), many Gnostic groups such as Valentinians and Marcionites, and the Manichaeans. Marcion, for example, taught that "the smell of meat in the sacrifices delighted the Demiurge"; Mani prohibited meat and all animal food most severely and Manichaean monks were not even allowed to ride or hire animals for transportation, as that "meant that one was cherishing the body" (Voobus I 51, 117).

Farther afield, the great Asian religions were all devoted to vegetarianism: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Taoism. The great Greek philosophers Pythagoras and Plato were vegetarians as was Theophrastus, Aristotle' pupil. In Roman times the writers and philosophers Epicurus, Seneca, Ovid and Plutarch and the Neo-Platonists Plotinus, Porphyry and Apollonius of Tyana were also vegetarians and made impassioned arguments against the abuse and killing of animals.

Porphyry (b. 232 CE), Plotinus' pupil, devoted an entire book, On Abstinence from Animal Food, to well-reasoned arguments for vegetarianism and against animal sacrifice: "The most beautiful and honorable of those things by which the Gods benefit us, are the fruits of the earth. For through these they preserve us, and enable us to live legitimately; so that, from these we ought to venerate them...But if someone should say, that God gave us animals for our use, no less than the fruits of the earth, yet it does not follow that they are, therefore, to be sacrificed, because in so doing they are injured, through being deprived of life. For sacrifice is, as the name implies, something holy...But...how can this be holy, when those are injured from whom they are taken?" (2.12)

And Seneca wrote in Letter IX: "An ox is satisfied with the pasture

of an acre or two: one would suffice for several elephants. Man alone supports himself by the pillage of the whole Earth and Sea. What! Has Nature given us so insatiable a stomach, while she has given us such insignificant bodies? No: it is not the hunger of our stomachs, but insatiable covetousness which costs so much." (Spencer Heretic 87-107, 131-133, 140) A timely and relevant critique, as true now as it was then!

In short, Jesus was in good company when he prohibited animal sacrifices and required vegetarianism of his followers. He broke through the inconsistencies of the Jewish tradition, which forbade blood but allowed meat and required Temple sacrifices, and brought it back to its true ideals. These true ideals are expressed in the kosher laws and especially in the great Hebrew prophets Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah and Amos who depicted God as being horrified at the stench of animal sacrifices, contemptuous of humans for thinking that these had any spiritual significance and insistent that the practice of kindness, righteousness and justice were far more important than any ritual acts (see above).

In Isaiah's utopian peaceful kingdom "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them...They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain." (Isaiah 11:6-9) And Hosea 2:18-19 makes it even more clear that the covenant between God and humans should extend to all animals and that there should be peace between humans and animals as well as among humans: "And I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy." This is the true prophetic ideal that vegetarianism is meant to fufill, not in some distant eschatological future, but right now.

It is on this basis that the New Testament hides what Jesus was really trying to do in his cleansing of the Temple. This is of course a pivotal scene in the Gospel story of the last three days of Jesus, the one action that leads inexorably to his death. The problem is of course that, as as we have seen, the New Testament is so historically unreliable it is hard to know whether this story is fictional or not.

The whole story of the cleansing of the Temple as portrayed in the Gospels is highly unrealistic. It is Passover and a tense and revolutionary time in Palestine, thousands of Roman troops are stationed in Jerusalem expecting trouble from the masses of pilgrims converging from the entire Jewish world, and Jesus has just marched in and has been proclaimed the king of

the Jews. Yet the authorities do not even react when he launches an attack on the Temple and he walks away as if nothing had happened, even calmly discussing it afterwards. In particular, the chief priests don't react which one might logically think they would considering it is their Temple.

It is apparent that in line with their standard editing methods the New Testament editors are mixing several sources together: a mix of Josephus and Sayings 64 and 71 of the Gospel of Thomas. Josephus cites a prophet named Jesus ben Ananus, active ca. 62 CE, who frequently predicted the fall of the city and the Temple: "There was one Jesus the son of Ananus, a plebeian and a husbandman, who, four years before the war began...began on a sudden to cry aloud, `A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house...He every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, `Woe, woe to Jerusalem!' (Whiston 6.3).

As we know, Josephus was one of the main sources for the compilers of the New Testament Gospels, as "there are numerous parallels between the eschatological Jesus of Matthew 23 and 24 and the tragicomic Jesus described in the passage from Josephus" (Atwill 184). These parallels include identical phrases and concepts, the list of signs Josephus gives that precede the destruction of the Temple, the location and subject of both passages, and the dates, namely a 40-year span between 30 and 70 C.E. (184-194). Atwill says "the entire passage (in Matthew) appears to be nothing other than a `prophecy' of events and details that have occurred during Titus' destruction of Jerusalem, all of which can be found in Josephus" (Atwill 181).

Mixed with Josephus is a mistranslation of Saying 71 as "temple" instead of "house" and the use of the last sentence of Saying 64. Mark may well have constructed the entire Temple scene of Jesus driving out the money-lenders from this last sentence. As Davies says: "The whole Markan pericope is summed up at the beginning `Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there' (Mk 11:15-19) which appears to be a narrativisation of Thomas 64b `Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my Father.'...Whatever `places of my Father' may have meant to the compiler of Thomas, the applicability of the phrase to the Jerusalem Tample seems obvious ...Mark constructs a narrative (as he does with Thomas 31 to construct 6:1-6)...moving then to the description of the activity, adding scriptural citations to provide apparent motivation, incorporating as he often does a plot by Judean leaders who are contrasted to inoffensive crowds, and finally framing the whole with the figtree incident to allow for broader symbolic interpretation" (Davies "Mark II" 256).

And the Gospel of John may well be doing the same thing. Beare points out that "the closing saying is itself probably a distorted reminiscence of the text Jesus quoted to the money-changers in the Temple: `Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise' (John 2:16 - not in the Synoptics)" (Beare 109) - or rather the other way around. In addition, the Greek topos is also the name for the Temple in John 11:48, thus it may well be that John does the same thing as Mark.

Yet, even with all the unhistorical elements in this story, there is still most likely a deep kernel of truth in it. Matthew 21:12 (also Mark 11:15 and Luke 19:45) says, "And Jesus entered the temple of God and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons." Conventionally this is seen as aimed at the money-changers, and anti-Semites love to equate Jews with rapacious money-lenders and capitalists. But what was really going on in the Temple? Ironically, it is the Gospel of John which makes clear what Jesus' real target is: "In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple" (John 2:14-15).

The target of Jesus' wrath was not the money-changers, it was the animal dealers and butchers! As Akers says: "We must remember that the temple was more like a butcher shop than like any modern-day church or synagogue. `Cleansing the temple' was an act of animal liberation" (Akers 117). And when we see that sacrifices were big business for the Temple and that priests received a share of the meat for themselves, we can understand why the priests were so angry with Jesus and sought to destroy him. It is possible that this very incident and the notoriety associated with it is what caused him to leave Jerusalem and move to Galilee which was not under Roman rule or under the jurisdiction of the High Priests and where he would be safe from persecution. The New Testament merely inverts the order of his life to hide this fact.

It is not clear how long he remained in Galilee. But it is quite possible that at some point Jesus left his disciples, just as he told them he would do in Saying 12, and moved to Edessa, either with Judas Thomas or after Thomas had already gone there.

Considering the ambiguity of the Prologue to the Gospel of Thomas, either of them could have written the 114 sayings of the Gospel of Thomas which could just as well be called the Gospel of Jesus. Shall we speculate that when Jesus left the disciples Thomas moved to Edessa and decided to record the sayings for posterity that Jesus had spoken? and that Jesus

worked with him to edit them? and that Thomas then published them in a book and distributed it throughout the Edessene kingdom and much further afield, all the way to Egypt? and that Mani, who got his start in Edessa, was enthralled by the Gospel of Thomas and quoted it often in his own writings? and that the document then survived until the area was conquered by the Moslems who also incorporated it into their writings?

Chapter 16:
Mary Magdalene and Salome

To complete the picture of Jesus' life, let us take a look at the extraordinary women associated with him, Mary Magdalene and Salome. And here the Christian imputation that he was a lifelong bachelor and celibate is simply not true, despite the fact that he was a Nazirite. In contrast to monkhood in the Christian tradition, a Nazirite was not forbidden from marrying and in general Judaism frowned on a celibate path. So who was Jesus' wife? All written documents are clear on this point: Mary Magdalene.

Up until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library the only source for the existence of Mary Magdalene was the New Testament, where she is a reformed prostitute. In 1969 the Catholic Church officially repealed that designation. But now there is a wealth of sources which refer to her and the picture of Mary has dramatically changed: she is mentioned 65 times in Pistis Sophia, 16 times in the Dialogue of the Savior, 4 times in the Gospel of Mary, and twice each in Thomas and in the Sophia of Jesus Christ. She is also mentioned many times in 3 of the Psalms of Heracleides in the Manichaean Psalm-Book. In these sources she is usually referred to as Mariham, Mariamme, Marihamme and the like, and only in the Gospel of Philip, Pistis Sophia, the Gospel of Peter and the Acts of Philip is she actually identified as Mary Magdalene, but "most scholars...hold that it is reasonably clear in most cases when Mary Magdalene is meant" (Schaberg Mary 126-127). The only disciples who come close are Thomas, mentioned 21 times, and Matthew 16 times in the Dialogue (Petersen 103). And she is also mentioned by many of the Church Fathers: Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Pseudo-Cyprian, Dionysius, and Pseudo-Clement, as well as over 30 fourth century references by Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Chrysostom, almost all direct references to John 20:17 (Schaberg Mary 60).

Much about her origin and even her name is unusual, though Mary was a common name at the time. In Tal Ilan's study of the distribution of Jewish women's names in Palestine in the Second Temple and Mishnaic periods, there were 145 women with 11 Hebrew names, yet 58 of them (23.4%) were Mariamme or Maria, with 61 more being Salome, leaving only 26 women for the other 9 names. Ilan thinks both Salome and Mariamme were particularly popular because they were names of the Hasmonean Jewish rul-

ers, which is also the case for 30.6% of the men's names (Ilan 191-192). But of all the many Marys in the New Testament, known solely by their family relationships, she is the only one known by a cognomen, Magdalene. It has generally been assumed that this refers to a city called Magdala on the west bank of Lake Genesaret or the Sea of Galilee. The problem is that there may not have been any town by that name.

Geographically there is a much stronger connection between Mary and the village of Bethany, 2 miles east of Jerusalem. It is quite remarkable how often all four Gospels have Jesus going to Bethany to visit Mary, her sister Martha and her brother Lazarus; it is the first place he goes to whenever he goes to Jerusalem. It is mentioned in Mark 11:1, 11:11, Matthew 21:17, 26:6, Luke 19:29, John 11:1ff. and 12:1ff.; it is also implied in Luke 10:38 and Jesus purposely goes all the way to Bethany in order to ascend to heaven from there in Luke 24:50. John the Baptist too seems to be associated with Bethany; John 1:28 mentions him baptizing in "Bethany beyond the Jordan" but there is no such town, and the Gospel of John may be trying to hide his close connection with Mary as well.

There is much good reason to think that Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany are one and the same person, which the New Testament is carefully trying to hide, and Bethany is quite clearly her hometown. It may be meaningful that there was a church of Mary Magdalene in Jerusalem as early as the 9th century, which was turned into a school in 1197 C.E. and whose last ruins disappeared in 1892. This clearly shows her association with Jerusalem (Kopp 196-197n).

Unfortunately, just as for all the other places in the Gospels real evidence for the existence of Bethany is lacking: no place of this name is mentioned by Jewish authorities though there is a very small and unimportant place called Beth Hini mentioned which may be near the site of Bethany and which the Gospel writers may have misread by switching their vowels. By the 4th century the supposed site was named for the reputed grave of Lazarus and called Lazarium, as reported by the Abbess Etheria in the 5th century, and until the 20th century the Arab village there was called El-`Azariyeh (Burkitt 390). Overall, it is rather suspicious that every single figure in the New Testament is given a non-existent or insignificant place as a hometown, and all this points to deception. It would make sense if Mary, just like Jesus, John the Baptist and the "disciples" or rather the brothers of Jesus, were all actually from Jerusalem, and the Gospels may simply be trying to hide the fact that they were such an integral part of the anti-Roman Jewish resistance movement of the legitimate priestly class.

Accordingly, Mary's social class is most likely much higher than it

might at first appear: in Matthew 26:6 the father is given as Simon the leper but in Luke 7:37-50 which tells the same story Simon is called a Pharisee. Neither one connects the story with Mary but we know it is the same story from the other Gospel citations, a typical example of New Testament techniques of deception and outright slander of her father, just as it slanders her. Thus Mary's father was Simon the Pharisee. As a Pharisee he belonged to the educated class; he certainly had his own house and Mary could afford expensive ointment. Interestingly, there is another Simon in Luke 4:38 who has a house in Capernaum and owns boats on the Sea of Galilee: if we accept the possibility that "Capernaum" is merely a code, could this be the same Simon? The New Testament is notorious for splitting the same person up in different passages with slightly different cognomens.

It is perhaps not entirely insignificant that Bethany ("house of unripe dates") is on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives which in 2 Samuel 15:30 is associated with King David. Could Mary Magdalene of Bethany be of a more important and high-placed family than it appears? Could her epithet "tower" or "fine gift" not only denote a strong and impressive personality but also someone from a distinguished background?

She is certainly turning out to be an extremely important figure in the group around Jesus. All the texts show her to be a teacher, mystic visionary and interpreter of Jesus' sayings in her own right, the only woman with a gospel named after her. She experiences visions and relays them to the others. She seeks knowledge and enlightenment; for example in The Dialogue of the Savior (141) she says "I want to understand all things, just as they are." She speaks with authority: in Pistis Sophia she asks 39 of the 46 questions and in the Gospel of Mary at least half of what remains is a dialogue between her and Jesus and in the other half she plays a major part. She may even be said to take a role here that is usually reserved for Jesus. The First Apocalypse of James suggests that James should turn to Mary and the other women for instruction and in the Sophia of Jesus Christ Mary is included among those special disciples to whom Jesus entrusted his most elevated teaching.

She is highly praised in all the texts, for example in The Dialogue of the Savior (139): "Mary said, `So: The wickedness of each day is sufficient. Workers deserve their food. Disciples resemble their teachers.' She spoke this utterance as a woman who understood everything." And in Pistis Sophia her complete spiritual comprehension is also repeatedly stressed, as in 87: "When Mary finished saying these things, the savior marveled greatly at the answers she gave, for she had become entirely pure spirit. Jesus answered and said to her, `Well done, Mary, pure spiritual woman. This is the interpretation of the word.'" (See King Mary 143-144) In all these texts Mary has the leading role among all female disciples and women named, and in the Gospel of Pe-

ter she is called mathetria ton kyrion, a designation as leader which does not appear in the New Testament (Petersen 101).

Several Gnostic groups also claimed Mary as their direct inspiration, as Hippolytus and Celsus attest. This does not mean that the teachings in the Gospel of Mary are completely Gnostic, as many scholars seem to assume. DeBoer shows that if anything they are based on the monistic idea of nature in Stoic philosophy but with the introduction of a new concept not found in Stoicism: "a cosmic power contrary to Nature, which, by infecting the harmonious mixture of Nature and matter, disturbs the original Stoic concept of cosmic harmony." This may be "an allusion to a Gnostic dualism in creation after all" and this is why the Gnostics liked her teachings (DeBoer "Gnostic" 703-704). Price says: "The Carpocratian Gnostics of Egypt made explicit appeal to Mary Magdalene together with Salome and Martha as the original teachers of their traditions...Clement...tells us that Epiphanes, son of Carpocrates, taught the equality of female and male (Stromateis 11.2.6), a doctrine...elsewhere associated with Mary Magdalene's revelation. Finally we may mention Irenaeus' lament that Marcosian Gnostics were active in his own district of the Rhone Valley (Adv. Haer. 1.13.5). One may wonder if the late medieval Greek life of Mary has just possibly preserved a genuine tradition when it records a missionary journey of Mary Magdalene to Marseilles" (Price 62-63).

And despite the Church's slander of her as a prostitute, her influence continued in medieval Christianity, as there are over 190 shrines dedicated to her in Western Europe, more than 600 of her relics venerated, and 170 churches bearing her name in pre-Reformation England (Schaberg Mary 90).

Mary Magdalene is part of a large number of women in leadership positions in early Christianity, as Karen Torjesen has shown. She says that "during the 1st and 2nd centuries, when Christian congregations met in homes, women were prominent as leaders...and women with relatively more wealth or higher status assumed the role of patron of a group" (5-6). Women prophets claimed authority to receive and interpret divine revelations, a tradition that was well-established in Greek and Roman religions (28). This was paralleled in the role of women in synagogues: a study of 19 Jewish inscriptions showed that women held various high synagogue offices (Torjesen 19). Thus Mary Magdalene was by no means unusual.

Both Esther de Boer and Sandra Schneiders have argued that she may even be the mysterious beloved disciple in the Gospel of John. As Schneiders says, "not only are an extraordinary number of John's main characters women, but these women are assigned the very community-founding roles and functions...that are assigned to Peter and the Twelve in the Synoptics." The

best evidence is in John 19:25-27 which describes Jesus' mother, his aunt and Mary Magdalene standing by the cross and then says: "When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, `Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, `Behold your mother!'"

Yet it is clear that only women are standing by the cross and no male has materialized, so he must be referring to one of the women. In addition, the word for disciple, mathetes, is gender-neutral, female in form and generically male in meaning, Jesus does not say "Son, behold your mother" and when it says afterwards "the disciple took her to his own home", the Greek eis ta idia really means "to one's own" and gives no indication of the gender of the one receiving the mother of Jesus. Thus a later Christian editor who was supremely uncomfortable with Mary being the beloved disciple could have made only one change of "daughter" to "son" yet left the other tell-tale signs that contradict that (Schneiders 238-242, DeBoer "Mary"). Thus Mary might well have been the "disciple whom Jesus loved".

She was certainly known to be a close companion of Jesus and there is much indication that their relationship was more than platonic. In the Gospel of Philip 48 (63.32-33) it says: "The companion of the savior is Mary Magdalene. The savior loved her more than all the disciples and he kissed her often on her mouth. The other disciples...said to him, `Why do you love her more than all of us?' The savior answered and said to them, `Why do I not love you like her? If a blind person and one who can see are both in darkness, they are the same. When the light comes, one who can see will see the light, and the blind person will stay in darkness.'" Jesus' answer is a bit cryptic but I think he is saying that whether he loves them more or not, they can still acquire wisdom and see the light. Clearly there is jealousy on the part of the other disciples toward Mary and just as clearly the fact that he "kissed her often on the mouth" indicates an intimate relationship.

The word used here and in the Gospel of Philip 28 (59.9) is the Greek koinonos, "partner, companion (with sexual side meaning)". Siegert's dictionary of all the words in the Nag Hammadi Library shows that koinonos and the related words koinonein (unite, have sex with) and koinonia (community, sexual intercourse) have a consistently, but not exclusively, sexual meaning and he comments that for koinonia "the difference in the (sexual and non-sexual) meanings is not always possible" (Siegert 260). So clearly someone in the first century hearing Mary referred to as a koinonein of Jesus would immediately have thought of her as his sexual partner.

Price points out that "`kissing' was often employed to stand for sexual

intercourse, and this same gospel elsewhere says that `it is by a kiss that the perfect conceive and give birth' (59.2-3). Later still we are assured that the implied sexual intercourse is purely spiritual and metaphorical in nature (76:6-9, 82:1-10)." (Price 59-60) This gospel is considered a text of the Gnostic Valentinians, who approved of earthly marriage because it was thought to be modeled on heavenly unions, and so there is no contradiction between the emphasis on a sexual union that is at the same time spiritual in nature (Phipps 135-138).

Moreover, the Gnostic dialogue Little Questions of Mary gives yet another indication of the sexual nature of Jesus' and Mary's relationship: though the writing is not extant, Epiphanius preserves a particularly juicy tidbit in his Panarion (26.8.2-3): "They assert that he [Jesus] gave her [Mary] a revelation, taking her aside to the mountain and praying; and he brought forth from his side a woman and began to [sexually] unite with her, and so forsooth, taking his effluent, he showed that `we must do so, that we may live'; and how when Mary fell to the ground abashed, he raised her up again and said to her,`Why didst thou doubt, O thou of little faith?'" It is interesting that much later both the Cathars or Albigensians, who had access to ancient traditions including the Gospel of Thomas, as well as Martin Luther assumed a sexual relationship between Jesus and Mary (Schaberg Mary 100).

William Phipps makes the quite compelling argument that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. First of all, "early marriage was and is still the custom among tradition-oriented people in the Middle East. In Hittite, Persian, Greek and Roman cultures it was firmly established that marriage should follow immediately after puberty...Ancient Jews considered heterosexual desire and its passionate expression in marriage a beautiful thing... Throughout ancient cultures the unmarried state was considered inferior...the Old Testament has no word for bachelor, so unusual was the idea" (Phipps Married 22-26). In the Jewish tradition celibacy is rejected both in theory and in practice and marriage "was regarded not only as the normal state but as a divine ordinance." Even the Essenes, whom Jesus may have joined, were married (Phipps Married 32-33). We may also add that Paul himself states in 1 Cor 9:5 that the apostles and brothers of Jesus were married: "Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?" If the brothers, why not then Jesus?

Phipps shows that Jesus clearly acted like a rabbi: he participated in rabbinic debates, he appealed to Scriptures and he was regularly addressed as a rabbi even though the New Testament disguises that fact by translating the Hebrew title as "Lord" or "Master" (Phipps Sexuality 46-49). Now rabbis have always been married and it would be highly unorthodox for Jesus to act as a teacher and law-giver and remain celibate.

Mary Magdalene's behavior at the tomb of Jesus also indicates her closeness to Jesus. In John 20:15 a figure in the darkness asks her whom she seeks and she says, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away." As Spong says: "Mary is claiming the right to the body! In first-century Jewish society to claim the body of the deceased, especially for a woman to claim the body of a deceased man, would be totally inappropriate unless the woman was the nearest of kin! Mary Magdalene is the primary female figure in the gospel narrative. She is the chief mourner, she refers to Jesus as `my lord', and she is the one who lays claim to the body of Jesus" (Spong 194). Therefore, we can safely assume she is Jesus' wife.

The New Testament may even tell the story of their wedding in a hidden way. John 2:1-11 relates a wedding of an unnamed couple that Jesus attended: "On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, `They have no wine.'" Then, after Jesus makes wine from water, "the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, `Every man serves the good wine first, and when men

have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.'" Derrett shows pertinently that the custom for first-century Jewish wedding-feasts in Galilee was that "the parents of the bridegroom, or the bridegroom himself, were responsible for the entertainment of the guests, and took the initiative with regard to the betrothal, the solemnisation of matrimony...and the invitation of the guests" (Derrett Law 229).

Accordingly, notice what is going on here: Jesus' mother and Jesus are clearly responsible for entertaining and provisioning the guests. Jesus' mother is the hostess of the wedding, which must mean that it is one of her children getting married; she holds Jesus responsible for serving the wine, which means that he is involved in the wedding; and without John making the connection obvious, the steward says to the bridegroom who served the wine that he has kept the good wine till last - but it was Jesus who served the wine! Therefore he is the bridegroom, a fact which John does his best to obscure.

Moreover, though John tries to imply that it was only a small village affair by not mentioning any guests, the water that Jesus turns to wine is in "six stone jars...for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons" (or 2-3 firkins). Taking an average of 25 gallons, simple math tells us that this is 125 gallons of wine, enough probably for a thousand hard drinkers. This is no small wedding! But that is the scale of an event one

would expect for someone with the stature of Jesus.

Some scholars have raised these perplexing issues: Spong says "when two generations are present at a wedding it is almost always a family affair... The only time my mother and my closest friends were at a wedding together with me was my own wedding!" (Spong 192) And A. N. Wilson asks: "Why did the servants come to Jesus when they realized that the wine at the wedding was about to run out? Why did the mother of Jesus tell the servants, `Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it?' It is not for guests to arrange the catering at a wedding, though it might very well be for the bridegroom. Possibly...the story of the wedding-feast at Cana contains a hazy memory of Jesus' own wedding" (AN Wilson 101). And the obvious person he married would have to be Mary Magdalene.

Mary, his probable wife, was so close to Jesus that she aroused the implacable jealousy and hostility of Simon Peter. He is shown in all the ancient writings to be jockeying for power and influence against her and to resent her leading role among the group of disciples. In general "the Petrine tradition is not notably kind to women. In 1 Petr 3:1-6 women are given a subordinate role" (Funk 532). He is the classic male chauvinist who cannot stand for a woman to be equal to him. This does not seem to be sexual jealousy, for he was married and took his wife along with him on missionary trips (Mark 1:29-31, I Cor 9:5). He was known by the other disciples to be hot-headed and prone to anger and is even accused by Mary of physically threatening her. He may well have had good reason to feel his position threatened by her, for despite what the New Testament says, Jesus clearly saw Mary rather than him as a favored interpreter of his teachings.

His judgment was prescient considering the testimony in the Gospel of John that Peter denied being his disciple three times while Mary faithfully stood by his side before and after the crucifixion. The New Testament's view of Peter may be ironic. Stock shows that there is a distinct connection between Matthew 16:18-19 where Jesus calls Peter "this rock on which I will build my church" and Matthew 16:23 where he says Peter "is a stumbling block to me." The second "rock" clearly undermines the first and ties in with the general presentation of Peter not as rock at all but as a vacillating figure on whom Jesus could not rely and who denies him at the end (Stock 66-67).

Here are some of the excerpts that show this very charged conflict between Mary and Peter:

Gospel of Mary 17: When Mary had said this [her vision of the soul's ascent], she fell silent, since it was to this point that the Savior had spoken with her...Peter answered and spoke concerning these same things. He questioned them about the Savior. "Did he really speak with a woman without

our knowledge and not openly? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?" Then Mary wept and said to Peter, "My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I thought this up myself in my heart, or that I am lying about the Savior?" Levi answered and said to Peter, "Peter, you have always been hot-tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. But if the Savior made her worthy, who are you to reject her? Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us."

Pistis Sophia 36: Peter stepped forward and said to Jesus, "My master, we cannot endure this woman who gets in our way and does not let any of us speak, though she talks all the time."

72: Mary came forward and said, "My master, I understand in my mind that I can come forward at any time to interpret what Pistis Sophia has said, but I am afraid of Peter, because he threatens me and hates our gender." When she said this, the first mystery replied to her, "Any of those filled with the spirit of light will come forward to interpret what I say: no one will be able to oppose them."

146: Peter said, "My master, make the women stop asking questions, so that we may also raise some questions." Jesus said, "Give the men, your brothers, a chance to ask some questions."

Peter's reactions to Mary in Saying 114 of the Gospel of Thomas fit very well with his attitudes in the above texts. His attack on her is remarkable for its extremism. First of all, this is the only Saying in all of Thomas where a disciple, rather than Jesus, authoritatively addresses himself to the other disciples and in what Schüngel calls an act of "provocative insolence" addresses a larger group of men and not Jesus (397). So this is not only an attack on Mary but almost a call to rebellion against Jesus himself, as he knows full well how close Mary and Jesus are. By asking the group to expel her and to deny her any part in spiritual attainment in the kingdom, he is essentially trying to break up their relationship. In addition, he is implicitly calling on the other disciples to back him up in a united front against Jesus and Mary. The implied threat here is that if Jesus does not offer Mary up as a sacrificial lamb Peter will attempt to take his place as leader of an all-male group, free of the lax and morally permissive practices Jesus seems to be endorsing.

As Marjanen says: "Peter does not want to exclude Mary and other women just from a group of privileged persons such as apostles, leaders, and teachers. What is at stake is a much more basic decision. Peter maintains that neither Mary Magdalene nor nay other woman should have any part in salvation and the kingdom of heaven...Nowhere in early Christian literature does

one find an equally negative view of women" (Marjanen "Mary" 104). But in later Christian literature one does! Peter's attitudes will soon become standard in the Catholic Church, and "Peter is the mouthpiece for the ideas of orthodox authorities in these texts" while Mary Magdalene "would have been viewed as an analogous and appropriate choice for a mouthpiece for Gnostic ideas" (Price 62).

Once we become familiar with the extensive literature on Mary Magdalene, we begin to see how deceptive and insulting the treatment of her by the New Testament really is. In the account of Jesus' life she is mentioned by her full name only once, in Luke 8:2: "And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out..." This story of the seven demons is an attempt to downgrade her, for the other mentions of her indicate her steadfastness and deep loyalty to Jesus. In contrast to Peter, she stands by Jesus before and after death in all four gospels, being mentioned continuously (Mark 15:40, 16:1-10, Matthew 27:55, 61, 28:1-10, Luke 23:49 [implied], 24:10, John 19:25, 20:1-18) and in Mark 16:9 and John 20:14 she is the first person Jesus appears to after his death.

However, the later and present conception of her as a repentant prostitute is not found in the New Testament at all and is "pure fiction with no historical foundation whatsoever." Karen King says: "Contrary to popular Western tradition, Mary Magdalene was never a prostitute. Eastern orthodox traditions have never portrayed her as one...In contrast to the prominent role she plays in the early literature...the early church fathers whose writings later became the basis for orthodoxy largely ignore Mary Magdalene.

When they do mention her, however, they present her in a consistently favorable light...Her name comes up most frequently in connection with the resurrected Jesus' enigmatic statement to her: `Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father' (John 20:17)" (King Mary 154, 149).

Not until the 4th century did the Church Fathers begin to present her in a negative light, and that was done only by identifying Mary Magdalene with both Mary of Bethany who anoints Jesus' feet in John 12:3 and the unnamed woman (a sinner in Luke) who anoints his head in Luke 7:37-50 and Matthew 26:6-13.

Even these citations say nothing about any of these women being prostitutes; that identification was not made until the end of the 6th century by Pope Gregory. "Once these initial identifications were secure, Mary Magdalene could be associated with every unnamed sinful woman in the gospels, including the adulteress in John 8:1-11 and the Syrophoenician woman with her five and more `husbands' in John 4:7-30. Mary the apostle

and teacher had become Mary the repentant whore" (King Mary 150-152).

Ironically enough, the Christian theologians may have used Jewish anti-Christian polemics to make this identification: "Hostile scribes confused Mary of Nazareth with Mary Magdalene and punned that `Magdalene' meant not `of magdala', a village in Galilee, but rather m'gaddla, `the hair curler', a euphemism for a madam, since elaborate hairstyling was regarded as the mark of a prostitute." Price speculates that this may have started among "early Aramaic-speaking Christians who meant to aim it at Mary the disciple, not Mary Jesus' mother" (Price 74).

There is good reason to think, however, that Mary Magdalene was identical with Mary of Bethany and that the Gospels go to great lengths to hide that fact. The same story is told very differently in all four gospels, the basic story being that a woman uses costly spikenard oil from an alabaster jar to anoint either Jesus' head or feet. In Mark 14:3 and Matthew 26:6 it is in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper and the unnamed woman anoints his head; and in Luke 7:37-50 it is a house of a Pharisee, she is a sinner and anoints his feet, wipes them with her hair and kisses them, after which Mary Magdalene is mentioned separately. John 12:3-8 tells the same story but is the only one to connect it with Mary of Bethany, whose sister was Martha and whose brother Lazarus.

Anointing is a sacred ritual done to consecrate someone to a high spiritual office: there is only one anointing in the New Testament and it is performed by Mary! And Jesus justifies her action when she is criticized. The only other rite performed on Jesus was by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. Moreover, Mary is shown as wiping Jesus' feet with her hair, which not only was uncovered but unbound. According to Jewish law, only a husband was allowed to see a woman's hair unbound and if a woman let down her hair in front of another man, this was a sign of impropriety and grounds for mandatory divorce (Picknett 49-50, 54-55). Thus, for Mary to anoint Jesus means she is someone with a high sacred office and she is also his wife; ergo, Mary of Bethany is the same as Mary Magdalene. The New Testament makes sure to hide that fact completely.

Two other references are also interesting in connection with Mary. John says in 11:5 that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus", meaning of course that he loved Mary. And in Luke 10:38-42 Martha is jealous of her sister Mary, because Martha is serving Jesus while Mary is sitting sat his feet and listening to his teaching: this indicates the high intellectual nature of Mary. All these references are carefully dissociated from the real Mary, just as the wedding of Jesus and Mary in Cana is deceptively hidden.

In an interesting article Robert Price carefully analyzes 7 stages in the

progressive downplaying of Mary's prominent relationship with Jesus (Price 66-72).

1. In John 20:11-18 Mary sees Jesus right after his death, before he has even ascended, and no one else does! He tells her to tell the other disciples. "This remarkable fact has been ignored because of the habit of readers unconsciously to harmonize this Easter story with the others." (Price 67)

2. In Mark 16:9-20 the first appearance of the risen lord to Mary was added by a later hand to Mark's appendix.

3. In Matthew 28:1-10 Mary sees first an angel, then the risen Christ, but receives no special revelation, nothing beyond what the angel said.

4. In Luke 24:1-12 Mary and the women see angels who direct them to tell the 12 to await the risen Christ but they do not see Christ himself. Then in Luke 24:34 and 1 Cor 15:5 Peter is the first to see Jesus. As King says, Luke's tendency is "to reduce the status of Mary Magdalene and of women in general to subordinate roles, especially in comparison with the enhanced roles of Peter and `the twelve'." (King Mary 142) This allowed the Church to claim that Simon Peter had rights of succession because he was the first to see Jesus as well as to make the claim that women didn't count because they couldn't be disciples anyway. (Pagels 9)

5. In Mark 16:1-8 "not only do Mary and the other women never see Jesus, but they pointedly disobey the injunction of the angel to tell the Twelve of the resurrection!" (Price 69) This is part of the "thoroughgoing tendency in Mark's gospel to discredit the disciples of Jesus at every opportunity...Perhaps Mark represented Pauline Christianity...The third faction Mark repudiates is...the women disciples of Jesus led by Mary Magdalene. Aware of the claim of Mary to have received Easter revelations, Marks suppresses any such appearance, having Mary see only an angel, and having her disobey the angel at that. She is a mere third-hand messenger, and not even a good one" (Price 70).

6. In John 20:2-10 Mary's role is minimal; she does not even see angels and her role is merely to fetch the male disciples.

7. And in the final stage in 1 Cor 15 all mention of Mary is omitted because her claim to apostleship has been denied.

Price concludes: "The hypothesis of increasing denial of Mary's claims to apostolic credentials thus provides a paradigm for explaining much of the bewildering confusion in the Easter materials vis-a-vis Mary Magdalene." Yet they could not omit her altogether "because she was too well-known as an associate of Jesus." (Price 72) Of course, by suppressing Mary's important role Christian theologians and authorities also suppressed any pos-

sibility of women in positions of authority, insisting over and over again that women had no right to preach, teach, have visions, heal, conduct exorcisms, discuss scripture, baptize, or serve as deacons, presbyters or bishops (see, for example, Tertullian De Praescriptione Haereticorum 41.5-8).

Thirdly, along with suppressing Mary's closeness to Jesus and women's rights to participate spiritually, Christian theologians and authorities also tried to hide Jesus' very normal sexuality by arguing that he was celibate. Matthew 19:12 - "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" - was the favorite proof text for that argument but other texts were used as well to show that he abhorred marriage and sexuality. (Phipps Married 72-79) Yet, as Phipps says, "it is significant that Jesus is never represented by any canonical gospel writer as being derogatory toward women. He gave his disciples no warnings about the wiles of women. In practice as well as in theory he endorsed the created order of sexual equality. He dealt with both righteous and unrighteous women as individuals with specific concerns not as cases illustrating some religious principle." He is shown even in the New Testament as having in-depth conversations with women whom he treats with full respect, women were his primary financial supporters and he refuses every opportunity to be judgmental toward "fallen" women. (Phipps Married 61-63) So the Christian theologians presented a completely distorted picture even from their own scriptures.

Rosemary Ruether shows how there is a dichotomy between misogyny and virginal feminism in the thought of the early Church Fathers. Once the male was equated with the spiritual and the female with the physical, then it followed that women should be subordinated to men, "as flesh must be subject to spirit in the right ordering of nature" in the words of Augustine. Thus woman was, as Ruether says, "peculiarly the symbol of the Fall and sin, since sin is defined as the disordering of the original justice wherein the bodily principle revolts against its ruling spirit and draws the reason down to its lower dictates" (Ruether 157).

Or as Torjesen puts it, "the inferiority of women and their subordination to men was directly linked to their reproductive sexuality and to their social role of care for bodily life." The only solution was for women to be virginal and thus escape the sinful nature of the flesh and sexuality: "by renouncing the body and sexuality and following the ascetic ideals, women in effect transcended their femaleness." Any other kind of woman was considered dangerous and sinful (Ruether 164-67, Torjesen 210). None of this is found in Thomas or even in the New Testament: it, has nothing to do with Jesus or Christianity but is simply a perversion by an authoritarian patriarchical Roman Catholic Church.

The same feminist historians, however, have also raised the concern that Saying 114 of the Gospel of Thomas, which portrays the conflict of Mary and Simon Peter, seems to be equally sexist and misogynist. Jesus says here: "Behold! I myself shall draw her so that I shall make her male, in order that she herself will become a living spirit, resembling you, the males. For every woman who will make herself male will go into the kingdom of the heavens." The key phrases that seem to be anti-female are Jesus saying that he will make Mary male and that "every woman who will make herself male will go into the kingdom of the heavens." This is where all the debate has ensued as to whether what Jesus is proposing is derogatory to women or whether his offer to "make her male" is to be taken purely metaphorically. Most commentators can accept Peter's male chauvinism, because that is to be expected, but consider it disappointing to find evidence of chauvinism in Jesus' mouth, not only toward Mary but toward all women.

Because of the apparent elevation of the male to superiority that directly contradicts Saying 22 where the male and the female are held to be equal, many scholars, including Marjanen, Akagi, Kasser and Davies, have come to the conclusion that Saying 114 was not originally part of the Gospel of Thomas but was added later, perhaps even a century later, by a community of men with an ascetic and anti-female tendency. As Marjanen says, "the fact that the phenomenon and the phrase `making oneself male' has very close, almost verbal parallels, on the one hand, in the 2nd and 3rd century apocryphal acts and on the other, among the late 2nd century Valentinian and Naassene texts, speaks for the fairly late origin of the Saying itself...This suggests that Saying 114 has been added to the collection in a situation in which the role of women in the religious life of the community has for some reason become a matter of debate" (Marjanen "Woman" 103).

But if we pay attention to the subtleties of the meanings of the Coptic words the document uses and translate them correctly, then the sexism disappears and it turns out that Jesus is actually being ironic. The Coptic sok that is usually translated as "lead, guide" actually means "draw, drag" and refers to an action that overcomes resistance and takes place against the will or interest of that person. It also has a subsidiary meaning of "leading someone who is bound" or "misleading someone" (Schüngel "Vorschlag" 396). These are the meanings in the other sayings where the verb occurs: in Saying 8 the fish net is pulled up and in 35 the blind man is misleading the other blind man into disaster.

The strongest clue of Jesus' true attitude is in the phrase "a living spirit, resembling you, the males." Why does he say "you, the males" when he

is himself male? Clearly he does not include himself in that group, otherwise he would have said "us males." This is also his way of putting Peter in his place and just as Peter denigrated the female, so is Jesus actually denigrating the male. Jesus is implying that Peter and the other disciples are not even close to being "living spirits", as they only have a resemblance, and that Mary has much more potential of becoming one than they do. And the reason is that they are too stuck in their sense of maleness to be able to advance toward a less gendered identity. As Valantasis says, Jesus sees himself as a "sort of third gender" who makes Mary a living spirit which only resembles males but isn't male (Val 195).

What we have to remember about the next phrase - a woman making herself male in order to get into the kingdom of the heavens - is that Jesus has expressly said in Sayings 49 and 75 that being male is not sufficient for attaining the Kingdom.The order of spiritual development is as follows:

1. Primal androgyny

2. male	2. female
3. monachos	3. male

4. immortal living spirit: unity transcending polarity

Salome

The Gospel of Thomas gives even more evidence of Jesus' high respect for charismatic women as well as his rather active sexuality in Saying 61. This saying refers to a relationship with Salome who turns out to be the second most prominent female disciple after Mary Magdalene in the circle around Jesus. Her name, interestingly, means "peace, well-being" in noun form and "whole, complete, perfect" in adjective form (Wint 72). She is clearly mentioned as a disciple of Jesus in a number of Christian and Gnostic documents: in the First Apocalypse of James 40.9-26 she occurs in a list of female disciples, in the Pistis Sophia 1.54, 58, 3.132 she converses four times with Jesus, in the Manichaean Psalm-Book she is highly praised as a valued apostle of Jesus, and in the Syriac Testament of our Lord she acts as an interlocutor of Jesus in a post-resurrection revelatory discourse. Clement of Alexandria mentions her seven times, mostly in quotations from the Gospel of the Egyptians all of which are dialogues between Jesus and Salome (Corley 87). And Epiphanius says that the Gospel of the Egyptians contains secret revelations which could be traced back to Salome (Petersen 219).

It is also remarkable how many apocryphal documents mention her.

For Coptic ones, in the 4th century History of Joseph the Carpenter Salome went on the flight to Egypt; in the Assumption of the Virgin Salome lived with Jesus' mother Mary after the Passion, as did Joanna and "the rest of the virgins who were with her"; and James mentions another unpublished Coptic text which tells the whole story of Salome. There was also the Discourse by Demetrius of Antioch in which "she was the first who recognized the Christ and she followed him everywhere throughout his life" and she is mentioned in the various translations of the Acts of Pilate (James Apoc NT 74, 85, 88, 116, 194).

As for Gnostic connections, according to Celsus (cited by Origen 5.62) the Carpocratians, followers of Carpocrates and his son Epiphanes, considered their own claim to a tradition from Jesus to be based on the authority of Salome, and in turn Marcellina, a student of Carpocrates, founded her own group in Rome, the Marcellians. The Carpocratians, who actually called themselves Gnostics, preached complete equality, including of men and women, and tended toward open sexual relationships and libertinism. Epiphanes, cited by Clement of Alexandria, "did not differentiate between rich and a poor, ruled and ruler, dumb and intelligent, men and women, free and slave...The creator and father of the All has given the laws with his own sense of justice and has given eyes for everyone to see with equally" (Petersen 220-222). Interestingly, though a number of Church Fathers including Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus and Epiphanius discuss the Carpocratians at length, they all refuse to mention Salome: our source for her high standing is the pagan Celsus (Hultgren 49-55).

Smith concludes: "Since the Carpocratians who appealed to Salome's authority also maintained that Jesus was a natural man, the son of Joseph, and since Salome in orthodox material was cursed for her denial of the virgin birth, it would seem that she had figured as an authority for esoteric traditions allied with a naturalistic account of Jesus' birth" (Smith Clement 191). The range of citations of her and her apparent influence in both Egypt and Syria testifies to her prominence and we know from the work of many feminist scholars (Pagels, Torjesen, King) that early Christianity and Gnosticism were quite open to female disciples and to women taking leadership positions.

The scene in Saying 61 between Jesus and Salome is a rather juicy one. Salome seems to express surprise that Jesus has climbed onto her bed and has eaten a meal with her; she wants to know who he is and from where he has come. One hates to have what is called in the vernacular a "dirty mind" but it is hard to avoid the possible sexual implications here. The Coptic telo (talo) means "go up, mount, go aboard; with ejèn be raised upon, tr.

raise, lay upon" (Crum 408a-409b). Here in line 7 it is used with ejèn, with a specific meaning of "lay upon". Add to this that despite modern scholars' tendency to use the word "couch", cloc does mean "bed" and only "bed", unless one prefers a "bier" for a corpse! Bovon even suggests that in both Luke and Thomas it could well mean "conjugal bed"! (Bovon Sentences 49) Shocking as it may seem, if Jesus climbs up on Salome's bed and lies down with her, it does not take a highly imaginative disposition to wonder about the level of intimacy of their relationship.

Yet Saying 61 shows that Jesus and Salome are clearly having doubts about their relationship. First of all, Salome seems surprised that Jesus seems so physical and earthly: he sits on her bed and he eats from her table. She says, "Who are you, man?" Not son of man, not Master or any other title, just "man," pure physical, bodily man. She recognizes that he has come from the One, the fundamental spiritual source of all creation, and that he is clearly a great spiritual teacher, but she is confused by his physicality. It is almost as if she is asking whether he is so spiritual that he really will not be available to her in a physical sense, and that it would be a shame if he were not. At the same time she is asking what the relationship should be between the physical and the spiritual worlds.

Jesus answers with a very strong Coptic word, "devastated", denoting a feeling of complete devastation, desolation, inner emptiness. Could Jesus be speaking of his own feelings for Salome when he says "whenever he is desolate (devastated)"? In other words, they are clearly not an official couple, and he may or may not already be married to Mary. He is about to leave her and he will miss her. But he also knows that the relationship must end and that to feel desolate for her will mean that he has clarified his own personal situation.

That is why he says that if he is divided he will be filled with darkness. Division comes for him in many ways: he is divided in his romantic allegiances between Mary and Salome, he is divided between his deep connection for Salome, his longing for her, and his knowledge that he should break off the relationship; and he is also divided between his spiritual path and the demands of his body.

It is difficult to deal with the powerful attraction to Salome which threatens to disrupt his life. She must have been an impressive person and a very beautiful woman. It is fascinating that she is quoted so many times in the Gospel of the Egyptians by Clement of Alexandria asking Jesus how to defeat death, and that Jesus answers that it is possible only by suppressing sex and its results. This was clearly an ongoing issue between them. Salome, who is wise, ultimately is willing to let him go so that he might attain his true

calling.

There is a grammatical ambiguity in the phrase "I am your disciple" such that it could have been spoken by either Jesus or Salome. This indicates the extent of their closeness and even their androgynous fusion. Salome is clearly an impressive person in her own right - and she would have to be if someone of the caliber of Jesus chooses to be involved with her - and she may well be someone that even Jesus could learn from. They are both highly evolved people who continue to inspire each other and learn from each other: they may truly be both each other's teacher and disciple at the same time. And consequently either of them is capable of saying the last part of the saying with authority.

But from a New Testament point of view this is a very scandalous story and Christian authorities wasted no time in suppressing it. The New Testament used only the first two lines of Saying 61 and suppressed all the rest of the material that relates to Salome. Salome is only mentioned in the Gospel of Mark and there only twice:

in Mark 15:40, which cites her as a witness to the crucifixion, and in 16:1 which cites her as a witness to the discovery of the empty tomb. The Secret Gospel of Mark, which Morton Smith found and which mentions Salome, is omitted from the final version of Mark; Luke (23:55, 24:1) omitted both Markan lists of women witnesses and though he mentioned the other women elsewhere, he eliminated Salome's name; and Matthew, though he used over 90% of Mark's gospel in writing his own, deleted the name of Salome from the first list (27:56) and removed her entirely from the second (27:61, 28:1). As Smith says, "the presumption is that Salome was eliminated because persons of whom the canonical evangelists disapproved were appealing to her as an authority" (Smith Clement 189-190).

This policy of eliminating Salome continued throughout the history of the early Church. The closeness of Salome to Jesus and her standing as an independent teacher in her own right was a threat to the attempts of the Catholic Church to claim primacy and to derive its power from Simon Peter. Christian theologians thus circulated stories to downgrade Salome: in the orthodox Protevangelium of James, for instance, Salome is shown as disbelieving in the virgin birth of Mary and being punished by the withering of her hand, and this story was repeated in other fancy narratives. This is also similar to the story of Thomas' disbelief and manual test of the resurrection in John 20:24-29, showing a similar process at work in the case of Thomas.

Chapter 17:
The Family Tomb of Jesus

There is one other fascinating piece of evidence for Jesus' existence and that of his family that, if true, would be the only real physical proof of his existence, but an astounding one: the discovery of the tomb of Jesus and his family in Jerusalem! Oddly enough, it is precisely this very first and only possible proof of Jesus' existence that Christian scholars vehemently reject: one would think they would be ecstatic. Because of the sensationalizing of this find in 2007, I would normally give this little credence either were it not for the low-key manner of its original discovery by Israeli archaeologists. In 1980 construction of a housing development was taking place in a suburb of Jerusalem in the hills of East Talpiyot, now renamed Armon Hanatziv, 5 km south of the Old City. During the bulldozing of freshly dynamited ground an engineer named Efraim Shochat came upon a large tomb with a courtyard almost 15' wide in front. Since he was an Orthodox Jew and did not want to desecrate the resting places of the dead, he alerted the Israel Antiquities Authority to excavate the tomb before construction started again. However, the IAA archaeologists essentially conducted a salvage operation as they had too little time to do a complete report, including full-scale drawings, photographs and DNA tests. They took the ossuaries out and sealed up the tomb again so that construction could start again on Monday. The only other people who have been able to get into the tomb since then, by means of a certain amount of good old Jewish chutzpah, were the film-makers Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino; they are not professional archaeologists and have been heavily criticized, but their first-hand observations and their DNA tests do round out the rather incomplete and reticent Israeli report.

In a way I can understand why the film-makers sensationalized this find: it is a sensation! What the archaeologists Amos Kloner, Yosef Gat and Shimon Gibson found was unusual and impressive. First there was a stone relief sculpture of a chevron over the entrance, an upside down Y a meter wide with a prominent circle placed in its center; such an elaborate facade on a tomb that otherwise had no decorations was very unusual. There were also three human skulls and bones in the antechamber outside the tomb, in a place where the normal practice in Jewish tombs was to deposit oil lamps, perfume bottles or ceremonial meals in cups and bowls. These formed a

sort of isosceles triangle whose base was oriented toward Jerusalem's Temple Mount. Inside the tomb there were six burial niches radiating outward into three of the chamber's four walls, and inside the niches there were ten ossuaries with undamaged lids perfectly in place, despite the blocking stone to the tomb's entrance being missing and despite evidence of looters having entered the tomb at some time before.

Ossuaries, or bone boxes, were used in Jewish funerary practice for secondary burials, mostly practiced in the first century CE: "Instead of burial in coffins as had been an earlier custom, bodies were apparently first placed in a pit or cave and left to decompose for about a year until only bones remained. These bones were then gathered by the deceased's family, deposited into an ossuary, and interred in a tomb. Ossuaries (and tombs in particular) were a more costly form of burial that not all persons could afford" (Feuerverger 12). Ossuaries were usually hand-hewn of large blocks of limestone and many of them were decorated with a variety of ornamental motifs, including rosettes, wreaths, discs, concentric circles, lozenges, zigzag lines and checkerboard, as well as plant, architectural and frame motifs (Hachlili 94-105). Their purpose was to preserve the body as the home of the soul, based on "the Israelite doctrine of man as nephesh, a unitary conception of the totality of the individual, and the biblical idiom `to be gathered to one's fathers'... According to the Israelite view man is a solitary unit in death, when even the bones of a man possess a shadow of their strength in life. The body in the Israelite conception is merely the soul in its outward form while the bones of the dead represent a manifestation of that soul in a weakened state" (Meyers Jewish 12).

This use of ossuaries in Palestine goes back to the Early Bronze Age (3200-2200 BCE), as shown by the cemetery at Bab edh-Dhra, and "secondary burials of varying sorts are extremely well attested in the Middle Bronze Age I period." In the Iron Age "primary and secondary interments often occur in the same tomb chamber", and many of their features may have been borrowed from the Aegean world, where Mycenaean tombs have also been found with bone chests and rectangular ossuaries (Meyers Jewish 4-5). The custom of using ossuaries largely disappeared until its sudden re-appearance in the Herodian period where it became common among Jews in Jerusalem from about 40 BCE to 70 CE, though several groups of ossuaries have also been found in Jericho, as well as in Samaria, Galilee and the Jezreel valley (Meyers 20-21, 38, Hachlili 94). In the aftermath of the two wars between Jews and Rome the number of skilled artisans in Jerusalem was greatly reduced, if not eliminated, and this may have been a major factor in the gradual abandonment of the custom in the mid- to late-third century (Rahmani 21), though in the late Roman period ossuaries have also turned up in such Dias-

pora centers as Alexandria, Carthage and Spain (but what was once thought to be a 2nd century ossuary from Tarragon, Spain, may simply be a synagogue basin) (Meyers 37, Rahmani 25).

Thus, this find at East Talpiyot is not an unusual one by itself, as ossuaries were common in the first century and a total of 897 have been found in Israel and are kept in the warehouse of the Israel Antiquities Authority. What is unusual, firstly, is the good quality of the tomb, carved from the solid rock of the Jerusalem hills with good workmanship and attention to detail, clearly the resting place of affluent and important people (Jacobovici 5-15). And what is also unusual are the inscriptions on the ossuaries.

Of the 897 total ossuaries, 227 soft limestone ones and 6 hard limestone ones are inscribed with the names of the individuals within, two thirds of these inscriptions being in Hebrew/Aramaic and a third in Greek. Rahmani, who catalogued all ossuaries in the possession of the State of Israel, comments that "the seemingly high proportion of inscribed ossuaries is in many respects misleading since plain, uninscribed specimens were either discarded by the excavators or excluded from this catalogue" (Rahmani 11). The inscriptions, usually incised with a sharp point but sometimes drawn with charcoal, were generally hasty and crude, since they were done by the relatives of the dead or by professional tomb custodians rather than by the ossuary masons: "The name of the person was often inscribed on the outside, most frequently on the front of the receptacle but sometimes on one of the other sides or on the lid...In a minority of instances, but still not infrequently, other intentional marks appear on ossuaries. In addition, most ossuaries have assorted scratches and gouges incurred during manufacture, handling or the long stay in a tomb" (Smith Cross 53).

For the East Talpiyot find Amos Kloner, who finally published a report of the discovery in 1996 in the IAA journal Atiqot, was impressed by the fact that of the ten ossuaries six were inscribed "which is a higher ratio than normally found. Five ossuaries are inscribed in Hebrew and only one in Greek; normally the proportion of Hebrew to Greek is 4:3" (Kloner 16-17). What follows are these ten ossuaries, with the names inscribed on them; the information is derived from Kloner's original report as well as Rahmani's 1994 catalogue (first number is IAA number, second is catalogue number).

80-500 (701): "Of Mariamene, who is also called Mara" (in Greek); the ossuary inscription says Mariamenou which is the genitive form of Mariamene, rendered in a particular diminutive form understood to be an endearment, and one of the many variants of the name Mariam/Mariame. Kloner and Rahmani think "Mara, a contraction of Martha, is used here as a second name" but "Mara" could also be a feminine version of the Aramaic dominant

masculine form mar meaning "lord, master, honorable person". Ornamented with two six-petaled rosettes, zigzag frames and vertical rows of three discs.

80-501 (702): "Yehuda son of Yeshua"; bar (son of) is Aramaic, not Hebrew. Ornamented with two six-petalled rosettes and a zigzag frame.

80-502 (703): "Matya"; scratched inside the ossuary was "Mata". "Both are shortened forms of Matityahu = Matthew". Very plain; broken and reconstructed.

80-503 (704): "Yeshua son of Yehosef"; preceded by an X mark and additional mason marks including a star. "The first name, preceded by a large cross-mark, is difficult to read, as the incisions are clumsily carved and badly scratched...The reading Yeshua is corroborated by the inscription on No. 702 referring to `Yeshua, the father of Yehuda'". This ossuary, along with that of Mariamene, is the longest in size, possibly corresponding to taller than average persons.

80-504 (705): "Yose"; a contraction of Yehosef (Joseph), the second most common name in the Second Temple period. "The similarity of this ossuary and its inscription with that of Marya on No. 706, both from the same tomb, may indicate that these are the ossuaries of the parents of Yeshua (No. 704) and the grandparents of Yehuda (No. 702)." Plain; broken and reconstructed.

80-505 (706): "Marya"; a Hellenized form of Miriam or Mariam. Plain with no ornamentation;

very irregular height; broken and reconstructed.

80-506 (707): Ornamented facade; some illegible incisions on narrow side and a cross-mark on one whole side. Broken and reconstructed.

80-507 (708): Ornamented with two six-petalled rosettes and double zigzag frames.

Broken and reconstructed.

80-508 (709): Also ornamented. Broken and reconstructed.

80-509: Plain. (Later missing).

Over all, as Feuerverger summarizes: "The six inscriptions correspond to four distinct styles. That of Yeshua is unprofessional. The ossuaries of Marya, Yoseh, and Matya are executed in similar plain but neat hands. That of Mariamenou is executed in an `elegant' Greek hand. And finally, the ossuary of Yehuda appears rendered `professionally'." Based partially on the pottery sherds found and the style of the ossuaries, the archaeologists date the ossuaries to the "Second Temple period, i.e. from the end of the first century BCE or the beginning of the first century CE, until approximately

70 CE" (Kloner 17-21, Rahmani 222-224, Jacobovici 79, Feuerverger 6-11).

There is even more to this story: of these ten ossuaries, only nine ended up in the warehouse of the IAA and one (80-509) disappeared in transit without having been photographed but having been measured and catalogued. It so happens that in 2002 André Lemaire, a senior scholar working on West Semitic linguistics at Hebrew University, was invited to read the inscription on an ossuary owned by Oded Golan, a collector who claimed he had bought it from a dealer. The inscription read in Aramaic: "Ya`akov bar Yosef achui d'Yeshua" or in English "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus". The unusual grammatical form which literally reads "his brother, of Jesus" is attested in one of the Aramaic texts of the contemporary Dead Sea Scrolls and the use of achui rather than the standard Hebrew ach is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and on another ossuary (Shanks 11-16, 22n).

It does seem that the unusual second part "brother of Jesus" was added later than the first part as it is rougher and in a different script: this has caused a number of people to call the whole ossuary a forgery. Indeed, while it is normal in Jewish custom to give the father of an individual, it is highly unusual to find the name of a brother or son inscribed with the name of the individual interred. There is only one ossuary in the 897 ossuaries catalogued by Rahmani which includes the name of a brother: "understandably, the relationship was emphasized when the remains of brothers were deposited in the same ossuary". And only one mentions the name of a son (Rahmani 15). Feuerverger thinks "such rare mentions presumably occurred only when the other mentioned persons were individuals of particular distinction" (Feuerverger 12) and this could well be the case here for the James ossuary.

However, McCarter "speculates that `brother of Jesus' might have been added to the original inscription because in the subsequent years, other members of the same family bore the names `James son of Joseph' and it had become necessary to identify this James further" (Shanks 46-47).

Ironically enough, when the IAA changed its mind about the James ossuary and declared it a forgery on the basis of an oxygen isotope test, the only part that passed was the last letter in the word "Jesus": that would make the first part a forgery rather than the second part and that would make no sense whatsoever. Apparently the inscription had been cleaned which introduced modern molecular elements (Jac 54-55).

Shanks calculates that based on the population of first-century Jerusalem and the frequency of men's names, there were probably 20 men who were James, son of Joseph and brother of Jesus (Shanks 62-63) so just by itself there is 1 in 20 chance of this being the ossuary of James the brother of

the Jesus of the New testament and the Gospel of Thomas. But if this ossuary was indeed part of the East Talpiyot tomb, the odds rise astronomically.

Given all this, it is hard not to conclude that this James ossuary is indeed the missing tenth one from the Talpiyot tomb, probably stolen in transit to the IAA warehouse. The laboratory examination by the Geological Survey of the State of Israel of the patina on the ossuary with the use of a binocular scanning electron microscope found "no sign of the use of a modern tool or instrument" nor any "evidence that might detract from the authenticity of the patina and the inscription" and noted that the chalk limestone of the ossuary was exploited around Jerusalem during the first two centuries CE (Shanks 16-19). Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum subjected the inscription to a long-wave ultraviolet light examination and determined that there were no bits of foreign microscopic debris in the crevices of the inscription (Jacobovici 53).

The missing tenth ossuary was originally measured at 30 cm high and 60 cm in length; the James ossuary is 30.2 cm high and 56.5 cm in length, almost exactly the same, assuming that the original measurements were rounded off (Jacobovici 210). And chemical patina tests were conducted on both the James ossuary and the Talpiyot tomb ossuaries, with the conclusion being that "compared to other patina samples from ossuaries found in the Jerusalem environment, the Talpiyot tomb ossuaries exhibited a patina fingerprint or profile that matched the James ossuary and no other" (Jacobovici 188).

The Israeli archaeologists who made the original find have consistently been skeptical that these burials have anything to do with Jesus and insist that all the names were common enough names in the first century that finding them together in one tomb is a pure coincidence. Two studies have looked at the frequency of names in the period: Tal Ilan's exhaustive study of names from 330 BCE to 200 CE, with a total of 2509 male and 317 female names, and Rachel Hachlili's two studies more specifically of the Second Temple period, using a wide variety of sources and with a total of 1091 male and 192 female names for one, and a more focused study of the late period for the other. There is also Rahmani's compilation of 241 names on the ossuaries and a breakdown of 519 names on ossuaries described by Ilan. The most popular names were the following:

	330 BCE - 200 CE		**200 BCE - 100 CE**	**1st Ossuaries**	
		Male			
Shimon	257 (10.2%)	174 (16.0%)	21%	26 (10.8%)	62(11.9%)
Yehosef	231 (9.2%)	163 (15.0%)	14%	19 (7.8%)	45 (8.7%)
Yehudah	179 (7.1%)	121 (11.1%)	10%	18 (7.5%)	45 (8.7%)

Eleazar	177 (7.0%)	115 (10.6%)	10%	16 (6.6%)	30 (5.8%)
Yehohanan	128 (5.1%)	89 (8.2%)	10%	12 (5.0%)	26 (5.0%)
Yeshua	103 (4.1%)	83 (7.6%)	9%	10 (4.1%)	23 (4.4%)
Hananiah	85 (3.3%)	51 (4.7%)	3%	10 (4.1%)	19 (3.7%)
Yehonatan	75 (2.9%)	53 (4.9%)	6%	6 (2.4%)	14 (2.7%)
Mattathiah	63 (2.5%)	55 (5.1%)	5%	8 (3.3%)	17 (3.2%
Menahem	46 (1.8%)	33 (3.0%)	2%	0	4 (0.7%)
Ya'acov	45 (1.8%)	29 (2.7%)	2%	5 (2.0%)	7 (1.3%)

Female

Mariam	80 (25.2%)	44 (19.8%)	20
Salome	63 (19.8%)	56 (25.2%)	26 (inc. Shelamzion)
Shelamzion	25 (7.8%)	30 (17.5%)	
Martha	20 (6.3%)	18 (9.9%)	11

Thus Joseph constituted 9-15% of the names, Joshua/Jesus 4-9% and Jacob/James 2-3% (Ilan Lexicon 55-56, Hachlili Names 9-10, Jewish 200, Shanks 56). Indeed, six ossuaries have been found with the name "Jesus" on them and one was found in 1926 with "Jesus, son of Joseph", still on permanent display in the Israel Museum (Jacobovici 33). One could certainly argue that the names in the East Talpiyot tomb were so common in the Second Temple period that even finding a number of them together in one tomb would not be unlikely.

To settle this issue scientifically, we are in the fortunate position of having a professional statistical study by Andrey Feuerverger of exactly this question of the statistical odds of having all these names together in one tomb. Feuerverger assumes first of all that Mary and Joseph are indeed Jesus' parents, that his father is a different person from the Yose buried in one of the ossuaries and that the "Mariamene" in the tomb is Mary Magdalene (38). Assuming a population of approximately 132,200 Jerusalemites who died between 6-70 CE, at most 12% of the population had the literacy and affluence to be considered for ossuary burials. Thus a relevant population size of at most 4,370 males and 2,185 females could be buried in inscribed ossuaries (Feuerverger 24-25).

On the assumption that Jesus' family tomb has to be one of the 1,100 tombs in the Jerusalem area, Feuerverger uses various scenarios, including the addition of other members of Jesus' family known from the New Testament, to calculate the odds that this particular combination of names is random. His results range from .000181 to .0353, the worst-case scenario

(43-45), or .02%-3.5% probability. Stated another way, the range is 1 in 350 to 1 in 18,000 probability that the names in the East Talpiyot tomb are random. When the film-maker Cameron stated in 2007 that Feuerverger's model concluded that "there is only one chance in 600 that the Talpiot tomb is not the Jesus family tomb, if Mary Magdalene can be linked to Mariamene", Feuerverger agreed that he had authorized the number 600 to be used in the film. He did however qualify this by saying "I'm prepared to stand behind that but on the understanding that these numbers were calculated based on assumptions that I was asked to use" (64).

Feuerverger thus concludes that "our computations strongly suggest that the possibility that the Talpiyot tomb is that of the NT family merits serious consideration ...Among the various assumptions made, perhaps the one that most `drives' our analysis in the direction of `significance' is the extraordinary inscription Mariamenou e Mara...The mysteries concerning the identity of the woman known as Mary Magdalene...hold the key for the degree to which statistical analysis will ultimately play a substantive role in determining whether or not the burial cave at East Talpiyot happens to be that of the family of Jesus of Nazareth" (Feuerverger 50-52).

In the discussion following Feuerverger's article not a single reviewer agrees with his conclusions. Some disagree with his statistical methods, but others object to Feuerverger's historical assumptions. One major objection by C. Fuchs and others is to the inclusion of Mary Magdalene in calculating the statistical probability, Leaving her out of the calculation would reduce the odds ratio from Feuerverger's 0.994 to 0.487, much smaller odds (63). D. L. Bentley also criticizes the assumption that Mariamene and Mara had to be the same person (69). Another objection by Bentley is to the assumption that the tomb had to be in Jerusalem rather than in Galilee (68) and Ingermanson thinks it was unlikely that Jesus had a son or that Jesus and Mary Magdalene would be buried in the family tomb at all (86-87).

Höfling and Wasserman calculate the odds more expansively of finding any "interesting" assortment of names and by leaving out Matthew and Jesus' son Judas and by calculating Mary Magdalene separately got a 60% chance of the tomb belonging to Jesus' family under the most optimistic scenario (82). But as Feuerverger replies,"`interesting' will not be enough; there will be little opportunity for detection...unless the renditions which occur match more specifically to the NT individuals" (107).

All in all, though I have little expertise in evaluating statistical arguments, the criticisms seem to be aimed not so much against Feuerverger's statistical competence but against the historical assumptions he uses to set up his formulas. And here the resistance to his conclusions is based more on

the controversial nature of the implications rather than on the solidity of his argument. As Stephen Stigler says: "Is this resistance rational? Do questions like that confronted in Andrey Feuerverger's painstakingly honest study of an archeological find, questions involving broad public knowledge and wide publicity, require a different standard of proof than run-of-the-mill scientific questions?...That it may be greeted skeptically is no reflection upon him, only upon the nature of the question he considers" (55-56).

Jacobovici's calculations arrive at rather more astronomical odds than Feuerverger's. Assuming 1 in 79 males was called "Jesus, son of Joseph", 1 in 24 was called a Latinized Maria, 1 in 193 could be called "Mariamene also known as Mara" and multiplying all these numbers together, he arrives at the odds of finding these three individuals in the same tomb as 1 in 365,928. Assuming 14% of males as Joseph and adding in Yose would make the odds 1 in 2.5 million (Jacobovoci 77-78). Clearly this is a much simpler statistical calculation than Feuerverger's complex process using the Bayes formula and undoubtedly overstates the odds dramatically. But without resorting to the hyperbole of film-makers, there still seems to be solid grounds for considering the convergence of names in the same tomb, all of whom are known to be family members of the historical Jesus, as highly statistically significant. Much as both Christian and Jewish scholars are desperately trying to explain this find away, it cannot be simply dismissed.

Jacobovici and Pellegrino also strengthen their case by DNA tests conducted on bone fragments cocooned in the mineral concretions on the bottoms of the Jesus and Mariamne ossuaries. The mitochondrial DNA extracted from the samples showed that the two individuals were not related and since they came from the same familial tomb, "these two individuals, if they were unrelated, would most likely have been husband and wife" (Jacobovici 165-172). Now there is something that alone would make most Christians cringe at this discovery and not want to hear about it, not to speak of the fact that there is also an ossuary of Jesus' son Judas.

Some have therefore challenged the ossuary named "Mariamene" and have said that was not the name of Mary Magdalene who is called "Maria" in the New Testament. However, as Bovon shows, the Hebrew Miryam is regularly translated in the Septuagint as Mariam but is given in Josephus as Mariamme, since the only consonants Greek words can end in are n, r or s and thus an e is added to the m to make it sound less foreign. In the same way the New Testament Maria is also a Greek version of Miryam chosen to erase the impression of strangeness. In the Acts of Philip that same name which clearly refers to Mary Magdalene is given as Mariamne, which is quite close to the Mariamene on the ossuary inscription (Bovon 75-80). This is also the name she is called by Hippolytus in Refutation 5.2: "These are the

heads of very numerous discourses which the Naassenes assert that James the brother of the Lord handed down to Mariamne." Thus, it is clear that Mariamne or Mariamene was undoubtedly her name and it is also significant that the name as well as the letters it is written in is Greek, indeed the only name in the tomb which is Greek, another piece of evidence, perhaps, for her marrying into the family of Jesus rather than having been born into it.

There are several other factors that make this find unusual and noteworthy. First there is the uncommon form of Joseph, Yose which does appear in Mark 6:3 as one of the brothers of Jesus. But as noted above, Rahmani thinks that based on its similarity to the style of Marya's ossuary, the ossuary inscribed "Yose" actually contains Jesus' (step)-father and Judas' grandfather rather than Jesus' brother Yose. This would certainly make sense: as his mother is buried there, it is in keeping with Jewish burial practices that his father would be as well.

Secondly, there is the fact that a Matthew is buried in the Jesus family tomb, who, if he were really the "disciple" mentioned in the New Testament, would be the only non-family member in this tomb. And that would be truly highly unusual. However, the New Testament refers to a Levi son of Alphaeus who is equated to Matthew the tax collector; Alphaeus as well as Cleophas seem to be synonyms for Joseph. Therefore Matthew is a son of Joseph and a brother of Jesus and is rightly buried in the same family tomb. If we take this tomb evidence seriously, then the Gospel obfuscations around Matthew really do start making sense. And if someone had forged the inscriptions on this whole collection of ossuaries in order to prove the truth of Christianity, it is highly doubtful that they would added Matthew to the mix, since he is not even supposed to be Jesus' brother (though they could have gotten Yose from the New Testament).

Thirdly, Jesus' ossuary stands out among the ten in the tomb. Strangely enough, it is the plainest of all the ossuaries, and moreover it appeared to have been damaged and rejected by its own stone mason. The Jesus inscription itself cuts across several deep and seemingly unintentional, older scratches, indicating perhaps a reused ossuary (Jacobovici 109pict)! Was Jesus so humble as to insist on a plain ossuary for himself? Or is it a sign of his low standing in his family that his bones were buried in such a low-quality and cheap one?

Significantly, Rahmani points out that "while it is clear that only wealthy families would have been able to afford the costly varieties of ossuaries, the choice of cheaper types should not be regarded as a sign of comparative poverty or of parsimony. In the `Tomb of the Kings', belonging to the royal house of Adiabene, richly embellished sarcophagi were found together

with the much simpler sarcophagus of Queen Helene...Neither poverty nor parsimony could have prompted the family of Nicanor, one of the wealthiest in mid-first century CE Jerusalem, to purchase a simply incised ossuary...Ethical and religious considerations may have dictated the choice of a simple ossuary. The impulse to expend money on a burial in order to pacify the dead, assuage the mourners' feelings of guilt, or impress the living was frequently condemned in the first and second centuries CE" (Rahmani 11). But this still raises the question why other ossuaries are so much fancier than Jesus'.

In addition, there is an X as part of the inscription of his name. Obviously the cross is a later Christian symbol but is that what this X is? In his study on Jewish symbols in the Graeco-Roman period, Goodenough shows that the cross was a simple and universal symbol: "The simplest form was a rough crossing of lines. This could be elaborated into a rosette, it could become the magical `character' mark with circles on the end, or it could be made to whirl by turning its ends as a swastika. In an absolutely rudimentary symbol like this, one which emerges in almost every savage tribe and developed civilization alike, it is impossible to say what it `means' because it means so many things. It had the value that an object or person marked with it was indicated as holy, was made safe from danger of all sorts...In all these civilizations it marked animal, ossuary, or man as being something sacred and safe. Whether it had any connection with the cross which the Christian was to `take up' seems to me very dubious, for the symbol is essentially a mark, not an object to be carried or grasped" (Goodenough 7.178).

Thus in Judaism the cross is connected with the last letter of both the Hebrew and Aramaic alphabets, a Taf in Hebrew and a Tao in Aramaic, a name that literally means "mark". In Ezekiel 9:4 the Taf was a mark of righteousness and a protective symbol to mark those who should be spared (Jacobovici 196, Goodenough 7.178). This symbol appears in ancient Egypt as the ankh, a cross with a circle on top which was a symbol of the sun and of life and was even called a "mystical tau" in the 17th century; the ankh is also found inscribed on gravestones (Cramer 1, 7, 52). Rosettes, which are elaborated crosses, were omnipresent on Jewish ossuaries, including most of the ones in Jesus' family tomb. They were widespread in the entire Middle East and like the ankh originally represented heavenly bodies, usually the sun but also the moon and the stars. Later the rosette became a"free symbol, to be applied to any deity" and thus "for Jews, too, the rosette had come to symbolize their God and their hope" (Goodenough 7.180-182, 197)

Thus the assumption that crosses found on tombs in Israel indicate that the person was a "Christian" is simply wrong. The first to suggest that cross marks were symbols placed on ossuaries by early Christians was Charles

Clermont-Ganneau who in 1873 discovered a rock-cut chamber containing at least 30 ossuaries on the Mount of Olives. Ossuary #11 had the Hebrew names "Judah" and "Salome, wife of Judah" with a regular cross of branches of equal length on both the lid and the receptacle, which to Clermont-Ganneau indicated "the appearance of Christianity in the heart of an old Jewish family, with its burial vault at the very gates of Jerusalem". Smith, however, considers it far more likely that they are simply mason's marks, similar to others like it which Sukenik also recognized as such: "The two designs are so similar to one another and so distinctive from other ossuary marks that it is likely that the lid and the receptacle containing inscriptions 8 and 10 were originally part of one ossuary. The signs were probably intended to be matching marks, incised to show in which direction the lid should be positioned on the receptacle" (Smith Cross 55-56, 58, Sukenik 359-361)).

Ossuary #29 was inscribed with a cross with limbs of unequal length, the so-called Latin cross, which Clermont-Ganneau considered to belong "to a comparatively late period". Indeed, as Smith says, "the use of a cross of this form, incised in the manner in which it is, is otherwise without archaeological attestation in either Judaism or Christianity prior to A.D. 135, and indeed not until long after that time." Since the ossuary cannot date later than 135 CE, Smith thinks this particular ossuary may have been added to the group later. In all, he says: "The conclusion to which the evidence from these ossuaries leads is that the crudely incised cross marks and similar designs are not religious symbols" (Smith Cross 57).

Sukenik makes much of another tomb find near Talpiot made in 1945 with a inscription "Simon Barsaba" which he takes to refer to the Simon Barsabas in Acts 1:23 and with four crosses on an ossuary (#8) along with a Greek inscription which Sukenik translates as "Jesus woe" (Sukenik 357-358). To him this tomb, which he dates no later than the first half of the century CE, represents virtual proof of Jesus' crucifixion: "With regard to the crosses of our tomb, it would be unwise to insist that the cross had already become a venerated symbol of Christianity; these may be a pictorial expression of the event, tantamount to exclaiming `He was crucified.' My suggestion, therefore, is that the crosses and the graffiti on ossuaries nos. 7 and 8 represent a lamentation for the crucifixion of Jesus by some of His disciples...All our evidence indicates that we have in this tomb the earliest records of Christianity in existence. It may also have a bearing on the historicity of Jesus and the crucifixion" (Sukenik 365).

These are grandiose claims, and, as Willoughby says, "the discreet reader will at once realize that each one of these gigantic inferences merits challenge and critical examination of the most rigorous sort." Though Sukenik's dating is probably secure, "far more precarious is the author's identifica-

tion of the grotto as a Jewish-Christian family tomb. As patronymics, Barsaba and its cognates were not uncommon in Roman Palestine" (Willoughby 63). Sukenik himself admits that the inscription can also be read as "Jesus son of Jehu" - "the letters IOU on the inscription are the way with which the Septuagint usually transcribes the name Jehu, prophet or king of Israel" (Sukenik 363) - and Willoughby finds that "both of these normal translations of the inscriptions in question conform exactly to familiar Septuagint renderings of these names, and likewise to usual practice in ossuary inscriptions" (Willoughby 64).

With regard to the crosses, none of the other 13 ossuaries have crosses on them, except a small cross that may be a mason's mark on #10, though the decorated ossuaries have the same six-petalled rosettes and zigzag bands as the Jesus family tomb ones. And Smith, once again, shows it to be a mistaken assumption that the crosses were religious symbols: "The centres of each cross...prove to lie at almost exactly the horizontal mid-point of each surface. Furthermore, they prove to be at approximately the same heights on the surfaces, namely, a little above vertical mid-point...We may therefore conclude that the marks were intentionally centred in this manner. Now, it is somewhat unlikely that if these marks were intended as religious symbols they would, on the one hand, have been placed with such great precision and, on the other hand, have been executed so crudely...The simplest explanation is that they were placed there by the mason who cut the ossuary as a guide to the laying out of intended (but never executed) designs on the surface." (Smith 59-60). Or as Willoughby puts it, "in simplest terms they are intersecting lines in the form of plus signs (+) very carelessly rendered. Jesus was not crucified on a plus sign" (Willoughby 64). The same is true of the Dominus Flevit tombs on the Mount of Olives, excavated by the Franciscan Fathers: once again, crudely scratched cross marks which were interpreted as religious symbols are much more likely to be mason's marks for aligning lids and receptacles (Smith 60-64).

I do think Christian archaeologists and scholars are a little over-eager to find Jews embracing Christianity: as we have seen, the crosses themselves are either universal symbols, used by Jews as much as by anyone else, or they are simply crudely incised mason's marks. Nor do Christians have any monopoly on the so-called Latin cross, even when it is a religious symbol.

The Jewish nature of the symbols on Jesus' tomb is also seen in the eight-pointed star on his ossuary which the archeologist Kloner calls a "mason's mark" (Kloner 18). However, Goodenough shows that the star was just as common as the cross in Jewish art and was interchangeable with the rosette form. It appears most commonly with six points, the so-called Star of David, "but on one synagogue it is an eight-point star made of

two squares, enclosing a ten-point star". According to Scholem, the star had primarily magical purposes as a charm to drive away evil influences and it was certainly as a sign of protection that the medieval Cabbalists used it; the Christians too took it over as a magical charm (Goodenough 7.198-199). But once again, there is nothing inherently "Christian" about this symbol any more than there is about the cross, and finding a star and a cross on Jesus' ossuary may simply indicate standard funerary Jewish practices of the first century.

On the other hand, it is also noteworthy that of the ten ossuaries only Jesus' has the star and cross on it. The star has extensive symbolic associations in first century thought, but mainly with Messianic movements. In the Dead Sea Scrolls "the Star Prophecy is quoted three times in very important contexts in the Damascus Document, the War Scroll (especially 11-14) and in the collection of Messianic proof-texts known as the Messianic Testimonia... This `Star' denotes a very important Messianic ideology and symbolism. It is based on Numbers 24:17 that a `Star would rise from Jacob, a Sceptre to rule the world'" (Eisenman 253). This Star Prophecy was connected with the language of Daniel's "Son of Man coming on the clouds" which is also quoted by James, and is connected with the language of the Primal Adam, the Son of Man, the Perfect Adam and the Messiah (Eisenman 431-432). The Messianic symbolism of the Star persisted until Bar Kochba, the last Messianic figure to lead a revolt in 132-135 CE against the hated Romans, whose true name is not known but whose sobriquet means "son of a star" in Hebrew and Aramaic (Yadin 18).

Does this symbolism make Jesus a Messianic figure? As we have seen, John the Baptist and James were most likely regarded as Messianic figures before Jesus was, so this star may not necessarily have that meaning in this funerary context. There is of course another possibility, connected with the fact that Jesus' ossuary is not only plain and undecorated, which the ossuaries of his mother and his brother James are as well, but of inferior quality and maybe even reused to boot. It is in such bad shape that it broke when IAA employees were trying to move it into a semi-permanent crate lined with protective foam (Jac 161). We know how estranged Jesus was from his parents and probably from his brothers. He may well have broken contact with them and gone his own way in his life. They certainly would not have appreciated his rejection of Judaism and his "hippy" lifestyle. Is it possible that the star and the cross were put on his tomb in an ironic or sarcastic manner, to make fun of the fact that of his entire family it was Jesus who did not qualify for the Star Prophecy in Numbers and who was not holy and specially marked? This might be even more the case if the Christians had already appropriated the name of Jesus for their mythical god figure and his family wanted to tar

him with that association. This is wild speculation that may have no basis but it would fit the situation.

In sum, given the intrinsically Jewish context of the tomb burial, given the fact that ossuaries were only used during the first century, given the archeological dating from pottery sherds, and given the widespread use of the same symbols on contemporary Jewish ossuaries, there is no reason to reject out of hand the Talpiot find of Jesus' family tomb along with the separate James ossuary. The fact that an Israeli archeological team first investigated the tomb, closed it up again and only reported it later in a matter-of-fact professional way gives enormous assurance of its authenticity. I have read the 1996 article myself and see nothing sensationalistic about it. There is no doubt that Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino have drawn much media attention to it with their film and book, but that does not inherently detract from the tomb's genuineness.

Neither the Israeli authorities nor most Christian scholars find this to be a welcome discovery and tend to reject it for their own political and theological reasons: the Israelis because they are not interested in any more Christian pilgrim sites and veneration of Jesus and Christians because it contradicts the idea that Jesus had no brothers and no wife, that he was from a poor carpenter's family and that he is buried under the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; some of course reject the very idea that he left a body behind. Let us not even mention the huge amount of money flowing into the existing Christian tourist sites which may certainly be a factor as well and which could be jeopardized by a new and more accurate site. And there may even be overly sensitive types among Christians who will wonder whether they have been lied to for the last 1700 years and will refuse to go to any more pilgrimage sites at all. And where would Christianity be then?

Yet there is no good reason why Jesus, his wife Mary, his son Judas, his mother Maria, his step-father Joseph and his brothers James and Matthew should not be buried in a tomb near Jerusalem - and it makes perfect sense for sanitary reasons that it would not be in the city itself, contrary to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. They were certainly important people, Jerusalem was clearly their hometown and they could afford their own tomb. Consider that the first century population of Jerusalem was only 80,000 people, most of them too poor to afford their own rock-cut tombs. The number of people who could is fairly small, at most 12% of the population: why shouldn't Jesus's family be among them? The only people in Jesus' family who are missing are his brothers Thomas, Simon and Joseph: but notice that there are exactly three ossuaries with no inscriptions on them. That may indeed mean that they were once inscribed and the inscriptions have worn off: there is no way to prove this but it is suggestive.

To me, the most amazing thing about this tomb is that it corroborates some of what I have been able to decipher about Jesus' life from the Gospel of Thomas and other sources. As we have seen from the sayings bearing on Jesus' life, we can deduce that Jesus must be from Jerusalem and not Galilee, that his background must be an upper-class priestly one of a distinguished lineage, that Mary Magdalene must be his wife, that he therefore must have had children and that most of the "disciples" in the New Testament are really his brothers. All these deductions are supported by the ossuary finds and the picture of his life suddenly becomes less conjectural and more documented. If this tomb were authentic, it would certainly counteract the fact that the New Testament is largely a fabrication, and it would allow us not to have to take the conclusion of very skeptical scholars that even Jesus' existence is a fabrication.

Taking all outside information into account, I would like to summarize the main conclusions on what a possible life of Jesus might be. One must of course keep in mind that anything beyond the facts given in Thomas is purely speculative, but if the tomb evidence has any value then some of the speculations may have more basis.

Jesus was from an upper-class priestly family on both maternal and paternal sides. His mother Mary could have been of a high priestly lineage under the Maccabees and his step-father was either on the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court, or on the city council of Jerusalem, depending on how the word "council" should be interpreted.

Jesus' mother Mary was possibly raped by a professional Roman soldier Tiberius Julius Abdera Pantera during her engagement to Joseph (or Cleophas). She may have had twins as a result of this rape, Yeshua (Jesus) and Yehuda (Judas), later called Thomas or Twin. Most likely she left the twins with her cousin or sister Elizabeth and then returned to Joseph with whom she had four more sons, Yakov (James), Shimeon (Simon), Yosef (Joseph) and Matityahu (Matthew) and probably two daughters whose names we do not know.

There is no archeological or literary support for the existence of either Nazareth or Capernaum in the first century nor does the idea of Jesus' family living in Galilee square very well with their high priestly position. John the Baptist, Elizabeth's son with whom Jesus grew up, is traditionally associated with Ein Karem near Jerusalem and it is highly likely that Jesus indeed grew up in or near Jerusalem.

Being illegitimate, Jesus felt like an outcast in Jewish society, especially in his upper-class family, and consequently he rejected his own Jewish background. He also had great resentments against his mother and his

step-father whom he held responsible for his low state, and he resented his brothers who were given the privileges and attention he was denied. The only person in his family he felt truly close to on a life-long basis is Judas Thomas.

Jesus became a disciple or perhaps co-worker of John the Baptist when the latter began his movement of spiritual regeneration and purification and worked with him to spread his teachings. John's movement can be seen as a rebellious Messianic one though John did not proclaim himself as the Messiah. It is possible that the movement engaged in activism against animal sacrifices and that Jesus and others entered the Temple to drive out the sellers of animals and to stop the sacrifices. And it is possible that it is at that point that Jesus and others had to leave Jerusalem from fear of being arrested and move to Galilee, out of reach of the Temple authorities.

At some point in his life Jesus had a relationship with Salome, a teacher in her own right with her own following. His major romantic relationship was with Mary Magdalene, probably of Bethany near Jerusalem, whom he probably married and with whom he must have had children, at least one son named Judas if the family tomb is genuine. Mary became a well-respected teacher in her own right and aroused the envy and hostility of another disciple and probable brother of Jesus, Simon Peter.

It is most likely in Galilee that Jesus broke away from John the Baptist, probably over the latter's political and revolutionary activity which Jesus thought was less important than inner spiritual development. Jesus may have remained in Galilee or fled to safety in Syria as tensions in Palestine increased. It is during this period that Jesus deepened his own teachings and developed his own philosophy, a synthesis of classical and Jewish ideas with a strong mystical tendency.

It may well have been John the Baptist and not Jesus who was arrested by the Herodian authorities, turned over to the Romans and crucified under Pontius Pilate for Messianic aspirations and revolutionary activity. And it was John the Baptist who was hailed as a Messiah and continued to have a following who believed in him for many centuries.

Though Jesus had great respect for his brother James, he felt that their teachings and focus were fundamentally different. James assumed the mantle of legitimate High Priest and was a devout Jew who attempted to have Jews return to an original state of religious purity; it was James who was hailed as a Messianic figure and whose death precipitated a Messianic uprising against the Romans, not Jesus. Jesus, who had no ancestral claims to the High Priesthood due to his illegitimate status, rejected official Judaism with all its ritual practices and was not interested in building social institutions.

A conspiracy of Herodians, priestly authorities and Paul, with Roman connivance, succeeded in murdering James, whose Messianic authority, possible Maccabean or even Davidic heritage and hold on the people they feared. This murder in 62 CE most likely triggered the Jewish Revolt of 66-70 CE which was brutally suppressed by the Romans and led to the beginning of the 1800-year Jewish diaspora. The Nazorean movement, however, which James had led, continued to exist under the leadership of Jesus' next brother Simon and others of his family and their descendants, perhaps even Jesus' son Judas.

His twin brother Judas Thomas most likely moved to Edessa, the capital of the small kingdom of Osrhoene in what is now Syria, and spread Jesus' teachings there. It is possible that Judas and Jesus together wrote the Gospel of Thomas in Aramaic and that it was distributed from there throughout the Middle East and all the way to Egypt.

There is no evidence on Jesus' death in any sources and it does not seem likely that he was a Messianic figure and that the Gospel story of him dying on the cross under Pontius Pilate is true, especially since the dating of the Gospels doesn't work and since no early Christian sources mention it. He clearly did not intend to found a movement or institution of any kind as he tells the disciples twice that he is going to leave them. What then happened to him is a mystery. Perhaps he stayed in Edessa. Perhaps he went to Egypt and perhaps personally wrote the Coptic translation of the Gospel of Thomas that we have today. Perhaps he retreated to the mountains to meditate, as an Indian yogi would. Perhaps he went to India, as a number of fanciful books claim. But if the family tomb in Jerusalem is authentic, he was buried with the rest of his family and with his wife Mary in Jerusalem, so at the very least, wherever he died, his body was brought back to Jerusalem, his hometown.

Chapter 18:
The Story of the Crucifixion and John the Baptist

What all these contradictions in the central story of Christianity, the Passion narrative, point to, shockingly enough, is that there is no real history to Jesus' crucifixion: the whole story may simply be invented, at least with regard to Jesus! Moreover, we have good reason to suppose that it may have been John the Baptist who was crucified, not Jesus. And this points to a solution to all the contradictions that we have seen in the New Testament: the editors amalgamated several people in their composite portrait of Jesus. And there is good reason to think that these three people were the authentic historical figures Jesus, John the Baptist and James.

Let us look more closely at the source of the idea of crucifixion in the New Testament. And as we have seen that over and over again the New Testament takes sayings of Jesus and constructs narratives around them, so it is quite likely that the original idea of crucifixion is taken from Saying 55 of the Gospel of Thomas.

Saying 55 has the following phrase: "He who will not carry his cross in my way will not become worth as much as I." This is the only use of the word in all of Thomas, and significantly in Q as well: as Davies says, "in the ancient sayings list that scholars call Q...the only time a cross is mentioned is in this very same saying" (Davies 72). So this is clearly an important citation which may have much bearing on the whole New Testament story. Yet in many ways it does not seem to fit because Thomas has no Passion or crucifixion story, and in fact no narrative at all. Is Jesus speaking of his crucifixion here?

Christian theologians of course say "Yes". Grant sees it as a possible reference to Jesus carrying his own cross as in John 19:17 (Grant 159) and Valantasis says the phrase "raises the possibility that at least this saying may be aware of the tradition of Jesus' crucifixion: am awareness not found anywhere else in the text" (Val 132). DeConick goes even further and says: "The general opinion expressed by the majority of scholars that Thomas is not interested in Jesus' death is without merit. The presence of this saying in the Kernel Gospel suggests that even the earliest Thomasine community knew of Jesus' crucifixion and believed its imitation necessary for their salvation"

(DeC 189). There is no doubt about the real practice of crucifixion among the Romans (earlier employed by Scythians, Assyrians, Persians, Phoenicians and Carthaginians), which was inflicted in particular on slaves, violent criminals and foreign rebels against the state. Officially it could not be imposed on Roman citizens, though exceptions were made for cases of treason. Originally it was used only as a means of punishment and only for slaves convicted of certain crimes and did not result in death. Only in the first century BCE did it evolve into a method of execution (Tzaferis 48). It was one of the most humiliating and excruciating punishments ever devised by humans, because it also included public abuse and running the gauntlet beforehand as well as the condemned having to carry the horizontal beam of his own cross to the place of execution.

The forms of crucifixion varied according to the level of caprice and sadism of the executioner, with the victim sometimes even being upside down, and it was the rule to nail the victim by both hands and feet, while binding only with bonds remained the exception (Hengel 25, 31-32). A small seat and foot support were often added to increase the agony by keeping the victim alive for an extended period of time (Tzaferis 49). In all countries but Judea "victims would be left on the cross during the night, and it might take up to three days for them to expire," usually of suffocation, starvation and dehydration rather than the direct effects of the hanging itself. In Judaea, however, because of Mosaic laws against leaving a body up after sundown, the legs were normally broken to hasten death (Ian Wilson 126-130, Theissen 456).

Though we know from literary sources that tens of thousands of people were crucified in the Roman Empire, only one victim has so far been uncovered archaeologically, and that was by Vassilios Tzaferis in 1968 in some tombs northeast of Jerusalem in an area called Giv`at ha-Mivtar. The tomb, containing 8 ossuaries and the bones of 17 different people from two generations, was of a distinguished family, for on the side of one of the ossuaries was inscribed "Simon, builder of the Temple", probably a master mason or engineer who participated in Herod's lavish rebuilding of the Temple, and another said "Yehonathan the potter".

A third son "Yehohanan, the son of Hagakol", however, had been crucified between the ages of 24-28, probably for anti-Roman activities, for two heel bones held together by a 7" nail were found in his ossuary, so tightly nailed together that both his feet had to be amputated in order to bury them (Tzaferis 47, 52-53, Haas 58-59). As lamps, pottery and pots found in the tomb clearly date from the late Hellenistic and Herodian period and as "the general situation during the revolt of A.D. 70 excludes the possibility of burial", Tzaferis thinks "the present instance was either of a rebel put to

death at the time of the census revolt in A.D. 7 or the victim of some occasional crucifixion (Tzaferis Jewish 20-26, 31).

There has been a good bit of discussion among archaeologists as to the exact position of his body on the cross. Tzaferis, bolstered by an anatomical analysis by N. Haas, concluded that the man's arms were nailed to the horizontal beam just above the wrists, his legs were bent to the side resting on a sedile, a small seat, and his two feet were nailed to the vertical beam with one nail. Then his legs were broken in order to hasten his death and to allow his family to bury him before nightfall in accordance with Jewish custom (Tzaferis 52-53). Zias and Sekeles, however, argue from their analysis of the skeleton that his arms were most likely bound in order to save scarce wood and that his feet were nailed separately on either side of the vertical beam (Zias 26-27) and Yadin even thinks the man may have been crucified upside down (Yadin 21-22). However that may be, it is clear that the man had experienced much suffering in his life even prior to crucifixion: a palatal cleft and other facial asymmetries, probably due to stress or malnutrition during his mother's pregnancy, the death of 5 children in his family before the age of 7, one of starvation, the death of another woman struck on the head by a mace and ultimately the fact that only 2 in his family of 17 lived to be more than 50 (Haas 54-55, Tzaferis 47).

Despite this widespread misery inflicted on its victims and its frequent abuse, especially toward slaves, hardly anyone in the Roman cultured classes spoke out against it. This is not because they did not know its cruelty: "It is certainly the case that the Roman world was largely unanimous that crucifixion was a horrific, disgusting business" (Hengel 37). Hengel says: "The evidence from Seneca and elsewhere also shows that even where crucifixion is only used as a simile or metaphor, its gruesome reality could very well be before the eyes of the writer...People were only too well aware of the particular cruelty of this form of punishment - at one point (In Verrem II.5.162) Cicero succinctly calls it `that plague'; however, it is almost impossible to find a protest against its use in principle. Cicero twice protested against the crucifixion of Roman citizens...but he was concerned with quite specific individual instances...And while the Stoic Seneca ascribes the abomination of crucifixion and other tortures to the worst of all passions, anger, he takes it for granted that criminals have to be executed in this way" (Hengel 32, 36-37). To a large extent the upper classes didn't care because they were living off slave labor themselves and because crucifixion was almost always inflicted only on the lower class: "Crucifixion was widespread and frequent, above all in Roman times, but the cultured literary world wanted to have nothing to do with it, and as a rule kept quiet about it" (Hengel 38).

This mental schizophrenia on the part of the educated classes of

Rome might perhaps explain why there is no contemporary mention of Jesus' crucifixion, assuming he really was crucified. But was he or is the expression in Saying 55 a metaphor? First of all, throughout Thomas the assumption is that the disciples are speaking to a living Jesus, standing in front of them in the physical flesh. And there are topical references to his brother James and to John the Baptist being alive, references which dates the gospel quite early, certainly before Jesus' own death. So unless Saying 55 was added much later, after his actual death, it makes no sense for him to refer to his own death that has not happened yet. And even if it was added later once his death became known, putting such a reference in his mouth given the context of the other sayings would be quite awkward for any editor.

Secondly, one finds that the cruel punishment made such a strong impression on the contemporary world that it became a part of metaphorical speech, from Plato through the first century. If one looks at the common use of the phrase "carrying one's cross", it was used with three meanings, all metaphorical: "Crux could be used as an expression for the utmost torment, even including the pains of love, and sometimes it is difficult to decide whether there is a real reference to the instrument of execution or the death penalty, or whether the language is merely metaphorical" (Hengel 66). This is precisely what we will need to decide about the saying in Saying 55.

One meaning was as a "common figure of speech for bearing up under burdens or difficulties", as Barnstone says (Barnstone 57n). Cameron says "the image seems to have been proverbial, a traditional symbol for suffering and sacrifice" (Cameron Myths 247). This is how Epictetus uses "crucified", as a metaphor for trouble coming one's way, and the First Book of Jeu also uses it to mean trial and tribulation (see Texts). Socrates was the favorite example of a man who knew when to die and accepted death with equanimity and "for Cynic or Stoic philosophers of the time, following a teacher in suffering and death was an extremely important idea," metaphorically at least if not literally (Seeley Jesus 542). Seeley says ultimately Jesus came to be remembered as a martyr because people were convinced he had lived his life as a philosopher. Not for nothing do we use the word "stoic" today to mean someone who is seemingly indifferent to pain, or pleasure for that matter.

The second meaning was simply as a metaphor for discipleship, with an implication of hard work and sacrifice entailed in that choice, and here the original meaning of stauros as a pole or stake may be much more primary than the later one of a cross. The Manichean Psalm-Book, the Liber Gradum and the Codex Brucianus use "crucified" in this much milder sense to mean becoming a disciple, almost in the sense of taking up a wanderer's staff. Not one of these texts means any kind of literal crucifixion by it and they certainly are not referring to Jesus' crucifixion.

But the third meaning was more philosophical and had to do with the overcoming of desires, as Hengel shows: "Seneca compares desires with `crosses into which each one of you drives his own nails'...The following sentence... could fit into a Cynic sermon: they are torn apart by as many desires as crosses. Cicero attacks the basic Stoic thesis that pain is not really an evil... His terse counterargument runs: anyone who is put on a cross cannot be happy...Like Seneca, Philo uses the image of crucifixion on several occasions to describe the enslavement of man to his body and the desires which dominate it: souls `hang on unsouled matter in the same way as those who are crucified are nailed to transitory wood until their death'. The common starting point for these passages is Plato's remark in the Phaedo (83cd) that every soul is fastened to the body by desire as though by a nail" (Hengel 67).

So which of these meanings are contained in Jesus' admonition to his disciples to "carry his cross in my way"? That could well be all three. Even though "the metaphorical terminology is limited to the Latin sphere, whereas in the Greek world the cross is never...used in a metaphorical sense" (but crucifixion itself is just as prevalent), from the evidence of Thomas Jesus appears to be well-acquainted with the Latin as well as the Greek authors and must have known the terminology, certainly from Philo if nowhere else (Hengel 68). Jesus may well be drawing on the Cynic tradition for his stand. Mack says that although the sayings in sayings 55 and 101 about hating one's parents and bearing the cross were "extreme cases of having one's mettle tested, thus reflecting a time of distress for the Jesus people, none was unusual for the Cynic tradition on which the Jesus movement drew. All occur in the Cynic tradition as examples of testing personal integrity...the cross had become a metaphor for the ultimate test of a philosopher's integrity" (Mack Lost 138-9). The reason is that "if one could properly face physical suffering and even death, then one was a true philosopher" (Seeley Jesus Phil 541).

We can now see why Jesus makes carrying one's cross such an important prerequisite for being worthy of him and for being his disciple. "To be like Jesus thus specifies what it means to carry the cross: to imitate the exemplary activity of Jesus by putting one's convictions into practice as Jesus did" (Cameron Myths 248). It is a symbol for someone who is willing to endure suffering and even death for the sake of being a true seeker, someone who has the endurance and tenacity to see the spiritual journey through to the end even when it becomes intolerably difficult, someone who aspires to be a true philosopher like Socrates. The cross also symbolizes a

person who is an outcast in society, not a common criminal but a rebel and a maverick who may take abuse and rejection from society for being the dis-

ciple of a misfit such as Jesus. And finally, the cross symbolizes the mortification of the flesh and leaving behind the body for the sake of true spirit: as Amundsen says, "to be a person of Spirit is to become a `criminal' or renegade to the world of materiality" (Amundsen 136). These are, I think, some of the implications of what Jesus means when he says "carry your cross" - and all are metaphorical, none have anything to do with a real crucifixion.

Amazingly enough, there is no evidence that the story of the crucifixion of Jesus under Pontius Pilate was even part of the original traditions about Jesus. As Seeley says, "the Sayings Gospel Q is notable for lacking an account of Jesus' death. It is surprising that one early Christian document is apparently so indifferent to an event which plays a profound role in others (e.g. Romans, Mark)" (Seeley Jesus 222). There is also an astounding lack of reference to the life, death and teachings of Jesus in the canonical post-Pauline writings which are very early Christian writings and should know about him. The Pastoral epistles fail to appeal to the words of Jesus and 1 Peter says nothing about the earthly Jesus. The document seems not even to know of a tradition which made Pilate responsible for Jesus' death, as the author urges submission "to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong" (2:13-14). Indeed, of the post-Pauline epistles only the four latest (Ignatius, the Pastorals, 2 Peter and Polycarp) mention Pilate or show knowledge of some of the four canonical gospels. Nor do the epistles ascribed to John seem to show any knowledge of the historical situation in which the gospel depicts Jesus, nor of the biographical details of his life recorded there, but teach Jesus as a purely theological figure. As well, the epistle of James does not point to Jesus as an example but rather to the Old Testament prophets. Of course, Paul himself says very little about the historical Jesus (Wells Did 45-52).

The very orthodox Church theologian Irenaeus (130-200 CE) himself denies the historicity of Jesus' crucifixion. In his major work Against Heresies 2.22 he rejects the idea that Jesus only preached for one year and died at the age of 30 and spends much space proving that Jesus in reality lived to a ripe old age: "Now, that the first stage of life embraces thirty years, and that this stage extends onwards to the fortieth year everyone will admit, but from the fortieth and fiftieth year a man begins to decline towards old age, which our Lord possessed while he fulfilled the office of a Teacher, even as the Gospels and all the elders testify; those who were conversant in Asia with John, the disciple of the Lord, affirming that John conveyed to them that information. And he remained among them up to the times of Trajan" (2.22.5). Then Irenaeus goes on to quote John 7:56 where the Jews said to Jesus "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham" to support his argument. Nowhere in this entire chapter does Irenaeus mention a crucifixion and

Pontius Pilate; when he refers to Jesus' death he says only that "he suffered". The sentence "he remained among them up to the times of Trajan" (98-117 CE) is ambiguous. Is Irenaeus saying Jesus lived until at least 98 C.E.?

Supporting this lack of reference to the crucifixion in written sources is its equally noticeable absence in Christian art. Graydon Snyder finds many symbols in his study of Christian art before Constantine: the anchor, the boat, the fish, the orante, the boat, the olive branch, the good shepherd, the lamb, the palm or tree, the bread, wine, the vine and grapes, the wonder worker, and Mary (Snyder 27-58). But there is one symbol that today we consider to be the pre-eminent Christian symbol of them all that he does not find in early Christian art: the cross. Snyder says: "The sign of the cross has been a symbol of great antiquity, present in nearly every known culture... The universal use of the sign of the cross makes more poignant the striking lack of crosses in early Christian art scenes, especially any specific reference to the event on Golgotha. Why was the universal cross symbol not redefined in early Christian art? The cross symbol, as an artistic reference to the passion event, cannot be found prior to the time of Constantine...The first clear crucifixions, i.e. Jesus on a cross, are known to us from the fifth century (the wooden door of S. Sabina in Rome and the ivory casket now in the British Museum). Even in these two instances the nude Jesus is not dying or suffering. His eyes are wide open. He is conquering the cross... Among the symbols classified in this chapter, none signifies suffering, death, or self-immolation. All the early symbols stress victory, peace, and security in the face of adversity...There is no place in the third century for a crucified Christ, or a symbol of divine death" (Snyder 60-64).

I find this to be amazing information that all Christian scholars should take heed of and it supports what we have learned from the Gospel of Thomas. Let me reiterate: there is no tradition in early Christianity of Jesus' crucifixion under Pontius Pilate. The entire story is a later fabrication. And if that critical and essential part of the New Testament is invented, then what in the New Testament is not?

Notice what we have just established:

1. the phrase "carrying one's cross" was always used in a metaphorical sense and was a favorite philosophical image for the willingness to face life's burdens and even death with equanimity;

2. nowhere in Q, which is considered by all scholars to be the most historical record of the authentic Jesus, are there any other references to Jesus' crucifixion or even to the cross;

3. nowhere in the historical record is there any reliable document about Jesus' crucifixion, and there are some grave dating problems in the New Testament given the discrepancies between the reign of Pontius Pilate (26-36 C.E.), the true death date for John the Baptist (35/36 C.E.) and the starting date for Jesus' ministry which the New Testament says came after John the Baptist's death;

4. the crucifixion of Jesus was not a part of the earliest Christian traditions in canonical post-Pauline writings or in the early Church Fathers;

5. nor does the crucifixion appear at all in Christian art before the 4th century;

6. and we have seen over and over again how the New Testament takes sayings from Thomas and constructs entire plot narratives around them.

Is it thinkable and possible that the entire crucifixion story of Jesus in the New Testament was invented for political and theological reasons and that it is solely based on this one reference in Saying 55 which was then expanded into a full-sized narrative?

Christian scholars have great difficulty with the fact that Jesus' crucifixion does not seem to be attested in any early historical tradition nor in Q, and must make increasingly untenable assumptions to uphold that belief. As Seeley, for example, says in his discussion of Q 14.27 which includes Saying 55: "Jesus's death is not explicitly referred to in 14.27. This verse nonetheless has two important features....The first is that Jesus himself is explicitly at issue...The second feature is that stauros is mentioned. The term could hardly be cited without calling to mind Jesus' death. However uninterested members of the Q community (or communities) may have been in Jesus' death, it is difficult to believe they were unaware he had suffered crucifixion" (Seeley "Jesus' Death" 225-226).

Notice the logic here:

Q does not refer to Jesus' death.

Q does refer to the cross.

The cross is associated with Jesus' death much later than Q.

Therefore Q must associate the cross with Jesus' death.

This is truly faulty logic. By any rules of logic this should be called the fallacy of begging the question, assuming the truth of what one seeks to prove (see Copi 151). A closer examination would show precisely the oppo-

site: the cross was clearly not associated with Jesus' death in Q. It might mean that there is no way we can say with any historical certainty that Jesus, or at least this particular Jesus the spiritual teacher of Thomas, died on the cross, and there is a very good chance the whole story was simply invented - or, what is even more likely, that the New Testament amalgamated two stories here, as there is a strong possibility that it was John the Baptist who was crucified.

Close analysis shows that the New Testament does not appear to be telling the truth about John the Baptist's death. As Kraemer says: "While both the Gospel narratives and Josephus' account appear relatively straightforward, there are serious, long-noted discrepancies between Josephus, on the one hand, and the Gospels, on the other, as well as striking if subtle differences between Mark and Matthew. Further, and less well noted, aspects of Josephus' narrative are egregiously and perhaps irresolvably at odds with claims he makes elsewhere about Herod Antipas and his wife, Herodias" (Kraemer 321).

The story in Matthew 14:3-12 and Mark 6:17-29 is that Herodias' daughter Salome (only called by name in Josephus who in turn does not cite this dancing story) danced before Herod and conspired with her mother, who resented John's criticism of her marriage which required the repudiation of the former wife, the daughter of Aretas, to get a reluctant Herod to behead John and give her his head on a platter. The details in Josephus, however, show that Salome must have been a toddler around this time since Herodias left her first husband Herod, the son of Herod the Great, shortly after the birth of Salome, and that does not agree with the Gospel story. Josephus also contradicts himself as he says that Salome married Philip before he died in 33 C.E. and was subsequently married to Aristobulus in the early 50's to whom she bore three sons. This does not square with her birth to Herodias and Antipas shortly before their marriage in 34 C.E.

If the latter is true, then Salome could not have had anything to do with the death of John; if the former is true, she was too young to have had a role. If we add the fact that a respectable princess would not have danced in public before strange men anyway, this whole scene has so many discrepancies that it clearly cannot be historical. Kraemer for one simply gives up trying to reconcile the sources: "It might be wiser to regard the reports in Josephus and the Gospels as separate narratives that cannot and should not be amalgamated" (Kraemer 330-333, 340). Some scholars, such as Saulnier, try hard to save the Gospel dating by moving the marriage of Antipas and Herodias into the 20's, 23 at the latest, which allows John the Baptist to be executed in 27 or 28 and Jesus a year later (Saulnier 375-376), but this raises other dating problems, such as that Salome would have been too old to have three

sons with Aristobulus. The most reasonable conclusion is that the whole Salome story is simply concocted by the Gospels for ideological reasons and that Josephus too, who is not always very clear with his chronologies due to his tendency to combine stories thematically rather than chronologically, has his own political reasons for stretching the truth.

In the narrative frame of the story of John's death Antipas, when hearing about the miraculous doings of Jesus, worries that "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised" (Mark 6:16). Thus Kraemer convincingly suggests that the purpose of this entire fabricated story is to dispute the idea that Jesus is secondary to John: "These narratives...are fashioned to refute... the possibility that Jesus is John raised from the dead by telling a narrative in which the body of John is desecrated in a manner that makes it impossible to resurrect it, at least physically, by severing the head from the body, and by leaving the head with Herodias while burying the corpse" (Kraemer 341).

The Gospels could have also gotten the beheading story from two other passages in Josephus. Josephus says in Antiquities 18.136 that Emperor Tiberius had ordered Vitellius who was marching imperial troops against Aretas that the latter should either be brought back in chains or that his head should be sent to Tiberius. And in 20.97-98 there is a story of a certain imposter named Theudas between 44-46 C.E. who claimed to be a prophet "and persuaded the majority of the masses to take up their possessions and to follow him to the Jordan River." The procurator Fadus sent a squadron of cavalry against him: "Theudas himself was captured, whereupon they cut off his head and brought it to Jerusalem." Could the Gospels be mixing several stories from Josephus here?

Thus, the Gospel story brilliantly serves many purposes at once. By taking the blame from the king, a Roman puppet, and placing it on his wife and daughter, who were of Jewish descent, it neatly accomplishes four political agendas basic to the New Testament: the superiority of Jesus over John, the fear of women and the association of women with evil, the exculpation of the Romans and the placing of all blame on the Jews. By mixing in the Theudas story it is insinuated that John is just as much of an imposter as he is.

The dating of John's death thus raises serious issues about the historical accuracy of the Gospel accounts. According to the Gospels (Mt 4:12 and Mk 1:14), it is not until John was arrested by order of King Herod Antipas that Jesus started his own ministry, but this dating is at odds with Josephus' account in his Antiquities 18.116-19. Here Josephus says that John the Baptist was still alive when Philip died in 33 C.E. for he predicted a similar death for Herod Antipas; also Herod Antipas was deposed and banished by Tiberius

before the latter's death on March 16, 37 (Eisler 290-291). John was put to death right before Herod Antipas was defeated by the Nabataean king Aretas, who was retaliating for Antipas' rejection of his wife, Aretas' daughter, in order to marry Herodias, the widow of Philip the Tetrarch, and to annex Philip's lands. This defeat was seen by some Jews as a divine response to John's death.

Antipas was well aware of the revolt by a Samaritan messianic prophet and connected it with John whom he feared would lead an armed uprising as well. This same revolt then caused Pontius Pilate's downfall, as he attacked a large number of Samaritans trying to climb their sacred mountain at the encouragement of their prophet and crucified a number of their leaders, in a manner reminiscent of the story of Jesus in the Gospels. The Samaritans complained to Vitellius, governor of Syria, which resulted in the recall of Pilate to Rome. On the way to Rome Tiberius died but Pontius Pilate's term was over, to the great relief of the Jewish population (Eisenman 62, 495, Kraemer 327, Grant Jews 111-112). All this occurred in the year 36 CE, thus putting John's death in 35-36 CE.

These dating discrepancies have serious implications: notice that depending on exactly when John was arrested, this gives very little time for Jesus' ministry in order for him to be crucified under Pontius Pilate. The Gospels give the impression that Jesus' ministry lasted only a year, probably because they are aware of these dating issues, but they also contradict themselves and have the length of ministry being 2, 3 or 4 years. Clearly the New Testament story of Jesus being crucified under Pilate conflicts with the idea that Jesus started his ministry after John's arrest and only taught for a year: one or both of these is wrong.

It is of course possible that John outlived Jesus, which would have to be the case if Christian theologians insist on their traditional death date of 30 CE for Jesus. This would, however, blatantly contradict Matt 14:12 where John's disciples buried his body "and they went and told Jesus". Or one could argue, as Sanders does, that Josephus' order of events is not chronological, that there is no intrinsic connection between his death and Aretas' invasion and that John's death could have occurred much earlier (Sanders Historical 286-288). But it is of course the Gospels who connect Antipas' and Herodias marriage, the repudiation of Aretas' daughter and Aretas' invasion and John's criticism, so once again they would have to be wrong. It is difficult to save this chronology, no matter how you twist and turn it.

Even if Jesus' ministry was only one year, if he started right after John's arrest, if John was kept in prison for a year and if Jesus died at the very end of Pontius Pilate's term, this contradicts the Church Fathers who

placed the Crucifixion in the 15th year of Tiberius which would be 29 CE. This was done to make him 30 at his death in order to establish an analogy between Jesus and King David who is said in 2 Samuel 4 to have begun his reign at the same age. These dates are clearly artificial and ideological. In addition, if Jesus died in 35 C.E. this brings him, as Eisler says, "much too close to Paul, whose conversion on the road to Damascus must have happened in one of the years between 28 and 35, the earlier date being preferable for various reasons" (Eisler 295). And if Jesus supposedly died on the 15th day of the lunar cycle on a spring solstice (Passover) which fell on a Friday, the only such date is in 18 CE (Eisler 296). Thus, the dating of John's death which can be fixed precisely has a major impact on the believability of the New Testament which is once again shown to be largely fabricated.

What is particularly interesting, however, about John's death is that it is clearly John and not Jesus who died during the term of the governorship of Pontius Pilate. We have just seen that the story of the beheading of John is fictional, but how did he die then? Supposedly John was put to death in the fortress of Machaerus on the east side of the Dead Sea, but Josephus contradicts himself as to who even controlled this fortress: in Ant. 18.119 he says it was Herod Antipas, but in 18.112 he says it was Aretas, in which case John could not have died there. Something is not right with this story of John's death in Josephus and something is equally not right with the story of Jesus' death in the Gospels.

Now, there is clearly a story of a crucifixion under Pontius Pilate in the Gospels: such stories are hard to invent yet the dating is wrong for Jesus. That leaves one other possibility to resolve the discrepancies. Is it possible that it is John who was crucified and not Jesus? Is it possible that it was the Romans under Pontius Pilate who arrested John somewhere in Judea or even in Jerusalem, connected him with the Samaritan revolt, held his Messianic preaching as a threat to the government of Rome, and thus crucified him? Or, if Antipas arrested him, is it possible that he turned him over to the Romans rather than stirring up his population against him by being the one to do the killing?

And is it also possible, as Eisenman suggests, that Paul collaborated with Antipas, perhaps even in the persecution of John, as after a long self-justification in 2 Corinthians 11:32-33 he lets slip that he is in a hostile relationship with King Aretas, thus presumably on Antipas' side (Eisenman 654-655)? And are both Josephus and the Gospels at pains to conceal these facts in order to exculpate the Herodians, the Romans as well as possibly Paul? And did the Gospels then cleverly assign this story to Jesus, who was not a revolutionary and did not give the Romans cause to crucify him, in order to draw in John's followers?

One clue that this is the case is in the Gospel story of Jesus before Pilate. In Mark 15:1-14 Pontius Pilate immediately asks Jesus "Are you the king of the Jews?" even though no such phrase has been used by Jesus' accusers and no Jew would have used this accusation anyway nor have they even used the indigenous term "king of Israel". Only when Jesus is on the cross is he even taunted with that label (Mt 27:42, Mk 15:32) and only in Luke 23:2 do Jesus' accusers so much as mention kingship. Pierson Parker concludes from this that "when Pilate, on confronting Jesus, pounces at once on the charge of kingship, it has to be because somebody has coached him beforehand", and that somebody is Herod Antipas who is consistently mentioned as collaborating with Pilate. Luke shows the sequence of Antipas' attitude to Jesus: in 13:31 he wants to kill him, in 23:8-9 Jesus has a hearing with Antipas who questions him at length and in 23:11 it is Antipas who "arrayed him (Jesus) in gorgeous apparel and sent him back to Pilate", suggesting that Antipas saw Jesus as a political rival (Parker 200-206).

What is particularly interesting about this story for our understanding of John's death is the parallel between the story of the plot against John and the plot against Jesus. As Parker shows, in Josephus (Antiquities 18.5.2) the story is that "Herod Antipas feared that John would stir up the populace, and that this might start an insurrection and bring down on him the wrath of higher authorities. To avoid this, Herod Antipas concluded it was necessary to put John to death." The parallel passage in John 11:46-53 can be summarized as: "The Sanhedrin feared that Jesus would stir up the populace, and that this might start an insurrection and bring down on them the wrath of Rome. To avoid this, the Sanhedrin concluded, it was necessary to have Jesus put to death" (Parker 204). So the real story of John's death is ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels!

In addition, one could certainly argue that the New Testament, in creating its fictionalized story of Jesus, borrowed much from John's life and teaching. It is remarkable that the New Testament, which tries so hard to downplay John, also feels compelled to spend so much time on him and that the Gospels draw so many parallels between John and Jesus. Luke 1-3 not only alternates the birth stories of John and Jesus but essentially uses the same messianic and supernatural language and imagery for both and gives both Zechariah and Mary a similar exalted prophetic speech about the future greatness of their sons. Rather than Jesus being the Messiah and John being the forerunner, the truth may actually ironically be the reverse: John made prophetic and perhaps even Messianic claims for himself whereas Jesus did not, as Saying 52 of the Gospel of Thomas very clearly shows. As a consequence, John had a large following after his death which acclaimed him as the Messiah, whereas Jesus was remembered for his striking sayings and wisdom

teachings. When the New Testament came to be written,
the only way for the writers to claim Jesus as the Messiah was to mix his story up with John's, as well as with James', and to try in this way to appeal to John's followers.

The New Testament takes great pains to minimize the role of John the Baptist in Jesus' life and is quite uncomfortable with his existence. There are constant attempts to deemphasize his importance and to turn him into a mere forerunner of Jesus, and his role in the political upheavals of the day is entirely suppressed. Instead the Synoptics turn him into a grim prophet of apocalyptic doom, a picture which is entirely at odds with his portrayal in Josephus. Josephus shows John as emphasizing virtue, righteousness and piety but says nothing about eschatology. The apocalyptic passages must have been added later to an original text, for as Cameron shows, the characterizations of Jesus and John in the Gospels are based on patterns of chreia elaborations: "Our analysis has demonstrated that the conceptual concerns sustaining this entire pericope are clearly governed by a wisdom way of viewing the world, not an apocalyptic vision" (Cameron Character 62).

Mason concludes from his comparison of the Synoptics that the New Testament is suppressing three basic facts about John the Baptist: "a) John the Baptist's proclamation was a self-contained apocalyptic message, not contingent on Jesus' appearance; b) the `coming one' who would bring the immersion in fire was for John either God himself or an unspecified agent of God; c) the Baptist must have attracted a following of his own, independent of Jesus' disciples" (Mason 174).

The attempt made in the Synoptic Gospels to pretend that Jesus' contact with John was brief is thus clearly artificial and collides with its own testimony and with common sense. Mark 1:12, for instance, says right after relating the baptism of Jesus by John, "the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness", as if to make sure that no one would ever see Jesus as a long-term disciple of John.

This baptism of Jesus by John was a particular problem for theologians. As Taylor says, "that Jesus was baptized by John has been a problem almost from the beginning of Christianity, and not only because his being baptized indicated that he might have been subordinate to John" (Taylor 262). According to Michael Grant, "the forgiveness of Jesus' own sins, when he was baptized by John, set the theologians of subsequent centuries a conundrum. For how could Jesus have been baptized for the forgiveness of his own sins, when according to Christology which developed after his death, he was divine and therefore sinless?" (Grant Jesus 49). Consequently, Christian theologians tried to argue that Jesus was immersed not so the water would

purify him but so he would purify the water! (Taylor 263) Jerome tries to get around the issue by citing the Gospel of Hebrews which purportedly has Jesus claiming sinlessness but admitting the possibility of sin by ignorance, the only reason why he might need to be baptized by John (see above). The New Testament would have left the whole story out altogether, except that John being a teacher of Jesus was too well-known.

We see this fact in the use of Saying 46 by Matthew 11:7-15. First he prefaces Saying 46 with a partial quote from Saying 78 which Matthew links to John the Baptist even though there is nothing in the Saying that indicates that. Then he throws in a prophecy from Malachi 3:1 that John was only the messenger for him who was to come, meaning Jesus: "This is he of whom it is written, `Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.'" Kraeling, however, makes the interesting point that John's Messianic prophecy was not of a human being: "for analogies we must go instead to the angelic `manlike one' of Daniel 7, to whom power is given and who comes with the clouds of heaven" (Kraeling 57). It is clear that John's Messianism is only pressed into service much later for Christian purposes.

Then Matthew finally goes on with the quote from Saying 46: "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force." Notice how Matthew changes Saying 46 to minimize John the Baptist, replacing "the little one" with "the least". The phrase about becoming a child to enter the Kingdom is then moved from this context of John the Baptist to a separate place altogether, Matthew 18:3 (Mark 10:15, Luke 18:17). Then he leaves out the most important part of Saying 46, the necessity of returning to the pure state of childhood before Adam in order to enter the Kingdom. And removing all spiritual content from Saying 46, he tacks on a gratuitous sentence about violence in the kingdom of heaven, which makes no sense at all in the spiritual definition in Thomas. What a travesty of a beautiful spiritual teaching! Luke 7:28 leaves out this last sentence but politicizes this excerpt by connecting it to a rivalry with John's followers.

What is the New Testament trying so hard to suppress? Jesus clearly admired John greatly: in the first lines of Saying 46 he says since Adam there is no one higher or more exalted than he! John was a remarkable personality and was a pivotal person in the life of Jesus. The historical sources on John are slim, all secondary with no primary sources: a fair amount of material in the four gospels and some mentions in Acts, one paragraph in Josephus' Antiquities Book 18, composed about 93-94 C.E., the so-called Slavonic

Josephus and much later Mandaean documents. None of this is truly reliable, and all must be used with caution. As for pictorial art, Bagatti claimed that a grafitto of a man wearing a long tunic that he found underneath the mosaic of a fifth-century monastery in Nazareth showed John the Baptist, but Taylor has concluded that it is actually a soldier heralding a cross and was done some time after 340 C.E. (Taylor Grafitto 147): another good example of the necessity of caution.

There is one other potentially historical source, and that is the fact that the Talmud (Ta`an 23a) speaks of an individual whose father was Honi the Circle-Drawer, related to a line of high priests in the Maccabean era with Simon and Onias alternating, and who was called Hanan the Hidden. This Hanan was called "Righteous" and the "Hidden" sobriquet connects him with the Secret Adam tradition in which the Righteous person is hidden in order to save him from the enemy, Noah being the first of such a line in the Zohar. Not only is John or Yohanan the exact same name as Hanan, but there is also a tradition associated with Hanan's father Honi who was said to have fallen asleep under a carob tree only to awake 70 years later when the tree bore fruit: in some traditions carobs were John the Baptist's main food (Eisenman 366-367). If there is any real truth to these connections, they would tie John to James' and thus Jesus' family line, as James has many parallels with the Onias-Honi line.

And if the Talmud does refer to John, then Luke is hiding what may be John the Baptist's Maccabean connections, for in Luke John's father is called Zechariah with no genealogy given. Luke is, however, willing to admit that Zechariah was a priest and his mother Elizabeth also of priestly family, "of the daughters of Aaron". Epiphanius strengthens the priestly origin of Zechariah by quoting the Gospel of the Ebionites, in Panarion 30.13.6, as saying "of him (John) it is said that he was from the family of Aaron the priest, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth." The general assumption is that Zechariah was a rural priest or at least one outside of Jerusalem. Luke 1:8 says: "Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense." Jeremias shows that there were 24 courses of priests, "each of whom did service in Jerusalem for one week from sabbath to sabbath...Each priestly clan (weekly course) was divided into four to nine priestly families (daily courses), carrying out in turn their section of the weekly course during the seven days of their turn of duty". 300 priests were needed for each weekly course (Jeremias Jerusalem 199, 203). Jeremias estimates that there were probably 7,200 priests and 9,600 Levites in all (Jeremias 204); Sanders thinks that "it is not unreasonable to suppose that a few thousand priests and Levites lived in Jerusalem in Josephus' day" (Sanders

Judaism 170).

There is no way to tell from Luke where Zechariah lived, whether in Jerusalem or elsewhere: all it says is that he did his week of service at the temple and "when his time of service was ended, he went to his home" (Luke 1:23). However, traditionally John the Baptist's birth-place and hometown is said to be Ein Karem, a village right to the west of Jerusalem: today there is a Church of the Visitation there with a statue of his parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah. Traditions are not always true, especially in Christianity where so much is fictionalized, but this one is also supported by Mandaean traditions. And if it is true, then it puts John's family very close to Jerusalem, though still living in a village. One could call them "rural" priests but "suburban" might be a better term.

Thus, as members of the lower priesthood there was a great gulf between John's family and the high priests. The high priests lived in tremendous luxury, exemplified by a mansion of 2,000 sq. ft. unearthed in Jerusalem, and moreover, as Josephus reports, they often took the tithes that the lower priests were supposed to receive for themselves, to the point that the poorer priests starved to death. When the Jewish revolt broke out in 66 C.E., the lower priests immediately joined in. Consequently, Hollenbach concludes that John "came from a family of rural priests which had Zealot leanings. These sympathies were most likely the result of the alienation the lower rural priesthood commonly felt toward the political-social-economic-religious Jerusalem establishment" (Hollenbach Social 854-856). At the same time, if there is any chance of Maccabean high-priestly lineage in John's line, then his father and he would have considered themselves the legitimate high priests and acted accordingly.

That certainly seems to be the case for John who became a nazir, a holy man who took a vow of purity and poverty which included vegetarianism, similar to the sadhus of India. Though the New Testament imputes the eating of locusts (akrides) to him, the Gospel of the Ebionites (see above) makes clear that he ate a strict vegetarian diet: wild honey cakes in olive oil (elkrides). Epiphanius accused the Ebionites of lying about his diet of locusts, but all the early Christian sources agree with them: Athanasius and Isidore of Pelusium said the akrides were tips of plants or trees, the Diatessaron according to the unanimous testimony of later Syrian commentators read "milk and wild honey" and the Syrian texts universally stress that the so-called "locusts" were really roots or plants rather than insects (Brock 114-121). So it is the New Testament and the Church Fathers who were lying rather than the Ebionites and, as Eisler concludes, "there is thus a strong probability that the original tradition about the Baptist spoke of tree-fruits and young vegetable shoots, and not of the repulsive locusts" (Eisler 615).

His lifestyle and teachings were permeated with a dedication to purity befitting his Nazirite vow. He lived and dressed exceedingly simply, a cloak of camel's hair and a leather girdle around his waist, and advocated a ritual of immersion in water, Jewish in origin, as an alternative to animal sacrifice. He advocated strict adherence to Jewish law and among the Pharisees had a reputation for righteousness, which is why they went out to be immersed by him (Akers 41-44).

What is normally translated as "repentance for the forgiveness of sins" in Luke 3:3 reads in Greek metanoias eis aphesin amartiôn which really means "a change of heart for the setting free of shortfalls". In other words, John is calling for a thorough inner transformation in order to inspire people to aspire to a higher state of spiritual perfection rather than falling short of their true potential. Only later was that turned into a dogma of repentance and sin. And John's emphasis on fire, which Mason shows to have been part of the original tradition about John and which the Gospels replaced with "holy spirit", was meant to be not so much in a future apocalyptic sense, but in a present radical transformational sense (Mason 169-173).

John the Baptist might well either have been an Essene, a member of the Qumran community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, or have been taught by them. Qumran is not very far from Jerusalem, just to the east of it on the Dead Sea. As Otto Betz says, "correspondences between the life and teachings of the Qumran community and the life and teachings of John are often extraordinary." These include: the idea that cleansing of the body must be accompanied by purification of the soul, the belief that ritual washings would be superseded with a purification by the Holy Spirit at the end of time, the emphasis on the Teacher of Righteousness who was a prophet ordained by God to lead the repentant to the way of his heart, and a commitment to vegetarianism and an ascetic lifestyle (Otto Betz 209-210). In particular, the Essenes rejected the bloody animal sacrifices at the Temple and replaced them with the "offerings of the lips", that is prayers and works of the law: "man must render himself to God as a pleasing sacrifice; he must bring his spirit and body, his mental and physical capacities, together with his material goods and property, into the community of God" (Betz 211).

At the same time, there were significant differences between John and the Essenes. He is never called one either in the New Testament nor by Josephus, who does identify three other prophetic figures as Essenes but not John. John was also "outspokenly critical of the civil government, which would be uncharacteristic of an Essene", and he was much more concerned with the salvation of his Jewish countrymen than the reclusive and withdrawn Essenes. Thus, what he should be called is an Essene prophet, of a lineage that stood up to kings, criticized their conduct and foretold their downfall.

Betz concludes: "I believe that John grew up as an Essene, probably in the desert settlement at Qumran. Then he heard a special call of God; he became independent of
the community - perhaps even more than the Essene prophets described by Josephus" (Betz 212-213).

It wasn't John's emphasis on water immersion itself that was radical, for the "concern with ritual purity seems to have been characteristic of Second Temple Judaism in general" (Taylor 23). Rather, what was radical and what aroused the opposition of the Jewish authorities was his insistence that baptism took the place of sacrifices and prayers. Morton Smith says: "All over the world, from very early times, men have tried to wash off spiritual pollution as if it were physical dirt. In ancient Israel...nothing could atone for sin except sacrifices and repentance. By John's time the only place in Palestine where a Jew could legally sacrifice was the Jerusalem temple. The temple priesthood had a valuable monopoly and made the most of it...So when John introduced a new way to get rid of sins, a simple, inexpensive rite that could be performed anywhere, the indignation of the priests at this cut-rate competition and the enthusiasm of the common people can be imagined... Nothing like this seems to have been known in Judaism before the Baptist's time. In spite of common statements to the contrary, there was nothing like it at Qumran; the Essenes had special immersions, but only for purity" (Smith Secret 90-92).

But there is much more to John's teaching that is generally not emphasized and Luke 3:10-14 gives us a clue as to John's true views: "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." In addition, he tells tax collectors not to collect more than their right and he tells soldiers to stop robbing people. This is a teaching of social justice, simple living and equality, well in keeping with the prophetic tradition, and a pointed criticism of both Jewish hierarchy and Roman oppression. So it wasn't baptism and purity or even the end of sacrifices that was his primary teaching, but, as Hollenbach says, "the oppression of the weak by the strong was at the center of John's preaching" (Hollenbach Conversion 200) and if he was not directly fomenting political revolution, then he certainly was a social revolutionary (Hollenbach Social 874).

The radical nature of his activity is also shown in the location that the Gospel story gives for him. The area of southern Peraea in the Jordan River valley was entirely unsuitable for mass baptisms: this area was not just a wilderness but an outright desert where nothing grew and no one lived and the only habitation was on sites around the springs above the foothills to the east. The Jordan itself, which flows in a trench well below the level of the

valley and drops from 676' below sea level at Lake Gennesaret to 1290' below at the Dead Sea, was covered with dense undergrowth which harbored the deadly Palestinian viper and the vicious wild boar: "the sides are of unstable marl which becomes impassable when wet" and "the fords become unusable when the level of the river rises during the winter rains". Thus the river was not accessible even if one were willing to venture into a forbidding desert. As Murphy-O'Connor rightly asks: "Why would the Baptist have chosen a place that was difficult for individuals, impossible for mass baptisms, and virtually inaccessible during the one season in the year when he could expect people to come to him, namely, the relatively cool winter months...If John's mission was to convert all Israel, why preach in an area without a permanent population?" (Murphy-O 359-360, Kopp 101).

An inaccessible place is not suited for drawing many visitors but is well-suited, however, as a hiding place for a prophetic, revolutionary or rebellious group. It therefore may well be that both the Gospels and Josephus are hiding the true nature of John's activity, and contrary to the impression given by the Gospels that most disciples returned to their normal life after their time with John, he clearly had an organized group of followers. As Taylor says, "in Judaism discipleship was not a loose relationship with a person whom one respected as a reputable scholar or sage, but a well-defined relationship entailing close involvement between disciple and teacher" (Taylor 102). But were they more than theological students?

Horsley, Eisler and Carmichael have suggested that the main thrust of John's teaching was political and that he was part of a wide-spread Jewish resistance movement. As Barrett says, the idea that multitudes went to the Jordan merely to wash hardly makes sense and clearly Josephus is not telling all he knows. If the baptism was rather an "oath of the soldiers entering the army of the fighters for the Messiah" (Carmichael 139), then this would make more sense of the constant fear by the authorities of John as a revolutionary influence that Josephus alludes to: "his later references to Herod's fear of a revolutionary movement show that the Baptist was concerned in messianic activity which either was, or showed the possibility of becoming, political and military" (Barrett 198). Horsley says "the priestly aristocracy knew very well that prophetic preaching such as John's was a direct challenge to their authority and power, considered both illegitimate and oppressive by `the multitude'... There was a definite possibility that John's preaching could provoke the Jewish inhabitants of Perea (Transjordan) into common action with (Herod Antipas') Arabic subjects, i.e. a popular insurrection" (Horsley Bandits 179-181).

Eisler sees John as leading a Messianic guerilla movement against the authorities and using coded language and his rite of baptism to hide his

subversive activities. John was involved in the uprising of 4 B.C.E. which followed the death of Herod the Great, possibly being acclaimed High Priest by the people (Eisler 206, 259). Luke 3:7-14 shows John speaking to the multitudes who ask him what they should do, but in 3:14 the Greek word strateuomenoi usually translated as "soldiers" (which would be stratiotai in Greek) really means "combatants".

Carmichael summarizes Eisler's arguments: "If we assume that John was not merely exhorting some anonymous multitudes to live better, but was actually giving specific instructions for the conduct of a guerilla campaign being conducted on a national basis against a hated oppressor, we may perceive its point...For the followers of the die-hard anti-Roman movements among the Jews the baptism was intended to be the rite of initiation into a new Israel...This was the origin of the use of the word `sacrament' in the later Christian church: sacrament meant a soldier's oath of allegiance (see Livy 10.38 and Justin 20.4) and John's baptismal confession was the oath of the soldiers entering the army of the fighters for the Messiah. Thus the new Israel, as foreshadowed by both John the Baptist and the Zealots, was to be regenerated by John's baptism into a `new covenant' with the ancient national, now universal, God of the Jews: those `children of Abraham' who did not take the oath and thus undergo the rite of lustration for the army of the Messiah were to be regarded as backsliders into heathenism" (Carmichael Death 138-140).

And this is why Jesus lauds John so highly: Jesus lauded the Baptist as the greatest of all men yet born because before his time Moses and the prophets had only spoken and prophesied of the Kingdom of God, whereas John had been the first to attempt a realization of the idea, to "prepare the way" (Eisler 264, Carmichael 136-138). As Kraeling says, Jesus does not actually call him the "greatest" per se, but he follows Jewish phrasing to laud someone for "a specific trait of the individual in question in respect to which he is outstanding" (Kraeling 139). And here the trait is John's willingness to put ideas into action and to put his energies into bringing about a new Messianic age.

Whatever the extent of his revolutionary activities, whether purely verbal in the tradition of the Jewish prophets or actually military, there is no doubt that John had a large following that considered him as a Messiah and later disputed the Messianic claims of Jesus' followers, as is clearly indicated in the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions (see above). Mark 6:44, for instance, implies that John's popular following was 5000 men, a significant number. John's enormous appeal was based precisely on the fact that he did not aim

for political leadership or power and that he was respected for his purity and integrity. John established no religious movement or institution, created no exclusive group of disciples subservient to him, offered his rite of immersion to anyone, and was never worshipped, though some considered him a prophet. This incorruptible disdain for power and wealth had a profound effect on many people, including Josephus and Jesus himself (Taylor 317-320): Josephus himself admits to having been "for purity's sake...a devoted disciple" of a Bannus who has many resemblances with John the Baptist (Life 11). There is even a tradition in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies (2.23-24) that both Simon Magus and Dositheus, who became leaders of their own Gnostic sects, had been followers of John the Baptist.

The cult of John the Baptist "survived at least until the mid-50's as the author of Acts is guileless enough to let on. When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he greeted the faithful there with the question, `Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' (Acts 19:2-5) This question is met with blank incomprehension." The Ephesian "disciples" had never heard of the Holy Spirit nor of Jesus, but only of John the Baptist. "They had been told this on the authority of an Alexandrian Jew named Apollos and he was clearly a missionary whose endeavors were seen as rivals to those of Paul. When Paul wrote to Corinth (I Cor. 1:10-12) he found that Apollos had been there too" (AN Wilson 102). And John 3:25 lets slip that even before John was arrested John had a rival group of disciples who were not followers of Jesus and held John to be their authority.

This cult around John the Baptist continued for many centuries to come. The particular rite of baptism that John practiced was adopted by many groups, as reported by the Christian heresy hunters: Menander and his disciples, the Dositheans, the Simonians, the Marcosians, Justinus and his sect, the Naassenes, Sethians, Elchasaites, Nazareans, Sampseans and Masobotheans. "Simon himself received only that early form of Christian baptism that was in all important respects the baptism of John" (Kraeling 182). As a result of this association with "heretics" the Christian theologians had very little to say about John during the whole of the 2nd and 3rd centuries and only when the Gnostics were forcibly suppressed in the 4th century did John become a very important person again (Kraeling 183-184).

According to Lupieri, it is quite possible that the Mandaeans, a Gnostic sect living to this day in Iraq and Iran, were originally survivors of disciples of John, who fled to Mesopotamia before the Jewish revolt of 66-70 C.E. due to persecution by Jewish authorities. Mandaean texts paint John as being born and active in Jerusalem and functioning as a Mandaean priest, and for the Mandaeans he was the only true prophet, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and

Mohammed being prophets of falsehood (Lupieri 144, 153, 162).

Likewise, the medieval Cathars tell a story of the fall of the angels in which God wrote a book relating the story of humans: "And when the holy Father had composed the said book, he placed it in the midst of the heavenly spirits...and said: He who shall fulfill the things which are written in this book, shall be my son...And then one of the spirits standing by, who was called John, rose up and said that he himself was willing to be the son of the father, and to complete all things which were written in the book aforesaid... and he descended from heaven, and appeared as a newly born boy in Bethlehem" (Badham 810-811, Dollinger 160-161).

Badham and Conybeare think that "the name John is here a misreading either of the copyist of the MS or of the editor" but why would a copyist for the Christian Inquisition substitute John for Jesus when that was clearly heretical? Indeed, "if we retain the name John, there is no alternative but to assume that we have here an echo of those disciples of the Baptist who... claimed Messiahship for their master as late as the fourth century" (Badham 811), a tradition that was known even as late as the 14th century!

In Saying 46 Jesus may well be making a political and revolutionary statement himself by lauding John the Baptist, especially when we take into account the fact that John is still alive. There are clearly other sayings in Thomas where Jesus makes strong anti-establishment pronouncements (34, 65, 78, 81, 95, 98 and 100), along with others where he speaks against religious authorities (39, 43, 52, 102): even 10, 16, 71 and 103 could be interpreted in political terms. The issue of whether Jesus himself was involved in political and revolutionary activities, as the Gospels clearly indicate, is a complicated one. He certainly cannot be seen as standing apart from the Messianic and revolutionary agitation of his time.

Even the enigmatic phrase in line 5 "so that his eyes will not break/ be broken" has a number of possible meanings which may include a political one as well. The verb "be broken" and that has a connotation of outside violence being done to John. And if someone, say the authorities, break his eyes, then that means they break the rest of him as well, i.e. he is put to death. The emphasis in the phrase could then actually be on "eyes": in other words, Jesus is predicting that John will be broken or put to death, but that it is precisely his eyes that will not be broken. That is, he may die as a person, but his cause and his beliefs will live on. His vision of a purified state governed according to principles of justice and equality will never die.

So ironically, Jesus may be referring to the crucifixion in the Gospel of Thomas. But it isn't his own: it is John's! And his reference is precisely the kind of anti-Establishment, rebellious attitude that the New Testament

is at great pains to suppress. It does so by making the figure of Jesus into an apolitical one but having him bear the punishment that was actually given to John, and by making John a fringe figure of apocalyptic doom rather than the revolutionary leader that he was.

Chapter 19:
James and Jesus

The third historical figure that was amalgamated into the composite Jesus was Jesus' brother James. And it turns out that the very quality that the New Testament Jesus is supposed to have had, namely his Messianic standing, was actually not his at all but pertained to his brother James. To understand this issue, we have to look at Jesus' family background and the circumstances of his birth. And we find another shocking fact: the historical Jesus was born to a distinguished line with possibly Messianic aspirations, but he was illegitimate and thus had no right to that claim. Instead, it was his legitimate brother James who was groomed for that role. We will look at the issue of Jesus' illegitimacy in Chapter 17 but in this chapter we will look at the historical figure of James, Jesus' brother.

Since Jesus was illegitimate, his brother James, the true eldest son of Joseph, took on the role of the future Messiah, that is someone of Davidic and Maccabean lineage who would drive out the Romans and restore the Jewish kingdom and the rule of religious law. Strangely enough, James is far better documented in the historical sources than Jesus or any other figure around Jesus is; as Eisenman says: "Though there is material about Peter and Thomas, Judas Thomas and Thaddaeus from extra-biblical sources, most - but not all - is patently mythological...Aside from Josephus' picture of John the Baptist, only James emerges as a really tangible and historical character when one considers the length and breadth of these sources" (Eisenman 413-414). He is discussed at length not only in the New Testament and Josephus but also in the Gnostic and apocryphal texts the Apocryphon of James and the two Apocalypses of James, the "Jewish-Christian" Pseudo-Clementines and the Epistle of James, as well as in the Church Fathers Hegesippus, Eusebius, Clement, Epiphanius, Origen and Jerome. In Jerome's work Lives of Illustrious Men which includes 135 persons from Simon Peter onwards including Philo, Seneca and Josephus, the section on James is the longest except for Origen, longer even than that on either Peter or Paul (Eisenman 478).

None of these sources, of course, are entirely reliable, and they all have hidden and not-so-hidden political and theological agendas. However, Eisenman, who has devoted a massive and impressive work of 1100 pages to

the subject of James, argues that there is a central core of material that keeps repeating in so many sources that it constitutes a basic core of historicity: the allusions to the "righteous One", the "falling to his knees and praying" and the efficaciousness of his prayer, the fall from the pinnacle, the proclamation of "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven" in the Temple at Passover, the charge of blasphemy and the stoning. Thus, "the traditions about James...were known and had already begun to be overwritten at least by the time of the earliest appearance of parallel materials now in the New Testament documents...probably before 100 CE" (Eisenman 465).

Since James is such a well-documented historical figure, any tangible family background would shed light on Jesus as well, who is not well-documented. And here the Maccabean parallels are unmistakable. Like Jesus and his three brothers, the successful Maccabean revolt against the Hellenizing Seleucid kingdom (successor to Alexander the Great) was led by four brothers: Judas, John, Eleazar (Lazarus) and Simon (Eisenman 18). The Maccabeans, of course, were the last independent Jewish kingdom (167-37 BCE) and every Messianic movement sought to restore their glory. Thus it is highly interesting that a few decades before the Maccabean uprising (ca. 200 BCE) there lived a Simeon the Righteous, descended from an Onias, who was also father of an Onias who became a High Priest just prior to the outbreak of the Maccabean uprising and is an important character in the Second Book of Maccabees. He was known for his "piety and perfect observance of the law" and was described as the "protector of his countrymen" and as a "Zealot for the laws". Moreover, he was martyred under Antiochus Epiphanes (175-163) in Antioch, a death that triggered the uprising led by Judas (Eisenman 364-366).

In the next century there was a Honi the Circle-Drawer, also called "the Righteous One" and suffering martyrdom by stoning. He is described as being able to bring rain by drawing circles (Josephus, Ant. 14.22-25). This may also be a sign of purity, as Josephus reports that the Essenes, in observation of the Sabbath, would not step out of a certain radius even in order to relieve themselves. And this Honi is the father of another individual called "Righteous" with the curious sobriquet Hanan the Hidden, who has similarities to John the Baptist (Eisenman 368).

The similarities with James are striking. Like Onias, James was known for his piety and as protector of his countrymen; he too was martyred and this too triggered an uprising. Like Honi, the ability to bring rain was attributed to James; as Epiphanius says in 78.14.1: "Once during a drought (45-48?) he lifted his hands to Heaven and prayed, and at once Heaven sent rain...Thus, they no longer called him by his name, but his name was, rather,

`the Just One'." Hegesippus calls James something close to Onias, "Oblias", a meaningless word which has occasioned a spirited scholarly discussion as to its meaning. Baltzer and Koester think it stood for Obadiah (Baltzer 141-142), Schoeps argues that Hegesippus misread the Hebrew scheliach sedeq, "holy representative", referring to an intercessor for the Jewish people before God (Schoeps Jacobus 123-125), and Eisenman says it simply means "Protection", "Shield" or "Strong Wall" as the Christian writers defined it (Eisenman 361). But it is just as likely that Hegesippus distorted the high-priestly sobriquet Onias of the Maccabean era, with all its powerful political and theological connotations, into the meaningless Oblias.

Thus, the question is: was James (but not Jesus!) in the same high-priestly Maccabean family line through his father? Did James model himself on his ancestor Simeon the Righteous and see himself as the precursor of a coming revolt against the Romans, the Seleucids of his day? Was Honi in his family line as well and probably living during his childhood? Did Honi initiate him into the skills he needed to claim the mantle of the True High Priest and to restore the Maccabean priestly function? For in 36 B.C.E Herod had put to death the last Maccabean High Priest, Mariamme's younger brother Jonathan, and had seized personal control over High Priestly appointments and garments, a policy followed by all his successors, both Herodian and Roman. Not until the Jewish revolt did the Zealots elect their own High Priest Phineas (Eisenman 49-50). If James was of the Maccabean line, then he would see it as one of his highest duties to restore the true Priesthood.

It is highly indicative of a family heritage that James was chosen from birth for his role. All the sources say that James was committed by birth to be a Nazirite, a holy person. While there were many Nazirites who took vows for certain periods, in particular when suffering from sickness or to express personal grief, to solicit divine assistance in time of personal crisis or during a pilgrim festival (Chepey 194-195), it is clear that James' vow was a lifelong one and that he was dedicated holy by his parents. Normally such a vow was good only until the child was of the age of maturity (12-13), but James made his own decision to continue to abide by it (Chepey 186).

James was remarkable for his consistency, dedication and lack of hypocrisy. Hegesippus describes him thus (quoted by Eusebius Ecc. Hist. 2.23):

"This apostle was holy from his mother's womb...He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head; he never anointed himself with oil or used a public bath. He alone was allowed to enter the Holy Place. He never wore woolen, only linen garments. He was in the habit of entering the Temple alone, and was often to be found on his knees and interceding for the forgiveness of

his people, so that his knees became hard as a camel's...And on account of his exceeding great piety, he was called the Just (i.e. Zaddik) and Oblias (i.e. Ophla-am), which signifies Justice and the People's Bulwark, as the Prophets declare concerning him."

Both Epiphanius and Hegesippus agree that James was a committed vegetarian and teetotaler, and he shared these practices with the Pythagoreans and Essenes who also did not eat meat, drink wine, cut their hair or wear wool (Akers 166). He did not anoint himself with oil or take hot baths in the Roman style but took cold baths like the Essenes and other Nazoreans. He only wore linen and refused either to eat any animal food or wear any clothing made from animal skins (Eisenman 312, 336). The Epistle of James shows him to be firmly rooted in the Jewish Wisdom tradition, accepting all Jewish Torah laws on purity, diet and circumcision, portraying wisdom as God's gift and providing instruction on moral action for the life of the community (Hartin James 99-100); as he says: "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). At the same time, as Epiphanius reports from a contemporary book called Anabathmoi Iakobou (Ascents of Jacob), James deviated from Jewish tradition by taking a strong stand against Temple animal sacrifices and the fire on the sacrificial altar, due to his vegetarian convictions (Strecker 251).

Though Thomas does not share James' adherence to Jewish law, in other respects there are remarkable similarities between the Epistle of James and Thomas, especially in their view of material wealth. As Hartin says: "The Gospel of Thomas and the Epistle of James betray a similar ethos of radical discipleship...The attitude of mistrust of the world...dominates both traditions... For the Gospel of Thomas the rejection of the world involves a radical ethos that embraces an itinerant life...James likewise is highly critical of wealth and the evils that the rich have perpetrated against the poor, in particular against the members of his community....Poverty entails a radical lifestyle which shuns the world...The symbolic language of `the world' and `the poor' functions in a similar way in the Gospel of Thomas and the Epistle of James" (Hartin poor 158-160).

James also had much in common with the Qumran community and even used a similar vocabulary. The Qumran writers had been impressed with Ezekiel's redefinition of righteousness in 18:17-21 as individual rather than as sin being passed down through the generations, and both they and James put emphasis on the idea that the righteous are made so or justified by what they do and are responsible for their own actions (Eisenman 376). Eisenman shows that both Qumran and James use terms such as "patience", "laboring", "works", "being Poor", "Riches", "the morning Star" and "those

who claim to be Apostles" but are rather "Liars" (Eisenman 508).

Just as prevalent in the Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly in the Community Rule and the Hymns, are "Foundation", "Rock" and "Cornerstone" images: "a firm Foundation which will not shake", "Wall", "Tower", "Bulwark or "Fortress" (Eisenman 133). Both believed in a real and genuine Priesthood as opposed to the politicized High Priesthood forced onto the Jewish people by the Herodian kings and their Roman overlords. And in both this true Priesthood is connected with a utopian and eschatological element: the proclamation of the Messiah "coming with Power on the clouds of Heaven with the Heavenly Host" at Passover in the Temple is common to both (Eisenman 212-213).

Gaster, Eisenman and Schonfield think that the enigmatic "Teacher of Righteousness", who comes to an unhappy end and whom Christians have always liked to take as being Jesus, corresponds to James. As Gaster says: "We may perhaps not unreasonably conclude that the Dead Sea Scrolls actually open a window upon the little community of Jewish Christians clustered around James in Jerusalem. These men have been originally the urban brethren of the hardier souls that betook themselves to Qumran and to other encampments in the Desert of Judah" (Gaster Dead 17). The good correspondence between the "Teacher of Righteousness" and James also extends to the "Man of Lying" who is Paul and the "Wicked Priest" who is Ananus who ultimately conspired to kill James (Eisenman 86, 569, Schonfield Party 187). Both communities used the same passage from Isaiah 3:11, "for the reward (gamul) of his hands will be done to him", one to apply it to the death of the Teacher of Righteousness and the other to apply it to the death of James the Just: "one could not ask for more powerful proof of their identity than this" (Eisenman 449-450).

Due to his strict vows, James had a priestly office, being uniquely empowered to wear the high priestly diadem on his head and privileged to enter the sanctuary of the Temple (Brandon Jesus 122). He was always called a tsaddik or dikaios in Greek: Josephus says of him that "he was surnamed the Just because of both his piety towards God and his benevolence to his countrymen" (Antiq. 12.43), inviting comparison to the famous high priest Simon the Just of the early third century B.C.E., and to him is attributed the saying: "The world is sustained by three things, the Law, the Temple Service and the practice of benevolence." Hegesippus even says in Eusebius Eccl. Hist. 2.23 that James' prayers as a tsaddik were believed to have been successful in stemming God's judgment since it was not until immediately after James' martyrdom that Vespasian began to attack the Jews (Schonfield Party 145).

Both Eisenman and Schonfield regard him as the Opposition High Priest uniting all the disparate groups in first century Palestine who opposed the Romans and their Herodian puppets and who longed to restore Jewish Law as once again pre-eminent. Schonfield says that "he could hold together all its diverse elements as no other could. He followed strictly the Way of the Law. His nationalism pleased the Zealots, while his extreme asceticism commended him to the Ebionite-Essene wing. He enjoyed the respect of the Pharisees, and was beloved by the Jewish populace of Jerusalem" (Schonfield Party 146). Even the Herodian Establishment saw James as so popular that right before his death the chief priest comes to him and asks him to quiet the people, "for all the people have confidence in [or obey] you" (Eusebius 2.23.7-11). And Paul takes James' exalted stature for granted and it is clear that "all overseas teachers required letters of introduction or certification from James and were required to send him back periodic reports of their activities" (Eisenman 78).

Everything about James thus sums up what Jews saw as a Messianic figure or at least a precursor to the Messiah. In Jewish terms a Messiah is an earthly leader who is capable of restoring Israel's past glory and driving out the foreign invaders who are polluting the purity of Jewish Law. As Gershom Scholem shows, the Messianic idea in Judaism, which runs strongly through the prophets and rabbinic Judaism, is largely conservative, directed toward the preservation of Judaism which is always in danger, and restorative, "directed to the return and recreation of a past condition which comes to be felt as ideal". The apocalyptic element is a separate though powerful strand, though later fused with the ideals of restorative utopianism (Scholem Messianic 3). It is clear from all the sources that James saw himself not as a Messiah himself but as the precursor of "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven". In a very similar way to Simeon the Righteous who prepared the way for Judas Maccabee to restore the rule of Jewish Law, James saw himself as preparing the way for a similar, perhaps this time a supernatural, figure to come and to throw out the corrupt Herodian priestly quislings and the oppressive Romans.

Thus it will be startling from a Christian point of view to realize that the real Messianic leader of the Jewish people was not Jesus at all, but James. The prevailing assumption and the story told by the Church Fathers is that James was the successor to Jesus after Jesus' crucifixion but he acted as part of a triumvirate of Peter, John and James, as Brandon says (Brandon 159-160). Painter sums up the prevailing view: "Tradition names James the first leader of the Jerusalem church. The list of the bishops of Jerusalem, the first fourteen Jewish (Hebrew) and the next fourteen Gentile, cites James as the first of the Hebrew bishops. Various traditions affirm his appoint-

ment, directly by the risen Jesus, by Peter, James and John, or by the apostles as a group" (Painter 5). But did James really act in the name of Jesus as a "bishop" of a "church", or did he act in his own name as a Jewish priest and Messianic leader of an opposition movement?

According to the standard story, Jesus was put to death by the Romans as a rebel leading an uprising against the state and proclaiming himself as King of the Jews, and the brutal Roman punishment of crucifixion was reserved only for such rebels. James died in 62 CE: if he inherited Jesus' mantle as Messianic aspirant, he would have acted as such for 32 years, using the standard chronology for Jesus' death. Wells rightly comments: "So we are to believe that James led the Jerusalem Christians as their Messianic king without Roman interference! In my view, the fact that Jewish and Roman authorities permitted Christians to practice their religion at Jerusalem in the 50's is itself evidence against the view that the founder of the faith had a few years earlier been executed as a result of Jewish or Roman hostility" (Wells Historical 174).

The evidence that James acted in the name of Jesus is quite lacking. Even the New Testament denies that he was a follower of Jesus, though for political and anti-Semitic reasons, and portrays his brothers as not believing in him, and Bauckham has to really strain to find evidence that he was: John 2:12 but contradicted by John 7:5; Luke 8:19-21 and 11:27-28 speaking of no rift but not of discipleship either (Bauckham James 106-109). The Epistle of James says much about God and the Lord and contains much practical ethical teaching, but it only mentions the name "Jesus Christ" once, in 2:1: "My brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory". It would be easy to see the reference to Jesus as a Christian interpolation, for the point of what follows is not to talk about faith in Jesus but to elucidate the idea of not showing partiality between rich and poor. Moreover, James explicitly argues against the Christian teaching of Paul that faith is more important than works: "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food and one of you says to him, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled' but you give him none of the things his body needs, what good is that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (2:14-18). This is a thoroughly Jewish teaching with nothing "Christian" about it: it is practical rather than metaphysical and it is concerned with tangible acts of compassion and charity.

Christians have always suspected this work of not being "Christian" enough; as A. N. Wilson says: "So bitterly has this epistle been hated by Orthodox Christians that they have even questioned whether it is Christian at all. Luther used to tear it from the Bible whenever he found it, denouncing

it as an epistle of straw, for it advocates goodness and self-restraint and says nothing about Justification by Faith only" (AN Wilson 249). We surely can't have goodness and self-restraint, can we?

Not only did James not act in the name of Jesus, it isn't even clear that he headed any kind of recognizable sect or group and if he did, they weren't "Christians". It has always been assumed that there was a group called "Christians" who continued to venerate Jesus as the Messiah even after he died and that James was a "bishop" of that group. In the 19th century F. C. Baur proposed a conflict between a Jewish Christianity led by Peter and a Gentile Christianity led by Paul, and since then the Jerusalem "church" led by James has generally been seen as "Jewish-Christian". But surprisingly when one looks closely there isn't much evidence for any of this.

The testimony of the Church Fathers regarding "Jewish-Christians" is quite confused, as is generally the case with anything involving historical facts. They talk about Ebionites which may or may not be identical with the many groups called Nazoreans or the like, if groups they are, but only Irenaeus and Origen seemed to know anything first-hand while Epiphanius, Eusebius and Jerome had no direct knowledge. As Joan Taylor says: "The Church Fathers tended to refer to anything `Jewish-Christian' as Ebionite... but...the Ebionites are by no means clearly described in the literature. Scholars' attempts to find one group in the diverse descriptions given by patristic authors have not been successful...`Ebionism' became a term that the Church Fathers used liberally to refer to any groups in which Jewish customs were practiced...People who behaved like Jews in any way, practical or ideological, were Jews. Ebionites were, therefore, Jews, and Jewish-Christians were all `Ebionites'...By the fourth century, there was widespread interest in Jewish praxis by Gentile members of the Church and a variety of groups exhibiting `Jewish' characteristics. None of these can be traced back to known first-century Jewish-Christian groups with any certainty" (Taylor Phen 321-323, 327).

What all this tells us is something quite shocking to the standard view: as Taylor rightly argues, "Jewish Christianity" is a scholarly invention and did not exist. Jesus had a small group of disciples, as shown in the Gospel of Thomas, but since he did not claim to be the Messiah and rejected all such ideas, his followers could certainly not be called "Christian". James was considered a Jewish opposition leader, but not of any particular group or sect nor did he aspire to be a sectarian, Christian or otherwise. And Paul's followers certainly cannot be called Jewish-Christian. Only after the destruction of Jerusalem and the flight of the remaining survivors of the revolutionary movement can one speak of anything called a "Jewish-Christian" group, but here too the term "Christian" is completely out of place. For one, the term was not even used until much later in the 2nd century, and for another, Mes-

sianic Jews would never have called themselves by a Greek term. In short, it may be comforting and ecumenical to see Christianity coming out of Judaism, but the evidence shows that it is an invention by Paul and later theologians and has little to do with Jesus, James or Judaism.

It is after the flight from Israel under the leadership of James' and Jesus' brother Simeon that the survivors do seem to divide into Nazarenes (Nazoreans in Epiphanius) and Ebionites. As Pritz convincingly shows: "The Nazarenes were distinct from the Ebionites and prior to them...It is possible that there was a split in Nazarene ranks around the turn of the first century" (Pritz 108). They fled beyond the Jordan to Pella and Kochaba near Damascus, out of reach of the Romans; some were even found in Galilee and in Jerusalem until 135 when all Jews were expelled from the city. A sarcophagus discovered beneath the north apse of the West Church of ancient Pella has many similarities with first and second century sarcophagi found in Jerusalem, Balata in Samaria and in three sites on the coastal plain of Israel and generally ascribed to Jewish-Christians: limestone material, anterior friezes, geometric designs carved in low relief and sloping headrests inside. Robert Smith who headed the excavations postulates that it was originally in a mausoleum in a cemetery and possibly contained the bones of an important leader of the Jewish-Christians who fled to Pella, thus causing later Christians to build a church over it (Smith sarco 252-256).

The Nazarenes followed what would later become mostly orthodox Christian beliefs and were not considered heretics by the Church Fathers before the 4th century. They proclaimed God and Christ, used both the Old and New Testaments, with a Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew, accepted Paul as an apostle, but still kept Jewish customs (Taylor Phen 326, Pritz 75, 108). However, in the 4th century when what we know as Christianity was created, both Epiphanius and Augustine branded them heretical (Pritz 76).

The Ebionites, however, were the true followers of James and held his name in great reverence, claiming descent from his movement, whether direct or indirect. The surviving family of Jesus and James continued to be active in Messianic and revolutionary movements and to be considered threats by the ruling authorities; according to Hegesippus (Ecc. Hist. 3.12.1): "Vespasian gave an order that a search be made for all descendants of David, and this resulted in the infliction of another widespread persecution on the Jews" (Eisenman 643). The immediate successors of James seem to have been other members of their family: first their brother Simeon and then possibly grandsons of Judas Thomas. These two grandsons, Jacob and Zechariah, were interrogated by Domitian and after their release governed their congregations until they were executed under Trajan, and Simeon, who had returned to Israel, was also executed by governor Atticus as a descendant of

David in 107 under Trajan (Eisenman 782-788, Schoeps Jewish 32-34).

Thus it is no surprise that the Church Fathers saw the Ebionites as heretics. As Eusebius reports critically, they saw Christ as "a plain and common man, and justified only by his advances in virtue, and that he was born of the Virgin Mary by natural generation." Eusebius makes a pun on their name, "the Poor", saying "they have also received their epithet, the name of Ebionites, exhibiting their poverty of intellect", as they "cherished low and mean opinions of Christ" (Eusebius Eccl. Hist. 3.27). Clearly they rejected the entire Pauline mythology, calling Paul "an apostate from the Law", understood Jesus to be simply a righteous man and elevated James above Jesus.

And they were not the only ones to cherish James' memory, as he continued to be venerated for many centuries to come by many different spiritual groups. The First Apocalypse of James 40.22-26 says that his traditions were said to have been transmitted through four women, Salome, Mariamne, Martha and Arsinoe, and the Naassenes (probably a misnamed combination of Nazarenes/Nazoreans and Essenes) claimed to have been the recipients of a secret tradition of gnosis through James by way of Mariamne (Mary) (Eisenman 836). The Gospel of the Hebrews, as quoted by Jerome, has James, who swore that he would not eat until he had seen Jesus again, being the first to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared (Klijn Jewish 80-83). As late as the 4th century the Pseudo-Clementines still speak of James with great respect: in the Epistle of Clement to Jacob (preceding the Homilies) he is styled "the supreme Supervisor, who rules Jerusalem, the holy Community of the Hebrews, and the communities everywhere excellently founded by the providence of God" and he is addressed as "the Lord Jacob", all titles that a Christian might think should apply to Jesus.

In short, James was admired and venerated for centuries for his high degree of holiness, piety and adherence to every principle of non-violence both toward humans and animals and was seen as the undisputed leader of a wide variety of oppositional groups in late first-century Judaism. He did not found any particular "church" or group but remained non-sectarian and managed to retain the respect and admiration of Jews from the opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. Only after his murder and the defeat of the Jewish revolt did a separate sect form, the Ebionites, dedicated to both his and Jesus' teachings and their memory.

James was the champion of the lower orders of priests and the Jewish people in general in what Schonfield calls a "Nazorean movement embracing Zealots, Pharisees, Essenes and others" against the corrupt collaborationist High priestly Temple hierarchy of Sadducees and the Herodian ruling class (Schonfield Party 18-19). And this activity would lead to James' inevitable

murder and moreover it seems very likely that it was the murder of James that precipitated the Jewish revolt of 66-70 CE.

From the sequence of events it appears that a consortium of Herodian, Sadducean and Roman ruling class interests decided to strike a mortal blow at the opposition movement in Israel by murdering James. Sometime before 62 CE a wall had been built, presumably by Zealot priests, to block the Herodian King Herod Agrippa II (49-93) from viewing the Temple sacrifice while reposing and eating on the balcony of his palace. As a result several priests were arrested and taken to Rome, whom Josephus accompanied, thus allowing him to win the favor of Nero's wife Poppeia and to ingratiate himself with the court. And also as a result Agrippa II and the then High Priest Ananus ben Ananus, who resented the opposition movement and blamed it for the assassination of his brother the High Priest Jonathan, decided to remove James, with the support of Nero who increased his persecutions of the Jews more determinedly than ever, "seemingly purposefully goading them into revolt", as Eisenman thinks (Eisenman 25).

Another person who may have been involved with the plot against James was Paul, who is not what he seems to be. Paul himself admits in Romans 16:11 that he is a member of the Herodian family and related to the "Littlest Herod", Herodion, and in 16:10 he sends greetings to the family of Aristobulus, probably the son of Herod of Chalcis who took control over the chief priesthood (Eisenman 349): clearly his class interests are not with James' opposition movement. Acts 24:26-27 makes clear that Paul, arrested after being accused by "the Jews", had ongoing conversations with the procurator Felix for two years, supposedly when he was in prison and supposedly about his faith in Christ and about "justice and self-control and future judgment". Eisenman finds this apparent attempt to convert Felix highly unlikely and thinks it is "more in the nature of intelligence debriefings than theological or religious discussions". At the hearing before Agrippa he makes a lengthy self-defense and Agrippa finds no fault in him, similarly to the hearing of Jesus before Pontius Pilate. It is the same Agrippa who would be responsible for the death of James and his sister Bernice was to become the future mistress to Titus, conqueror of Jerusalem: surely Paul must have had strategic discussions with him as well (Eisenman 550-551).

Very significantly, the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.70 have a detailed scene in the Temple, thought to have taken place in the 40's, where Paul agitated against James, who had a "great multitude who had been waiting since the middle of the night" to see him. Paul, with his followers, physically attacked James, pushing him down the steps, injuring one or both of his legs (a theme repeated later in Christian writings) and leaving him for dead. This resulted in a flight of James' followers, 5000 in number, to Jeri-

cho, pursued by Paul who chased them all the way to Damascus (or possibly the Qumran community) (Eisenman 588-589). The same scene is described in the Ascents of James 1.69.8-70.8, considered a source of the Recognitions and possibly written in the region of Pella at the end of the first century or at least by 135 CE, though Paul is here called only "a certain man who was an enemy" (Van Voorst 78-79). Though van Voorst thinks Paul is merely being blamed for preventing the conversion of the Jewish nation to Jesus by preaching his law-free Gospel (Van Voorst 161), this is minimizing the agreement of all these sources on the continuing history of murderous hostility of Paul toward James.

That Paul would be conspiring with Agrippa and the procurator, both Felix (52-60) and his successor Festus (60-62), to kill James makes sense given his history. Acts certainly shows Paul first persecuting the followers of James and even after supposedly "converting" continuing to oppose James and undermining his teachings and authority. Paul was most likely envious of James' great popularity and conspired to remove him in order to supplant him: not for nothing did the Dead Sea Scrolls most likely refer to him when they talk about the "Man of Lying" and it is striking how often Paul insists in his writings that he is not lying. The Dead Sea Scrolls most likely record both attacks on James, the first by "the Liar" Paul and the second by "the Wicked Priest" Ananus (Eisenman 615).

It is also striking how both the Christian sources as well as Josephus confuse the dating of this ultimately non-fatal attack by Paul and mix it up with the actual death of James. Acts places the attack by Paul in the 40's but it transposes the stoning of James in the 60's with that of Stephen in the 40's, while Josephus transposes the attack by Paul to the 60's. Eisenman says: "If one keeps one's eyes on the two elements of the fall from the Temple stairs and the stoning, one can sort these out. The keys to the conflation are the words `throwing' or `casting down' (kataballo in Greek) and the `headlong fall' James takes, at least in the first attack - in the New Testament, `Judas Iscariot' and `Stephen' along with him" (Eisenman 529, 614) Clearly these sources are straining hard to hide the truth, especially of the incriminating involvement of Paul, the founder of Christianity.

The plot against James also had the support of the Sadducean upper class. For one, they resented his vocal support of the lower priesthood who "were infected with Zealot views", especially his criticism of their misappropriation of tithes. For another, they resented his suspension of animal sacrifices. Josephus disingenuously blames the stopping of sacrifices under James and the refusal by the lower priesthood to accept such gifts for the war with the Romans; these actions "laid the foundation of the war with the Romans, for the sacrifices offered on behalf of that nation and the Emperor were in

consequence rejected" (War 2.409-10). The lower priests continued to honor James' stand by rejecting gifts and sacrifices even three and a half years after the death of James, and Brandon thinks their action in stopping he imperial sacrifices as well was the final act that sparked the revolt of 66 (Eisenman 283, 291, Brandon Jesus 168-169).

And for a third, as Hegesippus says, "his influence with the people was so great that the...Sadducees...became alarmed because the whole people were in danger of expecting Jesus to come as the Messiah" (Eusebius 2.23.4-18) - or more accurately, without a Christian spin, expecting James to proclaim himself as the Messiah. To suppress these dangerous Messianic hopes and to advance Paul's agenda, the high priest Ananus II, who is probably the "Wicked Priest" of the Dead Sea Scrolls, took advantage of a vacuum of Roman power in between two procurators and in 62 C.E. ordered the execution of James by stoning, probably on the grounds of blasphemy or leading the people to worship other gods (Bauckham 223-225). The immediate justification for the charge of blasphemy may well have been because James was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur (on a different day than the official calendar) and seek forgiveness for communal sins, a privilege he had and claimed as a true High Priest. Going into the Holy of Holies meant that he would have known and pronounced the Divine Name of God and that could be called blasphemy since he was not an official High Priest (Eisenman 566-570).

Since James was a priest, Jewish law prescribed a full Sanhedrin trial, the Sanhedrin unfortunately being stacked with political appointees, and if found guilty, he would be pushed to his death off the top of the Temple which would normally make stoning unnecessary. In the unlikely case that a person did not die from that, a heavy stone laid upon the chest was prescribed to that effect. The Christian writers cannot resist adding humiliating treatment by the Jewish authorities to their description of James' death: while in Josephus he is only stoned (Ant. 20.197-203), in Clement he is thrown off the parapet and clubbed to death (Eusebius 2.23.1-3), in Eusebius (quoting Hegesippus) he is stoned as well as beaten on the head with a laundryman's club (2.23-4-18), and in the Nag Hammadi document The Second Apocalypse of James V.61.20-62.12, probably of Christian origin, he is also struck and dragged on the ground, a stone is placed on his abdomen, and he is then forced to dig his own grave, buried up to his waist and finally stoned.

Given a quasi-legal Jewish procedure before the Sanhedrin, all these extra acts of violence would not have happened in reality, as Böhlig argues (Bohlig 209-210). The Christian addition of clubbing is downright malicious. In Jewish law a priest who was found to be unclean was to be taken outside the Temple and his brain was to be split open with clubs (Mishnah

Sanhedrin 81b-82b): James, of course, was anything but unclean (Eisenman 575). It is clear that the whole charge was trumped up and increased Ananus' unpopularity, and Jewish protests directed at the new Roman procurator Albinus and King Agrippa II succeeded in having Ananus removed (McLaren 19-23).

Eisenman concludes that James was "the centre about whom these disturbances or confrontations in the Temple turned, whose removal in 62 CE made the Messianic Uprising that followed inevitable" (Eisenman 488). His death was possibly the major trigger for the Jewish uprising against the Romans and removed one of the last voices of reason and non-violence from the scene which led to an increase in antagonism and fanaticism. This led to the Jewish Revolt of 66-70 CE which the Romans brutally suppressed and which together with the suppression of the Bar Kochba revolt of 132-135 CE led to the 1800-year Diaspora of the Jews. The Ebionite movement which followed James was ultimately destroyed and Paul claimed the spiritual teachings of Jesus for himself and supplanted the Jewish followers. And in the 4th century the Church turned on the true teachings of Jesus as embodied in Thomas and thoroughly suppressed them.

Thus the Gospels do two things with the figure of James: they downplay the primacy of the historical James and they amalgamate James into their composite figure of Jesus. In the New Testament allusion to Saying 12 (Mk 9:33-37, Mt 18:1-5, Lk 9:46-48 and Lk 22:24-27) the disciples dispute with one another who is the greatest, or the greatest in the Kingdom, and Jesus answers by telling them to be humble as a child and by saying that they are all below himself. It is certainly possible to see this as a direct commentary on Saying 12 as a way to undermine the claim of James to be "the greatest" and in order to elevate Jesus and thus the church that claims to speak in his name into monarchical status. This is reiterated in Matthew 23:11 where he says "neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled." This seems blatantly political, especially to serve the Gospel agenda of downplaying any claim to primacy of Jesus' brothers.

Accordingly, throughout the Gospels the issue of James' authority is a critical one. Just as with Mary Magdalene and John the Baptist, the New Testament tries mightily to minimize James' role and to hide his identity. While Peter is mentioned 190 times in the New Testament and Paul 173, there are only 11 mentions of James: twice in the Gospels (but never in Luke), three times in Acts, four times in the letters of Paul and once each in the prescript of the letters of James and Judas (Hengel 71). Paul only calls him Jesus' brother once in Galatians 1:20 and Acts never does. Neither in Acts 12:17 nor in 15:13 is he even introduced or identified, though the first mention

prepares for his speaking appearance in chapter 15. He might not have been mentioned at all except that it was too well-known that he was involved in the "Jerusalem Council" with Paul, yet his murder, which was well-known too, is still not mentioned.

It is clear that parts have been taken out in editing and Luke himself admits that he used previous works in compiling his account. Brandon asks whether "the strange silence of Acts about the antecedents of James...was deliberate" (Brandon 163) and Eisenman answers yes: "Whenever Acts comes to issues relating to James or Jesus' brothers and family members generally, it equivocates and dissimulates, trailing off finally into disinformation, sometimes even in the form of childish fantasy... almost always with uncharitable intent" (Eisenman 601-602).

Moreover, there are two other James' that are most likely all the same James, the brother of Jesus: there is an apostle James, son of Zebedee, brother of John, or just James brother of John, who is mentioned 11 times in the Synoptics and once briefly in Acts 12:2 where he is killed by the sword on Passover by Herod; and there is also an apostle James, son of Alphaeus, mentioned three times in the Gospels and three times in Acts. Normally one would think that since the Gospels mention both of these James in the same sentence that they would not be the same person, but there are so many other instances of deceptive doublets in the New Testament that one cannot make that assumption. In particular, as we have seen above, Alphaeus/ Clophas was the real name of Jesus' step-father, thus making "the son of Alphaeus" Jesus' brother, meaning James, and "Zebedee" is simply invented and means the same thing (Eisenman 96-97).

Though early Christian writings at least acknowledge James to be a blood brother of Jesus, theologians after Hegesippus denied this kinship. The ruling view in the 3rd century was that Jesus' brothers came from the first marriage of Joseph, and later in the 4th century James became a cousin (Hengel 89-90). Origen takes it even further by arguing that James and the other brothers were not blood brothers, but rather symbolic or adoptionist brothers (Eisenman 396-397). Eusebius misquotes Josephus who referred to "the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ" and changed it to "the brother of him that is called Christ, whom the Jews had slain, notwithstanding his pre-eminent Righteousness" - the very words previously used to describe James (Eisenman 404).

Yet despite downplaying and marginalizing James, the New Testament also slyly uses many elements from James' life and teachings and applies them to its composite picture of "Jesus", as well as to other characters such as Mary and Stephen. It does so in three ways: one is borrowings from James,

one is the depiction of Jesus as the opposite of James, and the third consists of James' characteristics applied to other characters.

Borrowings from James applied to Jesus

1. The quote from Hegesippus that James was "holy from his mother's womb" is used by Luke 1:26-42 to construct the birth of Jesus.

2. James lifelong Naziritism is used to create a fictional town Nazareth as Jesus' hometown (Eisenman 241-242, 321).

3. Jesus' evocation in Matthew 26:24 of the "Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of Heaven" is the same quote as James' 62 C.E. proclamation in the Temple on Passover in the Pseudo-Clementines and in early Church accounts (Eisenman 213, 242). This phrase is repeated several times with several variations in the Gospels (Matt 16:28, Mark 8:8, Luke 9:26).

4. In Matthew 4:5 the same phraseology is used in the story of Jesus' Temptation in the wilderness as for the death of James: "Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, `If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down.'" This is how James' death is described too: "thrown down from the pinnacle of the Temple in the holy city" (Eisenman 423).

5. Early Church accounts depict James going into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur to ask forgiveness for the sins of the whole people. The Gospels apply that to Jesus in Matthew 9:2-8, Luke 5:17-26 and Mark 2:1-12 where Jesus cures a man with palsy and forgives his sins. The Scribes and Pharisees cry out "blasphemy" (the charge against James) and insist that only God has the power to forgive sins.

6. The blasphemy charge is the same for James and Jesus. This makes no sense in the case of Jesus who should have been charged with insurrection and subversion according to the story in the Gospels, so clearly the charge against James is being applied to him (Eisenman 565-566).

7. As a priest, James was entitled to a full Sanhedrin trial. The Gospels transfer this to Jesus, who was being charged with sedition by the Romans and would never have been tried by the Sanhedrin, certainly not on Sabbath and not on Passover.

8. The "laundryman" or "fuller" mentioned in accounts of James' death appears again in Mark 9:3 where Jesus' clothes became white as snow "as no fuller on earth can whiten them" (Eisenman 685).

9. Origen, Eusebius and Jerome quotes Josephus as saying that "the

downfall of Jerusalem was believed to be on account of his (James') death" - but this quote is no longer to be found in any extant copies of Josephus' works, probably removed by Christians. This idea was then applied to Jesus in his predictions of the downfall of Jerusalem (Eisenman 234, 395).

10. James' words at his death "O Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" are placed in Jesus' mouth by the New Testament (Schonfield 220).

Deliberate opposites to James applied to Jesus

1. Jesus is shown in Luke 5:30 par. as consorting with sinners and tax collectors in order to draw a contrast to James (Eisenman 300). This also succeeds in taking embarrassing features of Paul, such as the fact that he was a Herodian and consorted with tax collectors, namely the rulers, and maliciously attributing them to Jesus. The kind of people barred from Qumran - the blind, lame, crippled, sexually impure - "are just the categories of persons Jesus is pictured as having repeated intercourse with in the Gospels" (267). The same goes for the categories of people barred from the Temple like lepers, the blind, the lame, people with a running discharge (281).

2. Jesus is pictured as being a glutton and a drunkard in order to contrast him with James who ate sparingly and drank no alcohol. The emphasis on Jesus and his disciples not fasting in Matt 9:14 par. also undermines James' Temple atonement and fasting on Yom Kippur (Eisenman 617). And the Gospels emphasize Jesus' teachings that "what goes into your mouth does not defile you" to imply that Jesus was not vegetarian like James. This is once again malicious, since Jesus was staunchly vegetarian but it is Paul who was not and sought to undermine that ethical teaching.

3. The Gospels make a point of saying that Jesus' legs were not broken on the cross, whereas James' legs were broken. The Gospel of John shows an intense interest in this question, repeating the same point three times in as many lines (19:31-33) (Eisenman 577).

4. Jesus says "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" in direct contrast to what the Qumran Hymns say about lifelong Naziritism which could well be applied to James: "You drew me out of the womb...Cast out upon your lap from my birth, you have been my God from my mother's womb" (Eisenman 578)

Borrowings from James applied to other characters

1. James' lifelong Naziritism is transferred to make Mary a perpetual virgin, which is of course absurd as she had at least four sons and two daughters.

2. A Roman centurion named Cornelius, part of a group who were universally hated for their brutality, is depicted as "pious and god-fearing, doing many good works for the people, and supplicating God continually" in Acts 10:2 and as an "upright and God-fearing man" in 10:22. This is a direct allusion to James done in a truly malicious manner (Eisenman 497).

3. The details of the stoning of James in Hegesippus and other early accounts are transferred to the fictional story of the stoning of Stephen as a Christian martyr in Acts 7:55-60, after his long speech in Acts 7:2-53: "the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God", "crying out with a loud voice", "cast him out", "falling to his knees, "cried out in a loud voice", "Lord, lay not this sin on them". But what is truly malicious about this is that the words and life of James, a thoroughly devout Jew, are then used for anti-Semitic purposes, to accuse "the Jews" of persecuting all the prophets and killing the Righteous One. Notice how the story is both true and false in a diabolical manner: the "Righteous One" meaning James himself was killed by the high priests whom Stephen is addressing here (not by "the Jews"!), but here the application is twisted to mean that the Jews killed the Messiah, meaning Jesus. Yet Acts does admit in 8:1 that it was Paul, and not the Jews, who was involved in Stephen's death: "Saul was consenting to his death".

Chapter 20:
The Denigration of Judas Thomas in the New Testament

The New Testament manipulation of historical truth for political purposes is exemplified to the highest degree in its treatment of Jesus' brother Judas Thomas. Not only is he denigrated as "doubting Thomas" but he is diabolically and maliciously turned into the very symbol of betrayal and evil, Judas Iscariot. And this distortion is strongly connected with the New Testament's need to supplant the true gospel of Jesus, the Gospel of Thomas, which bears Judas Thomas' name.

The Prologue to the Gospel of Thomas says: "These are the sayings which are secret/hidden which Jesus who is living spoke and he wrote them, namely Didymos Judas Thomas." It is interesting to note what seems like intentional grammatical ambiguity in the last line as to who was the author of the Gospel of Thomas: the sentence could just as easily been turned around to make it clear that Thomas is the writer. Instead the saying implies that either or both Jesus and Thomas wrote the gospel.

If you consider the extraordinarily complex and subtle level of the sayings as well as the careful and mathematical structure of the sayings as a whole, it is clear that they are not some random compilation by some unknown later editor but are the product of a great mind. They could be the product of two great minds working together which makes them even more extraordinary.

And there is even more to their collaboration than intellectual and brotherly closeness. Amazingly enough, Thomas is not only universally referred to as Jesus' brother but also as his twin brother. "Didymos" is Greek and means "twin", and "Thomas" is related to Hebrew te`om, Aramaic te`oma and Syriac tama and also means "twin". Thomas' real name is Judas; thus his name in the Gospel of Thomas really reads "Twin Judas Twin" (Nagel Erw 386n). There is no evidence that it was used as a proper name in pre-Christian Greek, Aramaic or Hebrew, and there are clear indications that it was long understood as a nickname in the Syriac Christian tradition. All Greek evidence for the name Thomas is found in writings of post-Christian origin and the same is true for the Semitic form of the name in Greek inscriptions and papyri (Klijn John 89). The fact that in order to adapt the

spelling of the word to the Greek there are four different transliterations of the name Thomas in Syriac, with one of them taken to mean "chaos, abyss", indicates that the original Syriac word was not taken from the Greek (Klijn John 91).

Even the New Testament admits his twin nature in three passages, but only in John: 11:16 says "Thomas, called the Twin (Didymos in the original), said to his fellow disciples...", 20:24 says "now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them...", and 21:2 says the disciples to whom Jesus revealed himself included "Thomas called the Twin". Only once do the Gospels admit that Jesus had a brother called Judas, in Matthew 13:55, so drawing on the Gospel of Thomas and the Thomas literature clearly this is the same person as Thomas the Twin. And early Christian writings admit the twin nature of Thomas as well: Priscillian refers to Thomas in Tract. III as iuda apostolus...ille didymus domini (the apostle Judas the twin of the Lord) who then touched Christ's wounds, and Pseudo-Isidor of Seville says the same in Ch. 75 of De vita: Thomas Christi didymus nominatus est (Thomas is called the twin of Christ). The Breviarum apostolorum which exists in several medieval manuscripts gives the following explanation to the cognomen Thomas Didymus: hoc est Christi similis (this one resembles Christ) (Blinzler 32). This belief in the twinship of Thomas and his likeness to Jesus continued to be in circulation down to the 14th century and existed in the first ages of the Eastern Church (Harris Cult 115).

There is a whole literature around Thomas - The Book of Thomas and The Acts of Thomas which includes the Hymn of the Pearl - and here too he is called "Twin". It does not take much reading in the Thomas literature to come across the pervasive theme of the close identity between Thomas and Jesus. This is shown in the Nag Hammadi writing The Book of Thomas the Contender in which there are a number of phrases to describe their closeness: my true friend, he who understands himself, fellow spirit, truthful companion, fellow laborer (Nagel Thomas 66-69). And in the Acts of Thomas, as Silverstev says, "the literary ambiguity in the interactions between these two main characters speaks for itself, and it is intended at the very least to prevent the reader from drawing clear borders between the two of them" (Silverstev 330). In the Acts of Thomas (11, 34, 45, 57, 151) Thomas' "close resemblance or likeness to Jesus is a recurring theme in the writing, often causing confusion about the identity of both Jesus and Thomas" (Uro Thomas 121-12).

If they were biological twins, that does not necessarily mean they had to look alike. The majority of twins, 70-80%, are fraternal twins where two eggs are involved in the womb which have separate placentas and quite different genetic make-ups and thus do not result in close look-alikes. Iden-

tical twins, which are about 20-30% of the total number of twins, involve only one ovum and one sperm and here the two embryos do share the same placenta and identical sets of genes which cause the two babies born to look alike (Lash 28).

Whether fraternal or identical, there is a profound level of communication and attunement between twins. Lash expresses it beautifully: "Behaviourally, most twins...are quite normal people...What does distinguish them is often an uncanny sense of symbiosis, the feeling of living simultaneously with or through the body, mind and emotions of the other. Twins are highly empathic with each other and may even be distinctly telepathic, knowing what is happening in each other's lives without needing the usual means of communication. They can be deeply dependent upon each other, emotionally and psychologically, and it is very common, when one twin dies, for the other to feel imbalanced and disoriented in a profound way. Perhaps twinhood is as close as nature dares to place us to the romantic dream of twin-souls interfused by the power of love" (Lash 29-30).

Does the fact that Jesus is a twin help to explain his view of the world? One of his primary teachings is the attainment of Oneness: becoming a monachos, one who is living, a single one, being united rather than divided, attaining the undivided Kingdom. And there is an equal emphasis on making the two one and transcending duality to attain unity. It is hard not to see this teaching in terms of his own experience: from early on he experienced duality, seeing a double of himself in the world, but also unity, feeling deeply attuned with that double. His sensitivity to that experience of Oneness that he has had makes him uniquely able to convey it to others. Similarly, Thomas' experience as a twin makes him uniquely able to be a faithful expositor of Jesus' teachings.

What is also remarkable in the Gospel of Thomas is its high degree of paradoxical ambiguity and multi-layeredness and that is exactly what we find in the way humans have perceived and represented twins. As Lash says: "Closely examined, Twins pose all manner of conundrums and inner contradictions. Ponder it as we will, the dynamic interfusion of Twins never lends itself to a clearcut exposition. Etymologically, `Twin' denotes both union and separation, joining and parting. In Middle English...to twin something meant to split or divide it... But twin was also used to describe joining, juxtaposing or combining into one... Doubling, or replication, is the active mode of duality, but this is not to be mistaken for the harmonious balancing-act of pure opposites... Rather...they embody the trick proposition of errant near-symmetry" (Lash 6). Twins are both united and divided, alike and not alike, joined together and individual, symmetrical and asymmetrical.

And there is something about this asymmetrical symmetry and this non-dual duality of twins that deeply disturbs people and causes them to want to retreat to the simple dichotomies of dualistic thinking. As Lash says: "Twins are dangerous either... because they incarnate the forces of supernatural conflict, or because they reproduce the image of cosmic near-symmetry in a literal manner which violates the boundaries of the secret, invisible realm where those forces are believed to originate" (Lash 12). Twins, who are idiosyncratic pairs, open the door to a higher paradoxical reality underlying this visible reality, an inverted ambiguous reality of potential disorder and chaos that humans fear and thus charge with taboo and sacredness (Lash 8).

In folklore and tribal customs twins are both revered and feared, but more often feared than revered. In some tribes the birth of twins is greeted as a omen of good fortune, and at least one of them is treated as the progeny of a totemic ancestor or power-animal, or as the offspring of a normal father and a wizard. For example, in the Akwaala tribe in Southern California it was considered a lucky privilege to give birth to twins and "it was customary for all twins of that tribe to wear magnificent garb as a mark of distinction for their privileged status." Twins also enjoyed a special standing among the Cocopa, Yuma, Zuni and Mohave, among which twins were supposed to be of supernatural origin and to possess the powers of clairvoyance (Gedda 6). And among the Ekoi tribe in the African interior "when a twin-birth occurs they make it an occasion of rejoicing, and her neighbors present gifts to the happy mother" (Harris 15).

But in the majority of tribes twins are a curse so serious that the children are often killed and the mother permanently banished. The taboo is so severe that the twins often cannot be buried and must be executed in a ritual manner. In tribes where the twins' lives are spared, there are twin-towns where the outcast mothers and their offspring live (Lash 5, 12). Many tribes worldwide, from the New World to Africa, were extremely hostile to twins and usually put one or both of them to death, believing that twin births were caused by an enemy's malediction. Gedda explains this split into positive as well as negative attitudes even between neighboring tribes as follows: "The primitive mind explains the phenomenon as being due to the intrusion of some supernatural force. That is why twins assume a special character which can result in a positive or negative attitude toward them" (Gedda 7).

In mythology world-wide there is always an inherent tension and conflict in all twin stories, yet twins are essential to the very creation of reality and human society. The more primitive a mythology is, the more dyadic it is: for example, in Central American mythology the very oldest of the gods are designated by the prefix ome meaning "two" and twin culture heroes abound in both North and South America. In cosmogonic mythologies worldwide

there is a high incidence of twin deities and firstborn pairs which are both benevolent and hostile to humans (Lash 9-11). Among the Babylonians and Assyrians there were seven twin constellations and in Indian mythology the young twin gods named Asvin were so important and had such healing powers that the Rig-Veda contains 50 hymns dedicated to them and they were invoked three times daily by the Vedic chanter in sacrificial rites. The most famous twins in Greek mythology were the Dioscuri, meaning "sons of Zeus", who were so popular that there were innumerable literary references and archaeological traces to this pair in classical antiquity (Gedda 3-4).

The stories of twins who are cultural founders in which one is stronger and murders or displaces the weaker one are legion: Jacob and Esau in the Hebrew Bible, who are described as being dissimilar and as being already enmeshed in conflict in the womb; Anpu and Bata, a very complicated Egyptian twin story of 1250 B.C.E where Bata dies twice, his death also being twinned, and is reborn each time; Herakles and Iphikles, a Greek myth where Herakles is a kind of Superman and Iphikles disappears yet Herakles takes Iphikles' son as his companion in his exploits; Romulus and Remus where Romulus kills Remus and becomes the founder of Rome; and the trickster tales of the Americas "where one twin is strong and wily, the other is weak and dull-witted, yet always capable of enough ingenuity to confound the activities of his superior" (Lash 13-14) We might even call the Adam and Eve myth a twin story, with Eve being the stronger of the two. Invariably in these stories, though "the presence of the lesser, weaker twin often highlights the superiority of the other", at the same time "the power of the lesser twin does come into play against the greater one" (Lash 13).

What I find interesting in these stories is the contradiction between the actual reality of twin relationships and the way in which they are portrayed in human perception. We have seen that in reality twins are unusually close in a telepathic way and free of rivalry and conflict, yet in the stories it is always the opposite. Clearly humans are projecting their own discomfort over the paradox of twins onto the actual twins themselves.

How does the Jesus and Thomas twin relationship fit into this general cultural heritage? Quite in contrast to the stories of the rivalry of twin brothers, in them there is no hint of rivalry or conflict, no trace of fear and taboo; instead they have a powerful bond akin to the romantic love of soulmates. They may well have been rejected by their society in real life which caused them to draw together even more closely: not only were they illegitimate but twins as well, which must have called up a large amount of hostility, shunning and superstitious fear from others. But they transmute that rejection into a sensitivity to higher truths that most people who are not born on the edge are not privy to. More than the common run of people who

fear ambiguity and paradox, they as twins embrace it and understand how it undergirds the very nature of the reality of the universe. Judas Thomas turns out to be an influential historical figure, especially in Syria, and there is an extensive literature associated there with his name, which includes the Gospel of Thomas, the Acts of Thomas, the Book of Thomas the Contender and the Hymn of the Pearl. There is a strong tradition of Thomas moving to Edessa and even on to South India and a long history of veneration of him in both places. Despite all the New Testament obfuscation, Thomas is the same person as Judas who is called Jesus' brother in Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55, and the same person as Thaddaeus, Lebbaeus and Judas son of James as we have seen in the examination of disciples' names above.

This equation of Thomas and the given name Judas is shown in the Syrian Thomas literature. As Gunther says: "In the Acts of Thomas the oldest manuscripts of the Syriac text (the original language) generally designate the Apostle as `Judas', but this later was altered to `Thomas' (except in chh. 125-158, Greek). Later readers, especially of the Greek text, knew the Apostle of India who was buried with honors in Edessa primarily by the name `Thomas'...Apostolic succession in India is traced to `Judas Thomas' by the orthodox Syriac Teaching of the Apostles...In the Book of Thomas the Contender `Judas Thomas' is addressed as `Brother Thomas' by the Savior (138:2, 4)".

Interestingly, in the version of John 14:22 in Ephrem and Syrus Curetonianus it says "Judas Thomas" and in Syrus Sinaiticus "Thomas" rather than the present "Judas (not Iscariot)". Eusebius Eccl. Hist. 13.4 and 11, along with the Syriac translation and the parallel passage in the Doctrine of Addai, also has "Judas Thomas" with reference to the Abgar legend. This later becomes "Thomas" or "Judas" (Gunther Meaning 124-127). The Greek version of the Acts of Thomas even has his name fully as given in the Gospel of Thomas, "Judas Thomas, who is also called Didymus", while the Syriac version only has "Judas Thomas the Apostle" (Klijn Acts 158). In the oldest known Syriac text of the Acts of Thomas (5th/6th cent.), the leading character is called Judas; in a 10th century manuscript we also find the name Judas but this has afterwards been changed into Thomas, and not until the 19th century does a manuscript give the name Thomas only (Klijn John 92).

The Christian sources, however, go out of their way to be misleading and deceptive about the existence pf Judas Thomas. In particular, they separate mentions of "Judas" from mentions of "Thomas" or "Thaddaeus". Eusebius in his Eccl. Hist 1.13 relates that King Agbarus of Edessa wrote to Jesus seeking his help to cure him of a disease: "Though he did not yield to his call at that time, he nevertheless condescended to write him

a private letter, and to send one of his disciples to heal his disorder... After the resurrection...Thomas, one of the twelve apostles,...sent Thaddeus, who was also one of the seventy disciples, to Edessa, as a herald and evangelist". In Acts 15:22, however, right after James finishes a long speech which shows him to be in charge, it says: "Then it seemed good to the apostle and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren".

Both sources are misleading in their own way. In Eusebius the whole story of the correspondence between Jesus and Agbarus is clearly legendary and fabricated, and even Pope Gelasius declared it apocryphal in 494 CE (Segal 73). Modern scholars agree and Segal cogently argues: "The conversion to Christianity of an important monarch at this early period would not have been ignored by Christian writers for close on 300 years. Secondly, Edessa was, from, at any rate, the third century, under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Antioch, but her Christian community is unlikely to have accepted this subordinate role had her ruler and the majority of her citizens adopted Christianity shortly after the crucifixion" (Segal 64-65).

If we look at our list of disciples, Thomas sending out Thaddeus is patently absurd, as they are the same person: an early inscription found near Urfa, probably 5th century but possibly older, that is an incomplete copy of the Letter of Jesus to Abgar refers to "Thaddaeus that is Thomas". And "at the time of the visit of Egeria to Edessa (384 CE), Saint Thomas was himself regarded as the evangelist of the city; the abbess makes no mention of Addai or Thaddaeus" (Segal 66, Gunther Meaning 127).

If we use Acts for further information, it is clear that it is James who sent out Thomas, here "Judas called Barsabbas" which merely means "son of the father". Acts claims that Paul went as well, but it is noticeable that in 15:34 it says of Judas and Silas "after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brethren to those who had sent them" but in the subsequent section 15:34-40 it is also clear that Paul, Barnabas and Silas left "after some days", whereas Judas did not. Barnabas may be entirely invented and may actually be the same as Judas Thomas when the latter is not mentioned, as in Acts 11:22 there is a similar or the same trip to "Antioch" by "Barnabas" alone.

Acts refers to "Antioch" which could be the capital of the former Seleucid Empire in Syria, but on coins of Antiochus Epiphanes (d. 163 BCE) Edessa was called "Antioch by the Callirhoe" (Antioch by the beautiful flowing water) and it was also called that by Pliny (though he incorrectly maintains that the city's name was Antioch before it was Edessa) (Segal 6).

Ironically, those Christian references to "Antioch" are likely to be to Edessa to begin with and to be hiding the strong presence of Judas Thomas there (Desjardins 127-128). All the Christian sources are trying to hide a trip and possibly a long-term move by Judas Thomas to Edessa on the direct authority of James, and this deception indicates that the trip must have been important and that there must have been nothing "Christian" about it.

Edessa, or Orhay in Syriac, founded under Alexander the Great's successor Seleucos (358-280 B.C.E.), was the capital of the independent state of Osrhoene which lay on the great trade route to the East which passed between the Syrian desert to the south and the mountains of Armenia to the north. Starting in the 2nd half of the 2nd century B.C.E. insubordinate despots seized power for themselves in Edessa and its environs and were able to maintain the independence of the Osrhoene kingdom against both the Parthians and the Romans until its conquest by the Romans after the assassination of the Emperor Caracalla in Edessa in 216/217 CE (Drijvers Edessa 4-8). The city, bilingual in Greek and Syriac Aramaic, was a center of literary culture and, because of its famous school where philosophy and rhetoric were taught to the young, was called the Athens of the East (Drijvers Syrian 126). It was known for the high skill of its architects, its school of Edessan mosaicists, its partiality for music and its vigorous literary activity (Segal 32-35). Women too, who were entitled to own their own property, held an honored position in Edessan society (Segal 38). One could say that this flourishing of culture in Edessa laid the basis for a later autonomous Syrian national literature and culture (Dihle 57).

With a mixed population of indigenous Arabs, Jews and Greeks and a decided Parthian influence, Edessa was also religiously tolerant, practicing its own highly syncretistic state pagan religion which included worship of the planets and reverence for running water and sacred fish (Drijvers Syrian 127, Segal 48-50). The Elkesaites also flourished, whose doctrines were a mixture of Judaism, Christianity and paganism: veneration of water as the source of life, belief in the male and female principle of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and belief in reincarnation (Segal 44). Along with a political alliance with the nearby kingdom of Adiabene whose king Ezad had converted to Judaism in 36 CE, Edessa was also hospitable to its quite influential Jewish population, many of whom were engaged in the silk trade with China and who constituted perhaps 12% of the population, a percentage based on the number of the known tomb inscriptions (Barnard 161-162, Klijn Edessa 27, Segal 30, 67).

Edessa is thus precisely the kind of syncretist and tolerant environment that would attract an anti-establishment renegade philosophy such as Jesus'. That is what we see in the apparent success of Judas Thomas in Edessa, who was greatly venerated there and whose grave became a place of

pilgrimage, as Clement of Alexandria reports (Strom. 4.9.71). The Thomas literature or "school" does seem to have some commonalities and may even be influenced by the Gospel of Thomas. As Drijvers says: "Edessa...turns out to be a center of traditions linked with the apostle Thomas...All writing connected with his name have essential doctrinal elements in common...The central theme of the theology of the Thomas literature is man's regaining of paradise lost through the right use of his mind and will...Sin and atonement are not emphasized and actually absent. Like Jesus...man should become a `single one'...which implies the actual abolition of the difference between male and female, a reinstatement of man's situation before the fall...The true believer...is in a sense identical with Christ, because he has regained his original estate which Christ represents and reveals...Another element in the same complex is the symbolism of the bridal chamber or heavenly wedding feast, where man is united with his heavenly alter ego and the original state of harmony is restored...The relationship between Jesus and Thomas consequently functioned as an ideal paradigm of the relation between every believer and his Lord" (Drijvers Early 170-172).

Thomas and the Gospel of Thomas are so closely associated with the Syrian tradition and with Edessa that many scholars even argue that Thomas was written there, due to the Syriac name "Thomas" and the Aramaic expressions in Thomas (Drijvers Edessa 14). Perrin goes so far as to argue that "the Thomasine collection is to be understood not as a string of Greek sayings randomly compiled through many stages, but as a unified Syriac text carefully worded and arranged so as to conform to a certain literary-rhetorical pattern" and by retranslating it into Syriac he finds a number of hitherto unsuspected catchword associations (Perrin THomas 25).

What is especially fascinating about Edessa is that its religious traditions in the first three centuries C.E. exhibit the same kind of free-wheeling eclecticism that we also see in the Egypt at the time of the Nag Hammadi Library. It is the home of Mani, Marcion and Bardesanes, all later considered "heretics", and it may be the home of the beautiful Odes of Solomon and the Hymn of the Pearl. All these are much later than the Gospel of Thomas, but they seem to illustrate the general spirit of the place. As Barnard says, "probably we must envisage a complex collection of loosely connected groups in Edessa towards the end of the second century - a suitable milieu for Christian Gnostic and semi-Gnostic beliefs to develop" (Barnard 173).

It is even possible that certain writings found in Egypt in the Nag Hammadi Library, such as the Gospel of Truth and the Gospel of Philip, "originated or were known at an early date in Edessa" (Barnard 173): Nagel, for instance, has shown a number of Syriacisms in the Gospel of Truth and both Segelberg and Ménard have argued that due to numerous Syriac ele-

ments in style and wording the Gospel of Philip should be considered of Syrian origin, most likely stemming from Antioch. The most obvious references in the Gospel of Philip are in 56.3-13: "The word for Christ in Syriac is messias, and in Greek is khristos"; and in 63.21-24: "The Eucharist is Jesus. Now in Syriac it is called pharisatha, that is, `that which is spread out'". Though the word pharisatha is disputed and difficult to understand, the references to Syria are clear (Menard Milieu 261-266, Beziehungen 317-321). As Segelberg summarizes it: "A Semitic influence...is more prominent than in most other early Gnostic sources. It is not a mere superficial knowledge of Semitic words...but there is a certain amount of basic knowledge of the language...Greek is the original language but it preserves some material from Syriac and Jewish Christian sources" (Segelberg 222-223).

Bardesanes or Bardaisan (154-223 CE) exemplifies this Edessene eclecticism: of pagan priestly background and instructed at Hierapolis, the famous cult center of the Syrian goddess Atargatis, he was the first genuine Edessene theologian known in Syrian and Greek sources. He was a theologian, philosopher, ethnographer, historian and astrologer, a composer of 150 hymns, a master at bow and arrow; he enjoyed a high position at the court of King Abgar, undertook research trips and received Indian visitors (Barnard 171-172, Ehlers 289, 298, Segal 35-37). In his philosophical system he drew on widespread astrological lore, semi-Gnostic ideas and pagan philosophy and incorporated Jesus as a divine emissary of God, but also Hermes-Nebo and other pagan figures (Drijvers Edessa 26). Barnard calls his thought world "a Syrian Jewish-Christian Gnosis similar to that which appears in the Gospel of Thomas" (Barnard 171): is this the influence of Judas Thomas?

Considering the importance of Thomas as the person closest to Jesus and the author of the document bearing his direct teachings, we can now understand that if the New Testament was to assert the primacy of Paul, it would have to get Thomas out of the way just as it did James. We have already seen how the New Testament compilers downplay and denigrate the brothers of Jesus, James and John the Baptist. But of all the figures in Jesus' life they absolutely hate Judas Thomas the most and expend much energy disguising his existence and vilifying him. And the same is true for the second century Christian apologists who do not mention Thomas at all, aside from one short mention in a citation from Papias in Eusebius Eccl. Hist. 3.39.4 (Desjardins 131n39).

What did Thomas do that arouses such fear and disdain? The Gospel of Thomas continually emphasizes seeking the truth for oneself and not accepting the word of authority. Jesus here is shown as a teacher only, whole goal is not having power over his disciples but instead empowering them to think for themselves and experiencing their own truth. This attitude

was deeply threatening to an autocratic Roman imperial church insisting on absolute obedience. So the Gospels inserted a story in which Thomas refused to act on blind belief and demanded proof before he would accept that Jesus was actually resurrected. According to John 20:29, who is the only gospel which has this story, Jesus responds: "Do not be faithless, but believing...Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." This repeated message is obviously blatantly political; it inculcates blind belief in Jesus and thus the Catholic Church. The message is not to use your own reason and senses to determine the truth but simply to believe what authority tells you, a thoroughly reactionary stand. And ever since then Thomas has been slandered as "Doubting Thomas", as if doubt were such a mortal sin.

But there is a darker and more malicious undertone to the hostility to Thomas, and that is the New Testament's creation of his other identity of Judas Iscariot. Throughout the Synoptics Judas is only mentioned in Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55 as a brother of Jesus, while Thomas is mentioned in the Synoptics (Mt 10:2, Mk 3:18, Lk 6:15) as one of the twelve: the two are not directly linked. Judas Iscariot is also mentioned in the Synoptic lists of disciples but when the action heats up in Jerusalem he is also called "Judas, one of the twelve" along with "Judas Iscariot".

The Gospel of John, however, drops all cognomens in the critical scene of the betrayal at the Garden of Gethsemane and simply calls him "Judas". Oddly enough, right before the Passion scene John 14:22 mentions a "Judas (not Iscariot)" who asks him why Jesus will manifest to them but not to the world. All in all, it seems that there is a deliberate attempt to use the confusion of Judases to equate Judas the brother of Jesus with Judas Iscariot. And John cements that connection with Thomas when he calls him "Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin" in 20:24 and associates him with Jesus' wounds, caused, of course, by Judas Iscariot.

Clearly John, and surely the Synoptic compilers as well, are aware of the twin nature of Jesus and Judas Thomas, but they maliciously invert their relationship: instead of the twins being unusually close and of an uncanny spiritual attunement, the New Testament makes Judas the betrayer and killer of Jesus! This is truly diabolical.

And there is another political element to their creation of the Iscariot figure that present-day scholars invariably overlook. There has been much scholarly discussion of the meaning of the word "Iscariot" and the long-standing consensus has been that it consists of the Hebrew word for "man", ish, and the name of a town, Kerioth, thus "man of Kerioth", a town in Judaea ostensibly mentioned in Joshua 15:25, Jeremiah 48:24 and Amos 2:2

(Gartner 41). Scholars have then concluded from the assumptions that he was a Judaean and not a Galilean and thus of a higher social standing that he was the outsider among the disciples, more ambitious than the others and thus more likely to defect. Others have suggested Sychar in Samaria mentioned in John 4:5, making him a Samaritan and even more of an outsider. As is usual with New Testament geography, however, neither of these towns existed: Kerioth is nowhere mentioned in post-biblical literature and simply means "cities" which is how it is translated in the Septuagint, and Sychar is not mentioned in any other sources aside from John (Maccoby Judas 129-131). In addition, ish in Hebrew has a long and unchangeable vowel, in which case it would not be possible to change the name to Scarioth or Scariotes as so many Old Latin and Old Syriac Gospel manuscripts do (Ingholt Judas 155-156, Smith Judas 531).

The linguistic problem is that the endings on the word "Iscariot" in the New Testament citations are neither Hebrew nor Aramaic: the Hebrew proper name ending oth is only found in three passages in the present-day New Testament (Mk 3:19, 14:10, Lk 6:16) but in the oldest versions it is the meaningless ot; in eight others the Greek or Latin ending otes is used which would not fit a Hebrew place name at all nor an Aramaic word (Torrey 55).

Thus "Iscariot" is neither Aramaic nor Hebrew but Greek or Latin, and there is one such word that scholars have consistently proposed and just as consistently rejected: Sicarius or the plural Sicarii. In the variant reading Scarioth and Scariotes in the Gospel passages in the 5th century Codex Bezae, a principal Gospel authority, the "i" is being dropped, which results in a word that looks even closer to Sicarius (Ingholt 152). If Sicarius is meant here, then that would explain why the surname Iscariot was not translated in any of the New Testament passages: the Gospel writers translate the Aramaic name of James and John, Boanerges, the name Barnabas, helper of Paul, the name Peter given to Simon - why not Iscariot? (Ingholt 158) Clearly they are hiding something.

And what they are hiding is a political allusion that would have been understood by anyone who had read Josephus. Josephus refers to three different anti-Roman Jewish groups whom he finds equally objectionable, the lestai (bandits) the zelotai and the sicarioi, and who are often assumed to be the same group, especially because Josephus also refers to both Sicarii and Zealots as "bandits". Many scholars, including Schürer, Roth, Baron, Hengel and Brandon, assume that Judas the Galilean was the founder of a Jewish freedom movement in 6 CE and that the above groups were simply variants of an all-encompassing Jewish rebel movement throughout the first century called Zealots who finally led the Jewish Revolt of 66-70 CE (Smith Zealots 1-2, Horsley Sicarii 435). However, Smith and Horsley show that the three

groups were quite different. The lestai were a typical phenomenon of rural social banditry which usually rob the well-to-do, government officials and landlords and have the support and admiration of the peasantry (Horsley 437). The Zealots as an organized party and not as "zealous" individuals did not come into existence until the winter of 67-68 CE and consisted of "the representatives of Palestinian, principally Judaean, peasant piety, hostile alike to the rich of the city, the upper priesthood of the Temple, and of course the foreign rulers (Smith 19).

The Sicarii, however, were not a rural but an urban phenomenon who began in the 50's and whose name was derived from the sica or dagger with which they murdered political targets. "In contrast to bandits, who made attacks and then fled to their hideaways because their identity was already known only too well, the Sicarii, although operating in broad daylight and in public places, assassinated their victims surreptitiously. Because of this clandestine manner of operation, no one knew who the assassins were, and they could continue to lead normal public lives in the city" (Horsley 438). Josephus reports that when their enemies fell "the murderers would join in the cries of indignation and, through this plausible behavior, avoided discovery. The first to be assassinated by them was Jonathan the High Priest. After his death, there were numerous daily murders" (Jewish War 2.254-56). The targets of these terrorist tactics were not Roman soldiers and civilians but rather the Jewish priestly aristocracy, notables and pro-Roman gentry in the countryside, and these tactics represented "the execution of a deliberately planned strategy for liberation from Roman rule" by causing terror among the upper class Jewish collaborators with the Romans (Horsley Sicarii 439-440, 444-445).

Thus, what the New Testament openly does is to call Judas a terrorist! and by implication Jesus too! According to Josephus, Eleazar, the leader of the Sicarii, was a descendant of Judas of Galilee, who revolted against the imposition of direct Roman rule and taxation over Judaea in 6 C.E. by breaking into the Herodian palace in Sepphoris and seizing the arms there. It seems a little too much of a coincidence that Luke has Jesus born in precisely that year and that his "evil twin" bears the name Judas Iscariot or Sicarius. In the Gospels Simon, another one of Jesus' brothers, is also variously called "Zealot", "Iscariot" and "Cananaean", the latter being the Hebrew word kannaim, a term used in the Talmud which also means "Zealot": as we have seen, of course, this is just a later mish-mash, as Sicarii and Zealots were by no means the same. Still, does not all this indicate the extent of the involvement of Jesus' family in the Jewish national cause, of whatever form that might have taken?

Just because the New Testament calls Judas a Sicarius doesn't mean he murdered people with a dagger: the Gospels may just be slandering him.

Josephus, for example, calls everyone who opposed the Romans "bandits" and he is particularly harsh on the Zealots, calling them "villains", and the Sicarii whom he accuses of "cruelty and avarice", something his allies the Romans would of course never be capable of. Torrey says, almost plaintively, that "Judas does not seem to have been a cutthroat, nor a man who would have joined a company of bandits" (Torrey 57). But perhaps idealistic people who are disturbed by the oppression and rapacity of an occupying imperialistic power and who aspire to a higher spiritual ideal are not necessarily a company of bandits. Thus, the political agenda of the New Testament is clear here: vilify the anti-Roman political activity of Jesus' brothers and dissociate the artificially apolitical figure Jesus from the Jewish nationalist cause by pretending, as Harwood says, that "Judas the Zealot had really been Jesus' enemy and had ultimately betrayed him" (Harwood 277).

And the Christian writers are so intent on their political agenda they don't even seem to realize the utter implausibility and clumsiness of their fabricated story of Judas Iscariot the Zealot. First of all, the motive is not very convincing. As Carmichael says: "Mark attempts no explanation at all, while Matthew simply advances as the motive Judas' greed...If Judas were interested in money only, it would obviously have been far easier for him simply to have absconded with the treasury of Jesus' followers than actually to sell his Lord" (Carmichael Death 23).

In Mark 14:10-11 and Luke 22:3-6 only "money" is mentioned, but in Matthew 26:14-16 the amount is 30 pieces of silver. 30 pieces of silver isn't negligible but it isn't an enormous amount of money either: it was the average price of a slave and enough to provide food for one person for about five months. But it isn't historical anyway, being based on Zechariah 11:12-13: "So they weighed for my hire, thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, cast them unto the potter." In Matthew 27:3-10 this becomes the story of Judas feeling remorse for his deed and returning to the high priests, casting the thirty pieces of silver at their feet with which to buy the piece of land known as the potter's field.

Nor does political opportunism seem to be the real motive, for, as Maccoby says, "if Jesus was arrested as a political subversive, then his betrayer would have to be a political collaborator with the Romans, a role for which nothing in the foregoing story prepares us" (Maccoby 77).

Secondly, the scene of the betrayal at Gethsemane makes absolutely no logical sense. Consider the story as the New Testament tells it: Jesus has publicly gone into Jerusalem, has been acclaimed the King of the Jews and has openly gone into the Temple, creating havoc. He does all this on the eve of Passover with Jewish pilgrims flooding into Jerusalem from all over the

Jewish world during a tense and revolutionary time in which there are thousands of Roman troops expecting trouble at any moment. From then on the logical thing for the Roman and Jewish authorities to do is to follow him and arrest him at the next opportunity when there is less of a crowd around him which could riot. Jesus does not need to be betrayed! They know exactly who and where he is!

As Carmichael says: "If he was such a well-known public figure who had preached to multitudes in the enormous Temple courtyard, and was the leader of a movement large enough to arouse the hostility of the authorities, both Jewish and Roman, why was Judas needed simply to point him out to his captors? Quite apart...from Judas' inexplicable baseness, just what information was he supposed to be selling? What, in short, was it worth to anyone?" (Carmichael 25).

The story raises many more questions and makes so little narrative sense that no good novelist would ever have come up with it, but as usual the New Testament is not trying to tell a real story or a historical one. Instead it is putting together random pieces of the Hebrew Bible which don't fit together to fulfill "prophecies" of Jesus' role as Messiah and his death, namely Zechariah 11:12-13, Psalm 41:10, 55:14, 69:26, 91:10 and 109:7-13, 2 Samuel 17:23 and 20:9-10 (Levy 537-538, Gartner 60-66). The inherently fictional nature is shown by the fact that in later Christian writings the story keeps growing by leaps and bounds: the writers take especial delight in adding as many gruesome details to Judas' death as they can possibly invent. As Enslin says, "that in any of these additions to what may be styled the Judas legend there is to be discerned any historical probability is quite unlikely" (Enslin 136) - and that is putting it mildly.

Christian scholars cannot imagine that Christian writers would make up such a story; as Torrey says: "There certainly is no ground for questioning the representation of all the Gospels, that Jesus was betrayed by one of his own little company, and the fact must have become generally known very soon" (Torrey 53). Yet they are willfully closing their eyes to endless contradictions that lead skeptically-inclined commentators to conclude that Judas Iscariot is an imaginary and mythical figure made up for the sole purpose of having someone to betray Jesus (Levy 539, Schläger 58-59).

In Mark 14:43-46 the scene is particularly clumsy. As Maccoby says: "Judas suddenly appears, although no indication has been given that he ever left the company of Jesus...The clumsiness may indicate that the betrayal theme has been superimposed on an earlier narrative in which there was no such betrayal. It is interesting too that betrayer is here called `Judas', showing that we have here a narrative in which Judas has not yet been differentiated

from Judas Iscariot. Moreover, Judas is identified as `one of the Twelve', as if it were necessary to explain why he was; this shows that in some earlier version which Mark was adapting this was the first introduction of Judas into the Gospel narrative" (Maccoby Judas 36).

And the story of betrayal is a late insertion. Significantly, the Greek verb paradidomi in the Gospel story never meant "betray" until the passages with Judas Iscariot in them were translated that way: its dictionary meaning is "to give or hand over, to give into another's hands as a hostage, to deliver up, surrender, hand over to justice, also to betray; hand down, transmit to posterity; grant, bestow, offer" (Liddell 521b). Klassen concludes that "not one ancient classical Greek text has so far surfaced in which paradidomi means `betray' or has the connotation of treachery" nor does the word "hand over" have a negative connotation in the Septuagint and Josephus as well, who uses the word 293 times, does not even once use it to mean "betray" (Klassen 47-49). As Schläger points out, the word is always translated with the meanings given in Liddell in all other passages of the New Testament where it is used except, strangely enough, the ones having to do with Judas Iscariot when all of a sudden it becomes "betray": an odd little coincidence (Schläger 54). And even in these passages "betray" did not start until the English translations of the 16th century (Klassen 56). Paul never mentions a betrayal or a betrayer: in 1 Cor 15:5 Paul says that the resurrected Jesus "appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve". While the Synoptics are careful to say "eleven" in the resurrection scene (Mt 28:16, Mk 16:14, Lk 24:33), John does not give a number at all, and in Matthew 19:28 Jesus includes the entire twelve original disciples, including Judas Iscariot, as those "who will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel". Nor is a betrayal mentioned in the Apostolic Fathers, in Didache, Justin or Aristides (Schlager 57). In the Gospel of Peter 14.60, a gospel mentioned by the Church Fathers and rediscovered in 1886-187 at Akhmim, Upper Egypt, it says "But we, the twelve disciples of the Lord, wept and mourned", clearly assuming Judas Iscariot was still in good standing (Hennecke 1.179). It is apparent that earlier traditions are being reflected in these citations which later editors neglected to change.

Similarly, to the Cainites Judas was a hero and the betrayal of Jesus was meritorious since it delivered mankind from the power of the Demiurge. And since they took the Docetist view that Jesus did not really suffer on the cross but only appeared to, Judas was simply helping Jesus to an early and painless translation to heaven. Thus the Cainites felt they were avoiding the rank Christian hypocrisy of desiring Jesus' death because it assures them salvation but refusing to take responsibility for it and delegating that responsibility to the Jews as Jesus' killers: the Cainites "acknowledged their complicity in the deed and gloried in it" (Maccoby Judas 94-95, Kasser Gospel 122-126).

This Cainite view of Judas is taught in the astounding Gospel of Judas (the actual title of the document) in which Judas betrays Jesus at his express wish. This gospel which Irenaeus had mentioned by name in 180 C.E. was rediscovered in Middle Egypt in the 1970's and after the usual detours through greedy dealers due to which the manuscript unfortunately deteriorated, it was finally acquired, restored and published by reputable scholars in 2006 (Kasser 47-68). In the very first scene there is a remarkable similarity to Saying 13 of the Gospel of Thomas where Jesus takes Thomas aside privately because he has a higher level of understanding: while the other disciples get angry because Jesus laughs at their prayer of thanksgiving over bread, Judas "was able to stand be

fore him" and Jesus asks to speak to him privately, a sign of their closeness. Judas feels himself to be an outsider and Jesus consoles him that "you will be cursed by the other generations - and you will come to rule over them". And finally at the end Jesus tells Judas "but you will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that bears (clothes) me".

As Kasser et al explain, "Judas is instructed by Jesus to help him by sacrificing the fleshly body (`the man') that clothes or bears the true spiritual self of Jesus. The death of Jesus, with the assistance of Judas, is taken to be the liberation of the spiritual person within" (Kasser Gospel 19-43). This is exactly what the Cainites said and according to Irenaeus (Ref. Her. 1.31.1) they had this very Gospel of Judas as their authority. And very significantly, according to Epiphanius (Pan. 38.1-3), the Cainites called Judas Jesus' relative.

Strangely enough, even the New Testament shows evidence of an older version which depicts Judas and Jesus as unusually close. First of all, as Wright perceptively argues, the Gospels call Judas Iscariot the "First of the Twelve". Mark 14:10 says o eis tôn dodeka, meaning "the one of the twelve", and in Hellenistic Greek "the one" is simply a colloquialism for "the first" (Wright Judas 20). This leadership position is indicated by the fact that Judas was the treasurer of the group, as John 12:6 shows (he "had the money box"), and must therefore have been respected and trusted to a high degree. And in Luke 22:24-30 the disciples dispute "which of them was to be regarded as the greatest" which may well be a discussion of whether Judas should continue in his leadership role: Jesus not only seems to support the status quo here ("let the greatest among you become as the youngest"), but he also includes Judas as one of those who will "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt 19:28), even though he supposedly knows all along that Judas will "betray" him.

Secondly, one can make a strong case for the startling idea that Judas Iscariot (or Judas Thomas the Twin) was Jesus' Beloved Disciple mentioned

in John 13:23 as "lying on Jesus' breast" and in 19:26 where he bade him take care of Jesus' mother. I know this is a rash statement considering that countless articles and books have been written on this topic and every candidate imaginable has been proposed as the Beloved Disciple, and the idea flies in the face of the consensus candidate for the last twenty centuries, John the Apostle or John son of Zebedee (Charlesworth 197).

But I am basing this conclusion on two New Testament passages which to me seem clear as daylight. John 21:20 says: "Peter turned and saw following them the disciple whom Jesus loved, who had lain close to his breast at the supper and had said, `Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?'...This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true." In John 13:23-25 it says: "One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus, so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, `Tell us who it is of whom he speaks'. So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, `Lord, who is it?'" And then Jesus gives the morsel of bread to "Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot", but nowhere does it say that he turned to a different person. As Charlesworth says, "one wonders why the author has written this section so that the Beloved Disciple (13:23) and Judas (13:36) are presented in such an ambiguous way. Readers can derive the opinion that they are really lying on the same couch because they are one and the same person" (Charlesworth Beloved 178). Precisely.

The clue that clinches it is in the Synoptic Gospels: in Mark all the disciples say "Is it I?" and in Luke they only talk to each other, but Matthew 26:25 has the only individual disciple who asks Jesus who the betrayer is and that is Judas Iscariot. I don't see how much more clear this can be: the beloved disciple is the one who asks Jesus about the identity of the betrayer and in Matthew that is Judas Iscariot.

Yet Christian scholars universally reject even the mere thought of this possibility even though that is what God's word, the New Testament, clearly says; as Charlesworth comments: "Most New Testament experts will not take seriously a suggestion that Judas could be identified in any way with the Beloved Disciple. The resistance will be immediate, unsympathetic, and the credentials of one supporting such an hypothesis will be severely questioned" (Charlesworth Beloved 174) In Charlesworth's exhaustive overview apparently only two people have ever dared say such a shocking thing, one being Ludwig Noack in 1876 and the other C. S. Griffin in 1892, the latter the author of a book so rare that even Harvard Libraries do not own it. Albert Schweitzer at least mentions

Noack for seven pages, though rather critically (Schweitzer Quest 172-179),

but otherwise both writers were roundly ignored. More recently Sidney Tarachov proposed the idea again and Maccoby is open to it (Maccoby Judas 138).

Surprisingly Charlesworth, who considers the mainstream candidate John the Apostle "really an assumption" that is accepted "usually without any independent research" (197), is sympathetic to the idea: "We must admit that there are some observations that warrant contemplating that Judas Iscariot is conceivably the Beloved Disciple. Why should this hypothesis be branded absurd, unthinkable, idiotic, inconceivable?...The place of Judas in the life of Jesus is something quite other than the portrayal of him in the final edition of the Gospel of John or in other early Christian literature. The more we study Judas Iscariot, the more we become impressed by the aggregation of pejoratives concerning him than we are with bruta facta from his life" (Charlesworth 174, 178). It is refreshing to see a New Testament scholar express some doubt on the standards of New Testament veracity. Here is an eminent theologian who has done thorough research on this subject and whose views should be taken seriously.

Yet even he is afraid of his own courage (or perhaps of the vast majority of unsympathetic New Testament experts severely questioning his credentials and coming to tar and feather him) and will not equate Judas Iscariot with Thomas whom he ends up arguing for as the beloved disciple (Charlesworth 235-236). He also does not once in his entire book refer to the critical passage in Matthew 26:25 that I think makes a clearcut case. Gunther makes the other half of the argument for Judas, Jesus' brother, as the Beloved Disciple: he argues that only a brother could meet the criteria for someone so close that Jesus could entrust his own mother to him and so it has to be the "Judas (not Iscariot)" mentioned in John 14:22 (Gunther Relation 142-144). Schenke wonders whether Judas Thomas, "the most mysterious of all the brothers of Jesus, might not have been the historical model (in terms of history of tradition) for the Beloved Disciple figure", especially considering the statement by Jesus "You are my twin and true friend" in the Book of Thomas 138.7-8 (Schenke Function 123-124). Now if we could only put these wise suggestions of Charlesworth, Gunther and Schenke together to form the Holy Trinity of brotherly names, then we would have something closer to the inconceivable truth.

If an open-minded person, however, can allow him- or herself to conceive the inconceivable, then let us close the three-fold circle: the Gospel of John admits that Judas Iscariot was Jesus' beloved disciple, it connects Judas Iscariot with Judas, Jesus' brother, while mentioning Thomas separately, and we know from many other sources that Judas and Thomas are the same person. Moreover, most astoundingly John admits that it was the beloved disciple who wrote his gospel, in other words Judas Thomas! And that can

only mean that whoever wrote the Gospel of John knew full well that the real story of Jesus that he was trying to supplant was the Gospel of Thomas and that Judas Thomas, Jesus' twin brother who is slandered by the New Testament as Judas Iscariot, wrote this gospel. It all really does make sense once you cut through all the New Testament obfuscation to find the pearl of truth shining deep down in its murky bowels.

All this evidence thus points to the fact that the original story of Jesus and Judas is one of great intimacy and closeness and that the story of Judas the Betrayer was a late Church addition for strictly political reasons. There are several possible motivations for this: denigration of Judas Thomas and of the primacy of Jesus' family in favor of Paul, and rank anti-Semitism. As Maccoby explains: "Judas was chosen because of his name, which signifies `Jew'. During the period leading up to the composition of the Gospels, the incipient antisemitism found in Paul's Epistles developed into a full-blown indictment of the Jewish people as the rejecters, betrayers, and finally murderers of Jesus...As a result of the Jewish War against Rome the Pauline Church... determined to disclaim all Jewish connections, deny that Jesus was in any way a rebel against Rome, and assert instead that he was a rebel against the Jewish religion, thus throwing the entire blame for the crucifixion of Jesus on the Jews" (Maccoby Judas 27-28).

And this is all accomplished by one vivid and dramatic scene in the New Testament in which "the whole anti-Semitic myth of the Gospels is unforgettably displayed: the inoffensive Jesus, resigned to his sacrificial death, standing meekly before the howling Jewish mob, in which all the elements of the Jewish people are represented - Priests, Sadducees, Pharisees, Sanhedrin and common people, united in the cry, `Crucify him!' Pilate, the Roman governor, stands by in helpless sorrow; the Romans are not to blame" (Maccoby Sacred 143). And what incalculable evil and destruction has resulted from this one fictional story.

The New Testament not only uses the Judas story for its anti-Semitic message but also draws on ancient traditions of the sacrifice of the victim who is both innocent and sinful. Sacrificial victims, whether human or animal, had to be unblemished as the foundation of civilization and culture represented an intrusion into the natural world and thus required an atoning return of the very best society could offer to the gods. This innocent victim was meant to assuage the gods' anger and to alleviate humans' guilt over their own sins, yet at the same time it had to be considered corrupt and evil in order to take on the sins of the entire society as the designated scapegoat. In many societies these scapegoats were expelled at the beginning of the new year to carry away the sins of the old year, as a means of purification (Frazier

Scape 224-228).

Yet because the victim is innocent, the figure of the slayer is particularly torn, ambivalent and contradictory. All the myths of twins and pairs of brothers in which one kills the other make an intimate connection between the sacrificial victim and the slayer, the Sacred Executioner: "The slayer must be an outcast, but he must also come from within the tribe, or he loses his representative validity. He must be disclaimed by the tribe, and yet be one of them, the more closely affiliated the better. The tribe must not perform the appalling act; yet it must be performed on their behalf. And ideally it must be performed by one who could act as their leader, because close to the victim-leader, and almost his doppelganger" (Maccoby Judas 44).

The portrayal of Judas in the New Testament fits these criteria of the Sacred Executioner perfectly, especially "the aura of fate that surrounds his act of betrayal" since Jesus knows what he is going to do: "Unless he voluntarily commits the act, he cannot be held responsible for it, and the responsibility reverts to the community that desperately desires the act to be done, since their salvation depends on it; but, on the other hand, if he commits the act on purely personal grounds, the act remains a trivial one, not the cosmic one that the community demands. He must therefore he impelled by fate, and be a figure of cosmic importance himself, one marked out from the beginning of time to commit the act" (Maccoby Sacred 123). That is why his motivation is so flimsy and contradictory in the New Testament: it is in actuality an ideological and mythical motivation rather than an understandable human one. And that is why he has to be the double of Jesus: to enable a convenient symbolic splitting of good and evil impulses inside humans themselves.

Ultimately the ambivalence of the splitting of good and evil demands that both Jesus and Judas become scapegoats and both are sacrificed. As Tarachow analyzes it from a psychoanalytic perspective: "Christian mythology solves its ambivalence by having two scapegoats, Christ and Judas. One is for love and the other for aggression, one for killing and the other for being killed, one for eating and the other for being eaten. One figure is pale and ascends to Heaven (although he too made a trip through Hell), the other is dark and assigned to the Devil and the lower regions. One is connected with oral bliss, the other with anality and aggression...For the Christian, Christ provokes envy because of his passive homosexuality and supreme masochism, and also because he is so close to God. Identification with Christ is attained only at great cost...The problems provoked by the scapegoat for aggression take a different turn. We envy Judas his role as lover and executioner of Christ" (Tarachow 547-548). Many people fear the intimidating symbolic perfection of Christ and would rather identify with the more understandable

greed and aggression of Judas and symbolically kill the demands of the good that require too much effort to attain: but feeling guilty about their own attraction to evil then demand that Judas be punished even more harshly.

Accordingly, the rebel outcast leader Jesus and his intimate conniving twin Judas were perfect psychological and symbolic figures for the Christian myth and the New Testament compilers made their mutual sacrifice the basis of their new theology. The intimacy of sacrificial victim and slayer is embodied in the kiss Judas gives Jesus when he is about to betray him: "Jesus' blood has been shed in sacrifice; this is the atoning blood that brings salvation, but it is also the blood that cries for punishment of those who have shed it" (Maccoby Judas 45). And so Judas must die too, both as punishment and to make salvation possible, but also in a manner - on the "field of blood" - that ties in with ancient agricultural sacrifices to fertilize the soil (Sacred 133): "The death of Judas is that of a Black Christ, who undergoes his own Passion in order to spare mankind the deadly sin which he commits on their behalf...In Matthew he hangs himself, and the image of the Hanged Man too recalls many mythological figures of sacrifice, from Attis to Jesus himself...(to) the self-inflicted sacrificial death of Odin.

As long as we mistakenly view the death of Judas as a historical event, we can see only contradictions in the evidence: Judas cannot have hanged himself in a field if he died by a bursting of the entrails; he cannot have died in a field, and also somewhere else...But as soon as we...consider the story as a myth, the contradictions vanish, and turn into variations on a theme" (Maccoby Judas 58-59).

This theme ties in well with Christianity's appropriation of the dying and rising god myths of pagan religions: Tammuz, Osiris, Attis, Adonis, Dionysius and Mithra. Here the god takes on all the sins of the people for the preceding year, in effect becoming a divine scapegoat, is ritually killed, and is then miraculously resurrected to bring on a purified new year. As Frazier says in his seminal work The Golden Bough: "A man, whom the fond imagination of his worshippers invested with the attributes of a god, gave his life for the life of the world; after infusing from his own body a fresh current of vital energy into the stagnant veins of nature, he was cut off from the living before his failing strength should initiate a universal decay, and his place was taken by another who played, like all his predecessors, the ever-recurring drama of the divine resurrection and death" (Frazier Scapegoat 422). This story was applied by Christianity to the person Jesus, who played the mock king ritually put to death, thus turning him into a pagan god to replace all the other pagan gods. None of this is in the Hebrew Bible, especially not the idea of the betrayer of a destined sacrifice which comes from Graeco-Roman my-

thology, yet misquotations from the Bible were marshalled by the Christian compilers in service of a theology alien to it (Maccoby Judas 41-42).

However, what Christianity did goes much beyond the pagan religions: no pagan religion assumed that their resurrected god was anything but a mythical figure to be understood ritually and symbolically. Christianity was the first religion to take this literally and apply it to a real person. In addition, ancient sacrificial rites were carefully ritualized and involved selected individuals, but Christianity applied the symbolic idea of the scapegoat to the entire Jewish people. In ancient Hebrew custom the scapegoat was sent out to wander in the wilderness and eventually to die, but now instead of Judas doing so symbolically, the Jewish people are condemned to do so literally. And in the Christian myth, in a very twisted way, one Jewish scapegoat, Judas, who is condemned to die, is responsible for having another Jewish scapegoat, Jesus, killed in order to save the souls of Gentiles: this truly makes a mockery of the symbolic meaning of both Hebrew and pagan ritual.

What is even more twisted is that Jews are then held responsible for killing a Jewish scapegoat who did not even die for their purification, as he might in a traditional ritual. Yet the only way for Christian worshippers to avoid their feeling of complicity in the death of Jesus whom they constantly see suffering in front of them (or perhaps even their sadistic pleasure in his suffering), is to shift the blame to the Jews: thus the famous statement in Matthew 27:25 "His blood be on us and our children". And 1500 years of unremitting inculcation of hatred of Jews "because they killed Jesus" finally led to the Holocaust, the ultimate physical application of the perverted and excessively literalistic myth that the New Testament compilers had themselves put into the world.

But does any of this have anything to do with the real persons Jesus and Judas Thomas? Both Jesus and Judas bear noble names that are highly honored in Judaism, the name "Jesus" from the Jewish hero Joshua, and the name "Judas" embodying the Jewish national and royal name including the heroic Judas Maccabaeus who freed the Jews from Seleucid oppression. Here Christianity has tragically succeeded in turning Jesus into a symbol of suffering and death, and Judas into the symbol of Satanic malevolence and evil. This sado-masochism may be intrinsic to the religion of Christianity as Paul and others created it, but it has nothing to do with the teachings of the real Jesus or his faithful twin brother and friend Judas Thomas.

Chapter 21:

Is the New Testament an Eyewitness Report?

We have now seen that the Gospel of Thomas is undoubtedly the authentic source of Jesus' thoughts and teachings and that the New Testament is not only secondary but even distorts the true words of Jesus, either because its editors did not understand Jesus' philosophy or as a deliberate policy. But are we not told that the four gospels are written as eye witness reports and that they are the direct record of the historical Jesus? Tradition says the first Gospel was by John Mark, a disciple of the Apostle Peter; this gospel then formed the basis of the Gospels attributed to Matthew and Luke, for the following reasons: 1) Apart from details Mark contains very little that is not in Matthew nor in Luke. 2) When Mark and Matthew differ as to sequence of matter, Luke agrees with Mark, and when Mark and Luke differ as to sequence, Matthew agrees with Mark, 3) Matthew and Luke never agree as to sequence against Mark." (May and Metzger 1167-1168). Apart from these three gospels called the Synoptics, tradition identifies the author of the fourth Gospel with the apostle John.

Thus if we assume that the New Testament is what it claims to be, then it should be an eyewitness report by at least two direct disciples of Jesus, Mark and Matthew, and two others, Luke and John, who had access to primary reports and documents. The Gospels do cite names and events that are historical and can be dated. And even though the thrust of the work is clearly theological and not historical, still the basic facts must be historical. But when we try to use these gospels merely to establish the very basic facts of Jesus' biography - his birth date, the length of his ministry, his death date, as well as the geography of his environment - we are entangled in such a mass of contradictions that we are left with very little data from which to build a biography.

There has been much scholarly discussion on the birth and death dates of Jesus, with two interesting volumes devoted to the subject edited by Jerry Vardaman (Chronos, Kairos, Christos); yet there is no consensus at all and everyone argues for different dates. The earliest of these dates are by Vardaman, who argues for a birth date of 12 BCE and a crucifixion date of 21 CE, based mostly on acceptance of Josephus' Christian reference as a series in a chronology (Chronos 56-57, Chronos II 313-319) but few scholars

agree with this. The general assumption is 4-3 BCE - 30 CE, but that is not universal. Most scholars take one of the several references from the New Testament and from Josephus as their starting point and argue from there, and then others have to be argued away that contradict the first. Let us therefore examine the existing references.

Birth date

Matthew and Luke both give historical events around the birth date of Jesus but those events are at least eleven years apart in dating. Matthew 2:1 says "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea in the days of Herod the king" and Matthew 2:19-20 refers to Jesus being a child when Herod died. Herod the king has to be Herod the Great who died in 4 BCE, so Jesus would have been born at least a year or so before. Filmer has argued that based on a redating of the beginning of his reign, Josephus' method of reckoning reign-lengths and an eclipse of the moon preceding his death that Herod's death should really be dated to 1 BCE (Filmer 283-285, 291). But the fact that all three sons of Herod dated their reigns from their father's death or from Augustus' confirmation of his last will and an appointment of Augustus' grandson Gaius Caesar to sit on a consilium to decide on the future king of Judea after Herod's death, datable to 5 BCE, confirms the accepted date of Herod's death in 5-4 BCE, possibly as early as December of the year 5 (Barnes 205-209).

Contrary to Matthew's date, Luke 2:1-3, however, says: "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth...to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child". This census of Quirinius, the Roman governor of Syria, took place in 6 CE, the first year that Judaea passed from rule by Herod's family to direct Roman rule, and was recorded by Josephus as an unprecedented event of that year in Antiquities 18.26 (but is not mentioned at all in his Jewish War). But already there are problems with what seem like facts.

First of all, Josephus does not agree with Tacitus (Ann. 3.48) who gives Quirinius' full career: Quirinius had advanced to the rank of consul in 12 BCE, had waged a successful war in Cilicia and had finally become major domo for Emperor Tiberius, but there is no mention of him ever having been governor of Syria. However, Tacitus does mention a Sabinus as governor of Syria from 4 BCE on and Weber in his study of the matter not only thinks Quirinius and Sabinus are the same person but that the census men-

tioned by Josephus actually occurred in 4 BCE after the death of Herod (Weber 308, 314-316). Weber proposes the equivalence of Sabinus and Quirinius to have Luke and Matthew agree with each other on a date of 4 BCE, but it seems much more reasonable in this case to accept Tacitus' facts as a historian who had full access to Roman records rather than Josephus who had only spotty access to primary sources. Josephus is thus probably wrong about Quirinius being governor of Syria: this is telling because Luke surely got this fact straight out of Josephus as with so many other tidbits that seem historical.

Even if we leave out Quirinius as a mistake and have a local census under a different governor, everything else about Luke's story is still historically wrong, as Robin Fox shows.

1. Luke has Quirinius and Herod being contemporaries, since Luke 1:5 talks about the birth of John the Baptist, born the same year as Jesus, as taking place "in the days of Herod, king of Judea". But Herod had died ten years before. His sons are never called "Herod" in the Gospels but Herod Antipas or Archelaus, so Luke must be referring to Herod the Great.

2. If Luke is wrong about Quirinius and Herod was the king, then there would have been no Roman census: "The Jews were still Herod's subjects, members of a client kingdom, not a province under direct Roman rule. Client-kings were responsible for their subjects' taxation, not the Romans... Herod the Great...never coincided with a Roman taxing of Judaea" (Fox 29).

3. "It is even doubtful if the Emperor Augustus ever issued a decree to Rome's provinces that `all the world should be taxed'. Certainly, Romans did take censuses in individual provinces which were ruled directly by their governors. They were not, however, coordinated by an order from Augustus to all the world, at least so far as our evidence goes. It is immensely unlikely that a new edict of such consequence has escaped our notice" (Fox 29). Paul Maier agrees: "The claim that no non-Christian record exists of a universal Roman census ordered by Augustus is still valid. The three celebrated censuses conducted by Augustus in 28 BC, 8 BC and AD 14...are apparently enrollments of Roman citizens only, although they may have involved censuses in the provinces also, since some Roman citizens certainly lived outside Italy" (Vardaman chronos 114).

4. In addition, the practices of Roman taxation do not agree with the Gospel narrative: "In the Gospel's view Joseph was descended from David and so he went to Bethlehem, the `city of David', a proper birthplace for a future Messiah. However, Roman censuses cared nothing for remote genealogies, let alone for false ones; they were based on ownership of property by

the living, not the dead...A Roman census would not have taken Joseph to Bethlehem where he and Mary owned nothing and were therefore assumed to have needed to lodge as visitors at an inn...There was not even a legal need for Mary to go and register with her betrothed husband. We know from evidence of Roman tax census in Egypt, still surviving on papyrus, that one householder could make the return for everyone in his care...Above all, it was not a journey which a Galilean, a man of Nazareth, would have been required to make. In AD 6 Galilee, unlike Judaea, remained under its independent ruler Antipas and would not have been bound by a Roman census or taxing. This ruler's existence is known from Josephus, other histories and his own coins: as a Galilaean, Joseph of Nazareth was exempt from the whole business" (Fox Unauth 30-31).

On top of being wrong about the census and not agreeing with Matthew's date, Luke does not even agree with himself. In 3:1 he says "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar...the word of God came to John": Tiberius was confirmed as Emperor on September 17, 14 CE and thus his 15th year would be 28 or 29 CE. Luke also says in 3:23 that Jesus was "about thirty years of age" when he began his ministry: judging from Matthew 3, Mark 1 and John 1, John the Baptist had a brief ministry of probably 6-9 months before the beginning of Jesus' ministry, putting the latter at 30 CE. But that would put Jesus' birth in 0 CE, which contradicts both Luke's date of 6 CE and Matthew's date of 4 BCE, and there is no way to make Herod's death take place in 0 CE.

Christian theologians have striven mightily to save their orthodox dating from this confused hodge-podge of dates, in the following ways:

1. Quirinius had an earlier term as governor of Syria closer to Matthew's date of 4 BCE and conducted a census then: unfortunately this suggestion, as Maier says, "founders on the fact that the list of the relevant Syrian governors is not only apparently complete, but well peopled with personalities who are far more than names on a stone fragment somewhere" (Vardaman chronos 115).

2. Filmer postulates a co-regency of Herod's sons Archelaus and Antipas with their father Herod in order to have Jesus be born in 1 BCE (Filmer 297), and Martin also argues that Herod died during a lunar eclipse in 1 BCE which necessitates co-regencies with his sons (Vardaman 86-91). But that notion derives only from rhetorical hyperbole in speeches put in the mouths of Herod and Antipater in Josephus' Jewish War (1.625, 631) and has no basis in fact (Barnes 206).

3. Tiberius and Augustus had a co-regency for the last few years,

which puts the 15th year of Tiberius in 25 or 26 CE, making it possible for Jesus to be 30 years old according to Matthew's birth date: but this co-regency is another fictional invention by Christian scholars to save Biblical dating.

None of this total mish-mash adds up to any historical evidence, and all of it is driven by political and theological considerations. One reason for Luke to connect the birth with Augustus (27 BCE-14 CE) was "that Augustus himself was regarded as a savior-god by the Roman world. And his reign was the commencement of a new era, much better, it was hoped, than the immediately preceding one" (Rylands 111). And Luke was writing for a highly placed Gentile, Theophilus, in the Roman world: what better way to begin than with connections to the Roman government? (Fox 32) Luke, of course, also wants to place the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, the city of David, to fulfill the prophecy in Micah 5:2. And it is also possible that 6 CE is a sly way for the Gospels to connect the birth of Jesus with the birth of the revolutionary movement that led to the Zealots, as Judas the Galilean started his revolt in that year (Eisenman xxv).

Matthew needs to have an evil king like Herod in order to tell his purely symbolic fables of the Wise Men, the Star over Bethlehem, the Massacre of the Innocents and the Flight into Egypt. He also has Joseph going to Egypt to fulfill the prophecy in Hosea 11:1 "and out of Egypt have I called my son". As A. N. Wilson rightly says: "It is hard to think of a body of folk tales less edifying than the stories about Jesus' life. For sheer silliness, they are almost unrivalled. If you read the infancy narratives in the Gospels and these narratives alone, and if you knew nothing of other Christian writings or teachings, it would not occur to you that the Christian religion had any claim to be morally serious" (AN Wilson 90). Let us not even dwell on the fact that shepherds would not be keeping watch over their flock in winter: it is too cold in Israel in December in the fields for sheep.

Historians have taken Matthew's Star story seriously and have looked for a date in which such a major astronomical event might have occurred. But there are too many to help the dating: the return of Halley's comet in 12 BCE, an unusual conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation of Pisces in 7 BCE, or a nova or exploding star in 5 BCE visible to Chinese astronomers of the Han dynasty for more than 70 days (see Kidger). None of these dates agree with Luke's date of the census of Quirinius but possibly with Matthew's vague date. The truth is that one cannot take any of these stories in Matthew seriously and most likely Matthew was incorporating Balaam's star from Jacob in Numbers 24:17: "A star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel."

In order to confuse dating even further and thoroughly reiterate the point that one should not look for any factual truth in the Gospels, John 8:57 says that Jews in Jerusalem reprove Jesus because he implies he has seen Abraham: "Thou art not yet 50 years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?". Here it is hinted that Jesus was between 40 and 50, perhaps nearer 50. In order for Jesus to be close to 50 by 36 CE, the latest date he could have died, he would certainly have to be born at least in 4 BCE, and probably a good bit earlier.

We can also cite Epiphanius Haeres. 78.13.2, 14.5 where he says James, Jesus' brother, died at the age of 96 which would put his birth date in 34 BCE The assumption is that Jesus was born first and James afterwards; that would make Jesus' birthdate at least 35 BCE or earlier. There is a tradition of a Jesus called "Righteous Rabbi" being executed under Alexander Jannaeus who reigned from 103-76 BCE and the slaying of the rabbis is dated at about 87 BCE Epiphanius reflects some knowledge of the belief that Jesus lived around this time (29.3), though it is possible that his information is no more than this Talmud text (Goldstein 74-77). But this is all too early and merely confirms the complete chronological unreliability of the dating.

The Gospels give different chronologies for the length of Jesus' ministry:

1. 1 year - they give the impression that ministry lasted but a year, but they give no reliable chronology.

2. 2 years - John's Gospel talks about 3 Passovers; Mark conveys that 3 spring-tides have to enter into calculation of duration of ministry, considering these references to 3 springs: a reference to Jesus plucking ears of corn 2:23, feeding of multitude who were seated on green grass (6:39) and the final Passover in spring.

3. 3 years - However, Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History says: "The whole time of our Savior's ministry is proved not to embrace 4 years; there being 4 high priests for 4 years, from Annas to the appointment of Josephus, surnamed Caiaphas, each of whom held the office a year respectively. Caipahas is justly shown to have ben high priest in that year in which our savior's sufferings were finished".

Things are just as confusing when we try to determine the date of Jesus' death. There are several clues in the Gospels toward a historical date for Jesus' death, but the real date is just as difficult to determine as the birth date. The lower and upper limits of the date are set by the administration of Pontius Pilate who was prefect (not procurator which did not start as a title

until the reign of Claudius) from 26-36 CE, although some historians have argued for 18-36 CE. The only other truly datable event is the death of John the Baptist, which can be dated fairly accurately to 35-36 CE. If the Gospel writers are correct, and Jesus started his ministry when John was arrested by Herod Antipas, then this leaves very little time for Jesus' ministry in order for him to be crucified under Pontius Pilate, not even a year. This also contradicts the Church Fathers who placed the Crucifixion in the 15th year of Tiberius which would be 29 CE. This was done to make him 30 at his death in order to establish an analogy between Jesus and King David who is said in 2 Samuel 4 to have begun his reign at the same age. None of these dates agree with Epiphanius (Haeres. 78.13.2, 14.5) who said that James reigned in Jerusalem for "twenty-four years after the Assumption of Jesus": James' death is accurately datable in 62 CE so that would make Jesus' death take place in 38 CE, too late for Pontius Pilate but in line with the idea of a three years' ministry after John the Baptist's death.

None of these dates agree with Paul's dating from Galatians 2:1 where he mentions a second trip to Jerusalem 14 years after the first. According to Acts 12:17-23, Peter escaped from prison and permanently left Jerusalem after a Passover before the death of Agrippa I; this Passover must be 44 CE at the latest which makes Paul's second visit to Jerusalem also 44 at the latest while Peter was still in Jerusalem. This means Paul's first visit would have had to take place in 30 CE (Gal 1:18), his conversion 3 years before that in 27 (Gal 1:17) and thus the crucifixion had to take place before 26 CE, which is too early for Pontius Pilate (Vardaman Chronos 143-144).

Kokkinos tries to save the Gospel dating in various ways: by arguing, with many earlier Christian scholars, that the wording of Galatians is wrong and should actually read 4 as it does in the 12th century manuscript 1241 rather than 14 - but that is the only manuscript with this variant! He also argues that Jesus' ministry did not have to start soon after John the Baptist's ministry, even though this is what three gospels state, and that "a five-year interval...must be seriously taken into account" (Vardaman Chronos 138, 145). One would have to call all this grasping at straws.

Historians have also tried to correlate the day of Jesus' death with the Jewish calendar. The three synoptic gospels (Matt 26:17-20, Mark 14:12-17, Luke 22:7-14) say Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover Meal, while according to John it was the day of the crucifixion itself that was Passover preparation day (John 19:14). This is an important factor in calculating the year of Jesus' death, because Passover always falls on 15 Nisan, and all gospels are agreed that the day immediately after the crucifixion was a Sabbath. Because of the gospel discrepancies we cannot be sure whether we are looking for a year in which 14 Nisan fell on a Thursday or a Friday. Between 29 and 36 CE there

was no year in which Passover fell on a Friday; the closest year is 18 CE. However, the Gospel of John dates the crucifixion to the day before Passover which is consistent with the Jewish calendar, and here Passover fell on a Saturday in 27, 30, 33 and 36 CE, though some people have questioned the accuracy of 30 and 33 (Vardaman 146-149). Because of so many possibilities, scholars do not agree on which year makes the most sense. Some scholars, like Humphreys and Waddington, even take seriously the supernatural events attending the Crucifixion reported by the Gospels and look for the dates of lunar or solar eclipses, but that is giving too much credence to mere literary embellishments (Vardaman 172-181).

And all this rises and falls with the regularity of the Jewish calendar: but as Roger Beckwith shows, "the Jewish months, years and festivals were fixed not by calculation in advance but by continuous observation" and "the Jews did not begin to calculate the Passover astronomically, or to employ the nineteen-year cycle for this purpose, until between the fourth and seventh centuries AD" (Vardaman 187-188). Thus all attempts to correlate the New Testament dating with the Jewish calendar are essentially a waste of time. Of course, as Harwood says, John, in a desire to represent Jesus as the new "paschal lamb", probably artificially fixed the moment of crucifixion as coinciding with the time when the lambs would have been slaughtered in the Jerusalem Temple in preparation for Passover, so there is nothing historical about this (Harwood 351).

There are other dating problems as well:

1. The Gospels mention Judas Iscariot and Simon the Zealot, but according to Josephus, the Sicarii did not even exist at the time Jesus is supposed to have existed. They did not become active until 25 or 30 years after the death of Jesus. According to some historians, the Zealots did not emerge until nearly 40 years after Jesus' career.

2. Acts 5:34-39 says the great Pharisaic rabbi Gamaliel ben Hillel defended Christians from Jewish persecution: he describes the rebellion of Theudas who led an abortive uprising in 46 CE and then declares that after Theudas came Judas of Galilee, who was in fact crucified in 6 CE. And he attributes this speech to the days immediately following Jesus' execution, more than a decade earlier than the rebellion Gamaliel supposedly describes. It is possible that Luke copied Josephus who described Judas' rebellion in a flashback immediately following his account of Theudas (Antiq 20:97-103). The only other inference is that Gamaliel was referring to Jesus' execution as taking place after 46 CE (Harwood 338).

3. John 2:20 says: "The Jews then said, `It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he spoke of the temple of his body." This speech can be clearly dated to 28 CE, the Temple having been built in 18 BCE. Yet this makes Jesus give a highly Messianic remark long before the Gospels have him even start his ministry, which at the very earliest did not begin until 29 CE. If Matthew is right and he was born in 6-5 BCE, this would make him the right age to have begun his ministry, but it would not agree with all the dates arrived at for John the Baptist.

These are then possible birth dates: 12, 7, 6-5, 4, 3-2 BCE or 6 CE. And possible death dates: 27, 30, 33, 36, or 46 CE. In sum, the attempt to fix historical dates for Jesus' life and death results in an insoluble muddle. There are so many possible dates and none of the historical references agree with one another that one is left with the conclusion that the historical references must be entirely invented by the Gospel writers to give themselves a veneer of being historical without any shred of an attempt to have them actually be true and verifiable.

Geography

The same lack of factuality is the case with regard to the geography of the Gospels. Upon checking the geography of the Gospels against contemporary historical information one finds almost nothing that is truly factual. Whoever wrote the New Testament shows a startling ignorance of Palestinian geography, an ignorance they share with the first century Roman writers Strabo, Pliny the Elder and Tacitus who also do not seem to have any first-hand knowledge of Palestinian geography (Freyne 77-78). The descriptions of the Jordan area around the Dead Sea and Jericho, in particular, are quite confused. For example, Strabo (16.55) has the Jordan flowing between Libanus and Antilibanus into the sea, and the Arabians sail on it: the Jordan, of course, ends in the Dead Sea to which there is no water access from Arabia.

Yet these classical writers show a basic interest in physical features and aspects of ethnographic and settlement patterns that is completely absent from the Gospels; as Freyne says: "Even by comparison with the non-Jewish writers there is a strange detachment from the geography of Palestine. We never get any authorial interjection to explain details; there is no interest in the physical geography or how it might have a bearing on the lives of people. The lake is referred to as the Sea of Galilee...yet we are never treated to any description despite the repeated crossings... One might query whether the

evangelists are at all interested in the real world or whether they are merely providing a suitable setting for their narratives" (Freyne 78, 80). And even if they are only interested in geography as a backdrop, their details are mostly erroneous. As Karl Schmidt says: "If one wants to read a continuous report with an itinerary, one needs to disentangle a topographical chaos that cannot be disentangled" (Schmidt 209). Here are the most outstanding errors:

Towns in Galilee

Practically all the towns and villages given by the Gospels for Galilee show no evidence of ever having existed, certainly not in the first century CE. This is particularly true of Nazareth, Jesus' supposed hometown. The Gospels are very vague in their description of Nazareth, besides saying that it is on the hill, a fact which is true of half the villages of Palestine. Despite the continuing references to a town called Nazareth in practically every biography of Jesus, there is little historical or archeological evidence that any such place existed in the first century CE. There are no references to it in the Old Testament or in Paul's Epistles. Particularly compelling non-evidence is the fact that Josephus, who fortified a dozen of Galilee's most important cities and names them, does not mention Nazareth in his comprehensive list of 204 villages and 15 fortified towns, which seems to comprise all the region's urban centers. He does mention Yafia, a fortified town only 5 miles southwest of present-day Nazareth, and he makes frequent mention of Galilee's state capital, Sepphoris, 5 miles downhill, but this city in turn is never mentioned in the four gospels. Nor is Nazareth mentioned in the Jewish Apocryphal writings or in the Talmud which refers to more than 60 Galilean towns and which even dates later than Jesus' time (Karl Schmidt 157). And all the literary and epigraphic sources which seem to place the existence of Nazareth close to the first century turn out on close examination to be questionable.

The earliest mention of Nazareth, and the only mention in any inscription, is in a Hebrew inscription on marble slab fragments found in 1962 in excavations at Caesarea. These list priestly courses and the locality to which they moved after the destruction of the Second Temple and one line in particular says "the 18th course Hapizzez Nazareth". Similar lists of priestly families that mention Nazareth are found in liturgical poems of the 6th and 7th centuries, with reference to the list in I Chronicles 24:7-18, in particular poems of lamentation by Eleazar ha-Kallir of Caesarea (where the town is called Natzerath) and Pinhas b. Jakob ha-Kohen which recapitulate material from the inscription. The material where the fragments were found was a mixture of Hellenistic, late Roman and late Byzantine dates, so the range of dating is quite broad.

Does this mean that Nazareth existed after the destruction of the Second Temple, i.e. 70 CE? or does this mean that priestly families lived there at the time of the slab inscription which Avi-Yonah conjectures, but without certain evidence, could be the 3rd or 4th century? (Avi-Yonah 137-139, Eisenman 1002n88, Ruger 257-259, Klein Beitrage 74-75). The latter seems far more likely.

The next mention of what is said to be Nazareth is not until the beginning of the fourth century in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History 1.7.14 (published 313 CE) where Eusebius (260-340 CE) discusses criticisms of the discrepancies in the genealogy of Christ and says: "These coming from Nazara and Cochaba, villages of Judea, to the other parts of the world, explained the aforesaid genealogy from the book of daily records, as faithfully as possible." Eusebius not only uses Luke's variant spelling Nazara but also does not link Nazareth with Galilee (Judea is not the same as Galilee) so we cannot even be sure it is the same place. Nor does he link Nazareth with Jesus himself. He doesn't give much biography of Jesus at all except for the story of Herod killing the infants, John the Baptist and a long story of a letter by King Agbarus of Edessa to Jesus.

Though there is some evidence for human occupation at the site of Nazareth with 23 rock tombs dating to 200 BCE, the village, if it existed at all, must have been a very small and insignificant place. As Reed says, "Roman and Byzantine tombs to the west and east of the Church of the Annunciation delimit the size of the site and suggest a population of less than 400 people" (Reed 131). Due to its location up a fairly steep hillside and due to its rocky soil and lack of agricultural land, the tendency was always for houses to be spread out and not to form a compact settlement (Kopp Beitrage 189-191). There is evidence for first-century settlement of some sort, for in 1992 Israeli archaeologists found a burial cave next to present-day Nazareth with a three-level rectangular burial chamber and every day remains of cooking pots, storage jars, juglets and lamps; but this does not indicate a town per se (Najjar 49).

The Franciscan excavator, Friar Bagatti, was of course particularly interested in proving the truth of Christianity and gives much credence to Christian stories of Nazareth, but his actual archaeological results were rather meager, as he himself admits: "Of the ancient village we have found but few masonry remains because little was excavated in this regard...Yet there is evidence of its existence in the literary texts and in the abundant pottery found in the silos, which bespeaks the presence of houses which have now disappeared...Looking through the volume some will wonder why the materials found are so few and so broken...First of all the village had always but very modest proportions" (Bagatti 234, 319). As Meyers and Strange conclude, "it is not possible to deduce the layout of the village from the remains so far

excavated, nor is it possible to reconstruct the size and precise plan of any of its houses...Nazareth...would not have been a particularly impressive sight" (Meyers and Strange 57).

As far as dating goes, the preponderance of evidence is toward later rather than earlier dates: "In dealing with the excavations around the venerated Grotto we have treated also many sherds because they served to suggest a date...Some sherds belong to the Hellenistic period, others to the Roman and many to the Byzantine" (Bagatti 272). Later in his conclusions Bagatti seems to contradict himself: "We have met with only a few traces of the Hellenistic period, but there are many elements of the Roman period", here implying that there are "Herodian" elements (319). Clearly there is little in the way of Hellenistic pottery and most of it is Byzantine, but he is a bit reluctant to admit this as he concludes "one finds in this village, which has always borne the name of Nazareth, all that the New Testament leads us to expect in it" (Bagatti 319).

In addition, "there is no evidence of any public structures from the Early Roman period. There is no marble nor mosaics nor frescoes from the period prior to Christian construction in the post-Constantinian period. There are no public inscriptions whatsoever...There are also no luxury items of any kind, though a few stone vessel fragments have been found" (Reed 131-132). This lack of public structures extends to the lack of a synagogue.

Despite the constant references in the New Testament, no ancient synagogue has been uncovered in present-day Nazareth, though remains of 23 synagogues have been found all over Galilee. At Nazareth itself only isolated architectural elements of a synagogue, the location of which is unknown, have been found: namely four column bases which resemble similar elements in synagogues of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Bagatti excavated remains of a pre-Byzantine building which had certain resemblances to a synagogue, but he considered it to be a church from the time of Constantine built in the style of contemporary synagogues. In any case the earliest dates would be 3rd to 4th centuries, certainly not the 1st (Huttenmeister 340-342, Foerster 315). Remains of a 4th century synagogue were discovered at Yafia in the hills of Nazareth and a fragmentary mosaic pavement which contains two dedicatory inscriptions in Aramaic was found at Kafr Kanna north of Nazareth, but the remains are too scanty to reconstruct its plan (Foerster 307).

Evidently there is almost no reliable literary and epigraphic evidence for the existence of a first-century Nazareth or anything that can be called a town, and archaeological evidence is sparse to non-existent before the 4th century, showing nothing more than a few poorly made houses of fieldstones

and mud with thatched roofs. As Reed says, "the entire area seems to have been preoccupied with agricultural activities" at a very simple subsistence level, and the material remains consist of "locally made pottery and household items, without any trace of imported or fine wares from the earlier period" (Reed 132). A very unpromising if not inconceivable home for someone like Jesus.

Moreover, it is highly likely that the modern town of Nazareth was built starting in the reign of Constantine to overcome the embarrassment of Christian theologians over its non-existence, and in order to have some place to which Christians could make a pilgrimage. We know that one Joseph of Tiberias, a leading member of the priestly caste and a baptized Christian, won the favor of Emperor Constantine and was authorized by him to build Christian churches in the Jewish towns and villages of Galilee. Epiphanius merely reports that he built churches in Tiberias, Sepphoris "and in other places" thus it is not clear whether he built one in Nazareth as the present-day church of the Annunciation originally dates from the 5th century. While Nazareth had been an isolated place closed in by hills and with little road access, roads were built to it once the authorities decided to make it a place of pilgrimage and, as Kopp says, "it became, artificially, a hub of commerce. Otherwise, left to nature, with stony soil and tucked away in a fold of hills, it would have remained an insignificant and remote place" (Kopp 49-50, 54).

Even then it was slow to catch fire as a place of pilgrimage. Origen (185-254 CE), who lived in Caesarea for a period of time, seems never to have visited Nazareth; Eusebius, Socrates and Sozomenus say nothing about the building of a church in Nazareth; the saintly Melania reports on Christians in 373 who came from Egypt to Sepphoris to distribute charity but she says nothing about Nazareth; and the first documented visit is in 386 by Paula who did not seem to tarry long. Nazareth is missing from a list of holy places in a document written around 440, and finally in 460 it is listed as the seat of a bishop. Not until 570 is the Church of the Annunciation even mentioned, and Nazareth as a truly Christian city dates only from 630 CE on, after the Jews had fled or been expelled (Kopp Beitrage 82-84). Thus, Christian attempts to create Nazareth to have the New Testament come true were rather late in having any effect.

Moreover, Nazareth remained a Jewish town from the second century up until 629-30 CE when the Jews took the side of the invading Persians against the Romans and were driven out in retaliation by Christians when the Romans won after all. In 359 CE Epiphanius was told by "a tired old man of 70" authorized by Constantine to build churches in Galilee that the Jews of Nazareth would not even allow Christians to build a church there (Kopp 54-56).

Just as with Nazareth, there are many questions how significant of a place Capernaum was during Jesus' lifetime and how long it had even existed. No such town is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and there is no history to the name apart from the New Testament; only in post-Biblical rabbinical literature were a number of different names given to the settlement - Kefar Achim, Kefar Tanchumim, Kefar Techoumin, Kfar-Nachum - of which the latter finally became the official name in modern times. The Arabs called it Kefar-Tanchum, corrupted into Talhum which the Europeans then misinterpreted as Tell-hum, "the mound of Hum", though no mound ever existed there (Sapir 12). It is at the site called Talhum that the remains of a quite imposing and ornate synagogue (24.4x18.65m), 100m from the lakeshore, were found. But whether that really had any connection with the Capernaum of the New Testament is pure conjecture: it is merely assumed without any real proof. Kopp honestly says regarding Telhum that "excavation alone...might reveal whether or not this place was called Capharnaum" and he suggests several other alternative sites (Kopp 171-173).

Christian excavators of the site were eager to prove the first century origins of the synagogue ruins and the Franciscan Friar Orfali, who dug from 1905-1921, in particular ignored contrary evidence: as Sapir says, "he either ignored completely or suppressed anything discovered on site that was considered irrelevant to the main purpose of the dig" and "the excavators feared to dig further lest they meet a deeper strata which might disprove their theory" (Sapir 42). However, two other teams of excavators, Kohl and Watzinger in 1905 and Corbo and Loffreda from 1968 to 1972, came to rather different conclusions. The first team dated the synagogue to the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd, purely on stylistic evidence, but the 1968 team found thousands of coins that dated from the 4th century, as early as Constantine I, to the fifth century, to Theodosius II, with the coins of the first half of the fourth century less numerous: "Relying on the numismatic evidence...and the considerable amount of late Roman and early Byzantine pottery, Corbo and Loffreda concluded...that the construction of the synagogue should be dated to the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century A.D." (Chen 135, Loffreda 53-61).

Contrary to Finegan's argument that this synagogue probably replaced an earlier one destroyed during the Jewish Revolt which might well go back to the first century (Finegan Light II 305), the excavators found that the synagogue was built not on top of an earlier one but on a private platform laid on what seemed to be private houses. These show evidence of having been destroyed in the second half of the fourth century, perhaps in the Jewish revolt of 352 C.E. that was brutally suppressed by the Romans and may have caused the subsequent decline of the Jewish population of Galilee (Chen 134, Lof-

freda 56). Foerster thinks the excavators did not take into account extensive repair after an earthquake of 363 C.E. and thus the foundation should be dated no later than the mid-third century (Foerster 300); but the numismatic evidence seem quite overwhelming, especially the 24 Byzantine coins found right under the foundation of the synagogue. Chen strengthens the argument for a later date even more by showing that the synagogue was designed by means of the Pythagorean triangle with sides 3 and 4 units long and the early Byzantine foot of 0.32 m which has already been identified in a number of churches in Illyricum and Palestine (Chen 135-138). Oddly enough, despite all this contrary evidence, Loffreda still insists "there is no doubt that a Synagogue was in Capharnaum at the time of Jesus. It is quite possible that it was located not far from the fourth century Synagogue" (Loffreda 62).

It is generally assumed that there were many synagogues in first-century Palestine; as Safrai says,"by the beginning of the first century C.E. synagogues existed in great numbers throughout the whole land of Israel and the Diaspora, and even in Jerusalem itself" (Safrai vol. 2 909). But much of the evidence for that assumption is from the Christian literature, which is not a reliable historical source, and from the later Talmud, and archeological evidence argues against the idea. Loffreda lists a number of synagogues which have turned out to be later than originally thought, such as Capernaum, Nabratein and Chorazin, more in line with the 4th century dates of synagogues at Khirbet Shema near Meron and Susiya near Hebron, and states further: "These observations alone would disprove the assumption that the traditional chronology is firmly established. They show dramatically the shaky ground upon which the consensus of archaeologists is based...Only archaeological data, collected through systematic excavations, can overcome the problems which have beset the study of ancient synagogues for almost a century" (Loffreda Late 42, 38).

Sanders concludes that most religious worship in first-century Palestine took place in the home and that there is not much evidence for the existence of first-century synagogues. He says: "The home was the most frequent place of worship; it was there that people prayed and observed the sabbath and many other holy occasions...Archaeology has not thus far revealed many first-century synagogues in Palestine. One has been found in Gamla (in the Golan Heights), one on Matsada, and one on the Herodium (the last two were built during the time of the revolt, 66-73)...Later synagogues were probably built on top of earlier ones, and the early remains were completely destroyed or rendered unidentifiable" (Sanders Jewish Law 77). Many places later called "synagogues" were simply large rooms in private houses which then became public rooms and lack distinguishing architectural details (Charlesworth Jesus 109).

Not only has no synagogue been found on the site that we now call Capernaum, but the town itself appears to have been quite insignificant and any synagogue in it would have been a small one. The population would have been limited by the "arduous agricultural conditions" created by ubiquitous black lava stones and boulders and even trees have difficulty taking root in this terrain, though to the west of Capernaum over the ridge in the Gennesar Plain there is some of the finest agricultural land in Palestine (Reed 144). Nor does the site itself allow for a large town, being only 300-400 yards wide between the lake and the foothills and amounting to an inhabited area on a short, narrow strip along the sea of 6 hectares: Reed thus estimates a population of 600-1500 people. To the east a cliff protrudes as far as the lake in such a way that it was not until the 20th century that a road was blasted through it (Kopp 172-173, Reed 151-152). Avi-Yonah's map of Roman roads in Palestine shows a road going through the hills and across the Jordan to Syria but none around Lake Gennesaret north of Taricheae, and well-paved Roman roads in this area do not date until the early 2nd century CE as part of Hadrian's road system in the east: thus there was neither a road to Capernaum from the south nor one leading out of it to the north (Avi-Yonah Hist Geo 100, Reed 148).

Thus the assumption by Meyers and Strange that it had a possible population of between 12-15,000 is extremely unlikely nor is there any evidence for Kennard's view of it as "one of the great emporiums in Palestine" located "on one of the trade routes from Egypt to Parthia, the market town of a region renowned for amazing productiveness, and transshipment point for goods coming across the lake" (Kennard Cap 138). The excavators found no first century public buildings nor public inscriptions, there were no major thoroughfares, the streets were narrow and unpaved without any sign of centralized planning and the houses were simple one-story structures of mud-packed basalt fieldstones arranged around courtyards (Meyers 59, Reed 151-154). Josephus was right when he called "Kepharnokon" a village at a simple material level, one that was mainly known for its healing springs and may have been mainly accessible by boat. And clearly the Gospels are greatly exaggerating when they call it a polis, which in Graeco-Roman usage had to contain "public structures that indicated a certain lifestyle and governance among the wealthier citizens" (Reed 167).

As a matter of fact, the Gospel of Matthew gives us a clue that Capernaum is not meant to be a real historical reference, nor is Nazareth. In 4:12 it says: "He went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: `The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles - the people who sat in darkness

have seen a great light'" (Isaiah 9:1-2). Matthew thus admits that he placed Jesus by the shore of Lake Gennesaret and built Capernaum up to more than it really was for the sole purpose of having him fulfill Isaiah's prophecy and that there is nothing historical about Jesus' connection with Capernaum. For the fictional town of Nazareth is in the traditional tribal territory of Napthali, while the equally fictional town of Capernaum is in the territory of Zebulun, thus fulfilling the entirety of Isaiah's prophecy. And in Isaiah's usage "Galilee" which means "district" simply referred to the region about Kadesh which was never thoroughly assimilated to Judaism, a term that later came to be applied to the newly conquered non-Jewish district now called Galilee (Kennard Cap 136-137).

As Rylands summarizes: "There is no independent evidence of the existence of Capernaum at that time. The statements of later writers as to its position are contradictory, and archaeologists are unable to agree with regard to its site. Josephus says there was a fountain called Capernaum not far from the Lake of Gennesaret. The Evangelist evidently coupled this fountain with the Messianic fountain of Zechariah, which is connected with the abolition of idols and the expulsion of the `unclean spirit', and he has accordingly created a symbolic town as the scene of a symbolic episode" (Rylands 92-93). Even later Christian pilgrims surprisingly listed it as a minor stop on their itinerary: "Usually described simply as a village, the only distinguishing features the pious commented on are the basilica built over the house of Saint Peter and the synagogue where Jesus ministered" (Reed 141).

The same issues as for Nazareth and Capernaum are also true for Bethsaida and Gennesaret. The Gospels contradict themselves on whether Bethsaida was a "lonely place" which Jesus sought for its remoteness and quiet after John the Baptist was executed (Mk 6:31-32, Mt 14:13), or whether it was a city (Lk 9:10) and the hometown of Peter, Andrew and Philip (Jn 12:21). But John also calls it "Bethsaida in Galilee", so is this the same place as the historically attested town of Bethsaida on the east side of the Jordan River, enlarged by Herod Philip at the beginning of the first century, but not actually located in Galilee? There cannot be two Bethsaidas located opposite each other. In addition, the historical Bethsaida was a good ten miles from the nearest point in Galilee and so the crowds which followed Jesus in Mark would have had a long walk.

Karl Schmidt says Bethsaida means "house of hunting" or perhaps "house of provisions" and is given as the locale of the story in Luke 9:10-17 of Jesus' miraculous feeding of 5000 people: clearly this is meant as an allegorical name (K Schmidt Rahmen 211). Oddly enough in Mark 6:35-44 the same miracle is not done in Bethsaida, for right afterwards they go "to the other side, to Bethsaida", while in Matthew 14:15-21 no place is given for the

same miracle but afterwards they "crossed over" to Gennesaret, as they also do in Mark but not in Luke.

Mark 6:53-56 and Matthew 14:34-36 clearly imply that Gennesaret was a sizable town: "Immediately the people recognized him, and ran about the whole neighborhood and began to bring sick people on their pallets to any place where they heard that he was, And wherever he came, in villages, cities or country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces..." But there are grave historical problems with this whole account. Gennesaret should probably be equated with the ancient Biblical Chinnereth located on the present tell el-`oreimeh, a hill on the northwest shore of Lake Gennesaret commanding the plain which extends about a mile inland: this was an important fortified city in early Biblical times and is mentioned in Joshua 19:35, with the region given that name in 1 Kings 15:20. However, according to Kopp (who believes in the existence of all these towns even though he is very scrupulous about the contrary evidence as well), archeological excavations show that "the city had flourished most in the late Bronze Age, whereas the early Iron Age was very poorly represented. The Roman period bequeathed a wealth of ceramics, but only one house...In the time of the gospels, therefore, the place had long been uninhabited." Traces of a settlement adjoining this hill and extending about 300 yards south have been found, with fragments of marble pillars and isolated basalt blocks dating from the Roman and Byzantine period but "no traces of dwelling-houses have yet been discovered...It is only probable that this khirbe was inhabited as early as Roman times" (Kopp 198-200).

Thus it is unlikely that there was a town called Gennesaret in the first century, though it is attested later in the period of the Talmud. It is also possible that the name refers to the whole area, but the area was not even well-populated, as the hill of the ancient Chinnereth blocks access along the lake and the road veers off from Taricheae over the hills. As Kopp says, "the only thing on the plain which could truly be called a city was Magdala-Taricheae" (Kopp 203). And even if there had been a habitation there, the geography of the Gospels still does not add up, because there is no way that "Gennesaret" can be called "opposite" to Bethsaida, as it lies in a straight line slightly to the southwest from Bethsaida along the same coast, yet it is too far for Jesus to walk to from Bethsaida as Mark 6:45 states. Thus Mark is clearly fabricating a story when he speaks of large masses of people living here and "villages, cities or country" and this is purely an exaggeration done in order to stress the healing powers of the Messiah, not with any concern for geographical truth. In addition, in the Syriac and Old Latin manuscripts as well as in Josephus, 1 Maccabees, the Talmud and the Targums the place is called "Gennesar", making the non-Western text of the Gospels the only text to have "Gennesaret" and making it more likely that the name is invented (Burkitt 391).

As for Chorazin, mentioned only briefly in Matthew 11:20-24 and Luke 10:12-15, there is once again little evidence for any extensive settlement at the time of Jesus. Though it was inhabited in the later Stone Age, "it may have reached its peak of development only after the second Jewish revolt when Galilee became the centre of Jewry", indicated by a basalt synagogue from the turn of the 2nd to the 3rd century. However, by the time of Eusebius (265-340) it had already been abandoned, which seems like a short lifespan (Kopp 187-188). The Gospels may be using the word simply as a word symbol, as it is a version of the Hebrew chinzir, "pig"; though it is only mentioned once in Matthew 11:21, it may well be thematically connected with the story of the demoniac and the pigs in Gadara in Matthew 8:28. That story in turn is the same one as the story of the man in Gerasa with the unclean spirits and the 2000 pigs in Mark 5:1-13 and Luke 8:26-33, so clearly the town of Gadara is simply invented as well (Karl Schmidt Rahmen 212, Nestle 185-186).

Cana also is not mentioned at all in the Synoptics but four times in John (2:1-11, 4:46, 21:2) though entirely with symbolic connections. Josephus does mention it once in his Life 86 as a "village of Galilee" at which he claims he made his headquarters, but usually he claims his headquarters was at Asochis (Eisenman 819-820). There are two archeological sites which are possible candidates: Kafr Kenna which lies 5½ miles from Nazareth on the winding road to Tiberias and Khirbet Kana, an uninhabited mound 8½ north of Nazareth, on the same road as Sepphoris. Finds at the former have been very meager but the latter dates back to 1200 BCE and shows a considerable population in Roman times. The earliest literary mention of Kana, however, is not until the 9th century, in a priestly list by Eleazar Kalir (Kopp 144-148). And in the Syrian versions of the Bible the name becomes Katne but no such place can be found either and Katana near Damascus is too far away (Burkitt 394-395). Cana might have existed but in the Gospels themselves it too may be invented, as John probably interpreted the Aramaic word Kananaya, "Zealot", as meaning a native of Cana, and described Nathanael as such, who is otherwise known as Simon the Cananaean.

There is very little archeological and historical evidence for any of the towns of Galilee mentioned in the four Gospels as being the locus of Jesus' activities, and it appears that every single one is most likely completely fabricated and invented.

The use of the word thalassa for Lake Gennesaret

Another interesting issue that Christian scholars, with the exception of Gerd Theißen, have not discussed is the use of thalassa by the New Testament to refer to Lake Gennesaret, renamed Lake Tiberias in the 2nd century. All the authorities on the Greek language agree that thalassa means "sea, ocean" and in the rare instances it is used of lakes, that is only for salt lakes: see Liddell 781-2, Bauer 713, Moulton 283, Grimm/Thayer 282, Lampe 610. This is just as true for its use in the Septuagint as it is in the Roman and Byzantine periods (see Lust 269, Sophocles 568). Grimm says "specifically used of the Mediterranean Sea" and when used of Lake Gennesaret, "by a usage foreign to native Greek writing" (Grimm 282). The word for "lake" is limen and that is consistently how Lake Gennesaret is described. Josephus also uses the word limen for all inland lakes in Palestine of any size as opposed to the Mediterranean, as does the author of the Book of Maccabees (Theissen 11). Even the Dead Sea, a considerably bigger body of water which due to its salt content might have qualified to be called "sea", was called limen or lacus in Latin by almost all ancient authors including Aristotle, Didodorus Siculus, Strabo, Vitruvius, Seneca, Pliny, Ptolemy and Josephus, and Olympiodorus in the 6th century is one of the few writers of antiquity who calls it a "sea" (Theissen 7-9).

However, oddly enough the New Testament uses thalassa to describe Lake Gennesaret (Mt 4:18, 15:29, Mk 7:31, Jn 6:1, 21:1), with only one exception in Luke 5:1 where limen is used, and it is the only written source to do so. In John the lake is even called the "Sea of Tiberias" which indicates a 2nd century provenance and a foreign perspective, as Tiberias was considered to be a non-Jewish intrusion into the area (Theissen 14-15). Even the Bauer/Aland dictionary, which lists one definition of thalassa as "lake", can only find New Testament references to substantiate the definition (Bauer 713). Koine Greek or not, this is just plain wrong. Lake Gennesaret is very far from being any kind of major body of water: it is 13 by 7 miles (21 km x 12 km) at its widest extent, with a total of 102 sq. miles (170 sq km). One way we know this is wrong is that thalassa was translated in the Latin Vulgate Bible as mare, a word which only refers to salt water bodies.

This error or lie was noted very early on. About 400 CE Macarius Magnes (Apokritikos 3.6) cited an anonymous critic of Christianity, probably Porphyry but possibly Hierocles, who said: "Those who report of the true nature of the places say that there is no sea (thalassa) there but rather a small lake (limen), which is formed by a river at the foot of a mountain in the land of Galilee near the city of Tiberias, a lake which can be crossed in only two hours in small dugout canoes and which is not even large enough for waves of for a storm. Mark thus moves outside of the truth" (Theissen Meer 5). This is clearly a well-informed critic: note also that the famous story of Jesus'

stilling of the "great storm of wind" which caused Jesus' boat to fill with water (Mt 8:24-26, Mk 4:37-39, Lk 8:22-24) cannot be based on historical truth, as such storms would not occur on a placid lake such as Lake Gennesaret.

The only explanation for what would possess the New Testament editors to make such an egregious and one would think obvious error is that they simply did not know enough about the true geography to determine whether it was a lake or a sea. Nor did the factual truth matter to them, as they were more interested in theology than geography. Fishing has symbolic associations and the placing of Jesus on Lake Gennesaret and the fact that his disciples are fishermen is purely theologically driven. The whole theme and the word thalassa may well be derived from saying 8 of the Gospel of Thomas.

The lack of mention of Sepphoris and Tiberias

It is particularly striking that none of the Gospels ever mention the capital of the Galilee, Sepphoris, and only John ever mentions the other major city Tiberias, and that one time in 6:23. Sepphoris, the centrally-located capital of Galilee, was completely rebuilt in Greek style by Herod Antipas in 3 BCE, after being destroyed by the Roman army suppressing a Galilean insurrection, and was the largest city with perhaps 30,000 people. Laid out on the Roman grid pattern, it contained a forum, Antipas' royal residence with an imposing tower, a 4,000-seat theater, bath, bank, archives, gymnasium, basilica, water works and other buildings (Batey 53-56). Excavations by Jim Strange in 1983 and Ehud Netzer starting in 1985 uncovered a labyrinth of tunnels, cisterns, grain silos, wine cellars, storage chambers and the water supply system, dating to the Herodian period (Batey 15-18, 22). Around Lake Gennesaret the main urban center was the new Roman-style capital Tiberias on the south-western shore of Lake Genesaret, built by Herod Antipas around 19 C.E.

Given the importance of these two cities in first-century Galilee, Freyne thus finds the complete silence concerning Sepphoris and Tiberias "completely baffling" and says: "If Jesus was prepared to visit gentile territories to address Jews living there, why exclude these cities from the ambit of his ministry, since they were both thoroughly Jewish in character in the first century, despite some minority presence? Reading the Gospels with a complete picture of Galilee as the intertext, one suspects that the silence is not just an omission, but very deliberate. It seems impossible for anyone to have conducted the kind of ministry attributed to Jesus in the lower Galilee without having to encounter in some way these two Herodian cities and their

spheres of influence" (Freyne 84). It is possible that a desire not to call attention to the Herodians is behind such a deliberate omission, as indicated by the fact that Herod Antipas, despite being the ruler of Galilee, is so infrequently mentioned in the Gospels (Freyne 85). But it is also possible that by the time the Gospels were written the authors had no idea that Sepphoris and Tiberias even existed: ultimately the only truly historical city correctly placed in the Gospels is Jerusalem, the only Palestinian city which someone living in Rome would know about.

The geography of John the Baptist's activity

The Gospels do not agree on the exact area of John the Baptist's preaching and are strikingly vague about it. Mark 1:4 says John appeared "in the wilderness"; Luke 3:3 calls it "all the region about the Jordan" and Matthew 3:1 calls it "the wilderness of Judea" and says in 3:13 that "Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by him". Conzelmann, in his study of Luke, concludes that Luke's placing of John the Baptist near the Jordan was driven strictly by theological considerations, in order to create a clear demarcation between the spheres of activity of John and Jesus: "Luke omits Mark 1:5 but he presupposes the verse in v. 3 as well as later in v. 21. What is it that Luke objects to? Evidently the statement of where those who come to John have come from...According to Luke, after his baptism Jesus has no more contact with the Jordan or even with its surroundings. It is true that according to Luke Jesus does in fact come to Jericho, but it is questionable whether Luke knew that this town was in the region of the Jordan...His acquaintance with Palestine is in many ways imperfect; and from the Septuagint of which he made great use, Luke would find nothing to tell him that Jericho was situated in the neighborhood of the Jordan...Luke can associate him neither with Judaea nor with Galilee, for these are both areas of Jesus' activity. Yet on the other hand there has to be some connection, so the Baptist is placed on the border. It is obvious that Luke has no exact knowledge of the area, and this is why he can make such a straightforward symbolical use of localities" (Conzelmann Theology 19-20).

The author of the Gospel of John must have felt the need to correct this lack for precision, for in John 1:28 he specifies the place a bit more by calling it "Bethany beyond the Jordan". But the problem here is that there never was a place called Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, only near Jerusalem. Origen was already bothered by this in the 3rd century and comments that even though he found Bethany "mentioned in almost all of the manuscripts...we are convinced that we should read not Bethany, but

Bethabara, for we have searched on the spot for traces of Jesus, his disciples and of his prophets". Bethabara means "house of the crossing" which may simply have been a place where a ferry crossed the Jordan. The Pilgrim of Bordeaux then supposedly found this very place in 333, but the Abbess Etheria who visited the banks of the Jordan in 385 only mentions the crossing of the Hebrews before the conquest of Canaan in Old Testament times and not a baptism of Jesus. St. Paula who died in 404 then identified a place called Gilgal as the place where both events took place and by 421-432 a church to John the Baptist had been erected at this spot, built high upon great arches as a precaution against the rising water of the Jordan (Kopp Holy 113-118). Clearly there is no real historical tradition associated with the place of Jesus' baptism and the whole area of activity of John's preaching seems to be entirely invented for theological purposes.

The location of Gerasa

Mark 5:1 says: "They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes" and Luke 8:26 says "Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee" This implies that Gerasa is on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Yet in reality Gerasa, today Jerash, is more than 30 miles to the south-east, too far away for a story whose setting requires a nearby city with a steep slope down to the sea and certainly not even close to being "opposite" Galilee. There is also no consistency in how the name of the area is spelled: Matthew 8:28 calls the people "Gadarenes" and other manuscripts read "Gergesenes" which is what Origen called them, but one of the Syriac versions of the New Testament, the Sinai Palimpset, says "Girgashites" who are mentioned in Gen 25:21 (Burkitt 385-87). There was a Gergesa (Kursi) on the lake which was part of the territory of Hippos, but that is not the name in most manuscripts of the New Testament. There was also a Gadara much closer to Lake Gennesaret on a high mountain overlooking the Jordan Valley with an extensive territory and able to boast of its own poets and philosophers, but this also did not reach as far as the lake (Avi-Yonah Historical 103). It is clear, therefore, that the authors of the Synoptics or later editors thoroughly

confused three towns with similar names and ironically did not use the name of the one town which did abut Lake Gennesaret but rather those two which didn't. This does not indicate first-hand geographical knowledge.

The trip to Sidon and Tyre

Mark 7:31 says: "Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of the Decapolis." There are two rather large errors here: one is that Sidon is considerably north of Tyre, and the second is that there was in fact no road from Sidon to the Sea of Galilee in the first century CE, only one from Tyre. There also is no way to go "through the region of the Decapolis" from Sidon or Tyre, as the Decapolis is on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Avi-Yonah shows a Roman road from Ptolemais on the coast through Tiberias to link with an old Roman road that ran from Damascus to Scythopolis (Avi-Yonah Develop 57); but this runs through Galilee to the Decapolis, not through the Decapolis. In order to go through the Decapolis, one would have to make a wide loop from Tyre north to Sidon, over to Damascus, down to the road near Gadara and then over to the Sea of Galilee. It is easier to assume that the entire passage is simply wrong than to have Jesus walk an absurdly long way for no good purpose. As Beare says, "this would be like going from New York to Albany through Philadelphia, by way of the Laurentians; or like going from London to Birmingham through Southampton by way of the Lake Country!" (Beare 133)

Lang tries to rescue Mark's geography by suggesting that the term "Decapolis" is being used as a general landscape term for all "heathen" areas north of Galilee and that the theme is theologically driven, in order to show Jesus' mission to the heathens (Lang 151-159). So what Mark is really referring to is that by the time he wrote there were Christian communities in Damascus, Tyre and Sidon and in the Decapolis city Pella, and he wanted to establish their origin in Jesus' direct missionary activity (Lang Über 160). As a theological explanation, this makes much sense, but it still shows the subservience of geographical fact to theological statement and does not vouch for the geographical knowledge of Mark.

Accordingly, almost all Christian scholars come to the same conclusion that this itinerary makes no realistic sense and that this fact has major implications: "The question is important for the assessment of the authorship of the Gospel of Mark. For if verse 7:31 attests that the evangelist had no clue about the geographical situation in the region of Galilee, then that makes it difficult to identify him, as the old church tradition does, with John Mark, who according to Acts 12:12 came from Jerusalem and must have been familiar with Palestine" (Lang 145). Since the geographical argument is a primary one in contesting this authorship, the conclusion once again seems inescapable that this Gospel, like the others, was written much later by people unfamiliar with Palestine.

Judea beyond the Jordan

Mark 10:1 says "And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan" which in Matthew 19:1 becomes: "Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan". But Judea does not extend beyond the Jordan; Perea is on the other side of the river north of the Dead Sea and the Nabataean Kingdom is south and east of the Dead Sea. Theißen suggests that perhaps Matthew was written east of the Jordan and so his geographical perspective is from Syria rather than Palestine, as his focus on the Magi and missions to the heathen in Antioch may indicate (Theissen Meer 18-20), but if that were truly the case and he wanted to be precise he would have said "west of the Jordan". His very vague statement "beyond the Jordan" is more a sign of geographical ignorance than a change in perspective.

In Matthew 8:5 a centurion who lives in Capernaum asks Jesus to heal his servant who is lying paralyzed. But Galilee was not a Roman province and was under direct Herodian rule, so there would not have been Roman officers living in its towns. As Zeev Safrai shows in his study of the Roman army in Galilee, until 66 CE the Roman army was only stationed in Judaea and was rather small; it was not until 120 CE that there was a legion stationed in Galilee. There is some evidence for a Roman army unit in Sepphoris before 120 CE, during the time of R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanus, and there was a Roman military fortress on the hill above Tiberias (Levine Galilee 104-105), but this is well after direct Roman rule of all Palestine after the defeat of the Jewish revolt in 70 CE. The likelihood of a stray Roman centurion at the time of Jesus living on the remote and militarily unimportant northwest shore of Lake Gennesaret that has poor road access to boot is exceedingly small.

In Luke 9:51-18:4 "Jesus starts on his way to Jerusalem by way of Samaria and there are occasional references to Samaritan settings along the way; but at the end he approaches Jerusalem by way of Jericho (as in Mark and Matthew), although the passage through Samaria would not take him near Jericho. The Evangelist has made no effort to adapt the incidents of the journey to a Samaritan environment, and there are in fact occasional touches which imply that Jesus is still in Galilee. His presence in synagogues and his contacts with Pharisees are hardly compatible with the Samaritan scene. The parallel passages in Matthew are laid either in Galilee or in Judea." (Beare 152-153) In action that appears to be set in Samaria (Lk 10:13-15) Jesus utters his curses against Chorazin and Bethsaida: does it not seem irrelevant and misplaced to do that in Samaria where no one would care rather than in Galilee?

Mark is just as confused about geography as is Luke. Mark 11:1 says: "They were now approaching Jerusalem, and when they reached Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples." Anyone approaching Jerusalem from Jericho would come first to Bethany and then Bethphage, not the reverse.

The incident in Luke 13:31-33 where Pharisees come to warn Jesus that "Herod wants to kill you" is historically out of place in a Samaritan itinerary. In Samaria Jesus would already be out of Herod's jurisdiction as it was directly ruled by Rome.

Luke 17:11 says: "On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee." But Samaria is contiguous to Galilee, right on its southern border! The only way one could be "between" the two is a small section of the Decapolis that sticks out west of the Jordan river into Judaea and includes Scythopolis and part of Mt. Gilboa; if one were very charitable, one might assume that this is what is meant. Otherwise it is an astounding geographical error which alone shows complete ignorance of even the basics of the map of Palestine under first-century Roman rule. Pliny however makes the same mistake and if we assume that the Gospels were written in Rome much later than the first century the author of Luke might well have gotten the error there. In Luke 9:51-52 Luke seems to understand that Samaria is between Galilee and Jerusalem, for he says that "Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem" and sent messengers ahead of him to the village of the Samaritans.

John 4:3, however, says clearly "he left Judea and departed again to Galilee. He had to pass through Samaria." Perhaps the author of John was bothered by Luke's mistakes and tried to fix them by insisting on the correct geography; as Freyne says: "It has often been mentioned that the Fourth Gospel despite its high theological tones shows a much greater acquaintance with Palestinian, and in particular Jerusalem topography than do the Synoptics" (Freyne 79). It is possible that derision and criticism by non-Christian outsiders against the ignorance displayed by the Synoptics forced the author and editors of the last gospel to check their facts more carefully.

Many of the sites in Jerusalem mentioned in the Gospels are historically unattested elsewhere or cannot be located with any certainty, even though there are now countless tourist shrines everywhere claiming to be those locations. John mentions two pools in Jerusalem, but only one, the Pool of Siloe in John 9:7 was known in the Hebrew Bible. With regard to the other pool, the Pool of Bethesda, Burkitt says: "There is a doubt concerning the site, and a doubt concerning the name". Though a pool has been uncovered archaeologically near the church of St. Anne in the north-east corner of

Jerusalem, the Pool of Bethzata, Bethesda or Bethsaida by the Sheep Gate appears in history for the first time in John 5:2 and is unattested in any Jewish records though it was mentioned by the Bordeaux Pilgrim in 333 CE. However, Josephus tells us that this name was not the name of the pool but rather a quarter of Jerusalem called Bezetha which he thought meant Kainopolis or New Town: Burkitt however calls this "really quite impossible". The name Bezetha or Bezatha was the original name of the area of Jerusalem which later became corrupted to Bethesda and Bethsaida but probably had nothing to do with the pool (Kopp 314, Burkitt 395-397). Most likely John's mention of this pool with five porticoes is due more to theological than to geographical considerations, as he is caricaturing the inefficacy of the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, with the pool of water symbolizing the Torah. Thus the sick man could not be healed by the pool, the old covenant, only by the new one, Jesus (Charlesworth Jesus 120).

There is no ancient tradition associated with the house in Jerusalem where Jesus supposedly had his Last Supper, nor is it clear where Jesus went on the Mount of Olives to Gethsemane. The Synoptics are very vague about directions while John 18:1 has him crossing the brook Cedron to enter a garden, but there is no indication where at the foot of the mountain he climbed (Kopp 323, 335-336). The next part of the itinerary is just as vague: "The gospels leave us just as uncertain about the route from Gethsemani to the house of Caiaphas as about the route from the Last Supper to Gethsemani" (Kopp 353). Considering the fact that historically speaking Jesus would never have been brought to the private home of the high priest in the first place but rather to an official building in the temple precinct, it is clearly a waste of time to look for the historical house.

Nor is there much detail in the Gospels about the actual location of Golgotha, the place where Jesus was supposedly crucified, although one would think that if this crucifixion were such a dramatic historical event that the proponents of this truth would have wanted to immortalize the exact location. The Aramaic golgolta means "skull" and "it is possible that a dome-shaped hillock would be sufficient to provoke the description". But the present Golgotha was also the place where in Jewish tradition Adam was buried and afterwards there was a temple to Venus on the same spot, so clearly the fact that Constantine built his basilica there has nothing to do with any real tradition about the crucifixion of Jesus. Eusebius, for example, passes over Golgotha in complete silence and we will see later that there isn't even a tradition of Jesus' crucifixion in early Christianity (Kopp 374-377). Once again, no accurate geographical history can be gleaned from the Gospels regarding sites in Jerusalem.

The only thing that one can conclude from these egregious geograph-

ical errors is that the New Testament was written by people who did not have the faintest clue about Palestinian geography and history and had never been there. The evidence points to Greek-speaking writers living somewhere outside of Palestine, probably Rome, writing many years after the events and perhaps not even until the 4th century. Israel or Palestine is a small place; anyone who lived there would know every geographical detail. And they must not have been writing for anyone living in the Middle East for they nonchalantly throw in stray geographical references to give their narrative the appearance of historicity without even bothering to check to see if these references are true. Once the Church took power in 313 CE with Constantine, it quickly moved to build the invented towns and villages cited in the New Testament, and no one would ever know that they did not exist in the first century.

Chapter 22:
The Contradictions in the New Testament

Now that we have thoroughly examined the political distortions of the Gospel of Thomas by the New Testament and we know something of its history, we may be in the position to understand the reasons for the endless contradictions in the New Testament. The problem that the Gospel editors faced was to take the gentle, non-dualistic, non-authoritarian and socially marginal teacher and philosopher of wisdom of the Gospel of Thomas and turn him into his diametrical opposite. For if one is going to start a religion, one needs a spiritual basis for it. But if one's real purpose is to construct a deceptive means for ensuring the political loyalty of the masses to the Roman Emprie, to punish the Jews for daring to revolt against it and to make sure such a revolt never happens again, then one is going to get caught in innumerable contradictions which will be very hard to resolve. This may not matter if the masses of people are uneducated and cannot read the Bible anyway but it is a constant danger for the Church if someone literate and intelligent reads the New Testament closely.

That is of course why the Church forbade people from reading the Bible for themselves and tried hard to keep people from being literate. That is also why so many "heretics" and Jews were viciously persecuted, as they had the knowledge to question the prevailing ideology and to expose the New Testament as inauthentic. It is clear, for instance, that the Cathars possessed copies of the Gospel of Thomas and thus were viciously eradicated, and it is highly likely that the Templars were a major threat to the credibility of the Church as they too had access to knowledge about the true origins of Jesus that they acquired in Jerusalem.

And that is also why the New Testament was constantly revised and rewritten, well into the 20th century, in order to streamline the message and to get rid of obvious contradictions. Yet this task was impossible and often the editing simply made the content even more nonsensical and confused.

Let us look at some of these major contradictions and study how they arose. These include: contradictions in the names of Jesus' disciples, his personality, his teachings, his attitudes toward Judaism and his last three days in Jerusalem. It is especially these last contradictions around the crucifixion and

what they tell us about the real historical roles of John the Baptist, James and Judas Thomas that will open up something closer to the truth for us.

Contradictions in the names of Jesus' disciples

It is universally acknowledged that the proliferation of similar names in the New Testament is highly confusing and that it is difficult to understand why the four gospels do not agree on the names of the twelve disciples. Assuming that Matthew is a direct disciple and that Mark and Luke have access to first-hand information, it is hard to imagine that a disciple of Jesus would not remember the names of the other 11 people, if he had spent at least 3 years with them in intimate association, and in the company of a man who at the very least left an indelible impression, and may have possessed great powers. Surely even 40 years later the memory of those events would be so vivid that the names of the disciples would be permanently engraved in the memory. Then why do the gospels disagree on such a fundamental issue? Even the number varies: the Synoptics have 12 but John only 9, which is also the case in the Gnostic Pistis Sophia. Our main gospel sources for the twelve disciples are Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20, Mark 3:14-19 and Luke 6:13-16, plus Acts 1:13-14 which has a list but doesn't call them disciples.

The disciples all four Gospels agree on:

1. Simon "called Peter" in the Synoptics, "the son of John" in John 1:41
2. Andrew, his brother
3. James, son of Zebedee; Mark 3:17 "whom he surnamed Boanerges, that is sons of thunder"
4. John, son of Zebedee (brother of James in Matt 4:21); also surnamed Boanerges
5. Philip
6. Thomas
7. Judas Iscariot

The disciples the synoptics agree on:

8. James, son of Alphaeus

9. Bartholomew (bar Tholomaios) (son of Tholomaus, bandit early 40s?)

The disagreements:

10. Levi the son of Alphaeus in Mark 2:14; Matthew, tax collector in Matthew 10:3; Levi, tax collector in Luke 5:27.

11. Thaddaeus in Matthew 10:3 and Mark 3:18, Lebbaeus or Lebbaeus called Thaddaeus in other texts of Matthew; Judas, son of James in Luke 6:16, Acts 1:13 and John 14:22 (the historical James was a lifelong celibate and could not have had a son). A work attributed to Hippolytus says "Judas, also called Lebbaeus" (Eisenman 864).

12. Simon the Cananaean in Matthew 10:4 and Mark 3:18; Simon the Zealot in Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13; Nathanael of Cana in John 1:45, Simon Iscariot in John 6:71, 13:2 and 13:26 (usually translated "Judas son of Simon Iscariot" but it only says "of", Ioudas Simonos Iskariotes).

If this is meant to be historical, then it is a blooming chaos and most scholars simply accept these names as being all different people. However, we also know from Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55 that Jesus' brothers were called James, Joses (Joseph), Judas and Simon, and we know from the Gospel of Thomas and other sources that Judas was also called Thomas. By looking at the list above, we can already see many of these names and their variants. But if James is the son of Alphaeus and Simon is the son of Clopas, then these two names must be the same names as their father Joseph. We can see from many New Testament clues and references in Christian theologians that Alphaeus, Cleophas, Cleopas and Clopas are really other names for Joseph, Jesus' father, as follows:

Clopas, husband of Mary, Jesus' mother's sister - Jn 19:25 "his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."

Clopas, father of Simeon - Eusebius 4.22.4

Cleopas - Lk 24:18

Cleophas, father of Simeon - Epiphanius 78.14.2-6

Alphaeus, father of Levi - Mk 2:14

Alphaeus, father of James the disciple - Mt 10:3, Mk 3:18, Lk 6:15, Acts 1:13

Look at the logic here: Clopas is the husband of Mary who is supposed to be the sister of Mary, Jesus' mother, but no family would name two of its daughters Mary, so she must be the mother of Jesus, making Joseph the same as Clopas. Clopas, Cleopas and Cleophas are obviously all the same, but Cleophas is the father of Simon, Jesus' brother. James was also Jesus' brother, so Alphaeus must be the same as Clopas/Cleopas/Cleophas = Joseph. All that being so, then Matthew must be added to the list of Jesus' brothers as he is the same as Levi, son of Alphaeus, which makes him a son of Joseph.

The many cognomens of Simon are also all the same: Zealot, Iscariot and Cananaean all mean exactly the same thing, which is Zealot. And it is hard not to see this being the same Simon as Simon Peter. With regard to Judas Thomas, Christian theologians are not unaware of these issues: Koester says Judas, the brother of James is the same as the Apostle Thomas, Segal equates Thaddaeus with Judas the brother of James and of Jesus, and Rendell Harris equates Jude with Thomas (Gunther 146-147).

This exact family arrangement of Joseph and Mary, the parents, and James, Simon, Thomas and Joseph, the sons, is summed up in an interesting fragment from a medieval manuscript found at Oxford attributed to Papias: "Mary the wife of Cleophas or Alphaeus...was the mother of James the Bishop and Apostle, and of Simon, Thaddaeus, and one Joseph" (Eisenman 844).

Two names left on the list are a bit mysterious: Andrew who is a brother of Simon who is Jesus' brother; and John who is brother of James who is also Jesus' brother. Now Andrew (Andreas) is a Greek name, not a Hebrew one, and comes from andreios, "manly". No Jewish man would have a Greek name, unless he were highly assimilated. Is this just a sly joke on the part of the Gospel writers at the expense of Jesus' family, to throw someone in simply called "man" and make him Greek to boot? It is noticeable and rather suspicious that Andrew is almost never mentioned by himself, always in connection with his brother Simon Peter, Simon or Peter and in John 1:40 and 12:22 called "Simon Peter's brother"; there is only one exception in John 12:22. It seems to be very important to the Gospel writers to insist that Simon Peter had a brother yet Andrew himself does not seem to be real: does this divert attention away from the fact, which they seem to be desperately trying to hide, that Simon Peter was actually Jesus' brother? Or, as Cullmann suggests, Andrew was a sort of anti-Peter, used that way in later Christian writing. The motives of the Gospel writers for their fictional inventions are often opaque, but overall, as Peterson concludes from his study, "no reliable traditions existed about him in the ancient church" (Peterson 47).

It is also noticeable that while Mark mentions Andrew by name

in two episodes, Matthew and Luke omit him entirely in their retelling of Mark. As Peterson points out: "That both evangelists independently omitted Andrew's name from their rewrites of Mark shows clearly that Andrew as a disciple... was historically a person of no importance whatsoever" (Peterson 2). Or it may mean he simply did not exist and was invented as a twin version of Simon Peter. Another good indication of his fictional malleability is the change the Gospel of John makes in Andrew: now he is a disciple of John the Baptist and a figure of authority rather than merely a name and is no longer from Capernaum, as in Mark 1:21, but from Bethsaida. Later Christian writings build him up even more and after 500 these fabricated legends and miracles become fixed and permanent: in the Muratorian Fragment he becomes a source of revelation for the Gospel of John, Origen has him missionarizing in Scythia and Athanasius, Jerome and others have him preaching and being crucified in Greece (Peterson 6-14). But they probably knew full well Andrew was a complete invention.

As for John, did Jesus have yet another brother called John? Or is this the real brother Joseph (or Joses) who is missing from the list of "disciples"? Notice that Simon is called the "son of John" but we know Simon is really Jesus' brother, and Jesus' father is Joseph, so Joseph is being equated with John. James is also called "James the son of Zebedee" as is John, so clearly John is James' as well as Jesus' brother. All this makes "John the son of Zebedee" likely to be Jesus' brother Joseph. Good evidence for this equation is the fact that the version of Mt 13:55 in Codex Bezae, Basiliensis and Boreelianus and Greek manuscript S says "John" instead of "Jose" (Blinzler 34).

Bartholomew (Bar Tholomaios) seems to not be a real name, as only the patronymic is given and the first name is missing. However, interestingly in the Old Syriac version of Acts 1:23, 26 "Thulmai (Tholomaeus)" has been substituted for "Matthias", "Thulmai" occurs four times in the Syriac translation of Eusebius Eccl. Hist. 1.12, 2.1, 3.25, 29, and "Bartholmai" appears instead of "Matthias" in the Armenian list of the 70 and translation of these Eusebian passages (Gunther 144). Bartholomew thus seems quite clearly to be Matthew.

Another mysterious person is Nathanael who is called one of the disciples in John 21:2:" Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples...: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of the disciples." He is also shown in a scene with Philip in John 1:46 which takes place early on in Jesus' career. The only one left of Jesus' brothers who is unaccounted for is Matthew. Now it is noticeable that of all the Gospels John never mentions Matthew which may be

due to political reasons as Matthew is perhaps too "Jewish" for the author of John. It is then probable that John has changed Matthew's name to Nathanael, although this is only a conjecture. That leaves Philip (a Greek name!) who may well have been the brother of Mary Magdalene, at least according to the Acts of Philip.

Simplifying the whole brew, we see the following list of actual brothers of Jesus with all the names used for them in the New Testament and all their citations:

1. Judas Thomas

Judas, brother of Jesus - Mk 6:3, Mt 13:55

Thomas - Mt 10:2-4, Mk 3:16-19, Lk 6:14-16, Jn 11:16, 14:5, 22, 20:24-29, 21:1-2, Acts 1:13.

Thaddaeus - Mt 10:3, Mk 3:18; for Acts 1:13 in Syrus Sinaiticus, Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus and Bohairic Bible

Lebbaeus, Lebbaeus called Thaddeus - some manuscripts of Matthew 10:3; Alexandrian and Western texts of Acts 1:13

Judas son of James - Lk 6:16

Judas (not Iscariot) - Jn 14:22

Judas called Barsabbas - Acts 15:22

Jude, brother of James - Jude 1

Judas Iscariot - Mt 10:4, Mk 3:19, Lk 6:16, Jn 12:4, 13:2

One of the twelve called Judas Iscariot - Mt 26:14

Judas called Iscariot - Lk 22:3

Judas, one of the twelve - Mt 26:47, 27:3, Mk 14:43, Lk 22:47

Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve - Mk 14:10

Judas Iscariot, Simon's son - Jn 13:2

Judas, son of Simon Iscariot - Jn 6:71, 13:26

Judas - Mt 26:25, Jn 13:29, 18:2-5, Acts 1:16, 1:25

2. James

James, brother of Jesus - Mt 13:55, Mk 6:3

James - Mt 17:1, 13:55, Mk 1:29, 6:3, 9:2, 13:3, 14:33, Lk 6:14, 9:28, Acts 1:13, 12:17, 13:2, 15:13, 21:18, 1 Cor 15:7, Gal 2:9, 2:12

James the son of Alphaeus - Mt 10:3, Mk 3:18, Lk 6:15, Acts 1:13

James the son of Zebedee - Mt 4:21, 10:2, 26:37, Mk 1:19, 3:17, 10:35, 10:41, Lk 5:10, Jn 21:2

James the son of Zebedee whom he surnamed Boanerges - Mk 3:17

James the brother of John - Acts 12:2

James the Lord's brother - Gal 1:19

James, son of Mary and brother of Joseph - Mt 27:56

James, son of Mary - Mk 16:1, Lk 24:10

James the younger (Less), son of Mary and brother of Joses - Mk 15:40

3. Simon

Simon, brother of Jesus - Mt 13:55, Mk 6:3

Simon - Mk 1:16, 1:29, 1:36, Lk 4:38, 5:3-5

Simon who is called Peter - Mt 4:18, 10:2, Lk 6:14

Simon whom he surnamed Peter - Mk 3:16

Simon Peter - Mt 16:15, Mk 14:10, Lk 5:8, Jn1:40, 6:68, 13:36-37

Simon Bar-Jona - Mt 16:17

Simon the son of John - Jn 1:42

Cephas (which means Peter) - Jn 1:42

Peter - Mt 8:14, 14:28, 15:15, 16:18, 16:22, 17:1, 17:24, 18:21, 19:27, 26:33, 26:37, 26:58, 26:69-75, Mk 6:37, 8:29, 8:32-33, 9:2, 9:5, 10:28, 13:3, 14:29,14:33, 14:37 (Simon),14:54, 15:66, 15:70, 16"7, Lk 9:20, 9:28-33, 22:8 (Simon), 22:31-34, 22:54-61, John 18

Simon the Cananaean - Mt 10:4, Mk 3:18

Simon who was called the Zealot - Lk 6:15

Simon Iscariot, Judas' father - Jn 6:71, 12:4, 13:2, 13:26

Simeon son of Clopas or Simon bar Cleophas (Bishop of Jerusalem after James) - Hegesippus (Eusebius 4.22.4) and Epiphanius 78.14.2-6

Andrew, his brother - Mt 4:18, 10:2, Mk 3:18, Lk 6:14, Jn 1:40, 6:8, Acts 1:13

Andrew - Mk 13:3,Jn 1:44, 12:22

Andrew brother of Simon - Mk 1:16, 1:29

Other Simons

Simon the leper (Bethany) - Mt 26:6, Mk 14:3

Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus - Mt 27:32, Mk 15:21, Lk 23:26

Simon the Pharisee - Lk 7:40-44

Simon, tanner at Joppa - Acts 9:43, 10:16, 10:17, 10:32

4. Joseph

Joseph, brother of Jesus - Mt 13:55, Mk 6:3

Joseph, son of Mary and brother of James - Mt 27:56

Joses, son of Mary and brother of James the younger - Mk 15:40

Joses, son of Mary - Mk 15:47

Joseph called Barsabbas, surnamed Justus - Acts 1:23

John, son of Zebedee - Mt 4:21, 10:2, 26:37, Mk 1:16, 10:35, 10:41, Lk 5:10, Jn 21:2

John, his brother - Mt 17:1, Mk 6:37

John - Mk 1:29, 9:2, 9:38, 13:3, 14:33,Lk 6:14, 9:28, 9:49, 22:8

John, the brother of James whom he surnamed Boanerges - Mk 3:17

5. Matthew

Matthew - Mk 3:18, Lk 6:15, Acts 1:13

Matthew the tax collector - Mt 9:9, 10:2

Matthias - Acts 1:23

Levi the son of Alphaeus - Mk 2:14

Levi the tax collector - Lk 5:27, 5:29

Bartholomew - Mat 10:2, Mk 3:18, Lk 6:14, Acts 1:13

Nathanael of Cana in Galilee (a disciple!) - Jn 21:2

Nathanael - Jn 1:46, 1:48

6. Philip - Mt 10:2, Mk 3:18, Lk 6:14, Jn 1:43, 6:5-7, 12:20, 14:8

I don't see how anyone can argue with a straight face, as the vast majority of Christian theologians do, that most of these are separate people. If all this duplication is not a sign of deception, then it is a sign of Alzheimer's and severe senility. And no one has argued that the writers of the Gospels were not in their right mind. Therefore they must be hiding something. It is true that many of the people whom I have grouped together are listed to-

gether in the same sentence, but that may simply be a more thorough deception rather than indicating separate individuals. Thus it appears that there are only five "disciples" on this entire list, and all of them are really brothers of Jesus, plus one brother-in-law.

Interestingly, the Talmud says in Sanh. 43a that "Yeshu had five disciples - Mattai, Naqai, Netser, Buni and Todah". Mattai means "when", Naqai means "the innocent", Netser means "a branch", Buni means "my son" and Todah means "thanksgiving" (KLausner 29). Mattai must be Matthew and Todah could be Judas Thomas; Naqai could be James as the passage calls him "righteous"; and there are no good clues about Buni and Netser, unless Buni is Jesus' actual son Judas.

There is a Jewish tradition for five; as Goldstein says, "when we read in the Talmud of five disciples of Yohanan ben Zakkai and five students of Akiba ordained by Yehudah ben Baba we become suspicious of the number five" (Goldstein 32). The Gospel of Thomas also has a total of five disciples: Simon Peter, Matthew, Judas Thomas, Mary and Salome. Perhaps those really are the disciples, since James was famous in his own right and would not be a disciple of Jesus and Joseph did not seem to play much of a role. The New Testament is obviously male chauvinist and refuses to acknowledge female disciples of Jesus, so it would not be willing to list them.

That the number "twelve" in connection with Jesus' disciples is purely symbolic and mythological is shown by the later Gospel of the Twelve Holy Apostles in which each apostle represents a different tribe of ancient Israel and each one speaks a different language so that he can missionarize a different part of the world (Haase 25-26). However, other sources don't necessarily agree on which apostle is assigned to which country: while the above Gospel, for example, has Thomas going to India and Matthew to Parthia, Ephrem has the opposite (Haase 43-44). In the Ethiopian story of the apostles each apostle is also born in a different month and connected with a different gemstone (Haase 40-41, 48), indicating the connection to the calendar.

The question has to be asked why the New Testament compilers would go to so much trouble to invent all these different names and to carefully hide the identity of Jesus' brothers. It could not have been easy for them to keep all these mentions straight and to make sure that such complete confusion was created that no reader would ever be able to figure it out. This effort clearly indicates a rather different purpose altogether, and that is a political one. One of the New Testament's primary aims is to diminish and downplay the family of Jesus, especially his brothers, in order to elevate the primacy and legitimacy of Paul, who did not know Jesus and merely co-opted

his name to start a religion of his own. That is what is going on here by the proliferation of similar names.

It is noticeable how repetitively the New Testament portrays the disciples as stupid, obtuse, uncomprehending and quarrelsome, a device employed to denigrate the Jews and to whitewash the Romans. As Brandon says regarding the Gospel of Mark: "In this Gospel the Apostles are represented as a weak, vacillating band, who generally fail to understand their Master's true nature and mission and completely lack his power. They quarrel among themselves on the matter of precedence, one of their number actually betrays Jesus to his enemies, and they all finally desert him in his hour of need and flee...In his treatment of both the kinsfolk of Jesus and his Apostles we find revealed the same motive which informs Mark's presentation of the Jewish leaders and their people, namely the desire to detach Jesus from any vital connection with Jewish national life in its manifold aspects, and thus to demonstrate Christianity in its origins as a faith misunderstood and persecuted from the beginning by the Jews" (Brandon Fall 196-197).

It is clear from all the sources what an important role Jesus' brothers played in Jewish leadership in the first century, in what is called the Jerusalem "church" by Christian historians and what was actually a continuing Jewish messianic and nationalist movement. Not for nothing does the New Testament call both Simon and Judas Thomas Zealots, and Simon's cognomen Baryona means "extremist, terrorist", thus the same thing as Zealot: the same is true for "Cananaean" which is actually Kanaim or Zealot (Peterson 1). The Church Fathers (Eusebius 4.22.4) even agree that Jesus' brother Simon succeeded James as head of the movement, followed by Justus or Judas (Eusebius 4.5.3-4 and Epiphanius 66.21-22) after Simon was crucified under Trajan (98-117). This Judas cannot have been our Judas Thomas, who would have died by then: perhaps it was even Jesus' son Judas if the family tomb (see below) is genuine.

But at the same time Paul and his group was attempting to seize power for themselves and claim the mantle of Jesus and James for the Gentile religion later called Christianity. The only way for Paul to do that was to erase all claims of Jesus' brothers to primacy and legitimacy and to put forward his own, and that is the main purpose for which the New Testament was written. As Maccoby says regarding "Jewish" stupidity: "This notion arises in the Paulinist literature (the Gospels and Acts) in order to cope with the fact that Paul, who never knew Jesus in the flesh, nevertheless claimed to know more about his aims than his closest disciples, to whom Paul's idea of Jesus as a divine sacrifice was unknown. Paul, the late-comer, had to supplant the authentic Twelve [or rather the Five], and this was effected by the development of stories portraying them as both stupid and unreliable" (Maccoby Judas 30).

This was also effected by using a proliferation of names to hide thoroughly the presence of Jesus' brothers, and by calling these split-up names disciples instead of brothers.

What makes these tactics work is that they are drawing on a real truth: Jesus was estranged from his family, his mother and his brothers except for Judas Thomas. And though Simon and Matthew are shown asking him questions in the Gospel of Thomas, they either seem to misunderstand his teachings or are openly hostile (as in Saying 114). Saying 99 highlights the differences between Jesus and his family, and despite the often embarrassing stridency of Jesus' repudiation of family loyalty, was useful to the New Testament to stress the rejection of Jesus by "the Jews". As Hengel says, "the downplaying of the brothers of Jesus which continues in the Apostolic Fathers and the apologetic writings, is a sign of the one-sided tendentious selection of the historical reports available to us in the canon" (Hengel Jakobus 72). This sets the stage for Jesus' teachings to be taken to the Gentiles which is the idea that Paul based his religion on.

His brothers appear to be much more politically active in a Zealot and nationalist direction than he was and also staunchly Jewish in their outlook. They surely must have felt alienated from his anti-Jewish attitudes and excessively spiritual orientation. It is precisely these aspects of Jesus that made him so appealing to Paul and the Gospel writers as a basic figure on which to build a new religion.

Contradictions in Jesus' personality

Every other aspect of Jesus as depicted in the New Testament is also contradictory and it would take a whole book just to catalog these contradictions. With regard to materialism, Jesus is shown to live in a large house and his followers were prosperous fishermen: since he urged them to pay taxes to Caesar he must have assumed they would have earned enough money to pay the tax. In addition, he is supported financially by a number of wealthy women. Yet at the same time he preaches strenuously against wealth and advocates a simple and non-materialistic lifestyle. He stresses meekness and humility yet makes outrageous pronouncements for himself as being the Son of God, the Messiah and all other titles combined.

His attitudes to women and family are just as confused. He rejects his mother and brothers in Mark 3:31-35. But in Mark 7:9-13 he criticizes the Pharisees for not following their own commandments of honoring one's father and mother. And his statements on marriage, women and children are

entirely inconsistent, as he makes statements both for celibacy and rejection of family as well as for family life and indissolubility of marriage:

Against women and marriage

Mt 5:28: "I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Mt 19:12: "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."

Lk 20:34-35: "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage."

Lk 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

For women and marriage

Mk 10:9-12, Mt 19:6-9: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder...Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (a precept which would have been meaningless in the Jewish world, where women had no rights of divorce).

Mk 10:14, Mt 19:13: "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

Mk 10:29: "There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother and father or children or lands who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time."

Lk 10:38-42: He becomes involved in a lengthy discourse with Mary, sister of Martha of Bethany.

Lk 8:1-3 "With him went the twelve, as well as certain women who had been cured of evil spirits and ailments: Mary surnamed the Magdalen, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna and several others who provided for them out of their own resources" (This indicates that women supported him financially and that he had nearly as many women followers as men).

Jn 4:27: "The disciples returned and were surprised to find him speaking to a woman."

So which is it? Is Jesus a celibate monk, opposed even to looking at women, opposed to marriage for anyone who wants to enter the kingdom of heaven, and in favor even of castration? Or is he a friend to women and children and a believer in the sacred inviolability of marriage? Notice also that in Luke 14:26 he advocates leaving one's wife and children in order to be his disciple, but in Mark 10:29 he only advocates leaving one's children but not one's wife. So which is it? No sense can be made of any of this.

Contradictions in Jesus' teachings

Christians generally say that Jesus gives the most sublime ethical teaching in history: being the Prince of Peace, he taught the principle of unconditional love, as opposed to the principle of retribution and hatred in Judaism. It is therefore rather startling to read the extremely high level of anger, rage, invective, vituperation, slander, attack and calumny in the New Testament as put in the mouth of Jesus. A man consumed by anger, hatred, rage, bitterness, slander and invective as is the overwhelming effect of his statements in the New Testament would never have become famous as one of the greatest spiritual teachers in history. Contrast the following statements if you will:

a. Nonviolence and forgiveness (also in Luke 6)

Mt 5:1-9 The Beatitudes: Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the poor in heart, the peacemakers.

Mt 5:44 Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Mt 5:48 You therefore must be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

Mt 7:1 Judge not that you be not judged.

b. Violence, sadism and anger

Mt 12:34 You brood of vipers, how can you speak good, when you are evil?

Mt 13:41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evil-doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.

Mt 21:18-19/Mark 11:12-14 (Jesus sees a fig tree) When he came to it,

he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And he said to it, `May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' (Note that it was not the season for figs).

Mt 22:12-13 (Parable of the marriage feast) But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment... Then the king said to the attendants, `Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth'

Mt 23:1-39 A long litany of insults and anger directed at the scribes and Pharisees.

Mt 25:41 Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Lk 12:5 But I will warn you whom to fear; fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell.

Lk 14:16ff After the invited guests beg off, the master of the house becomes enraged and vows that none of them will ever taste his banquet.

c. Masochism

Mt 5:11-12 Blessed are you when men revile and persecute you.

Mt 5:29-30 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away...And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

Mt 5:39 Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

Mt 19:12 There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

Lk 6:27: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you..Give to everyone who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again.

d. Intolerance

Mt 10:32 But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Mt 11:20-24/Lk 10:13 Woe to you Chorazin! woe to you, Bethsaida...I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than you (this curse is because they do not accept his teachings).

Mt 12:30 He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

One can try as hard as one likes, but one will not find very many loving and forgiving statements in the entire New Testament. What there is is almost entirely in the Sermon on the Mount which Friedlander has convincingly shown to be based on Jewish teachings (Friedlander 11-23). One would think that a loving and forgiving person would have said at least one kind thing about the Pharisees and scribes: surely there were some good people among them. But not one such word falls from Jesus' lips. There is only one passage in the entire New Testament in which Jesus is said to love any particular person, and that is in Mark 10:17-25 where a man asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Here Jesus, after giving his answer, "looking upon him loved him", and then told him to sell and give away all his possessions. The fact that both Matthew and Luke find it uncomfortable enough to eliminate may mean that it contains an authentic memory of the event, but it is also rather surprising that there is only one such instance.

Moreover, it is rather surprising that despite the New Testament putting the quite radical teaching of loving one's enemies in Jesus' mouth, it gives no evidence that the New Testament Jesus puts it into practice himself. The hostility against the Pharisees, who did not even differ that fundamentally from Jesus, is never even briefly interrupted by a kind word.

As Montefiore comments: "I would not cavil with the view that Jesus is to be regarded as the first great Jewish teacher to frame such a sentence as: `Love your enemies, do good to them who hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them who ill-treat you' (Luke 6:27-28). Yet how much more telling his injunction would have been if we had had a single story about his doing good to, and praying for, a single Rabbi or Pharisee!

One grain of practice is worth as pound of theory...If Jesus was so marvelously perfect and sinless as his adherents maintain, should he not have been more able than other men to exercise patience, self-control, and love? Should we not rightly demand more from him than from ordinary men, and not less?...But no such deed is ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels" (Montefiore Rabbinic 103-104).

Would a man so famous for his spiritual teachings be such an undeveloped mix of anger, vituperation, negativity and outright viciousness with no examples of forbearance, tolerance and forgiveness? It is hard to imagine. Remember, the Jesus of the New Testament isn't supposed to be just anybody; he is supposed to be someone so perfect and superior to the rest of us that he demands to be worshiped as a god. Instead he comes across as some-

one whom I would want to avoid in everyday life, not someone who's every word I would hang on with baited breath.

Not only does Jesus not teach a very enlightened ethical system, it can only be called a teaching of sado-masochism. As Harwood says: "There can be no denying that Jesus urged his followers to accept and delight in treatment that any rational person would be bound to find intolerable...And for those who rejected his...glorification of masochism, Jesus threatened countless trillions of years of unrelieved agony in a torture chamber that can only be described as a sadist's dream...If this is what Jesus preached, then far from being an enlightened philosopher of comparable stature with Confucius, Hillel and Wilberforce, he must be recognised as a very sick man. And if Jesus did not preach the everlasting torture doctrine attributed to him, then the books by the anonymous authors arbitrarily designated Mark, Matthew, Luke and John contain the most obscene libel of a good man ever penned" (Harwood 289-292).

Many great minds throughout history have been disturbed by the negative nature of the New Testament and have concluded that it was not genuine. Thomas Jefferson rejected most of the New Testament and made his own compilation of it in less than 25,000 words. He explained his reasoning in a letter to John Adams on January 24, 1814: "The whole history of these books is so defective and doubtful that it seems vain to attempt minute enquiry into it: and such tricks have been played with their text, and with the texts of other books relating to them, that we have a right, from that cause, to entertain much doubts what parts of them are genuine. In the New Testament there is internal evidence that parts of it have proceeded from an extraordinary man; and that other parts are the fabric of very inferior minds. It is easy to separate out those parts, as to pick out diamonds from dunghills" (Mitchell Jesus 278).

Tolstoy too created his own Gospel harmony: "When, at the age of fifty, I first began to study the Gospels seriously, I found in them the spirit that animates all those who are truly alive. But along with the flow of that pure, life-giving water, I perceived much mire and slime mingled with it; and this had prevented me from seeing the true, pure water. I found that, along with the lofty teaching of Jesus, there are teachings bound up which are repugnant and contrary to it" (Mitchell Jesus 65).

The only reasonable explanation for these contradictions is that all this anger and vituperation against the Pharisees does not come from Jesus himself, who uttered some criticism perhaps as we find in Thomas but not this level of invective. This was all added by the 4th century when the Church embarked on a systematic program to stamp out all alternatives to

itself.

And conversely, the other extreme that we find in the Gospels that is so jarring, these absurd moral rules that are impossible for anyone to follow, do not come from Jesus either, but were also added as a counterbalance to offset the extreme viciousness. Clearly the Gospel editors realized that by inserting their virulent anti-Semitism they made everything else Jesus said less credible and thus they thought to regain his mantle as a moral teacher by stretching Jewish teachings into unrecognizability. More cynically, they may also have been attempting to teach non-violence and passive resignation to the masses in order to prevent the shock of the Jewish revolts of 66-70 CE and 132-135 from ever happening again: someone who is taught not to fight back even when abused and provoked is not someone who will rise up against ruling-class oppression.

Contradictions in Jesus' attitudes toward Judaism

One of the striking aspects of the New Testament is the contradictory nature of its attitudes toward Jews and Judaism. Overall the picture is one of hostility and antagonism, but throughout the New Testament there are also passages with a pro-Jewish and Pro-Pharisee reading. The mixture is highly contradictory and inconsistent, as the excerpts below indicate:

For Jewish Law:

Mt 5:17-19: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished."

Mt 15:24-27: Jesus says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel...It is not meet to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

Mt 15:30-31: "and they glorified the God of Israel."

Mk 12:28-34: "`Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, "The first is, `Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord our God with all your heart...'" (the Shema prayer)

Against Jewish Law:

Mk 2:23-27: "On Sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they

made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain...The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

Mk 7:14-23: "Hear me, all of you, and understand, there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him...Thus he declared all foods clean." But if the disciples understood Jesus' words in that sense, why did Peter in Acts 10:13-16, who put the question to Jesus and was answered by him, react so strongly against the possibility of eating forbidden, non-kosher food? "But Peter said, `No Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean'."

Mt 9:14-17, Mk 2:18-22, Lk 5:33-39: "Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, `Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?'" But Mt 6:16-18 implicitly endorses fasting but simply advocates doing it in private rather than making a show of it: "But when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites...Anoint your head and wash your face,that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret?"

Lk 11:38: "The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner."

Pro-Pharisee or for friendly relations with Pharisees:

Mt 23:1-3; "Then said Jesus to the crowds and to his disciples, `The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice'." Here he explicitly approves of the authority of the Pharisees

Lk 7:36: "One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him."

Lk 11:37: "While he was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him."

Lk 13:31-33: "At that very hour, some Pharisees came, and said to him, `Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you'."

Lk 14:1: One sabbath when he went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees..."

Lk 17:20: "Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming..."

Anti-Pharisee and against Judaism:

The anti-Pharisee statements are most noticeable in Luke with 13 distinct references as opposed to 8 in Matthew, 1 in Mark and 6 in John.

Lk 5:30 (also 15:2): ""And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, `Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?'" (A reasonable question, as tax collectors were universally loathed and hated among Jews for being rapacious agents of the Romans).

Lk 6:7: "And the scribes and Pharisees watcherd him, to see whether he would heal on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him."

Lk 7:30: "But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him."

Lk 11:42-44: "But woe to you Pharisees! for you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God...Woe to you Pharisees! for you love the best seat in the synagogues and salutations in the market places. Woe to you! for you are like graves whcih are not seen, and men walk over them without knowing it."

Lk 12:1: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

Lk 16:14: "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him."

Lk 18:9-11: "He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others" (using the Pharisee as an example).

Mt 23:13-39: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men...For you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides..you blind fools...you blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!...Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees! for you are like white-washed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanliness...You build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous...Thus you witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets... You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town."

Jn 8:44-47 (Jesus speaking to Jews): "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to this own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

So which is it? Is Jesus trying to fulfill the Jewish Law, every iota and

dot or jot and tittle of it, or is he trying to abolish it by breaking all the laws? If he is teaching his disciples to break kosher laws, why does Peter still keep kosher? If he is against fasting, why does he give two contradictory teachings? If the Pharisees hate him so much that they are constantly trying to kill him, why do they warn him that Herod is trying to kill him and why does he eat at their houses so often? Why does he tell his disciples and the crowds to do whatever the Pharisees tell them? But if the Pharisees are so helpful to him, why the vicious and relentless insults and vilification directed against what were some of the greatest interpreters of the Jewish tradition who ever lived?

And why are the Pharisees constantly being connected with other groups with whom they historically were not allied, especially the Sadducees? The New Testament is not even consistent as to who Jesus' exact enemies were: in the scene of the healing of the withered hand on the Sabbath, Jesus' antagonists are described as Pharisees and Herodians in Mark 3:6, as Pharisees only in Matthew 12:14 and as lawyers and Pharisees in Luke 6:7. In sum, it is impossible to get any consistent viewpoint out of this tangled mess. One could perhaps conclude that the ant-Jewish passages were added later and that is why they don't agree with the originally pro-Jewish text, but this too is difficult to disentangle.

One fact that we can ascertain is that whoever wrote the New Testament was not Jewish, and, as we have seen in looking at Palestinian geography, was far removed both in time and place from the events of the first century. And the basis for this conclusion is that the New Testament continually refers to people around Jesus as "the Jews" and gives lengthy explanations of Jewish customs, as if the intended audience was not Jewish and knew nothing about Jews: "Throughout the Gospels, scores of times, `the Jews' are spoken of, always as a distinct and alien people from the writers, and mostly with a sense of racial hatred and contempt" (Wheeless 185).

Here are some outstanding examples:

Mk 7:3: "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands, observing the traditions of their elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they purify themselves." No Jew would need this explained.

Mt 28:15: "So they took the money and did as they were directed; and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day."

Lk 23:50: "Now there was a man named Jospeh from the Jewish town

of Arimathea." Considering that all of Palestine was Jewish, this is akin to saying "the American town of Boston" when telling a story that takes place in the United States.

Jn 2:6: "Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rite of purification..." Shouldn't it be obvious that the rites were Jewish?

Jn 2:13: "The Passover of the Jews was at hand..." Passover is only celebrated by Jews.

Jn 3:1: "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews."

Jn 3:25: "Now a discussion arose between John's disciples and a Jew over purifying." John's disciples were all Jews!

Jn 5:16-18 (also 7:1): "And this was why the Jews persecuted Jesus... This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him..." Jesus was Jewish!

Jn 6:4: "Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand." A person would have to live in a true hinterland not to know that Passover was a Jewish feast: certainly anyone in Alexandria and Rome would know this. In comparison, no American would say "the 4th of July, the holiday of the Americans."

Jn 19:40: "They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews."

It is obvious from these references alone that the Gospels, and John most strongly, were not written by Jews for Jews, nor were they written for anyone who had any acquaintance whatsoever with Jewish customs. It is indicative that when these writers quote the Jewish Bible which they do about 350 times, in about 300 cases they are quoting the Greek Septuagint rather than the Hebrew original: any Jew would have used the Hebrew (CathEnc 3.271). One has to assume that the readers of these Gospels were rural or small-town people who had never come into contact with a Jew, for any city dweller would certainly know what Passover was at the very least.

Another example of this is the constant use of the Hebrew Bible in spurious ways that any intelligent Jew would immediately notice. For instance, Matthew 2:23 claims that the fact that Jesus lived in a town called Nazareth "fulfilled what was said through the prophets: `He will be called a Nazoraios'". However, no such sentence exists anywhere in the Hebrew Bible nor does the term Nazoraios. Not a single prophet, and certainly not plural prophets as Matthew claims, applies this term to the Messiah and Nazareth is never mentioned. And it is almost amusing that there would be a prophecy

saying the Messiah would be called a "Person from Nazareth": how absurd! Here is one more reason why the New Testament cannot have been written by and for Jews; as Moran says of Matthew: "Instead of convincing the Jews he would have been held up to ridicule by them as one not knowing the Scriptures. And this would be the case even if there had been a prophecy which had been lost by the time of Jesus. If it had been lost then the Jews would not have been aware of it" (Moran 323-324, 329). This "prophecy" is clearly a fabrication.

But the foreign and un-Jewish nature of the Gospels is also clear from the quite obvious and vicious anti-Semitism in them that could not have come from Jewish writers. As Luke Johnson says: "The scurrilous language used about Jews in the earliest Christian writings is a hurdle neither Jew nor Christian can easily surmount. It is a source of shame (finally) to Christians, and a well-grounded source of fear to Jews" (Johnson New Test 419). The New Testament is full of this anti-Jewish slander, perversely placed in the mouth of the Jew Jesus. The very worst of this is in Matthew 23:13-39, where Jesus attacks scribes and Pharisees, calling them vainglorious and posturing hypocrites, blind guides, white-washed tombs, serpents, brood of vipers and children of hell, and accusing them of being murderers of the prophets and of Jesus' own emissaries, but John has many passages of vicious slander as well.

As Ian Wilson summarizes: "The key canonical gospel of Mark... displays one overwhelming characteristic: a denigration of Jews and white-washing of Romans. Whoever wrote Mark portrays Jesus' Jewish disciples as a dull, quarrelsome lot, always jockeying for position, failing to understand Jesus, denying him when they are in trouble (as in the case of Peter) and finally deserting him at the time of his arrest. The entire Jewish establishment, Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests and scribes, is represented as being out to kill Jesus...By contrast Pilate, the Roman, is portrayed as positively pleading for Jesus' life: `What harm has he done?' (Mark 15:14). At the very moment when Jesus, amid Jewish taunts, breathes his last it is a Roman centurion, standing at the foot of the cross, who is represented as the first man in history to recognize Jesus as divine: `In truth this man was a son of God' (Mark 15:39)...The Luke gospel even avoids representing Roman soldiers as crucifying Jesus, and Matthew insists on the Jews' assumption of responsibility for Jesus' death `His blood be on us and our children' (Matthew 27:25). There is a strikingly anti-Jewish character to the speeches attributed to Jesus in John too, where Jesus is recorded as condemning `the Jews' in the most vituperative way" (Wilson 46-48).

In order to accomplish this exoneration of the Romans, the Gospels severely twist historical realities into something unrecognizable. Firstly, the

depiction of Jesus' activities is so ahistorical, given what we know of the revolutionary political situation in Galilee in the first century, that it reflects either complete ignorance on the part of the writers or an attempt to suppress the truth. Eisenman points out the historical absurdity of "Jesus' meanderings about the peaceful Galilean countryside - at a time when Galilee was a hotbed of revolutionary fervour and internecine strife - doing miraculous exorcisms, cures, raisings and the like, while Scribes, Pharisees and synagogue officials murmur against him" (Eisenman 56).

He goes on: "In the Gospels...one would have difficulty recognizing that this highly charged revolutionary situation existed in the Galilee...in a peaceful Hellenized countryside, where Galilean fishermen cast their nets or mend their boats...The scenes in the New Testament depicting Roman officials and military officers sometimes as near saints or the members of the Herodian family - their appointed custodians and tax collectors in Palestine - as bumbling but well-meaning dupes also have to be understood in the light of this submissiveness to Roman power. The same can be said for the scenes picturing the vindictiveness of the Jewish mob. These are obviously included to please not a Jewish audience but a Roman or Hellenistic one. This is also true of the presentation of the Jewish Messiah - call him `Jesus' - as a politically disinterested, other-worldly (in Roman terms, harmless), even sometimes pro-Roman itinerant, at odds with his own people and family, preaching a variety of Plato's representation of the Apology of Socrates or the Pax Romana" (Eisenman xx-xxi).

The same whitewashing of the Romans is even more strongly true for the Gospel story of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. If we take this story at face value, it is clear that Jesus was executed by a Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, for a crime against the Romans, sedition, and using a distinctly Roman punishment, crucifixion. Yet the Gospels have the full Jewish Supreme Court, the Sanhedrin, meet in the private house of the high priest to condemn Jesus in a hasty interrogation without a trial for a charge of blasphemy, meeting not only on a Sabbath but at night and on the first evening of Passover as well, and convicting him to death for that offense upon his own confession. And they have the august members of the Sanhedrin, the most learned men of the Jewish law, spit on him and strike him as well. These constitute so many violations of well-established provision of Jewish law and historical custom that such a set of events is not even imaginable. Haim Cohn, who was himself a Justice of the Supreme Court of Israel, shows that every part of the story of the trial has to be false:

"1. No Sanhedrin was allowed to sit as a criminal court and try crimi-

nal cases outside the temple precincts, in any private house.

2. The Sanhedrin was not allowed to try criminal cases at night; criminal trials had to be commenced and completed during daytime.

3. No person could be tried on a criminal charge on festival days or the eve of a festival.

4. No person may be convicted on his own testimony or on the strength of his own confession.

5. A person may be convicted of a capital offense only upon the testimony of two lawfully qualified eyewitnesses.

6. No person may be convicted of a capital offense unless two lawfully qualified witnesses testify that they had first warned him of the criminality of the act and the penalty prescribed for it.

7. The capital offense of blasphemy consists in pronouncing the name of God, Yahweh...It is irrelevant what `blasphemies' are spoken so long as the divine name is not enunciated" (Cohn Trial 98).

The only possibility for the Gospel story to be true, according to Cohn, is if the Sanhedrin was conducting a preliminary investigation rather than a trial, in which case only the high priest and some of his clerks and officers would have been meeting that night. But this would have had to be conducted for the Roman authorities and "there is not a single instance recorded anywhere of the Great or Small Sanhedrin ever acting as an investigatory agent of the Romans"; in addition, "Roman officers were perfectly capable of conducting investigations themselves" (Cohn 107-109). Thus the entire story is simply false. As A. N. Wilson says: "Every single event which follows - the arrest of Jesus, his trial, his execution - must be a work of fiction, since it is unthinkable that the Jews would have broken their most sacred religious observances in order to put a man on trial" (AN Wilson x).

Carmichael summarizes the issues: "Both the procedure and the content of the trial are deeply confused. The charges laid against Jesus are not those he is condemned on; we are told that the Romans, who actually condemn him, consider him innocent; while the Jews, who do not carry out the sentence, seem determined to undo him for reasons that either do not concern them or have no validity from a religious point of view...The Gospel narrative of the trial gives us a general impression of incoherence...Nor is this merely the incoherence of

an imperfectly remembered event...it is tendentiously incoherent. Perhaps the most striking thing about the trial material...is the extreme barrenness of the information given...From a legal point of view...every form of justice was vio-

lated and...Jesus was the victim of a judicial murder" (Carmichael Death 28, 41-43). There is of course much more to this whole issue of the real politics of the New Testament, but we will leave this question for later.

What is even more odd about the New Testament story is that the sayings of Jesus claiming to destroy the Temple are the basis for his trial and execution, rather than his public action of cleansing the Temple. As Arnal points out: "When Jesus is brought to trial the accusation against him is not that he performed such an anti-temple activity, but that he uttered a saying (a saying Jesus actually did utter according to Mark 3:2) in which the destruction of the Temple was predicted (Mark 14:58), a charge that is repeated as Jesus hangs on the cross (15:29). Thus the gospel of Mark implicitly contradicts itself on this point insofar as the charges against Jesus at the trial rather nonsensically focus on a relatively innocuous saying made privately rather than a blatantly insurgent action supposed to have taken place publicly" (Arnal Major 207).

The New Testament compilers appear to be quoting saying 71 of the Gospel of Thomas ("I will overturn this house, and no one will be able to build it again") but with the critical word "house" changed to "temple" in order to fit it into their narrative and their theology. These quotes all raise the issue of whether Jesus was referring to the Jewish Temple and whether he claimed that he would destroy it. All in all, in the New Testament Jesus is recorded as having predicted the destruction of the Temple five times, combined with an actual attack on the Temple in Mark 11:15-19. However, the only direct source quoting Jesus is in John 2:18-21: "The Jews then said to him, `What sign have you to show for doing this?' Jesus answered them, `Destroy (lysis - dissolve, set free) this temple and in three days I will raise it up.'...But he spoke of the temple of his body." John then makes clear that Jesus was referring to his body, which fits the real meaning of the verb lysis as well. Even in the Latin of Jerome soluite from solvo still means "loosen, dissolve, release, break up" rather than "destroy".

The other references to destruction are all secondary: Mark 14:58 (also Matth 26:61, 27:40, Acts 6:14): "And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, `We heard him say, `I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" In all these citations the verb is kataluo, "to dissolve, put down, make an end of", whose meanings really don't fit the idea of physical destruction but do fit a more inward meaning. However, in Latin this becomes destruere and that is where the misinterpretation starts, based not on the direct citation of Jesus but on the indirect ones. Thus, in the Greek New Testament is Jesus really speaking of the Temple? Moreover, the indirect citations of Jesus are labeled as false rumors. Jesus does say in Mark 13:2 (Matt 24:2,

Luke 21:6) with regard to the Temple: "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down" but here he does not claim that he is the one who will do it.

It looks like the later New Testament compilers are trying to have it both ways. They are citing Jesus' remarks as if he were speaking about destroying the Temple but at the same time trying to connect his words with his impending resurrection which is important to their theology. And then they also cite his prophecies about the destruction of the Temple as if to imply that the remarks are the same even though here he makes no claims for himself. So in reality Jesus never claims in the Greek New Testament that he will destroy the Temple and the word only begins to be used in Latin to fit the evolving Church theology.

But this makes the charges against him that lead to his execution even more absurd than they already are, adding to the historical absurdities of the Sanhedrin trial. Thus the New Testament editors, in order to put forward their anti-Jewish, pro-Roman ideology, are forced to twist the historical facts beyond recognition, making it even more clear that none of the Gospels were written by Jews or for Jews. .

It has, however, been argued that the Gospel of John in particular must stem from a Palestinian background as it shows a more accurate grasp of Palestinian geography and of Judaism than the Synoptics. Regarding John's knowledge of Palestinian geography, Hengel says: "Numerous historical details indicate that the author of the Gospel had a Palestinian origin, although the work was not written in a Jewish milieu...He writes a koine Greek which has a marked Semitic, even Hebraic, flavour...It further introduces Aramaic or Greek place-names and adds their respective translations...He is the only one in the New Testament to mention Tiberias, newly founded by Antipas...More particularly in Jerusalem (but also in Samaria and even in Galilee) it hands down astonishingly accurate geographical, historical and religious details, and adds interesting information about Jewish customs and festivals...For this reason E. Hirsch conjectured that the author must have visited Jewish Palestine as an Antiochene merchant and Gentile Christian" (Hengel Joh 110-111).

Despite his anti-Semitism, John also seems to know more about the basic practices of Judaism than the Synoptics: "The Gospel contains a series of Jewish-Aramaic terms which are transliterated into Greek, e.g. twice Messiah, which is unique in the New Testament, Cephas, Rabbi or Rabbouni, and Thomas-Didymus ...John knows halachic regulations...He knows about... the deep hatred between Jews and Samaritans...he is familiar with the Jewish manna haggada,..he also knows the importance of the last, seventh, day

of the festival of Succoth... He also has knowledge of the prohibition against breaking the bones of the Passover lamb and the special significance of the sabbath following Jesus' death, which coincided with the first day of the feast of the passover...The numerous linguistic and theological Qumran parallels, especially in the sphere of dualism and the doctrine of election, also point to Palestine" (Hengel Johannine 110-111). Evans adds: "The dualism found in the Manual of Discipline has especially drawn scholarly attention. Contrasts between light and darkness, good deeds and evil deeds, truth and falsehood are found in 1QS 3.13-4.26...The respective manners in which Jesus and the Teacher of Righteousness...refer to themselves and to their distinctive missions have certain features in common" (Evans Word 146-148).

Scholars do not, however, conclude from these features of John that the Fourth Gospel was written in Palestine, only that it shows familiarity with Palestine. As Evans says: "Johannine dualism can be understood as having derived from Palestine (as opposed to Syria or some other place where Gnostic dualism might have existed)... This is not to say, however, that the Fourth Gospel was composed in Palestine. Scholars have rarely suggested that. If that were the case, it would be hard to understand why the evangelist translated Hebrew and Aramaic words that would have been well known to Palestinians...The provenance of the composition of the Fourth Gospel was in all likelihood the synagogue of the Diaspora" (Evans 147-149).

Thus, even if John is better informed about the background facts, that does not by itself constitute any argument that he has more first-hand knowledge about the real life and teachings of the historical Jesus than the Synoptics. Christian scholars themselves agree that his Gospel was composed outside of Palestine and at least 70 years after the death of Jesus, about 100 CE, but this could of course be much later. Rather, as I have already suggested, the author of John and the later editors of his Gospel were embarrassed by the obviously fabricated nature of the Synoptics and realized that if Christianity were to have any credibility, the historical framework would have to be presented in a more accurate manner so as not to elicit criticism and contempt from pagan and Jewish outsiders.

In the Gospel of John one sees a strenuous effort to present Christianity in a more philosophical manner, drawing on Greek philosophical vocabulary, and to anchor it more definitively in the heritage of Judaism while denigrating Jews at the same time as the people rejecting the new Christian Messiah. But this effort is political rather than factual and does not change the clear conclusion from our study of the errors and contradictions of the New Testament that the Gospels cannot be taken as a primary source for the life and teachings of the historical man Jesus.

Contradictions in Jesus' last three days in Jerusalem

The unhistorical and contradictory nature of the New Testament becomes obvious once we put the stories of the four Gospels about the last three days of Jesus in Jerusalem side by side. If Jesus' last three days were as earth-shattering as the accounts make them seem to be, why do the four gospels disagree about the details so substantially? After all, it was only three days, spent among a very small circle who were constantly at Jesus' side. The study of memory shows that events of high intensity and drama tend to be remembered in every detail while everyday occurrences may be easily forgotten. But, as A.N. Wilson cogently observes: "By their own accounts, all Jesus' friends ran away at the moment of his arrest, and could not possibly have witnessed his so-called `trial' at the hands of the Jewish authorities" (AN Wilson xi) Here are some of these disagreements, but one could go on for pages and still not exhaust them, so this is only a partial list:

<u>The Anointing</u>

Mk 14:3-9, Mt 26:6-13: An unknown woman comes and anoints the head of Jesus, not his feet, and several disciples complain of the waste of money. This takes place several days later at the house of Simon the leper at Bethany and the two gospels don't name Mary or Judas playing a part.

Lk 7:36-50: He does not connect the story of this supper with the Passion Week at all but places it much earlier at the house of Simon a Pharisee, and the woman is a sinner of the town who bathes his feet with her tears, dries them with her hair and anoints them with precious ointment. The argument is not about the waste of money but about the failure of Jesus to discern the character of the woman in allowing her to touch him.

Jn 12:3: Jesus is in Bethany six days before Passover and Mary anoints his feet. Judas protests the waste of costly ointment.

b. Location of Jesus before entry into Jerusalem

Mt 26:6, Mk 14:3: 2 days before the Passover at the house of Simon the leper.

Lk 21:37: Jesus lodged every night on the mount called Olivet and went to the temple during the day.

Jn 12:1: 6 days before the passover at the house of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead, with Martha and Mary.

c. Judas' planning of the betrayal

Mt 26:14-16: Judas went to the chief priests, said, "What will you give me if I deliver him to you?" and they paid him 30 pieces of silver.

Mk 14:10-11: Judas went to the chief priests in order to betray him, and they promised him money.

Lk 22:3-6: Satan entered into Judas, he went to the chief priests and captains and they engaged to give him money

Jn - no mention until arrest in garden of Gethsemane

d. The Last Supper

Jesus says one of them will betray him:

Mt 26:21: The disciples ask "Is it I, Lord?" and Judas says Is it I, Master?"

Mk 14:18: They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another "Is it I?"

Lk 22:23: They began to question one another, which of them it was that would do this.

Jn 13:23-25: The disciple whom Jesus loved was lying close to the breast of Jesus, and both he and Peter ask "who is it?" Jesus then gave a morsel of bread to Judas Iscariot.

e. Who arrested Jesus

Mt 26:47, Mark 14:43: A great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

Lk 22:47-52: A crowd, led by Judas, including the chief priests and captains of the temple and elders.

Jn 18:3: A band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and Pharisees.

<u>The first place to which Jesus was taken after his arrest:</u>

Mt 26:57, Mark 14:53: Caiaphas the High Priest

Lk 22:54: the High Priest's house

Jn 18:13: the house of Annas, the father-in-law of the High Priest Caiaphas

<u>The trial before the High Priest:</u>

Mt 26:57-75, Mk 14:53-72, Lk 22:54-71: Full assembly of Sanhedrin before daybreak, with the chief priests, the elders and scribes assembled. The High Priest tears his clothes at Jesus' blasphemy. They spit in Jesus' face and strike him.

Jn 18:19-24: No trial before High Priest. An examination during which guards slap Jesus' face. He is sent on to trial before Pilate.

h. Action of Pilate

Mt 27:11-26, Mk 15:2-15: Pilate is reluctant to sentence Jesus and washes his

hands, symbolizing the innocence of the Gentiles. Pilate asks the crowd whether he should release Jesus or Barabbas. The High Priest says, "This blood be on us and our children," implying that the Jews alone are responsible for the death of Jesus.

Lk 22:2-25: Pilate finds no crime in Jesus and attempts to pass the buck to Herod Antipas, since Jesus, a Galilean, does not fall within the jurisdiction of Judea. Pilate releases Barabbas, having attempted to release Jesus. The Jews insists Jesus should die.

Jn 18:28-19:16: Pilate finds no crime in Jesus. There was a custom to release a prisoner at Passover. The Jews chose not Jesus but Barabbas. Pilate tries several times more to release Jesus but the Jews insist he be crucified.

i. The binding of Jesus

Mk 15:1, Mt 27:1: The Jewish authorities do not bind Jesus until after his hearing.

Jn 18:12: He is bound from the very moment of his arrest. His criminal status has already been guaranteed by the outstanding notice for his arrest, first issued in 7:30 and intensified in 11:57.

j. role of Herod Antipas

Only Luke mentions Antipas, because Antipas ruled Galilee; he might be referring to Psalm 2, "The kings of the earth stood up...against his anointed." Antipas was the only king in Israel.

k. scourging of Jesus

Mk 15:15, Mt 27:26, Jn 19:1: Jesus is heavily scourged before being crucified.

Lk 23:22: Pilate threatens him with only a beating as a preliminary to release; no mention of scourging.

l. carrying the Cross

Mt 27:32, Mk 15:21, Lk 23:26: Simon of Cyrene is forced to carry the cross.

Jn 19:17: Jesus carries his own cross alone to Golgotha.

m. Last words of Jesus

Mt 27:46, Mk 15:34: "Eli, Eli,lama sabachtani" (Psalm 22:1) - My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Lk 23:34, 46: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do". He dies with the words: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Jn 19:28: He commends his mother to the care of the Beloved Disciple, "Behold thy mother!" He says "I thirst". He dies with the words "It is accomplished".

n. Jesus' death

Mt 27:51, Mk 15:38: The sky becomes dark, the veil of the Temple is torn, the

graves open up and the dead rise up.

Lk 23:44: Darkness descends, the veil of the Temple is torn. The Roman centurion asserts Jesus was innocent.

Jn 19:31-35: The Roman soldiers come around breaking the legs of the crucified to hasten their death. Jesus is already dead; they stab his side and there flows forth blood and water.

Witnesses

Mt 27:55-56: Many women, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Mk 15:40: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome.

Lk 23:49: All his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee.

Jn 19:25: His mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene, and the disciple whom he loved: he said to his mother, woman behold your son, and to the disciple, behold your mother.

Can we make sense of all these contradictions? Is there a larger pattern or are the Gospels just making it up as they go? Clearly the above contradictions in what should be a straight-forward story indicate that the whole story of Jesus' last three days is fictional, and that the different writers of the Gospels and their later editors inserted different details according to their own theological predilections and the changing needs of the dogma of the time.

For all these reasons presented here, many scholars have come to the conclusion that the New Testament is essentially a fiction, a literary rather than a historical creation, and that it has no value as a historical document nor as a biography of the historical Jesus. As A. N. Wilson says: "The evangelists are not writers or historians in a modern, post-Enlightenment sense, their statements cannot be tested by references to other historians, or to neutral events exterior to the Gospel narratives themselves. The evangelists' way of putting together a narrative so as to interpret events in terms of other written traditions would seem alien to a modern writer...Our authors started out with the assumption that their story had parallels in the Scriptures. They were not making a straight story into a myth; they started with a myth." (AN

Wilson 52-54)

Or as Randal Helms puts it: "The Gospels are...works of art, the supreme fictions in our culture, narratives produced by enormously influential literary artists who put their art in the service of a theological vision." (Helms Gospel 11)

In general, the figure of Jesus presented there has so many internal contradictions of opposite qualities that it is hard to believe it to be the portrait of one person. Could it not be one person? One clue is in the story of the crucifixion and in its dating as related to the story of John the Baptist, and we will turn to this issue next.

VOLUME II

UNIT IV: THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Chapter 23

Historical Background

To understand the whole theme of this book, we need to have a thorough understanding of the historical background. We might interpret the clash of the Romans and the Jews as the conflict between two very different types of universalistic imperialistic philosophies that were irreconcilable. The God of the Jews had begun as a tribal god, Yahweh, no different from all the other tribal gods, but already in Genesis this is the same God who created the universe. In the prophets the God of the Jews was to triumph over all the enemies of the Jews and ultimately all the nations were to bow down before him, but only if the Jews practiced righteousness and adhered to God's commandments. In Isaiah 66:22-23 God declares: "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your descendants and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the Lord."

In the Jewish apocalyptic literature between 200 BCE and 100 CE God himself was expected to make his terrible appearance to punish the wicked and to establish his throne on earth and to institute the ever-lasting kingdom of God. And the center for this universal worship of God was to be Jerusalem, strategically located at the very center of the Old World, at the meeting point of three continents.

The Jews never gave up the faith that they were divinely ordained to possess this land as the chosen people of God, despite the fact that as a small and weak people they were incapable of maintaining their hold on it for very long. In a way it seems absurd that Jews would even think it was possible to maintain independence in such a central location, squeezed between the great empires of Babylonia/Assyria and Egypt, and later at the mercy of the great powers of Greece and Rome: every army with any ambition to control the Mediterranean and the Middle East had to conquer Palestine. Only their religious faith can explain this stubbornness.

From the time of the Babylonian conquest of the southern kingdom of Judah in 586 BCE to the present day, Jews have only had an independent

state in Palestine for two short periods: from 164-63 BCE under the Maccabees or Hasmoneans and from 1948 to the present as the state of Israel.

Yet large numbers of them continually refused to knuckle under and assimilate themselves to the various foreign conquerors they found themselves under, whether Persian (538 BCE), Greek (333 BCE) or Roman (37 BCE). The Maccabean revolt of 167 BCE was sparked by the attempts of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV to impose forced Hellenization on the Jewish population: openly contemptuous of Judaism, he emptied the Temple of its treasury, violated the Holy of Holies, placed the statue of Zeus on the Temple Mount, and banned circumcision and sacrifice. (see Enslin 13, Atwill 3)

Yet when the Maccabees finally triumphed under Mattathias and his five sons John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar and Jonathan, they showed themselves to be just as fanatical as Antiochus had been. Fired with zeal for the law and fighting a holy war with the conviction that God was on their side, they targeted not only their Syrian overlords but also Jewish assimilationists and collaborators. As they gradually began conquering Gentile territories, they compelled the inhabitants to convert to Judaism and the males either agreed to be circumcised or they were slain. Once they were in power, however, the Maccabees (or Hasmoneans, as Matthathias was descended from Hasmon) called themselves kings and behaved like any other Hellenistic rulers. It was the Hasidim or Pious Ones who kept the ideal of religious purity alive to be followed by the Pharisees and Essenes in the 1st century CE. (Kirsch 78-82)

The Maccabees were to encounter an even more ruthless enemy in the form of the Romans against whom they were no match. After a period of civil war that started in 65 between two Maccabean rivals for the throne, the non-Jewish Antipater, father of Herod, helped bring about Roman intervention with Pompey conquering Jerusalem in 63 BCE. Thereafter Palestine was a tributary of Rome and its independence was over, even though it might still have nominal Jewish kings. After an interval of rule by the client king Herod and his sons from 37 BCE to 6 CE, the Romans took power directly under a series of governors or procurators who had supreme military, judicial and financial authority.

The Roman sense of their historic destiny was easily a match for the Jewish self-conception. The Romans created the first world superpower by ruling over the entire Western world, an empire that for the first time had no rival. They felt morally entitled to their position of dominance and looked down on all non-Italian peoples, especially those to the east of them. Greeks were devious and slavish, Orientals were decadent and cowardly and Syrians and Judeans in particular were good for nothing but slavery. The subjugation of oriental peoples was central to their establishment of global domination

and they boasted about the peoples they had subjected on innumerable public monuments. (Horsley Jesus+Emp 20-22)

The Romans believed that to ensure their own national security terror, violence and oppression was necessary to extract deference from subjugated peoples. "The initial Roman conquest of new peoples often entailed devastation of the countryside, burning of villages, pillage of towns, and slaughter and enslavement of the populace. The Romans then reacted with brutal reconquest and often outright genocide even to minor breaches of treaty." Crucifixion accompanied by severe beatings, mass slaughter, enslavement and annihilation of whole peoples were methods used to terrorize subjected populations. In 4 BCE alone in retaliation for a widespread revolt the Roman general Varus, after burning towns and devastating the countryside, had about 20,000 men crucified. "In Palestine the brutality started soon after the initial Roman conquest in 63 BCE and continued literally, for two centuries."

Part of this brutality involved humiliation: "Rome asserted its superiority by humiliating its enemies, especially those who were far off, exotic, and strange...Forcing subject peoples to acknowledge or even worship the Roman army standards was yet another form of humiliation." Josephus reports an example of this by Pontius Pilate which elicited adamant protests by the Jews (Ant. 18.57-59). (Horsley 27-31)

On top of the violence and humiliation, the Romans imposed a policy of rapacious taxation to extort the maximum possible amount of money out of the Jewish people. "The infamous system of tax farming which had been abolished by Julius Caesar was re-instituted as soon as the Romans moved in. This amounted to handing over the collection of taxes to private contractors (who were little better than gangsters) whose profit on the deal depended on collecting as much as possible over and above the face-value of the taxes... They hired gangs of ruffians who demanded such huge sums that their victims often fled in despair.

When this happened, the tax-collectors tortured the fugitive's family on racks, wheels and other appliances of torture... Suicides were common in order to avoid this torture. If all else failed, the victim or his family were sold into slavery. The tax-collectors could always call on the Roman army for support, if necessary." In sum, "the Romans at this time frankly regarded their Empire as a vehicle for exploitation" (Maccoby Revolution 39-40).

Thus, the taxes on the Jews were particularly onerous, including land tax, income tax, poll tax, water tax, city tax, taxes on meat and salt, road tax, house tax, boundary taxes, market tax, customs duties, bridge tolls etc. "There were...many kinds of indirect taxation superimposed on the direct

taxation in the form of tribute. But for the Jews of Judaea the burden of financial outlay was exceptionally heavy. In addition to the Roman tribute and other secular dues, they were obliged by religious law to pay for the maintenance of the Jerusalem Temple and its large staff of priests, Levites and other Temple servants. The tithe which they had to pay regularly for this purpose (over and above the annual half-shekel poll tax) was originally designed as an inclusive ten per cent income tax...The burden was well nigh intolerable...the total taxation could have approached something like 40% of the provincial income" (Bruce Render 254).

Given these oppressive conditions in Judea, it should come as no surprise that Jewish resistance to the Romans and to the collaborationist Jewish upper classes (the Jewish aristocracy, the high priests and the Sadducees) was endemic throughout the first century and took many forms. The most elementary popular movement was social banditry, usually people forced off their lands by economic pressures or those in political trouble with ruling groups. Much broader in scope were the popular messianic movements where "large numbers of Jewish peasants gathered around a charismatic leader whom they acclaimed as king." Sometimes these movements were even able to hold territory for a few months or even for a few years. (Horlsey-Hanson 246)

There were also several prophetic movements around the middle of the first century with prophets "who inspired large groups of their followers to leave home and fields to join in divinely led new actions of liberation from alien rule." These prophets usually had "a vision of an eschatological act of deliverance modeled after one of the great historical acts of salvation."

The real focus of Josephus' wrath, however, are the Zealots and the Sicarii. The Zealots were originally one of many resistance groups and did not arise to prominence until the middle of the great revolt of 66-73 when they took the lead in combating the Roman legions and actually succeeded in driving the Roman legions from Judea in 66. The Sicarii or "dagger men" emerged as a group in the fifties CE. Their leaders had concluded that the situation was so desperate that extreme measures were called for against the Jewish aristocracy and Roman officials. "They thus inaugurated a program of assassination and kidnapping against key symbolic figures of the Jewish ruling circles who were collaborating with Roman rule." All these groups emerged during a period of heightened apocalyptic expectation when people were awaiting divine acts of deliverance. (Horlsey/Hanson Bandits 247-250) And all this revolutionary agitation finally culminated in the great Jewish revolt of 66-73.

The cost of the defeat of the Jews by the Romans was horrendous. Jo-

sephus claims that there were 1,100,000 deaths during the siege of Jerusalem, a figure he may well have taken from Roman military records; to this figure should be added the deaths from the rest of the war. Throughout Israel those younger than 17 were sold into slavery, and fit adult males were sent to work in the quarries or mines in Egypt and sent to die in the gladiatorial games. Nor was this the last Jewish revolt.

In 115-117 CE under Trajan a large-scale revolt of Jews took place throughout the Eastern Empire, in Egypt, Libya, Mesopotamia and Cyprus: all these revolts were brutally suppressed. The revolt in Egypt resulted in the extermination of one million and a half people and put an end to Jewish life in Egypt; the revolts in Cyprus resulted in the expulsion of the 40,000 Jews there. The only positive result was that the Roman attempt to conquer Parthia was prevented by their need to move troops to deal with the revolts, thus securing Parthia as a future place of refuge.

Bar Kochba's revolt of 132-135 CE resulted in a thousand towns razed to the ground and hundreds of thousands of deaths: Judea was almost depopulated of Jews and renamed Syria Palestina and Jerusalem was renamed Aelia Capitolina and forbidden to Jews. A large part of the former Judea was subject to an exclusion order put upon Jews. Many towns and cities in Judea were completely destroyed and later Christian pilgrims would remark on the ruins. Galilee retained the largest number of Jews, not more than half the total, and Tiberias became Palestinian Judaism's unofficial capital. The economic crisis of the 3rd century resulted in a wave of emigration, leaving Jews as a clear minority overall, a tragic end to millennia of Jewish habitation in Israel. (Goodman 433-434, Gilbert Jewish 15, Safrai judische 129-131, Taylor Christians 48-51)

What is amazing about these revolts is the willingness of Jews to take on the Romans militarily at the very peak of their power, a willingness one could call either great bravery or great foolhardiness. They were the only subject people ever to do so and certainly their stubborn national traditions and religious beliefs played a large role in their refusal to accept Roman rule. In the revolt of 115-117 the fact that the indigenous rural populations made common cause or at least sympathized with the Jews indicates that this revolt may even have had a serious chance of success. These revolts awoke in the Romans an almost pathological fear of Judaism and of nationalist Messianic movements and a strong conviction that such revolts should never happen again. All this is critical for understanding the roots of the New Testament.

Chapter 24:

The Manuscripts and Purported Authors of the New Testament

If the basic dates of Jesus' life are unhistorical in the New Testament, does that affect the reliability of the rest of the document? This is an important question for us because we are trying to determine whether we consider the Gospel of Thomas an authentic document of Jesus' life and teachings. If we assume that the New Testament is indisputably authentic, that makes Thomas potentially less so. Conversely, if it turns out that the New Testament is not an original document but a later edited one, then Thomas may also be the authentic document we want to rely on.

The standard position on the New Testament is that the four gospels are eyewitness reports. Mark recorded the memoirs of the apostle Peter who was there to witness the events around Jesus (though not after Jesus was arrested as he denied him three times). Matthew wrote a gospel in Hebrew, mostly relying on Mark. Luke, though not an eyewitness himself, compiled his account from the testimony of those who were and from derivative written sources. John is traditionally supposed to be the apostle John. But are these documents truly eyewitness reports?

The first fact we learn in studying the New Testament is the sheer number of its versions but also the lack of any complete version before the 4th century. According to Metzger, as of 2003 there were 5,735 catalogued Greek manuscripts which contain all or part of the New Testament: 116 papyri, 310 uncial manuscripts written in all-capital Greek letters, 2,877 minuscule manuscripts dating from 800 CE on and written in cursive, and 2,432 lectionaries to be used in church services (Metzger Text 50). The very oldest of these is the Rylands papyrus P52, found in Egypt, which measures only 2½ by 3½ inches and contains only a few verses from the Gospel of John: "On the basis of the style of the script, C. H. Roberts dated the fragment in the first half of the second century, though not all scholars are convinced that it can be dated within so narrow a range" (Metzger Text 55-56). One other papyrus dates to the 2nd century, four to about 200, including the Bodmer papyrus, two to the turn of the 2nd and 3rd century and 30 to the 3rd century, including the famous Chester Beatty papyri.. Strikingly all these papyri except for one are from Egypt where the hot dry sands preserved them through the centuries (Aland 57-59. The oldest non-canonical gospel

document yet discovered is the Egerton Papyrus which is not later than mid 2nd century CE, and has elements also found in the canonical gospels. The handwriting is closest in appearance to that of a non-Christian document datable precisely to 94 CE.).

But all these papyri contain only parts of the New Testament, and complete parchment documents of the Greek New Testament go back no further than the 4th century: the only known complete copy in uncial script is Codex Sinaiticus, found by Constantine Tischendorf at the monastery of St. Catharine on Mt. Sinai in 1844, and an equally valuable uncial manuscript is Codex Vaticanus, owned by the Vatican since some date prior to 1475. The oldest Latin text is Codex Vercellensis, sometime before 370 C.E. (Metzger Text 62, 67-68, 102).

In 1515 the famous Dutch scholar and humanist Erasmus issued the first Greek New Testament to be published, with the 5th edition in 1527, but he could not find a single manuscript which contained the entire Greek New Testament. Thus he had to rely on two rather inferior 12th century manuscripts whose text he supplemented by translating the Latin Vulgate back into Greek. This resulted in "readings which have never been found in any known Greek manuscript - but which are still perpetuated today in printings of the so-called Textus Receptus of the Greek New Testament!...Subsequent editors, though making a number of alterations in Erasmus' text, essentially reproduced this debased form of the Greek New Testament ...What came to be called the Textus Receptus...resisted for 400 years all scholarly efforts to displace it in favor of an earlier and more accurate text" (Metzger 142-145, 148).

But the problem is that it seems almost impossible to determine what an earlier and more accurate text might be. Not only did Erasmus introduce new variant readings, but all the earlier manuscripts do not agree with one another either. When the English scholar John Mill published his Greek text in 1707, based on all the Greek manuscripts he could procure, he found some 30,000 variant readings in the 32 printed editions and nearly 100 manuscripts he examined (Metzger 154). And when the German philologist Karl Lachmann (1793-1851) attempted to restore a more authentic edition of the Greek New Testament, which he published in 1831, he conceded that it was impossible to reproduce the "original" text and aimed solely to restore the text current in Eastern Christendom about 380 CE (Metzger 170-171).

Even this text is problematic. Of the four types of New Testament texts, the Alexandrian, the Neutral, the Western and the Syrian, the Western text is both ancient and widespread and was the text quoted by the early Church Fathers. But this text is highly variable, according to the editors of

the most noteworthy critical edition of the Greek Testament ever produced, the 1881 British one by Westcott and Hort: "Words, clauses, and even whole sentences were changed, omitted, and inserted with astonishing freedom, wherever it seemed that the meaning could be brought out with greater force and definiteness. Another equally important characteristic is a disposition to enrich the text at the cost of its purity by alterations or additions taken from traditional and perhaps from apocryphal or other non-biblical sources" (Metzger 175-179).

The same imprecision and variety of texts is true for the Latin translations of the Greek text. Once the Roman Catholic Church became the state religion of the Roman Empire, its official language was Latin and not Greek, and thus, beginning in the 3rd century, many Latin versions of the Gospels circulated in North Africa and Europe. However, as Jerome complained to Pope Damasus, there were almost as many versions as manuscripts: Luke 24:4-5 for instance had at least 27 variant readings. Thus starting in 382 CE the most capable Biblical scholar then living, Jerome, was asked to compile a Latin Bible, mostly using the best Old Latin text available and comparing it with some old Greek manuscripts. Yet his text was far from authoritative: already in the 5th century, according to Bishop Victor of Tunnunum (d. 569 CE) in his Chronica, "in the consulship of Messala, at the command of the Emperor Anastasius, the Holy Gospels...are corrected and amended". The Vulgate continued to be corrupted either by careless transcription or conflation with copies of the Old Latin versions, and even the repeated medieval attempts to restore Jerome's "original" version resulted in even further textual corruption: "as a result, the more than 8,000 Vulgate manuscripts which are extant today exhibit the greatest amount of cross-contamination of textual types" (Metzger 101, 105).

Not until the Council of Trent in 1546, under the impetus of the Counter-Reformation, did the Church decide to issue an authentic Latin edition that was to have the sanction of divinity. The edition of 1590 under Pope Sixtus V (1585-90) was supposed to be the officially authoritative text and changes to it and the printing of variant readings were expressly forbidden on pain of excommunication. But a mere two years later in 1592 Pope Clement VIII (1592-1605) called in all the copies he could find and issued another authentic edition which differed from the former in some 4,900 variants! Once again in 1902 Pope Leo XIII appointed a Commission of Cardinals, known as the Pontifical Biblical Commission, to further amend the Vulgate; in 1907 the Commission invited the Benedictine Order to undertake a collection of the variant readings of the Vulgate as a preparation for a thoroughly amended edition, but the work of the Benedictines was limited to the Old Testament. Thus starting in 1979 under Pope John Paul II the Neo-

Vulgate was undertaken which "represented not only innumerable alterations of the traditional text in purely stylistic matters, but more significantly a correction of it to the Greek text" as neither of the 16th century editions "succeeded in representing either Jerome's original text...or its Greek base with any accuracy" (Aland 190, Metzger 109, Wheeless 174-175).

The astonishing conclusion from looking at the history of both the Greek and Latin texts is that it is impossible to determine from any textual analysis what the original text of the New Testament may have been, and Christian writers freely wrote their own versions of the story of Jesus as they saw fit. As Origen (185-254 CE) complained very early in the history of Gospel writing (Comm. in Matt. 15.14): "The differences among the manuscripts [of the Gospels] have become so great, either through the negligence of some copyists or through the perverse audacity of others; they either neglect to check over what they have transcribed, or in the process of checking, they lengthen or shorten, as they please." In one instance Origen even suggests that all the existing manuscripts may have become corrupt (Metzger 200-201). The question is if there was not even an original text at the time of Origen who surely had access to all existing documents, when was there ever? And with all the Greek manuscripts in existence, why has a truly "original" text never been found? If there ever was one, the Catholic Church destroyed it a long time ago.

As Hoskyns and Davies say: "Of the hundreds of manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek at present in existence, it would be hard to find two in all respects alike. Variations in spelling, variations in order, variations in actual words and even in whole verses, make each more or less distinct. This lack of identity springs from the very nature of transcription by hand... Not errors only, but erroneous reconstructions as well, are incorporated into the text and handed on in every fresh transcription...The result is chaos" (Hoskyns/Davies 52).

And this chaos was in large part due to the fact that no one considered the New Testament all that holy. Christians had a less reverential attitude to the written word than Jews, a change which is indicated by the change from elegant parchment scrolls to little books or codices which the Christians preferred. As Fox says: "Nobody argued that a Christian book was so holy that it would defile the hands: when early Christians quoted words which we know in our Gospels, they often mixed up sayings from separate Gospels and quoted them as if they were one" (Fox 147).

The Church Fathers were very loose in their quotations of the New Testament: "If the Father quotes the same passage more than once, it often happens that he does so in divergent forms. Origen is notorious in this

regard, for he seldom quotes a passage twice in precisely the same words" (Metzger Text 1992 87). Celsus, a noted pagan critic of Christians points this out as well: "I have even heard that some of your interpreters, as if they had just come out of a tavern, are onto the inconsistencies and, pen in hand, alter the original writings three, four, and several more times in order to be able to deny the contradictions in the face of criticism." (Celsus 64) For example, even in the case of a simple passage in Mt 11:4/Lk 7:22 - "Go and tell John what you see and hear/what you have seen and heard" - there are 14 very different quotations in the early Christian literature, some short, some long, and there are 6 others that cite the rest of the passage without this sentence. (Mees ausser 29)

Until the canon was fixed in the fourth century, writers freely added and subtracted to Christian texts. The New Testament was regarded as a living text and earlier as well as later scribes "felt themselves free to make corrections in the text, improving it by their own standards of correctness, whether grammatically, stylistically, or more substantively" (Aland 69). Marcion produced his own gospel in the 140's by abbreviating Luke, changing and omitting bits of the letters of Paul and omitting Timothy and Titus. There were two versions of the Acts of the Apostles, the version in Codex Bezae being about a tenth longer than the Alexandrian text. There are two early papyri of the Gospel of John which overlap across 70 verses but they differ at no less than 70 small places. John 6:52-59 was added by a later redactor and at John 14:31 after Jesus says "Arise, let us go hence", three more long chapters of monologue follow, leading scholars to conclude that chapters 15-17 have been inserted later. At John 8:1-11 the famous story of the adulterous woman is not in surviving 4th-century codices and its style is universally held to differ from the rest of the gospel: it too must be a later insertion, by 400 CE. And the earliest texts of Mark's Gospel all end at 16:8, omitting the appearances of the resurrected Jesus: verses 9-20 are plainly by some later hand (Fox Unauth 139-143). The Gospel of Mark which was used by Matthew and Luke was substantially different from the Mark we know as transmitted in all texts and manuscripts (Koester History 20)

The New Testament does not even agree with itself on iconic Christian teachings. The four Batitudes given by Luke 6:20-23 are clearly a variant of four of the eight in Matthew (Mt 5:3, 6-7, 10-12), yet the "differences in wording are very considerable, far too great to be explained as the result of differences in the rendering of the Aramaic of Jesus into Greek...The Lord's Prayer, above all, which we might expect to preserve its original wording exactly, if anything did, we find before us in two surprisingly different versions (Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4), that of Luke being substantially shorter." (Beare 54)

Similar examples could be multiplied endlessly and this is even more

true for texts outside the New Testament, as Fox shows: "In the period 400-600 `aggressive forgeries' added false letters to the collection of almost every early Christian letter-writer...A critical history of Christian thought could not possibly begin to have been written until after 1500 because of forgeries by Christians themselves" (Fox Unauth 153-154). For instance, of 15 letters ascribed to Ignatius of Antioch (c. 110) 8 were rejected as forgeries; these were not sifted out from the genuine collection until 1646. "The letters of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (c. 250) reveal that Christian contemporaries had been faking letters in Cyprian's name quite freely and sending them to other Churches in order to discredit him. In the 170s we have the instructive protest of one Dionysius, bishop of Corinth: Christians were changing and faking his own letters, he said, just as (he knew) they had changed the Gospels." (Fox Unauth 130)

It was a common thing among the early Christian Fathers and saints to lie and deceive, if their lies and deceits helped the cause of Christ. Gregory of Nazianzus, writing to Jerome, says: "A little jargon is all that is necessary to impose on the people. The less they comprehend, the more they admire. Our forefathers and doctors have often said, not what they thought, but what circumstances and necessity dictated." The Apostolic Father Hermas said: "O Lord, I never spake a true word in my life, but I have always lived in dissimulation, and affirmed a lie for truth to all men, and no man contradicted me, but all gave credit to my words." (Doane 434)

A particularly interesting example of textual variants is the secret gospel of Mark that Morton Smith found in the Mar Saba monastery on Mt. Sinai in 1958, quoted in a letter of Clement of Alexandria pasted onto the endpaper of an edition of the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch dated to 1646. The letter says:

"As for Mark, then, during Peter's stay in Rome, he wrote [an account] of the Lord's doings, not, however, declaring all [of them] nor yet hinting at the secret [ones], but selecting those he thought most useful for increasing the faith of those who were being instructed. But when Peter died a martyr, Mark came over to Alexandria, bringing both his own notes and those of Peter, from which he transferred to his former book the things suitable to whatever makes for progress toward knowledge (gnosis). Thus he composed a more spiritual Gospel for the use of those who were being perfected. Nevertheless, he did not yet divulge the things not to be uttered, nor did he write down the hierophantic teaching of the Lord, but to the stories already written he added yet others and moreover brought in certain sayings of which he knew the interpretation would, as a mystagogue, lead the hearers into the innermost sanctuary of the truth hidden by seven [veils]." Clement then cites the secret ending to Mark in which Jesus spends the night with

a youth "wearing a linen cloth over his naked body" whom Jesus had freed from a tomb: during the night "Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God" (Smith Secret 14-17).

Smith concludes from a thorough grammatical and textual analysis that the letter is a genuine one of Clement and "on stylistic and historical grounds the secret Gospel...would seem to have been almost what Clement said it was: an expansion of Mark made, if not by Mark himself, at least by a disciple of his who imitated his style very closely...The secret Mark was part of the original material and...our present text of Mark was produced by abbreviation, not expansion" (Smith Secret 43, 70). Since Clement says it was used by Carpocrates, who flourished about 125, secret Mark would have to date somewhat earlier than Carpocrates' time (151). Thus, what this citation is telling us is that there were several versions of the same gospel, some for public use and some for the esoteric instruction of higher level devotees. But it is also telling us that these gospels were freely written with different purposes in mind and may not have have relied on historical sources.

Papias (c 60-130 CE), Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, who wrote five books called Interpretation of our Lord's Declarations in which he attempted to collect oral reminiscences of Jesus, admits that Mark had no first-hand information about Jesus. This is what Eusebius quotes of Papias concerning Mark (Eccl. Hist. 3.39): "And John the Presbyter also said this, Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, set down accurately as much as he remembered, but not, however, in the order in which it was spoken or done by our Lord, for he neither heard nor followed our Lord. But as before said, he was in company with Peter, who gave him such instruction as was necessary, but not to give a history of our Lord's discourses. So then Mark made no mistake in setting down some things as he remembered them; for he took care not to omit anything he heard or to include anything false." Eusebius goes on to say: "Of Matthew he has stated as follows: `Matthew composed his history in the Hebrew dialect, and everyone translated it as he was able'."

So Papias has just said that Mark did not rely on written sources but only on his own memory, nor did he take down his recollections in the order that Jesus said or did them. And even this probably faulty recollection was edited by Peter who was not interested in a history of Jesus but only in "what was necessary". As far as Matthew goes, Papias then essentially implies that those who translated Matthew were not accurate in their translations and gave only the versions they were capable of giving. These are clearly not ringing recommendations of the high accuracy and quality of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, coming from someone who was very close to their assumed date of origin. In addition, he appears to have spoken so disapprovingly about the Gospel of Luke that Eusebius hesitated to include his judg-

ment in his work and he either kept silent or expressed himself unfavorably about the Gospel of John. (Bauer Orth 184-186)

Papias thus put little faith in these supposed canonical gospels and in his own search for the truth about Jesus thought that oral tradition would give him greater reliability. As reported by Eusebius Eccl. Hist. 3.39:

"Papias himself, in the preface to his discourses, by no means asserts that he was a hearer and an eye-witness of the holy apostles, but informs us that he received the doctrines of faith from their intimate friends, which he states in the following words: `...For I have...delighted to hear those... that teach the truth...those that are given from the Lord, to our faith, and that came from the truth itself. But if I met with anyone who had been a follower of the elders anywhere, I made it a point to inquire whet were the declarations of the elders. What was said by Andrew, Peter or Philip. What by Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the disciples of our Lord."

Clearly Papias had no access to written documents and relied entirely on hearsay, and that several times removed from the source: followers of disciples of Jesus. The material that has come down to us from his labors, such as a long quotation in Irenaeus repeating the theme of 10,000 in endless variations (Adv. Haer. 4.23.4), is not very impressive, and aside from a few quotations in the Church Fathers not one original fragment of these five books by Papias survives. Bruce thinks that "to judge from what survives, the information about Jesus, not available in written form which he was able to gather, did not amount to much: he evidently had to scrape the bottom of the barrel" (Bruce 85). But one still has to wonder why the Church was so eager to get rid of all of his books when it was perfectly capable of preserving endless volumes of the theologians it favored, and what might have been in his books that was a threat to Christian belief. Just the quote in Eusebius alone contradicts the whole story of Mark and Matthew as the divinely inspired primary recollections of followers of Jesus: who knows how lethal his other material might be to Christian dogma.

What the Church did keep of Papias was of course useful in establishing the prerogative of the Pope of Rome to be a successor of Jesus: if Mark was the first and most authentic eyewitness to Jesus and if he was the secretary of Peter, then that establishes Peter as legitimate heir to Jesus. And with the insertion of the famous sentence -"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" - into Mt 16:18 and found in no other gospel, the Catholic Church created all the justification for its rule that it needed. (see Niederwimmer 186-188)

This whole process we have seen in which versions of Christian documents were being constantly written and rewritten thus raises the whole

issue of the authenticity of the New Testament. As Fox says: "There is a thin and difficult line between a saying (perhaps largely authentic) which Christians inserted into an existing Gospel and those sayings which a Gospeller ascribed implausibly to Jesus himself...If this one scene intruded, admittedly rather clumsily, what else might have been added more artfully during the hundred or so dark years in which we known almost nothing of the text's history?...How do we distinguish between what Jesus did mean, what an early close acquaintance thought that he meant and what later Christians claimed that he had said? A straightforward acceptance of everything as Jesus' historical words is simply wrong: sayings vary between the Gospels, and there is no exact agreement" (Fox Unauth 143, 203).

It may be due to this textual unreliability that we find the New Testament Gospels barely being quoted or mentioned by the early Christian writers. They are not mentioned in first century Christian writings such as the Epistle of Barnabas (96 CE) or the Shepherd of Hermas. No Pope or Church Fathers ever mentioned the Gospels or any of the four authors at any time before Irenaeus. Ignatius (110 CE) shows no knowledge of any of the Synoptic Gospels; Polycarp does not know Mark but does seem to quote Matthew and Luke not later than 135 CE. As Wheeless says: "One may turn the thousands of pages of the Anti-Nicene Fathers before Irenaeus in vain to find a direct word of quotation from written Gospels, nor...even bare mention of the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, as writers of Gospels" (Wheeless 196).

An outstanding example of this is the First Letter of Clement, a long anonymous letter sent from Rome's Christians to Corinth in the mid 90's. It twice "refers directly to `words of the Lord Jesus', but neither reference is an exact quotation of a saying found in any one of our Gospels. The author is also unaware of any written New Testament and restrained in his use of scripture. He urged Corinth to consult its epistle from the `blessed apostle Paul' and apparently alluded elsewhere to other Pauline epistles, as if he already knew them in a collection...It is striking that he quoted clusters of sayings from Jesus only twice, whereas he referred over a hundred times to verses in Hebrew scripture. Christianity, for this author, is certainly not yet a `religion of the book' with its own closed body of texts" (Fox Unauth 147).

Justin Martyr (100-165 C.E.) is an especially interesting case because his apologetic writings are fairly early, from the middle of the 2nd century, long before the existence of any canon. Justin's writings frequently contain passages reminiscent of passages from the canonical gospels but his quotations deviate significantly from them and he does not mention them by name. He calls his source or sources "Memoirs of the Apostles" and not

Gospels, a word he uses only three times. As Koester says, "considering the large amount of quotations and references to gospel materials, this is surprising" (Ancient 40).

In his study on Justin, Bellinzoni concludes that Justin does not actually quote the separate canonical gospels. Instead he quotes harmonized parallel materials from Matthew, Mark and Luke but not John, with the sayings of Jesus always occurring in a few groups rather than singly, and "the harmonistic texts used by Justin as his source for the sayings of Jesus are part of a tradition that had great influence on the later manuscript tradition of Matthew, Mark and Luke". In addition, there is evidence in Justin's writings for the use of catechisms and manuals for instruction against heresies (Bellinzoni 140-141). Clearly there was no authoritative text of the gospels in Justin's time and one can justly conclude that no Christian author of the first half of the second century or before quotes the Gospels or their reputed authors.

As with Justin, 2nd century non-canonical Christian writings do not appear to be quoting the four gospels directly either. Johnson says: "An examination of the way in which these writings treat our four Gospels shows that gospel materials are still in the making in the second century... Conflation of the gospels is the rule...There are occasional `corrections' and contradictions...New stories are occasionally composed or, at least, come to light... Teaching materials are created in rich profusion...When stories are not created de novo, legendary details are frequently added to older narratives to heighten the human interest...The teaching of Jesus from the older gospels is sometimes `spiritualized' or allegorized...The new gospel material reflects an active, rather than a contemplative, church life...Obviously, the churches exercise little hierarchical control over the writing of books" (Sherman Johnson Stray 45-48). The Pseudo-Clementine Homilies, written in Greek, are an example of how such writings, like Justin, cite sayings of Jesus not from any recognizable gospel passages but "often with conflated or harmonized features...The fact that all are short sayings of Jesus suggest that the source was a `Logiensammlung'...rather than a more complete harmony of the four gospels such as Tatian later composed" (Kline 239-240).

When we come to Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE), we do see citations from the Gospels, but with very different wordings. They seem to be closest to the Old Syriac and Old Latin translations but they are so variegated in that they do not correspond to any particular version of the Gospels that Michael Mees wonders whether Clement cited his Bible at all (Mees 10, 212). Scholars such as Burkitt who had hoped to find an "original" text in Clement were left disappointed (Mees 213). Clement's favored text was Matthew and he cites Mark sparingly, with the exception of the parable of the rich youth

(55); there are also few citations from John, just as in Justin, and these are from a mixed text (Mees 87). From Matthew his citations are mainly of Jesus' teachings and preaching and not of his life or miracles, but the wording of these citations corresponds neither to the Neutral or to the Western text and has a character personal to Clement (Mees 53). His citations from Luke "show numerous rewordings, changes and harmonizations... In addition, the influence of extra-canonical traditions can be seen immediately" (Mees 63).

The earliest mention of what later came to be known as the canonical gospels is by Irenaeus in his Against Heresies, written between 182 and 188 CE. Here (3.1.1) he says: "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect...Mark... did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who had also leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus." He then goes on starting with chapter 10 of Book III to quote extensively from these Gospels, citing them by name, and to claim them as the only authority as against all other writings.

But what is odd about this is that throughout Books I and II Irenaeus never mentions the names of the four Gospel authors and only refers to the word "Gospel" in the last few chapters of Book II (22, 26, 27). Why such a great difference? In the first two books he does not even refer to written Scriptures in general: one occurrence that is translated in 1.8 as "other sources than the Scriptures" actually says "reading from things unwritten", quite a different implication. Along with many quotes from the Old Testament, from Homer and from Paul's letters, he quotes the wording of the present Synoptic Gospels 71 times and John only 12 times, but never with an attribution and always in the form of brief sayings from Jesus. It is even more odd that the first time he does mention the word "Gospel" and the name Luke in 2.22.3-4 it is only with the purpose of criticizing the idea that Jesus died at the age of 30.

In addition, as the editor comments: "It will be observed that the quotations of Scripture made by Irenaeus often vary somewhat from the received text. This may be due to various reasons - his quoting from memory; his giving the texts in the form in which they were quoted by the heretics; or...from his having been more familiar with a Syriac version of the New Testament than with the Greek original" (Roberts 1.320n). The other reason most likely is that many of these quotes are of sayings that could also have come from the Gospel of Thomas and he may well be quoting directly from it.

Moreover, there is no original copy of this work of Irenaeus: "It

has come down to us only in an ancient Latin version, with the exception of the greater part of the first book, which has been preserved in the original Greek, through means of copious quotations made by Hippolytus and Epiphanius. The text, both Latin and Greek, is often most uncertain. Only three MSS. of the work...are at present known to exist...Irenaeus, even in the original Greek, is often a very obscure writer...Upon the whole, his style is very involved and prolix. And the Latin version adds to the difficulties of the original, by being itself of the most barbarous character. In fact, it is often necessary to make a conjectural re-translation of it into Greek, in order to obtain some inkling of what the author wrote" (Roberts 1.311-312).

What all this leads me to conclude is that most likely Book III, which is different in character from the preceding two books, was added or changed later in order to have Irenaeus agree with later dogma and the Church made sure to get rid of all earlier copies in order to hide that fact. Thus, if Irenaeus was actually quoting from what are today called the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John rather than from some other document such as a harmony, then he clearly did not accord them any special status. If he had considered them especially holy and authoritative, he would have quoted them by name. It is clear that later Church writers were concerned about this omission, for Eusebius makes it a point in Eccl. Hist 5.8.2 to quote Irenaeus' statement in Book III about the four Gospels, plus other statements asserting the sacredness of the Gospels: why these quotes and not others?

Two other documentary proofs of the antiquity of the canon have been cited by Christian scholars, but on closer inspection both also turn out to be from a much later date, as Koester shows. The Muratorian Canon, "a list of the canonical books translated form a Greek original into a rather clumsy Latin, is still widely believed to have been composed in Rome or Italy before the end of the 2nd century" but "serious doubts with respect to a 2nd century date have been raised by Albert Sundberg" and his arguments have been accepted by other scholars. Doubts have also been raised concerning an early date for the so-called Anti-Marcionite Gospel Prologues which gives prologues for Mark, Luke and John; Koester thinks the more likely date is the second half of the 4th century (Koester ancient 242-243).

Despite all this, Koester says Irenaeus "remains the earliest witness for the four canonical gospels as a unit" and "this tradition about the origin of the four canonical gospels appears, with some variations, in other Church Fathers. It was a firmly established and widely used tradition by the end of the 2nd century" (Koester Ancient 243-244). Yet the citations he uses to buttress this assertion are all in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, which was written sometime between the Council of Nicaea in 325 and his death in 340

CE. The quote from Clement of Alexandria in 6.14.5-7 merely mentions the Gospels of Mark and John and neither lists all four nor calls them canonical; the mention of Origen in 6.15.1-2 merely mentions Origen's interest in "the interpretation of the Scriptures"; and it is only the quote from Origen in 6.25.3-6 that states that there are four canonical gospels, "concerning the four Gospels which alone are uncontroverted in the Church of God under heaven".

Yet oddly enough once again, this citation no longer exists in the original Commentary on Matthew from which the quote is purportedly taken: Eusebius says it is from Book I but of the original Greek document, only books 10-17 still exist, with the exception of two fragments, and the greater part of the remaining survives in a Latin version (Roberts 10.411). There is thus no way to know whether Eusebius has not just made this quote up in order to hide the embarrassing fact that the four gospels are simply not mentioned by the early Christian writers.

Why is it that when it comes to real proofs of the existence of a canon of four gospels before the 4th century, all the original documents have mysteriously disappeared and all scholars are left with are blank assertions with no proof? Could it perhaps be that no canon of four gospels even existed before the fourth century and any such mention was fabricated later? That is precisely what Robin Fox says: "Not until the fourth century do Christian authors list exactly the books which we now accept as the Christian Bible and imply that they are an exclusive list. In the Greek-speaking Churches, Athanasius, the great bishop of Alexandria, sent a letter to his Churches in the year 367 in which he cited the twenty-seven books of our New Testament: he described them as the sole `fountains of salvation' to which `let no one add, let nothing be taken away'. In the Latin West, a similar list had hardened by the mid fourth century, and it is usual to appeal to Augustine's exposition and two councils in North Africa (in 393 and 397) which endorsed our list. However, it is also evident that disagreement persisted, especially among thinking Greek-speakers: councils in the East continued to rule on approved lists of scripture, while not always agreeing in their results...When we read the entire New Testament, we are reading a list of books which some of the Christians' bishops approved and asserted more than three hundred years after Jesus' death" (Fox Unauth 151-153).

Of all the dozens of other gospels of Jesus' teachings that existed, most, including the so-called "canonical" gospels, were only later versions and only a few might have reflected authentic traditions. These could include the Gospels of the Hebrews, the Nazarenes, the Ebionites and the Egyptians that the Church Fathers cited. But there was a plethora of others. The 6th century Gelasian Decree mentions the following Gospels which still existed:

Gospels under the name of Matthias, Barnabas, James the younger, Thomas, Bartholomew and Andrew, as well as Gospels which Lucian and Hesychius has forged (Klauck Apoc 3-4).

In the Nag Hammadi Library there were also the Gospels of Philip, of Mary and of Truth. From other sources we also know about the existence of the following: the Gospel of the Four Heavenly Realms, of Perfection, of Eve, of the Twelve, of the Seventy, of Judas, of Cerinthus, of Basilides, of Marcion, of Appelles, of Bardesanes and of Mani (Klauck 206). And there may have been many more besides these 27. For example, around 200 the bishop of Antioch found that the Gospel of Peter was highly esteemed in a church in Cilicia: if it was harmless, he was prepared to let it be read, but when he found that it was heretical (it denied Jesus' suffering) he wished it to be withdrawn. Even so, he admitted that large parts of it conformed to correct belief. (Fox Unauth 151)

The Gospel of Luke even admits that many other gospels existed, right in the very first sentence: "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word..." Clearly these were not narratives by direct apostles or "inspired" writings, else he would have said so.

Whether all of these were really "Gospels" or were simply called that by the Christian theologians is another matter altogether. The Greek word euaggelion is a rare word in classical and contemporary Greek and means "the reward of good tidings", with a verb euaggelizomai meaning "to bring good news, announce them". Mark borrowed the word "gospel" from the Septuagint version of the Psalms and Isaiah (40:9, 52:7) where it refers to the witness of men to the action of God fulfilling his promise; but he does not at all use it in the Old Testament sense. He extends the word almost beyond recognition by making Jesus both announce the good news and also be the good news. The other evangelists though may be aware of the misuses of the word, for while Mark uses it seven times, Matthew uses the noun only four times and Luke only uses it as a verb (Hoskyns 116-120). Since even the later "Gospels" mostly avoid the term, many of the above "Gospels" might originally not have been called that at all: certainly the Gospel of Thomas was not.

Eusebius makes clear that the earliest Christian writings were not cohesive narratives at all but Oracles which Papias recorded "not indeed in order." (Eccl. Hist. 3.39.12-16) Interestingly, Luke mentions the title of one of these oracles in 11:49 as "The Wisdom of God". Accordingly, Robert Graves has made the suggestion that the original material of Jesus' teachings was not

arranged chronologically but under subject-headings such as "Light", "Why Wail Ye?", "Fruitful Trees", "Importunity", "Conflict with Authority", "Watch and Pray", and "Master, Master". This was standard practice at the time, as the Pharisees also used subject-headings in the arrangement of their legal codes in the Halakah. This root in thematic collections explains the tendency in the Gospels to combine several separate parables into one inconsistent one and to run stories with a similar theme together even when they don't fit the narrative. Thus the narratives of the Gospels are artificial constructions imposed on a mass of unstructured material and this is why there are so many contradictions in the logic of the sequences. (Robert Graves 38-39).

From the plethora of Christian gospels, Bishop Irenaeus compiled the first list of Biblical writings that resemble today's New Testament around 180 CE. Even so, there was still no authoritative Christian canon. "The Muratorian fragment, commonly dated about 180, excludes the Epistle to the Hebrews and includes the Apocalypse of Peter; some Roman churchmen still rejected St. John's Gospel and many rejected the Apocalypse of John; Hermas, on the other hand, was thought even by Origen to be divinely inspired and a great variety of apocryphal Gospels, Acts and Apocalypses circulated among the faithful." (Dodds 104) Finally, in 331 CE, six years after Council of Nicaea which decided that Jesus was truly divine and the Son of God, Constantine caused to be prepared under the direction of the noted Church historian Eusebius 50 copies of the gospels for use in the churches of Byzantium. The old gospels were probably recalled and destroyed. By 393 and 397 Bishop Athanasius had a similar list of canonical gospels ratified by the Church councils of Hippo and Carthage.

By prohibiting and burning any other writings, the Catholic Church eventually gave the impression that this Bible and its four canonized Gospels represented the only Christian view. Augustine still complained that there were some 93 sects of heretics during the first three centuries of the Christian faith but by the 5th century Archbishop Chrysostom could boast, "Every trace of the old philosophy and literature of the ancient world has vanished from the face of the earth."

Tertullian exults: "We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief." (ch 7, 246) (Ellerbe 16, Graham 284, Wheeless 190)

There has been much debate over when the canonical gospels were written, and the general consensus seems to be that Mark dates to 70 CE, John is the latest at 100 CE and Matthew and Luke/Acts fall in between these dates. Mark was clearly the first of the gospels to be written for of 678 verses 662 have parallels in the other gospels. Matthew relies heavily

on Mark, using 645 of his verses, and only 172 of the verses in Matthew are original to him. Luke and John add much more original material: 476 verses of 1151 in Luke and 704 out of 879 in John. Even Luke uses 547 of Mark's verses while John only uses 170. (Larson 422) Some of these borrowings are verbatim but many are heavily changed with a very free treatment for the different purposes of each gospel. It is possible that since Matthew and Luke use so much of Mark, that gospel was not intended to be preserved: there are no fragments of Mark from the 2nd century and only one from the 3rd while there are 8 of Matthew and 4 of Luke from the 2nd and 3rd centuries. (Koester Ancient 314, 332)

Yet even John seems to be using much more of Mark than meets the eye. As Smith points out, there are remarkable parallels between the whole latter halves of Mark and John in terms of the "continued parallelism of the geographical items of the framework and the near identity in order of those major elements the two Gospels have in common...In both Gospels the parallel episodes stand in the same relation to the parallel framework - the same episodes occur not only in the same order, but also in the same places in the geographical frame." (Smith Secret 56-60)

John A. Robinson has taken a close look at the standard dating of these four gospels and concludes: "We may start with the fact, which I confess I did not appreciate before beginning the investigation, of how little evidence there is for the dating of any of the New Testament writings...It is surprising to be made to realize that there is only one reasonably secure absolute date...in the life of St. Paul...We cannot settle with any precision or finality the date of his birth, his conversion, his visits to Jerusalem, his various missionary journeys, his arrival in Rome, his death - or any of his letters. And if we know so little about Paul, how much less can we say about Peter or John? There is not a single book of the New Testament that dates itself from the internal evidence...It is surprising to discover that only one book of the New Testament, the Apocalypse, is dated in early Christian writings...For the rest, the traditions...have been shown to be worthless, self-contradictory or ambiguous... Closely connected...is the evidence of first attestation by name to the existence of a New Testament book in the early church... One is dealing here almost totally with an argument from silence ...There is no certain argument to be drawn from the use of any one New Testament book by any other...It is sobering too to discover how little basis there is for many of the dates confidently assigned by modern experts to the New Testament documents" (Robinson Dating 336-341). Having said all this, Robinson then surprisingly insists on dating the Gospels even earlier than anyone else would, namely from 40-65 CE (Robinson 352-353), but the real correction of dating should clearly go in the other direction. The only Theophilus, to whom Luke

addressed his gospel, who has been found to be historical was the bishop of Antioch from 169-177 CE which would mean Luke was written much later than commonly supposed. (Graham 284)

Despite the fact that the gospels bear the names Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, these names are mere attributions and not necessarily those of their real authors. The early texts had no headings, chapter or verse divisions, punctuation or even space between words and were written in capital letters without exception. The earliest writers who referred to the gospels significantly failed to mention names of authors and only in the 2nd century did they acquire the names they have today, namely Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. But these are only guesses.

In the case of Mark there is a major contradiction between the statement of Papias that the apostle Mark wrote in Aramaic and the nature of canonical Mark which is certainly not a translation and quotes the Greek Septuagint rather than the Hebrew Bible. If Mark is not an author, then neither is Matthew as he replicates almost all of Mark. The tradition of the authorship of Luke does not go further back than the end of the 2nd century. There is absolutely no historical association between those names and the documents ascribed to them. (Wilson AN 32, Wheeless 200, Beare 13)

The Gospel of John has even less historical tradition than the other gospels. It was not even mentioned until 140 CE and had a difficult time gaining recognition. Ignatius (50-115 CE) did not quote John verbatim or mention its local author to any churches in Asia. Polycarp (69-156), who shows acquaintance with almost every other book of the New Testament, has no clear reminiscence of it but he repeatedly commends the writings of Paul. Neither Irenaeus nor Eusebius report anything from Papias on the origin of John. Justin (100-165) has only three apparent quotations from John. (Gunther Author 407-409) Not until the controversy with the Montanists who rejected the Gospel of John as a late writing in disagreement with the Synoptics was the identification of the author of John as John the son of Zebedee made and was John made a predecessor of Paul as an apostle (Gal 1:17). (Gunther 411-413)

It is remarkable that very little is known of these four men, Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. All we know is the following. Mark is mentioned by Paul as one of his fellow workers in his letter to Philemon (24) and is said by Eusebius to have been Peter's secretary (Ecc. Hist. 3.39). Matthew is the tax collector and disciple in the Gospels, rich enough to own his own house, but apart from the initial mention at the Sea of Galilee and on the lists of disciples nothing further is said about him. Of these two men, Matthew is supposed to have been an eye-witness, yet it is remarkable that he

uses so much of Mark's material in his gospel even though Mark, by his own admission, relies on testimony from a second generation or later. For Mark 15:21 alludes to Simon of Cyrene as being the father of Alexander and Rufus, implying that Mark is of the same generation, and Mark's narrative (Mark 16:1-8) is the only one not to make the disciples eye-witnesses to the resurrection.

Luke is supposed to have been a Syrian from Antioch (Acts 11:28) and the co-worker of Paul mentioned in Philemon 24, 2 Tim 4:11 and Col 4:14, which identifies him as a physician, and the "we-sections" in Acts (16:10-17, 20:5-15, 21:1-18, 27:1-28:16) establish his association with Paul. John is supposed to be the disciple and apostle John son of Zebedee who is mentioned quite often in the Gospels, but as the Gospel of John was not written until 100 CE he would have had to be quite old by then. The Church Fathers also claimed that Papias was the disciple of John and had transcribed his gospel but Eusebius himself denied this and nowhere does Papias speak of John the Zebedee himself. (Bauer Orth 185-186) This is all we have.

One would think that if these men had truly existed and were the authors of the most sacred of all Christian scriptures that every scrap of their lives would have been reverently collected and Christian theologians would have vied with each other for the honor of writing their biographies. But such is not the case: there is no information beyond the bare mentions in the Gospels and there are no such biographies. And as we have already shown in great detail, there is no way that the Gospels could have been written by eyewitnesses living in contemporary Judea, a fact which rules out all the men named above. Clearly they cannot be the authors.

As Mack says: "With the exception of seven letters by Paul and the Revelation to an otherwise unknown John, the writings selected for inclusion in the New Testament were not written by those whose names are attached to them." This is due to the fact that "most literature in the early Christian period was written anonymously", "the concept of an apostolic age was a 2nd century creation", and "the later attribution of anonymous literature to known figures of the past...was a standard practice during the Greco-Roman period." (Mack Who 6-7) We have already seen that the Gospels are not mentioned in the early Christian writings, that the citations in the Church Fathers are only of Jesus' sayings and usually in a very different wording, and that the mentions of a four-Gospel canon are most likely interpolations. This can only mean that the Gospels, though probably based on earlier documents, were not given their final written form until the fourth century.

If the authors of the New Testament were therefore not Mark, Matthew, Luke and John, then who were they? An analysis of the style of the

New Testament may give us an answer.

There is good linguistic evidence from the Gospels themselves that they were written by authors whose native language was not Greek. Christian scholars have always had trouble explaining the wide gap between the Greek of the New Testament and literary Greek, as the New Testament Greek shows no trace of any classical education: the language "is Hellenistic, but of no literary type, nor does it represent any spoken dialect." (Torrey 237). They first ascribed it to a special biblical dialect, then proposed a special dialect of Semitic Greek and later argued that it is koine Greek, that is the simple popular Greek found in non-literary sources throughout the vast Hellenistic empire. (Blass 2, Evans Dict 430)

What most Christian scholars have had so much trouble admitting is that most of the New Testament is simply written in inferior Greek by authors with a deficient command of the language. The only exceptions are in the prologues of the Gospels and Acts and in the speeches of Paul. The Greek style of the Synoptic writers, especially Mark, is full of incorrect Greek words, redundancies, elliptical phrasings without clear grammatical antecedents, and sentences without any grammatical structure at all. The eminent Christian scholar Henry Cadbury calls it "colloquial, repetitious, often rough and ungrammatical, picturesque and direct", indicating authorship by "a simple and uncultivated native Greek." (Cadbury Making 82-83)

For this reason the Greek of the New Testament was considered to be unacceptable by the usual literary conventions of time and educated people of the time refused to take it seriously (Macmullen Chr 104). One of the main reasons for the thousands of variant readings of the Gospels is the constant attempts by editors to make the text more readable: "divergencies in wording arose from deliberate attempts to smooth out grammatical or stylistic harshness, or to eliminate real or imagined obscurities of meaning in the text" (Metzger, Textual Comm xvi)

Here is one example. Matthew 1:16 can be read in three ways:

1. "and Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ";
2. "and Jacob begot Joseph, to whom being betrothed the virgin Mary bore Jesus, who is called Christ";
3. "Jacob begot Joseph, him to whom was betrothed Mary the virgin, she who bore Jesus the Christ." (Metzger Textual 2-3)

There are major differences in these readings yet the original Greek is so unclear that all these readings are grammatically possible and were found in different early manuscripts. This is not the fault of Greek as a language which is very precise in its grammar but the fault of the author.

Two other examples among many: Mark 9:49 can be read either "For every one will be salted with fire" or "For every sacrifice will be salted with salt" or "For every one will be salted with fire, and every sacrifice will be salted with salt." Luke 2:14 can be read either "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" or "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased". (Metzger Textual 103, 133) It would seem that in a capable hand Greek is certainly capable of expressing a clear thought in an unambiguous way.

We have already seen some examples of simply incorrect words and phrases in our analysis of the New Testament versions of the Gospel of Thomas. Mt 5:6 and Lk 6:21 use chortas phesontai, a Greek verb that means "to feed or fatten in a stall", only used for animals, in their version of "they shall be satisfied". Lk 10:2 has a Greek phrase o men therismos polés oi de ergatai oligoi that reads word-for-word "the indeed harvest much, but the workmen few" which is simply bad Greek grammar. And in Luke's version of the parable of the lost sheep he uses the verb kataleipô "to leave behind, forsake, abandon, leave in the lurch" to describe what God does to the sheep left behind, a rather charged and troubling word.

Many other examples of sheer nonsense can be found:

Mt 23:38, Lk 13:35: "Behold, your house is left to you."
Mk 7:3: "Unless they wash their hands with the fist, they eat not."
Mk 14:68; "I neither know, nor understand, what you are saying."
Mk 16:2: "Very early in the morning, after the sun had risen."
Lk 9:10, 12: "An uninhabited place, namely the city Bethsaida."
Lk 10:4: "Salute no man on the way."
Lk 16:16: "Every man enters violently into the kingdom of heaven."
Lk 23:54: "It was the day of the Preparation, and the sabbath began to dawn."
Jn 7:38: "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Overall, Luke has the largest number of specimens of mere nonsense, with John a close second. Matthew comes off the best. (Torrey 272-273)

At the same time, relatively speaking Luke has the best Greek style of

the four Gospels, Mark clearly the worst. Luke and Acts use over 700 words that are not found elsewhere in the New Testament, nearly all of them words that are found outside the New Testament in writers with various grades of culture. Luke, who uses 350 of Mark's 661 verses and 53% of his vocabulary, has clearly attempted to improve his grammar. He frequently replaces the ubiquitous "and" with "then", he writes more complicated sentences with subordinate clauses rather than the simple ones of Mark, he eliminates the historical present in favor of the narrative past and he eliminates many of the vulgarisms of Mark. (Sterling 351-352) In particular, the second half of Acts, from 15:36 on, is Greek of excellent literary quality, without noteworthy Semitisms, very different from the first half (Torrey 243-44).

Yet Luke too has many mannerisms of a second-rate writer. He loves to repeat a word soon after using it once and has constant repetitions of stock words and phrases throughout his gospel: "all" and "every", "many", "today" and "each day", "truly" and "really", "they themselves", "this" etc. He is prone to exaggeration and over-generalization, often inserting "all" or "every". The Lucan nativity stories in particular are in a Greek that almost defies translation into English. (Cadbury Making 214-218)

John too writes a similar kind of Greek, "the same curious jargon, half Greek, half Semitic...an awkwardly mixed, unpleasing idiom" (Torrey 238, 240). Moulton concludes that he "was a man who, while cultured to the last degree, wrote Greek after the fashion of men of quite elementary attainment." (Moulton Grammar 2.33).

Meagher sums up his analysis of Mark's style: "The individual units of Mark's first chapter are inescapably faulty...This is very ordinary, homely, untrained prose, full of the same stylistic sloppiness and clumsy mismanagement of basic storytelling techniques that one expects to find in unsophisticated writing in all times and places...Mark's version is often inferior to that of one or both of his colleagues... There is an uneven performance in the setting-forth of the material, which is presented in stumbling and awkward narratives, full of anticlimaxes in the ordering of units, unaccountable variations in the texture of detail, laconic abbreviations intermixed with inefficient ramblings, and ordinary bumblings of every sort." (Meagher 53, 57, 63, 145-146)

Here is another evaluation of Mark by Rawlinson, a prominent Christian scholar: "The writing all through is vulgar, colloquial, unpolished, and is characterized by a singular monotony of style. There are hardly any connecting particles (de rigueur in literary Greek): the sentences and paragraphs follow one another in rapid succession, linked in the majority of cases by a simple and, or by the curiously frequent and immediately. Stereotyped

phrases and ideas recur constantly. There is a tendency to redundancy of expression (e.g. 1:32 At even, when the sun did set). There is a frequent use of parenthesis, a tendency to accumulate participles. The Greek of Mark is essentially a non-literary Greek, full of roughness and semitisms - the kind of Greek which might be spoken by the lower classes at Rome." (Rawlinson Gospel xxxi-xxxii) This is a rather damning assessment, and as Nineham says, one that "would probably command fairly general assent". (Nineham Gospel 40n)

So if the writers of the gospels are not native Greek speakers, who are they? Judging from their style of writing, they do appear to be of Semitic background. An analysis of Mark by Elliott Maloney has shown the presence of Semitic (Aramaic and Hebrew) constructions in his style: "Certain constructions...have been shown to be quite abnormal, or even totally unattested in Hellenistic Greek, whereas their appearance in Semitic is normal...There are several types of Semitism in the Gospel of Mark and...syntactical Semitic interference permeates every page of the gospel." (Maloney 245)

The same is true for the other Gospels: "A fair amount of the material in Mark 1-10 goes back to Semitic sources...In most instances the sections in Luke and Matthew have less Semitic frequencies than the parallel sections in Mark...Parts of Mark 1-10 are clearly dependent on Semitic sources, but the Gospel as a whole is not a translation of a Semitic gospel...In some instances Luke and Matthew appear to be using a Semitic source parallel to the Markan accounts." (Raymond Martin 39, 73-74) The difference in the Semitic sources is only that Mark seems to be using popular Aramaisms while Matthew and Luke rely more on Greek translations of Hebrew from the Septuagint (Carotta 136).

As a result of these Semitisms, many distinguished scholars (Dalman, Jeremias, Burney, Torrey) have proposed that the Gospels were originally written in Aramaic and only later translated into Greek. As Torrey says:

"With the exception of the first two chapters of Lk. and the 21st chapter of Jn. the Aramaic idiom is everywhere present in the Gospels, recognizable in a considerable proportion of the verses of any chapter. Often the Greek idiom corresponds, and therefore runs smoothly; but very often there is an ugly mixture...In place of clear and classical Aramaic we have muddy Greek...Every one of the countless curious Greek phrases which have to be apologized for... mirrors classical Semitic usage; to this statement there is no exception whatever. It would not be easy to find a specifically Greek (not also Semitic) idiom anywhere in the Four Gospels." (Torrey 267-268)

George Lamsa, who grew up in a remote Aramaic-speaking part of

the Middle East where the language had not changed for centuries, therefore considers the 5th century Syriac Peshitta to be the most authentic New Testament and made a new translation from it (Lamsa Four). He also pointed out that many of the mistranslations and incomprehensible passages of the Gospels can be understood if the underlying Aramaic word is understood correctly (Idioms).

Often the Greek authors misunderstood and mistranslated their Aramaic sources. This is partially caused by the nature of Aramaic in which one word has many meanings and a dot misplaced altogether changes the meaning. One is the famous saying in Mt 19:24: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." But the Aramaic word gamla can mean "a large rope" as well as "camel" and obviously "rope" makes much more sense here: "It is easier for a rope to go through the eye of a needle..." Mt 13:18 says "Hear then the parable of the sower." But the Aramaic word for "sower" is zarua and the word for "seed" is zara. The Eastern version of the Bible says "the parable of the seed" which makes much more sense metaphorically. In the parable of the nobleman the servants are rewarded with cities (Lk 19:17,19), a rather improbable reward for making a little money from trading. The Aramaic kakra means "province", but it also means "talent", a large piece of money, the difference being only a single dot. Obviously the latter word is the better translation. (Lamsa xi)

However, there is very good internal linguistic evidence that the Gospels cannot simply have been translated from Aramaic. Matthew Black shows that the Greek of the Gospels is not just "translation Greek"; the Gospels are "not all literal translations of Aramaic, but translations which have passed through the minds of the Greek Evangelists and emerged as, for the most part, literary productions." (Black 275) What he assumes here is that there were Aramaic documents used by the Greek authors of the Gospels: "Jesus must have conversed in the Galilean dialect of Aramaic, and His teaching was probably entirely in Aramaic. At the basis of the Greek Gospels, therefore, there must lie a Palestinian Aramaic tradition, at any rate of the sayings and teachings of Jesus, and this tradition must at one time have been translated from Aramaic into Greek." (Black Aramaic 16)

From his exhaustive linguistic analysis of the grammar and vocabulary of the four Gospels Black concludes: "Where any one Semitic or Aramaic construction could be found recurring, its distribution showed that it tended to be found most frequently, and sometimes exclusively, in the Words of Jesus. The same conclusion emerged from a study of the translation and mistranslation of the Aramaic in the Gospels."(Black 271) This Aramaic origin does not hold true for the non-Marcan narrative portions of Matthew

and Luke.

But one can go even further and question whether there are any underlying Aramaic documents at all. Several commentators have raised the pertinent issue of Aramaic phrases in the Gospel of Mark.

Mk 5:41: "`Ta`litha cumi!' which means `Little girl, I say to you, arise'."

Mk 7:34: "`Eph`phata' that is `Be opened'."

Mk 14:36: "Abba, Father"

Mk 15:34: "`Eloi eloi lama sabach`thani' which means `My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"

Mt 27:46: "`Eli eli lama sabach`thani'"

The problem here is that a Greek translator from an Aramaic text would not arbitrarily leave a few Aramaic expressions untranslated while rendering everything else in Greek. Some have suggested that these are words of power typically used by healers and magicians yet we also find that most other such words that Jesus uses are translated. Normally when we are reading a book translated into English from a foreign language and we find a few foreign words or phrases we assume that these were also in the foreign language in the original text, as otherwise the translator would have put them into English. Thus, the Aramaic words in Mark were foreign to whatever text they came from and this text could not have been an Aramaic one. Significantly, since these words are foreign in Jesus' speech, the language that Jesus spoke in the original was not Aramaic. (Birkeland 25) They were probably not in any text but were simply added as a flourish; as Grintz says, "such a pattern is typical of an author who wishes to add local color to his story." (Grintz 33n)

Interestingly, when Jesus speaks his famous words on the cross, the people think he is calling Elijah (Mk 15:35). This means that the version in Matthew ("eli") is the correct one while the one in Mark ("eloi") is not. Codex D for Mark 15:34 and the most current text of Matthew 27:46 has "eli, eli" rather than "eloi, eloi" - but "eli" is Hebrew and not Aramaic! Sabaq is a verb not only found in Aramaic but also in Mishnaic Hebrew, as is "abba" cited in Mk 14:36. So what Jesus speaks on the cross is really Hebrew. As we have seen, this is most likely his mother tongue. Mark then changed the saying into the Aramaic "eloi" because he believed or wanted others to believe that Jesus spoke Aramaic. (Birkeland 25-26)

If Aramaic is a foreign language to the writers of the New Testa-

ment, could they therefore rather be native speakers of Hebrew? Certainly the "Semitisms" of the Gospels could come from either linguistic heritage, but there are other specific indications that the native language of at least the author of Matthew was Hebrew. For one, Matthew renders the name of the Jewish people or land of Palestine consistently as "Israel" whether the speaker is Jesus or the author. Only when the speech is put in the mouth of a Gentile do we have "Jews" instead of "Israel". "Such a consistent usage is hardly conceivable in any language other than Hebrew. Aramaic invariably uses `Jews'. In Greek besides `Jews' one may also use "Hebrews" (Hebraioi) but not `Israel'." (Grintz 34)

Correspondingly, the term "Gentiles" is a designation foreign to Aramaic but familiar in Hebrew. "Canaanite" in Mt 15:21 is a term commonly used in Hebrew for "Phoenician" but not in any other language. In Aramaic or Greek it is simply devoid of meaning. Other terms which are uniquely Hebrew and do not occur in any other language are flesh-and-blood (16:17), kingdom of the heavens (32 times), my father who is in the heavens (20 times) and queen of south (meaning Sheba) (12:42). (Grintz 35-37)

Conversely, the predominant influence in Mark appears to be Latin. There is a whole series of Latin loan-words in this gospel: praetorium (1:16), legion (5:9,15), spekulator (executioner) (6:27), denarius (6:37, 12:15, 14:5), lestes (robber) (7:4), census (12:14), kodrantes (quadrant) (12:42), fragello (scourge) (15:15), centurion (15:39,44,45).

Latinisms include those from military terminology, legal and administrative parlance, designations for measures and coinage, and expressions from business and commercial life. Many of these Latinisms are in the vulgar form found in the jargon of the legionaries. Sometimes Mark even explains Greek terms by Latin ones, for example, that two lepta, "coins", are a quadrant (12:42) or that aule, "courtyard" is to be understood as praetorium (15:16). (Enslin 381-382, Blass 4)

Other interesting evidence for Mark's Roman point of view is in Mark 7:26 which says "Now the woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth." But no native of Palestine would have used this reference, as this term only makes sense when contrasted with Lybian-Phoenicians of North Africa. Josephus often mentions Phoenicians but sees no need to differentiate them from their African brethren. The point of view here is clearly from some place outside both the Middle East and North Africa, and that can only be Rome. (Niederwimmer 182)

Several early manuscripts of Mark state outright that Mark was written in Latin. In the subscription to the Syriac Vulgate, the Peshitta, to the Harclean Syriac and to several Greek manuscripts in the Barberine Library

(nos. 160 and 161), it is stated that the Gospel of Mark "was written in Latin at Rome." (Couchoud 35) In a painstaking analysis of the divergences between the Latin and Greek manuscripts of Mark, the French theologian Paul-Louis Couchoud has shown that over and over again in the instances when the Greek text is confused and unintelligible, the corresponding Latin text in the Codex Bobiensis and Palatinus is clear and exact, leading him to conclude that the Latin text is the primary one. This Latin text no longer exists as such, and the oldest Latin manuscript, Codex Bobiensis, was copied by an ignorant copyist who made many mistakes. Yet the two codices retain much of the original text and were the texts read by the early theologians.

One excellent example of the superiority of the Latin over the Greek text is in Mark 14:41-42 at the conclusion of the Gethsemane scene. In the Latin text Jesus first says "Sleep on" and after a moment he awakes the sleepers and says "Arise, let us be going!" In the Greek he says in the same breath, "Sleep on, awake, let us be going!" which makes little sense and indicates that a translator or copyist collapsed two separate actions into one. Interestingly, in 180 CE Irenaeus, two centuries before any of these manuscripts were written, says that Jesus first let the disciples sleep but awoke them when he came the second time (Haer. 4.22.1), clearly indicating that he had read the Latin text. Moreover, the Greek translator skipped part of the original Latin sentence and added a note at the end of the sentence beginning with apexei (it is enough) to reinsert the skipped part: the copyists of the documents, however, did not understand this note and translated it as if it were in sequence, leading to a garbled passage. (Couchoud 40-43)

Two more examples follow. In the Latin text of Mark 15:39 the centurion exclaims "truly this man is the son of God" after Jesus cries out to God on the cross, but in the Grek text he does so after Jesus "breathes his last", which makes the centurion's insight depend not on Jesus' admission of his sonship of God but on his depedy death. The Latin of Mark 9:49-50 says "For every substance is consumed (or more freely: every individual will be destroyed by the fire). Salt is good, but if the salt is tasteless everything will be tasteless in which you put it. Have peace in yourselves; be at peace one with the other." The Greek translator or copyist then misread oueia (substance) as thueia (sacrifice) and translated it "for everyone wil be salted with fire" which makes no sense. He also changed pacem (peace) to panem (bread), a reading found in the Codex Bobiensis, which in turn was corrected to salem (salt) because of the nearness of that word, resulting in the present-day nonsensical translation "have salt in yourselves." (couchoud 44-50)

There is also a plethora of linguistic evidence for the priority of the Latin over the Greek. The Greek translator consistently makes errors in reading ambiguous forms of the Latin, such as verbs with the same form in the

present and perfect (Mk 3:13, 3:31, 5:22-24, 14:16-18, 14:37, 14:66-68) or the absence of an article in Latin (Mk 2:7, 3:20, 4:38, 10:21, 11:21, 12:40. 14:20, 14:47, 15:12). He often translates the Latin in an overly literal way resulting in mangled Greek (8:32, 9:10, 9:21, 9:28, 14:3, 15:1). He adds words and paraphrases to explain the Latin (5:21, 13:15, 9:31, 1:42, 5:15, 6:4, 9:38, 2:23, 14:51, 9:39, 5:12). Often the text contains agglomerates, two variant translations of the same phrase found in juxtaposition, a sign of a corrector incorporating two separate documents (14:21, 10:32, 12:44, 8:15, 4:39, 1:35, 10:30, 10:4, 1:32, 5:23, 1:38, 4:2) (Couchoud 56-65, 70-72)

Finally, in three different Greek manuscripts three different Greek words are used for one Latin word. Close analysis shows that the Latin does not agree consistently with one manuscript over the others, but sometimes with one and sometimes with the other: if the Latin were derived from the Greek, it would agree most strongly with one of the readings (Couchoud 67-70).

The evidence also indicates that Clement of Alexandria, in the small number of his quotations from Mark, quotes the Latin and not the Greek text (5:34, 10:22, 10:25, 12:30). It is curious that Clement quotes 10:25 four times but in four different Greek forms that are not the forms occurring in the existing Greek manuscripts, indicating that "if he desired to quote Mark he translated the Latin at that moment without looking to see whether he had made another translation for himself or whether there was another one in existence." (Couchoud 72-73)

According to Jerome, "Mark at the request of the brethren at Rome wrote a brief Gospel...Taking the Gospel which he had composed he went to Egypt." The Greek translations of Mark were apparently made in Egypt; the oldest, 4th century Codex Vaticanus, was allied to the oldest Coptic version. The 5th century Codex Bezae was then taken back to the West where it was translated back to Latin at the time a Latin version of the complete New Testament was made under Jerome. So the present Latin version may actually be a Latin translation of a Greek translation of the original Latin of Mark. (Couchoud 78-79)

To summarize: Mark, the first gospel to be written, is written in Latin by someone of Semitic origin who has extensive experience in the Roman military and who has a working knowledge of Latin. His knowledge of Greek, however, is extremely poor and he has very little literary flair and imagination. Matthew, who uses much of Mark, is written by someone of Hebrew origin who expresses himself with turns of phrase only found in Hebrew. This does not mitigate his thorough anti-Semitism which seems to be all the stronger due to his own Jewish background. Luke writes a more

polished Greek style, though an idiomatic rather than a literary one, and his gospel is more carefully written than Matthew and gives the impression of a literary whole. Luke is much more concerned to give his gospel historical verisimilitude, though ultimately he is fundamentally a writer of fiction. John may be the most anti-Semitic of all the gospels yet this gospel is more concerned about historical accuracy than the other three and is more accurate about contemporary details of Jewish life. Here are the characteristics all four authors have in common. They are of Semitic origin for they write a Semitic style of Greek, but whether they are natives of Palestine or not they are not familiar with the geography of the country in any detailed way. They are not writing for Jews as they explain everything having to do with Judaism. Whether they or at least some of them are Jews or not, they are critical of Judaism, see Jews as their enemies and feel that a new religion is needed to take its place; however, it is questionable how much of the systematic and rather vicious anti-Semitism in the New Testament is from the original authors. They are pro-Roman in their outlook and spend much time whitewashing the Romans and absolving them of any reponsibility for any crimes and transgressions. And they are literary artists, not historians, for they are writing fiction and take many liberties with historical details.

There are three possible authors fitting all of these criteria who come to mind each of whom have a high place in the Christian canon. The first is of course Paul whom we know as the author of the letters attributed to him in the New Testament but whose ideas are clearly closely connected to the Gospel story as well. The next is Seneca who was the only classical philosopher accepted as practically a Christian and lauded highly by all Church theologians. And the third is Josephus, the only historian of that period whom the Christian Church preserved and whose account of the destruction of Jerusalem was integral to the Christian message.

All three of these men also had extraordinarily close connections with the Roman Emperors, from Nero to the Flavians, and this fact has a significant bearing on their motivations for their part in the creation of the Christian story. What we will find is that Christianity may well be the creation of a highly educated group of writers and philosophers at the Roman imperial court with a powerful political agenda: the creation of a pro-Roman, spiritualized, Hellenistic-style mystery religion with an anti-Semitic, pro-Gentile, and anti-national point of view. Let us look at each of these men in turn and examine their backgrounds and connections with the New Testament.

Chapter 25:

Paul and Seneca as Authors of the New Testament

Judging from Paul's writings in the New Testament, it should really be suprising that they are considered worthy enough to be regarded as Holy Scripture directly inspired by God. When you compare them with the sacred scriptures of the world - with the Tao te Ching of Lao Tzu, Confucius' Analects, the Dhammapada and other Buddhist writings, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the Bhagavad Gita, the Gospel of Thomas, Job, Ecclesiastes and the Jewish Wisdom literature in the Bible or even some of the Gnostic writings - they come up sadly wanting. They are deeply personal, defensive, vituperative, argumentative, contradictory, with a continuous tone of fierce controversy, in a way that none of the above scriptures are.

These scriptures are all on a highly philosophical level with the author being entirely absent while the author of Paul's letters is ever present in all his flaws and neuroses. Something similar can be said about the New Testament Jesus. The Roman Empire was a time of great religious syncretism and all religious traditions were represented and easily accessible, so any curious person could easily compare them.

This may well be why it took so long for Paul's letters to be given any kind of respect or accorded inclusion in the Christian canon. From 55 CE to about 100 CE Paul's letters seem to have been neglected and his authority to speak for Christians was seriously challenged by the followers of Jesus around James. Not until his reputation was rehabilitated around 100 CE were efforts made to collect his letters and during this time "the random and fragmentary nature of the Epistles indicates that they were for some period of time not authoritative in Christian circles, otherwise they would have been better taken care of. They were doubtless only recovered, brought together and cherished when Pauline Christianity was successful." (Carmichael 207) The present 2 Corinthians has several breaks in continuity that cannot be explained as laps in Paul's thought. It is most likely composed of fragments which have been pieced together from five different letters by later editors. The 16th chapter of Romans may have been added to the work at a later date. Philippians must also be understood as a collection of several letters. (Brandon Fall 215, Koester Hist 53-54)

The early Church Fathers seem to have only known a few of Paul's

letters. Clement of Rome (about 90) knew at least Romans and 1 Corinthians. Polycarp mentions him by name three times and quotes one saying from Corinthians. The author of 2 Peter (1st half of 2nd century) knew a number of Paulines. But Ignatius writing perhaps as early as 110 mentions only Ephesians. The only Pauline letter known by them all was 1 Corinthians. But Justin Martyr in the 130s does not mention Paul's name at all, though he does have a quasi-parallel theology, has little or no knowledge of Acts and knows Matthew and Luke in a different form from the present ones. (Bauer Orth 217-221, Wells Hist 20, Eisenman 465)

Oddly enough, it was the "heretic" Marcion who seemed to be most familiar with Paul and may even have been the first systematic collector of the Pauline heritage. He rejected the Old Testament and everything that stemmed from Palestine and sought to give his teaching as broad a Pauline foundation as possible. His collection in 140 CE included ten of Paul's letters, certainly more than any of the Church Fathers. Paul enjoyed the favor of the heretics to a large extent, including the Valentinians and the Montanists, and the suspicions of the later orthodox Church about his theological reliability were only allayed by the addition of the pastoral Epistles to the canon. (Bauer Orth 221-226)

Whether all of the present 13 letters are really Paul's is still questionable and the problem of false names and forgery in Paul's Epistles is acute. Koester says the following seven letters "are generally accepted as genuine without doubt - Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon", a judgment with which the recent Scholars Version agrees, with the exception of interpolations (Koester History 52, Dewey xvi)- but Fox thinks there are doubts about Philippians, Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians in ascending order of magnitude. (Fox 130) Oddly enough in 2 Thessalonians Paul warns his audience against the possibility of fake letters with which some Christians were trying to mislead their fellow Christians about the end of the world, yet many modern scholars consider this whole letter to be a fake. Romans seems to be much interpolated with late insertions: 5:6-7, 13:1-7, 16:17-20 and 16:25-27 according to the Scholars Version; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 may also have been added (Fox 130, Koester Hist 54) In sum, there is much about Paul's letters both in their content and transmission that is entirely untrustworthy.

The same caution as to truthfulness holds for Paul's life as well. The standard biography accepts Paul's statements about his life at face value, beginning with the claim in Acts that he was born in Tarsus in Asia Minor and that he was a Pharisee. The dating of his life is difficult to construct and there has been much disagreement about these dates. There is one date in Galatians 2:1 where he mentions a second trip to Jerusalem 14 years after the

first. According to Acts 12:17-23, Peter escaped from prison and permanently left Jerusalem after a Passover before the death of Agrippa I; this Passover must be 44 CE at the latest which makes Paul's second visit to Jerusalem also 44 at the latest while Peter was still in Jerusalem. This means Paul's first visit would have had to take place in 30 CE (Gal 1:18), his conversion 3 years before that in 27 (Gal 1:17) and thus the crucifixion had to take place before 26 CE - but this is too early for Pontius Pilate (Vardaman Chronos 143-144). The reference to 14 years must therefore not be factual and all the other dates are too early.

The only historically secure date for Paul's life is his trial before Gallio in 51 (Acts 18:12-18). An inscription at Delphi, pieced together in 1970 from nine fragments found in the French excavation from 1905-1910, reveals a letter from Emperor Claudius, which mentions L. Junius Gallio as proconsul, ordering the admission of new inhabitants to a depopulated Delphi. It is dated at the time of the 26th acclamation and we know that proconsuls served for only one year, starting on July 1 of any given year. The 26th acclamation can be dated in the spring of 52 and Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, must therefore have served from 51-52. (Murphy-OC 15-22)

Putting together the dates proposed by modern scholars with the dates summarized by D. Plooij for older scholars (in parentheses), we have the following ranges:

33-35 (31-41): conversion to Christianity
35-38 (32-43): first visit to Jerusalem
46-52 (41-47): Apostolic Council in Jerusalem with James
51: trial before Gallio
55-59 (53-61): arrest in Jerusalem
57-62 (59-62): journey to Rome
59-64 : journey to Spain
60-67 (60-64): death in Rome

(Plooij chart, Murphy-Oconnor 8-31, Koester Hist 103-104, Brandon Fall 152, Klausner From Jesus xv, Ludemann Paul Founder 61-62, Paul Apostle 262-263)

Obviously there is no consensus among scholars as to the exact dates of Paul's life. Overall the dates and biographical details of his life are unknown, unknowable and shrouded in mystery, and there are almost no clues in his writings about the real person Paul. As Robinson says: "It is surprising to be made to realize that there is only one reasonably secure absolute date...

in the life of St. Paul...We cannot settle with any precision or finality the date of his birth, his conversion, his visits to Jerusalem, his various missionary journeys, his arrival in Rome, his death - or any of his letters." (Robinson Dating 336-341).

Paul is vague even concerning his own health problems, in Gal 4:13-15 and 2 Cor 12:7-10, and as Sevenster says, "the first thing that strikes us that there is really so little definite information on the nature of Paul's complaint." (Sevenster 21) This reticence is surprising from someone like Paul as he otherwise comes across as quite self-absorbed, engaged in ongoing personal conflicts with many enemies and opponents. It is clear from 2 Cor 11:23ff that he writes about his personal life only with great reluctance and only because his legitimacy has been attacked. Even here he uses a series of numbers (5, 3, 3) which sound less biographical than symbolic.

Since no dates are given, the entire chronology of Paul's life is reckoned from the trial of Paul before Gallio in Acts 18:12 which had to be in 51 CE, plus references to "3 years" in Gal 1:18 and "14 years" in Gal 2:1. But there are major factual discrepancies and dating problems in all the writings by and about Paul:

1. Luke strings together episodes in Acts by means of loose chronological indications; for example Acts 6:1 "in these days", 12:1 and 19:23 "about that time". Furthermore, 4 chapters (Acts 11:26-15:41) are allotted to the first 13-14 years of Paul's life but 14 chapters (Acts 16-28) to the last few years of his life.

2. Acts 4:6 and Luke 3:2 incorrectly designate Annas, rather than Caiaphas, as the high priest during the ministry of Jesus and after his death.

3. Acts 5:36-37 incorrectly dates Theudas and errs by placing Judas the Galilean after Theudas.

4. Acts 9:21-23 where the Jews in Damascus plot to kill Paul and he is saved by being lowered over a wall in a basket does not agree with 2 Cor 11:32-33 where the same story of being let down in a basket is told but it is the Arabian King Aretas who wishes to arrest him.

5. Acts 9:27 has Paul returning from Damascus to Jerusalem where "Barnabas brought him down to the apostles" and he preached "boldly in the name of Jesus"; the same story of returning from Damascus to Jerusalem is told in Gal 1:18-19 except that here Paul says "I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother" and right afterwards he adds "I do not lie".

6. The assertion of a worldwide famine in Acts 11:28 contradicts both world history and Acts 11:29-30 itself where it is stated that the congregation

in Antioch was able to send aid to Jerusalem.

7. Though Luke several times reports on Paul's visits to a given locality, he presents detailed information only in one report while any other visit is described in general terms: Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10 vs. 20:2), Philippi (16:12-40 vs. 20:2-6), Corinth (18:1-17 vs. 20:2-3) and Ephesus (19:1-20 vs 18:19-21).

8. The expulsion of the Jews from Rome in Acts 18:2 appears to take place 18 months before Paul's trial, and on that basis the 5th century Christian writer Orosius dates it to 49 CE. However, the Roman historians Suetonius and Dio Cassius date the same event to 41 instead. (see Ludemann 24-25, Eisenman 151-152, AN Wilson 26-27)

9. Acts does not agree with 2 Timothy, which purports to be written by Paul at Rome. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Tim 4:20 that he has left Trophimus "sick at Miletus" but in Acts 21:29 Timothy accompanies Paul to Jerusalem when the latter leaves Miletus. Moreover, in Philemon Timothy had been in Rome with Paul during his imprisonment but 2 Timothy makes no reference to conditions at Rome, their time in Paul's prison or any details of their recently shared life. (Fox Unauth 131-132)

10. Acts mentions at least three if not four visits of Paul to Jerusalem after his conversion (9:26-30, 11:27-30, 15) But in Galatians only two such visits are recorded (1:18-24, 2:1-10).

In general, Acts seems not to be very well-informed about Paul and his teachings. Acts has Paul going off to Jerusalem almost immediately after his conversion and is unaware that Paul spent three years in Arabia and Damascus after his conversion and prior to his first visit to Jerusalem (Gal 1:15-18) nor is it aware of his turbulent relations with the Christians of Corinth which led to several visits there. The account in Acts 18:18-19:22 is very condensed and does not refer to the hostility and suffering which Paul recounts in 1 Cor 4:9-13, 15:32, 2 Cor 1:8, 4:8-12.

Acts also never mentions the fact that Paul had written epistles: it is odd that a writer who does so much to glorify Paul would not want to give him credit for his literary work. At the same time, the content of Paul's speeches in Acts derives from Lukan theology and has so many differences to Paul's theology in his letters that a number of scholars have concluded that the author of Acts could not have been a companion of Paul as is usually claimed: "The author of Acts is in his Christology pre-Pauline, in his natural theology, concept of the law, and eschatology, post-Pauline. He presents no specifically Pauline idea...The obvious material distance from Paul raises the

question...whether one may really consider Luke, the physician and travel companion of Paul, as the author of Acts." (Vielhauer 48)

Scholars since Ferdinand Baur have raised doubts about the veracity of Acts, especially because of the discrepancy between "the fragmentation of earliest Christianity reflected in Paul's letters and the utopian picture of a unified and harmonious movement painted in Acts." The resurrection stories in Acts, for example, are modeled on similar ones in the Gospels: Peter's raising of Dorcas (9:36-41) and Paul's raising of Eutychus (20:7-9) are modeled on Jesus' raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:22-43). (In the story of Eutychus Paul preaches so long and apparently tediously that Eutychus falls asleep and off his window ledge).

The story of Paul going to Damascus to arrest followers of Jesus may be based on I Maccabees 15 which says that the 2nd century BCE High Priest Simon had the authority to send envoys to Rome with letters; Rome in reply advised the arest of any "traitors" againat Israel: "hand them over to Simon teh High Priest to be punished." (1 Macc 15:21). The story of Paul's conversion experience seems to be based on 2 Macc 3:22-30 in which Heliodorus sets out to remove the Temple treasure but finds himself in the presence of a great apparition of brilliant light which causes him to fall on the ground as if blind. A recent edition of Paul's letters by the Scholars Version concludes that "the Acts of the Apostles should be classified among the later interpretations of Paul and not be used as a historical source for reconstructing his life and work." (Authentic 10-11, Helms Who 91-94).

Just as with Jesus no accurate life of Paul can be written and the sources do not seem historically trustworthy. In no other part of the New Testament are textual variants so many and so free as in Acts. But the major difference to the life of Jesus is that the letters of Paul are generally accepted to be written by Paul himself. Thus, the total lack of factual information may well indicate a highly deceptive person who has much to hide and is very clever and self-aware about doing so, for an ordinary person who writes as much as Paul did would have let something slip that would give a factual insight. And the discrepancies with Luke in Acts may indicate a corresponding agenda by Luke to obfuscate the truth about Paul.

It is suggestive that the veracity of truthfulness is a major theme in Paul's writings. For one, four times Paul insists outright that he is not lying: Rom 9:1, Gal 1:20, 2 Cor 11:31 and 1 Tim 2:7. In Rom 3:7 he refers to himself lying: "if through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds." In Gal 4:16 he considers the negative consequences of telling the truth: "Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?" And in many other passages the obsession with lying comes through: his calling on the wrath of God against

those "who by their wickedness suppress the truth" in Rom 1:18, his admonition "do not lie to one another" in Col 3:9, his concern "let no one deceive you" in 2 Thess 2:3 and his startling description of "God who never lies" in Titus 1:2. Perhaps he doth protest too much.

What is Paul hiding? We might begin by questioning the truth of his claims to be a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin from the city of Tarsus. First of all, Paul himself never mentions Tarsus in his letters; it is in Acts 9:11, 21:39 and 22:3 that he is quoted as making this claim: "I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia". In his letters he does however repeat the claim of being both a Jew and a Pharisee: in Rom 11:2 and in Phil 3:5; in Acts 22:3 he claims to be brought up "at the feet of Gamaliel", the great Pharisee rabbi, and in 23:6 and 26:4, in his defense at his trial, he claims to be a Pharisee.

But there are many internal and historical problems with these claims. First of all, there is no evidence that Pharisaic groups in the Diaspora ever existed: "Pharisaic emphasis on purity and food laws would make life in the Diaspora very difficult; the pursuit of the `tradition of the Fathers' also would be really successful only in the Holy Land. Even in Palestine, Pharisees were not omnipresent, but centered on Jerusalem and Judea." (Stemberger 67-68) There certainly were few, if any, Pharisee teachers in Tarsus and a "Pharisee training would have been hard to come by." (Maccoby Paul 6). Paul also contradicts this information about Tarsus by saying to the people of Jerusalem in Acts 22:3 that he "was brought up in this city". This would suggest that he came to Jerusalem as a child, but that does not square with his proud claim to be "from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city" in 21:39.

Paul's claim in Acts to be a pupil of Gamaliel is also highly dubious. Only the New Testament describes Gamaliel as being a member of the Temple Council and calls him a Pharisee (Acts 5:34); Josephus mentions him only as the father of a Pharisee, Simeon, not as one himself (Life 190-191). But the Mishnah specifically states that he decided matters of Jewish law but never in formal teaching or in a master-disciple relationship; he also was not part of the school of Hillel or Shammai nor the head of his own school. (Stemberger 68) The chances of him having taken a student, especially a child at that, seem extremely slim.

It is also odd that Paul never mentions this claim of being as a student of Gamaliel in his letters, even when he is most concerned to stress his qualifications as a Pharisee. And his citations of the Hebrew Bible in his letters are normally of the Greek version, the Septuagint, rather than the original Hebrew; any student of Gamaliel would absolutely have had to know

excellent Hebrew to study with him. A claim that is so contradictory is most likely false and possibly an outright lie. Thus, it is hard to understand why in the face of all this evidence most scholars on Paul insist on taking him at his word and calling him not only a Jew but also a Pharisee, trained in the Jewish law, with his style of argument and thought being rabbinical: whole books are devoted to this kind of analysis. (see W Davies Paul) Rather, his style of argument is Hellenistic, modeled on that of the handbooks of ancient rhetoric and on the Stoic philosophers. Betz' analysis of Galatians shows that its structure corresponds exactly with the structure of the apologetic speech in these handbooks of rhetoric, containing an introduction (1:6-11), a narration (1:12-2:14), an indication of the point of the proof (2:15-21), a statement of proof (3:1-4:31), an admonition (5:1-6:10) and a conclusion (6:11-18). (Betz Literary)

Leipoldt points out that "Paul's style is similar to that of the Stoic diatribes, particularly as are known from Arrian's memoirs of Epictetus. The piling up of rhetorical questions, the rapid alternation of question and answer...above all the peculiar dialectic of Paul were favorite means of expression of the Stoic philosophers." (Leipoldt Christentum 146) At the same time, his written style is such an idiosyncratic and inelegant Greek that it suggests someone whose native language is not Greek.

The style and content of his letters give many telling bits of evidence against his supposed scholarly background. For one, he habitually uses the language of military life, as well as of sports and stadium athletics such as race running and prize fighting, leading Eisenman to wonder "if at some point he had not actually been a soldier himself" (Eisenman 665). For another, the Pauline letters are replete with commercial language, "both directly, to describe aspects of the relationship between the apostle and local congregations, and also metaphorically, to make theological statements." (Meeks 66). For example, in 2 Cor 8 he uses "poverty" and "wealth" as spiritual metaphors and in Col 2:14 his disciple speaks of Christ's sacrifice as "canceling the note that was against us."

The language of commercial partnerships is especially evident in Philippians. He speaks of conversion in terms of gain and loss: "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ" (3:7-8). He describes his relations with the Philippians in commercial terms: "No church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only...Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit. I have received full payment, and more; I am filled...And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches" (4:15-19). Paul's background seems much more in the military and commercial realm than it does in the study of theology.

Paul is clearly not telling the truth about his true origins and motivations, and most of what he says needs to be taken with a large grain of salt, though he lets slip bits of truth now and again. Contemporaries certainly did not think he was Jewish. The Ebionites, as reported in the 4th century by the hostile Epiphanius (Panarion 30.16), said that he was a Greek who converted to Judaism and became circumcised in the hope of marrying the high priest's daughter: "Then, when he failed to get the girl, he flew into a rage and wrote against circumcision and against the sabbath and the Law". (Maccoby Paul 182) Maccoby, for one, rejects any notion of Paul having been a Pharisee: "That Saul was a Pharisee is rendered most unlikely both by his persecution of the Nazarenes and by his association with the High Priest. But a person of foreign, non-Jewish extraction is just the kind of person that could be expected to enter the service of the High Priest and engage in police activities which a native-born Jew, resentful of Roman hegemony and of the Sadducean quisling regime, would regard with hostility and scorn" (Maccoby Paul 60).

Every indication in the New Testament is that Paul was not only a Roman citizen but one with close connections to the Herodian ruling class in Palestine and even to the court of the Roman Emperor, a position that "enabled him to wield inordinate importance in Jerusalem at a comparatively very young age" (Eisenman 525). Paul held Roman citizenship by birth, a rarity in Roman Palestine at this time, and everything about Paul corroborates this Roman ancestry. His very name Paul is a Roman one; it is rare in the East, extremely rare among non-Romans, above all in the Greek East, and does not occur at all among Jews. It also suggests high birth (Ludemann Paul 134). In all the accounts of his travels he travels only within the Roman Empire, never in Parthia, Arabia or the barbarian north, where one might think there would be converts as well; he does not even venture to Rome's rival Alexandria.

There is good evidence that he was a member of the Herodian family which had been granted Roman citizenship in the previous century. In Rom 16:10-11 Paul sends greetings to "those who belong to the family of Aristobulus" and to his kinsman Herodion, the "Littlest Herod". This Aristobulus, who was married to the Salome connected in the Gospels with the death of John the Baptist, may well be the son of Herod of Chalcis (44-49 CE), Agrippa's brother and successor who demanded and received control over the chief priests (Eisenman 349). Acts 13:1 also mentions Paul's Antioch contact Manaen, a member of the court or syntrophos of Herod Agrippa.

There is also an interesting pattern of Paul journeying to Arab or Edomite territories connected with the Herodian family. In Gal 1:17 he mentions that he "went away into Arabia", and in 2 Cor 11:32 he mentions

King Aretas in connection with Damascus. Arabia is generally taken to refer to the area around Petra, on the other side of the Dead Sea, and here it is suggestive that Herod's mother was an Arab from Petra. The wealth of the Herodians was based on these Transjordanian connections and their involvement in the Arabian trade that came through Petra and then across the Dead Sea to Jerusalem or directly to the Mediterranean coast. Aretas was a sworn enemy of the Herodians and clearly an enemy of Paul as well; the incident in 2 Cor 11:32-33 might well refer to Paul's activity in the war against Aretas on the Herodian side (see Eisenman 149-150).

Paul also had a nephew, the son of his sister, living in Jerusalem, as reported by Acts 23:16, who discovers a plot by "the Jews" to kill Paul; this nephew has a strong enough Roman connection to inform the Roman Chief Captain of the Temple Guard who with 70 horsemen, 200 soldiers and 200 spearsmen escorts Paul to Procurator Felix in Caesarea to be kept safe in Herod's palace. Paul's sister can possibly be identified as Cyprios IV, the wife of Helcias, the Temple Treasurer, whose father and grandfather had been Temple Treasurer before him and close associates of the earlier Herod. Her son and Paul's nephew was Julius Archelaus, former brother-in-law of Bernice, wife of King Agrippa. This line goes back through a daughter of Herod and his Maccabean wife Mariamme I to the Idumaean Costobarus, the husband of Herod's sister Salome I. Paul is thus an aristocrat directly related to the ruling Herodians and is well-connected (Eisenman 525-526, 799).

Acts makes clear that his Roman citizenship and Herodian connection gave him an unprecedented degree of protection and allowed him cover for what are disguised as religious missionarizing efforts but in actuality seem to be political activities. In Acts 16:38 he is arrested, supposedly for curing a slave girl of her ability of divination which deprived her owners of profit; these owners then accused Paul of being a Jew, but as soon as he announced his Roman citizenship he was immediately let go. This story is clearly concealing something else, most likely of a political nature.

It is noticeable how many people of wealth and status Paul mentions in his letters as being his contacts and fellow travelers. Wayne Meeks has determined that there are 65 individuals named in Paul's letters as persons active in local congregations, as traveling companions or agents of Paul or both. Some of these are also mentioned in Acts which adds 13 other names and an anonymous household. Of these there are 30 individuals whose status can be determined and these seem to be almost all people of some wealth and status. Many of them have houses ample enough to host meetings and guests, others are called patrons and donors, including one, Philemon, who is a slave owner, and some have titles, such as Crispus the archisynagogus, a Jewish official, or Erastus the oikonomos tes poleos, an important municipal

official. We find merchants, scribes and physicians, independent women traveling on business and freedmen with enough means to be able to travel. Even when only a name is given it can be inferred that a Roman name in Corinth and Philippi belong to the original stock of colonists, thus well-established, and Greek names in Philippi must be merchants (see list in footnote).

In Luke and Acts more wealthy and prominent people are named as Paul's friends, contacts and "converts": Joanna, wife of Herod's epitropos Chuza, a supporter (Lk 8:2), Sergius Paulus, proconsul of Cyprus (Acts 13:7-12), Greek women and men of high standing (Thess 17:12), Dionysius the Aeropagite in Athens, member of the most ancient court and council (17:34), Publius, chief man of Malta (Acts 28:7-10), Asiarchs of Ephesus, chosen from families of means and leaders of the rites of the imperial cult (Acts 19:31), Lydia, Thyatiran dealer in purple fabrics (Acts 16:14), Jason, wealthy man (Acts 17:5-9) and Titius Justus, a Roman citizen and owner of a house adjacent to the synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:7). (Meeks 55-63, list in footnote) In addition, Acts 8:26-40 tells a long story of Philip's "conversion" of the eunuch minister of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. Overall, the people interested in Christianity in Acts are predominantly upper-class.

Meeks ultimately downplays the wealth of Paul's contacts. To be sure, there are no landed aristocrats, no senators, equites or decurions on this list. But Meeks then says the typical Christian as represented here was "a free artisan or small trader. Some even in those occupational categories had houses, slaves, the ability to travel, and other signs of wealth. Some of the wealthy provided housing, meeting places, and other services for individual Christians and for whole groups." (Meeks 73) This seems like an unwarranted modest conclusion: the people he analyzes seem far above the status of artisan or trader, not to speak of people like the chief man of Malta, the Aeropagite of Athens and the proconsul of Cyprus.

What is odd about these contacts of Paul is that we know from historical research and contemporary comments that Christians were almost invariably common working people, mainly slaves and women, and there were for several centuries almost no people of wealth and status among them. So why does Paul seem to be circulating exclusively among the opposite social strata whom he is supposedly "converting"? Wealthy people would be the least likely of anyone to adopt a strange, new and persecuted religion. The other question is what is really meant by "church" in both Acts and Paul's letters. Today we define this term as a religious congregation meeting in a sacred building. But the Greek word ekklesia used in Paul meant something very different: derived from a verb that means "to call out or call forth", it

originally meant an assembly of the citizens summoned, by a herald, from their homes into some public place, and later came to mean any assembly convoked for political purposes. In the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, synagoge was used to translate edhah, "the society formed by the children of Israel" while ekklesia translated qahal, "their actual meeting together." In the present-day manuscripts of Paul's letters the word ekklesia is used metaphorically in terms such as ekklesia of God or of the Lord or of Christ, for those called to be believers in Christ. (Liddell 206, Hoskyns 20-25)

But when ekklesia is referred to by itself, it simply means a group of people meeting together. Given the political meaning of the term in its contemporary Greek usage, could it not simply have meant just that in Paul's original writings, a meeting for political purposes without any religious meaning whatsoever? And could not the religious meanings have been edited into Paul's letters in succeeding centuries in which ekklesia came to refer to bodies of Christians in the aggregate? That could easily explain why Paul is writing to "churches" of wealthy people - they aren't churches at all! He is simply attending political meetings, possibly of an official nature.

Could it be that he is in fact engaging in political work on behalf of the Roman, Herodian and high priestly Jewish governments, perhaps ferreting out potential pockets of Jewish Messianic radicalism in sensitive areas under Roman control? Is he really on a continuation of his mission to attack the supporters of James and the revolutionary nationalist Zealot Jewish movement? And are his contacts with wealthy and prominent people missions to enlist them in his aid, both financial and political?

It is noteworthy that all the groups of people he addresses his letters to and visits live in heavily Romanized cities with a strong administrative and military presence as well as containing significant Jewish populations. Philippi in Macedonia on the Via Egnatia, the ancient overland route from Asia Minor to the West, though originally founded by Philip of Macedon in 356 BCE, had been designated a Roman colony and was settled by a substantial number of army veterans. Thessalonica, a seaport founded in 315 BCE, also on the Via Egnatia, was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, with a syncretistic religious tradition of Greek fertility deities and Asian redeemer gods.

Corinth, though an ancient Greek city, had been totally destroyed by the Romans in 146 BCE and was refounded in 44 BCE with freed Roman slaves. It was named the capital of the Roman province of Achaia and soon became the fourth most important city of the Empire, due to its location at the base of the isthmus. The Asia Minor province of Galatia had two cit-

ies with Jewish populations, Ancyra and Iconium, and the so-called seven Churches of Asia Minor, which included Ephesus, were all in towns with large Jewish populations; it was in Asia Minor that Jews were particularly numerous and influential. Rome itself may have had 15,000 to 60,0000 Jews in the first century. (Authentic 26-27, 69, 165, 203; Gilbert Jewish Atlas 20) It surely must be more than a coincidence that Paul, who claimed to be the Apostle to all the Gentiles, picks only centers of Roman government and military with Jewish populations for his "missionary" work.

Nor is he merely working on his own. He has a secretary to whom he dictates his letters (see Gal 6:11 where he notes when he writes in his own hand and Rom 16:22 where his scribe sends his own greetings); and he seems to have a large group of "fellow workers" and "helpers" constantly traveling with him, enough people that he could send several people to different places while he traveled elsewhere. Most of them are not Jewish, for he writes in Col 4:10-11 that the "only men of the circumcision among my fellow-workers" are Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus Justus. Nor would it be surprising if some of them were armed, perhaps to protect him against the "plots made against him by the Jews" (i.e. Acts 20:3).

Moreover, his work is so extensive, possibly involving such a large staff, that he continually needs to raise money to finance it. The fact that his refusal to get support from the Corinthians is exceptional proves the rule, for he even gets money from the Macedonians whom he describes as living in "extreme poverty" (2 Cor 8:2). It is rather telling that he says to the Corinthians "I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you" (2 Cor 11:8). This may perhaps be hyperbole, but it is clear that he is reproached with personal covetousness, greed and guile, to which he defends himself in 1 Thess 2:5-12.

He does raise large amounts of money, ostensibly for the Jerusalem "Church" and its poor relief, and he is quick to remind his readers of that fact (Gal 2:10, Rom 15:25-32). In 1 Cor 16:1-4 he gives instructions for a weekly collection and 2 Cor 8:20 suggests a substantial amount of money, using the term hadrotes, "plenty, lavish gift". Yet in 1 Cor 16:3 he insists on collecting the money himself and then giving it to others to take to Jerusalem, possibly accompanying them as well. Given his estrangement from the group around James, did any of this money really end up in Jerusalem? Did he use it for his political work or to pay his entourage? And did his allusion in Rom 15:31 that his contributions were unwelcome in Jerusalem serve as an excuse for him to keep the money for himself? (see Schmithals Paul 79-82, Bell 22)

One thing is clear: Paul was a particular enemy of James, Jesus' brother, and his Messianic revolutionary following, a hostility that one would

expect from a member of the ruling class. In Acts 8:3 Saul "was ravaging the church, and entering house after house; he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison" and in 9:1 "Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" got "letters to the synagogues at Damascus" from the high priest authorizing him to arrest "any belonging to the Way, men or women,...bound to Jerusalem". This cannot possibly be true since Damascus was outside the confines of Judaea and the Sanhedrin lacked any jurisdiction in this region, certainly not to demand forced extraditions. And it makes no sense that the High Priest would send a private citizen in the first place to make citizens' arrests. Clearly Paul is there as an agent of the government, either the Sadducee collaborators or the Roman governor.

As A.N. Wilson points out: "Outside the pages of the New Testament, there is no evidence that the Jews have ever been guilty of religious persecutions. They have been notably disputatious among themselves but there has never been a Jewish inquisition. The Roman persecution of religious minorities, Jews included, inspired the author of Acts to invent the fiction of Jews as the great persecutors; a persecution for which Christendom felt itself entitled to take revenge for many centuries afterwards." (AN Wilson 26-27).

There is also good evidence in the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.70 that Paul personally attacked James in the 40's, beating him so badly that he left him for dead, an attack disguised in Acts as being directed at "Stephen". There is a detailed scene in the Temple where Paul agitated against James, who had a "great multitude who had been waiting since the middle of the night" to see him. Paul, with his followers, physically attacked James, pushing him down the steps, injuring one or both of his legs (a theme repeated later in Christian writings) and leaving him for dead. This resulted in a flight of James' followers, 5000 in number, to Jericho, pursued by Paul who chased them all the way to Damascus (or possibly the Qumran community) (Eisenman 588-589). The same scene is described in the Ascents of James 1.69.8-70.8, considered a source of the Recognitions and possibly written in the region of Pella at the end of the first century or at least by 135 CE, though Paul is here called only "a certain man who was an enemy" (Van Voorst 78-79).

That Paul would be conspiring with Agrippa and the procurator, both Felix (52-60) and his successor Festus (60-62), to kill James makes sense given his history. Acts certainly shows Paul first persecuting the followers of James and even after supposedly "converting" continuing to oppose James and undermining his teachings and authority. Paul was most likely envious of James' great popularity and conspired to remove him in order to supplant him: not for nothing did the Dead Sea Scrolls most likely refer to him when

they talk about the "Man of Lying" and it is striking how often Paul insists in his writings that he is not lying. The Dead Sea Scrolls most likely record both attacks on James, the first by "the Liar" Paul and the second by "the Wicked Priest" Ananus (Eisenman 615).

Paul's target was not "Christians" who did not exist, but Messianic Jews who hated both Herodian and Roman rule (see discussion in Chapter 21 on James). Ultimately Paul played a leading role in the death of James in 62 CE, collaborating with the quisling High Priest Ananus and the Herodian upper class to get rid of a Jewish leader perceived as a major threat to their rule.

Paul himself admits how much at odds he is with the true followers of the historic Jesus and rejects the requirement that he needs a letter of recommendation from James as authority to teach. Wherever he goes he says he is challenged by "intruders", those "who want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (i.e. Gal 1:7, 1:9, 4:17, 6:12), what scholars call "Judaizers", in other words, representatives of James who dispute his right to teach. This conflict is transformed by Paul into "plots by the Jews" which he sees everywhere: in Damascus, Ephesus, Corinth, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Thessalonica and Beroea.

He is constantly arguing against criticisms of his right to speak as an apostle of Jesus, for example in 2 Corinthians: that he is not competent (3:5), that he distorts the word of God (4:2), that some even call him insane (5:13, 11:21), that they do not accept him as an apostle (9:2), and that he is unqualified to be an apostle (13:6). He rejects the criticism that he is a liar and a"man of dreams" (Gal 1:20 and 4:16). He insists that he needs no earthly authority for his dispensation is directly from God by way of the Holy Spirit (3:4-6) and that it is based on "visions and revelations of the Lord", indirectly asserting that he went up to the third heaven, possibly out of his body (12:1-3).

There is, however, a fundamental inconsistency between the account given by Paul of his own life in his autobiographical writings and the narative of the Acts of the Apostles, which underplays the fundamental conflict between Paul and the group around James in Jerusalem. Paul tells the Galatians that at the time of his conversion he had not met any members of the Jerusalem church (Gal 1:17), which sits oddly beside the account in Acts that he was a sort of police sergeant, in charge of interrogating figures like Stephen. He still maintains that he had not met any even three years later, saying that he "saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother" but to this he appends "In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!" (Gal 1:19). In other words, he is most certainly lying, and probably about the for-

mer statement as well.

In Gal 2:11 Paul mentions the dispute with Peter (Cephas), the leader of the Church in Antioch: "When Cephas came to Antioch, then I did oppose him to his face since he was manifestly in the wrong." This quarrel is not mentioned in Acts 21:15-26 in which Paul makes a special trip to Jerusalem to meet with Peter, James and the Jerusalem leaders, ostensibly to bring contributions from the Gentile churches for poor relief (Rom 15:25). This meeting is written up as a great Apostolic Council in which "they glorified God" when Paul reported his missionarizing activities to the Gentiles and in which they reached an amicable resolution acccepting Gentile membership. But even Acts cannot hide the fact that Paul is highly mistrusted, being accused of teaching "all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs." One wonders why Paul took the risk of going to Jerusalem to meet with James and Peter at all. Paul does not indicate a date for the dispute with Peter, but if, as Schmithals thinks, it happened after the Apostolic Council, then clearly Acts is hiding the level of disagreement between them (Schmithals Paul 63).

It is clear that Paul is being deceptive about his true role with regard to the true followers of Jesus. There is a strident and defensive tone in all his letters and he is constantly arguing against real or perceived enemies who challenge his credentials. He is especially defensive about his history as a persecutor. One has to wonder what his real agenda is. He even admits that he is not an especially good person but cannot or will not control himself: "For I do not do the good I want but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it but sin that dwells within me" (Rom 7:19-20). That last statement seems like a convenient rationalization.

There is clearly a deep psychological conflict within him and a certain sense of guilt, which seems to culminate in the emotional collapse on the road to Damascus known as his conversion. Here a light from heaven flashed about him and he heard Jesus' voice asking him "`Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'...Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank" (Acts 9:3-9). Clearly this is a profound emotional experience which Acts recounts twice more - once in a speech by Paul before a mob of people in Acts 22:6-12 and once again in a speech to Agrippa in 26:13-18.

But most amazingly Paul never mentions this vision in any of his letters, especially not in 2 Cor 11:32 or in Gal 1:17 where his trip to Damascus is recounted. One would think Paul would want to emphasize such a powerful

experience as proof of his legitimacy but he doesn't. Does this mean that the story in Acts is a much later one, made up to give Paul the legitimacy that he did not have in real life? Is Paul afraid that people will not believe his story or will mock it? Or does this mean that he is simply very calculating in his "missionarizing" activities and that there is nothing personal about his religious belief? In any case, as with much in Paul's career, there is a high degree of deception here.

It should therefore come as no great surprise that he was not trusted by the majority of people who came in contact with him. This is even true for the congregations to whom he writes, who, it appears, continued to offer resistance to his teachings and attempted to follow the authorized representatives of James. As he said to the Galatians (1:6): "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel"; or to the Corinthians (1:4): "For if some one comes and preaches another Jesus than the one we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received or if you acept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough."

Acts 21:28 reveals that the ordinary Jewish populace saw Paul as their sworn enemy. When the Jerusalem group demanded as a token of his good faith that Paul purify himself in the Temple with four other men, the Jews "from Asia" vehemently protested, declaring "this is the man who is teaching men everywhere against the people and the law and this place; moreover he has brought Greeks into the temple and he has defiled this holy place". Brandon thinks James and the elders would have been quite aware "of the danger to which they were exposing the champion of Gentile Christianity in requiring him thus publicly to prove his orthodoxy"; (Brandon Fall 135) perhaps they were even hoping to be rid of him once and for all, expecting the Jewish crowd to kill

him. Instead they made of him an even more determined enemy who ultimately brought about James' death.

According to Acts 21:32, Paul was saved from the wrath of the populace by a Roman cohort of soldiers who arrested him until the tribune found out that he was a Roman citizen in 22:28 and immediately released him. Once again it was his Roman citizenship that afforded him the personal protection of King Agrippa II, his wife Berenice (the future mistress of Titus) and the Roman procurator Felix. Paul had ongoing conversations for two years (24:26-27), supposedly when he was in prison and supposedly about his faith in Christ and about "justice and self-control and future judgment". Eisenman finds this apparent attempt to convert Felix highly unlikely and thinks it is "more in the nature of intelligence debriefings than theologi-

cal or religious discussions." Paul must have had strategic discussions with King Agrippa as well. (Eisenman 550-551).

Other interesting testimonies to that end are in the Muslim sources. A very early source is al-Kalbi (died 146 CE) who says that Paul only pretended to be a Christian and in actuality corrupted Christian doctrine. His motivation was a particularly tortuous kind of malice and he hated the Christians so much that it hurt him to think of them entering Paradise; so he made sure by corrupting the Christian religion that if the Jews went to hell, the Christians went there too. (Stern Abd 177-179)

A less fanciful and possibly more historically based view of Paul is in a 10th century Arabic manuscript of the Muslim theologian `Abd al-Jabbar, discovered in Istanbul, which appears to be based on much older documents, possibly Jewish-Christian ones (see Pines). In a book designed to prove that Mohammed was the true prophet he recounts the history of Christianity and in sections 14-21 discusses Paul. He says, "This Paul was a cunning and roguish Jew, out for mischief and assisting mischief-doers,a trouble-maker and power seeker who employed all kinds of tricks to this end." When he was arrested by the Romans, he said to the Roman governor, "Yes, I follow the religion of Caesar, king of the Romans, and have cut loose from the Jewish religion."

Sent to Rome, "he frequented the company of the Romans and was always to be found at the court of the Emperor, inciting the Romans against the Jews, reminding them of their old emnity and the wars waged by the Israelites against them and many Romans they had killed. He warned them against the Jewish danger, saying that it was not impossible that they again establish a state and turn against them." Paul influenced the Emperor to declare war against the Jews: "One of the Emperors listened to Paul's denunciations of the Jews and followed his advice. He marched against them, killed many of them, took their wealth, and reduced them to slavery, returning with precious booty. Thus Paul's prestige went up and they liked him even better than before."

Paul rejected the precepts of Judaism practiced by Jesus: "Thus Paul emancipated himself from the religious practices of Christ and accepted those of the Romans. If you look carefully you will find that the Christians became Romans and accepted the religious practices of the Romans, but you will not find that the Romans have become Christians." (Stern Abd 137-140) This analysis by a Muslim scholar may be much closer to the truth than what most Christian scholars write about Paul.

Even the New Testament, with all its obfuscations, makes clear the powerful connections Paul had at the court of the Roman Emperor. These

connections are particularly evident in the list of people to whom Paul sends greetings in Rom 16:1-15, whose possible identities Lightfoot has determined from an analysis of grave inscriptions. The names Ampliatus and Urbanus occur in a list of imperial freedmen connected with the mint on an inscription of 115 CE. There was a person named Stachys, a comparatively rare name, who held an important office in the imperial household at the time of Paul. Apelles was the name of a famous tragic actor who at one time stood high in the favor of the emperor Caligula and the name Claudius Apella occurs again in an inscription of the age of Vespasian. The "family of Narcissus" refers to the powerful freedman Narcissus "whose wealth was proverbial, whose influence with Claudius was unbounded and who bore a chief part in the intigues of this reign". He was put to death by Agrippina shortly after the accession of Nero and Paul is writing to his remaining relatives. (Lightfoot 174-175)

The most important of Paul's connections, however, is Epaphroditus. Paul mentions him in Phil 2:25 as "my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need", in 4:18 he again expresses gratitude to the same for "the gifts you sent, a a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God", and in 4:22 he associates him with "Caeasar's household." This Epaphroditus, an imperial freedman, was secretary to Emperor Nero and was rewarded by Nero with military honors, to which only a freeborn person was entitled, for his contribution in exposing the Pisonian conspiracy of 65. He was also involved in Nero's death, helping him commit suicide, though this may actually have been an assassination. As a reward, he would also appear afterwards to have been Domitian's secretary, until the latter turned on him, put him to death and confiscated his fortune in 95 CE, supposedly for daring to kill an Emperor, namely Nero. (New Pauly 4.1014-1015, Eisenman 639). This connection with Epaphroditus is a crucial clue to understanding the connections between Paul, Josephus, and the Flavian Emperors.

According to Acts, Paul was supposedly delivered as a prisoner in chains to Rome in order to claim his right to appeal to Emperor Nero against his imprisonment. Yet much of what he says about being a prisoner does not add up and his behavior is much more that of a free agent. After being a supposed prisoner he addresses the populace in Jerusalem (Acts 22:1-21) and the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1-10) and in Caesarea the Roman governors Felix (Acts 24:1-21), and Festus and the Jewish king Agrippa II (Acts 26:1-23) hear him speak. "Paul's message reaches every section of the population of Palestine, from the city mob to the royal court, from the religious leadership to the secular authority. The improbability of a prisoner under investigation being offered the opportunity to disseminate the heresy/treason of which he

is accused needs no emphasis." (Murphy-Oconnor 351)

The accounts of the ship voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1-28:14) are also contradictory both within the text itself and between the Western and Alexandrian texts. Acts 27:8-10 starts from Fair Havens in Crete whereas 11-12 has as its goal Phoenix in Crete; also, 27:13-17 recounts a stormy passage to the Isle of Clauda where the ship takes shelter but in 27:18 the ship is still at sea. Close analysis shows that two different texts about two different voyages have been conflated together, one in which Paul is free and the other in which he is a prisoner. Is the purpose of this to disguise the fact that Paul was a free man on the way to Rome? (Murphy-Oconnor 351-354. Boismard and Lamouille in their 1990 book have made a detailed reconstruction of the two texts.)

Acts ends by saying "he lived there two whole years at his own expense...preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered" (28:30-31). Moreover, in his letter to Philemon Paul seems enough at liberty to convert a slave Onesimus and to ask his master Philemon to prepare a guest room for Paul when he came to visit. This sounds like a high degree of freedom - not even house arrest! - for a supposed prisoner of the Roman state. It is also rather surprising that the narrative simply ends here, and nothing more is said of Paul's eventual fate. This must be by design, as surely the author must have known Paul's fate. Why would he not mention Paul's martyrdom if this is true?

He apparently turned up again in the run-up to the Jewish Revolt against Rome in 66 CE, when the chief priests inside Jerusalem sent out an intermediary named Saul to invite the Roman commander Cestius to enter Jerusalem to put down the uprising. According to Josephus (Ant 20.213-214), Saul, his brother Costobarus and another relative Antipas (a Herodian!) then led a riot in Jerusalem, directed against "those weaker than themselves" (Eisenman 389). Subsequently Saul fled with his brother to Cestius' camp and from there to Emperor Nero who was residing in Corinth. There Saul reported on the situation in Palestine and blamed then Governor Florus (64-66 CE).

It is at this point that Vespasian is given his commission to repress the Jewish uprising, though it is not clear whether Saul accompanied him (Eisenman 527). In Rom 16:13 Paul also sends greetings to Rufus "eminent in the Lord": the Roman commander of Jerusalem who "turned Jerusalem into a ploughfield" after Titus went to Rome for his victory celebrations, as Josephus reports, was named Rufus (Eisenman 657). And he planned to make a trip to Spain following his appeal to Caesar in Rome.

There is, however, no mention of Paul's death, though the early

Church sources (Tertullian Haer. 36, Clement in Ad. Cor. 5 and Eusebius 2.25.5) say he was beheaded along with Peter, possibly in 68 CE under Nero (54-68). Jerome says (De viris illustribus 12) "He (Seneca) was put to death by Nero two years before Peter and Paul received the crown of martyrdom." Yet, as Lietzmann shows, no old documents, including the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, give any factual data as to time, place and details of the martyrdom and the documents which do, the Acts of Peter and Paul, are from the fifth century (Lietzmann 169, 173). Nor is the grave of Paul in the present Church of St. Paul likely to be authentic, as the tradition only goes back to 200 CE and there is no evidence betwen 64 and 200. Neither does the location of his grave make sense, on a side street in a low-lying area subject to regular flooding by the Tiber, far from the contemporary Christian community, and right next to a pagan columbarium or burial site but without any Christian burials nearby. This does not seem like a fitting site for the burial of the great Christian apostle. (Lietzmann 221, 226, 246)

It is hard to escape the suspicion that the Christian sources are deliberately vague about the date of Paul's death and that he continued to be active in Roman circles for quite some years to come, possibly well into Domitian's reign (81-96). Given his predilection for giving speeches, if he had died as a martyr, it is a certainty that he would have given a particularly brilliant speech from the dock after the death sentence had been passed, for as a Roman citizen his death would have had to come only after a legal proceeding. And without a doubt this speech would have been a cherished event continually refererd to by Christian authors and would have been considered even greater than Socrates' speech at his trial.

There are good indications that Paul not only wrote the letters that are securely attributed to him but may have also had a hand in the writing of the Gospels themselves. First of all, there are startling parallels between Paul as shown in his letters and the figure of Jesus in the Gospels. As Eisenman puts it, "Jesus' meanderings about the peaceful Galilean countryside - at a time when Galilee was a hotbed of revolutionary fervor and internecine strife - doing miraculous exorcisms, cures, raisings and the like, while Scribes, Pharisees and synagogue officials murmur against him, resemble nothing so much as the incipient Paul travelling around the Hellenistic Mediterranenan." (Eisenman 56-57)

Galilee was a synonym for Gentiles (Mt 4:15) and the Galileans were regarded as such by the Jews of Jerusalem. Plots against Paul which abound in his letters become transmogrified into Jewish plots against Jesus. Jesus' depiction of Roman tax collectors as righteous in Luke 18:9-14 and of course his choice of Matthew the tax collector as a disciple are paralleled in Paul in his admonition to Christians to pay their taxes in Romans 13:6-7. Paul, like

Jesus, experiences dire pemonitions before traveling to Jerusalem of the Holy Spirit promising only "imprisonment and afflictions", most likely due to the "plots of the Jews" he alludes to earlier. Like a self-sacrificing Messiah he nobly says "I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself", laying it down for the sins of others, since "he is innocent of the blood of all of you" (Acts 20:18-26).

The story in Acts 21:15-26:30 of Paul's return to Jerusalem and his arrest by a Roman tribune followed by an interrogation before high priests, the Roman governor and finally King Agrippa is eerily similar to the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his arrest by the Romans. First he meets with other Christians and goes into the temple to purify himself. Then the Jews attack Paul and drag him out of the temple until a Roman tribune arrests him: even then the mob follows him, crying "Away with him!". Interestingly enough, the tribune mistakes him for the Egyptian, a pseudo-prophet and charlatan who was prevented from conquering Jerusalem by the procurator Felix (52-60), as Josephus reports (Ant. 2.262). He is about to be scourged (22:24) until it is discovered that he is a Roman citizen. Then he is interrogated by the chief priests and the council and there is a Jewish conspiracy of over forty men to kill him.

At the hearing before Agrippa in Acts 25-26 he makes a lengthy self-defense and Agrippa finds no fault in him, saying, "This man has done nothing deserving of death or chains" (26:31). It is the same Agrippa who would be responsible for the death of James. The scenario here of an intervening interview with high Herodians, combined with hearings before the Roman Governor, is exactly the same as in the Gospel of Luke, who also authored Acts (see Eisenman 285, 288). While the Roman Paul escapes being scourged and crucified, the Jew and anti-Roman rebel Jesus does not, a clear political message.

Here is a list of these parallels between Luke and Acts:

1. A threefold prediction of the coming fate: Jesus' passion (Lk 9:22, 9:44-45, 18:31-34) and Paul's imprisonment (Acts 20:22-23, 21:4, 21:10-11)
2. Arrival in Jerusalem (Lk 19:28-44, Acts 21:17-26)
3. Conflicts in the Temple (Lk 19:45-21:4, Acts 21:27-40)
4. Speech to the people in the Temple (Lk 21:5-38, Acts 22:1-22)
5. Farewell to the disciples (Lk 22:1-46, Acts 20:17-38
6. Arrest (Lk 22:47-65, Acts 22:23-29)
7. Trial before Sanhedrin (Lk 22:66-71, Acts 22:30-23:11)

8. Plot of Jews and transfer to governor (Lk 23:1, Acts 23:12-35)
9. Trial before Roman governor (Lk 23:2-5,13-25, Acts 24:1-25:12)
10. Involvement of Herodian ruler (Lk 23:6-12, Acts 25:13-26:32)
11. Journey to final destination (Lk 23:26-32, Acts 27:1-28:16)
12. Attacks there (Lk 23:33-43, Acts 28:17-24)
13. Beginning of world mission (Lk 24:44-49, Acts 28:25-28)
14. Positive result (Lk 24:53, Acts 28:30-31)
(see chart in Mittelstaedt 170-171)

The parallels are too exact to be coincidental: clearly either Jesus' story is modeled on Paul's or Paul's on Jesus'.

If Paul did have a hand in the writing of the New Testament which purports to be the story of the historic Jesus, why does he not mention this Jesus and his teachings in his letters? He gives a revealing clue to his motivation in 2 Cor 5:16: "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer." In other words, he admits that he is ignoring the historic Jesus in favor of a mythological one, even though he well knows that there was a real Jesus. In Acts 13:6ff Paul, "filled with the Holy Spirit", blinds a Jewish false prophet named Bar Jesus: here is a symbolic story of Paul killing Jesus and putting himself in his place. His motivation is, as we have shown, that he is trying to undercut the legitimate Messianic Jewish figure James, and the legitimate work of the real Jesus, the Gospel of Thomas, in favor of the composite Jesus of the New Testament, the pacifist who would not threaten the power of the Roman Empire. And for that purpose the Gospels and his letters work very well together: the quasi-fictional biographical Jesus of the Gospels is nicely complemented by the theological Jesus of Paul.

Paul has a primary purpose in his work on the New Testament, in line with his role as an agent for the Herodian monarchy and the Roman Emperor, and that is to combat the Messianic ideas of the Jewish rebels and in particular the Qumran community. The Qumran community who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls had withdrawn to the desert near the Dead Sea to await the final apocalyptic battle against the occupier Rome, in a six-year struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil, until God would himself intervene mightily to give a final victory to his people. They were most likely closely linked to the Zealots and were a target of the Roman army under Vespasian. They lived a semi-monastic life with communal ownership and believed that only those who practiced a stringent adherence to Jew-

ish religious law and practice would surive the end of Days. (Roth 64, Yadin Message 186-7)

They spoke much of their Master, a Teacher of Righteousness, who had been persecuted and murdered at the hands of a Wicked Priest or Spouter of Lying. Eisenman has proposed that this Teacher of Righteousness was none other than James, Jesus' brother, and that the Wicked Priest was Paul who had a prime role in James' murder. (Eisenman 551)

Paul is deeply familiar with their writings and they were clearly a target of his battle against Messianic Judaism. Eisenman has meticulously analyzed the extent to which Paul's vocabulary is drawn from Qumran, particularly from the Habakkuk Pesher and the Damascus Document:

stumbling blocks (1 Cor 8:9, Gal 5:11)
puffed up (1 Cor 8:1)
lying workmen (2 Cor 11:13)
Servant of Righteousness (2 Cor 11:15)
their End shall be according to their works (2 Cor 11:15)
gift of languages (1 Cor 12:28)
Righteousness pleasing to God (Rom 14:17-18)
Riches (Rom 10:12)
called by name (Rom 10:12)
be separated (2 Cor 6:17)
be cleansed from every pollution (2 Cor 7:1)
Perfect Holiness (2 Cor 7:1)
(Eisenman 246-247, 651-652, 694-696, 745-749, 825)

Other vocabulary from Qumran, in this case the Manual of Discipline, is also found in the Gospel of John: the conflict between light and darkness, the spirit of truth, the light of life, walking in the darkness, children of light and eternal life, root and branch. (Wilson 41)

What Paul does very skillfully and deceptively is to incorporate the vocabulary of Qumran into his own theology but with the actual aim of undermining the Jewish belief. This can be seen in 2 Corinthians where he argues the superiority of his New Covenant based on the spiritualized body and blood of Jesus Christ over the Old Jewish Covenant based on written laws. He contrasts the "Service (diakonia) of death cut in letters of stone" against the Service of the "Spirit of the living God" coming in splendor (or

glory) (3:3-10). This language of Service was also used in Qumran: in the Habakkuk Pesher the "Service of the Spirit" is contrasted with the "Service of Vanity" or a "Worthless Service" of the Spouter of Lying. The language of glory is found in James' proclamation of the "Son of Man coming in glory" and the language of splendor is found in the greatest document of the Jewish mystical tradition, the Zohar or Book of Splendor. (Eisenman 649-651)

Paul is also intent on counteracting the Qumran critique of the Spouter of Lying which may well be himself. In Qumran God will pour out his Cup of Anger on those responsible for the destruction of the Righteous Teacher and the Poor. Paul twists this Cup symbolism to opposite ends in Acts 2:43 where the Holy Spirit is "poured out" and in Paul the blood of Christ is "poured out" to be drunk in the "Cup of the New Covenant in my Blood" (Luke 22:20). (Eisenman 458-459, 708-9)

In 1 Cor 15:1-3 Paul says: "But brothers, I reveal to you the Glad Tidings which I preached, which you also received, in which you also stand, by which also you are being saved - if you hold fast to the Word which I preached to you (unless you believed in vain) - for I delivered to you in the first place what I also received." "Standing" recurs in Rom 14:4: "He stands or falls to his own master, and he shall be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand." Almost all of this vocabulary is found in the Qumran writings: the "Standing One" was an important doctrine in Qumran as well as among the Ebionites and Gnostics and terms like "hold fast" are found in the Damascus Document. The Habakkuk Pesher uses the words "empty", "vain" and "worthless"
to describe what the "Man of Lying" is "building" and the "vainglory" of his "mission" or "service". (Eisenman 695-696)

Over and over again what Paul does with the Qumran vocabulary is to change the meaning of their words from a radical and revolutionary implication to a watered down pacific Christian one. It is remarkable how Paul manages to twist the meanings of the words he borrows from his opponents. The Zealots and the Qumran community use the word "zeal" with a radical and revolutionary meaning: in Qumran "zeal for the Judgments of Righteousness" is part of the "Spirit of Truth" and "the Way of Light" of the "Sons of Righteouness" and the curses upon "the men of the lot of Belial". The Community Rule says: "For he shall be like a man zealous for the Law, whose time will be the Day of Vengeance!"

But Paul calls his communities "zealous of spiritual things" and uses the word in a non-political sense in connection with "building up the church" and "speaking in tongues" (1 Cor 14:12). In 2 Cor 7:11-12 he uses it, as in the Community Rule, in connection with God's "Anger" and "Vengeance" but

with an exactly opposite meaning of his own anger at the resistance of the Corinthians to his teachings. In Gal 1:14 he claims to have been "exceedingly zealous for the traditions" of the Fathers and in Gal 4:17-18 he uses the word three times (in the original Greek but unfortunately not always translated correctly), after attacking the Law as bringing death, attacking circumcision and attacking the Jerusalem Leadership. Here he accuses his opponents of being "zealous afer you to exclude you so that you will be zealous after them" though not "zealous for the right things". The "right things" are clearly not the Zealot Messianic cause but the spiritualized and Romanized Christian faith that he offers: tellingly, in Rom 10:2 he says that the wrong "zeal for God" is not "enlightened". (Eisenman 822-823)

In this very distortion of Qumran language we get a key to the real aims of the so-called Apostle Paul. It is clear from his letters that his uppermost concern is his battle against James and the Jewish tradition he represents and his desire to extinguish that tradition and to replace it with his brand of obedient faith-based Christ-worship. His claim to spiritual revelation from other-worldly wisdom is entirely due to his need to supplant the very real legitimacy of Jesus' brother James. Running underneath this battle is his equation of the Christ figure he is proclaiming with himself.

Despite the many thousands of pages of analysis written on Paul's theology, Paul seems more interested in the political implications of his theology than in the intellectual consistency of it, and thus his teaching is full of contradictions. In Gal 1:20 and in what follows Paul makes a fervent argument for the source of his theology in spiritually apprehended faith alone, yet this is contradicted by 1 Cor 15:1-11 which states a credal affirmation of the primary principles of the faith. Nor can Rom 2:6 ("For he [God] will render to every man according to his works") be reconciled with Rom 3:20 ("For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of law"). This dispute between salvation by faith and salvation by works broke apart the Christian Church into Catholic and Protestant branches during the Reformation but Paul blithely pronounces both doctrines just a few paragraphs apart.

His teachings on sin, death and righteousness in Romans 6 are simply confusing: we were once slaves to sin and free in regard to righteousness but the death of Christ frees us from sin, so that having been set free from sin, we have become slaves of righteousness. This equates to being slaves of God and this gives us eternal life. This seems like clever word play but I am not sure anyone has any idea what it means. As a result of such inconsistent theology, there is no theological agreement in early Christian writings: the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Pauline Epistles and the Epistles of James and of John differ considerably from one another in dogmatic content and for many centuries the Christian Church tore itself apart over doctrinal disputes.

What really matters in this theology is the word "slave of God". Paul's battle is against those upstart Jewish dissidents who dare to think for themselves and to oppose the elite establishment. By using their very language against them Paul can defeat the enemy culturally while the Roman army defeats them militarily. And the ultimate goal is to undermine Jewish Messianism by replacing it with the belief in a deified imperial figure as the Messiah without the worshiper even being aware that he is thereby pledging obedience to the Roman Emperor. And he threatens those unwilling to be obedient with "the punishment of eternal destruction" which will occur "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." (2 Thess 1:7)

What there is of consistent philosophy that Paul has Jesus espouse in his letters is to a considerable extent based on Seneca and there are real questions whether Seneca himself may have had a hand in the writing of the New Testament as well. The Stoic philosopher Seneca was well-acquainted with Paul and it is quite instructive to look at his influence on Christianity.

Stoicism was much more than a philosophy and it is its religious and political aspect that makes it so critical in the history of Christianity. As Hadas says: "Though Stoicism equipped itself with a logic and a cosmology, like rival schools, the impelling motive out of which it originated and perpetuated through several centuries was not so much philosophical as evangelical... Its original intention was nothing less than to revolutionize the political organization of the known world...It was Zeno who gave form to the vision of a world which should be a single oikoumene in which all men should be members one of another, citizens of one state without distinction of race or institutions, subject only to and in harmony with a common law immanent in the universe, and united in one social life not by compulsion byt only by their own willing consent...Each man must play out to the best of his ability the role assigned to him...Essential in every man's role is obedience to the naturally ordained overseers of the grand plan; in other words, the Stoic is bound to do his duty to the state." (Hadas 19-24)

To fulfill this promise, Seneca imagined the coming of a great man of virtue, nobility and wisdom who would lead humans forward into this more perfect universal society. He says: "We must select some noble man whom we have always before our eyes so that we live as if he looks at what we do, and act as if he sees it...He is a guard, an example, and a norm without which one will not restore to balance whatever is wrong." (Ep. 11) "The sage stands erect under any load. Nothing can subdue him; nothing that must be endured annoys him." (Ep. 71) "If anybody saw this figure, higher and more splendid

than anything the eye is used to seeing in the world of humans, would he not, as if he were meeting a divine being, stop in awe and ask in silent prayer that this sight may be granted him without sin?" (Ep. 115) This great man is remarkably close to the Messianic figure in Christianity.

Seneca thus attempted to mold the Emperor Nero into such a figure. The Emperor Claudius had banished Seneca upon assuming the throne in 41 CE but brought him back on the urging of his wife Agrippina and made him tutor of his son Nero. Nero then became Emperor in 54 at the age of 17 upon the poisoning of Claudius by his ruthless wife Agrippina. Seneca celebrated this ascent of Nero as the beginning of an age of freedom of happiness and elevated Nero to the status of a world savior chosen by heaven. Seneca wrote Nero's inaugural speech to the Senate and his funeral speech to the murdered Claudius who was then deified in compensation and Agrippina became the priestess of the new divinity. Once they were able to overcome Agrippina's domination, Seneca and the praetorian prefect Afranius Burrus became the real power behind Nero's reign and gave the Empire five years of beneficent administration.

Though Seneca counseled Nero to rule leniently, his adulation of the young man and assurance of his divine omnipotence went to Nero's head and he began to imagine himself a s a divinely inspired artist. He made a triumphal visit to Greece as a singer, charioteer and actor where he received 1808 prizes from obsequious judges and had himself adulated as a savior from heaven, as a reincarnated Apollo and as Zeus the bringer of freedom. The glorious hopes of the first five years were dashed in 59 when Nero murdered his mother Agrippina, an act to which Seneca and Burrus were reluctant accessories. Seneca even wrote Nero's dishonest exculpation of the crime to the Senate. It did not take long for Seneca to retire in 62 and once having lost the favor of the emperor, Nero finally forced him to commit suicide in 65 CE due to suspicions of being involved in a plot against him. (Hadas 6-7, Stauffer Christus 150-154, Grant Twelve 149-170)

There is no doubt that Seneca can be called a hypocrite. He was blind to all of his pupil Nero's crimes; he did not censure his murders and probably even partly condoned them. His whole career was marked by a certain duplicity, a fact which is all the more disconcerting as he praises and glorifies firmness of character so highly. He insists that wealth does not make for happiness but certainly does not refuse the millions bestowed upon him by Nero. He extolls the heroic bravery of the sage but lacked the courage to act likewise in his own life.

At the same time he himself attacked hypocrisy: "Philosophy teaches us to act, not to speak; it exacts of every man that he should live accord-

ing to his own standards, that his life should not be out of harmony with his words...This, I say, is the highest duty and the highest proof of wisdom." (Mor. Ep. 20.2). He certainly failed to live up to his own standard of wisdom.

Yet his failure to live up to his own ideal of human greatness does not negate the fact that he had an ideal. More and more, however, he came to see that this ideal could not be realized in an actual human being but only in the divine realm: thus the connection with Christianity.

More so than any classical philosopher, Christianity claimed Seneca as an honorary Christian. Jerome called him "our own Seneca" and Tertullian said he was "often our own" (Lightfoot 270). Though Paul's dates are not known, it appears from Seneca's dates of 5/4 BCE-65 CE that he and Seneca lived at approximately the same time. The connection between Paul and Seneca's older brother Gallio, to whom Seneca dedicated several essays, is suggestive. According to Acts 18:12-17, when Gallio was proconsul of the senatorial province Achaia from 51-52 CE he saved Paul from an attack of "the Jews" of Corinth who accused Paul of worshiping God "contrary to the law". Gallio replied that he "refused to be a judge of these things" as it was merely "a matter of questions about words and names" and he drove the Jews from the tribunal. Paul then stayed "many days longer", and though it does not say with whom, a man with his connections would surely have paid a call on Gallio after the latter had taken his side. Paul's trip to Spain coincidentally takes him to the home of Seneca and Gallio. Another interesting hint is in a text variant of Acts 28:16 in which "the hecatontarch passed the prisoners over to the stratopedarch": it so happens that the last stratopedarch was Burrus who was a great friend and close collaborator of Seneca's (Sevenster 9).

In addition, both Augustine (Ep. 153.4) and Jerome (On Illustrious Men 12) record the existence of letters between Paul and Seneca. Jerome says "they were very widely read" and cited them as the reason that he placed Paul in his catalogue of 135 saints. The oldest manuscripts of the existing 14 letters only date from the 9th century, with many as late as the 12th to the 15th century, and "their language, style and construction are also unanimously considered to be very clumsy", as Sevenster says (Sevenster 13). The content consists almost entirely of fulsome exchange of compliments and inquiries about each other's health, so banal and pedestrian that there is virtually no scholar who accepts them as genuine.

As early as 1908 the judgment was that "they are now universally allowed to be spurious" (Lightfoot 330) and probably date from the 4th century. They must certainly date after 325 CE, for Lactantius wrote in that year that Seneca would have been a true Christian if he had had someone to guide him, showing that he was obviously ignorant of such a correspondence

(Sevenster 14). Lightfoot says: "It is sufficient to say that the letters are inane and unworthy throughout; that the style of either correspondent is unlike his genuine writings; that the relations between the two, as there represented, is highly improbable; and lastly, that the chronological notices...are wrong in almost every instance." (Lightfoot 330). Particularly egregious is the suggestion in Seneca's 8th letter that the Emperor Nero could be converted to Christianity and only the Empress Poppae Sabina, a secret Jewish sympathizer, stood in the way: only a Christian forger could have come up with such obvious nonsense.

However, this does not mean that authentic originals had not at one time existed, which the Church found embarrassing and replaced with the existing spurious ones. It is hard to believe that Jerome and Augustine, both highly intelligent men, could possibly have referred to the existing letters as real; if they were, it is surprising that they are not cited continuously by other Church theologians. Lightfoot argues that "it is wholly inconceivable that a genuine correspondence of the Apostle would have escaped notice for three centuries and a half; and no less inconceivable that, having once been brought to light at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century, it should again have fallen into oblivion and been suffered to disappear" (Lightfoot 333).

But this is not inconceivable if the Church had good political reasons for wanting this correspondence to disappear but knew that its existence was too well-known simply to suppress. Any institution that can successfully suppress the Gospel of Thomas, the true words of its supposed founder, is certainly capable of suppressing letters by its Apostle Paul. This is the argument of Johannes Kreyher who argues that a correspondence between Paul and Seneca, with which both Jerome and Augustine were familiar, really had existed, but that this has been suppressed, while a completely spurious one has been preserved (Johannes Kreyher, L. Annaeus Seneca und seine Beziehungen zum Urchristentum 1887, 178ff.).

The fact that Jerome does quote a similar wording to what is in the 11th letter - "For I wish that my position were yours in your writings, and that yours were as mine" - may simply mean that such direct quotes by Church Fathers were left in the spurious creations to give them the air of authenticity. Whoever forged the letters was not ignorant, for he knew something of Seneca's philosophy and his relations with Lucilius, and he is acquainted with first century Roman history.

There has been the usual difference of scholarly opinion as to whether there is a strong congruence of ideas between Paul and Seneca, and many scholars have strenuously argued against the Cbhristian notion of Seneca as

an honorary Christian (A. FLeury in Saint Paul et Seneque is the first to argue this in 1853). Boissier, for instance, argues that Seneca's ideas are drawn from the long stream of classical philosophy and that his differences to Paul are as great as his similarities (Boissier 51, 66). If the idea that Seneca was a Christian disciple of Paul were true, then Paul must have not have explained his ideas very well: "Is it possible that the apostle in teaching Christianity to his pupil would voluntarily have omitted the essential points, or that the illustrious philosopher would have retained nothing from his teaching but some moral ideas whose meaning seems often to have escaped him?" (Boissier 60).

But even those scholars who reject any Christian element in Seneca are still astounded by the similarities. Seneca teaches the trials and sufferings of good men as the chastisements of a wise and beneficent God the Father. Life is a continual warfare, the soul being bound in a prison-house, weighed down by a heavy burden of original sin and vice. Hence follows the duty of strict self-examination, requiring one to live "as if in public, fearing himself more than others." Though humans are unequal in society, yet in their spirit they are free and equal and the slave has claims equally with the free man. The true riches are not external but spiritual: "one ought so to give that another may receive." The outside often seems good while the inside is filthy and corrupt. Death may come at any time, so it is dangerous to be too wrapped up in worldly affairs and not put one's internal house in order. These ideas are all directly paralleled in Christian philosophy (LIghtfoot 279-286).

What endeared Seneca to Christianity in particular is his strong critique of paganism and his hatred of Judaism. He vehemently attacked the Oriental cults which had invaded Rome and mocked the priests of Isis and Cybele, but he has also lost respect for the ancient Roman pagan traditions and found their depictions of the gods outdated and vulgar: "Zeus is not better than a good man" (Boissier 67-68). He may also have instigated the harsh Roman policy toward the Jews under Nero, as he had a strong hatred of Judaism. Nero sent the harsh governor Florus to Judea in 64 who, by Josephus' testimony, seemed intentionally to goad the population into revolt. Seneca shared this anti-Jewish prejudice against Jews with the other Stoic philosophers who resented Jewish particularism, as they aspired to establish a religious philosophy for all mankind. (Bentwich 31, 206)

The influence of Stoicism and Seneca on Paul is profound. One can first see it in his writing style, which is modeled on Stoic diatribes such as Arrian's memoirs of Epictetus. The characteristics Paul shares are the accumulation of rhetorical questions, the quick alternation of question and answer, the use of connecting conjunctions, the use of technical concepts of Stoicism

and the peculiar dialectic where the writer argues with himself. In addition, there are the comparisons taken from the military and athletic realm and the simile that all humans are members of one body. (Leipoldt Ch+S 146).

The similarities between Seneca's and Paul's philosophy are also striking, down to the very wording. Here is a partial list:

Rom 1:22-23: "Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchange the glory of the imortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles." De Superst. (Fragm 31): "They consecrate the holy and immortal and inviolable gods in motionless matter of the vilest kind: they clothe them with the forms of men, and beasts and fishes."

Rom 1:29, 32: "They were filled with all manner of wickedness ...Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them." Ep. Mor. 39.6: "They are even enamored of their own ill deeds, which is the last ill of all: and then is their wretchedness complete, when shameful things not only delight them but are even approved by them."

Rom 8:24: "For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?" Ep. Mor. 10.2: "Hope is the name for an uncertain good."

Rom 9:18: "Whomever God loves he hardens." Provid. 1.2: "God tests the good person, hardens him and prepares him for himself."

Rom 13:14: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" or Gal 3:27: "You have put on Christus." Ep. Mor. 67: "Put on the spirit of a great man."

1 Cor 2:14: "Natural man does not perceive the things that are of the spirit of God. It is foolishness for him and he cannot understand it because it must undergo spiritual examination. But the spiritual man judges all things." Ep. Mor. 66: "Sensuality cannot judge about good and evil, it does not know what is wholesome and what is not. It cannot vote on anything that does not touch it immediately...Reason then is the judge over good and evil."

1 Cor 4:9: "I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men." Prov. 2.9: "But lo! here is a spectacle worthy of the regard of God as he contemplates his works...a brave man matched against ill-fortune, and doubly so if his also was the challenge."

1 Cor. 9:25: "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we are imperishable." Ep. Mor. 78.16: "What blows do athletes receive in their face, what blows all over their

body. Yet they bear all the torture from thirst of glory. Let us also overcome all things, for our reward is not a crown or a palm branch...but virtue and strength of mind and peace acquired ever after."

2 Cor 3:17: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom." De Vit. beat. 15: "To obey God is liberty."

2 Cor 3:18: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another." Ep. Mor. 94.48: "A Man is not yet wise, unless his mind is transfigured into those things which he has learnt."

2 Cor 12:15: "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls." De Provid. 5: "Good men toil, they spend and are spent."

Tit 1:15: "Unto the pure all things are pure, but into the defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure." Ep. Mor. 98.3: "The evil man turns all things to evil." (see Lightfoot 289-290, Bauer Christ 44-49)

This list could be multiplied endlessly with parallels to practically all of Paul's letters as well as Acts. Parallels can also be found to the Gospels:

Mt 6:8: "Your father knows what you need before you ask." Ep. Mor. 100: "Whatever is to be good for us our God and Father has placed very close to us. He did not wait for us to ask, he gave it us by himself."

Mt 6:26: "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them." De Remed. fort. 10.1: "You say I am poor? The birds lack nothing. The animals live from one day to the next. The beast in the desert has enough nourishment."

Parallels are of course to be taken with caution. Seneca's God is a much less personal God than the Christian one, perhaps even veering toward a pantheistic conception ("God is near you, he is with you, he is within you." Ep. Mor. 41.1). His notion of immortality is the Stoic aristocratic one that only the wise deserve immortality, in Paul it is a free gift offered to everyone. Seneca is a philosophical dualist, valuing soul over body; Paul wants a spritualized body. Seneca values virtue and friendship and emphasizes the freedom and self-consciousness of the individual. Paul emphasizes the community of being one in Christ and obedience to the authorities. Seneca values benevolence and humanitarianism; Paul love. Seneca's concept of sin is of an action contrary to rationality, Paul's is original and innate. (Deissner 28-36)

Sevenster cautions: "Great care must be taken when drawing parallels...The same words do not always mean the same thing" and then concludes: "Paul may have occasionally derived terms and expressions from the

Hellenistic world around him and even from the Stoic school, he may now and then use phrases which are at first sight reminiscent of Seneca, but he always makes them instrumental to the particular purpose of his own preachings." (Sevenster 240)

Lightfoot, however, initially concludes otherwise: "The first impression made by this series of parallels is striking. They seem to show a general coincidence in the fundamental principles of theology and the leading maxims in ethics: they exhibit moreover special resemblances in imagery and expression, which, it would seem, cannot be explained as the result of accident, but must point to some historical connexion." (Lightfoot 290-291)

I find these parallels highly persuasive and we have already seen that evidence indicates that Paul and Seneca were most likely quite well acquainted with each other.

But if their theology and their very wording is that similar, then who copied whom? The two men seem to be about the same age but Seneca is clearly the more distinguished and accomplished of the two. If Paul shows evidence of Seneca's language, then it is most likely that Seneca influenced Paul rather than the other way around. But the other possibility is that they simply worked together and each man contributed his ideas to the group effort known later as the Gospels, as Bruno Bauer suggested in the 19th century. Seneca supplied the philosophical ideas whereas Paul was an expert on the writings of the messianic Jewish sects and especially Qumran (the Dead Sea Scrolls) which he incorporated and mercilessly spoofed in both his letters and the Gospels. Paul was also well acquainted with the Gospel of Thomas which he or future editors incorporated in heavily revised forms into their creation, as we have already shown.

But there is also an important third member of their creative group, and that is the first century Jewish historian Josephus. We will now turn to him.

Paul's contacts from his letters:

Roman names, original stock of colonists: Achaicus and Fortunatus (1 Cor 16:17), Quartus (Rom 16:23), Lucius (Jewish) (Rom 1:21) in Corinth, Clement in Philippi (Phil 4:3)

Greek names, merchants in Philippi, independent women: Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2)

Scribe in Corinth, Latin name: Tertius (Rom 16:22)

Physician in Corinth, Latin name: Luke (Philem 24, Col 4:14)

Freedmen financially able to travel: Ampliatus (Rom 16:8), members of Chloe's household (1 Cor 1:11), Andronicus and Junia (Rom 16:7), Epaenetus (Rom 16:5)

Traveled widely: Silvanus (1 Thess 1:1 etc.)

Ample house to put up all Christians in Corinth, man of wealth: Gaius (1 Cor 1:14, Rom 16:23)

Archisynagogus, well-to-do: Crispus (1 Cor 1:14)

Probably also wealthy, leads household, patron: Stephanas (1 Cor 16:15)

Oikonomos tes poleos, important municipal official, high wealth: Erastus (Rom 16:23)

Jews with good Roman names, high wealth: Prisca and Aquila (Acts 18:2)

Runaway with some education: Onesimus of Colossae (Philem 10), Col 4:9)

House large enough to accomodate Christians and guests, patron, slave owner: Philemon, Apphia his wife, Timothy the brother

Independent woman, some wealth, traveling on business: Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2)

Patroness: Mother of Rufus (Rom 16:13)

Leader of Antioch group, reasonably well-to-do: Barnabas

Alexandrian Jew, rhetorical training: Appollos (1 Cor 16:12)_

Also from Luke and Acts:

Joanna, wife of Herod's epitropos Chuza, supports Jesus from her own possessions (Luke 8:2)

Sergius Paulus, proconsul of Cyprus, summons Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:7-12)

Greek women of high standing as well as men (THess 17:12)

Dionysius the Aeropagite in Athens converted (17:3)

Publius, chief man of Malta entertains him (Acts 28:7-10)

Asiarchs of Ephesus (Acts 19:31)

leaders of Antioch: Symeon Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, the syntropos of Herod Agrippa (Acts 13:1)

Lydia, Thyatiran dealer in purple fabrics, luxury item, household for guests, convert (Acts 16:14)

Jason, house and wealth, host, (Acts 17:5-9)

Titius Justus, house adjacent to synagogue in Corinth, Roman citizen (Acts 18:7)

Chapter 26:
The Flavian Courtier Josephus and the New Testament

There is one other non-Christian author beside Seneca who has been held in the highest esteem by the Christian Church from the veryu beginning, and that is Josephus. If one is looking for a true author of the New Testament, then Josephus is a prime candidate. There are innumerable parallels between the New Testament and Josephus' writings, more than can be ascribed to chance. And given Josephus' ambivalence to his Jewish heritage and his strong pro-Roman predilections, it is not hard to see his biases reflected in the New Testament.

Let us then look at the evidence of the hand of Josephus, the third member of the founding Christian Trinity, in the creation of Christianity. As a result of the patronage of the Flavian Emperors he had the leisure to write The Jewish War which he completed in 77 or 78 CE, followed by The Antiquities of the Jews 15 years later. These works of Josephus were held in high esteem by both the Roman Emperors and by official Christianity. They were placed by order of the Flavian Emperors in the public library of Rome and they were carefully preserved until the triumph of the Christian Church gave them new importance. The Emperor Constantine then ordered extracts from the Jewish War to be put together for his edification. (Bentwich 240, 247)

The works were valued by the Church in particular for the fact that the events Josephus described proved that Jesus had been able to see into the future and thus proved his status as a divine prophet. For the early Church Fathers, particularly Eusebius, Josephus' description of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple as a punishment by God of the crimes of the Jews and their slaying of Christ became the historical proof of the truth of Christianity. The death of the Jews becomes the necessary condition for the birth of Christianity. Moreover, Josephus' insistence on the antiquity of the Jews was convenient for the Church to claim for the new religion of Christianity an illustrious pedigreee. The new covenant with Jesus superseded the old one with the Jews but also incorporated it and acquired its heritage and it was Josephus who provided the factual basis. Of course, Josephus was also important to the Church for his mention of Jesus in Ant. 18.3.3 §63-64 which, if any of it is in the original, is one of the few historical attestations to the existence of Jesus (see discussion in Chapter).

Josephus was so highly valued that eventually he came to be called "a

kind of fifth gospel" and as a "little Bible." As many as 13 Christian authors of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, especially those of the Christian East, used him as an authority; of these six clearly made use of material drawn directly from Josephus, one probably did and the rest were acquainted with Josephus but did not use his works directly. And from the time of Bede in the early Middle Ages who places him side by side with Origen, Jerome and Augustine, Josephus often achieves almost the authority of a church father. (Hardwick 105-111, Schreckenberg 317-319, Mason J+NT 11-13) Some of the Eastern churches of Syria and Armenia included his books as part of their handwritten Bible and Latin editions of the Bible after the invention of the printing press included them as well. "For centuries henceforth they were the prime authority for Jewish history of post-Biblical times, and were treasured as a kind of introduction to the Gospels, illuminating the period in which Christianity had its birth." (Atwill 15, Bentwich 240).

Josephus' version of the events of the first century was so important to the Church that it made sure to get rid of all other contemporary witnesses, in particular the works of historians Nicolas of Damascus and Justus of Tiberias. Nicolas, the son of an Antipater and related to Herod, was the close friend both of the Emperor Augustus and of Herod himself, whom he championed and supported and whose son Archelaus he helped succeed to the throne. A highly educated and skillful writer, he wrote a 144-volume Universal History, of which some sections have survived, and Josephus' accounts of Herod are undoubtedly drawn from this work. Yet "nothing remains of his detailed accounts of Judea or King Herod, though he wrote copiously of both; we know these parts only through what Josephus - the new authority on Judean matters - adapted from Nicolaus for his own purposes." (Mason Josephus Judea 12, Thackeray Josephus 65-66)

Justus of Tiberias was a Jewish councilor in a minor Greek city and became secretary of the Roman client king Agrippa II. Like Josephus, he wrote a history of the Jewish revolt of 66-70 CE, published in the 90's after the death of Agrippa, which he claimed to be a definitive eye-witness report and superior to any other. He appears to have been a kind of court scribe as he also wrote a chronicle of the Jewish kings, although that may have been part of the same work on the revolt. He must have been a talented writer and must have had access to precious information yet even though he covers the same period Josephus does the Christian Church chose not to preserve his works, most likely because he put forth a much more pro-Jewish point of view on the revolt than Josephus. Justus' writings still existed in the 9th century, as the Patriarch Photius claims to have read his work, but by the 10th century he was only mentioned in passing and seems to have been sup-

pressed. (Rajak 81-84, Mason JJ 13)

The parallels between the stories in Josephus' Antiquities and Jewish War and the New Testament Gospels have been pointed out by many scholars. Though today most modern scholars say both relied on common traditions, many scholars over the years have argued that the author of Luke/Acts in particular used Josephus in creating his account. The truth could just as well be the opposite: that Josephus had a hand in writing Luke, or may even be the author of Luke. Some of the best evidence for this is linguistic, in the similarities of the vocabulary between Josephus and Luke. D. A. Schlatter has found about 2200 words plus their cognates that are common to both Luke/Acts and Josephus covering two columns on 49 pages while his list of words that are in Luke but not in Josephus come only to about 460 and cover three pages (Schlatter 659-710). At the very least the linguistic debt of Luke to Josephus is clear. Sclatter concludes that "there is no second author who displays as many linguistic parallels to Luke as does Josephus" and many passages in Luke were not composed by him but were taken over directly from Josephus. (Schlatter 27-28)

One indication of Josephus' hand in Luke may be in Luke 2:52 where the 12-year old Jesus is in the temple, "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers." In Josephus' Life 2 he says: "When I was a child, and about 14 years of age, I was commended by all for the love I had to learning; on which account the high priests and principal men of the city came then frequently to me together, in order to know my opinion about the accurate understanding of points of the law."

Another aubiographical reference might be the character of Joseph of Arimathea, the disciple of Jesus who asks Pontius Pilate for Jesus' body after the crucifixion. As Schonfield points out, Arimathea may be a sly inside joke rather than a true place: "Josephus in his autobiography, telling of his own eminent ancestry, states that his grandfather Joseph begot Matthias in the tenth year of the reign of Archelaus (A.D. 6). The Greek text of the words `Joseph (begot) Matthias' is simply Josepou Matthias. The name Joseph of Arimathea is given in the Greek of Mark as Joseph apo Arimathias. The similarity is striking. It is certainly curious that we have Josephus, himself a Josepou Matthias, begging the Roman commander for the bodies of three crucified friends, one of whom is brought back to life" (Schonfield Passover 164).

Interestingly Luke/Acts is in two parts as is Josephus' Against Apion, published around 100 CE, and just as each section of Josephus' work is dedicated to Epaphroditus, so are both Luke and Acts dedicated to Theophilus.

Even the wording is similar: Josephus starts his second part with the words "In my previous book, my most esteemed Epaphroditus, I demonstrated..." while Luke begins Acts with "In my previous treatise, Theophilus, I covered everything that Jesus did and taught..." The Theophilus of Luke is probably fictitious (Theophilus simply means "God-lover"): no contemporary Theophilus is known and it is hard to believe that a Christian author would have had a wealthy patron. There is a Theophilus who was bishop of Antioch from 169-177 CE, but this is too late. There was however a Theophilus brother of Jonathan the high priest under Herod the tetarch (Ant. 18.5.3) and a Theophilus son of Annas removed as Jewish high priest under Agrippa at the time Josephus was born (Ant. 19.6.2) and these may have suggested the name. (Schonfield Party 35-36, Whealey 7) The prefaces of both Josephus' Antiquities and Luke's Acts also begin with a summary of their previous work and the reason for the second.

There are interesting parallels between the figure of Jesus in the New Testament and various personages in Josephus. Even though the New Testament Jesus is not mentioned as a prophet in Josephus, the historical figures he does mention are very similar to him in their activities and aims. As Schreckenberg points out: "There are almost surely structural and formal correspondences between the actions of Jesus of Nazareth and the actions of the prophets and miracle workers of the period of the New Testament described by Josephus. Note, for instance, the actions of Theudas (Ant. 20.97-99; Acts 5:36), Judah the Galilean (War 2.118, 433, 7.253; Ant. 18.4-10, 25, 20.102; Acts 5:37), the Egyptian (War 2.261-263; Ant. 20.169-172; Acts 21:38) and the Samaritan who wished to lead his followers to Mount Gerizim (Ant. 18.85-89; possibly related to Luke 13:1)." (Schreckenberg 316)

There is a remarkable agreement between Josephus and Luke in their basic assumptions about the religious world of the Jews at the time of Jesus. Both emphasize what the Sadducees did not think rather than what they thought, such as their rejection of immortality. Both characterize the Pharisees as a philosophical school occupying a middle ground between the chief priestly aristocracy and the masses. Both assume that the Pharisees enjoyed great influence among the people, a conclusion not supported by all modern scholars. Neither author is interested in the Pharisees, Sadducees or chief priests in and of themselves; they are simply backdrop for their stories. Considering the very particular emphasis in the works of both men, one could see them as being the product of the same author. (Mason JJ 372-373)

Here is a list of some of the direct parallels between Josephus and Luke, but there are many more:

1. The parable of the pounds relates that a nobleman went into a

far country to receive his kingdom but his citizens hated him and sent an embassy after him saying "We do not want this man to reign over us"; on his return he proved to be a cruel tyrant (Lk 19:12-27, Mt 25:14-30). This is drawn almost exactly from the history of Archelaus, Herod's successor, who went from Judea to Rome to obtain a kingdom and whose citizens hated him and sent a messenger after him to say "We will not have this man to reign over us"; he too proved to be a cruel tyrant and was deposed in the tenth year of his reign (Ant. 18.11).

2. The Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices (Lk 13:1) is reminiscent of the Galileans killed by Pilate's soldiers in a riot caused by Pilate's use of the Temple Treasure to build an aqueduct to Jerusalem (Ant. 18.3.2).

3. The Samaritans who stop Jesus and his followers from Galilee from entering their village because Jesus was going up to Jerusalem (Lk 9.52-53) uses the incident of a refusal by the Samaritans to permit Galileans to enter one of their villages on the way to Jerusalem (Ant. 20.6.1).

4. Jesus' healing of the Roman centurion's servant upon being beseeched by "elders of the Jews" who swear that the Roman "loves our nation", and the centurion's statement "For I also am a man set under authority" (Lk 7:1-10) is paralleled in the story of Petronius, the Roman legate of Syria, who befriended the Jews when the Emperor Gaius insisted on placing his statue in the Temple and who says "For I am under authority as well as you." (War 2.10.4). (see Schonfield Plot 253-4, Party 42)

5. Acts 5:36-37 tells the stories of Theudas and Judas the Galilean in that order, stating that Judas followed Theudas chronologically. Josephus also tells the story of Theudas (44/45 CE) at greater length in Ant. 20.5.1 §97-98 and follows it by a mention of Judas the Galilean as an aside which he makes clear happened previously (6 CE). Acts must have misunderstood Josephus and assumed the two to be in historical sequence.

6. Both Acts 12:19-23 and Ant. 19.8.2 §343-350, in describing the death of Herod Agrippa I, give the exact same details: the setting in Caesarea at the time of a fast, his garments, his acclamation as a god, the attribution of his death, and the descriptions of his death. There are only a few differences in other details.

7. The story of the Egyptian in Acts 21:38 also appears to be taken from War 2.13.3 §261-273. Interestingly, the difference between the number of his followers in Josephus at 30,000 and those in Acts at 4,000 can be explained by Acts' misreading of the Greek capital letter lambda as delta.

Luke in particular, but also Acts, is full of historical references that are all found in Josephus, another argument for Josephus as the author.

These references include: Simon the magician (Acts 8:9-24, Ant. 20.141-143), the Egyptian false prophet, Ananias the high priest, Felix the procurator and his wife Drusilla, Porcius Festus the procurator, Agrippa II and Berenice, the widow's sacrifice of a mite, King Herod, the slaughter of the innocents, Archelaus, the census of Quirinius, the 15th year of Tiberius, John the Baptist, Pharisees, Sadducees, James the brother of Jesus, Judas the Galilean, the famine under Claudius (Acts 11:29-30, Ant. 20.101), and the death of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:19-23, Ant. 19.343-351). (Atwill 329-330)

One could perhaps argue that most of the above references were well-known at the time, but that does not account for the reference in Luke 3:1 to Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene, a minor ruler if there ever was one. It turns out that Lysanias, tetrarch of Abila and Abilene, a territory northwest of Damascus near Lebanon, is also named in Josephus, four times even, but only in passing (War 2.215, 247; Ant. 18.237, 19.275, 20.138). (Schreckenberg Flavius 188-189) And interestingly, even though Roman names are always double, Luke/Acts calls Quirinius and Felix by only one name but Pontius Pilate and Porcius Festus by two (Acts 24:27): the exact same usage is also found in Josephus.

Acts seems particularly well-informed about the Roman Empire. It distinguishes correctly between senatorial and imperial provinces, the former being governed by a Proconsul on behalf of the Senate, the latter by a Propraetor representing the Emperor. The references in Acts 13:7 to Sergius Paulus, Proconsul of Cyprus, and in 18:12 to Gallio, Proconsul of Achaia, are particularly accurate because the administrations of those provinces had just changed. In 28:7 Publius is called protos, the first man; that title is not found in extant literature but is known from inscriptions found at Malta. Similarly the magistrates at Philippi are correctly called Praetors in 26:20 while those at Thesalonica are called politarchs in 17:6, a title confirmed by many inscriptions. Correct information is also given for many cities and provinces of the Roman Empire: Lystra, Neapolis, Beroea, Achaia, Athens and Corinth. (Williams Commentary 30-31)

This does not of course mean that all the historical details are accurate. For instance, the claim in Acts 11:28 of a world-wide famine in the days of Claudius is contradicted by contemporary secular historians and the statement in Acts 18:2 that all Jews were expelled from Rome is contradicted by Dio Cassius (60.6.6), as the number of Jews in Rome was simply too large for such a mass expulsion.

The fact that both Josephus and the New Testament focus on Pontius Pilate is also indicative. Of all the Roman governors of Judea from 6 CE on, the first year of direct Roman administration, Pontius Pilate is the only

one Josephus discusses at great length. Josephus only mentions the first one, Coponius (6-9 CE), in passing (2.117-118) and he omits any mention of the next three, nor does he mention Pilate's replacement. There is no doubt that Pontius Pilate was real, as a dedicatory inscription on a building called the Tiberieum in Caesarea erected by him in honor of the emperor Tiberius has been found. (Mason J+NT 103-104, Fitzmyer Wand 31)

It is remarkable that the New Testament chooses to locate its narrative in precisely this governor's tenure and not in one not discussed by Josephus. The dating of Jesus and John the Baptist does not fit the time period of Pontius Pilate and a later governor might have been more convincing chronologically. Josephus particularly emphasizes Pontius Pilate's insensitivity, cruelty and capriciousness as one in a long line of Roman governors whose arrogant behavior was a major factor driving the Jews to revolt. Yet it is interesting that the New Testament describes the meek, forbearing Roman governor. This is the man who aroused so much Jewish protest that even the hard-headed Romans felt compelled to remove him as governor in 36 CE.

Certain narratives in Acts also seem to assume knowledge of Josephus. Acts 24:2-3, where a Jewish spokesman accuses Paul before the Roman governor Felix, shows him in a most positive light: "Being favored with abundant peace through you, and in view of the reforms that have come in this nation through your concern, most excellent Felix, in every way and everywhere we receive this with all gratitude." Josephus however shows Felix to be treacherous, corrupt and notorious for his cruelty to Jews (Ant. 20.8.5). Yet in Acts 24:25 when Paul talks to Felix about "justice, self-control, and coming judgment" Felix suddenly becomes alarmed and tells him to go away and in 24:26 the writer notes that Felix expected to receive a bribe from Paul.

Felix' reaction is incomprehensible given just the positive views contained in Acts. some other information as provided by Josephus is necessary to understand his reaction. (Mason J+NT 113-114)

There are also close parallels between the ethical teachings of the New Testament Jesus and Josephus' descriptions of the Essenes in War 2.119-161 or 2.2-13.

Mk 10:21: "Jesus...said to him, `You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me'." Acts 4:32-35: "Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common...There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of land or houses sold them, and ... distribution was made to each as any had need." War 2.122: "Riches they despise and their community of goods is truly admirable; you

will not find one among them distinguished by greater opulence than another. They have a law that new members on admission to the sect shall confiscate their property to the order with the result that you wil nowhere see either abject poverty or inordinate wealth; the individual's possession join the common stock."

Mt 5:33-37: "Do not take an oath. Let what you say be simply yes for yes and no for no." War 2.135: "Any word of theirs has more force than an oath; swearing they avoid, regarding it as worse than perjury, for they say that one who is not believed without an appeal to God stands condemned already."

Mt 10:9-11: "Take no gold or silver or copper in yourbelts, nor a bag for the journey,. nor two tunics. Take no sandals or staff...Whatever town or village you enter, enquire who in it is a worthy and stay there." War 2.125-126: "They carry nothing whatever with them on their journeys, except arms as a protection against brigands. In every city there is one of the order expressly appointed to attend to strangers."

Another uncanny similarity is in Josephus' story of his role in a crucifixion in his Life (26). Here he relates that during the conquest of Jerusalem he was sent to a village named Theoca in order to reconnoiter whether it was fit to pitch camp. He saw three former acquaintances being crucified and, feeling sorry for them, told Titus about them. Titus immediately commanded them to be taken down and to be attended to; two of them died while the third recovered. Is this not similar to the story of Jesus' crucifixion where a Joseph of Arimathea, similar to Josephus bar Mathias, asks Pilate for the body of a crucified man who then recovered, while two other men died on the cross?

Other circumstantial evidence for the similarity of the Gospels to Josephus lies in the Greek style. We have already seen that the style of the Gospels has a strong Semitic tinge and that the Greek especially of Mark is an inferior one. Interestingly, the native languages of both Paul and Josephus was Aramaic, a Semitic language, and for both Greek was an acquired language. Paul writes a simple Greek without great literary quality and Josephus never achieved full fluency and exactness either in spoken or written Greek and needed literary assistance from native Greeks to write his major works. (Bentwich 38, Loeb 2.ix) Yet the Gospels had to be written in Greek as they were intended for the Hellenized Middle East in which the Romans had had so much trouble. It is certainly conceivable that Paul wrote Mark, the first Christian gospel, and the other Gospels were written simply to clarify the unclear phrasings and clumsy story-telling found in Mark. And if Josephus

wrote Luke/Acts, then it must surely have been edited to create its more elegant Greek style in comparison with Mark.

The parallels between the attitudes to women found in Josephus as well as in Luke/Acts are much more speculative but are worth noting. Josephus was married three times and particularly lauds his third wife: "in character she surpassed many of her sex, as her subsequent life showed." At least two royal women were helpful to him: Poppea, Nero's wife, and Domitia, the wife of Emperor Domitian, who "never ceased conferring favors upon me." Though Josephus displays some evidence of sexist atitudes toward women, his portrayals of the Jewish matriarchs in his Antiquities are particularly positive. In his retelling of the Biblical stories of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, he creates idealized pictures of these women by omitting and altering negative aspects of the biblical accounts of them. He may be doing this to show them as exemplary representatives of the Jewish people to a non-Jewish audience, but it also shows his own positive attitude toward women. (see Bailey)

It is thus remarkable that Luke is so much more interested in the role of women than any of the other gospels. Luke uses the Greek word for "women" 11 times, Matthew 6, Mark only twice and John none. Luke also uses the word for "womb" 8 times, while Matthew and John only use it once and Mark none. Only Luke is interested in Mary's inner life (2:18, 34, 51); only Luke has Mary rejoicing in her pregnancy; only Luke mentions fetal quickening (1:41). Luke is the only Evangelist to imply that Jesus' female initiates outnumbered the male ones (8:2), that Jesus was financed by women (8:3) and that women were the first to believe in the resurrection though the male disciples refused to believe (24:10-11). The first person to call Jesus "Lord" in Luke is a woman (1:43) and the first person resurrected after Jesus is a woman (Acts 9:40). Over all, Luke has the largest cast of female characters in the New Testament and the additional material Luke adds to what he takes from Mark has a much higher percentage of material about women than is found in any other gospel. (see Helms Who 65, 81) None of this proves that Josephus wrote Luke but obviously someone with positive regard for women did, and Josephus fits this description.

Now that we have established Josephus' likely hand in the writing of the New Testament, let us see what we can learn from his life that would shed light on his aims and motivations. And what we are going to find is a long record of deceptions, outright lies and half-truths, a record that bears much similarity to that of Paul. Disentangling the truth from Josephus' prevarications is not an easy task, but only by doing so will we find out what his

true role in the creation of Christianity is.

Josephus bar Matthathias was born in 37 CE as the son of a Jewish high priest of the first of the 24 priestly orders who was probably also a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Court. There were 18,000 priests available to offer sacrifices at the Temple, every one of them with a claim to unbroken male-line descent from Aaron, yet there was a big gap between the upper and the lower priesthood. The former were influential magnates and the latter merely peasant farmers: Josephus' family was among the former. Although the Torah stipulates that priests should not be landowners, Josephus' family had a large estate outside Jerusalem as well as a mansion inside the city: one excavated mansion covered 600 square meters.

Josephus' genealogical claims, however, do not add up. On his mother's side he claims to be descended from the Maccabee kings through his great-great-great-grandmother, as his priestly forebear Simon the Stammerer had married a sister of Jonathan, the first Maccabee high priest. Yet the genealogy he gives in support goes through his father, not his mother, and according to him (Ant. 13.301) the Hasmoneans did not even assume the title of "king" until Aristobulus in 104 BCE, well after Josephus' ancestor's marriage. Nor do the dates he gives for his ancestors add up. He may well be lying about his royal ancestry, but even if he were just a member of the high priesthood Josephus was still at the very apex of the Judean aristocracy. Throughout his life he had strong biases in favor of the priesthood and the Hasmonean monarchy and he acted in accordance with ruling class interests. (Seward 9-10, Mason JJ 37-38)

In his autobiography Josephus claims to have studied with the Essenes, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, to have lived with Bannus, a hermit in the wilderness, for three years and at the age of 19 to have "engaged in public affairs, following the Pharisaic school." All these claims are highly questionable: how did he manage not only to study in depth three religious sects but also to spend three years in the wilderness, all before reaching the tender age of 19? how could he as an aristocratic Sadducee rebel against his family to such a heightened degree that he would have become an Essene or something similarly non-mainstream and then a Pharisee, hated by the Sadducees? (see Hata 310-311) It is possible, as Mason argues, that these are purely rhetorical commonplaces to impress his Roman readers: the child prodigy, the youthful philosophical training, the Biblical sojourn in the desert and the grown-up choice of a diplomatic career (Mason J+NT 38-39). But he could also be hiding something.

One indication of his true identification is in a calculation of his various references in his written works. Josephus has 372 references to chief

priests, 13 to Sadducees, and only 44 to Pharisees. His work is thus much more concerned with priestly circles than with Pharisees. Pharisees and Saduccees do not play a significant role in the main drama of the War, appearing only in the first two volumes as backdrop. (Mason JJ 364-366) One possible explanation for why Josephus might falsely claim to be a Pharisee is that he is an outsider attempting to be accepted by the Roman aristocracy. He depicts the Pharisees as a philosophical school akin to Stoicism, which was the most popular philosophy within this aristocracy. He is thus hoping that his identification as a quasi-Stoic will be in his favor. (Jossa 339)

Yet, as Thackeray says, his "contribution to our knowledge not only of the deeper religious aspects of Judaism, but even of its ritual, customs and antiquities, is somewhat disappointing", being marked by a "certain superficiality." "As profound theologian and religious devotee he is wanting, or at least rarely betrays such deeper knowledge and emotion in his works." (Thackeray Josephus 76) Also, oddly enough his knowledge of Hebrew is weak: he gives wildly inaccurate etymologies of Hebrew proper names, he misstates the number of books in the Jewish Bible as 22 and does not seem to be familiar with their normal division, and for his discussion of the Bible he uses a Greek version (the Lucianic from Syria) and an Aramaic text (a Targum) rather than the Hebrew text. Even more strange, he may not even have owned a copy of this Lucianic Greek text when he wrote the War: the fact that he shows no acquaintance with it in his earlier work War but uses it in his later Antiquities indicates that he did not have it in Palestine but found it in Rome (Thackeray Josephus 77-86) This is all very surprising coming from someone from such an illustrious Jewish background and with claims to have acted as a priest in Jerusalem for seven years.

Correspondingly, he displays a very strange ignorance of Judean geography. His descriptions of the geography of Palestine seem to be much more from a Roman than a Jewish point of view. His geographical lore is introduced only when Vespasian is the actor in a particular district, he is confused about Hebrew names of places, such as his explanation of the town of Gamala or Bezetha, he knows only the Greek name for Mount Zion rather than the Hebrew one and he constantly inserts references to pagan myths that no devout Jew would have done. Even more odd is the fact that his description of the fortress of Masada, the siege of which he had not seen, is absolutely correct, while his account of Jotapata, which he personally defended, is full of exaggeration. All this is inexplicable if he is the learned Jewish priest and Jewish governor he claims to have been. (Bentwich 121-123)

His descriptive passages about geography are closely based on the literary model of the Roman geographer Strabo. For example, in describing the Jordan valley, Josephus follows the exact order of Strabo's description

of the Lebanon valley: first the characterization of the ridges, the names of the mountains and an estimation of the fertility or dryness of the soil of the ridge. In geographical and topographical descriptions Josephus follows Strabo's oder of going from the periphery to the center and back to the periphery again. Josephus' description of the Jordan and its sources is taken directly from Strabo; he corrects one mistake about the source but retains another one about Philip as tetrarch of Trachonitis. (Shahar 228-240). One can conclude that Josephus is more concerned with displaying his Roman literary education than with Palestinian geography.

Though he is always called a Jewish historian and sometimes a Greek one because of the language in which his works have reached us, it is rather astounding that in the passages in Antiquities devoted exclusively to Roman history (18-20) his information is often more detailed than that of the acknowledged Roman historians Suetonius and Tacitus. Josephus cites many oral testimonies as well as written sources that apparently gave him privileged information not only about the reign of Nero but also those of Caligula and Tiberius, including an extremely detailed account of Caligula's death. (Hadas-Lebel 99-103)

It is possible that much of his life story is a lie and that his Roman connections go much further back than he is willing to admit, much like Paul. And just like Paul, he continually insists that he is telling the truth. Just in his introduction alone, the word "truth" appears three times and "accuracy" six times. He continually insists that contrary to other historians he tells the truth and gives due praise and blame to both sides: War 1.6, 9, 17, 30; 7.454; Ant. 1.4; Life 360-361; Ag. Ap. 1.6, 50. He constantly derides other historians for embellishing the truth while he tells the plain unadorned truth and repeatedly claims to be an eyewitness to the events he describes. (Shahar 190-193, Mason JJ 11).

One way of determining Josephus' credibility is to compare his accounts of certain events with the account of the same events told by the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo. Smallwood's comparison of the stories of Gaius Caligula and of Pontius Pilate in both shows that "Philo's narratives have a greater sense of immediacy than those of Josephus" as Josephus often leaves out critical details or inserts melodramatic plots. Overall Philo "emerges as the writer with the greater historical credibility." (Smallwood 127)

He does admit that he journeyed to Rome in 64 CE at the age of 26 to secure the release of some fellow priests who had been imprisoned by Agrippa and summoned before Nero. Here he was introduced to and won the favor of Emperor Nero's wife Poppaea Sabina, who was fascinated by Ju-

daism, and who helped Josephus get the priests released. It is noteworthy that it was through a woman that Josephus gained favor at the court, considering what we have seen above of the great interest in the role of women in both Luke and Acts. This is the same time period as Paul's stay in Rome, so the two almost surely met at court.

While in Rome he was impressed with its magnificence and acquired a lasting admiration for the Roman Empire and a conviction of its invincibilty. But one wonders about the "large gifts" given to Josephus and his conversations with Nero: did Nero perhaps propose certain undercover activities, as Hata suggests: "These were to maintain order in Palestine by muzzling the anti-Roman political and religious fanatics in Jerusalem and other cities of Palestine. They also included providing smooth passage for the Roman forces in case they should invade Palestine. Josephus was given the `large gifts' to use as operating funds with which to execute the mission assigned to him." (Hata 315)

When the Jewish rebellion against Rome broke out in 66 CE, Josephus says he was made governor of Lower and Upper Galilee, the most important military post of all, even though he had no military background and believed the cause to be hopeless. Considering how vital the strategic position was to the defense of Judea against the Romans, the only reason for the Sanhedrin to entrust it to a man with no qualifications and dubious loyalty would be to pretend resistance to Rome but really to work for resistance to the rebellion.

Josephus admits as much in his Life: while in War he claims to have been a military commander from the outset, in his autobiography he says he was sent with two other priests, probably his seniors, to persuade the rebels to lay down their arms. The two priests, Joazar and Judas, may have been the very same two whose release Josephus secured in Rome, unless he is lying about their arrest and the three of them were on a pro-Roman mission from the very start.

Once in Galilee, Josephus spent much of his time dividing the population into two hostile parties and feuding with the other commander John of Gischala whom he continually slanders in his book. Nor did he make much of a military effort when the Roman army appeared, allowing the great army he had raised and trained on the Roman model to melt away, treating those who were keen to fight as enemies and scoundrels, leaving the towns he had fortified so strongly undefended, and neglecting even to occupy Sephoris when it was offered to him. (Bentwich 45-52)

Even in his own account he admits that the population of Galilee did not trust him and that when accused of stealing money he had to practice

deception and ruthlessness of the most desperate sort in order to escape their wrath (War 2.595-613). His true allegiances become clear in Tiberias which revolted against the Romans: to suppress this revolt Josephus pretended to agree to talks with the leading citizens and instead imprisoned one group after another, ultimately arresting and imprisoning the council of 600 members and 2000 other citizens (2.632-642).

His behavior at Jotapata, his last stand, was particularly disgraceful. By his own admission, he fled Tiberias into Jotapata, leading the defense of the Jewish forces there against Roman attack while at the same time convinced that further resistance to the Romans was hopeless and looking for a way to go over to the Romans. With this attitude it is hard to believe that he would still have retained command of the defense of Jotapata during the 47-day siege by the Romans and perhaps he is even lying about this and was actually under house arrest by the Jewish defenders. Jotapata finally fell to the Romans with 15,000 massacred and 200,130 taken prisoner. His preparations to flee were stopped by his own men whom he deceived by a suicide pact which he rigged to allow himself to be one of only two survivors. (War 3.141-392)

What is odd about his account of the defense of Jotapata is that almost all of his defensive measures seem to be borrowed from classical historians. Josephus describes with particular pride the six tricks he used to defend Jotapata and speaks as if he invented these techniques. But the use of an awning of fresh rawhide is found in Thucydides (2.75), the use of garments dripping with water is in Herodotus (1.21), the lowering of sacks of chaff is in Aeneas Tacticus (32.3), the pouring of boiling oil is well-documented from many periods of siege warfare, and the covering of couriers with fleece so that they will be mistaken for dogs seems to be related to Aesop's "wolf in sheep's clothing". (Cohen 95-96) Other elements of the sack of Jotapata recall the siege of Troy in Homer and Virgil's Aeneid. (Thackeray Josephus 118-119) Did any of this happen or is Josephus just using literary license?

It is clear that he is not telling the truth about his activities. For one, as Cohen shows, his two works, Life and Jewish War, "disagree not only on the substance but also on the order of Josephus' activities in the Galilean war of 66-67 CE." (Cohen 3-8) In the War Josephus portrays himself as a great and resourceful general and governor of Galilee, appointed to lead the revolt against Rome. In the Life he reluctantly joins the rebels' side and is sent to Galilee to minimize the rebellious tendencies on behalf of the Romans (Rappaport 280).

This difference may be because the Life is a response to Josephus' contemporary, the Jewish historian Justus of Tiberias, who wrote a history

attacking Josephus' character and actions. From Josephus' defense of himself one may conclude that Justus charged him with lying about being a general and instead being an independent tyrant in Tiberias, practicing extortion, living luxuriously but neglecting the populace, stealing gold from the palace in Tiberias, raping women, and being an incompetent administrator. All this aroused the indignation of the most eminent and respected Jewish leadership. Justus and Josephus traded accusations of war-mongering with each other; Jusstus charged Josephus with instigating the peace-loving population to join the revolt against Rome as opposed to Justus who was working for peace. In reality, both took ambivalent and equivocal positions.

Even worse, Justus charged Josephus with preparing to surrender the country to the Romans, preparing to attack Jerusalem and establishing himself there as a tyrant, and being a coward at Jotapata. Faced with these accusations, he was forced to admit in his Life that in reality he was not doing his job as a commander of rebel troops, that his support of the revolt was only a cover-up, so as not to raise the suspicions of the rebels, and that he was really on the Roman side. Even in his War he admits that the population of Jerusalem considered him to be a traitor, especially after they had first mourned him as a hero when they thought he had died in the siege: "Some abused him as a coward, others as a traitor, and throughout the city there was general indignation, and curses were heaped upon his devoted head." (War 3.432-439) (Cohen 126-128, Mason J+NT 75-76, Rajak 85-89, Rappaport 283)

According to Josephus' account, he was taken captive by the Romans and was brought before the Roman general Vespasian to whom he represented himself as a prophet. He then claimed that Judaism's messianic prophecies had foreseen not a Jewish Messiah but Vespasian himself and he prophecied that Vespasian would become Emperor, a prediction that Vespasian did not believe at first. Nevertheless, he was kept a prisoner of war from July 67 to the summer of 69 when Vespasian became emperor, "kept under surveillance", as he says. It should go without saying that for an observant Jew to identify a Roman general, one who destroyed the Temple no less, as the longed for Jewish Messiah is the height of apostasy and blasphemy, and it does not come as any suprise that Josephus has henceforth been regarded by Jews as the ultimate traitor to his people, a man to be shunned and hated.

Strangely enough, nowhere in his writings, not even in his autobiography, does he record his personal movements during this period. He describes in great detail nine battles fought by the Romans during this time, probably from Roman documents, as well as two battles where he was supposedly present as a captive in the Roman camp. (Shahar 194-202) Considering Josephus' general lack of veracity and his long associations with the Romans, one wonders again whether he was truly a captive. Why does he not

offer any details about his captivity? Why does he seem to know so much about Roman activities during this period when he was supposedly kept under strict surveillance?

Does the story not sound like that of a secret agent or quisling, sent by the Romans to infiltrate the rebels and to undermine their efforts? Then the capture at Jotapata would be a pre-arranged means by Josephus to rejoin the Roman army and his "captivity" would simply be a resumption of his intelligence work. The only reason for the Romans to keep him under surveillance would be if they had suspected him of being a double agent and secretly working for the Jewish side after all.

And Josephus' "prophecy" is probably purely fictional, for why would the great commander and future emperor Vespasian be impressed by a prophecy of a turncoat Jew without a following who was out to flatter him? Mason suggests that "it is conceivable that Vespasian conspired with Josephus to fabricate the story in return for his life: this Jewish priest could be retained as living proof of a mysterious Eastern oracle confirming Vespasian's right to rule." (Mason J+NT 46-47) The Roman historians Suetonius and Dion do report Josephus' prophecy in their later accounts, though Tacitus does not.

In reality there were a number of other omens and prophecies that Vespasian would have considered more important than Josephus', assuming the latter even happened. Both Suetonius and Dion report miraculous omens and oracles called prodigia heralding Vespasian's ascension and Tacitus reports the similar prophecy of the priest Basilides which became widely known (Hist. 2.78): Tacitus and Suetonius predicted a father and son to be emperors, as opposed to Josephus who only predicted one ruler. The prophecy that may have had the most political effect in the Orient was the meeting with Apollonius of Tyana at the temple in Alexandria, Egypt, in fall of 69 CE, the year of four emperors. When Vespasian asked him outright to make him emperor, Apollonius replied, "I have done so, because I previously prayed for an emperor who was just, generous and moderate...and it is clear that you are the answer to my prayers." (Philostratus Life 5.28) Apollonius was regarded as a quasi-Savior in the Mediterranean world so this connection gave Vespasian great legitimacy in the Oriental world. And the sanction of a pagan priest meant much more to the pagan Vespasian than the approval of a Jew. (Weber 37, 47-49)

But the earliest prophecy of Vespasian's imperial elevation was that of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai three days before Nero's death, on June 9, 68. Moreover, there are many odd parallels between his story and Josephus' account of himself: "That rabbi, one of the leaders of the Sanhedrin, had, like Josephus, counseled caution at the beginning of the rebellion. Like Josephus,

he seemed to have made a realistic appraisal of the power of Rome. The story of Josephus' escape by a ruse from Yotapata is paralleled by that of Yohanan's escape, also by a ruse, from beleaguered Jerusalem...His disciples...placed him in a coffin and pretended that he was dead and that they were going to bury him in the cemetery outside the city gates. Having thus escaped from Jerusalem, he went to Vespasian and predicted that he would become emperor. Like Josephus, he gained his freedom by that prediction. Like Josephus, he was accorded additional favors by Vespasian; and he made the famous request: `Give me Yavneh and its sages.'" (Wasserstein Josephus 19) That is, the Romans allowed him to reestablish a religious academy at Yavneh.

This escape and the application of the World Ruler or Star prophecy to Vespasian laid the groundwork for the renewal of Judaism in the form of Rabbinic Judaism now that the old sacrificial Temple Judaism was no more. One could argue that Rome had a hand in creating modern Judaism just as it did Christianity. What Rabbinic Judaism does is to reject the urgent apocalyptic and messianic strains of 1st century Judaism and to put the coming of the Messiah off into the distant future. Pious Jewish men were to spend their time poring over the Torah and learning holiness, without regard to politics or anything going on in the outside world. Politically Rabbinic Judaism is quiescent and passive with an accomodationist policy toward Rome and any outside ruler.

It is rather symbolic that it is this story of prophecy that Josephus chooses to fictionalize in his account. Josephus too sought an accomodationist policy toward Rome and he too sought to create a religion that would enshrine political passivity and obedience to authority: thus his participation in the writing of the New Testament. Josephus surely knew the story of Yohanan's escape, though he does not mention it in his works, and he must have been impressed by it. Even more so, Vespasian may have been impressed by such a prophecy coming from an eminent and learned Jewish sage and member of the Sanhedrin: this more than anything may have impelled him to feel justified in suppressing the rebellion.

To the Roman mind the war against the Jews was more than just the suppression of a revolt of disaffected subjects. It was the epic clash of Occident and Orient, the battle between two great cultures who both sought world domination. The Jewish God saw himself as a universal god whose aim was to be the supreme deity and who allowed no superior. This was a claim that no deified Roman emperor could tolerate. Rome and Judaism were irreconcilable: one or the other had to go under in the epic struggle to the finish. If not Jerusalem, then Rome. Vespasian could thus see himself rightly as being the Savior of Western civilization against the Oriental onslaught. (Weber 38-39)

After Vespasian was proclaimed emperor, he rewarded Josephus -supposedly for his prophetic gifts but probably really for his service as an intelligence agent - by releasing him and bestowing his family name of Flavius on him, usually given to freed slaves. Josephus accompanied Vespasian and Titus on a journey to Alexandria; after Vespasian returned to Rome to be crowned emperor in 69 and Titus was commanded to complete the conquest of Jerusalem, Josephus was sent back to Palestine with him.

Once the revolt was crushed, Josephus took up residence within the Flavian court at Rome, where he enjoyed the patronage of Vespasian and the subsequent Flavian emperors. The Flavians permitted Josephus to live in Vespasan's private residence, granted him prized Roman citizenship, gave him large tracts of land in Judea confiscated from former rebels and ultimately exempted him from taxation. They also brought him under the protection of their family and became his literary patrons.

The editor and publisher of Josephus' works at the Flavian court was none other than Epaphroditus, secretary to the emperors, whom we have already encountered in connection with Paul and who apparently continued in his powerful role at the imperial court until Domitian's time. Josephus dedicates three of his four works (all but Jewish War) to the "most excellent" Epaphroditus whom he calls "a devoted lover of truth" (Apion 2.296). In Ant. 1.8 he makes clear his close connection with him: "There were certain persons curious about the history who urged me to pursue it, and above all Epaphroditus, a man devoted to every form of learning, but specially interested in the experiences of history, conversant as he himself has been with large affairs and varying turns of fortune, through all which he has displayed a wonderful force of character and an attachment to virtue that nothing could deflect." Some scholars identify the Epaphroditus of Josephus as Marcus Mettius Epaphroditus (22/23-97/98), an Alexandrian grammarian and bibliophile with a library of 30,000 volumes who had settled in Rome during Nero's time. But this man does not at all fit Josephus' description, as his works were solely on literary subjects - a commentary on Homer and analysis of etymologies - and there is no indication of him being interested in history and being "conversant...with large affairs". (Seward 267, New Pauly 4.1015) Josephus' Epaphroditus is almost certain to be the same as Paul's Epaphroditus, a very important man indeed.

Josephus' Jewish War proved to be useful for the purposes of Flavian propaganda. Of undistinguished background but intent on legitimizing himself, Vespasian attempted to portray himself as the second Augustus: the first had established a new regime after 20 years of civil wars and the second had established the principle of a hereditary monarchy after equal threats to Rome's stability. Where Josephus' work becomes important is his thesis that

God himself had repudiated his former Chosen People for violating his own laws and had now bestowed his favor on Vespasian. Augustus had received his divine protection from the gods of the Occident but Vespasian now represented the union of the gods of both Orient and Occident, a divine sanction that no other Roman Emperor had ever enjoyed. (Saulnier 561-562)

Despite Josephus' close association with the Flavian court and the strong pro-Roman slant of The Jewish War, he was not the official chronicler of the war. This was Marcus Antonius Julianus, procurator of Judea during the campaign and member of Titus' war council. Josephus, who never received the coveted official title amicus Caesaris, continued to be no more than a freed slave of the Flavians, a dependent imperial client, with nothing to distinguish him from the thousands of other imperial clients with the name Flavius. And even though he lived the last 30 years of life in Rome, Josephus was not a member of the brilliant intellectual circle at the court and remained isolated. (Price 101-106, Parente 46-49) As Yavetz puts it, "he must have been a member of the lower entourage, in the same category as doctors and magicians, philosophers and buffoons." (Yavetz 431-432)

All the same, for his work on the Jewish revolt Josephus had access to privileged Roman documents. Apart from the early Galilean campaign and a few other scenes where he plays a prominent part, the bulk of his narrative cannot be derived from his own notes but from Roman military sources, especially the concise itinerary, the disposition of the Roman legions and the names of the Roman heroes of the war. There are indications that he had access to the Commentaries (memoirs) of the Roman commanders, Vespasian and Titus themselves. He alludes to them in three places (Life 342, 358, Apion 1.56) in his defense against his critics, making the point that he had access to better information than they did: "Perhaps, however, you will say that you have accurately narrated the events which took place at Jerusalem. How, pray, can that be, seeing that neither were you on the scene of action, nor had you perused the Commentaries of Caesar (i.e. Titus), as is abundantly proved by your account which conflicts with those Commentaries?" (Thackeray Josephus 37-40)

Josephus' account, written originally in Aramaic, had specific purposes for the Flavian Emperors and had several audiences in mind. As he says after a long description of the Roman army: "If I have dwelt at some length on this topic, my intention was not so much to extol the Romans as to console those whom they have vanquished and to deter others who may be tempted to revolt." (War 3.108) The first audience was the Jewish Diaspora in the Eastern part of the Empire, as well as the Jewish inhabitants of Parthia,

Mesopotamia and the Jewish principality of Adiabene, whom he wished to dissuade from revolting or planning revenge for the defeat in Judea considering the tragedy that had befallen the Jews there. The second was those under Roman rule to persuade them that it was futile to think of revolting considering how the Jews fared. The third was the "barbarians" outside Roman rule - the natives of Parthia, Arabia and Babylonia - to signal them not even to think of attacking the Romans at the peak of their power. (Loeb ix-x, Parente 49)

And finally in his reworked Greek version Josephus addressed himself to the Roman administration and Greek and Roman intellectuals throughout the Empire. Josephus set out to impress these educated people with his style and knowledge of Greek and Roman writers. He hired educated and well-paid assistants to edit his acquired and rather imperfect Greek into a remarkably elegant classical Greek style with a large and choice vocabulary and with no trace of Semitisms: Books 15-19 of the Antiquities appear to be entirely written by two of his assistants. The very title Jewish War was meant to remind readers of Caesar's Gallic Wars: the very title is pro-Roman, as the implied meaning is "war against the Jews." He purposely adopts an Atticist revival style of Greek close to that of contemporary writers such as Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, Aristides and Lucian. He follows Greek rhetorical style by juxtaposing items which belong together no matter the chronology or the disposition of the source.

Josephus makes allusions to phrases from the historians Thucydides, Herodotus, Xenophon, Demosthenes, and Polybius; like Thucydides, he insists that he is writing truthful history. He makes even more use of Homer, the Greek and Roman poets Pindar, Vergil and Sallust, and the tragedians Sophocles and Euripides. And his geographical descriptions are based on Strabo. Making allusions to classical works was a literary habit for Roman writers and they expected their educated readers to recognize them: Josephus follows in their steps. (Cohen 32-33, Mason JJ 48, Chapman 126-127, Thackeray vol II xv-xvii, Thackeray Josephus 56, 102-109. Antiquities as well has a Roman model: its 20 books are modeled on the 20 books of Roman Antiquities by Dionysius of Halicarnassus published in 7 BCE)

Yet despite this attempt to follow Roman literary conventions, Josephus found little popularity. His style simply did not fit the conventions of Roman historiography: "Ancient historians assiduously avoided all bias, and impartiality...was one of the conventional claims of historiographic prefaces... Open profession of bias was unthinkable, for it would have instantly destroyed the reader's confidence and attention." Josephus was clearly biased in an emotional way and admits his grief for the tragic fate that has befallen his people. Yet as a newcomer to the literary profession, he did not have the

standing to violate accepted standards, and the tension between his role as Jewish polemicist and Greek historian simply could not be reconciled. (Price 107-112, quote 110)

This tension within Josephus between his Jewish origin and his adopted Roman identity permeated his entire life and kept him from a whole-hearted identification with any party. Josephus was a man with a split personality and his attitude toward the Jewish war was ambivalent from the very beginning as he never believed in a Jewish victory. "The real undercurrent in his whole work is that Jews and Romans are two great nations. War between the two nations was not inevitable and peaceful co-existence was a real possibility, if wild extremists on both sides - Zealots on one hand and greedy procurators on the other - had not dragged the two nations into an unnecessary clash." (Zavetz 421) As Mason insists, Josephus is not a mere one-dimensional Flavian lackey: he shows the war to be a tragedy without heroes in a story full of suffering, sorrow, calamity and lament. (Mason JJ 31)

Josephus' two-sidedness is fully on display in his account of the war of the Jews against the Romans. Here he is once again torn between his identification with his Jewish countrymen and his need to propagandize for the Roman cause. For this reason he only recounts the facts that serve his purposes and invents other stories as needed. It is difficult in Josephus to know whether he is writing fiction or fact as both are merely used for his larger political points. Parente points out "the co-presence, even on adjacent pages, of realistic narratives drawn from the author's recollections and the offical Roman documents available to him, on the one hand, and of narratives which we may call outright dramatic representations with little or no correspondence to reality on the other." (Parente 45)

Josephus' descriptions of what went on inside Jerusalem during the Roman siege, especially the atrocities of cannibalism, internecine warfare and torture he ascribes to the Jewish rebels, have to be invented as he simply wasn't there and as all possible witnesses were slaughtered by the Romans. The details are so exaggerated and gratuitous that they can only be due to his need to denigrate the rebels on behalf of his Roman patrons. (Parente 57)

In particular, the episode of Mary eating her own child is clearly a literary fiction. "When the wealthy Maria addresses the infant she is about to eat (inside besieged Jerusalem, the story being known to Josephus and the Romans by rumor; War 6.214), she expounds upon the evils of `war, famine and civil strife.' (6.205) This little speech conveniently reprises a programmatic triad from the prologue (1.27), the three evils for which Josephus has since blamed the rebels (4.137)...; most strikingly, it anticipates Titus' restatement of the same triad when he hears of the enormity a few sentences later

(6.215-216)." Clearly this incident is invented without a historical basis and merely serves a larger political point. (Mason JJ 12)

Nor is it believable that the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed against the express wishes of the Roman commander Titus as Josephus insists. Josephus portrays Titus as being a protector of the Temple and of Jewish worship (War 6.94). In a council of war Titus oppposed the opinion of the other officers that the Temple should be burnt and declared that he would not destroy such a magnificent building under any circumstances. The Roman soldiers were supposedly attempting to put out a blaze already burning in the inner court when a Roman soldier hurled a torch into the Temple. Titus tried to stop the fire by issuing commands but the Temple was burnt anyway against his will (6.254). But Josephus contradicts himself: in 7.1 he says explicitly that it was Titus who "ordered the whole city and the Temple to be razed to the ground" and in Ant. 20.250 he says Titus captured the city and set fire to it and the Temple.

Moreover, Josephus' version is contradicted by that of the Christian historian Sulpicius Severus, presumably drawing on a lost part of the Histories of Tacitus, who says that Titus ordered it destroyed against the opinions of others in the council: "Titus himself took the opposite view, holding that it was more important to destroy the Temple, in order to eradicate the more compleetly both the Jewish and the Christian faiths" (Chron. 2.30.6). This version may well be more truthful as Tacitus had no obligations toward the Flavians and did not have to flatter them. And the Talmud (b. Gittin 56b) accuses Titus of profaning the Torah after his conquest of the Temple. (Stern 73, Parente 63-66, Yavetz 416-417)

Josephus' depiction of the most powerful man in the world as being impotent in seeing his orders carried out would have been considered pejorative to the Emperor had he been writing an official chronicle. But as a message to his co-religionists this lie was a political necessity: if Titus was unable to save the Temple despite his commanding power, then it was God himself who had destroyed it. And this was due to the sacrileges that the Jews themselves had committed against their own Temple, as Josephus shwos in gory detail. Thus the Jews had lost God's favor and should accept Roman superiority. (Parente 67)

This stance of unenthusiastic acceptance of Roman rule is also displayed in the speeches that King Agrippa II give to the population of Jerusalem on the eve of war (War 2.345-401) and that Josephus gives during the siege (5.362-419). The Romans have been favored by God who has bestowed a great empire on them, and submission to their rule, which on balance is relatively mild and unoffensive, is simply dictated by self-preservation. This

contrasts with the real admiration expressed by various provincial authors, such as Polybius and Aelius Aristides. (Price 114-115)

Such undermining of Roman greatness and Titus runs through Josephus' account and is part of another side to Josephus, a slyly subversive anti-Roman tinge of irony and even criticism. All the extant Roman sources make extravagant claims to promote Titus in the public arena, as part of a propaganda campaign to give legitimacy to the Flavian family's hold on the throne. Vespasian at least had been commander and governor but Titus in particular needed the victory over the Jews to give himself a successful track record and to counteract his unpopularity. Yet Josephus contradicts this image of Titus as a successful commander at every turn. He says Vespasian rather than Titus was in command at the capture of Tarichaeae, contrary to the claim made in Suetonius; at Gamala Titus was not with Vespasian at the beginning of the siege and Vespasian oversaw the capture of the town, and most significantly Josephus stresses that Titus was not the first to capture Jerusalem and recounts earlier captures by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Pompey, the Parthians, Herod and Varrus, (McLaren 288-291)

Even more biting, Josephus attacks Titus' very ability as a commander. First he builds Titus up by praising his clementia, an important virtue of rulers which the Stoics elevated as a Roman ideal. Josephus argues that the ruthlessness and cruelty Titus showed toward the Jews was forced upon him by the Jewish extremists and he acted thus reluctantly (5.442-44, 455; 6.118-124, 128, 215-16) His innate love for human beings caused him to show mercy by stopping massacres (3.501, 5.421) and refraining from exerting his full destructive power. This portrayal on the part of Josephus is especially important because Titus was accused of cruelty before ascending the throne, a reputation that he made immense efforts to change after he became Emperor (Yavetz 413, 423-428)

Yet Josephus then proceeds to undermine his portrayal. He makes the point that Titus was preoccupied with clemency to the point of gullibiity and with security to the point of timidity. He violated traditional Roman values with respect to military virtue by taking too many precautions for the lives of his soldiers and attempting to make the war risk-free for them. Moreover, in his innocence and patience he is taken in by the clever stratagems and daring of the Judean fighters and does not take elementary precautions to protect his troops. Josephus portrays himself as being much more astute than the Roman commander and capable of meeting the stratagems of his opponents with deceptions and double games of his own. It is hard to believe that all this is true nor could it redound to Titus' credit, so Josephus is clearly undermining his own flattery of Titus and paying a left-handed compliment to his erstwhile countrymen. It is amazing that his work could be published under

a Flavian administration: most likely no one in power read it or they were taken in by the apparent picture of Titus' great clemency. (Mason JJ 83-86)

These irreconcilable contradictions within Josephus and the complicated and ambivalent aspects of his relationship to Judaism, to the Jewish rebellion and to his patron Titus go into his contribution to the writing of the New Testament. He is a Jewish aristocrat who as a young man went over to the Roman cause and decided to work as a Roman agent to counteract the rebellion of his countrymen. Yet he still identifies himself as a Jew and is proud of Jewish accomplishments, prompting him to write Antiquities 15 years after Jewish War in order to combat misinformation about Jews, to show Jews as exemplary citizens of the Empire and to emphasize their ancient traditions of noblest character (Mason JJ 65-66).

A cogent argument can be made that Josephus would not have taken part in such a blatantly anti-Semitic enterprise as the New Testament precisely because of his deep pride in his heritage. It is of course possible and likely that the strident anti-Semitism of the Gospels was not present to such a degree in the early drafts that Josephus participated in, and that it was added later. It may also be that he was filled with contempt for his own people when he wrote War and parts of the New Testament but that he came to regret his own self-hatred by the time he wrote Antiquities. While in Antiquities he states that the Roman governors from Pilate on were intolerably oppressive and goaded the Jews into revolt, still the Jewish rebels were even more to blame for the catastrophe that befell the city. And his harsh condemnation of the rebels and their supporters all too easily becomes extended against Jews as a whole.

Josephus relentlessly disparages and insults the rebels, and he shows no sympathy with the population of Jerusalem who sided with them. He gloats over the terrible fate of his personal enemies and does not express even the mildest disapproval of the atrocities of the Roman conquerors who carried out a veritable genocide of the Jewish population of Judea. At least 600,000 and possibly over 1 million died in Jerusalem alone and untold thousands in the rest of Judea, as well as 50,000 in Alexandria. Nor does he condemn the sale of 30,000 Jewish prisoners of war and the butchery of thousands of Jewish prisoners in the theaters of Rome afterwards. (For statistics see Grant Jews Roman 202-203)

Yet at the same time he professes grief for the sad fate of the Jewish people and he instructs the reader to separate the facts from his own openly expressed feelings. He asks for "indulgence for a compassion which falls outside an historian's province" and asserts that "the misfortunes of all other races since the beginning of history, compared to those of the Jews, seem

small". But then he adds, mindful not to blame the Romans, "and for our misfortunes we have only ourselves to blame." (War 1.12)

This is exactly the contradiction we see in the story of Jesus' mission and crucifixion: the innocent victim (Jesus, the Jewish people), brought down by the evil Jewish leadership (Pharisees and high priests, Zealots) whom the Roman government (Pilate, Titus) benevolently and with excessive forbearance attempts to restrain but who must ultimately take the blame ("His blood be on us and our children"). Jesus, however, who has consistently predicted the destruction of the Jews and Jerusalem, is then resurrected and triumphs after all. And it is here that Josephus' prophecy to Vespasian is incorporated into the New Testament: the real Messiah of the Jewish people is not a Jew but a Roman Emperor, Titus.

Chapter 27:
Josephus' Jesus and Titus

Joseph Atwill in his ground-breaking book Caesar's Messiah has made the fascinating argument that the figure of Jesus is meant to be a parallel to that of Titus, the conqueror of Jerusalem, and that many of the incidents in the Gospels are modeled on true incidents of the Jewish Revolt of 66-73 CE. The point of all this is to demonstrate that Jewish Messianic hopes have now been realized in the person of Titus and that further resistance to Rome would be futile.

Thus the dating of Jesus' life in the New Testament and possibly even the Jewish Revolt in Josephus was not meant to be historical but ideological. Jesus was born in the year Zero, his ministry began 30 years later and exactly 40 years after his death the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, fulfilling the prophecy in Daniel 9:2 that 70 years must pass "before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem." 40 years is also the period of the wanderings of the Jews in the desert before reaching the Promised Land. Jesus' death and resurrection in 33 CE is correlated with the final defeat of the Zealots at Masada, also exactly 40 years later. Here there is a remarkable parallel between Josephus who gives the final suicide at Masada as occurring on the 15th day of Nisan (War 7.9) and John 19:31 who states that Jesus was crucified on the 13th of Nisan and arose on the 15th (calculated by the fact that Passover and the Sabbath were the same day). (Atwill 280-284)

The Jesus of the New Testament is therefore able to prophecy the exact events that then come to pass as recorded by Josephus. In Luke 19:37-43 Jesus predicts that the foes of Jerusalem would encircle it with a wall, demolish the city and its temple, leaving "not one stone upon another" and level its inhabitants. This prophecy is connected with the Son of Man prophecies in Mt 24:33-34, 42-4 and 25:13 and take place in a generation which was seen by the Jews of the time as lasting 40 years. Titus is the only person who could be said to have fulfilled Jesus' prophecies concerning this Son of Man.

Correspondingly, the dating of the events in the Jewish War is set up to be used in conjunction with the New Testament to show that Daniel's prophecy of a Messiah had been realized in the person of Jesus. Early Christian scholars used these connections between Josephus, Daniel and Matthew

24 to prove the truth of the New Testament prophecies. Daniel 7:13-14 predicts the coming of "one like a son of man" who "was given dominion and glory and kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away." This Messiah would then be "cut off" followed by the destruction of Jerusalem 70 years later (Dan 9:2, 9:26). Josephus aligns his depiction of the Jewish war with the timelines given in Daniel: that the daily sacrifice would be halted (i.e. the Temple destroyed) three and a half years from the beginning of the war and that the war would last 7 years, a reckoning which required the siege of Masada to take place in 73 CE, 3 years after the fall of Jerusalem. The dating of Masada, or even the event itself, may well be fictitious (Atwill 259-263)

Interestingly, modern critical scholars of the Bible now agree that Daniel, which purports to be written in the 6th century BCE durign the reigns of the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar and the Persians Cyrus and Darius, actually comes from the 2nd century, as its facts about the 6th century are vague and inaccurate while it is detailed and exact about the 2nd century. The purpose of this pretense of coming from the 6th century is to create a "literary fiction intended to impress its readers with the supposed accuracy of its foreknowledge of the next several hundred years," in which Jeremiah's 70 years become 70 weeks of years. The culmination of Daniel's "prophecies" of a 7-year tribulation from 171-164 BCE is the "abomination" of Antiochus IV who forced an altar to Zeus and the sacrifice of swine in the Temple of Jerusalem in 167 BCE, an event that brought about the Maccabee revolt and also the event with which Josephus begins his Jewish War. (Helms Who 20-31)

Josephus' fictionalized account of the Jewish war is therefore intended to buttress the fictional figure of the New Testament Jesus, who represents both the Jewish Messiah predicted by Daniel and the Roman Messiah Titus combined into one. And though Josephus gives little direct information on his Jesus figure in the Jewish War, he gives startling parallels. In War 6.5.3 §301-305 there is a story of a Jesus son of Ananus who came to Jerusalem four years before the war began and "began on a sudden to cry aloud: "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" He was arrested by the Jewish authorities and brought to the Roman officials who whipped him "till his bones were laid bare" but at every stroke of the whip his answer was "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" The Romans finally released him, finding him harmless, and he continued to utter his woe cries until he was finally killed at the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE by a stone from the Roman siege engines.

The doomsday predictions of Jesus in Matthew 24 and 25 state: "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man...and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other...
Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to thn maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom." (Mt 24:27-44-25:1) Notice the repetition of the east and west, the four winds, the brides and the bridegroom. And in Jesus' speech in Matthew 23 he uses the word "woe" seven times, just as Jesus son of Ananus did.

The New Testament story of Jesus of Nazareth is an exact parallel to this story of Jesus son of Ananus. Both entered the precincts of the Temple at the time of a religious festival. Both spoke of the doom of Jerusalem, the Sanctuary and the people. Both apparently alluded to Jeremiah 7 where the prophet condemned the Temple establishment of his day. Both were arrested by the authority of Jewish, not Roman, leaders and both were beaten by the Jewish authorities. Both were handed over to the Roman governor to be interrogated. Both refused to answer the governor and were then scourged. Governor Pilate may have offered to release Jesus of Nazareth but did not; Governor Albinus did release Jesus son of Ananias. (see Evans "Jesus in" 476)

Is Josephus deliberately creating a satire of the New Testament Jesus? For if he is not and the New Testament borrowed from Josephus, then it is a joke of the highest order to create a spiritual paragon out of a pathetic madman. But if Jesus son of Ananus is a satire on Jesus of Nazareth, then that indicates a startling familiarity on the part of Josephus with the Gospel story at a very early date when few non-Christians could ever have heard of the details of the Gospels. And this fact supports the idea that Josephus had a major involvement in the writing of those very Gospels and that his works and the Gospels were designed to be read together.

The signs that Jesus predicted to precede the destruction of the temple are also paralleled in Josephus. False prophets are mentioned in both documents. In Matthew the Son of Man goes from east to west; in Josephus the Roman army marches from east to west. In Matthew the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven; in Josephus chariots and troops of soldiers were seen in the clouds. In Matthew Jesus cries woe on women suckling children; in Josephus there is the story of the starving woman who ate her suckling child. in Matthew Jeses foresees famines and earthquakes; in Josephus the priests felt a quaking and the siege of Jersualem caused a massive famine. Jesus foresees a "great tribulation"; all of Josephus is an account of

these "misfortunes." Jesus foresees the killing of the prophet Zacharias the son of Barachias; Josephus records the killing of Zacharias the son of Baruch by the Zealots. (Atwill 186-194)

Interestingly enough Jesus compares himself to a stone in Mt 21:44-46 and says "he who falls on this stone will be severely hurt; but he on whom it falls will be utterly crushed." Atwill thinks this may well be a malicious joke by the writers of the New Testament: a Messiah of the Jews threatening to be the stone to crush the Jews who rejected him who is instead killed by a Roman stone (Atwill 203), another indication that the real Messiah is a Roman one who will crush the Jews for their rebellion.

In John 21:18-24 the resurrected Jesus asks Simon three times whether he loves him and then prophecies that "another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go (this he said to show by what death he was to glorify God)." Whereas to John he merely says "feed my lambs" and "tend my sheep". This may well be a reference to the two main Jewish leaders of the rebellion, Simon and John, who came out of caverns beneath Jerusalem after the Roman victory, forced out by starvation. After being captured by the Romans, John was given life imprisonment while Simon was taken to Rome and executed, exactly as Jesus predicts. And it is rather startling that in the Gospels Simon denies Jesus three times (Jn 18:25-27) while in Josephus (War 6.2) Titus says he asked Simon to surrender three times and three times he was refused. Jesus calls Simon "Satan" in both Mt 16:21-25 while in Lk 22:33 Simon says he is "ready to go to prison and to death", both of which occurred. All the Simons in the New Testament may well be lampoons of the Jewish leader Simon.

Moreover, Mark 5:2-9 may allude to the capture of the Jewish leaders as well, in the story of the man with the unclean spirit who lived in the tombs and cut himself with stones. This may be an inside joke as Josephus reports that Simon took some stonecutters with him into hiding. Atwill wonders whether this demon-possessed individual healed by Jesus in Mark 5:20 "who began to publish in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him" was John the Zealot leader who ended up collaborating with the Romans to help write the New Testament by giving them details of the messianic movement, perhaps writing the very Gospel of John! (Atwill 71-73)

A close look at Josephus and the Gospels shows uncanny parallels between two men, Titus and Jesus, who called themselves sons of God and whose "ministries" begin in Galilee and end in Jerusalem where both arrive on Passover. Both men begin their campaign at the Sea of Galilee, both are sent by their fathers (Vespasian, the Father in heaven) and both reassure

their followers not to be afraid (War 3.10.5, Lk 5:10). In both documents Chorazain is mentioned (War 3.10.8, Mt 11:23) and in Josephus Chorazain is a type of fish while in Matthew Jesus invokes woe against it. In War 3.10.9 Titus attacks a band of Jewish rebels led by a leader named Jesus, drowning them in a lake like fish, and in Mt 4:19 Jesus promises the disciples that he will make them "fishers of men". (Atwill 43)

In Josephus' War 4.7.4 there is a story of rebels driven from their city Gadara, the metropolis of Perea, who were forced to leap into the river Jordan where many were drowned. The context here is in a criticism of the "tyrant" John, one of the main leaders of the rebellion, who created sedition that spawned the Sicarii, the most militant faction of the Jewish rebellion. These Sicarii were "too small for an army, too many for a gang of thieves", in other words, the right number for a legion, and had infected a great number of young men "like the wildest of beasts". In the Roman victory over the rebels of Gadara 2200 prisoners were taken as well as many animals (but no pigs).

All these elements are in the Synoptic Gospels as well, all three of which (Mt 8:28-34, Mk 5:1-20, Lk 8:26-39) tell the story with quite a bit of space devoted to it. Here the Sicarii are being lampooned as a legion of demons who had infected the people of Gadara. Jesus (or Titus) then exorcises these (political) demons by driving them into 2000 swine who then drown in the sea, just as the real-life rebels of Gadara had done. No swine are captured in Josephus because they had drowned in the Gospels, an indication how Josephus and the Gospels are designed to be read together (Atwill 65).

This story is part of a more general theme in the Gospels that the Jews who lived between 33 and 73 CE were a wicked generation infected by a demonic spirit (Mt 12:39, 12:45, 17:17, 23:36, 24:34). These adjectives - wicked and demonic - are exactly how Josephus describes the Sicarii: "nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world." (War 5.10.5) This is of course the generation that launched the most serious rebellion that Rome had ever faced, culminating in an epic battle for an almost impregnable Jerusalem crowded with two and a half million people who had come up from all parts of the country and the Diaspora to celebrate the Passover.

The climax of the New Testament story, the last days of Jesus in Jerusalem, has many parallels in Josephus' story of the battle between the Jewish Zealots and the Romans under Titus for Jerusalem. Somehow Josephus manages to blame the Jews for the Roman destruction of their Temple and claims that Titus had tried to preserve it. In a speech of Titus to the defenders of the Temple he says: "Why do you trample upon dead bodies in this temple?

and why do you pollute this holy house with the blood both of foreigners and Jews themselves?" (War 6.2.4) Later it says that "he had proposed peace and liberty to the Jews, as well as an oblivion of all their former insolent practices, but they...had chosen sedition...they had begun with their own hands to burn down that, which we have preserved hitherto." (War 6.3.5) "Thus was the holy house burnt down, without Caesar's approbation." (War 6.4.7)

The Gospels likewise portray Jesus as being destroyed against the wishes of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, and the parallel is made clear in John 2:19-21 in which Jesus is the Temple (similar prophecy in Mk 14:58 and Mt 26:61). Paul develops this theme further in I Cor 3:9-17 where Jesus is the foundation of God's temple that a Christian is to build within himself. Over and over again in Josephus the Jews are blamed and blame themselves for inflicting the sufferings of the rebellion on themselves while the Romans were merely trying to bring peace and propsrity to them. Josephus says that compared with "the misfortunes of my country...which under Roman rule had reached the highest level of prosperity only to fall to the lowest level of misery" "the misfortunes of all other nations seem small...and [for our misfortunes] we have only ourselves to blame." In the Gospels the blame for Jesus' death also falls on the Jews: "his blood be upon us and upon our children" (Mt 27:25).

In Josephus Titus who was not wearing armor just barely managed to escape from a group of armed men ina garden outside the northeastern corner of Jerusalem, near the Mount of Olives (War). In Mk 14:49-53 just when Jesus is captured in the Garden of Gethsemane, which is also at the northeastern corner of Jerusalem, the story is recounted of a young man who fled naked from the Roman soldiers, leaving his linen cloth behind. Could this be a parallel to the escape of a "naked" Titus, i.e. without armor? (Atwill 110-111) In this case the real Roman Messiah escapes and the false Jewish one is captured.

In Josephus a Jesus ben Ananus who went around Jerusalem proclaiming its destruction is scourged by the Romans and then let go (War 6.5.3). So too is Jesus Barabbas, who in the insurrection had committed murder, and was arrested with Jesus (Mt 27:16-26). Josephus consistently describes the Sicarii or Zealots as robbers; the two men between whom Jesus is crucified are also described as robbers (Mt 27:38). In Josephus one of the portents for the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem is a great light shining at the ninth hour (War 6.5.3). In Mt 27:46 there was darkness from the sixth until the ninth hour at which point it was light again and many wondrous events took place.

The story of Niger of Perea in Josephus is also similar to the story

of Jesus in the Gospels. Niger leads the initial assault on the Roman Army on the way to Jerusalem in 66 CE and a follow-up assault on the Romans at Ashkelon; there Silas and John are killed and Niger is given up for dead. His companions had been searching for him on the battlefield for three days in order to bury him but then he emerged from his hiding place in a subterranean cave (War 3.2.3). Later he runs afoul of the Zealots due to their jealousy of his valor and he is dragged through the city pointing to his wounds. He is brought outside the gates of the city, is refused a burial and calls upon the Jews famine, pestilence and internecine strife (War 4.6.1). The parallels to Jesus are obvious (Eisenman 538, 885).

The most diabolical and vicious lampooning of the Jews in Josephus and the Gospels is in connection with the siege of Jerusalem and the defeat of the Jewish rebellion. In War 6.3.4 Josephus describes an incident of cannibalism caused by the famine that resulted from the Roman siege of Jerusalem. This incident, by the way, was the passage most commonly cited from Josephus' works by Christians of the ancient world and the Middle Ages. (Mason J+NT 11) Mary, whose father was Eleazar of the house of Hyssop, found it impossible to get any food for herself "while the famine pierced through her very bowels and marrow" and thereupon killed and roasted her own son, an infant still breast-feeding. When the "seditious" demanded to know where she had gotten food, she replied that "she had saved a very fine portion of it for them...This is mine own son, and what hath been done is my own doing. Come, eat of this food, for I have eaten of it myself!...But if you...do abominate this
my sacrifice...let the rest be reserved for me also."

The parallels with the Last Supper and the Crucifixion are striking. First of all, hyssop is the plant Moses commanded the Israelites to use when marking their houses with the blood of the sacrificed Passover lamb which was also required to be roasted nor were its bones allowed to be broken (Ex 12:7-9). At the Last Supper (Mk 14:22-27) Jesus gives the disciples a Passover biscuit and says, "Take this, it is my body." At Jesus' crucifixion he received sour wine with hyssop and his legs were not broken. And in Luke 2:35 Jesus' mother Mary is also pierced through: "a sword will pierce through your own soul also; that the reasonings in many hearts may be revealed." (Atwill 48-49).

Moreover, characters named Eleazar are found throughout Josephus' The Jewish War and the New Testament and they all have "Jesus-like attributes of having been born in Galilee, having the power to dispel demons, having been plotted against by the High Priests, having been scourged, having survived a crucifixion, and having risen from the dead" (Atwill 102).

There was a historical Jewish leader Eleazar whom Titus captured on the Mount of Olives and crucified after the defeat of the Jewish rebellion and he is being satirized in both documents as a false Jewish Messiah whom Titus is destined to replace.

In the New Testament Eleazar is the same name as Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead. Luke 10:38-42 tells the story of Lazarus' sisters Mary and Martha, the latter of whom complains that Mary is not helping her to serve him food. Jesus replies that "Mary has chosen the good portion which shall not be taken away from her." Atwill comments "the comic point is that the 'good portion' Mary and Jesus enjoy is the flesh of Lazarus" because Jesus waits four days before he comes to the tomb to raise Lazarus. Jews believed that the spirit was irrevocably gone on the fourth day following a person's death, so Lazarus' resurrection is a joke, cemented by the fact that Martha mentions the stench of his body (Atwill 117-122.) This is the exact parallel to Josephus' story of Mary's cannibalism.

According to Atwill, "if the Romans did create the New Testament, they invented the darkly comic narrative about a human Passover lamb to satirize the grim `feast' of the starving Passover celebrants who were trapped inside Jerusalem. Josephus' story concerning the `starving Mary' and the sacrament of communion are both reflections of this comic theme" (Atwill 56). It is of course deeply malicious on the part of the Romans to offer a cannibalistic rite in the form of Communion to the Jews, a people with strict dietary laws too fastidious even to eat pork. This Roman Jesus they are asked to eat would be a Messiah whose flesh could be eaten by all humanity, as opposed to the one in Exodus which only the circumcised could eat.

For Jewish separatism was the main cause of the Jewish rebellion against the Romans and could only be overcome by a universal religion focused on the Roman emperor. The Zealots had been so staunch in their opposition to Roman rule and the deification of a human that even Zealot refugees in Egypt refused under all manner of torture to acknowledge Caesar as their lord (War 7.417). By creating the Messianic figure of Jesus who was secretly modeled on Titus, the Romans could get the Jews to do what they refused to do in real life: acknowledge the Roman Emperor as their deified Lord.

When Jesus asks the Jews to repent for "the kingdom of God is at hand", the sin of which he wishes them to repent is that of their rebellion against Rome. And in Mary's speech to her child in Josephus she states that her "miserable child" would be "a fury to these seditious varlets and a byword to the world, which is all that is now wanting to complete the calamities of us Jews." This is what Christianity set out to do, to punish the Jews

forever after for their audacity in daring to challenge the might of the Romans. Not for nothing do Christians worship a Jew crucified for the crime of rebellion against the Romans every Sunday. The subliminal message is: don't ever think of rebelling against authority for we'll do the same to you as we did to him.

At the same time the New Testament goes out of its way to hide the responsibility of the Romans for this punishment of the Jews by perversely making the Jews responsible for their own sufferings. This theme is found strongly all through Josephus, although he makes clear that it is for the crime of rebellion. He puts a long speech in the mouth of Eleazar at Masada, for which he could not possibly have had any evidence as all the defenders of Masada died there, in which Eleazar confesses that their miserable end was a sign of God's wrath "at the many wrongs which we madly dared to inflict upon our countrymen" (War 7.332).

The New Testament gives this an added twist that is the opposite of the historical truth: it blames the Jews for being anti-Messianic and claims they are suffering because they killed the Messiah. Thus Roman Christianity can have its message both ways: it can condemn Jesus to death for being a rebel against the authority of the Romans, sending a threatening message to anyone contemplating rebellion in the future, and it can also make Jesus into a pacific and unthreatening figure who is perfectly agreable to the Romans, thus laying the blame on the Jews and justifying their persecution for the true crime of rebellion against the Romans.

This double-sidedness is illustrated by the strange juxtaposition of a Jewish Messiah crucified for rebellion against the Romans who at the same time urges his followers to cooperate with the Romans and not to resist them. In Mt 5:38-42 in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells his followers not to resist "one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also, and any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well, and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles." Then in Mt 5:43 he also reinterprets the Jewish teaching of "love your neighbor and hate your enemy" into "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

The sentence about going one mile is a reference to the fact that Roman soldiers had the legal right to force civilians to carry their 65-pound packs for a length of one mile, marked on Roman roads by milestones. Why would a Jewish Messiah, whom the Jews thought of as a warrior king, require his followers not only to agree to a demeaning Roman demand but ask them to exceed it as well? And it is clear that when he tells them not to resist

evil that it is in the context of the Roman oppression that he then describes. So he is thus telling Jews to allow themselves to be hit and beaten, to have their clothing stolen and to be forced into degrading physical work by the Romans, rather than fighting back as the Sicarii and the Zealots did. And on top of all that, they should also love their oppressors for doing this to them. Some Messiah.

This theme of obedience to the Romans runs through all of Paul's letters as well. In Eph 6:5 he demands that slaves obey their masters, a continuing concern for the Romans who relied on slaves for all their labor. In Rom 13:1-6 he says: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed...For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay all of them their dues." Remarkably he then connects obedience to authority with the Jewish commandment to love one's neighbor and with the following of one's conscience, a perversion. Failure to give obedience to the state will result in the "wrath of God" coming down upon the evil-doer, for "he does not bear the sword in vain": "wrath of God" is a frequent expression in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Jesus too is of course made to advocate paying the Roman taxes (Mt 22:21, Mk 12:17, Lk 20:25) in contrast to the Jewish rebels who were in favor of tax resistance. He is continually shown as eating with tax collectors and sinners, many of whom were also his followers (i.e. Mk 2:16), something the Pharisees rightly do not approve of. His disciple Matthew or Levi is a tax collector and in Mt 22:31 believing "tax collectors and harlots" go into the kingdom of God before unbelievers. And in Acts 10:22 even a Roman centurion is not only a follower but is hailed as "an upright and God-fearing man." This is a cruel joke against Jews for no real Jewish Messiah would ever have had Roman tax collectors and centurions who were hated for their oppression of the population as followers. Ironically the New Testament admits as much for it has Jesus say in Mt 18:17 of a sinner who refuses to listen even to the church "let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector," surely a pejorative statement.

Another cruel joke by the New Testament is the depiction of Jesus consorting with harlots. The Jewish nationalists considered the Herodian princesses of Maccabean blood, namely Bernice, Herodias and Drusilla, as nothing better than harlots, and the issue of "fornication" is a major theme in the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as in the Letter of James. (see Eisenman 105) The Gospels turn that Jewish attitude on its head.

Jesus' staunch vegetarianism is also turned into its opposite in both the Gospels and in Paul. In Mark 7:14-23 Jesus overturns the Jewish kosher laws and declares all foods clean: "There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; ut the things which come out of a man are what defile him." This is paralelled in Romans 14:1-23 in which Paul launches a sustained attack on vegetarianism: "As for the man who

is weak in faith, welcome him, but not disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables... Nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it is unclean...Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God."

Vegetarianism, extremely popular among philosophers and spiritually minded people in the Roman Empire, can easily be construed by the authorities as an act of dissent against the prevailing morality.

As Brandon summarizes: "The authors of Matthew, Luke and John, each in his own way and for his own purpose, elaborated the Markan portrait of Jesus, as one innocent of sedition against Rome, into that of the pacific Christ, who taught his followers to love their enemies and rejected all resort to armed violence...The development of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and his role as the saviour of all mankind, made it impossible to contemplate that he could have involved himself in Jewish national affairs, especially of a revolutionary kind. Accordingly, the representation of him as living aloof or insulated from the political realities of first-century Judaea, which the Evangelists fabricated for their own particular apologetic needs, confirmed and sanctioned an evaluation that became doctrinally imperative." (Brandon Jesus 320)

Chapter 28:
The Flavian Emperors and Christianity

Christianity thus did not arise from the ground up and certainly not among the lower classes in Judea, but was created from above as a new state religion that would unite the fractious Roman Empire. It was the creation of the intellectual circle surrounding the three Flavian Roman Emperors who ruled from 69-96 CE, Vespasian and his two sons, Titus and Domitian. The purpose of Christianity was to replace the Messianic, militaristic and nationalistic religion of the Jews with a pacifistic religion that would promote Roman rule. The Messianic hopes of the Jews stayed alive even after the the revolt of 66 CE was crushed, as indicated by the Bar Kochba revolt of 133-135 CE, so the way to tame messianic Judaism would be to transform it into a religion that would cooperate with the Roman Empire.

The Flavians shared control over the region between Egypt and Syria "with two families of powerful Hellenized Jews, the Herods and the Alexanders. These three families shared a common financial interest in preventing any future revolts. They also shared a long-standing and intricate personal relationship that can be traced to the household of Antonia, the mother of the Emperor Claudius." (Atwill 4-5) The people taking part in the writing of the New Testament were all either members or court retainers of these families. The main authors were Paul, Seneca and Josephus, all with imperial and later Flavian connections, and Paul being a Herodian as well. As Eisenman says, this is a "substantial intellectual feat which could only have been effected by extremely able and well-informed minds" (Eisenman 795) and these three men certainly qualify as such.

As a Gentile and as secretary to Nero, Epaphroditus, Paul's "fellow worker" and the man to whom Josephus dedicated his works, must be seen as a prime candidate for the direction of this work. Other well-connected and literate people connected with the court may have supplied information to the authors at the very least, if they did not have a hand in writing parts of the work.

Tiberius Alexander of the powerful, originally Jewish but assimilated Alexander family of Alexandria, was one of the richest men in the world, after inheriting his father's estate, was governor of Judea from 46-48 and chief of staff to Titus during the siege of Jerusalem. He renounced Judaism and as-

sisted the Flavians with their war against the Jews. He certainly had intimate knowledge of Judaism and helped to insert a strong political pro-Roman and anti-Jewish message. Like Paul and Josephus, he was a quisling to his people, willing to order thousands of Jews to be murdered in Jerusalem and Alexandria in the service of his master.

His family was intimately linked with both the Herods and the Flavians. His father Julius Alexander Lycimarchus had been ruler or abalarch of the Jews of Alexandria and became financial steward to Antonia, the mother of Emperor Claudius, around 45 CE. His uncle was the famous Jewish philosopher Philo, who attempted to merge Judaism with Platonic philosophy. His older brother Marcus married Herod's niece Bernice as a teenager, creating a bond between the Alexanders and the Herods. Marcus died young and Bernice eventually became the wife of King Agrippa and later the mistress of Vespasian's son Titus. Bernice, being a Herodian with Maccabean ancestors, also had knowledge about Judaism. (Atwill 4-5)

Other people are: Julius Archelaus, Paul's nephew, is mentioned by Josephus as having read Antiquities. The Roman governor Felix, married to Bernice's other sister Drusilla whose brother Pallas was Nero's favorite, seems to have been involved in bringing Paul to Rome, and was himself a literate man. Josephus calls his father Matthew a writer of great repute and he may have been the prototype for the Gospel of Matthew. Agrippa II made over some 99 of his own letters to Josephus to help him rewrite his earlier work War in the Antiquities. All the people mentioned above knew each other well. (Atwill 255, Eisenman 795-800)

As Atwill summarizes: "In a convergence unique in history, the Flavians, Herods, and Alexanders brought together the elements necessary for the creation and implementation of Christianity. They had the financial motivation to replace the militaristic religion of the Sicarii, the expertise in Judaism and philosophy necessary to create the Gosepls, and the knowledge and bureaucracy required to implement a religion (the Flavians created and maintained a number of religions other than Christianity). Moreover, these families were the absolute rulers over the territories where the first Christian congregations began." (Atwill 6)

The writing of the New Testament must have occurred in many dfferent stages, though it is extremely difficult to disentangle the contributions of each author. It is quite likely that Paul and Seneca, neither of whom had first-rate fluency in Greek, produced a first draft of the Gospel of Mark before Seneca's death in 65 CE, laying the philosophical groundwork and composing a portrait of a Jesus resembling Paul. As we have seen, there is much evidence that Mark was first written in Latin, a fact that supports the possible

authorship of Seneca: perhaps Paul then translated the Latin into Greek. It is hard to know how much first-hand writing Seneca did or whether he merely supplied his ideas for Paul to incorporate; the simple, pared-down style of the Gospels does not match Seneca's discursive, prolix rhetorical style. Of course the Gospels have been much edited and changed in the many centuries afterwards so the original document might have been much closer to Seneca's style.

Matthew, said to be originally in Hebrew, was then written after the Jewish Revolt with several purposes: to improve the faulty Greek of Mark, to correct the erroneous references to the Hebrew Bible, to anchor the Jesus figure more securely in Judaism to allow the writers to claim Christianity as its heir, to incorporate the results of the Revolt in the Jesus story, and to accentuate the anti-Semitism now that the Jews had been defeated. Luke, or at least its first draft, was clearly written by Josephus, who used the Mark version and added details from the Jewish wars to make the Jesus figure more like Titus. Luke has a much grander historical scheme and a philosophy of God's plan for the world in keeping with Josephus' interests; thus Luke has many historical details to give the narrative a more factual tinge. Luke's purpose was to make clear that the Christ of Mark was not merely a Jewish Messiah but a World Savior, the founder of a world religion. Josephus, still proud of his Jewish heritage despite his apostasy to the Romans, also downplays the strident anti-Semitism of Matthew. Luke also contains a special section (9:51-18:14) with some material not found in any of the other gospels: Josephus must have had another source available to him for the parable of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. Paul might also have had a hand in the writing or perhaps the editing of Luke, as significantly the Gospel of Luke shares with Paul alone of New Testament writers quite a number of words and expressions (Cadbury 219).

One indication of the several stages of writing of Luke is in the contrast between the first chapter and the rest of the gospel, in particular the depiction of the characters mentioned. In the first chapter John the Baptist is treated almost as Jesus' equal, as a great prophet sent from God, whereas in the main part Jesus says of John "he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." (7:28). In the first chapter Mary is honored as the Virgin who conceived by an act of God whereas later Jesus rejects his mother when she wishes to speak to him (7:21). Equally, Jesus is first represented as the national Messiah of the Jews who "shall reign over the house of Jacob forever" (1:33) while later he becomes the Christ of Paul's teaching who suffers and dies in order to save mankind. Clearly the document has undergone major editing.

The Gospel of John had several purposes: to correct the egregious er-

rors in geography and Jewish customs of the previous gospels, to present the historical framework in a more accurate manner, to incorporate Gnostic theology in order to steal the thunder of the Gnostic rivals, to present Christianity in terms of Greek philosophical vocabulary to give it more cachet, and to anchor it more definitively in the heritage of Judaism while at the same time denigrating Jews as rejecting the Messiah.

The Gospels were also written and/or edited to combat what were later called "heretics" and to present a picture of Jesus in keeping with changing dogmas. The reason for four gospels may have been to provide each of the principal regions of churches with its own gospel that could refute the so-called heretics: Mark in Rome, Matthew in Antioch (Syria), Luke in Greece and John in Ephesus (Asia Minor). One suggestion is that Matthew was edited to combat the Ebionites who adhered to the tradition of James and the so-called Jewish Christians, Mark to combat the docetists who argued that Jesus did not suffer physically, Luke against the Marcionites who attempted to create their own Bible, and John against the Valentinians who taught Gnostic ideas (Wheeless 189, Schonfield 247) These documents were then continually revised in the succeeding centuries as the theology became more complex and to keep up with changing dogmas.

The Book of Acts was added in order to declare the Roman origin of Christianity and to affirm imperial Rome as the center of the new religion. Acts noticeably says nothing of Alexandria and mentions Antioch, the capital of Eastern Christianity, only in the beginning of its story. As Streeter says: "Acts is not intended to be a history of the first thirty years of Christianity. It is rather the story of how that religion travelled from Jerusalem, the capital of Jewry, to Rome, the capital of the world. Its aim is to trace the transition of Christianity from a sect of Judaism into a world religion." (Streeter 531) Acts had another purpose as well: to defend Paul against his critics and to establish him as the pre-eminent theologian of Christianity.

The very name "gospel" is connected with Roman imperialism. A gospel is not a known literary form in any Greek or Roman context, and in Greek literature outside of the Biblical and Christian writings both the noun and the verb are comparatively rare. The Greek noun euaggelion means "the reward of good tidings" and the verb euaggelizomai means "to bring good news, announce them". The verb ocurs for the first time in Aristophanes and was used for bringing news about victories or other joyful events but soon came to stand for the bringing of any news, good or bad. Significantly, euaggelion is found in a number of inscriptions from the early Roman imperial period, mostly related to the introduction of the Julian calendar during the reign of Augustus. The inscription from Priene of 9 BCE, the most famous

of these, has a definite parallel to the Christian message. It "celebrates the benefactions which have come into the world through Augustus, whom divine providence has sent as a savior and who has brought the wars to an end and established an order of peace", part of the religio-politcial propaganda of Augustus in which this rule of peace is proclaimed as the beginning of a new age. (Koester ancient 1-4)

The Christian writers then used its association with an imperial savior figure to create a new genre of religious writing that could be called a realistic narrative to differentiate itself from standard pagan mythological stories. "Although the use of the term realistic in this connection is rarely defined, it seems to stand in opposition to mythological or supernatural stories set in some other world and inhabited primarily by gods or devils. In other words, the gospels are taken to represent to us a story, or pieces of a story, which appears to have happened or could have happened in the primary world of our everyday experience, and which involve beings much like ourselves." (Aichele Literary 43) In this way the masses could be led to believe in the historicity of the fictions created by the authors of the Imperial court rather than being aware of their mythological nature as with pagan stories.

The Romans had a long history of using religion as a tool to assist them in conquest and a long tradition of neutralizing their enemy's religion by making it their own. In Judea Rome had tried to control the Jewish religion by appointing the high priests, but this attempt failed in the face of the stubborn opposition of the Zealots and other groups. Thus, "the imperial family would next attempt to control the religion by rewriting its Torah" (Atwill 35).

The problem the Romans faced was that "no matter how Titus tortured the Sicarii, they refused to call him Lord" (Ant. 17.23) as the Jewish religion forbids worshiping any god in human form. "To circumvent the Jews' religious stubbornness, the Flavians therefore created a religion that worshiped Caesar without its followers knowing it. To achieve this, they used the same typological method they used to link Jesus to Moses, creating parallel concepts, sequences, and locations. They created Jesus' entire ministry as a `type' of the military campaign of Titus" and placed these typological scenes "in the same sequence and in the same locations in the Gospels as they had occurred in Titus' campaign" (Atwill 10).

Thus the works of Josephus and the Gospels were created as a unified piece of literature whose characters and stories interact and which are designed to be read together. In the guise of a Jewish Messiah, Jesus' ministry was backdated to 30 CE, enabling him to foresee the events of the Jewish Rebellion of 66-73 CE, and Josephus' histories were created to document the

fact that Jesus had lived and that his prophecies had come to pass. A main purpose of the New Testament depiction of Jesus' ministry is as a satire of the Jewish enemies of Titus' campaign and many of the historical events, names and places in Josephus are repeated in the Gospels. Ultimately the goal was to set up Titus as a god in the guise of Jesus; 36 of 60 emperors from Augustus to Constantine were deified as was Titus after his death.

The Flavians were high priests of the Roman religion and collected prophecies; Vespasian even performed miracles, healing one man's blindness and another's withered limb (Atwill 26-27). Yet here is a religion, Christianity, in which the god worshiped was not a Roman Emperor and moreover praised meekness and poverty emanating from the very capital of the Roman Empire. Just the fact that Rome should be the capital of a Judean religion that the Romans allegedly continued to persecute seems strange in itself.

Yet the creators of the religion, the Flavians, were the first to profess it and much about the early history of Christianity shows their hand. It is remarkable that so many members of the Roman imperial family of the Flavians were recorded as being among the first Christians. Vespasian's granddaughter Flavia Domitilla is recorded as being the founder of the oldest Christian cemetery in Rome on property that she owned on the Atreatine Way a mile and a half from Rome. Her husband, the consul Flavius Clemens, son of Vespasian's brother Titus Flavius Sabinus and Domitian's first cousin, had been held in such high regard by Emperor Domitian that the latter associated him with himself as joint Consul in 95 CE, a sign that the childless Domitian intended to make him his heir apparent. Flavius Clemens' two sons were named Domitian and Vespasian respectively by the express order of the Emperor, a public avowal of the Emperor's intention that one or other of these boys should ultimately succeed to the throne. Flavius Clemens was at the very least a Christian sympathizer: though never professing Christianity publicly, he was noted for a marked abstention from the public duties expected of a man in his position, in particular pagan sacrifices ad gladiatorial shows, practices that Christianity opposed. His wife was a staunch Christian. But soon thereafter Domitian indicted both of them on a charge of "Christian tendencies": Clemens was executed and Domitilla was exiled. There is some confusion in the records as to which Domitilla was a Christian, as both her mother and her grandmother were also called Flavia Domitilla; perhaps more than one were Christians. (Goguel Birth 529-533, Streeter 535-537)

This Flavius Clemens may well have been the same person as the first pope of whom anything is known as an individual, Clement, the 4th pope or rather the bishop of Rome. The notion that Pope Clenment was a Flavian was recorded in the Acts of Saints Nereus and Achilleus, a 5th or 6th century work based on earlier traditions. The early theologians called him the

direct successor of Peter and a fellow laborer of Paul and the 2nd and 3rd popes on today's official list may well have been invented, perhaps to hide the obvious Flavian connection to the true second pope. Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians makes clear that the pope in Rome had authority over all other congregations, an authority modeled on the Roman army. His letter is mainly concerned with the liturgy and authority of the church while the life and teachings of Jesus as well as his redemptive work are barely mentioned (Atwill 29-31, 87; Goguel Birth 386-387)

Surprisingly, despite the emphasis on Roman persecution of Christianity in Christian histories, a number of other emperors besides the Flavians were partial to Christianity. Tiberius (14-37 CE) made a formal proposition to the Senate that Christ be received among the Roman gods; the Senate, however, rejected this proposal. Nero (54-68) wished to be informed of the new religion and from the beginning was favorable to it. Hadrian (117-138) wished to erect a temple to Christ and to give him a place among the gods. Elagabalus (218-222) constructed a temple on the Palatine near the imperial residence that celebrated the rites of all religions, including the ceremonies of the Christian Church. Alexander Severus (222-235), showed the greatest favor to the Christians, kept in his private chapel statues of Abraham, Orpheus, Christ and Appollonius of Tyana, four mighty prophetai to whom he paid the same reverence and at one time intended to build a temple in Christ's honor. (Healy 17-19)

Yet the letters of Hadrian reveal the real attitudes of the Roman emperors. "His interest in the religions of the Empire arose solely from political motives...Personally he had the profoundest contempt for the national gods... He despised all religions and saw in the conflicts of the sects nothing but a subject for mirth and raillery...He says, `the worshippers of Serapis are Christians, and they who call themselves bishops of Christ worship Serapis. Every archisynagogus of the Jews, every Samaritan, and every Christian presbyter is an astrologer, a soothsayer, or a quack doctor'...With lofty disdain he sneered at all religions, saying, `They have one god, Money, worshipped alike by Christian, Jew, and Gentile.'" (Healy 42-43)

Thus it is clear that the Roman emperors were far from being anything that can be called "believers" but fully understood the political purpose and fictionalized nature of Christianity. The writers whom they commissioned to create its documents and theology knew they were creating an elaborate fiction for political purposes, but also left many clues that would enable the intelligent and perspicacious to see through their game. We have already seen all the contradictions in the New Testament that are easily enumerated if a reader takes the trouble to compare the four gospels. The average Christian believer will of course not do that and will accept the standard

story given by the church. But it is still hard to understand why a church that prides itself on its unchanging dogma would leave itself so open to criticism by any of the educated class who takes the slightest effort to look more closely at its sacred scriptures.

Nor is it easy to believe that such intelligent men as Josephus, Paul and Seneca would not have been aware of these contradictions and would not have edited them out. One can only conclude that they are left in deliberately, precisely to alert the educated to the ruse. In particular, what the Gospels are revealing is that their figure of Jesus is an amalgam of several people (Jesus, James, John the Baptist) and that their story is that of multiple Jesuses. We see it in the differences in birth and death dates: the same person cannot be born in 4 BCE (Matthew) and 6 CE (Luke) at the same time, nor can the same person be crucified on the day of Passover (Synoptics) as well as on Passover itself (John). We see it in the unresolvable contradictions in Jesus' teachings and in his character. We see it as well in the contradictions of the four stories of his last three days in Jerusalem.

And we see it above all in the disparities of the empty tomb and the multitude of Jesus sightings after the resurrection. In John 20:1-15 one woman, Mary, sees two angels inside the tomb; in Matthew 28:1-8 two women see one angel outside the tomb; in Mark 16:1-8 three women see one angel inside the tomb; in Luke 24:1-24 a group of women see two angels inside the tomb. Atwill points out that these events happen at different points in the morning: in John it is still dark, in Matthew it is dawn, in Mark the sun has risen and in Luke it is "very early in the morning". If one correlates the movements of the male disciples with this sequence, then the implication is that the whole thing is a comedy of errors and that the women have really been seeing the men and have mistaken them for angels! (Atwill 125-142) This of course impugns their credibility as to whether the tomb of Jesus was really empty or whether they are even at the right tomb. Note that in Matthew the women never look inside the tomb and it is the angel who tells them that the tomb is empty.

In the same way, the Gospels multiply resurrection stories but emphasize that the disciples are not at all clear that it is Jesus. In John 20:15 Mary Magdalene mistakes Jesus for a gardener and ask him if he has carried Jesus away. In Mt 28:17 "some doubted" when they saw him; in Luke 24:37 "they were terrified and frightened and supposed they had seen a spirit"; in Luke 24:16 they did not recognize him and in John 21:4 "the disciples did not know it was Jesus."

Moreover, different numbers of disciples in different places are referred to as having seen the resurrected Jesus: in Matthew 28:17 there are 11 on a mountain in Galilee; in Luke 24:15 there are two in a village named

Emmaus; in Mark 16:9-14 Jesus appears first to Mary Magdalene, then to two walking in the country and then to eleven at table; and in John 20:19-21:2 he reveals himself to the disciples, first to 11, then to 12, and then to 6. Paul reports in 1 Cor 15:5-8 that Jesus appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the 12, then to more than 500 at one time, though some were asleep, then to James, then to all the apostles, and finally to Paul himself. Obviously none of these reports agree with one another and this seriously impugns their credibility.

As Atwill points out: "The herd of Jesuses roaming about at the conclusion of the four Gospels are a joke reflecting the fact that there were numerous individuals claiming to be be the Messiah during this era,a fact that is recorded in both the New Testament and War of the Jews...Since there are already so many `Messiahs' or `Christs', there is no reason why Titus could not be one as well" (Atwill 158). In John 21 the story of Titus' campaign against the Jews comes full circle: the same disciples who Jesus chooses and predicts will become "catchers of men" go fishing in the same lake in which the Romans once caught Jewish rebels like fish. Yet the Jesus they once followed - "Jesus, the son of Shaphat, the principal head of a band of robbers" - is now dead and they follow someone they do not recognize whom they help to be the real fisher of men: Titus (Atwill 152-155).

Apart from the underlying political message, these stories are clearly not intended to be consistent and are a warning to the wise not to take any supernatural tales too seriously. The authors may even be trying to undermine their slavish promotion of the Flavian cause by giving a "philosophical statement advocating reason over religious mysticism. The reader must resolve those logical contradictions: if he or she fails, the punishment is belief in a false god." (Atwill 158)

Josephus too makes clear that his story of Jesus' divinity is not to be taken seriously. There has been much discussion whether his mention of Jesus in Antiquities 18.3.3 §63-64 is a Christian forgery and interpolation in its entirety or whether there is an original passage that Josephus wrote that was then altered later. It is certainly an odd mix of purely Christian statements with phrases that no Christian would write. I have underlined the clearly Christian parts in what is called the Testimonium Flavianum: "At about this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if one might call him a man. For he was a worker of surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth with pleasure. He stirred up many of the Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon an indictment brought by the principal men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him from the very first did not cease to be attached to him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the holy prophets had foretold this and myriads of other marvels concerning him. And the tribe of the Christians, so

called after him, has to this day still not disappeared."

It is clear from his writings that Josephus was not a Christian and that he would not have written such blatant Christian dogma, nor is there any evidence that this passage was even present in the texts of the Antiquities known before the 4th century. This passage was not quoted by Church theologians until Eusebius in 325 CE. Origen in the first half of the 3rd century does not seem to have read it, since twice he says plainly that Josephus did not believe Jesus to be the Christ (Comm. in Matt. 10.17), though he is astonished that Josephus speaks so warmly of Jesus' brother James (c. Celsum 1.47, 2.13). He does however quote the Antiquities to show that the Jews ascribed the defeat of the Tetarch Herod to his murder of John the Baptist. Clement of Alexandria also quotes Josephus, but it seems that both Origen and Clement did not know Josephus first-hand but were quoting a pious Christian abstract.

No Church Fathers from the 2nd to the 4th century quote this passage and even after Eusebius three 4th century Fathers and five from the 5th century up, including Augustine, cite Josephus but not this passage. In all no fewer than 11 Fathers prior to or contemporary with Eusebius cite various passages from Josephus but not the Testimonium. It is not clear that any Christian writer before Origen had even read Antiquities. In the early 5th century only Jerome cites it and only once, even though he thinks highly of Josephus and cites other passages 90 times. In addition, there is a 6th century table of contents in the Latin version of the Antiquities which omits all mention of the passage. Though the oldest Latin manuscript of Josephus' works is from the 6th century and the oldest Greek from the 10th, the earliest manuscript containing the Testimonium is not until the 11th century. Even in the 16th century Vossius had a manuscript of Josephus which did not contain the passage.

In summary, none of the early Christian writers ever quote the passage as evidence in their controversies with Jews and pagans which, had they known it, they certainly would have done, as it would have been excellent evidence. They did not point to this passage in their arguments until the 4th century. Before Origen, Christian writers cited Josephus as an authority on things Jewish in works that were ostensibly addressed to pagans or heretics but not as an authority on any specifically Christian figure, including Jesus, James and John the Baptist. All this argues for a 4th century Christian interpolation of the entire passage. (Bentwich 241-242, Barrett 198-199, Rylands 14, Wells J Myth 201-204, Smith Mag 45, Whealey 7, 11)

On the other hand, if a Christian editor had written the whole passage, it seems highly unlikely that he would really have called Jesus a "wise

man" or referred to Christians as people who "accept the truth with pleasure (hedone)" or not referred outright to Jesus as a teacher of truth. Nor would he have been so self-effacing as to say that Christians have "still not disappeared" as opposed to saying they have triumphed or some such more glorious phrase. And in a later passage in Ant. 20.9.1 §200 Josephus refers to "James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Messiah" without further explanation, implying that he has already been mentioned before and supporting the existence of the previous passage. (A Christian forger would also have written "the Messiah" rather than "called the Messiah".)

It has thus been argued that once one leaves out the obviously Christian elements, one is left with a fairly neutral statement that could plausibly come from an outside observer. After all, as Thackeray maintains, "it is illogical to argue...that the Christians preserved the historian's work largely on account of the so-called testimonium de Christo, and at the same time that they themselves have interpolated it. They may have tampered with the text, but if the historian's writings owe their preservation to some allusion to Christ, they must have found there already something which met with at least their partial approval." (Thackeray Josephus 130). This original neutral version could account for Origen's comment that Josephus did not believe Jesus to be the Christ but without complaining of the tone of the remark: a deprecatory reference would have aroused his indignation and what he read did not have this effect.

The reference to Josephus' lack of belief in Jesus as the Christ may have been the reason why the Christian writers did not cite it before the 4th century, and it is most likely that Eusebius rewrote it to make it more palatable to Christian sensibilities. Eusebius is the first Christian writer to be both familiar enough with and to have access to Josephus' works. Until 313 CE Josephus' works were kept in the Roman public library to benefit a largely pagan readership, so Christians could not have tampered with his works before then. Once Christians destroyed the libraries of the Roman Empire and controlled the publishing of all books, the forged passages could be successfully inserted into the Testimonium and Josephus began his rapid climb in Christian estimation. (Whealey 19)

Meier's linguistic analysis of the style of the original passage and that of these interpolated parts as compared with the style of the New Testament bears this conclusion out: "Not one word of what I identify as the original text of the Testimonium fails to occur elsewhere in Josephus, usually with the same meaning and/or construction." For instance, Josephus uses "wise man" to refer to Solomon and Daniel and "incredible deeds" to refer to Elisha; "leading men" is also a characteristic Josephan phrase.

But in the three interpolated portions "when we consider the number of words and constructions in the core of the Testimonium that are not found in the NT, the total agreement of the interpolations with the vocabulary of the NT is striking...The difference from the core text is clear: in the core, not only are the vocabulary and style overwhelmingly Josephan, but at least some of the vocabulary is absent from the NT and some of the content is at variance with what the NT says." (Meier 80-83, citation 83)

There is support for the idea that the original version was at least neutral, if not positive, in an Arabic version discovered by Shlomo Pines, a history of the world entitled Book of the Title (Kitab al-`Unwan) written around 941/42 CE by Agapius, the Christian Arab and Melkite bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor. A citation from "Josephus the Hebrew" says:

At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. His conduct was good and he was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive; accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders. (Pines Arabic)

This is certainly not a Christian version, despite its citation in a book by a bishop: a Christian would never write "wise man" and "perhaps the Messiah" and would make far greater claims than that his "conduct was good". Could Josephus have originally written something like this version? However, this quotation in Arabic was translated from Syriac which was in turn translated from a Greek version that seems to have received some deliberate alterations by Christian copyists. Yet there might still be an original kernel of Josephus. Perhaps he really did write something positive about Jesus originally. (Charlesworth Jesus 95-97)

The problem is that the context in Josephus does not allow for such a neutral or positive statement. Preceding the Testimonium are two incidents involving Pontius Pilate which cast both Pilate and the protesting Jews in an unfavorable light (Ant. 18.55-59; War 2.169-177). Here Josephus seems more concerned with making formal and literary parallels than with the historical facts as such. In the first Pilate (whom Josephus calls "procurator" even though his real title was "prefect") introduces military standards with a picture of the Emperor to Jerusalem, and in another he uses Temple funds to build an aqueduct to Jerusalem. The incidents are part of Josephus' continu-

ing theme of contrasting Titus' benevolence toward the Jews with the brutality and rapacity of all who precede him: Antiochus, Herod, Pontius Pilate and Gaius Caligula. (Weber 73)

Both incidents use similar vocabulary and follow the same literary patterns: Pilate provoking the Jews by violating their customs, the Jews refusing to transgress their laws, the people creating a "disturbance" by yelling or pleading while he sits on his tribunal platform, Pilate ordering soldiers to surround the rabble, and the Jews showing courage in the face of death. Josephus offers very little in the way of historical details to flesh out his story, and neither the story of the introduction of the standards or that of the aqueduct make much sense as they now stand. But the choice of words ("rabble", "disturbance", "concerted" movement) is clearly pejorative. With the equally pejorative concluding words "and thus an end was put to this sedition" Josephus sets the stage for the story of Jesus in the Testimonium which is hereby associated with sedition against the Romans. (Mason JJ 18-25)

Right after the Testimonium he says "about the same time also another sad calamity put the Jews into disorder" and then tells two rather scurrilous and satirical tales of religious charlatanry involving Paulina and Fulvia. Significantly, these two stories are not told in War which does contain the same account of Pilate but not the Jesus story: clearly the Testimonium and the stories of Paulina and Fulvia go together.

In the first story a high-ranking Roman equestrian Decius Mundus is in love with Paulina, a wealthy woman who "by the regular conduct of a virtuous life had a great reputation", yet she will not sleep with him for all the money in the world, not even for 200,000 Attic drachmas. But because she is such a devoted believer in the goddess Isis, his freed-woman Ide helps him trick Paulina into doing so by bribing priests of Isis to make her believe that the god Anubis wanted to make love to her. Thus she goes gladly with her husband's permission and spends the night with the disguised Mundus. Her husband Saturninus reports this to the Emperor Tiberius who then orders the priests as well as Ide to be crucified while only banishing Decius Mundus.

The second story concerns a disgraced Jewish teacher "who had been driven away from his own country by an acusation laid against him for transgressing their laws and by the fear he was under of punishment for the same, but in all respects a wicked man". With three partners he persuades a woman named Fulvia "of great dignity and one that had embraced the Jewish religion" to send purple and gold to the Temple at Jerusalem which they then use for themselves. She was also married to a Saturninus who reported this to Tiberius who then ordered the Jews, numbering 4000 men, to be ban-

ished from Rome, a rather drastic punishment for the transgressions of four men.

Clearly these two stories are meant to be parallels with each other and with the Testimonium right before them. Both husbands are named Saturninus and in both cases an appeal is made to Tiberius. In both cases a wicked priest exploits a woman's weakness for religion and shows the hollowness of the belief in divinity. The equivalence of the two women is also shown by the fact that Paulina rends her garments as an expression of grief when she finds out what she has done: but this is a specifically Jewish custom which Paulina, as a follower of Isis, would not engage in but the Jewish Fulvia would.

Decius Mundus, modeled on a real Roman soldier names Decius Mus who sacrificed himself to save his legion, appears to Paulina on the third day to announce that he was not a god, a parallel to Jesus who appears on the third day to say he was a god. In Hegesippus' retelling of the story he adds the detail of pregnancy (De excidio 2.12.1): if that was once in the original, that would add a satire of the virgin birth as well. And Paulina may well be a symbol for the stubborn Jews who refused to love the Romans until they were tricked into doing so by a false god.

The Fulvia story could easily be a satire on Paul who collected funds for the Jerusalem Christians and whose converts included large numbers of wealthy women: this story is clearly implying that Paul kept these funds for himself. It seems logical that if the Testimonium satirizes the founder of Christianity, then the Fulvia story would do the same for its foremost propagator.

By having these mocking parallels follow his depiction of the divine Jesus Josephus is clearly poking fun at his own story of a man's divinity. Putting these three stories side by side, they end up essentially being the same: Jesus/Decius Mundus/Paul deceiving and "screwing" Greeks and Jews/devout Paulina/devout Jewish Fulvia = the fictional Jesus figure deceiving the Jews who are nonetheless receiving the fictional truth with pleasure. These satirical parallels would of course only become apparent to an attentive reader. (Atwill 226-249, Bell 20-22)

The strong implication is thus that the Jesus incident is also a calamity and that Jesus was similar to the charlatans in the story that follows. The phrase in the opening of the passage - ginetai de (there lived) - is only used by Josephus to introduce a calamity, disturbance or trouble. (Thackeray Josephus 142-143) And the word epago, usually translated as "win over", has a pejorative implication and means "bring to, lead on, let loose, instigate". Brandon, Bruce and other scholars thus conclude that Josephus had written something derogatory and between the time of Origen and Eusebius the

text had been radically altered. After all, Tacitus and Suetonius make neutral statements about Jesus and their texts were never altered. The original might have read as follows:

"At about this time arose a source of further trouble in one Jesus, a wise man who was a worker of surprising feats and a teacher of such people as accept the truth with pleasure. He led away many of the Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the so-called Christ. When Pilate, upon an indictment brought by the principal men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had attached themselves to him from the very first did not cease to cause trouble and the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has to this day still not disappeared." (Bruce Jesus 39, slightly edited)

It is not typical of Josephus to mention such an important incident as the life and death of Jesus in so few words and in general he loves to expound at great length on every petty incident. It would be much more characteristic of him to avoid the whole subject because it treats of the Messianic ideas of the Jews which after the Jewish rebellion were a topic of high sensitivity among the Romans. It is significant that he does not mention Jesus in the earlier Jewish War where he also recounts the same stories of Pilate but in the later Antiquities. So the fact that he mentions it so briefly here indicates that he does not consider it a historical incident deserving of great detail and that he has a distinct political purpose for inserting any mention at all.

It would be hard to believe that a historian of Josephus' caliber would not mention the actual founder of a Jewish sect that by 93 CE was fairly widespread and attracted many Greeks and Romans as well. In his voluminous history he mentions many popular leaders and ten Messsianic agitators (who did not actually call themselves Messiah) as well as 12 other Jesuses and he has a good deal to tell us about Pontius Pilate (18.3). That would have been a good place to discuss the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, which must have been notable events if they had really occurred. The fact that he does not is a clear sign that the Jesus of Nazareth of the New Testament did not exist as a historical figure, but he did exist as a literary figure.

Josephus' odd choice of words makes clear his ironic intent and explains why this passage uses words in ways that are not characteristic of Josephus. The word poietes, "worker, one who does", had, in Josephus' day, already come to have a special reference to literary poets, and Josephus uses it this way nine times consistently elsewhere to speak of Greek poets like Homer. The word phyle, "tribe", is used by Josephus 11 other times to mean a distinct people, race or nationality, such as Jews and Parthians. Yet in this

context the term is disaparaging: Christians regarded themselves as a community with no racial barriers and would never have called themselves a "tribe".

The word hedone, "pleasure", is not usually coupled with talethe, "the true". Thackeray has therefore suggested that talethe is a Christian interpolation and that the original word was ta aethe, "the unusual, strange", in which a simple erasure of the middle bar of the capital letter "A" would convert it into talethe. Moreover, the phrase "receive with pleasure" is used eight times in Josephus, but only once with a positive sense: the other seven refer to the welcome given to an impostor, to Judas the Galilean in his rash revolt which led to the nation's ruin, to a plot for the seduction of a Roman matron, to plans of conspiracy, and to the malicious pleasure afforded by the news of the death of two Roman emperors (Ant. 17.329, 18.6, 18.70, 19.185, 18.236, 19.127). (Mason J+NT 169-170, Thackeray Josephus 145)

All three of these words seem entirely out of place in their contexts here. But by calling Jesus a "poet" Josephus is making clear his fictional nature. By equating "truth" with "pleasure" he shows the questionable nature of the truth offered by Jesus and he equates Jesus with impostors, charlatans and conspirators (if the original word was "the unusual", he would still be equating Jesus with fictions and bizarre stories). And by calling Christians a "tribe" separate from the Jews he is making clear that Christianity has nothing to do with Judaism, despite its claims.

Politically speaking, by referring to "the indictment of the principal men", Josephus is making a political and pro-Roman statement: he is informing his Gentile readers that the `tribe of the Christians' which they disliked had originated in Judaea but the Jewish authorities, realizing its pernicious nature, had dealt promptly with its founder, by providing the local Roman governor with the necessary evidence of his guilt to justify his execution." (Brandon Jesus 364) And in the context of the New Testament, if Josephus is one of the authors, he is assuring his Roman readers that even though he has helped to create the Jesus figure of the Gospels, he is well aware that it is only a joke played on the gullible lower classes.

But if it is true that Josephus was one of the authors of the New Testament in the 60's, at least of Luke, why would he then be so critical of Christianity and of Paul in the 90's when he wrote Antiquities, to the extent of giving the game away? It seems very likely that he had second thoughts about his role as a Jewish apostate working to foist an anti-Semitic religion on his former countrymen. His sense of guilt impelled him to write the apologetic Jewish Antiquities which attempted to undo his vilification of the Jews in his

Jewish War. Here he attempted to dispel the ridicule and misinformation that characterized Roman portrayals of the Jews by magnifying their accomplishments and giving a record of their ancient and glorious history.

The Testimonium, which is only found there and not in the earlier War, may thus be an attempt to alert his readers to the true calamity of Christianity that he had helped unleash onto the world: Paul the wicked Jew, pretending to instruct the Jews in their laws but in reality defrauding the Temple, and the Romans "screwing" the Jews by inflicting a false Messiah on them.

All the same, only the educated read his book; the common people would never be privy to the secret.

Chapter 29:
Christianity in the Roman Empire

Christianity was not intended for the educated classes, who were consistently disdainful of it, but for the common people who were gullible enough to be fooled by it. Normally the Roman upper classes were quite cynical toward all religions and saw them only as a tool to control the lower classes; that is exactly why the Roman emperors were deified. Upper- class Romans were convinced that Christianity was one of a multitude of degraded foreign cults - "atrocious and shameful things", as Tacitus put it - that infested Rome. Tacitus called Christianity "a most mischievous superstition" and Christians were a "class hated for their abominations" (Ann. 15.44). "Romans of higher social classes believed that these oriental superstitions polluted Roman life and that they attacked the very fiber of society like a debilitating disease."

Generally speaking, Romans lumped both Judaism and Christianity together as offensive oriental cults with the difference being that the antiquity of Judaism elicited a grudging acceptance. Romans such as Tacitus considered Judaism to have "perverse and disgusting" customs and its religion to be "tasteless and mean" (Hist. 5.5), and they criticized its standoffishness and exclusivity, all vices which Christianity shared without the virtue of antiquity that Judaism had. Though Tacitus and Suetonius may have mixed up Jews and Christians in the first century, in the 2nd century, the era of the Antonine Emperors, an active literary and intellectual opposition, including Crescens, Fronto, Lucian and Celsus, focused itself on Christianity.

Educated pagans saw right through the Christian claim to be derived from Judaism while at the same time rejecting the Jewish community and its customs and laws. Celsus, author of On the True Doctrine about 180 CE, the most formidable enemy of the Christians whose works were painstakingly sought out and destroyed by the church, argued that the Christian repudiation of its origin proved the illegitimacy of the new movement, as it had no ancient traditions. Though Celsus had little admiration for the Jews, "they observe a worship which may be peculiar, but it is at least traditional." (Benko 21-22, Wilken 114-116, Healy 48)

Christianity was considered a mere superstition rather than a real

religion, due to its strange practices such as glossolalia, confessions of sins, prophecies, sacraments, and the sexual aberrations of fringe groups. In addition, it had a destructive effect on family life because it demanded the total allegiance of the individual; Eusebius said every town and house is divided by a civil war waged between Christians and idolaters.

Christians were also unpopular because they appeared to constitute a secret society whose members recognized each other by private signs and were bound together by some mysterious intimacy. At a time when the empire was in grave danger Christians shirked to their duty as citizens by refusing to serve in the army or civilian offices. They were held responsible for natural calamities as their atheism offended the gods and they were even accused of incestuous orgies and ritual baby eating, as described by the Latin rhetorician Marcus Cornelius Fronto (100-166?). The Christian theologian Tertullian in his Apology mentions the charges of murder, cannibalism, treason, sacrilege, atheism and incest, charges that were widely believed even by the educated as late as 180 CE. (Dodds 111-116, Benko 23, Celsus 16-18, Berner 56-57)

Romans, who believed in a staunchly pluralistic view of religion, particularly resented the arrogance of Christians in claiming exclusive possession of the absolute truth. Celsus said: "They regularly discuss fundamental principles and make arrogant pronouncements about matters of which they know nothing." What astonished all the early pagan observers was the willingness of Christians to die for unproved assertions and for their total faith in a guaranteed afterlife, leaving them willing to reject all the pleasures of this life.

At the same time, they were considered to be gullible and credulous people incapable of rational thought and thus relying solely on faith. Emperor Julian said: "There is nothing in your philosophy beyond the one word `Believe!'" Galen, who was actually sympathetic to Christianity, said: "Most people are unable to follow any demonstrative argument consecutively; hence they need parables, and benefit from them just as now we see the people called Christians drawing their faith from parables and miracles, yet sometimes acting in the same way as those who practice philosophy." (Galen understood by parables tales of rewards and punishments in a future life). (Benko 57-58, 142, Dodds 121)

Lucian's satirical biography of the philosopher Peregrinus Proteus (110-165) has this huckster becoming a member of a church solely to exploit gullible Christians who continue to treat him as a hero even after he is imprisoned by the authorities. Lucian makes fun of the ease with which a reasonably clever man manages to enjoy a status second only to the "founder"

himself, an obvious reference to the speed with which Jesus was catapulted into significance by his followers and a comment on Jesus as a deceiver who used magical arts to lead Israel into apostasy (Celsus 25-26).

It was a "common charge against the church that its doctrines had gained credence only with a public unable to tell truth from nonsense. They were believed only by children, slaves and especially women. Ardent credulity was presented as a weakness characteristic of the sex, pagan or Christian... Women, except at the very bottom of society, had far less liberty to stir about in the towns and gain a wide experience than men; so their capacity for critical discrimination would be less well developed." (Macmullen christiani 39)

One major reason for the conspicuous female presence in the churches was the elevated status Christianity gave to widows and virgins. Of course this also had financial benefits for the Church: widows controlled and inherited their husbands' property and the Church was a natural candidate for their bequests as was also the case for young virgins who inherited their parents' property. "By idealizing virginity and frowning on second marriage, the Church was to become a force without equal in the race for inheritance" (Fox Pagans 309-310). Yet given the patriarchial nature of Roman society, a religion dominated by women was immediately suspect. Nor did it help the Christian cause that the only New Testament witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus were women whose testimony had no standing in contemporary courts.

The very epithet "Christian" is a Roman one and a pejorative one at that and only became widely used relatively late. It is not found in Paul's letters and in the New Testament it only occurs three times: Acts 11:26, 26:28 and 1 Pet. 4:16. Before the middle of the 2nd century, it is used once in the Didache (12.4). The word does not occur in the earliest Christian writers, except in Ignatius (50-115 CE) who was a native of Antioch where the term was first used or even invented. Only after the middle of the 2nd century is the name used more frequently among Christian authors such as Justin Martyr, but even there it is often a defense against accusations: "Those who are accused of being Christians" (Bickerman 115, Pritz 11, 15).

In the Middle East, including Persia, Arabia, Armenia, Syria and Palestine, the Aramaic-derived word "Nazorean" or "Nazarene" (Nazoraioi) and its cognates, rather than the Greek-derived word "Christian", were always the normative term (Taylor Phen 316).

What this signifies is that there was a major difference between the Gentile Christians who believed in a deified Christ and the Jewish followers of the wisdom teacher Jesus who were called Nazarenes. Later histories of Christianity have always conflated the two and claimed the Nazarenes as Christians but in reality they had little to do with one another, as we have

seen in Chapter 13 in our discussion of James. Acts 24:5 even admits as much in calling Jesus a "ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." Yet the patristic literature before Epiphanius does not mention Nazarenes, a good indication that they were not considered to be Christians (Pritz 16).

The name Christianus has a Latin ending -ianus and must therefore have been given to the new sect by outsiders rather than being something they called themselves. When Acts 11:26 says "the disciples bore the name of Christians first in Antioch," the verb chrematizo indicates an official or legal style as is shown by all the respective uses of it (Bickerman 109-110, Peterson 356-357). In normal Greek the followers of Christ, a Greek term, would be designated by an appellation with the suffix -eios, and Greek nouns with Latin suffixes are rare.

These terms normally mean that "men or things referred to, belong to the person to whose name the suffix is added." Other such constructions (Galbiani, Augustiani) refer to the soldiers of a general and Herodianoi refers to slaves and freedmen of the Herodians (Bickerman 116-118, Mattingly 27).

The Augustiani, who were a paramilitary corps of devotees of Nero trained to create an impression of fervor, may well have been the satirical model for the term Christiani. The early Christians "never wearied of proclaiming allegiance to a person called Christus, whose praises they sang in formal hymns"; this reminded the citizens of the Syrian city of Antioch, who were well-known for their irreverence and aptitude for ridicule and scurrilous wit, of the ludicrous antics of the Augustiani and "the name Christiani would adroitly ridicule both groups at once." The pejorative meaning of the term was enhanced by the fact that the Greek verb khristeis meant the process of massaging with olive oil, usually performed by prostitutes, that took place in public bathhouses.

Its original use by outsiders as an ironic and contemptuous term explains why for a long time it was not used by believers themselves until it became a title of honor during the later persecutions. From Antioch this name would soon pass to Rome where it was current by 64 CE and was then adopted by the Roman authorities (Mattingly 28-32, Harwood 296, Peterson 358n, Goguel Birth 184-185. A good number of early Biblical commentators have pointed out the mockery implied by the name: Gerke, Zahn, Carr, Preuschen, Wettstein). Thus, the name "Christian" is a derisive term for a slave.

Correspondingly, the writers of the New Testament often mention Christ's slaves (1 Cor 7:22-24, Rom 1:1, Tit 1:1, 2 Pet. 1:1, Phil. 1:1, Col. 4:12 etc.). It was Jewish convention and a title of honor to call themselves "slaves of God", meaning that they were subjects of God and no one else on earth.

But the Christian meaning twists this around by transferring the notion of slavery to a human figure. It would have been shocking to both pagan and Jewish ears for Christians to say "slaves of Christ" in public as that would have suggested the blasphemous idea that the Messiah they adored was a god; thus the word "Christian" was preferred. (Bickerman 119-123) It is not hard to see this in the context of the Roman politics that we have seen above, in that the Roman authorities are once again tricking the common people to call themselves their slaves (Jesus = Titus) in the guise of religious egalitarianism.

Considering the universal disdain for Christianity extending to its very name, it should come as no great surprise that its adherents remained few and far between and that not until the official boost of Constantine in 312 CE did it turn into a viable religion. By the early part of the 2nd century Christian groups, generally quite small, from several dozen to several hundred people, could be found in perhaps 40 or 50 cities in the Empire. Even larger Christian groups were still only a small mnority in the places where they lived. The total number of Christians was probably less than 50,000, an infinitesimally small number in a society of 60 million; the Jews, by contrast, were a significant minority numbering 4-5 million and had been 6 million before the massacres under Titus and Trajan. Christianity remained very much a religion of Palestine, Asia Minor, some cities of Greece and Macedonia, and Rome. Most inhabitants of the Roman Empire had never heard of Christianity and very few had any firsthand contact with Christians. (Wilken 31, Ludlow 23-24)

This lack of contact is also due to the humble class origin of Christians and their penchant for secrecy. Most Christians were workers in low level urban employments and they were non-existent in the countryside. Christians avoided attention, kept to themselves, and avoided the festivities and public celebrations of their pagan neighbors. The church had no mission, it made no organized or official approach to unbelievers; rather, it left everything to the individual. (Macmullen Chr 34)

Yet the writings of their spokesmen were voluminous and this small but extremely articulate minority continually exaggerated the world-wide success of their religion. In an unguarded moment Origen did admit in the 240s that Christians were only a tiny fraction of the world's inhabitants. Even this small group of Christian authors was only found in the Empire's great cities - Rome, Carthage, Alexandria, Ephesus and Antioch (Fox pagans 269-270)

All the authorities agree that evidence for the existence of Christians in the Roman Empire is hard to find. A quarter of a million inscriptions in

Latin have been found throughout the Roman Empire, on all subjects and of all types, but from the Christian population they exist only in tiny numbers. Only after 312 CE did they become prominent. (Macmullen Chr 102-103) The same is true for other documentary evidence: "Although we have so much incidental material for life in the Empire, the inscriptions, pagan histories, texts and papyri make next to no reference to Christians before 250; the two fullest histories, written in the early third century, do not even mention them." (Fox Pagans 269) The mentions by Roman writers of Christians are also few, and almost universally pejorative.

The 1st century philosopher Plutarch, an intellectually curious man interested in the customs and beliefs of many people, who knew about the worship of Mithra, Isis, Osiris and many other deities, who was himself a priest and a deeply religious man, says absolutely nothing about Christianity in all his voluminous writings. This is particularly startling as he visited many of the cities and regions where Christianity was present and he was in touch with many people who might themselves not be unaware of the new movement (Betz Plutarch's ethical 304).

The main reason so little evidence can be found before the 4th century is that orthodox Christianity as such simply did not exist anywhere but in the minds of a few Church theologians. People who are now called Christians were far from unified in their beliefs and there was a wide diversity and multiplicity of interpretations. As Helmut Koester wisely points out: "Christian groups later labeled heretical actually predominated in the first two or three centuries, both geographically and theologically...The criteria used for designating heresies such as `Jewish-Christian' and `gnostic' are questionable. The assumption implied in such criteria, that heresies always derive from undue foreign influences, is misleading, since Christianity as a whole, whether labeled heretical or orthodox, has assimilated and absorbed a staggering quantity of outside influences. Christianity...is a thoroughly syncretistic religion." (Koester Traj 114-115)

This tendency of scholars and historians to group people into movements or religions with defined labels is highly misleading for this period. It was far more common to have independent spiritual and philosophical teachers, either wandering from place to place or settled in one location, who each had their own listeners, adherents and disciples. They might speak either from their own authority or as the disciple of another. And even when they belonged to a philosophical school, they still taught their own followers.

This individualistic structure is what we almost invariably see in the early history of "Christianity". Such a teacher, of course, was Jesus and it is clear from the Gospel of Thomas that he spoke only to disciples and not to

"crowds" as is depicted in the New Testament. The same is true for the New Testament figures John the Baptist, Paul and James. But the so-called Gnostics and all the Christian "heretics" were also based on single charismatic figures. Paul makes this fact quite clear in his letters when he complains about rival teachers invading his turf and taking his adherents away from him. 1 Cor 1:12 shows that members of religious groups defined themselves by the names of their leading teachers, be it Paul, Apollos (an Alexandrian disciple of John the Baptist), Peter, or Jesus. These teachers then invoked their own authority against each other in their disputes.

The continuous interpretation given by the Christian Churchmen that they represented the true orthodoxy accepted by the majority with only some heretics persisting in teaching falsehoods is clearly fictitious, tendentious and self-serving. Walter Bauer, who above all other scholars has shown the non-existence of orthodoxy, says: "Quite frequently we hear the churchmen bewail the extent of the danger from heresy, but nowhere do we find them attempting to adduce numerical evidence of the success of their own position concerning the outcome...No one can avoid the impression produced by the abundance of forms of heresy already evident in the second century and the mass of literary works produced by them... Until around 200...we are forced to conclude that in this camp a far more extensive literary activity had been developed than in the ecclesiastical circles." (Bauer Orth 193-194)

Even after Emperor Constantine created an imperial mass religion and called it Christianity, the Gnostic teachers continued to give the imperial cult stiff competition so that "in some regions Christianity was in danger of dissolving into the Gnostic movement as a Christ-tinged Gnostic religion" (Krause literar 223). Indeed, "especially in Egyptian Christianity it took a long time before the border-line between orthodoxy and heresy became clearly discernible" and thus the Gnostics were well in the mainstream of Christianity until the imperial cult defined orthodoxy in such a way as to exclude and forcibly suppress them." (Van den Broek 69-70).

There are more books than one can count on the "rise and triumph of Christianity" and invariably they start with the life of Jesus and show gradual increase until the final triumph under Constantine. Yet invariably the evidence they cite for this dramatic spread of Christianity always seems to come from the Christian writers themselves. And whenever scholars actually look in the historical records and documents for evidence of Christianity they just as invariably come up short-handed. One question that should be asked is whether the number of bishops really indicates flourishing Christian churches or whether it is simply a case of multiplication of bureaucrats as we find in all organizations of any age.

Let us look briefly at the evidence for early Christianity in the various regions of the Roman Empire, beginning with the Holy Land itself. Even contemporary Christian writers admit that there were no Christians in Galilee, the area most closely associated with Jesus, up to the 4th century. Epiphanius writes of the Jewish convert, Joseph of Tiberias, who wished to build churches in Jewish strongholds in Galilee around 335 CE. He says that no churches had been erected in Jewish towns and villages because of the rule that "neither Hellenes nor Samaritans nor Christians are to be among them. This rule of permitting no other race is obserevd by them especially at Tiberias, Diocaesarea which is Sepphoris, Nazareth and Capernaujm" (Pan. 20.11.9-10). Eusebius' list of martyrs in the beginning of the 4th century shows that the main concentrations of Christians were in Caesarea and Gaza, though there were also churches in Eleutheropolis, Scythopolis, Gadara, Batanaea, Aelia and Jamnia, but neither he nor Epiphanius mention any groups who can be called "Jewish-Christian". All in all, the Christian population in Israel was not large. (Taylor Christian 56-64)

For Asia Minor 1 Peter claims Christian communities in the Roman provinces of Asia, Galatia, Bithnyia, Pontus and Cappadocia, and the letters of Ignatius show leading churches in Asia in nine cities. Yet the orthodox bishops of these cities were often challenged and even Ignatius (50-115) limited his list of the faithful to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles and Philadelphia. However, even in Ephesus and the rest of Asia the gnosticizing Jewish Christians were large and powerful enough to evoke opposition. Church buildings in Ephesus, as everywhere else, can only be attested archeologically to the 4th century. (R GRant August 145, Bauer 67, 77, 88)

The Christian communities in Greece and Macedonia were sparse, mainly around the Aegean shore at Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens and Corinth. Paul's stay in Athens was brief and in Macedonia he encountered outright hostility. In Macedonia heresy predominated and Polycarp did not even write to Thessalonica, implying there was no Christian community there. 1 Clement shows Corinth rebelling against the self-appointed Christian establishment in Rome and Rome re-establishing its authority, but the rest of so-called Christian Greece remained hostile to Rome (Bauer 75, 105).

As for Italy, there is good reason to doubt whether the famous persecution of Nero was aimed at "Christians" at all. All that Suetonius says is that it was aimed at the followers of "Chrestus" which are more likely to be Jews than Christians, as "Christ" is merely the Greek version of the Jewish Messiah. It is noteworthy that no mention is made of Christians and Christianity in Italy in any Roman sources, not even by the Roman satirists (Juvenal, Martial, Lucian) who would have had a field day with this strange new religion if it had existed right under their noses. Nor do Seneca and Plutarch

mention Italian Christians either. (Lightfoot 24-28) The only churches in Italy are known at Rome and Puteoli. As for Rome, though there were several independent congregations, they were mostly followers of Valentinus and Marcion. (Ludlow 49-50)

Practically nothing is known of the church in Roman Africa during the second century; the first literary notices about it occur in the treatises of Tertullian of Carthage in the last decade of the century. Yet, as Grant says, "to rely on Tetullian for a picture of the church life of Carthage...is to be given a dastically distorted picture
of church life there." The earliest account is that of seven men and five women in 180, not a large community. And when "Christians" do appear, they seem to be in the form of the Donatist "heresy" with bishops convening endless synods to combat them and others not following the party line. (R Grant 187, 190-192, Ludlow 86-87)

Antioch in Syria has alwys been considered an important Christian center, yet the ecclesiastical tradition here is scanty. With an estimated half a million people Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire, being surpassed only by Rome and Alexandria, and so it is not surprising that Christians would like to claim that "Antioch in Syria played a larger part in the life and fortunes of the early church than any other single city of the Greco-Roman empire" (Metzger Antioch 313, 316) Though the New Testament mentions it as a place Paul stayed (Acts 18:22) and Peter visited (Gal 2:11-15), during the second part of the 2nd century and even long afterward Antioch played no significant role in the history of the church nor could Eusebius produce a credible list of bishops. No church structures before the 4th century have been archeologically excavated so there could not have been very many Christians. The religious situation here as everywhere manifested a pronounced syncretism. (Bauer 63-65)

Edessa is closely connected with the Thomas traditions but here too there is no evidence of Christianity until the 4th century. Christian scholars persist in calling Edessa a Christian town even back to the first century CE and claiming it as the earliest center of Syriac-speaking Christianity (Drijvers Edessa 4). Klijn dates the beginning of Christianity at the latest to 116 C.E.,the end of the reign of Abgar VII (109-116), but his source is the highly unreliable and fanciful Doctrine of Addai (Klijn Edessa 19).

Yet these same historians who construct an early history of Christianity admit that there are no sources to rely on. Klijn says "the beginning of Christianity in Syria (Edessa) lies completely in darkness" (Klijn Thomas+altsyr 146) and Drijvers says "all the existing sources for the study of Edessene Christianity stem from the second half of the second century

AD or from later times and tell us nothing about the historical origins of the local Church except legendary tales which have their own intrinsic value, but only emphasize our lack of solid evidence" (Drijvers syrian 129). Instead, Edessa seems to be another example of a syncretist religious mix: Judaism, Gnosticism and the Elkesaites as well as the home of Mani, Marcion and Bardesanes.

There seems to be some truth to the Christian boast that Christianity had spread beyond the Roman Empire, as for instance the Christian population in the Sassanid Empire of Persia was big enough to have 20 bishops. These Christians, however, were certainly syncretist in their beliefs and not orthodox at all. In geenral there is a lack of textual and archeological evidence in these regions. (Ludlow 24)

For Egypt, there is a strange absence of references to the beginnings of Christianity in Alexandria or anywhere else and there are no records of any Christian presence until 180 CE. Eusebius even searched diligently in his sources and found nothing and his list of the first ten Egyptian bishops is almost surely fictitious. (Bauer 44, Brandon Jesus 191) Bell admits that "there is at present not a single private letter, certainly dating from that period, which we can assign with any confidence to a Christian writer, nor are there any references to Christianity in legal, administrative or similar documents" (Bell Cult 80). Colin Roberts, who thoroughly analyzed extant 1st and 2nd century Egyptian papyri, asks: "Why are there so few traces of Egyptian Christianity, Catholic or Gnostic, in any of our sources, literary or documentary, in the first two centuries"? (Roberts 54)

Of all regions, it was in Egypt that orthodox Christianity had the weakest foothold. Up until about 180 CE, the bishopric of Demetrius (188-231 CE), any references to "Christians" in Egypt speak only of heretics, and before 250 CE the documentary silence on anything Christian in Egypt is complete. "It was not until the end of the third century that native Egyptian Christians appear in any considerable number" and even in the 4th century they were a small minority (Kahle Bal 260). This is shown by the fact that there are no more than occasional references which have anything to do with Christianity in private letters and papyri of the 3rd and 4th centuries (Finegan Hidden 72-73)

There is no doubt that Gnosticism in its more systematic form was strongly represented and widely distributed in Egypt: as early as the time of Hadrian (110-138) the greatest Gnostic teachers - Basilides, Carpocrates, Valentinus and the Marcionite Apelles- were flourishing in Alexandria and Epiphanius met Gnostics as late as 330-340 CE. Till remarks: "This condition and the fact that Gnosis was widespread early on particularly in Egypt

and that many gnostic and gnostically influenced works were written in Egypt, supports the assumption that Christianity first came to Egypt in the form of Gnosis" (Till Gnosis 230). That lack of an orthodox history and "heretic" background is precisely why the official Church Fathers are so silent on the subject of early Egyptian Christianity, covering it up with the concocted legend of its foundation by St. Mark (Weiss 221).

Gnosticism in Egypt can be seen as being part of an even broader and more syncretist new religion that had replaced the gods of Greece, Rome and even ancient Egypt, "a new and composite religion, whose ingredients were drawn from mamy sources, Greek, Egyptian, Irananian, Semitic (including Judaism) and Anatolian, a religion basically monotheistic, despite its multiplicity of gods and daimones, and deeply tinged by philosophical thought", though philosophy oriented more toward divine revelation than rational thought and argument (Bell Cults 70).

If something called Christianity can be spoken of at all in the first two centuries in Egypt, then it can only be called Jewish Christianity with a decided Gnostic tendency, which used the book of Genesis as their favorite authority, usually with an interpretive twist (Robinson NH50 26). It also did not use the so-called canonical gospels but instead the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Egyptians: as Bauer says, the term "Gospel of the Egyptians" would be "completely incomprehensible if one supposes that only a heretical minority of Egyptian Christians used this book while...the majority employed the canonical gospel", so these gospels were clearly the main authorities (Bauer Ortho 51).

Even the term "Jewish Christianity" is an unclear one: Weiss asks whether one should more precisely call it "Hellenistic Jewish Christianity" or "Gnostic Jewish Christianity" or "Jewish Christian Gnosis". Or should one unite them all and speak of a "Hellenistic-Gnostic Jewish Christianity"? Of course, even Alexandrinian Judaism is difficult to define as well, containing varied streams many of which were at odds with orthodox Judaism (Weiss 224-225). Once again, Egyptian syncretism makes it impossible to assign any hard and fast categories, as is true for the entire religious life of the Roman Empire until the Christian conquest.

Chapter 30:
The Sources of the New Testament

One might conclude from the limited numbers of Christians and the syncretistic nature of what is usually called Christianity that the Flavians failed in their attempt to create a new mass religion. Apparently the Roman upper classes were not in on the joke and continued to heap contempt upon it. But the Flavians certainly planted the seed for a religion that would enshrine obedience to the Emperor and hold the Empire together and it was Constantine and his successors who would give the religion its institutional form. Because of the scarcity of early documents it is very difficult to tell how much documentary material already existed and how much was newly written in the 4th century. It is clear, however, that the initial work by Paul, Seneca and Josephus was kept and expanded into a mass syncretist religion in which pieces of every philosophy and religion of the Roman Empire were welded together. In this way all other religions and philosophies could be brutally suppressed yet the common people could all find something in Christianity that they found familiar.

Desite its infelicities of style and implausible scenarios, as a work of synthesis the New Testament is an unparalleled achievement. Centuries of work went into the adding of one layer of content after another, amalgamated to such an extent that only diligent analysis can isolate all the strands. No scholar has yet done a thorough analysis of the sources of every sentence of the New Testament, yet this could and should be done, for not a single word of it is original. Every sentence has a source. And the constant process of revision over many centuries explains the multitude of versions of the New Testament. It also explains why the Church so diligently eradicated almost all traces of New Testament documents before the 4th century: any such remains would cast grave doubt on its fictional story of the Gospels being eyewitness reports.

The following can only be a superficial overview of the multitudinous strands that went into the making of the New Testament; the meticulous work is still to be done.

The first layer is the Gospel of Thomas. As we have seen, the writers of the New Testament change the paradoxical, multi-layered nature of

the original into a much more linear, politicized and eschatological version. Much of the time they do not understand the meaning of the sayings and plug them in wherever they think they wil fit. Yet the sayings are vital for giving the document its spiritual cachet: without them it would just be political propaganda.

The second layer is an amalgamation of historical details. The Jesus figure of the New Testament is a composite of three historical figures, Jesus, John the Baptist and James. The historical Jesus is useful for the purposes of the New Testament due to his opposition to Judaism and his estrangement from his family as well as his status as a teacher of wisdom. The historical John the Baptist is used to give the Jesus figure a rebellious tinge and to justify his crucifixion as a rebel against the Romans. The historical James as the true Jewish Messiah gives the New Testament its Messianic component and his murder feeds into the attempt to blame the Jews for the murder of Christ. Overlaid on this composite Jesus figure is Josephus' story of the defeat of the Jewish rebels by the Roman army under Titus and the parallels drawn between the real Titus and the composite Jesus.

Sprinkled throughout the narrative are real historical references that are almost always out of place or contradictory to other facts but give the fiction some semblance of truth. These references in the Gospels and Acts are all found in Josephus from which they were drawn: see above in disussion of Josephus. The New Testament authors may also be using more recent Jewish history as sources for their Jesus figure, namely the Teacher of Righteousness and the Hasmonean Antigonus. The Qumran community which produced the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls, also called Essenes, were pacifists, refused to take oaths, ignored Temple worship, rejected marriage and private property and were vegetarian, all practices which aroused hostility from more orthodox Jews. They originally followed a man called the Teacher of Righteousness who was arrested, tried, condemned to death and executed in the reign of Aristobulus II, the last Hasmonean king. Thereafter his followers were convinced that he had risen from the dead, had ascended to heaven and would shortly return as the all-powerful Son of Man, surrounded by myriads of angels, would conduct the last judgment and send all sinners to hell. They then withdrew into the desert at Qumran on the Dead Sea to await the coming of their Messiah. (Larson 234-235)

Another parallel figure, Antigonus, the son of the Hasmonean king Aristobulus, claimed the Jewish crown in 43 BCE, his cause having been declared just by Julius Caesar. Allied with the Parthians, he maintained himself in his royal position for six years against Caesar's rival Marc Antony who finally defeated him. Dio Cassius reports (Bk 18, p. 405): "Antony now gave the kingdom to a certain Herod, and, having stretched Antigonus on a cross

and scourged him, a thing never done before to any other king by the Romans, he put him to death." This unprecedented death created a widespread and deep sympathy for the crucified king of the Jews among the Syrian inhabitants, as reported by Plutarch, Strabo, Dio Cassius and others. (Doane 516-517) It is easy to see the New Testament Jesus as an amalgamation of the executed Teacher of Righteousness and the crucified Antigonus, one a Messiah and the other a Jewish King.

The New Testament also draws heavily on classical literature and rhetoric. The very format of the Gospels appears to be drawn from Greek rhetorical style. Students of rhetoric in ancient schools were taught to use chreia - brief statements or actions that are aptly attributed to some person - within extended prose compositions, and handbooks called Progymnasmata showed how to condense or expand these chreia. These handbooks "were a standard part of the first century CE educational curriculum, and exercises found in them represent widespread educational practices from the early first century BCE." Gowler says that "the Gospels give decisive evidence that they were created using the basic rhetorical exercises of the Progymnasmata." (Gowler 132-135) The eight elaborations of chreia taught by Hermogenes - praise, paraphrase, rationale, statement to the contrary, analogy, example, and citation of an authority - are found in various combinations throughout the Gospels.

Here is an example in Matthew 12:1-8:

Setting (12:1-2): Jesus goes through the grainfields on Sabbath, the hungry disciples pluck and eat heads of grain, the Pharisees condemn them.

Example (12:3-4): "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?..."

Analogy (12:5): "Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and yet are guiiltless?"

Comparison (12:6): "I tell you, soemthing greater than the temple is here."

Statement to the contrary and citation of authority (12:7): "But if you had known what this means, `I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless."

Rationale (12:8): "For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." (Gowler 139-141)

Clearly the authors of the New Testament had training in rhetoric.

The New Testament is also full of allusions to classical literature, a sign that the authors were people with a high level of education. Though many Christian scholars quite vehemently reject any pagan influence on their holy Bible, much scholarship has been done on elucidating these sources and there is a whole series of scholarly books showing the parallels called Studia ad Corpus Hellenisticum Nova Testamenti. Detailed studies have been done on Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, Aelius Aristides, Corpus hermeticum XIII and Apollonius of Tyana but the Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament shows many other authors: Lucian, Aristotle, Diogenes Laertius, Philo, Tacitus, Musonius Rufus, Iamblichus, Callimachos, Arrian, Philostratos, Plato, Epictetus, Demetrius, Euripides, Xenophon, Pausanias, Suetonius, Diodorus Siculus, Apuleius, Cicero etc. For example, the story in Mk 4:35-41 of the stilling of the storm is found in Plutarch (Caesar 38), Dio Cassius (XLI.46) and the Talmud (Berakh 9.1.13b) and the story in John 2:1-11 of the turning of water into wine is found in Euripides (Bacchae 704-7), Athenaeus (Deipnosophistae 1.34) and Pausanias (6.26.1). In particular, hundreds of parallels can be found to the Roman philosopher Dio Chrysostom (40-112? CE), a contemporary of the New Testament authors, a native of Asia Minor like Paul and like him a wandering philosopher preaching to anyone who cared to hear a mixture of Stoic and Cynic philosophy. (Mussies Dio viii-ix) For Plutarch (50-120 CE) alone, a contemporary of the New Testament authors, a priest of Apollo at Delphi and a versatile, well-traveled and well-read writer, there are 329 parallels, mostly in the Synoptics and in Paul's letters. These are stylistic and linguistic but also ethical and theological (Almqvist 141-143). The charismatic figure in Plutarch's essay "On the Genius of Socrates" who works miracles by means of his divine sign is paralleled in the New Testament as is the theme of the cosmic drama of the struggle of the soul for freedom (Betz Plutarch's theolo 239-244). In general, scholars have concluded that ruling out an occasional coincidence of expression or thought between Plutarch's theology and ethics and those of early Christianity, "the similarities are too numerous to be the result of coincidence alone." (Betz Plutarch ethical 304).

There are a large number of parallels in the writings of the Greek orator Aelius Aristides (117-180) between his religious ideas and those of the New Testament, as well as stylistic, grammatical, ethical and historical parallels. There is a most striking series of parallels to several passages in John (1:18, 9:4, 10:18, 15:5, 17:11 and 22) about the relation between Christ and God, similar to a number of lines on the relation between Athena and Zeus in Aristides' hymn to the goddess Athena. Aristides has a large number of parallels to the Aeropagus speech in Acts 17:22-31 and he also discusses the idea of vicarious dying which is found in Mk 10:45, Jn 9:50 and Rom. 5:6-8.

(Van der Horst 4)

Dennis MacDonald has shown that the Gospel of Mark uses Homer to create his story. Homer was extremely popular in the ancient world: one catalogue of manuscripts from Greco-Roman Egypt lists over 600 for Homer, mostly the Iliad, and there were two texts of Homer for every text by the next three authors combined (Macdonald Does 1-3). Imitations of Homer were common in all schools and prose authors imitated the Odyssey more frequently than any other book in the ancient world (Homeric 4-5)

The Odyssey is his prime literary model for chapters 1-14 and the Iliad, especially the death of Homer and the ransom of his corpse, for chapters 15-16. The first half of Mark involves the sea, complete with winds, waves and ships, just liek the first half of the Odyssey. Mark's story of the calming of the storm in 4:35-41 is an apparent imitation of Homer's story of Aeolus' bag of winds in Odyssey 10.1-69; the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac in Mark 5:1-20 seems to have been borrowed from the story of Odysseus' escape from the giant Polyphemus and the rescue of his comrades from Circe who had turned them into pigs (Odyssey 9.101-565); the story in Mark 6:34-44 of Jesus feeding 5000 men is paralleled in the feast of Nestor to 4500 men at the shore of Pylos in Odyssey 3 etc. What is remarkable about these parallels is that over and over again the sequence as well as the content is similar in both Mark and Homer. (Macdonald Homeric 173-186)

"Mark's Jesus shares much with Hector and, even more so, with Odysseus. Odysseus and Jesus both sail seas with associates far their inferiors, who weaken when confronted with suffering. Both heroes return home to find it infested with murderoous rivals that devour the houses of widows. Both oppose supernatural foes, visit dead heroes, and prophesy their own returns in the third person. A wise woman anoints each protagonist, and both eat last suppers with their comrades before visiting Hades, from which both return alive. In both works one finds gods stilling storms and walking on water, meals for thousands at the shore, and monsters in caves...Like Hector, Jesus dies at the end of the book, his corpse is rescued from his executioner, and he is mourned by three women." (Macdonald Homeric 3)

The major difference of course is that Mark's Jesus trumps Odysseus and Hector in all respects. Odysseus held on for dear life in a storm while Jesus stilled the storm; Odysseus left Tiresias in Hades still blind while Jesus restored Bartimaeus' sight; Odysseus predicted his quiet return to his estate while Jesus predicted his return to the whole world in a cosmic display of splendor; the Iliad ends with the tragic death of Hector while Mark ends with Jesus' triumph over death. (Homeric 188-189)

Acts as well draws on Homer. In the Iliad the casting of lots to

replace Judas parallels the casting of lots that selected Ajax to fight Hector in Iliad 7, the visions of Cornelius and Peter in Acts 10:1-11:18 parallel the lying dream of Zeus to Agamemnon and the vision of the serpent and the sparrows in Book 2, Peter's escape from Herod's prison in Acts 12:1-17 is modeled on Hermes' rescue of Priam from the Greek camp in Book 24, and Paul's speech to the elders at Ephesus at Miletus in Acts 20:17-38 is modeled on Hector's farewell to Andromache in Book 6. (Macdonald Does 12-13). Acts 20:7-12 which tells the story of a young man named Eutychus falling from the third story and revived at dawn is remarkably similar in content and sequence to Odyssey 10-12 which has a young man named Elpenor falling from the roof and buried at dawn; the similarity extends even to a shift from first-person plural to third person at precisely the same point in the story (Homeric 13).

Luke and Acts may also be modeled on Virgil's Aeneid which attempted to interpret the underlying meaning of the whole of Roman history: "Just as Virgil had created his foundational epic for the Roman people by appropriating and transforming Homer, so also did Luke create his foundational epic for the early Christian community primarily by appropriating and transforming the sacred traditions of Israel's past as narrated in the Bible of the diasporan Jewish communities, the Septuagint." (Bonz 26) Like the Aeneid, Luke has as its theme a divine mission in the form of a journey that will lead to the formation of a new people, a journey that is driven by divine guidance from supernatural beings in the form of prophecy, vision and oracle. (Bonz 56)

Another classical parallel can be found in Apuleius' The Golden Ass which tellingly enough is a satire on religious gullibility. The account in Luke 24:13-36 tells of a resurrected Jesus meeting with two disciples on the road to Emmaus where he talks to them at great length in the course of a seven-mile walk though they do not recognize him until he breaks bread at Emmaus. Then he vanishes to reappear presently in their midst at Jerusalem. In the first chapter of The Golden Ass a traveler overtakes two countrymen, one arguing for and the other against a local miracle, becomes engrossed in their talk and continues with them until they reach their goal. He then takes side against the skeptical one and tells him that he is of "gross ears and an obstinate mind." It is rather odd that Luke's story of a resurrected Jesus, which certainly stretches normal credibility, is based on a religious satire. (R Graves 763)

Luke and Acts also use Euripides' The Bacchae. In the story of Paul's conversion the resurrected Jesus whose followers Paul has persecuted says "it is hard for you, this kicking against the goads" (Acts 26:15); equally in The Bacchae a persecuted god, Dionysus, cries out to his persecutor, Pentheus,

that "you diregard my words of warning...and kick against the goads." (794) In Acts 5:39 Luke uses a rare Greek verb to denote "at war with God" that also appears in The Bacchae (45), and the miracle of Peter and Paul's escape from prison (Acts 12:8-10, 16:26) is a traditional Dionysiac miracle that figures prominently in Euripides' play (447-8). (Helms Who 90-91)

The figure of Dionysus is one of the many parallels incoporated into the composite Jesus figure of the Gospels. Both are young, persecuted, misunderstood deities, the sons of a god and a mortal woman (Zeus and Semele in the case of Dionysus); both are wandering charismatics who attract devoted followings; both are healers and miracle workers; both are associated with wine. Both had a special appeal to women and the poor and granted their female followers redeeming release into religious ecstasy. Both are scornful of daily toil: Dionysus enticed women away from their housework to join his manic rites and Jesus taught his followers not to worry about tomorrow and to emulate the plants and animals. Both are finally gods of personal salvation who promise life beyond the grave. (Ehrenreich Dancing 59-61)

There is certainly nothing original about Christian ethics. As Betz says: "It is now generally recognized that the early Christian writers made extensive use of Graeco-Roman popular ethics...To a large extent, the material had its origin in philosophical ethics. Mostly through the Cynic-Stoic schools it became `popularized' and part of the morality of the urban population. In this form philosophical ethics influenced early Christianity. This influence was in part mediated by Hellenistic Judaism which had appropriated Greek philosophical material several centuries before Christianity. Therefore we find ethical material of this kind both in early and in late New Testament sources." (Betz Plutarch's ethical 8-9)

There are a number of scholars, including Mack, Crossan and Downing, who have argued that Jesus resembles the Cynic philosophers both in his teachings and in his lifestyle. The Cynic school of philosophy was founded by Diogenes of Sinope (400-320 BCE), named after the Latin word for dog, canus, and lasted until the 5th century CE: "The Cynics sought happiness through freedom...: freedom from desires, from fear, anger, grief and other emotions, from religious or moral control, from the authority of the city or state or public officials, from regard for public opinion and freedom also from the care of property, from confinement to any locality and from the care and support of wives and children...The Cynics regarded peace of mind as happiness or an essential element of it." (Sayre 7, 9) Thus they had no settled abode, were unconcerned with their clothing or their looks, avoided work and money and insisted on extreme freedom of speech: they represented "not just a moral attack on Greco-Roman civilization, but...a paradoxical attack on civilization itself." (Crossan Hist 76)

Though many made fun of the Cynics and found their public acts shocking, Cynicism spread throughout the Roman Empire to such an extent that Josephus called it the "fourth philosophy" and that the Cynic philosophers were important enough to rouse the ire of the Flavian emperors. (Downing 585) One of the main reasons was that "one did not need to be highly educated to be a Cynic...One only needed to be convinced that much was wrong with a consumerist, inegalitarian, authoritarian and hypocritical society, and to feel it strongly enough to protest...whatever the cost in hardship and persecution." (Downing Cynics 585) Even the 4th century Emperor Julian, who tried to bring back paganism and was maligned by Christianity as "the Apostate", respected them: "Cynicism is a branch of philosophy, and by no means the most insignificant or least honorable, but rivalling the noblest... It seems to be in some ways a universal philosophy, and the most natural, and to demand no special study whatsoever" (Oration 6).

The New Testament Jesus had the following in common with the Cynic philosophers: owning little and giving away what one might own; haranguing and rebuking groups and individuals; speaking provocative and sometimes shocking truths; addressing ordinary people, including women, in unpretentious language; breaking with family and background; leading an itinerant lifestyle; envisioning God as fatherly; stressing inner happiness and serenity over outer accomplishments; having no worry or anxiety about the future; eschewing family life and marriage; and having no fear of death, even a martyr's death. (Downing "Cynics" 586-590, Downing Jesus 1-5, Seeley Jesus 541)

Classical authors made the same analogies, usually pejoratively. The Greek rhetorician Aelius Aristides (ca 128-181) held that the behavior of Cynics was "very similar to those blasphemous people in Palestine. They, too, manifest their impiety by the obvious signs that they do not recognize those who are above them...They are incapable...of contributing in any manner whatsoever toward any common good, but when it comes to undermining family life, bringing trouble and discord into families and claiming to be leaders of all things, they are the most skillful men." (Benko 46) One can easily see in the countercultural lifestyle of the New Testament Jesus a reflection of the historical Cynics.

Another philosophical source particularly for the Gospel of John is the first century Jewish Hellenistic philosopher Philo. The Christian doctrine of the Logos is found in its entirety in Philo in which the Logos has innumerable attributes: it is superior to all things and free from all taint of sin, it is the first-begotten Son of God, the well-beloved child of God, the second divinity, the Image of God, the Light of the World, the Orderer and disposer of all things, the shepherd of God's flock, the physician who heals all evil,

the instrument by which the world was created, a messenger sent from God, the sure refuge of those who seek him, the giver of spiritual freedom to those forsaking their sins, the liberator from all corruption, the true high priest, the fountain of wisdom, the Word and Mediator and the Advocate for Man. One can see all these concepts percolating through the entire New Testament, both the Gospels and Paul's Epistles. (Robertson Pagan 223-225) It is rather telling that Philo is linked so closely to the Flavian Emperors through his nephew Tiberius Alexander, chief of staff to Titus during the siege of Jerusalem. Either Philo himself or his nephew may well have had a hand in the writing of the Gospels.

But the classical philosopher whose life and teachings are most similar to the Jesus of the New Testament is Apollonius of Tyana (died 96-98 CE), a contemporary of Jesus and according to Mead the most famous philosopher of the Graeco-Roman world of the first century. He was a Neo-Pythagorean philosopher who saw himself as a reincarnation of Pythagoras, and as befitting a Pythagorean, he dressed in simple linen garments, had long hair and was a staunch vegetarian. He was unanimously held in the highest regard by classical philosophers and even some Christian theologians, and as late as the 5th century we find him being worshipped almost as a supernatural being, somewhere between gods and men (Eunapius, Ammianus Marcellinus, Vopiscus and Apuleius). He had traveled throughout the known world, visiting temples and shrines from all religious traditions; he had lived with the magi in Babylonia, the Brahmans in India and the "naked sages" in Egypt. He spent his life attempting to bring back the public cults to the purity of their ancient traditions, especially in Greece, and in particular spoke out against sacrificial rites.

Though he had a reputation for working miracles and exorcising demons, he himself rejected any supernatural element to his powers and repudiated the idea of his being a soothsayer or diviner. Through years of asceticism and meditation, he had acquired psychic gifts such as prophetic foreknowledge, seeing at a distance and seeing the past, seeing and hearing in vision, reading people's thoughts, and healing the sick in cases of obsession or possession. Like Jesus, he was believed by his followers to be the son of God and a being of supernatural power, and he was accused by his enemies of being a magician. Philostratus reported him raising a girl from the dead (though she may simply have been in a coma) and Justin Martyr even held him capable of stilling waves and wind and mitigating the attack of wild beasts. Justin was so impressed he even compared him favorably to Jesus: "Whilst our Lord's miracles are preserved by tradition alone, those of Apollonius are most numerous and actually manifest in present facts." (Smith Mag 84-90, Benko 107-108, Mead 28, 38-40, 71, 95, 111, Graham 289)

Both Jesus and Apollonius were "itinerant miracle workers and preachers, rejected at first by their townspeople and brothers...An inner circle of devoted disciples accomopanied each. Both were credited with prophecies, exorcisms, cures and an occasional raising of the dead. As preachers both made severe moral demands on their hearers. Both affected epigrammatic utterances and oracular style; they taught as if with authority and came into conflict with the established clergy of the temples they visited and tried to reform. Both were charged with sedition and magic but tried primarily for sedition...Both were said to have been fathered by gods and to have been amazingly precocious youths. Both at early stages in their careers went off into the wilderness and there encountered and worsted demons. At the ends of their lives, Apollonius escaped miraculously from his trial; Jesus, executed, rose miraculously from the dead; both then lived for some time with their disciples, were said finally to have ascended to heaven, and were credited with subsequent appearances, even to unbelievers." (Smith Magic 85)

These parallels between Jesus and Apollonius are so startling that it raises the question of who copied whom. Almost everything that is known about Apollonius comes from the Life of Apollonius written by Flavius Philostratus (175-245 CE), a teacher of rhetoric in Athens and Rome, and completed in 217 CE. It was written at the behest of the empress Julia Domna, wife of Emperor Septimus Severus and mother of Caracalla, who was a patroness of the arts and philosophy and gathered famous writers and thinkers around her; all three members of this imperial family were students of the occult and took a particular interest in magic, divination, dream interpretation and astrology (Mead 53-54).

It is quite curious that Philostratus, though of Greek origin from the island of Lemnos, has the Roman family name of the Flavian emperors who were responsible for the New Testament and that he was so well connected with the Roman emperors. Apollonius himself had several interviews with the future Emperor Vespasian (69-79) and was summoned by Titus (79-81), when he became emperor, to meet him at Tarsus. Succeeding emperors also honored Apollonius: Caracalla (211-216) built a temple for those who worshipped him as a hero, Alexander Severus (222-235) had his statue in his private chapel along with statues of Christ, Abraham and Orpheus, and Aurelian (270-275) vowed a temple to Apollonius of whom he had a vision when besieging Tyana. (Mead 31, 79, Smith 88)

It is also curious that the Life of Apollonius, which is "in the guise of a romantic story rather than in the form of plain history", containing fictionalized popular legends, set speeches and other embellishments, resembles the gospels in so many ways, in literary form and as an apologetic work: "After praise of the hero's family and legends about his birth, his childhood

is almost wholly passed over and his adult life is presented in a series of anecdotes connected merely by a geographic frame (references to his travelling and the places where this or that happened); the narrative becomes more coherent towards the end of the life with trial, escape, and later adventures, only to blur again when it comes to the death and subsequent appearances... Like the gospels the Life is in part an apologetic work, written not only to glorify its hero, but also to defend him against the charge of practicing magic." (Mead 28, Smith Magic 86)

It seems likely that the authors of the New Testament modeled many aspects of their composite Jesus on Apollonius. It was certainly not the other way around, as the early Church Fathers never imputed that plagiarism to Philostratus and as Philostratus' Apollonius was a wonder worker but not an incarnate deity. Apollonius was certainly well-known at the time and Philostratus himself says that he based his accounts on first-hand memoirs by Apollonius' disciples and even his own will. He also says that he traveled all over the known world and everywhere he met with the "inspired sayings" of Apollonius, as well as getting much information from the priests of the temple to Apollonius in Tyana founded at the imperial expense. (Mead 58) If the original authors of the New Testament did not use that first-hand information that was most likely available to them, then the later editors surely must have used Philostratus' work and fitted it into the existing document of the New Testament.

The primary source for the Gospels is of course the Jewish Bible. The scale of these borrowings is made clear in the standard critical edition of the New Testament which shows citations from and allusions to about 3000 texts from the Old Testament, including the Apocrypha, and some 300 texts from other Jewish sources. (Macdonald Homeric 169) The Gospel writers do not quote from the Hebrew Bible but from its Greek translation, the Septuagint. Luke-Acts in particular is full of allusions to the Septuagint: nearly every phrase in the opening sections is an echo of it.

Quotes from Jewish texts are used to establish that the Christian dispensation supersedes the Jewish one and fulfills its prophecies. As Helms says: "The Gospels are Hellenistic religious narratives in the tradition of the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament, which constituted the `Scriptures' to those Greek-speaking Christians who wrote the four canonical Gospels and who appealed to it, explicitly or implicitly, in nearly every paragraph they wrote." (Helms Gospels 16) They are intent on establishing Jesus as the new Moses handing down the new law, the new Joshua, leading a band of followers on a trek through the wilderness to a promised goal, and the new Joseph, betrayed by Judah/Judas into the hands of wicked men, but finding new life as a leader of the Gentiles.

Parallels are also drawn between Jesus and Elijah. Luke 7:11-16 is almost exactly drawn from 1 Kings 17:10-24: Elijah went to Sarepta and saw a widow with a dead son - Jesus went to Nain and saw a widow; Elijah commanded the widow "give me your son" - Jesus commanded the widow "Do not weep"; Elijah took the corpse and cried to God - Jesus came to the corpse and spoke to it; the dead son revived and spoke in both excerpts; "and he gave him to his mother" in both; the woman praised "the man of God" in Kings - the crowd praised the prophet in Luke (MacDonald Does 10-11).

Christian ethics are almost entirely drawn from Jewish teachings. The famous Golden Rule of Jesus was stated by the Jewish sage Hillel (1st cent. BCE) but in the negative, as the so-called Silver Rule: "Do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you." It is also found all over the world in practically all religious and philosophical traditions.

There is nothing original about the blessings and woes in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount and Luke's Sermon on the Plain, being a series of midrashim (scriptural commentaries) and drawn entirely from the Hebrew Bible:

Mt 5:3: Psalm 41:1
Mt 5:4: Isaiah 61:2
Mt 5:5: Psalm 37:11
Mt 5:6: Proverbs 21:17 and 21:21
Mt 5:7: Deut 13:18
Mt 5:8: Psalm 24:3-4 and 11:7
Mt 5:9: Psalm 34:11-14
Mt 5:10: Isaiah 50:6-7
Mt 5:11: Isaiah 60:15
Lk 6:24: Amos 6:1-9
Lk 6:25: Isaiah 65:13 and 65:14
Lk 6:26: 2 Chronicles 36:16
(R Graves 126; see Dalman Jesus-Jeshua 225-232)

Other parts of the Sermon on the Mount seem drawn from Jewish apocryphal literature, especially the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.

Matt 5:22 against angerTestament of Dan, 2:1-2: Unless you keep yourself from the spirit of lying and anger, and love truth and long-suffering, you are going to perish.

5. Testament of Benjamin, 8:2: He who has a pure mind in love does not look at a woman with a view to sexcrime

Matt 5:27-28 - Anyone who stares lustfully at a woman is already committing adultery with her in his heart.

6. Testament of Joseph, 1:1-3: I was hungry and Yahweh himself fed me. I was alone and my gods comforted me. I was sick and Yahweh visited me; slandered and he pleaded my cause; bitterly spoken against and he rescued me.

Matt 25:35-36: I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a foreigner and you welcomed me.

(Harwood 285)

The stories in the Gospel of John are carefully arranged in patterns following the Jewish liturgical year, reflecting and echoing the readings assigned in the Synagogue Lectionaries for the various feasts of the Jewish year. Accordingly, the place of Jesus' long discourses characteristic for this Gospel is usually the synagogue or the Temple. (Guilding 1) John is divided into a triennial cycle which is also found in the Babylonian Talmud. The first division of episodes (1:19-4:54) concerns the manifestation of the Messiah to the world and follows the Jewish Passover. The second division (6,5, 7-12) concerns the manifestation of the Messiah to the Jews and follows the feasts of New Year, Tabernacles, Dedication and Purim. In the third division (13-20) which concerns the manifestation of the Messiah to the world "the whole festal cycle is repeated and shown as fulfilled also in his Church, the true Israel", creating the New Temple not in a building but in the person of Jesus Christ. (Guilding 8-9, 46, 154, 171)

This lectionary structure is one more reason why the gospel of John cannot be taken seriously as eyewitness history. As Guilding says:"The action of the Gospel is strictly subordinated to the teaching, and it is in the narrative sections rather than the discourses that the use of the lections raises in an acute form the value of the Gospel as history. It has often been argued that the Evangelist must have been an eyewitness of the events that he describes, since his narrative is marked by minute details...but when again and again these details, absent from parallel synoptic accounts, are found to correspond so closely with the lectionary readings, one begins to suspect that some of them, at least, depend on the lectionary background rather than on true historical reminiscence...St. John is mainly concerned to bring out the theological truth enshrined in the events that he records." (Guilding 231-32)

Because the concern of the Christian authors is theological rather

than any regard for historical truth, they are extremely sloppy in their use of their Hebrew sources, often quoting non-existent texts or misquoting existing ones. Mark even manages to make an error in the Ten Commandments, which is quite an accomplishment. In 10:17-19 when a man asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus says, "You know the commandments: `Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'"

"Do not defraud" is clearly not in the Decalogue (perhaps it should be, considering the corruption in our economic system!) and Matthew 19:18 and Luke 18:20 quickly drop it, rightly seeing the embarassment to Christianity of their own founder not even knowing the ten commandments. Similarly, they also drop the reference to Abiathar in their citation of Mark 2:25-26 which connects David with the rule of Abiathar the High Priest: in actuality, Ahimelech was High Priest at the time (I Sam 21:1-6) and Abiathar was his son (see Mt 12:4 and Lk 6:4).

The very beginning of Mark (1:1-2) is another indication of the sloppiness of the Christian authors: "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." The problem is that this is an amalgamation of quotes from Exodus 23:20 ("Behold, I send an angel before you...Give heed to him and hearken to his voice") and Malachi 3:1 ("Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me") and only the second part is actually from Isaiah (40:3): "A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Yet Mark gives the impression that the entire passage is from Isaiah. Given that anyone with a copy of the Jewish Bible could check this and realize that it is not true, does this not cast doubt on Mark's veracity right from the start? And may this not indicate that the Gospels are not aimed at Jews who would recognize the error right away but at uneducated or even illiterate people who would not know the difference?

As Fox summarizes: "When Christians quoted those old prophecies, they used Greek translations which were untrue to the Hebrew originals: they ran separate bits of text into one; they twisted the sense and reference of the nouns (Paul, at Galatians 3:8, is a spectacular example); they mistook the speakers and the uses of personal pronouns (John 19:37 or Matthew 27:9); they thought that David or Isaiah had written what they never wrote (Acts 2 or Acts 8:26); they muddled Jeremiah with Zechariah (Matthew 27:9); they reread the literal sense and found a non-existent allegory (Paul to the Galatians at 4:21-23). There are vintage errors in the famous speech which Acts' author gives to Peter at Pentecost: Peter tortures bits of Psalms 16 and

132, mistakes their meaning and context, and quotes them in a poor Greek translation, although Greek was not the historical Peter's mother tongue and most of his supposed audience would not have understood a word of it. What in fact had the Hebrew prophets predicted about Jesus Christ or Christianity? They had predicted nothing." (Fox Unauth 339-340)

Amazingly, much of the story of the last days in Jerusalem is actually a composite of Old Testament prophecies. In Matthew 21:7 two animals were brought to Jesus to ride into Jerusalem in order to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 of a king riding "on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass", even though it creates an absurd picture of Jesus mounting two animals at once, like a trick rodeo rider. John 18:1 says: "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Kidron"; this comes from I Kings 2:37: "On the day thou passest over the brook Kidron, know thou for certain that thou shalt surely die."

The High Priest's servant was called Malchus, based on the story of God as Shepherd-King in Zechariah 11:4: "I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's land, and into the hand of his king (Hebrew Malko) and out of their hand I will deliver them." This is applied to Jesus' arrest because the shepherd was smitten (Zech 13:7) and the followers are delivered into the hands of Malchus. The naked man in Gethsemane refers to Amos 2:16: "He that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the Lord."

The trial of Jesus in front of the high priest is almost entirely based on the Hebrew Bible. Mark 14:57-59 is a fulfillment of Psalms 27:12, 35:11-12 and 109:2-5; 14:61, Jesus' silence, fulfills Isaiah 53:7 ("he was oppressed yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth") and Psalm 38:12; 14:62 fulfills Daniel 7:13 ("behold there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man") and Psalm 110:1 ("The Lord said unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand"); and 14:65, being spat upon and beaten, refers to Isaiah 50:6, 53:3-5, Micah 5 and 1 Kings 22:24. (see Nineham 406-407)

The narrative of the crucifixion was largely invented on the basis of Psalm 22. Jesus' cry on the cross "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" comes straight from Psalm 22:1; the story of the chief priests mocking Jesus and telling him to save himself comes from 22:7-8 ("All who see me mock at me...He committed his cause to the Lord; let him deliver him"); and much of the rest comes from 16-18: "Yea, dogs are round about me; a company of evildoers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet - I can count all my bones - they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots." Giving him vinegar comes from Psalm 69:21 and hyssop comes from Exodus 12:22; piercing his side

with a lance comes from Zechariah 12:10; not having his legs broken comes from Exodus 12:46 and being crucified with robbers comes from Isaiah 53:12 ("He was numbered with the transgressors") (see Anderson 1, Schonfield Plot 154-155)

Isaiah 53 as a whole was an important proof text to build the story of the suffering Messiah Jesus bearing the sins of mankind and remaining silent in the face of Roman torture ("He has borne our griefs...He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities...and with his stripes we are healed...He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth...he makes himself an offering for sin...he bore the sin of many.") However, the story of the Messiah being born in Bethlehem, a most improbable birthplace for a Galilean, is not in Isaiah but in Micah 5:21.

It is interesting to see the process by which more and more of the crucifixion story is rewritten to fit Old Testament prophecies. Today's version has the Roman soldiers in Mk 15:23 offering wine and myrrh (wine and gall in Mt 27:34) to Jesus before the crucifixion, while during the crucifixion he is offered vinegar, or sour wine, the kind given to soldiers (Mk 15:36, Mt 27:48). But the Arabic version of Mt 27:34 reads "myrrh" rather than "gall", like Mark, while older versions of Mt 27:48 (the Vulgate and Ethiopic text, the Sinaitic, Vatican and Bezan codices) read "wine" rather than "vinegar". This is closer to the historical truth, as Jews gave to any man about to be executed a grain of frankincense in a cup of wine, according to several Talmudic passages. It is clear that Luke and John are anxious to get away from any historical reality as they leave out the first offering of wine and myrrh altogether and only have the offering of vinegar during the crucifixion (Lk 23:36, Jn 19:29); John even admits outright that he does so "to fulfill the scripture". (The gall, by the way, seems to be borrowed from a ritual of the mysteries of Demeter). (Robertson Pagan 119-120, 191)

The resurrection story too is a composite of Old Testament prophecies. The voice coming out of the cloud in the Resurrection in Mark 9:2-7 that says "This is my Son, my Beloved; listen to him" is an amalgamation of three Hebrew texts: Psalm 2:7 ("my son"), Isaiah 42:1 ("my beloved") and Deut. 18:15 ("listen to him").

Both Isaiah and Genesis were favorite proof texts for Christian authors, but they did not feel bound by the Jewish list of canonical books and quoted freely from any old Jewish text, except for the Wisdom literature. Christians considered the Wisdom literature to be superseded as they did not see Jesus speaking wisdom but equated him with Wisdom. (see Christ 134-135) Besides the one and only quote in Mt 11:19 ("Wisdom is justified by her deeds"), the scholarly attempts to find traces of Wisdom in the Gospels

invariably use the sayings of the Gospel of Thomas quoted by the New Testament as examples, such as the "easy yoke" or "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit". (see Suggs 51ff, 99-106)

It has been argued, particularly by Conzelmann, that Paul is strongly influenced by Wisdom traditions and had even established a school of wisdom where wisdom traditions were reworke4d and methodically discussed. The prime expression of Paul's discussion of wisdom is in 1 Cor 1:10-4:21 where Paul argues that Wisdom is incarnated in Christ but uses arguments resembling the Jewish Wisdom text Baruch 3:9-4:4. But in reality Paul is arguing against wisdom traditions in saying that the Corinthians, in their concern for wisdom, were neglecting the centrality or even the relevance of the cross of Christ (1:17) which is the "secret and hidden wisdom of God" (2:7). Here Paul is not teaching wisdom so much as using the language of his opponents against them by twisting it into its opposite. He even dismisses wisdom as "worldly" (1:21, 26). Paul was considered by the Corinthians to be deficient as a teacher of wisdom and other teachers such as Apollos were regarded as being much better qualified than he (3:1-5, 4:3-5). (Pearson Hell 43-46)

The Christian habit of quoting Jewish writings of course caused embarrassment for Christians when arguing with Jews that their own texts prophecied Jesus. Jews would reply that these texts had no particular authority anyway. (Fox Unauth 122-23) In particular, Christians used apocryphal Jewish apocalyptic writings: "`Apocalypse' means revealing, the disclosing of secrets; and the secrets were not only secrets of what was to be. They included also secrets of what already was, but was concealed in heaven. Out of their knowledge of these heavenly realities grew their awareness of what would in due course take place on earh; and since the heavenly beings stood ready for action their manifestation could not be long delayed. Here the idea `kingdom of God' is used in a future sense...The old Jerusalem is to be replaced by a new one which God himself will establish. The idea of a new Jerusalem, or a new Temple, is fairly common in apocalyptic writing." (Barrett 227, 238)

One of these Jewish apocryphal writings, the Wisdom of Solomon, may have influenced the idea of Jesus being crucified. This literature portrays a wise man as persecuted and rejected on earth but vindicated after his death and includes the suggestion that his persecution included a "shameful death." (2:12-20). Wells suggests that "it may well have been musing on such a passage that led Paul (or a precursor) to the idea, so characteristic of his theology, that Christ suffered the most shameful death of all." (Wells Did 38-39)

The New Testament figure of the Messiah might also have been influenced by the Dosithean branch of the Samaritans, a heretical Jewish sect.

This group worshiped Dositheus who had several commonalities with the Jesus of the Gospels, as reported by the Christian writers as well as by Samaritan documents. Dositheus was considered to be the Messiah and the Son of God. His disciples said that he was not dead but still alive. He prescribed baptisms or baths following which one found oneself converted to his faith. He was said to have been a disciple of John the Baptist and was said to have succeeded him. He was said to have been the founder of the Ebionites and the Dositheans were also called Nazarenes. These are all very striking parallels. (Petrement 230-231)

Christianity thus took much from Judaism. Judaism supplied a vast panorama of history from the creation of the world until the last days, a scheme that outlines God's purpose for the Jews and gives a coherent view of all history. The whole sacred history of the Old Testament was pressed into service as prefiguring and leading up to the advent of Jesus, and the idea of the Chosen People was taken over by the Christian Church, becoming the Chosen people of God and the bearer of His message to mankind. The apocalyptic hopes in Judaism for the Last Days and the coming of the Messiah were also taken over in Christianity in which the savior was identified with the Jewish figure of the Messiah.

What Christianity rejected was the utopian theme of political and social liberation in Judaism contained in the epic story of a liberated nation leaving Egypt and creating a new society governed by divine law in the Promised Land. It is this Utopianism, the new Jerusalem, that continued to inspire the Hebrew prophets and created a host of socially progressive legislation aimed at protecting the poor, the weak and the slave. (see Maccoby Mythmaker 197) Clearly a religion designed to elevate the power of the Emperor and to keep the slaves in their place had no use for Utopianism.

A primary purpose for the high-placed inventors of Christianity was to create a religion that contained elements of all pagan religions so that everyone in the Roman Empire could find something familiar in the new religion. As Dodds says, in an age of anxiety the clean sweep that Christianity promised was appealing as it lifted the burden of freedom from the shoulders of the individual faced with a confusing multiplicity of cults and philosophies all promising salvation. (Dodds 133) Thus, overlaid on the story line of the composite Jesus dictated by the use of Josephus and the Hebrew Bible were many pagan elements from all the contemporary pagan religions. Whole books have been written on this topic alone but we will summarize the evidence briefly.

The birth and childhood of Jesus is taken from many parallels. The birth story of Jesus is similar to those of Plato, Alexander the Great, Au-

gustus, Pythagoras and Hercules, especially the idea of divine prophecy and divine involvement in the pregnancy. Tales of virgin births of great men are found throughout the world: Zoroaster, Ramses, Nebuchadnezzar, Romulus, Perseus, Prometheus, Augustus, Alexander the Great, Cyrus, Plato, Krishna, Buddha, the Siamese Codom, the Chinese Fo-hi, Lao Tzu, even Confucius, not to speak of the gods Horus, Ra, Apollo, Mercury etc. Mary in one form or another is the standard name for mothers of world saviors and pagan mythology is full of divine mothers whose sons became saviors.

Stories of children destined to be future kings escaping death at the hands of a tyrant are found in the biographies of Sargon, Abraham, Moses, Perseus, Oedipus, Cyrus and Romulus, and is a major theme in the story of Isis and Set in Egyptian mythology. In reality there is no historical evidence for the story of Herod ordering the slaughter of Jewish children but the Hindu god Krishna also had to escape from a massacre of children. The story of the magi is found in the legend of the birth of the Persian sage Zoroaster. The star of Bethlehem is paralleled by the Jewish legends of a brilliant star at the births of Abraham and Moses and is also found in stories of Lao Tzu, Krishna etc. Other universal elements in world legends are the cave as a place of birth, the recognition of the divine child by wise men and the presentation of gifts.

Baptism is a common theme in pagan legends: the gods of India, Greece and Egypt were all baptized, in fact the Egyptian god Anup was called the baptizer. The number 12 as the number of Jesus' disciples is of course a calendrical number found in all myths: the Chinese have 12 world creators; the Hindus have 12 Aditya or causes of being, the Greek myths have 12 Titans, the Scandinavian myths have 12 Aesirs of Asgard, Osiris had 12 helpers, there are 12 signs of zodiac, 12 basic forces etc. Miracle stories are found throughout the classical literature, being ascribed to gods like Asclepius and Dionysius but also to human beings such as Pythagoras and the Jewish wonder worker Chanina ben Dosa. Stories of mortals ascending to heaven and becoming gods include Romulus, Hercules, Hadrian's lover Antinous and the dream of Scipio in Cicero's writings. (see Cartlidge Documents 129-202, Graham 300-310, Harwood 324, Doane 113-127, 143-144, 150-159)

The story of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus in spring is another version of the ancient pagan myth of the dying and rising god who dies in the winter and is magically reborn at the spring equinox. The myths of the dying savior provided a means whereby the sacrifice necessary to avert disaster and take away human sin no longer had to be performed by actual human or animal victims, but was performed annually by the very god himself, thus making the sacrifice much more efficacious than when a mere human substitute was used. Dying savior stories include the Syrian Tammuz and his di-

vine mother Ishtar or the Greek god Adonis, who also suffered for mankind, the Canaanite Baal, the Greek Dionysius who was torn to pieces and revived from the dead, the Phrygian Attis who was killed by a boar and rose on the third day, as well as Prometheus, Bacchus, Cybele, Sabazius, Osiris, Serapis and so on. (Doane 191-199) The mourning women at Jesus' crucifixion and tomb are paralleled in the myths of savior gods in which the body of the slain god is sought by the goddess who mourns his death and rejoices at his resurrection. Such is the case at the festivals of Adonis or Tammuz; Isis and Nephthys mourn for Osiris and Cybele, the Great Mother, for Attis. (Rylands 60)

As regards crucifixion, there are sixteen virgin-born and sin-atoning saviors in myth and legend who have been crucified: Krishna of India, Sakia Muni of India, Tammuz of Syria, Wittoba of the Telingonese, Iao of Nepal, Hesus of the Celtic Druids, Quetzalcoatl of Mexico, Quirinus of Rome, Prometheus of the Caucasus, Thulis or Osiris of Egypt, Indra of Tibet, Alcestos of Greece, Attis of Phrygia, Crite of Chaldea, Bali of Orissa, and Mithra of Persia. (K Graves 92-119) The parallels between the Jesus story and the story of Krishna in India as told in the Bhagavad Gita are particularly startling, and Graves enumerates 346 analogies between them. This similarity is so striking that 19th century Christian missionaries and scholars attempted to prove that the Bhagavad Gita was derived from the New Testament. That of course cannot be so as the Indian writing dates from at least the 5th century BCE; thus, if there is a direct influence, then it must be the other way around (Doane 278-288, K Graves 225-240).

The cross is itself an ancient symbol found in many cultures, denoting the tree of life and the balance of the spiritual and physical principles in the universe. It is an ancient Egyptian symbol, the ankh, as well as a Jewish symbol, the makkabah, the letter tau shaped like a cross. It may also refer to the moment when the sun is passing down from the summer into the winter hemisphere, i.e. from the realms of life into those of death, the point where the lines of the equator and the ecliptic cross each other, forming a cross. (Rylands 96-97)

The crucifixion of Jesus has many of the elements of the ancient rite of the sacrifice of the mock king. Sacrificing a king to the god of the country, especially in times of danger and distress, was a widespread custom in ancient times. In course of time the king evades his own sacrifice by the substitution of a victim, first the king's son and then a mock king, who would be either a voluntary person or a criminal or captive. Later animals or effigies were sacrificed instead of men.

This mock king had to be both innocent and guilty, a victim and a

sinner, at the same time. He had to be innocent in order to be able to take the sins of mankind on his head and wash them away, but he had to be a sinner in order to justify him being punished. From the Jewish standpoint Jesus was a sinner, as he flouted cherished conventions and broke ancient taboos. The story of the crucifixion in the Gospels makes this duality very clear: in the most ancient versions of Matthew 27:16-17 the "notorious prisoner" Barabbas was written as "Jesus Barabbas" and Barabbas merely means "son of the father". In essence there are two Jesuses here or two aspects of the same Jesus. Notice the paradox here: the condemned one is innocent and the innocent one is condemned.

However, the death of the guilty mock king alone was not sufficient to ensure people's salvation, but his blood also had to flow as a result of castigation or some form of ill-treatment. In the Gospels it takes the form of Jesus being scourged and spat upon before being crucified and then being mocked on the cross. This blood would be sprinkled on the devotee and so the victim was usually stabbed or pierced. He may afterwards have been bound to a cross or hung upon a tree; or he may have been hung up first and pierced afterwards. This theme of the sacrifice of the mock king is the crucial element in early Christianity; "the earliest Christian literature knows nothing of the life of a good man, nor even of a trial and a judicial execution, but treats abundantly of the sacrificial death of Jesus and the efficacy of his redeeming blood." (Rylands 44-46, Davies Human 69-70)

The difference between Christianity and pagan religions, however, is that the sacrificed savior takes on a human form in Christianity, where he is clearly a deity in pagan religions. This comes perilously close to the actual practice of human sacrifice which had been widespread in earlier centuries and continued to persist even in Jesus' time, as reported by all the Roman writers. The Romans did not issue laws against it until 97 BCE, the Druids practiced it, and even in Greece human sarcifice to Lycaean Zeus was still performed in the 2nd century during periods of prolonged drought. Thus the association of Jesus with human sacrifice would have been a familiar element to all pagan converts (Robertson Pagan 122-129). The other difference is that Christianity claimed the sacrifice of Jesus to have lasting and infinite efficacy and saving power for all who partook of it, that Jesus' sacrifice had finally broken the cycle of sin that had called for continuous sacrifice. Striking parallels can be found between Christianity and the very popular religion of Mithraism, the cult of the ancient Indo-Iranian Sun God Mithra which spread from Persia throughout Alexander the Great's empire and then later through the Roman Empire. With its emphasis on brotherliness, fidelity and bravery, its exclusion of women and the secret bonds among its male members, it particularly appealed to Roman soldiers and became Christianity's

major competitor.

The many parallels of the New Testament story with the Mithras liturgies are remarkable. Mithra was a savior god and the mediator between the supreme god and man. His birthday was celebrated on December 25th (also the birthday of Bacchus, Adonis and Krishna), the sun's resurrection day after the winter solstice, the day that the duration of daylight had measurably begun to lengthen, and on this day he is symbolically slain in the form of a bull and eaten by his worshippers. A sacrament closely resembling the Christian sacrament of the Lord's Supper was celebrated on Sunday, down to the cannibalization of the god's body in the form of bread and wine. One might say the difference is that Christians cleaned up the Mithraic rite in which the worshipers bathed in the bull's blood in a pit below as a sign of purification; Christians merely drink the blood symbolically.

Other parallels are: on the forehead of those who became members of the cult the priest made the sign of the cross. Mithra is buried in a rock tomb from which he was resurrected after three days. Mithra's bishops wore a mithra, a mitre, as their badge of office, also adopted by Christian bishops. Mithraists ate a sun-shaped bun embossed with the sword (cross) of Mithra, also adopted by Christians. The resemblances were so close that Justin attributed the institution of its principal rites to the agency of demons whose purpose was the discrediting of the Christian religion: apparently he did not realize how much deliberate borrowing had occurred. The big difference of course is that no one even thought that Mithra had ever been a real human and knew that he was a metaphorical figure. (Robertson Pagan 333-334, Barrett 103-104, Harwood 357, Rylands 35, Wheeless 20-23)

The ancient mystery cults were another formative influence on the shaping of Christianity. "The vast upheavals in the Roman Empire, the dissolution of old forms of society, the uprooting of captive populations and the growth of slavery, had all wrenched the individual out of his formerly stable framework of life. The disintegration of the social fabric generated a novel interest in speculations on life beyond the tomb. The mysteries in general were rooted in the idea of immortality, an afterlife that was happier than life on earth. The Mysteries were generally expressed in the form of a sacred drama; they had no metaphysics but produced a dramatic spectacle. They also no ethic but were entirely preoccupied with rites of purification." (Carmichael death 196)

These mystery cults supplied the idea of the saving power of the death of the god and the conviction that it was not any gnosis imparted by the god that brought about salvation, but a mystic participation in his death. People considered themselves to be "subject to moral and physical evil,

dominated by Destiny, and unable to escape by themselves from the corruption that beset the material side of their nature. Salvation accordingly meant escape from Destiny, release from corruption and a renewed moral life. It was effected by what may broadly be called sacramental means. By taking part in prescribed rites the worshipper became united with God, was enabled in this life to enjoy mystical communion with him, and further was assured of immortality beyond death. This process rested upon the experiences (generally including the death and resurrection) of a Savior-God, the Lord of his devotees." (Barrett 91) The Savior-God was usually opposed by an evil force: Set against Osiris, Mot against Baal, Loki against Balder.

"The frequent use of the term `mystery' by the early Christians in reference to their own rites indicates that Christianity began as a mystery religion. New members of these cults were not admitted to the mysteries. They had to undergo a period of probation, passing through several degrees as they proved themselves worthy. The highest class of initiates were called `the perfect' and they alone were admitted to the innermost mystery. There are sufficient indications that this was the rule also in the Christian mystery cults. This is why Jesus spoke in parables so that the common people wouldn't understand him." (Rylands 93-94)

The Pauline Gospel is explicitly presented as a mystery as in I Cor 2:7: "We impart a secret wisdom of God in a Mystery, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification." Paul's story of his baptism, then would be an account of an initiation into a mystery: magical union with the Messiah, possession by the spirit, ascent into the heavens and liberation from the law. (Smith secret 99-114)

The secret gospel of Mark makes this element of initiation into a mystery rite very clear. In 1958 Morton Smith found part of a letter from the 2nd century Christian theologian Clement of Alexandria copied onto the back pages of a 17th century volume: here Clement makes reference to secret teachings of Jesus, reserved for a special few of his disciples, and quotes a passage from a Secret Gospel of Mark, telling of secret rites performed by Jesus with these disciples. The document reads: "And going out of the tomb they came into the house of the youth, for he was rich. And after six days Jesus told him what to do, and in the evening the youth comes to him, wearibng a linen cloth over his naked body. And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God." This sounds very much like a nocturnal initiation and baptismal rite into a secret teaching, exactly what the mystery cults did. This strange young man appears again in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk 14:51) and at the tomb wearing grave-clothes (Mk 16:5).

The story of the raising of Lazarus may be another version of this initation rite. Here the newly-admitted catechumen would be dressed up in grave-clothes and then called to new life in the Spirit. So Lazarus was not really dead but was simply participating in a ritual. The framework of Mk 10:1-34 plus the resurrection story of the secret Gospel is parallel to the framework of John 10:40-11:54 plus the Lazarus story. The basic story is the same: A sister whose brother had died went to meet Jesus and fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you were here, my brother would not have died." Jesus, when he saw her weeping, came to the tomb which was a cave with a stone lying on it. He then ordered the stone to be taken away and the dead man to come out (AN Wilson 182, Smith secret 47-56).

Anothyer source used by the writers of the Gospels for the Lazarus story was the Egyptian myth of the resurrection of King Osiris by the god Horus. Osiris dies and is buried in the Egyptian necropolis of Annu which in Hebrew would be Beth-Annu, "House of Annu", or Bethany. He is mourned by his two sisters, Isis and Nephthys (Mary and Martha) but the god Horus raises him from the tomb after four days, just as Jesus does to Lazarus, by saying "The tomb is opened for you, the doors of the tomb-cchamber are thrown open for you." (Helms Who 124-126)

Another prominent source in the making of Christianity is the philosophy of Gnosticism which, despite the claims of many scholars, existed before Christianity, though it later took Christian forms. Gnostics argued that the God of the Hebrew Bible was not the true transcendent deity but an impostor, an evil power they called the Demiurge, who attempts to hold human souls hostage in order to cannibalize their spiritual energy. The true High God lives in a region beyond the skies but he has pity on humanity and sends an emissary from the world of Light to teach those who are aware and who seek gnosis how to escape and free themselves from the Demiurge and from this evil material reality.

It is from Gnosticism that Christianity took the cosmic framework, transcending all the local geographic reference of the mystery cults, and the concept of the battle between cosmic powers of good and evil. The Gnostic idea of the Demiurge was transformed in Christianity into the idea of a fallen world ruled by an evil power, Satan. From Gnosticism also derives the concept of a savior, a Son of God, descending from the world of Light. What Christianity did not borow is the Gnostic idea of the emissary of light being the feminine principle of Sophia, issuing directly from God himself, and the bi-gendered nature of the Gnostic deity as being both masculine and feminine. The original Gnostic trinity was Father, Mother and Son: the Christians replaced the Mother with the gender-neutral Holy Spirit. (see Pagels Gnostic)

There are also similarities between Jesus and Simon Magus, considered by the ealy Christian theologians to be the earliest Gnostic and particularly hated by them. They regarded him as having "taken the lead in all heresy" and been the leader of "a sect that ensnare those wretched females who are literally overwhelmed with every kind of vice." (Eusebius Ecc 63) Yet he also, like Jesus, came for the sake of the lost sheep, rejected conventional morality, only seemed to be a man and seemed to suffer in Judea, and came to save people from death. According to Irenaeus, Simon taught that he had "appeared among the Jews as Son, descended in Samaria as Father, and came among the other nations as Holy Spirit." Samaritans gave Simon the title "the great Power of God." and in Rome a statue to him was even erected with the inscription SIMONI DEO SANCTO. (Robt Grant 70-88) One can see how easy it was in the ancient world to build a god from a living person.

Mixed in with the borrowings from Gnosticism were also ideas from the Persian religion of Zoroastrianism, a dualistic view in which a good god, Ahura Mazda, battles an evil god, Ahriman: this became the basis for the polarity of God and Satan. In Judaism, in contrast, Satan was by no means an evil principle but merely a fallen angel and it would be considered blasphemous to consider any evil power to rule over God's creation. In Mk 14:27 Jesus describes himself as a shepherd and his disciples as sheep just as Zoroaster did 600 years earlier. Zoroaster too died as a sacrifice for many just as Jesus describes himself in Mk 14:24. Jesus is tempted by Satan for 40 days, just as Zoroaster was tempted by Satan's Persian prototype Ahriman.

Another source for the composite Jesus figure in the New Testament is the ancient tradition of magic and the magician. Belief in demons was widespread among both pagans and Jews, even among the Pharisees; demons were real and greatly to be dreaded as supernatural rather than natural powers were held responsible for all sickness and misfortune. Evil demons were continually watching for an opportunity to take possession of the souls and bodies of men, whenever an opening was made for them by ever so slight a deviation from righteous conduct. There is plenty of evidence in the early Christian literature that Jesus was believed to have come to earth to save men from the tyranny of the evil demons and the rite of baptism was undoubtedly at one time a formula of exorcism.

As Smith points out: "Ancient Palestine had no hospitals or insane asylums. The sick and insane had to be cared for by their families, in their homes. The burden of caring for them was often severe and sometimes, in cases of violent insanity, more than the family could bear...Doctors were inefficient, rare and expensive. When a healer appeared - a man who could perform miraculous cures and who did so for nothing - he was sure to be mobbed. In the crowds that swarmed around him desperate for cures, cures

were sure to occur. With each cure, the reputation of his powers, the expectations and speculations of the crowd, and the legends and rumors about him would grow." (Smith Magician 9) Much of the healing was of course by the power of mental suggestion or outright hypnosis, especially for psychosomatic illnesses, as well as by the fact that most illnesses are cured by the body itself and by the passage of time; a good bit might simply have been fraud as well.

Moreover, there was a long-standing prejudice in the Hebrew tradition against doctors. The Bible considers healing to be a divine monopoly and "recourse to the services of a doctor in preference to prayer is held to be evidence of a lack of faith, an act of irreligiousness meriting punishment... The only human beings empowered to act as God's delegates were the priests and prophets...A man's healing powers are measured, first and foremost, by his proximity to God and only secondarily by the expertise acquired from study." (Vermes 59-60). The New Testament continues this prejudice and in Mark 5:26 physicians worsened the condition of a sick woman who had had a flow of blood for 12 years: "she had suffered much under many physicians."

There were a good number of existing models for the figure of Jesus as charismatic faith healer and magician. For one, there is a strong tradition of Galilean wonder workers, the hasidim, that the writers of the New Testament must surely have drawn on. They were particularly known for their practice of exorcism, in order to remove unclean spirits which were held to be responsible for sicknesses. Honi the Circle-maker was credited with making rain fall some time before the fall of Jerusalem to Pompey in 63 BCE by exerting his will on the natural world. Hanina ben Dosa lived in voluntary poverty, 10 miles north of Nazareth, and was held to be a reinacarnation of Elijah. He could heal the sick through prayer and the laying-on of hands and he once healed a boy without having to visit him. He was also able to make rain appear out of cloudless skies.

The charismatics often flouted tradition: Hanina walked alone at night, owned goats and carried the unclean carcass of a snake. Another Hasid was found by Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah to be lax and ignorant of the biblical laws on ritual uncleanness. "The charismatics' informal familiarity with God and confidence in the efficacy of their word was also deeply disliked by those whose authority derived from established channels." (Vermes 69-82) The similarities to Jesus seem quite clear.

Jesus was also compared to the pagan miracle worker Apuleius, despite the protests of Christian theologians such as Augustine. Apuleius had the reputation of being a magician and was accused of pronouncing magical incantations and endowing objects with magical powers. Most of these

objects turned out to be emblems and mementos of his initiation into various mystery cults. He was also accused of pronouncing magical incantations over a boy who actually turned out to be an epileptic. He claimed the power to do more than mortals: he was a theurgos, "a name attached to the highest, most respected class of magicians who, instead of dragging down divine popwer into the physical sphere by incantations, potions and other material means, tried to lift up the soul into the divine sphere by a clear knowledge of the divine." (Benko 104-106)

The Jesus of the New Testament is designed to be the greatest magician and miracle worker of all time, incorporating and surpassing all others. He has every mark of a magician: he cured by touch, looked upward and sighed, used Aramaic phrases in Greek, used typically magical words, used his hands conspicuously, touched the tongue, showed anger at demons and prohibed their return, required patients to have faith or trust, practiced secrecy in performing the cures, and required 3 or 7 day preparatory periods. Yet in creating their Jesus figure the authors of the New Testament wished to go far beyond their magician models. Beyond the normal powers of a magician, he also has the powers of a prophet or divine man: he had the power to make anyone he wanted follow him, could exorcise demons, even at a distance, had remote control of spirits and the power to order them about, gave his disciples power over demons, performed miraculous cures of hysterical conditions, including fever, paralysis, hemorrhage, deafness, blindness, loss of speech, raised the dead, stilled storms, walked on water, provided food miraculously, had foreknowledge of his own fate and of coming disasters, could read others' thoughts, claimed to be the only one who knows his god or is known by his god and claimed to be the image of the invisible god. (Smith Secret 105-106)

There is no doubt of the identification of Jesus as a miracle worker in the Gospels: out of 661 verses in the Gospel of Mark, the earliest and most authoritative of the gospels, no less than 209 deal with miraculous acts. It is hard to find a non-miraculous kernel to the Gospel. Altogether in the Gospels 35 miracles are attributed to Jesus, and there are well over 200 items about Jesus that directly involve something miraculous: through all antiquity no other man is credited with so many. Comparable items in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius number about 107, in the Pentateuch's story of Moses 124, in the stories of Elisha in 2 Kings 38. (M Grant Jesus 37, Smith Mag 109)

The Gospels use the Hebrew Bible to demonstrate that Jesus is a greater miracle worker than the Hebrew prophets Elisha and Elijah. Many of Jesus' miracles are parallel versions of those already performed by the prophets: compare 1 Kings 17:16 and Mark 8:5-9; 1 Kings 17:17-22 with Mark 5:22-24, 35-42; 1 Kings 19:4-8 and Mark 1:12-13; 2 Kings 2:8 and Mark 6:48;

2 Kings 2:21-22 and John 2:7-9; 2 Kings 4:42-44 and John 6:9-13; 2 Kings 5:6-14 and Luke 17:12-14. Elijah made a small amount of food last for several days, but Jesus topped it by feeding a crowd of thousands with a handful of bread and fish - twice! (Mk 6:38-44, 8:5-9) This double story of feeding the 5000 and 4000 is repeated no less than six times in the four gospels, just to make sure that any lazy reader will get the point. The miracle of raising Lazarus is intended to prove that Jesus was as great as the prophets Elijah and Elisha who were remembered as being able to resuscitate the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24, 2 Kings 4:18-37). (Harwood 199-200, 310)

The artificial nature of these miracle stories is made clear in Mark's account. Mark uses two sets of five miracle stories, both of which follow the same pattern: first a sea-crossing miracle, then a combination of one exorcism and two healings, ending with an account of feeding a multitude:

Stilling the storm (4:35-41)	Walking on the sea (6:45-51)
The Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20)	The blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26)
Jairus' daughter (5:21-23,35-43)	The Syro-Phoenician woman (7:24b-30)
Woman with a hemorrhage (5:25-34)	The deaf-mute (7:32-37)
Feeding the 5000 (6:34-44, 53)	Feeding the 4000 (8:1-10)

As Mack says, "these stories look like reports of miracles, especially healings, typical for the Greco-Roman age. Hundreds have been collected for comparison and the genre in general is exactly the same." Here the added twist is that the crossing of the sea and the feeding of the multitude is intended to recall the Exodus from Egypt under Moses, making Jesus not only greater than Elijah and Elisha but also making him the new Moses, leading the new Chosen People to the new Promised Land. (Mack who 65-66)

The title "Son of God" that the Gospels repeatedly give to Jesus is another mark of Jesus as a magician and is almost always used by them in connection with miracles. As "Son of God" Jesus casts out demons (Mk 3:11, 5:7p, Lk 4:41), walks on the sea and knows the Father (Mt 11:27p, 14:33). "Son of God" is not at all the equivalent in Judaism of a Messiah and is only used this way in the Gospels. In real life the title was rarely used except for Roman emperors. The story in the Gospels of a man made a god by a rite of purification followed by the opening of the heavens and the coming of a spirit is only found in contemporary magical papyri. Here the deification transforms the magician into a supernatural being capable of working a miracle. (Smith Mag 100-103)

The ideological nature of these miracles is, however, shown in the fact that Jesus the Son of God's work of liberation from evil demons applied exclusively to people following pagan deities. As Rylands rightly points out, "while Galilee is swarming with sick people and demoniacs, as soon as Jesus comes into Judea he meets not a single one of either. And yet there must have been as many invalids, epileptics and lunatics there as elsewhere." Since the population of Galilee was a mixed one, it could be taken as a "symbol of the pagan world in which religious error and people possessed by demons abounded", while in Judea there was no worship of heathen deities and thus no demoniacs in the symbolic sense (Rylands 114). Consequently when in Luke 10:1-16 Jesus sends 70 disciples out with a long set of instructions and imprecations against anyone who does not receive them, the only result they report on their return in 10:17 is that "even the demons are subject to us in your name," as if that was the sum total of Jesus' teaching. Contrary to the general practice in the pagan world of worshipping all deities since one did not know which one had the greatest power, Christians insisted on Jesus being the only magician with effective power.

At the same time that the Gospels proclaim Jesus to be the greatest of all magicians, they also pursue the contradictory goal of disavowing this fact. The Roman laws on magic under Sulla, valid from 82 BCE to 529 CE, had harsh punishments for people practicing magic, and the provisions collected by the jurist Paulus in the 200s read: "Any who perform, or procure the performance of, impious or nocturnal sacrifices, to enchant, curse, or bind anyone with a spell, are either crucified or thrown to the beasts (in the arena)...It is the prevailing legal opinion that participants in the magical art should be subject to the extreme punishment...It is not permitted for anyone to have in his possession books of the magic art...Not only the practice of this art, but even the knowledge of it, is prohibited." In practice magic was tolerated, unless it caused harm, and magicians were not brought to court merely for being magicians; only in Christian times was all magic universally forbidden. (Smith Mag 75, Benko 128-130)

Even so, Christians had a bad reputation among the Romans for practicing sorcery and the Gospels are very concerned to prove that Jesus was not a magician. The Romans were convinced that Christianity was an organization for the practice of magic, as shown by the comments of the writers Suetonius, Tacitus and Pliny and the criticisms of Celsus' anti-Christian polemic, and this was the reason behind much of the Roman persecution. The magistrates lumped Christians together with soothsayers and superstitious people and accused them of summoning demons and evil spirits by use of incantations. The early Christian theologians were extremely sensitive to this charge and spent much time trying to refute these accusations (i.e. Euse-

bius Proof ch. 6).

Much magic was practiced in the early churches; Acts 19:19 suggests the extent of it in Ephesus where the magical books of those Christians who could be persuaded to burn them were valued at about $320,000. (Smith 50-53, 94, Benko 114) The characteristics Christians had in common with pagan magicians were numerous: "they believed in demons and exorcisms, they attributed supernatural power to material elements when used in connection with precise formulas and under specific circumstances, they identified certain names as having unusual potency, they preferred nights and daybreaks for their meetings, they warded off evil by signs and symbols, they ate food charged with divine energy and they spoke in tongues." (Benko 128) Every reference in the Talmud too describes Jesus as a sorcerer who led the Jews astray, and in Jewish thinking being a magician was equated with being a false prophet (Smith Mag 79).

As Smith says: "Jesus' name continued to be used in magic as that of a supernatural power by whose authority demons might be conjured...These uses of Jesus' name in pagan spells are flanked by a vast body of material testifying to the use of his name in Christian spells and exorcisms, and to the practice of magic by Christians of various sects (including the self-styled `Catholic Church.') Exorcism became a regular ritual of the Church; magical practices are often attested by conciliar legislation against them and by `Catholic' writers (primarily Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius) against `heretics'. The attestations are confirmed by a multitude of Christian amulets, curse tablets and magical papyri in which Jesus is the god most often invoked." (Smith Mag 63) There is an ancient formula of exorcism in which occurs the phrase, "I adjure thee by Jesus, the God of the Hebrews." Of course Jesus' name was also used along with others and those who practiced magic were willing to adopt from any source names and formulas which sounded impressive and effective: "The adjuration is this, `I adjure thee by the god of the Hebrews Jesu, Jaba, Jae, Abraoth, Aia, Thoth, Ele etc.'" (Paris Magical Papyrus in Greek, about 300 CE) (Barrett 31-32)

It is due to this negative reputation for magic that the Gospels go to great lengths to minimize any association of their Jesus figure with magic. They are especially at pains to show that Jesus had true divine power rather than being one of the common low-class magicians offering entertainment to the masses for money or one of the many spirit mediums, fortune tellers, sooth sayers, charlatans or those outright insane wandering about the Empire. Many commentators have been puzzled by the insistence of Jesus on secrecy about his miracles and healings: there are five such injunctions in Matthew. As Grant says: "It is incredible that Jesus, after performing his cures (as we are told) in public, should then have ordained and expected that

they should be kept secret", concluding that these must be inauthentic and must be "subsequent additions by the Gospels." (M Grant 36)

The contradiction can be explained by the political needs of the Gospels. They need to have Jesus do miracles and claim to be the Son of God as that is essential to their case, and at the same time they deny that these emanate from Jesus himself. Matthew and Luke get rid of the traces of physical means of performing miracles that are found in Mark (7:33f, 8:23ff): for instance, while Mark 1:31 in reference to the healing of Peter's mother-in-law says "he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her", Luke 4:39 merely says "and he stood over her and rebuked her fever". The kind of concrete detail found in Mark 7:33 ("he put his fingers into his ears and he spat and touched his tongue") is entirely lacking in Matthew and Luke. John goes even further and cuts the miracles down to seven - though these are at a high order of supernaturalism - but admits that he has deliberately done so in 20:30 ("Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book").

The synoptics also have Jesus keep secret his claim to be the son of God until the High Priest forces him to admit it (Mk 14:61p); until then the claim is only made by voices from heaven, demons, his disciples, crowds and so on. This Messianic Secret, as Wilhelm Wrede called it in his classic 1901 work, is the central theological idea pervading the entire Gospel of Mark and Jesus constantly repeats his strict order not to tell anyone about his Messianic identity (1:24, 1:34, 1:44, 3:12, 5:43, 8:30). This obsession in Mark shows the depth of Christian sensitivity to the charge of magic; all such charges against Jesus are absent in the Gospels on the part of the Pharisees, the High Priests or the Roman authorities (Smith Mag 92-93).

The Gospels themselves cast doubt on the efficacy of the miracles. The story of the return of the evil spirits (Mt 12:43-45, Lk 11:24-26) makes clear that exorcisms had no lasting effect; after a temporary relief, the patient is found to be in worse shape than before: "the last state of that man becomes worse than the first." Mark particularly seems to be suggesting that the miracles were all in the minds of the believers. He admits that Jesus was unable to effect any cures in his own country (6:1-6), a sure sign of faith healing rather than medical cures, and there is a constant emphasis on the cure being dependent on the patient's faith.

After Jesus produces the miracle of the loaves and then walks on the sea, Mark 6:51-52 reports that the disciples "were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their minds were closed." The Greek expression kardia poróo, literally "harden the heart", means being mentally insensitive, obtuse or dull, and the first part of the sentence indi-

cates that they did not understand what the miracle meant. (Zerwick 126) In other words, they saw nothing and no miracle had occurred. This might be another example of the rationalist authors of the New Testament leaving sly clues for the educated initiates that the whole thing is simply a joke on the gullible.

Chapter 31:
Christian Persecution
and the Nag Hammadi

When persecution is spoken of in the histories the focus is always on pagan persecution of Christians, not the opposite, and the literature on this subject is very large. Yet it is clear that Roman persecution was limited in time and scale and resulted in relatively few victims: there were four periods of persecution, 64 CE before the great fire at Rome, 250-251 under Decius, 257-259 under Valerian and 303-305 under Diocletian, the so-called "Great Persecution". None of these lasted more than two years and in between there are at best isolated and local persecutions and no more. The Romans did not seek out Christians to persecute and "no attempt was ever made, even in the general persecutions, to prohibit Christians from worshipping their own god in private", though Diocletian did order the destruction of churches (139-140). Any Christian willing to offer a sacrifice to the gods or to the emperor was immediately spared (41), and Gnostics were never persecuted as they did not refuse the sacrifice (Ste. Croix 140).

And a careful analysis of the evidence shows that most of the few thousand total Christian deaths were due to voluntary martyrdom which "was much more prevalent in the early Church than has hitherto been realized" (198). For example, of the 91 Palestinian martyrs in the Great Persecution, only 16 may have been sought out by the authorities and the rest either actively sought martyrdom or attracted attention to themselves (Ste. Croix 65).

Ste. Croix summarizes: "We may reasonably conclude that except on isolated occasions...the ordinary Christian who did not insist on openly parading his confession of faith was most unlikely to become a victim of persecution at all...And in the West, where the persecution ceased before it had properly developed, we need not be surprised to find very few martyrdoms indeed...The so-called Great Persecution has been exaggerated in Christian tradition to an extent which even Gibbon did not fully appreciate. Other persecutions of Christianity were sporadic and short-lived" (Ste. Croix 67-68).

How vastly different in scale and ferocity was the Christian persecution of pagans and anyone they deemed heretics! One would perhaps think that Christians would have applied the "do unto others" principle

that they allegedly professed to the pagans or even to retaliate only to an equal extent. But that is not so at all. There is no doubt of a reign of terror unleashed by the Catholic Church in the 4th and 5th centuries against all culture, education and freedom of thought not fitting into its very narrow limits.

This story of "how and why the Christian Church - or rather churches- became during the fourth and following centuries, and remained for more than a millennium and a half, the greatest organized persecuting force in history" (Ste. Croix Christian 201) is not comprehensively and chronologically told in most histories, with a few exceptions. Edward Gibbon, John Robertson and Ferdinand Lot begin to tell the story, Ramsay MacMullen and Charles Freeman give good piecemeal accounts of it, and recent books by Michael Gaddis, Frank Trombley and Eberhard Sauer give it scholarly heft.

But when one assembles the entire chronology and looks at the devastation caused, the impact is overwhelming. What it shows is increasing violence and hostility directed by the Catholic hierarchy working in conjunction with the Roman state against "heretics" and "pagans" throughout the 4th century, with a brief lull from 361-375 CE, and then a full-scale successful assault starting with Emperor Theodosius I in 379 CE and resulting in a near-complete destruction of all pagan temples and shrines and in the suppression of all non-Christian thought and writing.

Persecution begins in 313 CE with Emperor Constantine (ruled 307-337), who had become a Christian in 312 and who granted toleration to Christianity with the Edict of Milan, mostly as a way to sustain his own questionable right to the throne. There has been much discussion about how sincere his conversion really was but there is no doubt that it was due to him that the Church eventually "triumphed". As Ferdinand Lot says, "We may think that in default of Constantine, some other Emperor might have become converted. In the first place, this is not in the least certain. In the second place, would the moment have been equally favorable? It is quite certain that Constantine's conversion came at a critical and decisive moment" since once the Church began tearing itself apart over doctrinal issues no pagan Emperor would have given it absolute power: "Constantine's conversion is thus a `miracle'. It saved the Church" (Lot 48).

In reality, Christians, who were still highly diverse and unstructured and had nothing that can be called "orthodoxy", were a tiny minority within the Empire, and were confined to the Greek-speaking cities of the east and at best 2% of the Latin-speaking West, hardly in a position to be the dominant religion of the Empire. Yet the Edict gave Christian clergy regular

annual allowances and exempted them from municipal taxes, rapidly drawing such a multitude of gain-seekers to the Christian priesthood such that the churches of Carthage and Constantinople soon had 500 priests apiece. The government subsidized the building of grand churches and the bishops had their decisions legally enforced. The primary duty of the Christian clergy was to maintain the divine cult of the emperor and by their prayers to ensure that God would support him. Constantine warned Christians against intolerance but granted toleration to pagans in contemptuous language: "Let those who hold aloof possess if they wish the temples of falsehood; we possess the glorious house of Thy truth" (Freeman 40).

Though there was never a general persecution of pagans, the process of increasing destructiveness had begun. Pagan temple destruction had been confined to hostility in Rome in the first century BCE up until 19 CE against the foreign and exotic cult of Isis (Sauer 47). And before Constantine Christians were discouraged from such destruction: for instance, a Christian council held some time between 295-314 CE at Granada in southern Spain had made it clear that any Christian killed by pagans for image destruction did not count among the martyrs.

"Image destruction exploded only when Christianity enjoyed imperial backing" and Constantine set it in motion (Sauer 30). There is no good count of how many temples Christians ended up destroying, but Deichmann lists 89 of the ones on top of whose remains churches were built or which in some cases were converted into churches; the others whose sites were never reused may well number in the hundreds (Deichmann 115-136).

Constantine despoiled gold, valuables and famous works of art from pagan temples and confiscated their lands; he suppressed some and destroyed others, such as the famous Temple of Asclepius at Aegae in Cilicia, a noted pilgrim shrine with miraculous cures. Other temples he destroyed and built churches over them: the temple of Aphrodite in Jerusalem and the shrine of Mambre near Hebron, the Temples of Aphrodite in Aphaca in the Lebanon and in Heliopolis in Phoenicia, which he hated particularly for their cultic prostitution, and the Temple of Zeus in Constantinople. In the case of the Aphaca temple the church was built with the same stones, on the same spot, and with identically sited exterior walls. During his reign Christians also seized the prophets of Apollo at Delphi and at Antioch and tortured them (Jones 173-174, Freeman 48, Hanson 348-351).

The process of persecution of "heretics" had begun as well, and in the next century and a half successive Emperors passed no less than 66 decrees against heretics (Grant Fall 163). The first of these decrees was

against Donatists, who insisted on their freedom from centralized control, were massacred wholesale in North Africa in 316-317 and had their churches taken away from them. However, in 321 Constantine had a change of heart and urged toleration of Donatists as repression was not creating the religious peace and uniformity he desired and he needed his troops for other purposes (Ste. Croix 218).

Emperor Julian (361-363), raised as a Christian but slandered by Christians thereafter as the "Apostate", attempted to restore paganism and suppress Christianity. He was horrified by the constant infighting between Christian groups and said: "No wild beasts are such enemies to mankind as are most of the Christians in their deadly hatred of each other" (Freeman 66). He ordered that the pagan temples must be reopened or rebuilt, paid for by the culprits who had destroyed them, he expelled bishops who were chiefly responsible for stirring up Christian mob violence in the cities, and he issued an edict of universal religious tolerance, including Christianity, showing that he was on a much higher moral plane than those he opposed. He thus "put a temporary end to what had become a whole spate of attacks on pagan temples" (Fowden 60).

Christians, however, continually tried to goad him into persecuting them in order to claim the moral high ground of martyrdom, by attacking pagan temples, including ones closed under Christian emperors that were reopened under Julian, and by refusing to pay for previous destructions of temples (Gaddis 92-96). For example, in 362 Christians surreptitiously burned the Temple of Apollo at Daphne, near Antioch, as revenge on Julian for removing the bones of their martyr Babylas and they also destroyed the Temple in Corfu and built a church over it (Hanson 349-350).

In the same year of 362 Julian also issued an edict banning Christians from practicing law and from teaching the three pillars of Roman education (grammar, rhetoric and philosophy), the single event for which he became notorious among Christian writers, as this would keep Christians from subverting the pagan classics to make converts. Before his death edicts were also issued to exclude Christians from all key government positions and from the army: as Julian said, "those who revere the gods should be given absolute preference...For practically everything has been turned upside down thanks to the folly of the Galileans (Christians)" (Browning 185-186). As Murdoch says: "Julian had marginalised Christianity to the point where it could potentially have vanished within a generation or two, and without the need for physical coercion" (Murdoch 140).

If Julian had not died in 363 and if he had had the long reign that

Constantine had, he might well have succeeded, as Christianity was at the time mostly an urban phenomenon, popular among slaves and women, and even in the cities was "little more than a veneer" (Murdoch 132). Despite the tendencies of most historians to see the "triumph of Christianity" as inexorable and inevitable and to downplay coercion as the true secret of its success, "a century of intelligently continuous policy to the same end", as Robertson says, "might have expelled Christianity as completely from the Roman world as Buddhism was soon to be expelled from India...Had a succession of Roman emperors set themselves to create a priestly organisation of pagan cults...and if at the same time they had left the Church severely alone, allowing its perpetual strifes to do their own work, it would inevitably have dissolved itself by sheer fission into a hundred mutually menacing factions, an easy foe for a coherent paganism" (Robertson 163-164).

I would venture to say that the world would have been immeasurably better off if Julian had succeeded, for despite positive aspects such as the support of the arts and an anti-capitalist economic policy, at least in the Middle Ages, the historical record of the Catholic Church is one of unrelenting savagery, intolerance and cultural destruction with deaths of easily several hundred million: the relentless persecution of the Jews, the Crusades against the Moslems, the Albigensian Crusades, the witchcraft persecutions, the violence of the Counter-Reformation and the religious wars, the genocide of the natives of the New World, the destruction of native cultures world-wide by the missionaries, the complicity in the Holocaust, the long history of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children at the hands of priests and nuns etc. etc. Rightly did one of Julian's closest friends lament upon his death: "Gone is the glory of good. The company of the wicked and the licentious is uplifted...Now the broad path, the great door lies wide open for the doers of evil to attack the just. The walls are down" (Murdoch 4).

From 363-375 pagans and heretics finally enjoyed a brief respite from state-sponsored violence, as Emperors Jovian (363-364) and Valentinian (364-375), though themselves Christian, did not attempt to persecute paganism. The only exception was a law of 364 aimed at Mithraism that prescribed execution for anyone who conducted certain ceremonies at night, namely wicked prayers, magical acts or sinister sacrifices (Sauer 138). But that did not mean Christians were willing to live in peace with paganism or even with each other, despite their continuous claims of serving the Prince of Peace and being the religion of love.

As MacMullen describes it: "The church even quite undisturbed was not a good neighbor...An ethic of love...could only be displayed from

parity or strength, toward the like-minded or toward suppliant sufferers... Anyone who asserted wrong teachings...earned instead an equally remarkable antagonism. In their official high meetings together, Christians could not keep their own disagreements within the bounds of civil language; their continual quarrels required the intervention of the civil authorities... Egypt especially, being split three ways, echoed to the shouts of partisans, the din of violence, and laments for those robbed, stripped naked, flogged, imprisoned, exiled, sent to the quarries and coppermines, conscripted into the army, tortured, decapitated, strangled, or stoned or beaten to death. The express object was to make converts...Imperial officials and their troops played an extremely prominent role in all this" (MacM Ch'izing 91-93).

And all this was only a preamble for what was to come. The accession of Emperor Theodosius I (379-394) marked the unleashing of the final orgy of Christian vandalism and destruction of all the cultural institutions of the Roman Empire that put an end to millennia of ancient tradition and achievement. By the time of Theodosius II (408-450) the law code drawn up in his reign contained no less than 25 laws, by his predecessors and himself, directed against paganism in all its forms (Grant Fall 160).

In 381 Theodosius attempted to enforce the Nicene Creed (Council of Nicaea 325 CE) that God the Father, Jesus the son and the holy spirit were of equal majesty, against the subordinationist or Arian view that Jesus was subordinate to God. This was mostly for political reasons, to elevate Jesus and by implication the Emperor who spoke for him to equal status with the primary pagan deities of old; in addition, the Goths, the enemies of Byzantium, were Arians and this served to distinguish the orthodox from the barbarians. Thus he decreed that heretics were to be forced to surrender their churches to the Nicenes, not to be allowed to build their own places of worship, and later not even to build churches outside a city wall. No Manichaean was allowed to bequeath or inherit property and in 382 the death penalty was decreed for members of certain Manichaean sects. This coercion was applauded by Augustine and Church officials (Freeman 93, 104).

The following year, in 382, two laws were passed aimed at "heretics" and pagans: one ordered the death penalty for anyone celebrating Easter on the wrong day of the year (McM Ch'izing 93); the other ordered the confiscation of all income-producing property from temples and what was seized by the state was to be transferred to the churches and in the West Gratian abolished the age-old subsidies to the priesthoods (McM Chy 57-58, Williams 59). This latter law struck a death-blow at pagan temples, for

paganism required extremely large portions of the regular municipal funds and without those could not maintain itself; the pagan priesthoods could not adjust to relying on voluntary revenue (Robertson 174).

This law also unleashed a rampage of fanatical monks against pagan shrines and temples all over the Empire; as Gibbon tells it: "In almost every province of the Roman world, an army of fanatics, without authority and without discipline, invaded the peaceful inhabitants; and the ruin of the fairest structures of antiquity still displays the ravages of those barbarians who alone had time and inclination to execute such laborious destruction" (Gibbon II 55-56). One telling example was the Temple of the war goddess Alat in Palmyra, Syria, which was mostly undamaged when Aurelian took the city twice in the 270s, despite the rebellion of the inhabitants, and continued to flourish in the 4th century but was finally completely destroyed by Christians in 383 (or 386) (Sauer 49-52). This shows the reluctance of even pagan conquerors to attack pagan temples.

In 386 we hear the very last voice criticizing the Christians before all critique is permanently snuffed out. The highly respected Sophist orator Libanius (314-390/391), native of Antioch and a great admirer of Julian, in one of the last pleas for religious toleration recorded in the ancient world, Oration 30, warned Theodosius of the devastating effect that tearing down ancient temples in the countryside by the monks would have on peasant life: "You then have neither ordered the closure of temples nor banned entrance to them...But this black-robed tribe (the monks)...hasten to attack the temples with sticks and stones and bars of iron...Then utter desolation follows, with the stripping of roofs, demolition of walls, the tearing down of statues and the overthrow of altars and the priests must either keep quiet or die. After demolishing one, they scurry to another...

Such outrages occur even in the cities, but they are most common in the countryside...By ravaging the temples, they ravage the estates, for wherever they tear out a temple from an estate, that estate is blinded and lies murdered. Temples, Sire, are the soul of the countryside: they mark the beginning of its settlement ...In them the farming communities rest their hopes...An estate that has suffered so has lost the inspiration of the peasantry together with their hopes, for they believe that their labors will be in vain once they are robbed of the gods who direct their labors to their due end... These hooligans...claim to be attacking the temples, but these attacks are a source of income, for, though some assail the shrines, others plunder the wretched peasantry of what they have, both the produce stored from the land and their stock... Others are not satisfied with this, but they appropriate the land too" (Libanius Oration 30 8-11). There is no indication

that this impassioned plea had any effect on Theodosius.

Thus did the Christians loot and destroy the local economies and civic structures of the Empire, for pagan temples served many different functions: as destinations for religious tourism and pilgrimage and lifelong loyalty to a local cult, as centers of priest-led worship at fixed hours of the day, as places of healing and places of prayer, as facilities for spending the night in order to have a vision, as centers of commerce, for use as classrooms, and as a place for local senate meetings in the porches and banquets of workers' fraternal associations. At Damascus the sanctuary of Hadad enclosed an area as big as two football fields which also served as the city's chief bazaar (Mac Ch'izing 97, Chy 54-56). Antioch alone had four temples, Fortune, Zeus, Athena and Dionysus, which served as schools, courtrooms and lawyers' meeting places (Libanius 146-147n). Freeman says: "The process of destruction was revolutionary in that the very fabric of city life, its rituals, its very sense of community, had grown around the sacred precincts over centuries ...The elimination of paganism was accompanied by a dampening-down of emotions, dance and song so effective that we still lower our voices when we enter a church" (Freeman Closing 267).

In 390/391 a new law reiterated the ban on sacrifices, decreed the death penalty for divination from entrails and for the first time authorized the closing down of pagan rituals still held in a building taken over by Christians, as well as prohibitions on purely private rituals: "No one is to enter shrines, no one is to undertake the ritual purification of temples of worship or worship images crafted by human hand". Another law forbade apostasy from Christian to pagan, punishable by loss of all rank, status and testamentary rights: "...they shall be branded with perpetual infamy and shall not be numbered even among the lowest dregs of the ignoble crowd." And a law specifically for Egypt now banned sacrificial ceremonies that were widely believed to ensure the continued rise of the fertilizing Nile. "All this was taken by zealous monks as tacit permission for a new campaign of temple-smashing" (Freeman 122-123, Williams 70, 121).

And as a response to these laws, Theophilus the local bishop of Alexandria asked for the use of an "old and dilapidated basilica", as the Christian writer Rufinus called it, for use as a church, which actually turned out to be the great Temple of Dionysius. He then deliberately angered the pagans by parading the temple cult-objects, especially the phalloi, around the city in derision, and used that success as a claim on all the city's temples, taking control of them. The pagans in response, under the energetic leadership of the philosopher Olympios, took Christian hostages which the Christians used as an excuse to justify an attack on the Serapeion, regarded as the most impressive complex of religious buildings outside Rome and

containing what remained of the famous Library of Alexandria (the Museum library having been destroyed in 48 BCE and 270 CE) that had at one time possessed 490,000 and possibly three quarters of a million papyrus rolls. Christians hated the Library in particular because the academics and intellectuals there constituted one of the main centers of pagan resistance to Christianity.

Christian mobs encouraged by their bishop mounted a full-scale assault on the temple, destroying the statues of the gods and burning the books. This destruction revealed the full extent of the technological ingenuity of the Hellenistic period, for "the images, composed of bronze and wood, backed into walls from which secret passageways issued, permitting the temple wardens and priests to climb inside the effigies and issue commands through their mouths." In addition, the image of the Sun on the ceiling seemed to levitate from the effect of a light beam positioned above it in relation to a balance (Trombley I 133). Thus was classical technology lost and thus ended the greatest library and scientific center the world had ever seen, for the aim of the Ptolemies had been to have in one place every book that had ever been written, even from as far afield as India. As a result, our modern knowledge of the first 1000 years of Western civilization is extremely spotty as only 1% of the works that were once found in the Library have survived (Pollard xvi).

The monks moved on to the considerable temple complex at Canopus dedicated to Isis, 14 miles northeast of Alexandria, where the festivals of Nilotic gods were celebrated (Trombley I 137-138). The destruction then continued forward, as described by the enthusiastic Rufinus, "throughout every Egyptian city, fort, village, rural district, riverbank, even the desert, whatever shrine could be found, or rather, tomb [of the `dead' gods], at the urging of every bishop" (McM Ch'izing 99, Ch'y 53, Remondon 64). As O'Leary says: "Very little remains in Lower Egypt of the temples which provoked the admiration of Herodotus and other travellers, but in these scanty relics we find traces of a deliberate destruction which involved an enormous outlay of energy; colossal statues, obelisks and columns of granite and other hard stones have been broken into three or more pieces, a task which required almost as great labour as their transport from Upper Egypt in the first place. This destruction is most obvious in temples where Isis was worshipped, temples which remained latest in use and still had their devotees in Christian times. Such painstaking destruction is seen in the colossus of Amenemhat at Tanis, the broken monolithic shrine at Yemt (Tell Nebesha), in the wrecked temple of Behbit (Naisi), where huge granite blocks are piled up to the depth of fifteen feet...and at Bubastis, the chief temple of Isis, where columns and statues have suffered a careful and very thorough

destruction" (O'Leary 55).

In 392 a law of 390 that had restricted monks to deserts was repealed, allowing them to join the renewed destruction of pagan shrines. Among the monastic leaders urging violence and hatred against pagans was the influential Shenoute who ran the White Monastery, a Pachomian monastery about 50 miles downstream from Nag Hammadi, from 388 to at least 451 and possibly 466 C.E. and who has been described as "a strong character, extremely active, brutal, a despotic dictator who would not tolerate any opposition" (Till Coptic 246). He threatened the local pagan landowners, conducted raids on temples and private homes to confiscate idols, books, and other equipment of pagan religion and with his monks took the lead in attacks on local rural temples including Atripe, Pneuit (or Pleuit), Panopolis and Koptos (Timbie 265-268).

When a local pagan magnate whose house Shenoute's thugs had ransacked and whose "idols" they had smashed accused him of committing lesteia - banditry, crime, illegal violence - against him, Shenoute haughtily replied: "There is no crime for those who have Christ" (Gaddis 1). Every time the local authorities tried to institute judicial proceedings against him for his outrages, he was able to marshal mass demonstrations to intimidate them into retreat, playing on the resentments of the Egyptian peasants against an exploitative aristocracy. Shenoute may even have had a hand in the destruction of Dendara, south of his monastery, which was too well-built to pull down but instead had its art work and statues thoroughly defaced by Christians. The same is true for the temple of Karnak (Sauer 100-101). Some temples, however, including a Temple to Apollo (Horus) at Abydos with 23 priests and 7 slaves, even survived Shenoute's era until the beginning of the 6th century as many of the local landowners remained pagans and continued to support the Egyptian priests (Kakosy 70, Remondon 71).

When Cyril became bishop of Alexandria in 412, he created his own shock troops loyal only to him, the parabalani, who were supposed to be stretcher-bearers and hospital orderlies but were soon perverted into a Nazi-like gang of thugs. These created such terror that the town council complained to the emperor of intimidation and the emperor himself had to ask that their numbers be limited to 500 but he did not dare to ban them. Nor was Cyril the only Christian leader with fully armed units: the patriarch of Antioch also commanded a threatening body of lecticarii, supposedly pallbearers for the burial of the urban poor, and the bishop of Rome turned a cadre of grave diggers into his own urban militia, later employed in murderous assaults on the supporters of his rival. These units are later extolled by Christian apologists as an example of Christian love, brotherhood and care for the poor and any violence by them was attributed solely to

provocations by pagans: as Ambrose said ominously, "The bishops are the controllers of the crowds, the keen upholders of peace, unless, of course, they are moved by insults to God and His church" (Brown Power 102-103).

Cyril's men apparently spent little time helping the sick and poor and keeping the peace: when in 415 the Christian city prefect Orestes, who believed Cyril needed to be curbed, rightly blamed him for riots, he was injured by a mob of monks for daring to insist on his secular powers. Cyril immediately launched a reign of terror: he closed the hitherto tolerated churches of the Novatians and appropriated their wealth and he sent a mob to plunder the Jewish quarter and seize Jewish synagogues, thus ending a community which had lived in

Alexandria for 700 years. And because Orestes protected the famous philosopher and mathematician Hypatia, who was acclaimed for her wisdom, Cyril sent his Christian thugs to drag her from her coach, stone her to death and hack her body to pieces. This symbolized the end of the classical philosopher's easy participation in public life and the final suppression of all classical learning (Brown Power 115-117, Freeman Closing 268).

Cyril's thugs then moved on to destroy the Temples of Serapis and Isis in Menuthis, 14 miles east of Alexandria, replacing them with a church, but parts of the Temple, many cult figures and several statues of the goddess were hidden in a private home in Menuthis. This continued to be a center of worship until 482 or 488 (dates vary).

The very last Egyptian temple was destroyed in 530 CE, the 25th dynasty Isis Temple at Philae on the southern edge of Egypt, which persisted as long as it did only due to its isolation, the only temple to continue hieroglyphic inscriptions as late as 394 C.E. and to contain the very last Demotic inscriptions of 452, was finally destroyed by Narses' men who spent weeks methodically smashing the feet and faces off the relief figures. They gave equal attention to the pharaohs whom they couldn't tell from the gods. Until then both a pagan and a Christian community had peacefully coexisted on the small island, tolerated only in the interest of peace with the local Nubians, so once again the order of destruction came from the top (McM Chy 53, Kakosy 71-73).

But there are many important questions raised by the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library: why is there only one copy in existence? who hid it in the cave to begin with? and why were so afraid of its destruction that they felt they needed to hide it? The consensus view among modern scholars is that the Nag Hammadi Library was hidden by Christian monks under the leadership of Pachomius, but there are many reasons for thinking that conclusion false, not least because Pachomius was a fairly orthodox Christian

who would have had no use for the bewildering variety of decidedly non-Christian documents in the collection.

What is interesting about the groups who commissioned or perhaps wrote the 13 codices (and probably many more that were not hidden) is the thoughtfulness and reflectiveness with which they put them together. Contrary to what many scholars assume, the tractates are not just compiled in random order but there is a sequence of liturgical elements to many of the codices with each of the tractates as steps in a general theme.

And the core of this theme was the attempt to create a new syncretist philosophy, as Williams shows: "Tractates seem chosen and placed for more than merely their esoteric quality, but rather for specific functions that they serve within codices. Rather than coming to us as a jumbled hodgepodge of traditions, the tractates come to us ordered...The arrangement itself...seems to be the scribal method of demonstrating or establishing the theological coherence among the works. A revelation received by an ancient Shem or Zostrianos or Eugnostos or Melchizedek is shown to be an anticipation of revelation from (or in) Christ. The ascent of an Allogenes is the mystical visionary communion beyond even baptism and eucharist. Testimony to the truth about Christ as great physician is discovered hidden in traditions associated with the Greco-Roman god of healing, Aesclepius. And so on. In other words, the very ordering of the material resolved...theological diversity among the writings" (Williams 39-40).

It is clear from the Nag Hammadi texts that these people had had a good Greek education. They were educated Graeco-Egyptians, at least of middle-class level, and they had studied Greek philosophy, especially Plato, principles of rhetoric, classical literature, linguistic theory and exegesis, mathematics, physics, medicine, metaphysics, anthropology and ethics. They were familiar with Greek teachings on the symbolic and religious significance of letters and the correspondence of the seven vowels with the seven planets and the seven notes of the musical scale. Böhlig thinks there is evidence that they quoted from anthologies current at the time. They valued education and the search for wisdom for its own sake and made of that alone their religious philosophy, rather than any dogmatic or fixed world view (Bohlig griechisch 25-39).

The fact that there was a large Coptic literature such as the Nag Hammadi Library indicates that it was in popular demand among ordinary people, for assimilated urban Egyptians were more likely only to read in Greek. Leipoldt says: "It is particularly noteworthy that the Copts, even though they did not speak Greek (at least not fluently), desired translations from Greek, which in part dealt with difficult subjects: for example, they

demanded Gnostic texts of which many types required specific knowledge and a pronounced capacity of memory. The Egyptian language is not used to or suited for complicated thought processes...Thus the desire for education displayed by Egyptian peasants is particularly astonishing" (Leipoldt Pachom 244). And this respect for literacy persisted well into the Islamic period: Steinmann's analysis of the Djeme payrus shows that as late as the second half of the 8th century 40-50% of Coptic speakers were literate while 50-60% were illiterate, and this not in a large metropolis but in a small town of 3000-4000 people (Steinmann 110).

In fact, the level of education among ordinary people in the Roman period was much greater than one would expect. Bell says: "Discoveries at Oxyrhynchus, a mere nome-capital, not a Greek foundation, have shown that an astonishing range and variety of Greek classical literature was there available for study...It is clear that the dweller at Oxyrhynchus, and so presumably other places in Egypt, had access to a vast body of literature, of which only a small portion now survives. There must have been a fairly large reading public and an active book-trade...Though illiteracy was common, especially among women, education was by no means confined to the wealthy elite but was widely valued and pursued in that middle class which Roman policy had done so much to create" (Bell Egypt 81-82). It is precisely such middle-class people who were most likely responsible for the Nag Hammadi collection.

Thus, careful analysis of the 12 codices leads to the following conclusions about the owners. The documents reflect an extraordinary doctrinal diversity, with no one theological system predominating. They are all spiritual and philosophical documents and intended for people with a strong religious interest and a belief in the power of gnosis. The texts show a creative and unique mix of dialectical forms of ancient Egyptian. The writers were in the forefront of people creating a new written Coptic language to express spiritual truths. The place of origin of the codices may extend over all of Egypt. The owners may have traveled quite a bit and their final form may be the result of modifications by a number of different people or groups. They may have been rewritten by different people into their own dialects and eventually a number of them may have been re-edited again by Sahidic scribes in the Nag Hammadi area.

They show evidence of being customized for individual owners who were not necessarily wealthy. Their use was private rather than institutional and they do not seem to have been used in a public library. The fact that they were found in the country does not rule out an urban origin. And most significantly, much care and thought went into the conception and planning of the codices; the tractates are not randomly put together but show evidence

of an overall thematic design. Contrary to what many scholars assume, the tractates are not just compiled in random order but there is a sequence of liturgical elements to many of the codices with each of the tractates as steps in a general theme.

What all this indicates is people who had studied many of the different religious traditions current at the time, had taken a sincere and personal interest in spiritual philosophy and had come to the conclusion that all the different traditions were really talking about similar aspirations and truths. So out of the incredible religious diversity in late Roman Egypt they decided to construct a syncretistic unification of basic themes common to all the different traditions and they carefully arranged them in a number of sets of tractates. And that is why no unifying sectarian dogma can be detected in the Nag Hammadi Library: because the compilers deliberately set out to combat dogma and sectarianism!

These people were possibly no identifiable group at all and may not even have had a name. They might simply have been simply high-minded and idealistic individuals who were themselves spiritual seekers and sought wisdom and insight wherever they could find it. They were certainly highly literate but that does not mean they were of an elite class. They were most likely both formally educated and self-educated and may well have been initiates in one or several of the mystery schools prevalent at the time. They may simply have collected the works of the Nag Hammadi Library or they may have been part of a creative group engaged in writing at least some of them. In short, they were an integral part of the small number of cultural creatives in any age who define what we call human culture and drive spiritual and intellectual progress forward.

So what happened to our fearless, innovative, creative, pioneering group of free-thinkers and spiritual seekers? And why did they hide the books they had spent so much time and care compiling? It is obvious that they would not have hidden them without extreme necessity, as the books were expensive and were very dear to their hearts, and it is also obvious that they were not able to come back and reclaim them. One can only assume that they would have reclaimed them if they could have and that they must have died before they could return. Their secret thus lies buried in their graves. What disaster could have caused this?

Once one looks carefully at the evidence, the answer is startling: ferocious and violent Christian persecution of all persons and writings not adhering strictly to the ever-changing orthodox dogma and the deliberate and wanton destruction of thousands of years of classical culture, architecture and education. This story is beginning to be told more and

more, but up until recently Christian and even non-Christian scholars have had a habit of downplaying or even ignoring the catastrophic events of the 4th and 5th centuries CE and the Church's responsibility for them. As Sauer says, "there has been an astonishingly low level of interest in the material traces of image destruction in archaeological literature" (Sauer 15).

Usually the rise of Christianity is seen as an inevitable triumph of a vigorous new religion over a moribund and dying paganism; as the prolific historian Michael Grant says: "During this whole period most official pagan worships were fading into the background...During the third century its shrines in North Africa were abandoned and at Rome, too, the cults lost ground...This failure of enthusiasm was one of the prices paid for war and disaster...Another reason for waning interest in the old religion was the growth of monotheistic feeling" (Grant Climax 163).

Let us summarize what this history tells us. Christianity as we know it today did not triumph because of an upsurge of popular support: before Constantine made it an official religion for his own political reasons it was a small minority regarded with contempt by most pagans as ignorant and overly credulous fanatics. Right from the beginning it was imposed on people from the top as a coercive religion to magnify the power of the Emperor and its dogmas were continually imposed by the Emperor to create an illusive theological unity: "It was the emperors who had actually defined Christian doctrine. This definition was then incorporated into the legal system so that orthodoxy was upheld by both secular and Church law, and heretics were condemned by the state" (Freeman 155). The emperors particularly liked the Christian teaching that the poor and the slaves should accept their lot in life as God-given, since they were all one in Christ, and the Christian focus on the afterlife as a way to get the poor to accept their present misery.

Most pagans were well aware of the coercive nature of Christianity and did not convert willingly; they fought against it long and hard for many centuries and resisted the destruction of their temples and shrines. One can reasonably argue that the vast majority of Christian conversions after the establishment of Christianity as a state religion were coerced and not voluntary.

As Sauer justly concludes: "Those who argue that paganism by and large collapsed in on itself...ought to explain why it is that Christianity became the sole religion precisely in those states which imposed it from above and normally outlawed pagan worship and tolerated or encouraged image destruction, while in the first millenium it failed to do so anywhere else...No doubt, Christianity would have continued to spread and would have gained the devotion of large numbers of human minds over wide areas even

if it had not turned from persecuted to persecutor after it had gained imperial support in the fourth century. Yet, would it ever have become the dominant, let alone the sole religion in the West without force?" (Sauer 173, 15). The answer is clearly No. And what is interesting is that contemporary Christian authors such as Augustine and Sulpicus Severus (biographer of Martin) make no bones about it and are rather proud of the role of violence in the dramatic growth of Christianity (Sauer 172).

Much of the impetus for Christian destruction of paganism, heresy and Judaism was economic: bishops, priests and monks looted the wealth accumulated in temples, shrines, churches and synagogues and seized their lands. As Libanius said, the monks used the laws against pagan sacrifice merely as an excuse to steal goods and seize property. Many charges of heresy were motivated by a desire to take over the property of "heretics".

Thus the Catholic Church became an immensely wealthy institution: the estates settled on the Church in the reign of Constantine alone brought in an annual income of well over 30,000 solidi (more than 460 pounds of gold) and in the 5th century the incomes of the bishops, of whom there were well over a thousand, were sometimes larger than that of any provincial governor, as high as 3,000 solidi. While in the pagan world there had been very few full-time professional priests, under the new Christian regime hundreds of thousands of monks and full-time clerics were supported by the state and ultimately by the heavily taxed peasants: "the staffing of the Church absorbed far more manpower than did the secular administration and the Church's salary bill was far heavier than that of the empire" (Ste. Croix Class 495-496).

Many of the theological battles over minute points regarding the Trinity were really only fronts for vicious personal power struggles between different factions and individuals within the Church. The abstruse and inherently illogical doctrine of the Trinity, caused by the impossible theological contradictions of insisting on a human being becoming a god but also remaining a human being, was only an object of belief as long as civil authorities were willing to enforce it. And heresy only existed because a centralized Church continually manufactured heretics, as shown by the fact that because the Church in Rome lacked effective central authority there was no execution in the West from the 6th century to 1022 C.E. (Freeman 186).

But ultimately there is no doubt that Gibbon was right: Christianity was a major, if not the major, factor in the decline and destruction not only of the Roman Empire but of the ancient traditions of classical culture. By destroying the pagan temples and the institutions of scientific and medical knowledge Christianity ushered in the Dark Ages of economic stagnation, daily misery and popular ignorance, especially in the West: town

life disappeared, industry and trade collapsed, living standards fell, and the monetary economy ceased to exist. It is easy to blame the Germanic barbarians for this and they certainly played a role, along with many other economic, military, ecological, political, sociological and demographic reasons that historians have diligently examined, but the pivotal role of the Church should no longer be ignored.

The violence and destructiveness by Church fanatics against centuries of culture and learning is only paralleled in the violence of the Nazi goons against Jewish and German culture in the 1930's and that of the fanatic Communist Red Guards against classical Chinese culture in the Cultural Revolution in the 1960's. But the effects of Christian terror were even greater than the effects of the Nazis and Communists, for it set Western civilization back for 1450 years: not until well into the 19th century did Western civilization regain the level of culture, education, scientific knowledge and technological achievement it had enjoyed at the height of the Roman Empire.

Christian destruction of books, as Speyer shows, was of a fundamentally different character than similar destruction and banning under the Roman Empire and Judaism. The Roman Emperors took all criticism of the state as criticism against themselves but each emperor had his own particular individual or group that he persecuted: Caligula hated Virgil and Livy, Claudius banished Seneca, Nero persecuted writers mostly out of envy, Vespasian persecuted the Stoic philosophers, Domitian banished astrologers and philosophers, including Epictetus, from Rome, Septimus Severus removed and destroyed all secret writings from Egyptian temples, Caracalla had contempt for all scholars, and Diocletian persecuted Manichaeans as well as Christians. Only the Good Emperors of the 2nd century from Nerva through Marcus Aurelius promoted complete free thought and speech (Speyer 59-76). The Jews only censored pagan works if they denied God the creator but declared a number of Jewish writings heretical that did not fit the canon (Speyer 119). Christians, however, were unique in their destruction not of selected works but of almost the entirety of all written tradition, with the exception of what passed for Christian orthodoxy at any given time. This was unprecedented in history. By the time the Christians were done, all that was left of the classics, to judge from Abelard's library in the 12th century, were two works of logic by Aristotle, Plato's Timaeus and a couple of texts by Cicero (Freeman 190). While the 3rd century Roman poet Serenus Sammonicus had owned 62,000 papyrus rolls, by the 7th century 475 books was a large library, such as that of Isidore, Bishop of Seville from 600-635, and the vast majority of people was illiterate (Freeman 178).

What is most amazing about all this persecution and violence against

anyone not fitting a narrow dogmatic view is that the persecutors almost always denied that their actions could be called that: they invariably called it just retribution for actions that condemned their opponents to everlasting perdition and hellfire (Ste. Croix Christian 208-209). In the hagiographic Christian stories of the "saints" they are always "portrayed as being virtuous and brave, and destroying pagan monuments in the face of opposition was a deed which distinguished them as fearless and charismatic men of God, untainted by and in power superior to the forces of evil" (Sauer 13).

Augustine conveniently justified intolerance by citing the brotherly love of Christians: "What then does brotherly love do? Does it, because it fears the short-lived furnaces of the few, abandon all to the eternal fires of hell?" (Freeman 170). If that's love, I'll take my chances on hate. This euphemistic justification of the totalitarian control of other people's beliefs marks a dramatic change from any pagan practice ever before. Even the ruthless and oppressive Romans had practiced universal religious tolerance and had no legal category for "wrong belief": it can be justly argued, as Sauer does, that "there was a greater degree of religious freedom in the Roman Empire of the first three centuries AD than there is in large parts of the world today" (Sauer 45).

As Robertson says of Christianity: "By spreading the dogma that error of belief, whether as paganism or heresy, doomed men to eternal torment, it negated the very basis of human brotherhood and gave a new dominion to hate, individual and corporate. It made neither good rules nor a sound society...Theodosius, when the rabble of Thessalonia braved him by murdering his governor for enforcing the law against a popular charioteer, treacherously planned a systematic and indiscriminate massacre by which perished from 7-15,000 men, women and children. No pagan emperor had ever done the like; and no such number of Christians can have been put to death by Nero...It is one of the anomalies of historiography that a moral rebirth of the world should have been held to begin in an age in which such things could be. Rather, the Mediterranean world had grown more neurotically evil than ever before" (Robertson 191-192).

And now we can understand why the spiritual seekers who owned the Nag Hammadi Library, including the original words of the philosopher Jesus, the Gospel of Thomas, absolutely had to bury their treasure. Given the continuous violence and persecution inflicted by Church authorities in Egypt throughout the 4th and 5th centuries, any number of events could have caused their books to be hidden and their owners most likely to be murdered. Was it the accession of Theodosius in 379? Was it the destruction of the Serapeion in Alexandria and the ensuing destruction throughout Egypt in 390? Was it the law banning heretical books in 409? Was it the witchhunts of

the fanatical Shenoute? Was it the persecutions by Archbishop Cyril starting in 412?

Let us remember that the vicinity of Nag Hammadi, though a major center for pagans and Gnostics, was also full of Christian monasteries, and we have seen over and over again that the Christian monks were particularly violent, fanatical and destructive. It is a miracle that our brave seekers were able to live in that area long enough to collect the books at all, given the fanaticism surrounding them. Ironically, though the prevailing dogma by Christian scholars is that the Pachomian monks saved and hid the books, the real truth is very likely quite the diametrical opposite: it may well have been those very same monks who persecuted the owners of the Nag Hammadi Library and burnt every other book they could find that was not the canonical New Testament. They may even have personally murdered the owners of the Nag Hammadi Library.

The spiritual seekers had no escape: Egypt was in the firm grip of Christian terror and free thinkers were unsafe throughout the Roman Empire, a situation similar to that of the Jews in Nazi Europe where there were almost no countries left to flee to and few outside countries would give Jews visas. They most likely knew they were going to be murdered and decided to do humankind one last great act of service for which we must be forever grateful: they buried their favorite books - surely not even all they owned! - in the cave near Nag Hammadi, thus preserving them from the Christian barbarians for a better time.

Appendix I: Poetic analysis of the Gospel of Thomas

Scholars do not entirely agree on the terms for the subdivisions of poetry and all such terms are to be taken loosely. But for my own purposes of analysis some such system is useful. Fokkelman has come up with a precise system from his study of Hebrew poetry which I will follow in simplified form. A poem has:

1. 2 to 4 beats/stresses per stich (colon)
2. 2 or 3 stiches (cola) per verse
3. 2 or 3 verses per strophe
4. 2 or 3 strophes per stanza[1]

Let us look closely at each one in terms of how it applies to Thomas:

1. Beat: Even though Philo and Josephus maintained that meter was present in Hebrew poetry, Lowth despaired of finding a system: "It is utterly impossible to determine, whether it were modulated by the ear alone, or according to any settled or defined rules of prosody".[2] Most modern scholars have concluded that there is no metrical system as we understand it from Greek, Latin or English poetry and that it is more accurate to speak of "rhythm" in Hebrew poetry.[3]

Something similar is the case for Coptic. The rules on stress are that one of the two last syllables are stressed, and that will always be a root word and not a suffix. In compound words the last word only is stressed.[4] These rules, not unlike French, give Coptic a certain rhythm, although because of the many prefixes it is not as regular as Western languages. Little Coptic poetry has been preserved from the first centuries of the language's existence, but remarkably there was an efflorescence of Coptic poetry and song in the 10th century. Extant manuscripts contain strictly liturgical songs and non-liturgical religious songs but the largest number are religious folk poems.[5] Hermann

1 Robert Lowth, Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1829 [1753])., 37.

2 Ibid, 164.

3 David L. Petersen and Kent Richards, Interpreting Hebrew Poetry (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 38-41.

4 J. Martin Plumley, An Introductory Coptic Grammar (Sahidic Dialect) (London: Home & Van Thal, 1948), 12-13.

5 Hermann Junker, Koptische Poesie des 10. Jahrhunderts (Hildesheim/New York: Georg

Junker's analysis of these manuscripts shows that the verses in Coptic poetry tend to have 3-4 beats per stich, with 3 being more common than 4; the number of unstressed syllables in between the stresses vary. While the poems do not scan as evenly as iambic pentameter or other metric forms in English or German might, there is a discernible and flexible rhythm created by the word stresses.[6]

Junker says: "The verses are considered to be rhythmic in that the quantity of syllables plays only a secondary role - in contrast to metrical verses which count the syllables. Therefore with regard to Coptic poetry one should not speak of meter but of rhythm...Thus the poet had an unforeseen flexibility: he could unstress a grammatically stressed word, or give stress to an unstressed one; he could include the same word into the number of accents one time and omit it the other, or he could treat the same case differently in the same verse."[7]

We see thus the decided advantage of the Coptic language for the highly metaphorical multivalent poetry of the Gospel of Thomas: it offered the flexibility of prose by not being constrained by rigid metrical forms but also the spareness and richness of poetry. The lines in Thomas have greater variation of length than this 10th century Coptic poetry, which after all was mostly sung: in most of the Coptic lines or stiches as I have delineated them there seem to be from 2-5 stressed syllables, similar to what Fokkelman shows for Hebrew poetry.

2. Stich (colon): Scholars differ on what they call a line of poetry; "stich" seems to be the older word and "colon" the newer one. However, many scholars don't subdivide between "stich" and "strophe" and rather than speaking of "verse" as Fokkelman does they speak of distich/tristich or bicolon/tricolon. I too will leave out "verse" for simplicity's sake. In the parallelistic structure of Hebrew poetry and Thomas the stiches usually come in pairs, sometimes in triplets. In Hebrew poetry "the vast majority of verses are bipartite; i.e. bicola. This is clear from the percentages of tricola: almost 12.5% of verses in Psalms are tricola, in Job only 8%, and in Proverbs even less, 4%."[8]

3. Strophe: This is unfortunately a rather imprecise term, generally defined as a subdivision of poetry that can be anywhere from one to many lines. Even in Fokkelman's definition of strophe as consisting of 2-3 verses, he says the Psalter contains 41 one-line strophes and Job ten such strophes.[9]

Olms Verlag, 1977 [1908-1911]), 72.

6 Ibid., 35-42.

7 Ibid., 42-43.

8 Fokkelman, op. cit., 38.

9 Ibid., 38.

Strophes may consist of one or more pairs of stiches, depending on whether they are part of the same basic thought.

Interestingly, "the word `strophe' comes from Greek and means `turn' or `twist'...eminently suited to biblical poetry, which is characterized by rapid shifts and changes. Tone, verb tense, grammatical person, genre, subject material, or mood all constantly vary, and all these changes are reflected in the structure of the strophe. We are able to discern these shifts by means of the strophic characteristics of the text."[10] And the same may be said for Thomas as well.

4. Stanza: A stanza is usually a collection of two or three strophes, possibly as many as four. This term is not relevant for Thomas as most of the sayings are too short to need this level of analysis and the few longer ones have a repetitive structure of similar strophes.

It is useful to analyze Jesus' sayings according to their poetic and mathematical structure. It helps to go step-by-step through Jesus' logic, especially in order to resolve his paradoxes. There is also an overall pattern of the saying: how the strophes relate to each other and how the main ideas in each strophe relate to each other (see also Appendix V for an analysis of the mathematical patterns of the sayings).

Parallelism

Medieval Jewish rabbis had already pointed out the nature of parallelism in Hebrew poetry, but for modern times the seminal study was by Robert Lowth, Bishop of London, in his work Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, first published in 1753, and reiterated in his Isaiah of 1778. He noticed that "the harmony of the verses does not arise from rhyme...but from some sort of rhythm...evident marks of a certain correspondence of the verses with one another, and of a certain relation between the composition of the verses and the composition of the sentences." He called this correspondence parallelism and saw it as the hallmark of Hebrew poetry.[11]

This parallelism is found not only in cited songs and poems in the Hebrew Bible, but also in the Prophets, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (in part), Lamentations, and Canticles. It is also characteristic of Babylonian literature, where it is found in the Epic of Creation, the Gilgamesh epic and the hymns to the gods, and in Ugaritic texts, with a frequency of three-clause sentences, repeated words or phrases in consecutive clauses and a stock

10 . Ibid., 87

11 Robert Lowth, Isaiah: A New Translation with a Preliminary Dissertation and Notes, Critical, Philological, and Explanatory (Boston: William Hilliard, 1834), viii.

vocabulary of pairs of words. It is found as well in Arabic literature where it is strikingly present in much prose but commonly absent from poetry which is generally rhymed.[12] It continued to be used through the second century, and the Apocalypse of Baruch for instance has "among the most regular and sustained examples of parallelism in the whole range of Hebrew literature", but later Hebrew poetry relied on rhyme and meter instead. [13]

Lowth defines it as follows: "The poetical conformation of the sentences...consists chiefly in a certain equality, resemblance, or parallelism between the members of each period; so that in two lines (or members of the same period) things for the most part shall answer to things, and words to words, as if fitted to each other by a kind of rule or measure...When a proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it in sense, or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction, these I call parallel lines; and the words or phrases answering one to another in the corresponding lines, parallel terms."[14]

Lowth found three categories of parallelism - synonymous, antithetic and synthetic - and thought that on the whole these could apply to all Old Testament poetry, though he acknowledged that "this parallelism ...is sometimes more accurate and manifest, sometimes more vague and obscure."[15] Synonymous parallelism occurs when parallel lines express the same sense in different but equivalent terms; antithetic when there is an opposition or contrast of terms and content between the first and the second line; and synthetic when the parallel structure is retained in the second line while the content is a further development of the thought that has been expressed, mostly by way of an intensification towards a new thought. Put simply, the three kinds of parallelism are a restatement of, a contrast to and an extension of the first line in the second line.

Though there has been a good bit of criticism of Lowth's three structural categories and many attempts to create new ones, they are sufficient for our reading of Thomas in that they really set up the contrast with the fourth category that is not found in Lowth or in any other scholar's system, which is paradoxical parallelism, another one of Jesus' innovations. For our understanding of the sayings of Thomas what we need to know is whether we are dealing with linear logic where Jesus is stating two similar things or two con-

12 George Buchanan Gray, The Forms of Hebrew Poetry Considered with Special Reference to the Criticism and Interpretation of the Old Testament (New York: Ktav, 1972 [1915]), 37-41; James L. Kugel, The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 25-26.

13 Gray, ibid., 23, 27

14 Lowth, Lectures, 157; Isaiah, ix.

15 Lowth, Lectures, 157.

trasting things or whether we are face to face with a paradoxical riddle that we need to ponder over.

Paradoxical parallelism is a structure of two terms, either one term per line of poetry or two terms in one line, in which the terms are opposite to each other yet equal. One might say this is a combination of synonymous and antithetic parallelism which in normal linear logic would not be possible. But in paradoxical reasoning something can be itself and its own opposite at the same time. An excellent example is Saying 43:

> 8 For they love the tree,
> 9 they hate its fruit;
> 10 and they love the fruit,
> 11 they hate the tree."

This is saying two contradictory things at the same time in perfect parallel form. Notice, however, they are not exactly the same: in line 9 we have "its fruit" and line 10 we have "the fruit". These kinds of differences are clues to resolving the paradox.

However, there is another kind of parallelism in all poetry and that is linguistic rather than structural. Tsumura calls this vertical parallelism in which words and expressions in one line are repeated in the second, either the same word or similar ones, or similar grammatical elements are carried forward from one line to the next.[16] He says: "The grammar of poetic parallelism is characterized not only by the usual horizontal grammar but also by `vertical grammar' in which the elements of parallel lines have a grammatical relationship with each other `vertically'."[17]

Much of this vertical parallelism is indeed found in the sayings of Thomas: we see words, expressions and grammatical elements being repeated in parallel lines, we see words with similar alliterative sounds, we see the same word used in two lines but with different meanings, and we see rhythmic repetitions of the same vowel sounds. These are all elements to watch for as one reads the sayings that will enhance one's appreciation of the sublime poetry and give one respect for Jesus' genius.

Allegory

16 David Tsumura, "Vertical Grammar of Parallelism in Hebrew Poetry," Journal of Biblical Literature 128.1 (2009): 172-179.

17 Ibid., 180-181.

In the classical tradition the need for allegory arose as questioning and rational minds began to disbelieve in the literal truth of the Greek myths of the gods and sought to reinterpret them. As Onians says: "Myths and the Homeric poems, the foundations of Greek civilization, often explain complex historical or astronomical facts with simple stories of divine or human relationships...The hearer was not originally expected to look behind them and study the phenomena which they explained. Only as their excessive simplicity became apparent to the Greeks, exposed to the wisdom of the East in the 7th and 6th centuries, were attempts made by poets and philosophers to find in them deeper meanings...The gods become depersonalized and take on a new grandeur as representations of abstract forces. At the same time abstract forces such as Strife and Forgetfulness themselves become gods."[18]

The term "allegory" itself only goes back to 70-60 B.C.E. in Philodemus of Gadara who calls it a rhetorical tropus closely related to metaphor and divides it into riddle or enigma, proverb and irony. The Stoics in particular used allegory to reinterpret the names of divinities as abstract principles and to interpret the gods as relationships between the physical elements: "The principle that both language and literature had two distinct levels, the one understandable by everybody and the other only comprehensible to the wise, had thus become firmly established in the Platonic and Stoic traditions."[19]

The first century Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo applies this allegorical method to make the myths of the Hebrew Bible understandable for a Hellenized Diaspora population. Even the rabbis rejected anthropomorphic expressions and felt it necessary to allegorize parts of the Bible, saying "we describe God by terms borrowed from his creations in order to cause them to sink into the ear."[20] So for Philo, as Wolfson says, "the principle that Scripture is not always to be taken literally and that it has to be interpreted allegorically came to him as a heritage of Judaism; his acquaintance with Greek philosophic literature led him to give to the native Jewish allegorical method of interpretation a philosophic turn."[21] He assumed that allegory was something "which loves to hide itself" and into which one has to be initiated; thus his interpretations of Biblical texts were always in terms of something else, either book learning, practical wisdom, or one's inner consciousness, depend-

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18 John Onians, Art and Thought in the Hellenistic Age: The Greek World View 350-50 BC (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979), 96.

19 Ibid.

20 Harry Wolfson, Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948), I.135.

21 Ibid., 138.

ing on external circumstances.[22]

It is precisely this method of allegorical exegesis of always seeing a different content in the apparent content that has given allegory a negative connotation. Even the poets of the Romantic age disdained allegory: Blake called it "a totally distinct and inferior kind of poetry" and Coleridge called it "nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses, the principal being even more worthless than its phantom proxy."[23]

Tinsley remarks on the "obsessive fears" of allegory and mysticism on the part of Christian theology, "part of a rooted distrust of the irreducible ambiguity of metaphorical language", but the allegory they had in mind was "the moralizing dissection practiced by a good deal of patristic and mediaeval exegesis of the Bible."[24] For example, in Augustine's interpretation the Good Samaritan = Jesus, a "certain man" = Adam, Jerusalem = the heavenly city, Jericho = the moon, the murderers = the devil, the oil = the balm of hope etc. Or in a standard Christian interpretation of the parable of the vineyard the vineyard = Israel, the wicked husbandmen = the rulers of Israel, the servants = prophets, and the son = Jesus.[25]

The problem with this is not allegorical exegesis per se but the assumption "that there is one final exhaustive decoding which, strictly speaking, renders the original dispensable. Augustine reads so much detail between the lines that his exegesis becomes a substitute for the original, taking the reader away from it rather than sending him back to it. Successful allegory is not susceptible to some final authoritative paraphrase."[26]

Simile parable

What is true for the story parable is equally true for the simile parable which in the rabbinic literature became the favorite form of parable. The simile parable, which is the main focus of scholarly discussion rather than the story parable, does have more of a tradition but even here Jesus innovates it into a new direction. A simile can be defined as "a figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, the comparison being made explicit by the use of the introductory `like' or `as".

22 Ibid., 115, 134.

23 E. J. Tinsley, "Parable, Allegory and Mysticism" in Vindications: Essays on the Historical Basis of Christianity, ed. by Anthony Hanson (London: SCM Press, 1966), 171.

24 Ibid., 153-154.

25 Ibid., 163, 169; Matthew Black, "Die Gleichnisse als Allegorien," in: Gleichnisse Jesu: Positionen der Auslegung von Adolf Jülicher bis zur Formgeschichte, ed. by Wolfgang Harnisch (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 262-263.

26 Tinsley, 167.

As with allegory and metaphor, simile was regarded in Greek rhetorical theory merely as an ornament of style, but it has a long exegetical history in Jewish rabbinical literature. The Hebrew Bible does contain two simile parables that are interpreted right after they are told: 2 Samuel 12:1-14, a parable of a rich man with many sheep and cattle who takes a poor man's only lamb, to symbolize David's taking Uriah's wife from him, and Isaiah 5:1-7, a parable about "my beloved's vineyard" with a watchtower in it as a symbol for Israel. These two could be models for Jesus' versions. There are a few other stories that somewhat resemble parables, at least as similes - 2 Samuel 14:5-13, 1 Kings 20:39-42 and Jeremiah 13:12-14 - but they do not really resemble Jesus' parables.

The question is whether not only the simile but the simile parable occurs in rabbinical literature before Jesus' time, and the answer there seems to be negative. In the very sparse datable first century texts Fiebig shows two examples of similes by Hillel. Furthermore, he argues that the quotes of parables by Hillel's student Yohanan ben Zakkai in the Tosefta, even though they were written down at a later date, must come from the first century.[27]

However, the earliest rabbinic collection, the Mishnah, which dates from 220 C.E. contains only one parable or perhaps at most four parable-like items[28] and the next sources which contain parables, the Sifra and the Mekhilta, are from the 3rd century. Starting with the latter, the occurrence of parables continues to increase, and the total number of parables in the rabbinic literature amounts to about 2,000.[29] They usually follow a consistent structure: the point to be illustrated, the introductory formulaIt is a parable. To what can this thing be compared?", the parable proper, the application and a scriptural quotation.[30]

Yet the material in these collections is difficult to date and there is no indication that it predates Jesus unless it stems from oral tradition; as Porton summarizes: "The Rabbinic collections are...a collection of materials from a variety of sources from many geographic locations edited in various stages over a period of time. We do not know who the editors were, what the process was, or even what the editors were trying to accomplish...The Rabbinic documents do not center on any one person but are complex anthologies of attributed and anonymous sayings, stories, myths, biblical comments, and the like by generations of sages, most often presented without any narrative

27 Paul Fiebig, "Jüdische Gleichnisse der neutestamentlichen Zeit" Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 10 (1909): 301-304.

28 McArthur and Johnston, op. cit., 18.

29 Ibid., 7.

30 Porton, op. cit., 212-221; Scott, op. cit., 16-17.

context."[31]

Thus, Jesus may not have invented the simile parable outright, as there are clear examples in the Hebrew Bible, but he may have been one of the first, if not the first, Jewish teachers to use it regularly in his teaching. His use of it in the Gospel of Thomas is also much less overt than the Biblical and rabbinical use. He never says "this is a parable", he never gives an interpretation of his similes, and he does not use his parables to illustrate an external point but lets them stand on their own merits. In contrast, as Klauck notes, the rabbinic parables are redundant in their content: they do not in themselves say something beyond the interpretation of them.[32] It is, however, interesting that many of Jesus' parables are comparisons to the Kingdom while about half of the rabbinic parables make comparisons between a human king in comparison with God the divine king: who influenced whom?[33]

McArthur and Johnston give a good summation of the main differences: "While the rabbinic parables seek to reinforce conventional values, those of Jesus tend to undermine or invert them. The parables of the Rabbis seek to resolve perplexities, but those of Jesus create them. The parables of the Rabbis intend to make life and thought smoother, but those of Jesus make them harder...Jesus the parabler was a subversive." [34]

APPENDIX II: TRANSLATION ISSUES SPECIFIC TO COPTIc

I would like briefly to discuss some of the special features of the Coptic used in Thomas, aside from the Subachmimic and Achmimic dialectical forms that we have already discussed, that make these 114 sayings a challenge to translate as well as giving them their expressiveness.

1. The compounding nature of Coptic

As Lambdin says, "Coptic is a highly compounding language, mostly by prefixation" (Lambdin xv). What this means is that a long word in Coptic

31 Porton, 207.

32 Hans-Josef Klauck, Allegorie und Allegorese in synoptischen Gleichnistexten (Münster: Aschendorff, 1986), 112.

33 McArthur and Johnston, op. cit., 119; Paul Fiebig, Altjüdische Gleichnisse und die Gleichnisse Jesu (Tübingen/Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1904), 83.

34 McArthur and Johnston, op. cit., 114.

may have a string of prefixes as well as suffixes, many of which can be read in several different ways depending on how they are divided. This introduces a pervasive element of ambiguity into Coptic sentences where unless one knows exactly what the speaker means, one may get a number of equally grammatical but inherently opposed meanings. This is a particular problem for a cryptic text such as Thomas in which we cannot rely on our common sense to know what something means. But Jesus also uses this feature of Coptic intentionally to create multi-layered, complex, paradoxical sets of meanings. Scholars may argue to no end which is the true meaning of a particular phrase or sentence, but all their readings may be intended rather than just one.

2. The Future without N

A large number of respected Coptic scholars including Haardt (Kopt 98-99), Garitte (Biblio 215), Arthur (138), Nagel (Gramm 441-442), Kahle (Balaizah 151-159), Polotsky (Man Hom xix), Till (Dialekt 38, "Bemerkungen" 269-270) and Stern (257) have pointed out that the Subachmimic form of the 1st Future tense has the prefix a instead of standard Sahidic na. Yet many translators ignore this scholarly consensus and translate these verbs in the perfect tense. Kahle says: "In some Subachmimic manuscripts and a few non-literary texts the N of the first future is sometimes omitted. The same phenomenon may be observed in the relative future prefix (eta for etna) and particularly in the second future (eia for eina etc.) where this occurs very frequently" (Kahle Balaziah 151) N may also be omitted in the 2nd perfect, the past relative, the 1st perfect relative, and the 1st perfect negative (158-159).

In Thomas this form is found in sayings 1, 44, 55, 101, 108 and 111. It is also found three times in the Gospel of Truth, twice in the Gospel of John, once in Acta Pauli, twice in the Manichaean Homilies, twice in the Gospel of Philip and also in Papyrus Berolinensis 8502 und Papyrus Bodmer VI (Haardt Kopt 98-99).

3. The great variety of verb forms and tenses in Coptic

Coptic is extremely rich in precise and descriptive verb forms and tenses, far more than are found in English. Yet many of these subtle differences in verbs are passed over by most translators and no attempt is made to render their meaning in the actual translation or to incorporate it in the interpretation of the text. Of all the grammar books, I have found Plumley's grammar most helpful here in elucidating these differences in meaning. I would like to list the forms and tenses most prevalent in Thomas and cite the

relevant explanations from Plumley.

A. Forms

1. Construct (one of three general forms of almost all parts of speech, the other being Absolute and Pronominal): "The construct form is used when a word is closely united with a following word. In this case the word in the construct loses the tone which passes to its complement. The loss of the tone results in an abridged form exhibiting the vowels in a shortened form" (Plumley 16).

2. Qualitative (one of two fundamental forms of the verb, the other being Infinitive): "The qualitative form indicates the result of verbal action, the effect or state produced by an action, the quality which it finally produces. In contrast to the infinitive of intransitive verbs it suggests the permanent character of the verbal action effected" (Plumley 60-61).

B. Tenses

1. Circumstantial: "The circumstantial is used after verbs expressing cessation, sentient perception and the like, to introduce a second verb which is usually expressed in English by a participle or an infinitive." (Plumley 90)

2. Habitual: "This tense has the meaning of repeated instantaneous Past action. Customary action is indicated, but it is to be noted that a series of reiterated actions may not only be regarded as affected in the past, but also to be effected in the future" (94-95). In my translation I have followed Nations' lead and have used the somewhat old-fashioned but apt expression "wont to".

3. 3rd Future: "This tense lays special stress on the achievement of an action in the future. It carries a much stronger notion of futurity than the I Future, and is commonly found in commands, strong wishes and in Final Clauses introduced by je or jekaas" (100) .

4. 4th Future: "The use of this tense is confined to direct speech, either real or fictitious. For the most part it follows an imperative, and signifies the result which should follow when the action of the imperative has been achieved." (101)

5. Optative (Injunctive): "This tense expresses the notion of a wish, a hope or a request which may or may not be fulfilled in the Future." (102)

6. Tenses of unfulfilled action: One tense means "until", another "not yet": "This auxiliary...has the meaning of action which has not yet been effected, but which is due to be effected in the future. It may be trans-

lated by `not yet' or `before'" (104).

7. Conjunctive: "The chief function of this auxiliary is to join together sentences, the tense of the verb in the opening sentence being continued in the sentence introduced by the Conjunctive. This tense is most frequently found after a sentence containing an imperative. It is also used very often after a Future tense" (104-105).

In addition, there are separate verb tenses where English would simply use a conjunction: the conditional meaning "if", the temporal meaning "when" and the causative meaning "that". And there are also separate negative tenses: a negative 3rd future, a negative perfect and a negative habitual.

Two translation issues around verbs need to be addressed separately, the issue of the passive mood and the second tenses.

4. The lack of passive in Coptic

Coptic has no passive mood: "A separate formation for the passive does not exist in Coptic...The infinitives of many verbs may express either an Active or Passive sense. In order to express the Passive Coptic has to resort to circumlocution by employing the 3rd person plural suffix with the active tense. Thus to express `he was killed' Coptic has to say `they killed him'" (Plumley 120-121). I have chosen throughout this translation to respect the nature of the Coptic and in the majority of cases to use the active voice, unless the passive is very clear as in Plumley's example above. Gillabert's edition has been immensely helpful here.

5. The distinction between First and Second verb tenses

"The most striking feature of the Coptic verbal system", as Weima says, "is the existence of the principal tenses in not one but rather two distinct forms" (Weima 491). As Polotsky has shown and as Weima summarizes in an excellent article, the second tense is extremely important in placing emphasis on the adverbial extension of a sentence. Polotsky says: "The syntactic function of the Second Tenses is, as a rule, to turn the tense into a noun-equivalent, capable of filling the first (actor) position of the Bipartite Pattern, and thereby to throw emphasis on the adverbial predicate. English achieves the same effect in a similar way by the use of the Cleft Sentence (`it was...that...')" (Coll Pap 244, Copt Conj 398).

The result of this is that "the Coptic writers were able to follow the normal word order and still indicate a stress on the adverbial element" (Weima 494). As Kasser points out, this stress can be used "in the sense of a semantic inflation, for the use of expressions which become more and more commonplace of higher emotional, dramatic and emphatic density" (Kasser

Temps 213).

The reason these second tenses are so important is that Coptic word order is fairly inflexible. In both German and Latin, for example, the function of a noun is indicated by its own declined noun endings and the case of the article and/or adjective; thus word order is flexible. "Coptic however, as a general rule, preferred to keep to its normal word order, viz. auxilary, sibject, verbal form, obnbject, indirectg object or adverb, and indicated departure formthe normal stress at the beginning of the sentence by means of the Second Tenses" (Plumley 82). Weima expands Polotsky's analysis by delineating six uses of the Second tenses in Thomas in which they occur some 76 times, including 4 negations:

1. Prepositional phrase being stressed (22 times);
2. The verbs tontèn and eine, verbs of comparison (18 times);
3. Interrogative pronoun, many of which are adverbial in nature (17 times);
4. Direct statement introduced with je (4 times);
5. Rhetorical question (once);
6. Purpose clause introduced by either jekaas or shina (18 times)

(Weima 497-507). Interestingly, the Greek shina (ina) is always followed by a positive statement (sayings 22, 64, 69, 72, 73, 91, 103, 114); when followed by a negative statement it is shina je (sayings 21, 46, 47, 59, 63, 93).

Plumley gives a larger scope for the use of second tenses: "The adverbial extension may be a real adverb or its equivalent, i.e. an adverbial phrase formed by means of a preposition followed by a noun or pronoun, it may also include the indirect Object or Dative introduced by èn, or it may be an adverbial clause introduced by a conjunction or even indirect speech introduced by the particle je". He adds however: "There are many examples in which II tenses are used, where no adverbial extension is present. It is doubtful whether all these exceptions to the general rule can be dismissed as improper uses" (Plumley 81, 80). This broad range of applicability shows the tremendous flexibility of the second tenses.

Yet this interesting distinction is almost entirely ignored by translators, with the somewhat inconsistent exception of Layton. Weima too finds this surprising: "Given the universal acceptance of Polotsky's observations about the syntactical function of the Second tense, it is somewhat surprising that most translators have not followed his suggestion of using the Cleft sentence to highlight the stress expressed by this tense...The avoidance of

using the Cleft sentence is no doubt largely due to a belief that such a translation is too awkward for modern speech. Nevertheless, as C. C. Walters rightly notes: `It is most important that, whenever possible, this function of the Second tenses...be rendered in the translation'" (Weima 494). The only way to avoid the cleft sentence is inverted word order, such as "to you is this order given" or "today I shall do this". Sometimes this works but on the whole this construction sounds stilted in modern English. I have therefore followed Weima's strong suggestion and rendered second tenses as cleft sentences, with some exceptions, duly noted, when such a sentence truly does become too awkward.

It should be mentioned that the acceptance of Polotsky's theory is not universal. Louis Mikhail in particular argues against it: "Polotsky's theory of the Second Tenses...leads to the impoverishment of a language which has both a verbal and a nominal pattern. To deprive the verbal sentence of its own means of expression and turn it into a nominal sentence is nothing more than transplanting it into a strange suffocating milieu. It destroys the dynamic force of the verb which lies in binding other components of the verbal sentence in a chain sequence" (Mikhail Bohairic 68). While his point that Western and non-Western languages have different thought processes makes good sense, his standard of comparison is with Arabic texts - "in an Arabic verbal sentence we are not obliged to turn the sentence into a subject-predicate relation if we wish to emphasize a part of the sentence" (Arabic 88) - and his main Coptic document is a very late Bohairic one. This is not a convincing refutation of Polotsky.

APPENDIX III: KEY WORDS

The Gospel of Thomas contains a coherent and consistent philosophy that is expressed with great precision by clearly defined words. Jesus is both highly aware of the limitations of language as well as being determined to use language as precisely as possible to describe a higher realm that ultimately cannot be described. He is a master of language and not only expressed himself in striking and memorable phrases but also invented a number of new words and phrases to express his philosophy:

1. monachos (see)
2. the sons of the man, the son of the man (see)
3. Kingdom of the Father
4. the living one, son of the living one

5. single one (see)
6. standing firmly (on one's feet)
7. not taste (the) death
8. five trees in Paradise
9. ears to hear
10. divider
11. fasting the world (log. 27)
12. the great power (log. 85)

Other possible coinages of Jesus:

13. becoming a child
14. stripping off one's shame
15. trampling on one's clothing

In order to understand this great work, we must pay close attention to the words that he uses and we must distinguish between pairs of words that seem similar but are actually finely differentiated. I would like to give a list of these words here to help the reader to a better understanding of the text: one list is for important terms that recur frequently or that have special meanings in the Gospel of Thomas, and the other is for word pairs.

A. Recurring words

1. Behold {eis hééte)

Sayings 3.3, 9.2, 10.3, 113.5, 114.5.

Jesus uses "behold" to indicate a measure of ambivalence and even irony. The irony is clear in three sayings: in sayings 3 and 113 he does not agree with those who say "behold...", and in saying 114 he is mocking his own answer, saying that he will "draw" Mary when he really will not. In saying 9 the sowing clearly doesn't have completely good results and there may be ambivalence about the sower "going out". And in saying 10 Jesus' casting a fire upon the world is not what it seems; his use of "behold" makes that clear and invites the listener to look deeper. Thus "behold" is a signal truly to see to another level.

2. Cast/Throw {nouje}

Sayings 8.3, 9.3, 10.2, 13.24, 16.3, 16.5, 26.6, 26.8, 47.11, 47.14, 73.5, 93.2, 93.3.

The Coptic nouje means: "throw, cast, toss, lie, be reclining";
with ebol: "cast out, throw away, discard" (Crum 247a-259a). Jesus uses this word quite often and in surprising contexts where one would not expect it, at least not in English. We can understand casting out a net (8), throwing out seeds (9) and throwing pearls (93). But how do you throw a fire (10) or peace (16) or divisions (16) or a beam (and speck) in an eye (26) or wine into a wineskin (47) - wouldn't it splatter? - or laborers (73) who are not only thrown but cast out to boot? Isn't that a strong word to use? Clearly this is highly pictorial language which verges on the metaphorical. All these actions have an implication of a certain force and will power as if expecting resistance. The context is spiritual truths and insights that people are reluctant to hear and accept but that must be literally thrown at them for them even to begin to acknowledge their existence. So I think when nouje is used in all these sayings, it implies something spiritual to which there is resistance and which requires a certain fortitude on the part of the transmitter.

3. Child {shére}
Sayings 4.3, 21.4, 22.1, 22.3, 22.6, 37.8, 46.3, 46.7.

Becoming as a child is an important concept in Thomas, as it involves the kind of openness, receptivity, curiosity, and lack of prejudices that Jesus thinks are essential for spiritual development. He also uses it in the context of reincarnation in which one becomes a child again in the next life after dying in this life: this meaning is clear in saying 4 but may be implied in all the sayings where "child" occurs. So the concept "child" is not to be taken literally but more metaphorically in terms of the qualities of the child rather than being a literal child.

4. Ears to hear
{pete ouèn maaje èmmof esôtèm marefsôtèm} (ears to hear): Sayings 8.12-13, 21.31-32.
{peteuèn(m) maaje èmmof marefsôtèm} (ears): Sayings 24.5-6, 63.11-12, 65.24-25, 96.6-7.

Jesus uses a characteristic phrase "He who has ears (to hear), let him hear" whenever he says something that he considers particularly important. In all the sayings where this occurs he tells parables that have a sense of urgency. In all the parables the Kingdom is hidden and hard to find. In each case there is a decision to be made to choose the path of wisdom and in three sayings

(21, 63, 65) there is a danger of death or injury and losing the Kingdom permanently if one does not choose rightly. The stakes are high and the seeker must wager all on a very elusive quest. Those who have "ears", that is those who are spiritually attuned and who are seeking true gnosis, will hear what Jesus is urging.

There seems to be a distinct difference in meaning between the two versions of the phrase. "He who has ears to hear" is used in two sayings when someone has easily and quickly made a choice for what is truly important, i.e. the Kingdom, or here the "large fish" (8) and the "fruit" (21): their ears truly hear. "He who has ears" is used in contexts when the opposite could also take place, that is not following the spiritual path: in 24 the light also does not shine, in 63 the man dies before he can enjoy his "fruit", and in 65 the owner of the vineyard never gets his "fruit". These protagonists have ears but they do not always hear.

Saying 96 on the surface seems to fit better into the first category as the large loaves seem to resemble the large fish, but the point here is that attaining the Kingdom is a very gradual process and though she has made "large loaves", the Kingdom itself is still hidden. So here too she has ears but she does not yet "hear".

The phrase the "hearing ear" returns on six occasions as a conclusion of a parable, but in the New Testament it follows parables on three occasions and doctrinal presentations on four. It also crops up in sayings in the Gospel of Thomas where the corresponding New Testament text does not have it (Gartner 209-210).

5. Fill/full {mouh}

Sayings 8.5, 9.3, 61.16. 61.18, 63.7, (65.8), 97.3.

One would think that Thomas would use "full" as a metaphorical opposite to "empty", which we know from saying 28 to mean spiritually empty. But Jesus is never predictable and easy opposites are too simple for his subtle mind. "Full" seems to mean mixed, not yet sorted out, but containing the spiritual. In Jesus' metaphorical world unity and inner singleness of focus is the goal: fullness is the opposite of that as it contains too much that is not spiritually focused. In saying 8 the net is full of small fish but also the (spiritual) large fish; in 9 the sower fills his hand with seeds that have various results, some spiritual; in 61 one can be full of both light and darkness; in 63 the man fills his storehouses but doesn't get to use his fruit; and in 97 the jar was full of flour but it all spilled. In 65 there is actually another use of the same verb mouh but here meaning "seize" and the whole incident can also be read in a

mixed way. The Gnostics use the term much less ambiguously: in the Gospel of Truth some contexts are "the pleroma which has no deficiency fills up the deficiency" (35.37) and "the light which is perfect and filled with the seed of the Father" (43.13). Contrary to Thomas, this is an unmixed positive sense.

6. Fruit {karpos}
Sayings 9.13, 21.28, 43.7, 43.8, 45.4, 63.7, 65.5.

The word "fruit" is Greek, which usually indicates a higher philosophical level. Thus "fruit" invariably means the results of spiritual work and insight. When one has struggled long and hard to attain a higher spiritual place, then one finally "harvests" the "fruit". Figuratively the image fits with many other metaphors in Thomas: rocky or worked earth (log. 9), bubbling spring (13), field and harvest (21), uprooted vine (40), darnel in the harvest (57), fruit of the vine (65). The question is always whether the earth (the inner spirit) gives forth fruit (attains wisdom) or whether the land is hard, unworked, barren, insufficient for roots or full of noxious weeds (not receptive).

7. Happy {makarios}
oumakarios (the happy): Sayings 7.2, 18.8, 19.2, 58.2, 103.2.
henmakarios (among the happy): Sayings 49.2, 54.2, 68.2, 69.2.

The Greek makarios is invariably translated as "blessed" but that word has taken on a Christian meaning of being blessed by God which it did not originally have; the word in the Greek dictionary means "happy, fortunate, supremely blessed; also prosperous, wealthy" (Liddell 422-423). Hauck gives a useful history of the term: "First found in Pindar, makarios is a poetic word, also found later in common speech. It is a subsidiary form of makar...It describes first the happy state of the gods above earthly sufferings and labors, the transcendent happiness of a life beyond care, labour and death...It is then used for the dead who have attained to the supraterrestrial life of the gods, the state of godlike blessedness hereafter in the isles of the blessed. From the time of Aristotle it becomes a very common and much weaker everyday term, and it is thus avoided by poets (Aeschylus, Sophocles) and orators. It is used to describe the social stratum of the wealthy who in virtue of their riches are above the normal cares and worries of lesser folk...

There obviously developed in Greek a specific genre of beatitude to extol the fortune accruing to someone and to exalt this person on the basis or condition of the good fortune...It is often found in epitaphs or epinicia...

In content beatitudes, which are common in both poetry and prose throughout the centuries, reflect the sorrows and afflictions, the aspirations and ideals, of the Greeks...The righteous man is extolled for the outer and inner advantage conferred by piety, also the wise man for the blessing of the knowledge which accrues to him" (Hauck 362-364).

There is a strong Greek tradition of praising pure knowledge and wisdom, particularly when there is difficulty in attaining it, though in Euripides' Medea knowledge that is too great isolates a person and awakens the envy and hatred of others (Gladigow 420-424, 431-432). Macarisms are also common in the Jewish Wisdom literature, for example in Sirach where there are 9 or 10, though in the Jewish tradition the term is never used for God but rather for those who are righteous and follow God's commandments. There are a number of macarisms in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, but their number is greater in Greek than in the original, indicating that this is a more Greek than Hebrew tradition (Hauck 364-366).

What is particularly relevant for our understanding of how Jesus uses the term is Gladigow's observation that the praise of beauty, fame and fortune in Greek tradition was always ambivalently tinged: "Closely tied to this form of macarism was a reflection on how uncertain such fortune and how unreliable the happiness of humans really is in view of the lasting good fortune of the gods...The dead are no longer subject to the vicissitudes of life...thus they can be called makarios with greater justification than the living can" (Gladigow 405-406).

Clearly Jesus is drawing his macarisms straight from the Greek tradition and like the Jewish tradition they are not applied to God either. And Jesus shares the ambivalence of the Greek tradition to the transitory nature of beauty, fame and fortune, but he does not use the macarism as in the Jewish tradition to praise piety and religiosity either. His macarisms are startling and unexpected: Happy is the lion which the man will eat, he who stands firmly at the beginning, he who came into being beforehand, the man who has suffered, and the man who realizes in which part the robbers will creep in. These are not your standard praises and are all at such a metaphorical level that they need quite a bit of explanation to be understood.

Jesus also differentiates between "Happy is/are..." and "Among the happy is/are...", a distinction which no other translator follows but which is clearly in the original Coptic: oumakarios as opposed to henmakarios. Among the happy are the monachos and the chosen, the poor, those who are hated and sought after, those who have sought after themselves and those who are hungry. These are a bit easier to understand, but you notice these are a lower level of happiness, only "among the happy", not "the happy". So the cryptic

metaphorical levels are a higher level, which is a clear pattern in Thomas.

Interestingly, though makarios is used in the Greek New Terstament for the Beatitudes, in the Coptic New Testament the Coptic naiat, "blessed", is used instead, a derivative either of naa, "be great, large", or eia, "eye". This might be because the Coptic translators felt makarios to be too secular of a term, or possibly because of linguistic purism. The Gnostics, however,had no compunctions about using the term and Pistis Sophia in particular has a plethora of macarisms.

8. Heart {hét}
Sayings 3.2, 13.7, 17.5, 28.7, 34.2, 45.7, 45.9, 52.3, 63.9, 65.21, 68.5, 69.3.

The Coptic hét, used quite frequently in Thomas, means both "heart" and "mind" which in English seem like diametric opposites but in the Egyptian world view are very much united. Unfortunately there isn't really a word in English which captures that sense of emotional and mental unity. We could say something awkward like "inner being" but that disrupts the flow of the language. Thus I translate hét consistently as "heart" because that gets closer to the inner essence of a person than "mind" but the reader must keep in mind that it is not limited to the emotional side of humans. For example, in 63.9 it says "these were his thoughts on these matters in his heart". Normally we would say thoughts take place solely in the mind but that is not really true: emotions generate images in the brain which then give rise to thoughts. So it is certainly not inaccurate to refer to "thoughts in his heart".

9. Hidden {hép}
Sayings Prologue, 5.3, 5.4, 6.10, 32.5, 39.4, 83.3, 83.6, 96.4, 108.5, 109.3.

There is a fascination in Thomas with what is hidden, with the world beyond the visible, and with manifesting, revealing, uncovering and discovering that hidden world. It is indeed one of the main themes of Jesus' teachings, occurring in 8 sayings, and Jesus promises us several times that everything that is hidden will become known. These are some of the things that are hidden: what is before your face, the keys of gnosis, the light in the image, colostrum in flour, and treasure in a field. And this is what should not be hidden: a city on a high mountain and a lighted lamp. These all have their own metaphorical associations which will be explored in the commentary.

10. House {hei}

Sayings 16.7, 21.14, 21.18, 35.3, 35.6, 48.3, 64.17, 71.2, 97.9, 98.4.

The word "house" is used quite often in Thomas but there is a repeated association of conflict and disharmony: division between two and three in a house in 16, a thief coming into the house in 21, entering the house of a strong man in 35, making peace in a house in 48 (implying conflict), the house as an excuse for not attending a dinner in 64, overturning this house in 71, reaching the house and finding the jar empty in 97 and drawing a sword in a house in 98.

By its nature, a house is a place of division: its purpose is to wall off the inside from the outside, to protect against threats and enemies coming from the outside, to separate the private space from the public space. Interestingly, as Novak observes, the Hebrew letter bet, which means house, is the very first letter of the first word of first chapter of Genesis which deals with the process of God's separation of elements in order to create the world: "being the second letter, bet implies duality and therefore division" (Novak 125-126.) Indeed, there are many texts that use the word "house" to refer to the created world which in Jesus' view is inherently a place of division.

11. Kingdom {mèntero}

Kingdom of the Father: Sayings 57.2, 76.2, 96.2, 97.2, 98.2, 113.7.

Kingdom of my Father: Saying 99.7.

Kingdom: Sayings 3.3, 3.8, 21.18, 22.4, 22.7, 22.21, 27.2, 46.8, 49.3, 82.5, 107.2, 109.2, 113.2.

Kingdom of the heavens: Sayings 20.2, 54.3, 114.10.

Kingdom is such an important word in Thomas that there is a whole section in the commentary devoted to it so we will not try to define it here. But I do want to point out the differences in Jesus' wordings of the term and there seem to be some patterns here, although they are not 100% consistent. "Kingdom of the Father" is compared to a person in all sayings (a man, a woman, a merchant and a shepherd) except in 113 where it is spread out over the earth. "Kingdom" is used with a general sense of location and identity, often in a conditional or interrogative sense: whether it is in heaven, how to enter it, how to find it, how to know it, being far from it and the question of when it will come. The ones that don't fit that pattern are 107 and 109 which would fit much better with the category "Kingdom of the Father" as they make comparisons to persons: but that may also be intentional to indicate a different level of awareness.

The term "Kingdom of the heavens" seems to be grab bag: it is compared to a grain of mustard (20) and to the poor (54), and it is the Kingdom that women will enter (114). However, is Jesus being ambivalent about this Kingdom? For in saying 11 he says this heaven will pass away and that above it too, and in 111 he says the heavens will roll back, so clearly the heavens are not the most permanent place. And in saying 3 he denies the idea that the Kingdom is in any heaven at all. So is this a lower-level Kingdom, not lower-level in location but rather in awareness? If that is so and there is actually a gradation of his terms, they would clearly be arranged as follows:

1. The highest level of awareness: Kingdom of the/my Father
2. The middle level: Kingdom
3. The lower level: Kingdom of the heavens

This gradation can then be used to help in interpreting the respective sayings.

12. Large/great {noc}

Contrast between small and large: Sayings 8.6, 20.8, 96.5, 107.4.

"Great" as modifier: Sayings 12.3, 21.21, 85.2.

The contrast between small and large is a minor theme, but it is significant in the four sayings where it occurs. In two sayings, 8 and 107, the contrast is between the many small ones and the one large one, symbolizing the spiritual truth that a seeker should focus on. In the other two sayings, 20 and 96, something little and hard to see generates something large; as it is being compared with the Kingdom in both these sayings, we know once again it symbolizes the spiritual realm. The same word "great" is also used in three other sayings in which it is used in connection with Adam, James and the disciples and also signifies spiritual elevation.

13. Live/Life {ônh}

Live: Sayings 3.12, 4.5, 11.4, 11.5, 11.7, 37.10, 50.14, 52.5, 59.2, 59.3, 60.8, 61.3, 111.4, 114.7.

Life: Sayings 4.4, 58.3, 101.8, 114.3.

"Living" is another very important concept in Thomas and invariably denotes being truly spiritually alive as opposed to a mere biological existence. Jesus uses some unique terms not found anywhere else to describe those who have attained to that state: the sons of the living Father, the chosen of the living Father,

the son of him who is living, a living spirit, he who lives from that which lives. The sayings that contrast life and death (11, 59, 61) also do not mean a

literal physical death but once again inner or spiritual life and death. The term "life" also has a connotation of immortality.

14. Not Taste (the) Death

fnaji tipe an èmmou ("not taste death"): Sayings 18.10, 19.11.

fnaji tipe an èmpmou ("not taste the death"): Sayings 1.3, 85.6.

This seems like the kind of phrase Jesus would have invented, and it is interesting that the occurrences of the phrase in Jewish apocalyptic writings postdate the life of Jesus. It is found in 4 Ezra 6:26, dated by Bruce Metzger to the end of the first century: "And they shall see the men who were taken up, who from their birth have not tasted death" (Charlesworth OT Pseud 517). The phrase is then found quite often in the rabbinic texts:

Targum Jerusalem I Dt 32:1: "Moses said in his heart: I do not want to take witnesses for this people who taste death in this world; see, I want to take witnesses who do not taste death in this world" (phrase not found in Deut 32:1, only in commentary).

Genesis Rabbah 9 (7a): "R. Chama b. Chanina (ca. 260) said: The first man should not have tasted the taste of death".

Yoma 78b: "R. Schmuel (d. 254) said: Whoeever wants to taste the taste of death, he should put on shoes and sleep." (Strack I 751-752).

Though it isn't really a "stock phrase", as Perrin says (Perrin Redisc 201), Chilton does think that "our sources use the phrase as if it would be understood as a matter of course, and this does suggest that the usage was established by the time of writing" (Chilton Not 29). But if none of the uses of it predate Jesus and indeed there are no quotes from before the end of the first century, couldn't Jesus himself have been the source? I think it is indeed likely, considering his inventiveness with other striking phrases. In Jewish usage the phrase refers to certain quasi-angelic figures who have attained immortality, such as Moses, Enoch and Elijah, but Jesus means it in a more general sense: anyone who is a devoted spiritual seeker can attain true immortality. In the Gospel of Thomas, there are four criteria for not tasting death: finding the interpretation of these sayings, knowing the end by standing firmly in the beginning, knowing the five trees in Paradise and becoming more worthy than Adam. All these require interpretation.

Of the four times the expression is used in Thomas, "death" is preceded by the article "the" in two of these instances, sayings 1 and 85, and in two others, 18 and 19, it is not. This seems to be deliberate; but does the article change the meaning of the phrase? Usually a definite article refers

to some one specific thing, while the lack of an article means that thing in general or as a collective item. If that were the case here, "the death" would only refer to one death, whereas "death" would mean all future deaths. Thus sayings 18 and 19 would be referring to a higher and more permanent level of immortality than sayings 1 and 85.

15. Standing firmly (on one's feet) {ôhe erat}
Sayings 16.12, 18.8, 23.4, 28.2, 50.8, 99.2.

The Coptic expression ôhe erat literally means "stand on one's feet" with a sense of stability and fundamental rootedness; I have translated this as "stand firmly" although "stand solidly" is another option. Standing refers to a manifestation that is fundamental, with conviction and authority, at the deepest level of existence. It is a very powerful word in Thomas and it is used sparingly and with complete intention. Standing occurs in conjunction with many other important concepts in Thomas: standing as monachos in saying 16, at the beginning in 18, and as a single one in 23, Jesus standing in the midst of the world in 28, and the light standing and manifesting forth in 50. The only exception seems to be 99 where there is a good deal of ambivalence on Jesus' part to his mother and brothers "standing", but this is also the only saying to use the qualitative aherat which gives "standing" a different meaning.

The phrase "stand firmly" seems to be another of Jesus' unique creations, but the idea "standing" in a metaphorical sense goes back to Plato and is much used in later classical literature. In Phaedrus 247B-C Plato says: "Those who are called immortal, when they arrive at the summit, pass outside and stand on the outer surface of the heaven, and when they have taken their stand the revolution carries them around, and they behold the things outside of the heaven." Here we see the same connection between standing, which has the technical philosophical connotation of "absence of motion", and immortality. Socrates was evidently famous for his habit of going off and standing motionless while thinking through some problem, and this model of Socrates standing in contemplation was familiar to the Neo-Platonic philosophers and to the Gnostics (Williams 92).

In Hellenistic-Roman literature there is a repeating motif of the "upright stance" of the human being as "a distinguishing characteristic of the human, allowing the human to gaze upoward and contemplate the orderly movement of the heavens" And in Neoplatonic language, as well as in Philo and Plotinus, standing is used at various stages in the ascent to the vision of the Transcendent. As Plotinus said, the soul of the man of excellence "stands at rest" since he is no longer engaged in discursive reasoning but

rather has turned toward the One and the tranquil, "for the mind will stand still toward the vision, looking to nothing else but the Beautiful and giving itself completely to that" (Williams 78-81).

But the concept exists in Judaism also or at least in heretical Judaism. In the Samaritan liturgy the ka`em, the "standing one", is someone who has transcended death and God is described as "standing in eternity", ka`em l`olam. When Moses receives the tablets of the Law he stands between the standing ones, the angels, and the dying ones, the humans. This concept is eventually taken over in Syrian monasticism in the concept of bnai kjama, "sons of the standing ones", found in Aaphrates to denote monks, whose goal is to become like the angels (Adam Grundbe 225-228). Thus Jesus clearly draws his own concept from both the classical and the heterodox Jewish tradition.

In Gnosticism "standing" becomes a pivotal concept, and Williams has a whole book devoted to it. It was "used to describe the stability of the transcendent realm, stability associated with the realm beyond movement... The description of a transcendent entity as `standing' is not something which was a distinctive trait of a single gnostic tradition, but rather it represents a use of a philosophical jargon that had a much broader history" (Williams 53-54, 57). A variation of this theme is the concept of "the immovable race" which appears two dozen times in the Nag Hammadi Library, though only in five writings and nowhere else in ancient literature: this refers to those who have attained such a high level of spiritual development that they are no longer subject to the laws of motion and decay of the physical world (Williams 1).

Simon Magus, for instance, called himself "The Standing One", intimating that he himself was the Christ, that he would stand in eternity and his body was not likely to fall, and this term is found in a number of texts assocated with Simonian Gnosticism (Williams 36). In the Three Tablets of Seth, writings of a Gnostic Sethian community, God is addressed as follows: "Great is the self-originate which has stood at rest. O deity that stood at rest in the beginning...O thrice male! You have stood at rest; you stood at rest in the beginning" (Layton 153-154). Notice the combination of "standing" with the concepts of "rest" and "the beginning", terms that are also used several times in Thomas.

Indeed, the Platonically-influenced Nag Hammadi text Allogenes is a remarkable mix of the themes of Thomas: "If you wish to stand, withdraw to the Existence and you will find it standing and at rest after the likeness of the One who is truly at rest and embraces all these silently and inactively... And when I wanted to stand firmly, I withdrew to the Existence, which I

found standing and at rest like an image and likeness of what is conferred upon me by a revelation of the Indivisible One and the One who is at rest" (59.20-60.37). Were all these texts influenced by the Gospel of Thomas?

16. Stone {ône}
Sayings 13.23, 13.25, 19.6, 66.2, 66.5, 77.8.

One normally doesn't think of stones in any spiritual sense, certainly not the ordinary kind of stones one finds on the ground, but here Thomas is once again surprising. Stones have a clear metaphorical association in Thomas with the spiritual realm and with light. Perhaps that is due to the capacity of crystals and gems, which are after all stones, to reflect light and their association with higher powers and spiritual insight. In saying 13 the stones seem to have a power to protect Thomas and his spiritual knowledge against those more unenlightened. In saying 19 there are stones which serve those disciples who have truly listened to Jesus' words. In saying 66 the stone represents the spiritual realm which those ensconced in the material world reject. And in saying 77 stone is a lower level of reality but it is still a manifestation of light.

B. Two Words with similar meanings

Throughout Thomas Jesus uses what seem to be two words to mean the same thing, and that is how most translators render these words. But a close analysis shows that every word has a slightly different meaning. In particular, what Jesus does in Thomas is to differentiate between two levels of a given concept, a lower physical level and a higher spiritual level. He consistently uses the Coptic word for the lower level and the Greek word for the higher philosophical or metaphorical level, without the lower level having a negative connotation. But he also uses two Coptic words in the same way. These word pairs are all important concepts in Thomas, critical for an understanding of the sayings. Here is a chart of these pairs, with the English word that I use consistently in my translation to render the original:

Lower level	Higher Level
he e - discover	cine - find
joeis - master	sah - teacher
mèntero nèmpéue - Kingdom/Kingdom	mèntero/mentero èmpeiôt - Kingdom of the heavens /of the Father
oua - one	oua - One
ouônh - manifest	côlp - reveal
sooun - realize	souôn - know
ter - all	pterf - the All
toot - hand	cij - hand
Negative implication	**Positive implication**
eine - resemble	tontèn - compare
kôht - fire	sate - flame
psa nbol - the outside	ebol - outside
tahe, tohe - drunk	tihe - intoxicated
Coptic-Greek pairs - both positive implication	
Lower level	**Higher level**
eime - be aware	noein - discern
èmpsha - worthy	axios - worth as much
èmton - rest	anapausis - repose
che - be/come to come	arche - beginning
kai - become, be coming	kosmos - world
ma - place	topos - abode
ouōsh - desire	epithumia - lust

c. Come/Come to

1) ei - "come", be coming": Sayings 9.5, 9.14, 16.3, 16.5, 21.7, 21.16, 21.23, 21.29, 28.9, 50.5, 51.7, 57.4, 61.12, 64.19, 64.25, 64.33, 90.2, 109.9.

2) ōsh--"desire to come": Sayings 21.15, 33.9, 51.5, 64.10, 88.2, 88.7, 103.3, 113.2, 113.3.

There is no metaphysical level for either of these; this is simply a distinction that most translators ignore, but the Coptic verbs clearly have different meanings.

d. Compare/Resemble

1) eine - "resemble": Sayings 13.3, 13.5, 13.7, 13.10, 21.2, 21.4, 84.2, 102.3.

2) tontèn - "compare", tèntôn, "comparable to": Sayings 8.2, 13.2, 20.2,

20.4, 22.3, 57.2, 76.2, 96.2, 97.2, 98.2, 107.2, 109.2.

Jesus makes a distinction between two words for "be like": eine, "resemble", which is generally used with a more negative connotation, and tontèn, "compare", which is always used in a positive connotation in connection with the Kingdom. The negative nature of "resemble" is clear in saying 13, where Jesus asks the disciples to both "compare" him and say whom he "resembles" and where he rejects the disciples' attempts to answer the latter, in saying 84 where the "image" is considered much higher than the "resemblance", and in saying 102 where the Pharisees "resemble" a dog, surely not a compliment. It is not quite as obvious in saying 21, but close analysis shows it to be consistently used here as well.

Weima says likewise: "Except for one instance of tontèn in the imperative (log 13) and eine in the circumstantial (114) these two verbs are consistently used in the 2nd tense. This would suggest that the author wanted to emphasize the object to which the subject was being likened rather than the verbal act of comparing. Tontén always occurs in the qualitative, with the exception of the imperative in log 13 which cannot take this mood. Tontén is almost always used with a comparison to the kingdom whereas eine is used in all other comparisons. The one exception to this pattern is in log 8 where tontén occurs without a comparison to the kingdom" (Weima 500).

e. Desire/Long

1) ouôsh - "desire, wish": Sayings 6.2, 39.6, 69.7, 98.3, 107.10, 109.12.

2) epithume - "long": Sayings 38.2, 47.10.

Jesus doesn't deprecate desire or consider it anything negative.

But desire is ambiguous: it can orient us to lower or higher things. Here the sayings are equally divided: in three sayings (6, 69, 98) the desire is connected with physical matters - fasting, satisfying the belly, killing a noble - and in three (39, 107, 109) it is for spiritual matters - gnosis, the One, the surplus of inner treasure. Jesus uses epithume as something stronger coming from the depths of one's being and leading to a higher level. Here in Thomas it is only applied twice: to hearing Jesus' words and to drinking "new wine", clearly a metaphor.

f. Discover/Find

1) he e - "discover": Sayings 1.2, 8.6, 21.22, 21.25, 27.2, 28.4, 28.5, 38.7, 49.3, 56.3, 56.4, 58.3, 64.37, 68.4, 76.4, 77.9, 80.3, 80.4, 90.5, 97.11, 107.7, 109.10, 111.7.

2) cine - "find": Sayings 2.3, 2.4, 53.7, 92.2, 94.2, 110.2.

Here is another important distinction in Thomas that very few translators observe. Even Gillabert, strangely enough, translates he e correctly as "discover" in his transliterated text but then gives it as "find" in his actual translation! Such is the tyranny of "seek and you shall find" from the New Testament. He e literally means "fall upon, come upon" and has the connotation of finding something accidentally without really looking for it, such as Columbus (supposedly) coming upon America while looking for India. Cine has a sense of determination, of a deliberate finding. These are very important distinctions in Jesus' philosophy, as his whole focus is the intentional act of committing oneself to spiritual development. And clearly there is much more stumbling than intentionality in Thomas!

g. Drunk/Intoxicated

Tahe, tohe - "drunk": Saying 28.4, 28.11, (108.3).

Tihe - "intoxicated": Saying 13.14.

The same verb tihe is used here to mean two opposite things, but the difference is the verb in its basic infinitival form is used in a positive sense of being in a state of mental or spiritual ecstasy, while in the qualitative tahe and tohe the meaning is one of dullness, lack of receptivity and ignorance. The qualitative accentuates the quality of being drunk and makes it excessive. Ross calls it the first and second stages of being drunk and distinguishes between "dull inebriation" as opposed to "intoxication from beauty" (Ross 99). There is also a pun in 108.3 between "like me" and "drunk": the construction èntahe can be read both ways.

Interestingly, both the Odes of Solomon, which are late fist century to early 2nd century C.E., and the much later Manichaean literature make the same distinction. The Odes of Solomon 11:6-9 speaks of drinking and being "intoxicated from the living water that does not die" but 38:13 says that those invited to the wedding feast were "allowed to drink the wine of their intoxication. So they cause them to vomit up their wisdom and their knowledge". The first is clearly positive, the second negative, just like in Thomas.

Likewise, in the Coptic Manichean Psalm-Book 151.14-15 it says: "They that drink thy wine, their heart rejoices in it. They are drunk {tihe} with thy love and gladness is spread over their..." Conversely, in 56.15-16, 31-32 it says: "Come, my Lord Jesus...who hast saved me from the drunkenness {tihe} and Error of the world...The God of this Aeon...has sunk them in his

Error and the deceit of drunkenness." The same form of the verb is used in both citations, but the meaning is clearly the opposite: the negative citations (also 136.25, 152.14, 172.28, 189.23, 201.27) outweigh the positive ones (also 184.12), but both are found. I cannot help but think that both the Jewish Wisdom and the Manichaean sources may be influenced by Thomas; it is the kind of paradoxical distinction that ordinary mortals may not think of by themselves.

The Gnostic sources, in contrast, seem to use the term more conventionally in the negative sense of drunkenness: see

Apocryphon of John 23:5 and Gospel of Truth 22:15: "He who is to have knowledge in this manner knows where he comes from and where he is going. He knows as one who having become drunk has turned away fron his drunkenness and having returned to himself, has set right what are his own."

h. Earth-Sky-World

1) kah - "earth": Sayings 9.9, 9.14, 12.7, 16.5, 20.6, 44.7, 91.5, 111.2, 113.7.

2) pe - "sky, heaven (6, 11, 12, 44)": Sayings 3.3, 3.4, 6.9, 9.10, 9.15, 11.2, 11.3, 12.7, 20.9, 44.7, 91.5, 111.2.

3) kosmos - "world": Sayings 10.2, 16.3, 21.20, 24.7, 27.1, 28.2, 28.8, 28.9, 51.5, 56.2, 56.5, 80.2, 80.5, 110.2, 110.4, 111.8.

The different levels of reality are important concepts in Jesus' cosmology which appear often in Thomas. The Greek kosmos is a philosophical term with its own history and meaning, but Jesus uses the term in an ambiguous way with both a positive and a negative meaning. It is, however, a greater and more unifying level than earth and sky. In Thomas "earth" and "heaven" are often linked, as in sayings 12, 44, 91 and 111. There is no negative attitude toward earth, as in Gnosticism, nor is there a focus on heaven as the only desirable goal of life, as in Christianity. They are merely levels of being that are part of the cosmos.

i. Fire/Flame

1) kôht - "fire": Sayings 10.2, 13.25, 16.6.

2) sate - "flame": Saying 82.2.

Jesus uses both of these words metaphorically, but "fire" has a more negative meaning whereas "flame" has a positive meaning.

He is clearly choosing his words carefully, since Coptic is very rich in words for burning and for fire as the following list shows:

krôm - fire (S archaic), be on fire, burn
kôht - fire, put fire, set on fire, take, undergo fire
lôbsh - be hot, glow
mouh- burn, glow
rôkh - burn, become as cinders; metaph fervor (used in 13.26 and 57.12)
sahte - kindle fire, heat, light fire beneath, kindle, burn, set alight
sate - flame of fire, (throw fire, set on fire)
shah - flame, fire, shining vision; burn
hmom - be hot; heat, fever
jero - blaze, burn, kindle
jouf - burn, scorch
jofjf - burn, cook

j. Hand

1) toot (status pronominalis of tôre) - "hand, handle, spade, pick", used in many compounds (Crum 425a-429b): Sayings 9.3, 41.5, 65.5, 88.4, 95.5.

2) cij, jij - "script-hand, hand as measure" (Crum 839b-840b): Sayings 17.4, 21.29, 22.18, 35.4, 41.2. 98.6.

There are two words for "hand" in Thomas, one of them used in a more literal and the other in a more metaphorical sense. This is indicated by the definitions: toot refers to physical tools and cij refers to a more abstract measure. The differences in Thomas are subtle, since the sayings are all at a metaphorical plane already. For example, in saying 9 the sower filled his hand (toot) and threw seeds, a literal picture that is then to be interpreted metaphorically. But in saying 21 the man's hand (cij) with the sickle is already at a metaphorical level, as are the hands of the strong man in 35 and the hand that killed the noble in 98. 17 and 22 are clearly metaphorical.

k. Knowledge

There are four words for different levels of knowledge, perception and understanding in Thomas which can be divided into two pairs.

1) sooun - "realize, recognize, be acquainted with": Sayings 12.2, 16.4, 31.3, 51.8, 65.20, 67.2, 78.7, 91.7, 97.7, 103.2, 109.4, 109.6

2) souôn (construct form of sooun) - "know": Sayings 3.10, 3.11, 3.13, 5.2, 18.9, 19.10, 46.8, 56.2, 65.14, 69.5, 80.2, 91.6, 105.2.

The dictionaries do not make the distinctions in meaning very clear between

the various forms of the verb sooun or soouèn, but Eccles shows that souôn is the construct form of sooun. He says it is used before téutèn which is always followed by the construct (Eccles 20, 24). However, in Thomas the only saying in which it is used in that combination is saying 3 and in the other sayings souôn is mostly followed by noun objects. Like the 2nd tenses, the construct form is an emphatic. According to Plumley, "it is used when a word is closely united with a following word. In this case the word in the construct loses the tone which passes to its complement. The loss of the tone results in an abridged form exhibiting the vowels in a shortened form" (Plumley 16).

There is, however, a difference in meaning between the two forms of the verb and Ross is the only translator who perspicaciously notices this distinction: "Souôn is used consistently in this Gospel with the meaning of a profound certainty known at the depth of one's being. It is as when we say `I know that I am myself and no-one else...When spelt sooun it is is used consistently in the Coptic with lesser significance...as when we say `I know it is raining'" (Ross 93). Janssens also points out that souôn is used in the Gospel of Truth for profound knowledge, corroborating Ross' distinction (Janssens EvTh 302-303). I have translated souôn consistently as "know" with a higher metaphorical and spiritual sense and sooun as "realize" in most sayings except for five where this translation does not fit: thus as "recognize" in four sayings (67, 78, 91 and 103) and "be acquainted with" in one (31). A similar distinction in Greek might be between ginoskein, "know by observation, perceive" and oida, "know by reflection".

1) eime - "be aware, understand (97)": Sayings 3.12, 21.14, 43.4, 62.5, 97.8, 98.6.

2) noein - "discern": Saying 89.3.

Two other levels of knowledge contrasting perception versus intellectual discernment are eime, simple awareness, and noein, a higher form of intellectual understanding. These are usually translated as "realize" or "understand" as opposed to the two forms of sooun which are translated as "know"; but I think precise distinctions between the four words are intended in Thomas and translators should observe them. I have differentiated eime by translating it as "be aware" except in 97 where "understand" fits better.

l. Manifest/Reveal

1) ouônh - "manifest": Sayings 5.4, 6.10, 28.3, 37.2, 50.9, 57.11, 83.2, 108.5.

2) côlp - "reveal (itself)": Sayings 5.3, 6.9, 6.12, 18.4, 83.4.

The dictionary meanings of these two verbs overlap: ouônh is defined by Crum as "reveal, be revealed, appear; show, make clear" (Crum 486a-487b); in other dictionaries as "manifest, be manifest, make manifest"; and côlp is defined as "uncover, open, reveal" (Crum 812). The basic meaning of ouônh is the visual appearance, thus my translation as "manifest", while the basic meaning of côlp is the uncovering of something hidden, thus "reveal". However, most of the English and French translations ignore this distinction and use "reveal" for both; moreover, they use it in the passive rather than the active voice, "be revealed" despite the fact that Coptic doesn't even have a passive voice. The German translations are more accurate in this regard and at least put it in the active. The passive voice is too theological and even Christian for the meaning here.

m. Master/Teacher

1) joeis - "master": Sayings 21.7, 21.14, 47.3, 64.7 (64.14, .20, .27, .33, .35), 65.12 (65.13, .17), 73.4, 74.2.

2) sah - "teacher": Sayings 13.9, 13.12.

These two words are usually translated similarly as "master, lord" (the Patterson translation being an exception) but though sah can be translated as "writer, teacher, master", its basic meaning is related to writing, as opposed to joeis which implies social and political authority. Even if translated "master", it does not imply authority so much as "expert" or "scholar." I have made the difference clear by rendering it as "teacher". I have also not translated joeis as "lord" in 73 and 74, which most translators do, to get away from monotheistic implications that may or may not be in the text.

n. One

1) oua - "one": Sayings 13.22, 23.3, 30.4, 35.2, 47.4, 47.5, 61.3, 107.4.

2) ouôt - "single": Sayings 48.3, 76.7.

3) oua - "One": Sayings 11.10. 22.9, 61.6, 106.2.

Duality, multiplicity and Unity are major themes in Thomas. The word "one" or "single" always has some sort of metaphorical implication when it is used, either in the context of something or someone special or in contrast with "two" or "one" as contrasted with another "one". But there is also a higher-level and more cosmological use of the word to refer to primordial Unity and I have signified this usage by capitalizing "One".

o. Outside

1) ebol - "outside, outside of, out, outward, away, at the exterior", used in many combinations: Degge's concordance lists it 76 times in Thomas.

2) psa nbol - literally "the part outside": Sayings 22.10, 22.11, 40.2, 64.36, 89.2, 89.5, 99.2.

The particle ebol is used extensively in Coptic and is often untranslatable; its meaning depends on the context but is not usually a negative meaning. However, the expression psa nbol, a variant of ebol, seems to have a consistent negative meaning of duality and division as opposed to unity, a major theme in Thomas. It is hard to translate this expression completely consistently: in saying 22 it is "the outside part", in 40 "at the outside", in 64 "the outer parts", in 89 "the outside" and in 99 "on the outside".

p. Place/Abode

1) ma - "place": Sayings 30.2, 30.4, 33.8, 50.6, 67.4, 68.5, 75.5, 76.10, 86.4, 99.4.

2) topos - "abode": Sayings 4.4, 24.2, 60.15, 64.40, 68.4.

Almost no translator observes the distinction between the Coptic and the Greek words for "place", except Ross who capitalizes "Place" when it means topos. The French translators do use different words - place, lieu, endroit - but not consistently. The same is true in German in which Platz und Ort could be used to make the distinction. I think this is an important distinction and as with all Coptic-Greek pairs the Coptic is a lower-level physical place while the Greek is a higher-level spiritual "place". Latin in some ways is to English what Greek was to Coptic, so I have chosen to render the differences here and in other pairs by words derived from Anglo-Saxon and Latin: "place" and "abode". Saying 68 is particularly interesting in that both words are used in the same sentence (68.4 and 68.5), clearly indicating that Jesus intends them to have different meanings: the saying cannot even be understood without this distinction.

The spiritual meaning of "place" is attested in a number of sources. In Midrash Rabbah II.620-621 in the Palestinian Talmud it says: "R. Jose. b. Halafta said: We do not know whether God is the place of His world or whether His world is His place, but from the verse `Behold there is a place with me' (Ex. 33:21) it follows that the Lord is the place of His world, but His world is not His place". Aristotle said that "the proper places" of "things in the world" are "the goals toward which" they "move naturally and in which

they rest naturally...each of the elements naturally tends to be borne towards its own place (chôran)." Building on Aristotle, Philo says God could figuratively be called a "place" (topos) "by reason...of his being that to which all things flee for refuge" (Nations 239-240). The precedent is there; Jesus simply has a consistent use of the terms and, like Philo, uses the Greek topos for the spiritual level.

q. Rest/Repose

1) èmton - "rest": Sayings 61.2, 86.5.

2) anapausis - "repose": Sayings 2.10, 50.18, 51.3, 60.16, 90.5.

Just as with place/abode, we have here another Coptic/Greek pair that I have translated with an Anglo-Saxon/Latin pair. The Coptic èmton is used in a general and more physical sense while the Greek anapausis is used to mean a high state of spiritual development in which a person is beyond inner tension, duality and desire.

r. Rich/Wealthy

1) rèmmao - "rich": 81.2, 110.3.

mèntrèmmao - "richness": 29.7, 85.3.

2) plousios - "wealthy": 63.2.

In this pair rèmmao means spiritual richness, but plousios is an even higher state of spiritual self-sufficiency, based on the meaning of someone who does not need to work for a living.

s. Seek/Seek after

1) shine - "seek": Sayings 2.2, 18.5, 24.3, 28.9, 38.6, 59.5, 60.15, 76.8, 92.2, 92.6, 94.2, 107.6.

2) diôkô - "seek after": Sayings 68.3, 68.5, 69.3.

Seeking is obviously a very important concept in Thomas and in this case there is nothing low level about the Coptic word for seeking, shine, which is used in 11 sayings. The Greek diôkô simply expresses an even higher level. There is nothing spiritual about its dictionary definition - "pursue, drive, chase, hunt, run after, follow, strive to win" - but its connotation is an active and committed pursuit rather than a general seeking, and this fits with Jesus' emphasis on work and effort in order to attain spiritual growth.

t. Single one/Monachos

1) oua ouôt - "a single one": Sayings 4.7, 22.14, 23.5.

2) monachos: Sayings 16.12, 49.2, 75.4.

Some commentators such as Kee consider these terms to be essentially equivalent, but Jesus never uses two words in the same way in Thomas. He clearly coined both expressions himself: ouôt is defined as "single, alone, one, same" but does not normally exist in noun form with a definite article. And monachos is never used in any similar sense before Jesus and does not have a good equivalent in translation, but is considered to be a higher level of spiritual development than oua ouôt, though the latter is also a high state.

There has been a lot of discussion in the scholarly literature about the Greek term monachos with many scholars concluding that the monastic, celibate and solitary sense of the word has always been primary. Thus to understand its meaning it would be beneficial to look at its history, as has been ably researched by Adam, Harl, Judge, Dekkers, Bumazhnov, Joest and Morard.

The word derives from the Greek monos which has many meanings: "alone, left alone, forsaken; alone, only; standing alone, single in its kind, unique." Monachos as an adjective has a simple dictionary meaning of "solitary" and as a noun of "monk". As an adverb in the form of monachê and monachou the word goes back to the 5th century B.C.E. and is used twice in Plato's Symposium (see above) and in Xenophon; as an adjective monachos it was first used by Aristotle but also only twice.

After Aristotle its attestation previous to the Gospel of Thomas is quite sparse: three times by Epicurus, once by Diodorus Siculus, and otherwise only by the Athenian historian Apollodorus (2nd cent. B.C.E.), and the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus (1st cent. B.C.E.). This citation in a very practical treatise in Apollodorus shows that the word was not just known to intellectuals but even to ordinary legionaries.

Even after the three citations in Thomas further attestations are few: the Alexandrian mathematician and astronomer Claudius Ptolemy (2nd cent. C.E.) and the philosopher Plotinus (203-262 C.E.); the latest attestation is in 3rd century Greek papyri found in Egypt (Adam Grund 210-213). It is found neither in Philo, Josephus, the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible nor in the New Testament, and the early Christian theologians such as Origen, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa avoid it. Quispel says "it is especially noteworthy that it is never used in Gnostic writings (with the exception of the Dialogue of the Savior, which quotes the Gospel of Thomas)" (Quispel GoT Rev 237) and Harl says that "it seems to be absent from all sorts of

other texts where the same theme of interior unity is developed, notably in Philo of Alexandria, the Gnostics and Clement of Alexandria; the word does not appear either in Christian tradition of that epoch" (Harl 472).

In these Greek texts the word is used in a general descriptive sense and about things and was never applied to persons until the 2nd century C.E. Its meaning is three-fold:

1. unique, without parallel, the only example of its kind - Plato, Aristotle, Diodorus;
2. essential, indivisible, fully itself, in contrast with that which is multiple or divided - Epicurus;
3. alone unto itself, with nothing superior to it - Plotinus.

(Morard monachos 340) As Adam summarizes, "if it is said of a thing that it is monachos, that means: it is without parallel, it is unique - without this designation implying a rank order. Not the exception is meant, but something that in certain cases stands alone in its particular realm" (Adam Grund 213-214).

Now the question is: is this the meaning of the word in the two sayings 49 and 75? The way Jesus uses the word already differs grammatically from its use by classical Greek authors: he uses it as a noun which they never did, and he uses it to designate persons which was not the case before. Has he changed the meaning as well or does it simply mean "the unique ones" or "the essential, indivisible ones"?

Most scholars proceed on the assumption that Jesus or at least Thomas has indeed changed the meaning, and namely to denote "celibate solitary monk." Quispel says: "One must conclude that for the author of the Gospel of Thomas the monachos is `a' virgin, a celibate...it seems that (he)... was an encratite with a pronounced predilection for the celibates: only those who have renounced marriage will be saved, will be chosen" (Quispel "origines" GnSt100-101). Morard concludes that monachos is a "technical term", probably of Gnostic rather than popular origin, that "serves to designate all forms of asceticism in Egypt." It "simply reflects the characteristics of an ascetic, those that the literature of the Syrian and Judeo-Christian milieu reveal to us: that of an elect, separated one, a celibate" (Morard Encore 400, Monachos Moine 373, 377). Patterson says that the "monachoi (solitary) are those who have taken up the life of the wandering radical." Theissen and Patterson speak of the itinerant wandering radicalism of the Thomas movement in which a small number of celibate men develop a "siege mentality." Even if they are few in numbers and completely out of the mainstream, they still insist on seeing themselves as the chosen and the elect (Patterson 200-201).

Let us look at the history of the term to see if it really does mean

"solitary monk". The very first documented use of monachos as a recognized figure in society with the meaning of "monk" is in a petition of Aurelius Isidorus of Karanis, dated June 6, 324 C.E., which states that he was attacked by his neighbors over a straying cow and almost beaten to death until he was rescued by a monachos named Isaac and a diakon named Antoninus. What is interesting about this document is that this monk Isaac lived not in a secluded monastery but right in the village of Karanis and that the deacon was an active and prominent figure in village affairs (Judge 72-74).

Indeed, in Egypt before the establishment of Church orthodoxy most monks were not secluded or solitary at all, but lived in their own small household communities within villages and towns, participating actively in their civil and church affairs. Joest says "not only did they get constant visitors from the surrounding villages and towns who asked them for advice, conversely they also went to the towns in order to sell their goods and to replenish their food supplies. Sometimes they even worked on the harvests and earned their meager bread on the fields of the landowners." The Historia Monachorum relates that "there were hardly any villages and towns in Egypt which were not surrounded by monasteries as if by a wall" and in the city of Oxyrhynchos (where fragments of Thomas were found by Grenfell and Hunt) there were almost more monks than other inhabitants (Joest 25). The leader of such a community in Alexandria was Paieous, who was an influential political and community leader and a member of a college of patrons which was responsible for a series of stations of monks.

Judge says that the term monachos was the popular nickname applied precisely to this type of monk, whose more technical name was apotaktitoi, as opposed to a solitary hermit along the lines of St. Antony (Judge 84-86). This form of monkhood may even represent an unbroken tradition to the earliest Jewish monks around John the Baptist as well as the Qumran community, as attested by the fact that over 60 different classical Jewish writings were preserved in the early monasteries, including the complete works of Philo (Joest 28). Celibacy had been a feature of church life for at least two centuries already and "down to the fourth century the fathers heap their praises on the male equivalents of virgins without finding any need to create a name for such people"; the need for a new name was precisely to differentiate this type of monk from a desert hermit who was instead called an anchorite, monachos anachôritês (Judge 76, Vicychl 174, Dekkers 92).

Though Augustine (354-430) and St. Basil the Great (330-379) still insisted on the spiritual advantages of monks living in community, the fanatic Athanasius (295-373) and Jerome (347-419?) campaigned strenuously and virulently against these monachoi because they were too independent and would not submit to the orders of a rapidly centralizing authoritarian Church (Judge

77-79, Dekkers 97-98, 103). Workman makes clear that the orthodox Church always opposed the ideal of monasticism: "Monasticism in its origin was the protest of the lay spirit against any conception of religion which excluded the laity from the highest obligations or the supremest attainment...Both in the East and West the new movement was bitterly opposed, especially by the bishops", due to the fact that the monks, until the 5th century, were generally laymen and not ecclesiastics. "The dominating principle that pervaded Egyptian monasticism in all its manifestations...was a spirit of strongly-marked individualism." (Workman 13-17, 23)

Thus the central Church exerted all its efforts to break up monastic communities and to force the monks into a solitary and secluded form of existence. Pachomius set up the first Egyptian monastery of recluses in 320 C.E. and in the first citation of

monachos by an eclesiastical writer, Eusebius of Caesarea, writing in a commentary on the Psalms after 330 C.E., is at pains to emphasize the homeless and solitary nature of monkhood. Within 30 years after this commentary, as shown in the Vita Antonii of Athanasius, the term has become a fixed designation for an ascetic living in hierarchically structured monasteries in Egypt, a movement which then spread through the entire Christian world (Judge 74-76, Adam Grund 215).

By the time of Jerome the term monachos was not only restricted to someone solitary but it was considered "unthinkable that a monk could be anything but as hermit or coenobitic, two types which had in common not only celibacy, but the determination to detach oneself as completely as possible from the ordinary social pattern of the community. The only meaning available to monachus in Latin was `solitary' in the social sense; there was next to nothing left of the `single-minded' ethical ideal to which the Greek term had alluded in its pre-monastic life" (Judge 78-79). The same is true in Syria. There the equivalents for monachos also did not denote recluses and hermits but monks living in society. Two terms were used: the highest degree of monkhood was ihidaya, which means "a person who lives singly" and denoted only someone living a celibate lifestyle; someone who had once been married was a lower degree and was called a qaddise (Beck 256-259, Adam Grund 217, Vööbus Asc I.106-108). Such a person would enter a spiritual marriage, in which either a married couple decided to live without physical intimacy or in which "single people found others with whom they decided on this kind of life", even entering this form of marriage in early youth (Vööbus Asc I.79-80).

It was not until the 4th century, under the influence of stricter Egyptian monasticism and Manichaeanism, that the term ihidaya, like monachos,

was redefined to mean "solitary hermit" (Beck 267, Vööbus Asc II.66-69). Despite that, the 4th century Liber Graduum still shows that the "Syriac `solitary' is not so much an isolated hermit in the desert but a virgin, and often he or she is living in the midst of towns and people" (Baker Fasting 293). Thus Syria kept the original meaning of monkhood for much longer than Egypt.

Therefore, considering the fact that even when monachos was used to denote a monk, it did not mean "solitary" or "recluse", it is highly implausible that Jesus would have used it in this sense in Thomas. And he certainly didn't use the word to mean "monk" or "ascetic" considering that the first use of it in that sense is not until 324 C.E. Thus many scholars are being ahistorical and inaccurate in ascribing practices to Thomas that didn't even exist in the first century. Here Judge's suggestion that "the Greek loan word was adopted by the Coptic author (of Thomas)...because at the time he was writing he knew that monachos was the name of a recognised social type in Egypt", namely as monk, (Judge 87) is highly unlikely. And Crossan's view that "Thomas is profoundly basic to the traditions of sexual asceticism in eastern Syria just as later it would fit well within the Pachomian monastic movement in Upper Egypt" (Crossan Four 17) completely fails to see the vast difference between Pachomian authoritarian asceticism and the free-wheeling individualism of the Thomas community.

As a result, most translations of sayings 49 and 75 are in error in rendering the word as "solitary, lonely ones, alone, loners" if by that they mean a sociological condition of ascetic geographic isolation. Popkes very rightly says that Thomas uses monachos as an "ontological concept" describing not a "certain way of life for which one has to decide but a basic ontological definition", while in early monastic traditions it is used as a religious-sociological concept (Popkes Menschenbild 191-192).

Indeed, there is good evidence that the word had a much deeper and more psychological meaning. The translations from the Hebrew Bible into Greek by three Jewish translators, Aquila (2nd cent. C.E.), the Jewish-Christian (or Ebionite) Symmachus (200 C.E.) and Theodotion use the term monachos but in a descriptive sense: as Klijn says, "we may say that in circles where these translations originated the word was not considered a technical term. A few centuries later it become such, used as a clerical title, a monk. It is not justified to explain the meaning of a word as used in the second century by its usage in the fourth century" (Klijn single 272n).

The term is used to translate the Hebrew yahid (pl. yehidim) in five separate passages from Genesis 22:2 and Psalms (22:21, 25:16, 35:17, 68:7) and lebado in one passage, Gen 2:18, with yahed lebabi being translated as "unify my heart" in Jeremiah 32:39 and Psalm 86:11. Yahid, which is etymo-

logically connected with the Syriac ihidaya, means "solitary, alone, lonely, afflicted"; in its plural form yehidim it was used by the Qumram community to denote a special category of men dedicated to holiness and assiduous in prayer (Morard MonachosMoine 348, 356, Quispel GoT Rev 237-238, origines 102). It is with this sense of righteous people completely dedicated to God as the only focus of their lives that the Jewish Targums, the Targum Jonathan on Isaiah and the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Deuteronomy, use the term (Bumazhnov Bedeutung 253-258). Only later do the rabbinical commentaries on the word assume that it meant a "celibate". Morard even argues that the very word monachos is a translation of this Hebrew word introduced into Egypt (Morard import 242-243). In the Biblical translations above it is often associated with ani, anawim, "poor, weak, humble, small".

At the same time it also has a connotation of inner unity: it can mean "unique, only one" and in verb form it also has an interesting meaning of "making the heart one" (Harl 466-469). So it is those who experience inner loneliness and affliction who ultimately attain Oneness. This dual and paradoxical meaning comes much closer to the meaning Jesus intends in sayings 49 and 75 than a simple definition as "solitary" or "monk".

Some scholars have indeed come to the same conclusion. Grant changed his mind within the same article: first he said that "references to monks have been added" to Saying 75, but in a later note appended to his article he said "following Schoedel I should agree that there are no references to `monks' in Sayings 16, 50 and 75; the word should be translated `single ones' or `solitaires'. It is therefore unnecessary to date Thomas after the rise of monasticism" (Grant Notes 170, 179). Bumazhnov argues that given the condemnation of monastic seclusion in Christian texts such as Barnabas 4:10, "the acceptance of the ascetic term monachos with the meaning `the solitary one' in the Greek orthodox circles in which the respective texts were translated is rather unlikely" (Bumazh Einige 296).

Uro also says that it is "unlikely that the solitary formed a clearly defined celibate group among the larger group of Christians" and a "clear-cut encratite interpretation does not do justice to the multi-dimensional imagery of the gospel" (UroCross 158-159). Nordsieck agrees that "the main emphasis is not so much on being single and unmarried but on attaining spiritual unity as well as social unity with one's fellow humans." (Nordsieck 199)

The most perceptive comment was by Till, one of the original translators of the Gospel of Thomas, in 1958: "Monachos cannot have its usual meaning `monk' in this early text, but seems rather to mean `the lonely one' - not so much in the sense of a hermit or an anchorite but of a person standing alone with the advanced development of his knowledge (gnosis) who,

therefore, is not one of the mass" (Till New 452n).

It is clear, then, that Jesus has taken a word only found as an adjective and adverb in classical Greek sources, has turned it into a noun, has imbued it with the meaning of the Hebrew yahid as well as with the original meanings of the Greek word, and has created a central concept that encapsulates his ideal of spiritual development. Quispel goes so far as to call it "the most important word, indeed, the central concept" of Thomas (Quispel GoTRev 237) and Popkes says it "can be called the core anthropological concept" (Popkes 209).

It is a multi-dimensional, paradoxical and all-encompassing concept; as Dekkers says in arguing against a restricted definition as "monk": "It is rather an ensemble of qualities which harmonize, which balance each other perfectly, and which make a person called `One', who knows to stand on his feet all alone, who is unified internally and is not pulled in many opposite directions..The term...indicates more an attitude of heart than a way of life; in practice, many ways of life can be sheltered under the monastic tent" (Dekkers 95, 104). The paradox is, as Leloup says, that the "monakhos are simultaneously `separate from all' and `one with all'...It is the solitude that opens into the heart of the world...The monakhos seek and find the One who reigns in all and everything: the Root and the End" (Leloup 142).

Thus, based on what we can determine from the original Greek word, the Hebrew equivalent and its use in many texts, we can conclude that monachos contains the following set of meanings:

1. people who are single and unmarried, or living in a spiritual or platonic marriage;

2. those who simplify their lives and renounce the physical and material things of the world;

3. those who follow a path which separates them from others and isolate them from the world; those who feel "different" from others, mavericks and non-conformists;

4. those who accept their existential loneliness and basic solitariness and do not attempt to cover it up by constantly seeking the company of others;

5. those who seek and attain a greater sense of unity within thmselves and with others because of their heightened understanding of their inner loneliness;

6. those who aspire to transcend gender and reach an undifferentiated state of inner unity without social and biological constraints; and

7. those who aspire to become a "single one," to return to the original state of complete sense of oneness with the essential energy in the universe, with the light behind all things and with God, as symbolized by the state of man

in Paradise. As Ross says, "a monachos owes his name to the union of his heart with the divine and to the complete union of his being; he has become the complete man" (Ross Thirty 75).

This grand concept of inner Unity had a profound effect on thinkers after Jesus' time, whether expressed by monachos as in the Dialogue of the Savior or by monos as in the Valentinian school. We find the idea of unity in the Gospel of Truth as a central thought: "It is within Unity that each one will atatin himself." (25.10) It is in the Excerpta ex Theodoto: "The many having become one might all be mingled in the One which was divided for our sakes (36.2)" (Adam Gedanke 262-263).

And the Dialogue of the Savior, dated possibly as early as the turn of the 2nd century and part of the Thomas school, seems to quote Thomas directly, using the same phrase "the elect and the monachos", and like Thomas consists of Jesus giving spiritual teachings directly to his disciples and conversing with them. Morard sees it as teaching the notion of perfection to the elect, the monachos, "who, detached from the material world of the body into which he has fallen, has rediscovered, by the mystery of his interior reunification, the privileges of his primary condition at the heart of the kingdom of light from which he originated" (Morard Encore 396-397). Though she calls this "Gnostic", it is certainly in congruence with the philosophy of Thomas.

u. Worthy/Worth as much

1) èmpsha - "worthy": Sayings 56.5, 80.5, 85.4, 111.8, 114.3.

2) axios - "worth as much (as)": Sayings 55.6, 85.5.

Once again translators usually translate these two words the same way as "worthy" but Jesus always uses two different words for a reason, particularly when he uses them both in the same saying, saying 85. The dictionaries also give "worthy" as a translation for both, and Liddell gives axios as meaning "worth, equivalent, compensating; worthy, precious, due." I have followed Quispel's analysis here that the root meaning of axios is "counterbalancing, weighing as much as, of like value, worth as much as" (Quispel GoT Rev 262) and I have therefore translated it as "worth as much".

APPENDIX IV. THE ORDER OF THE SAYINGS

The Gospel of Thomas differs greatly from the New Testament in that there is no narrative, no history and no background. There is no story

of Jesus' miraculous birth, no miracles and wonder healings, no skies opening up and God speaking to Jesus, no prophecies of the future, no talk of a Messiah, no entry into Jerusalem, no crucifixion and no resurrection. Nor is there any mention of Jesus dying for anyone's sins or being the Son of God. In short, there is nothing in the Gospel of Thomas that can be called "Christian" in any way. Whatever Jesus was, he wasn't a Christian. One might actually be relieved to find that to be so, considering the rather disturbing record of official Christianity, and I do think that if Jesus had known of the uncountable crimes that were going to be committed in his name since his death, he would have lived a quiet life and never ventured forth into the public at all.

What we have is 114 concise, compressed and cryptic sayings in a language that few people know. And they seem to be in no particular order, all randomly jumbled together. Most of this book will be devoted to our attempts to understand the deeper meanings of these sayings, but right now I would like to investigate whether there is also a deeper order to the sayings.

Practically all scholars who have studied the Gospel of Thomas agree that there is little discernible order to the 114 sayings. Right away in 1957 before it was even published Puech said that it was "nothing but a succession of aphorisms or propositions independent of each other, mechanically juxtaposed and lacking any narrative or systematic framework" (Puech 39-40). Koester says, "The writer of the Gospel of Thomas is...not an author who deliberately composed the book according to a general master plan. He is rather a collector and compiler who used a number of smaller units of collected sayings, some perhaps available in written form, and composed them randomly...each saying has a meaning in itself" (Koester ACG 81-82).

Any random sampling of scholars finds the same verdict: "different layers of material which were successively juxtaposed in the compositon of the present work" (Doresse 343); "little in the way of structure, continuity, or internal coherence" (Lincoln 66); "made up of a variety of elements of varying age and provenance" (Higgins Non-gn 306). Grobel is perhaps the most dismissive: "a heap of heterogeneous sayings" (Grobel 369).

Some scholars have attempted to find some plan behind the "collection". Lincoln thinks it is a mix of instructions for both initiates and non-initiates and he thinks this explains its heterogenous character (Lincoln 70). Cullmann thinks there was an original Jewish-Christian collection which was added to by gnostic editors, explaining why "longer interrelated groups of non-gnostic Sayings are interrupted by individual gnostic Sayings" (Cullmann 430-431). Quispel thinks it is a mix of material from the Gospel of the Nazoreans or another Jewish-Christian gospel, the Gospel of the Egyptians

or another Encratite source, a Hermetic anthology and a few editorial sayings by the author (Quispel Got Rev 265).

A number of scholars, including Schippers, Janssens, Tripp, Davies, Perkins and DeConick have attempted to find an order to Thomas and have arranged the sayings into groups that they think are similar in content. Different arrangements have resulted:

(Fallon 4206-4208, Tripp "Aim", Davies CW 149-155, Perkins GoT 540-557)
DeConick thinks there was a kernel document consisting of five speeches to which the other sayings were added later:
Speech 1: 2, 4-6, 8-11, 14-16
Speech 2: 17, 20-21, 23-26, 30-36
Speech 3: 38, 40-42, 44-48, 54-55, 57-58, 61
Speech 4: 62-66, 68-69, 71-74, 76, 78-79, 81-82, 86, 89-91
Speech 5: 92-100, 102-104, 107, 109, 111 (DeC 25-31)
Clearly there is no consensus on any of these internal divisions.

One aspect that scholars do agree on is that there is a basic principle of catchword association in Thomas, as Garitte was the first to show in 1957 (Garitte premier 63f) and as Haenchen, Patterson and Callahan have expanded on (Hanechen 12-13, Callahan, Patterson 100-102). Two and sometimes more sayings that follow upon each other are united by certain catchwords they both use, usually the same word repeated in more than one saying but sometimes a word with a similar sound or two words with similar meanings. These patterns can be followed throughout the entire document, although they do not include every single saying and the links sometimes skip a saying. I have spent some time picking out every catchword association that I could find in all the sayings and the result has been a more complete list than any other scholar has found hitherto. Here are the complete catchword associations:

Catchword order of sayings

Pro.1 These are the sayings which are secret/hidden
1.2 He who will discover the interpretation of these sayings
2.3 until he finds
2.4 and whenever he finds
2.8 and he will be king over the All

3.3 behold, the Kingdom is in the sky
3.4 then the birds of the sky will be first {shorp} before you
3.7 then the fish will be first before you.
3.8 But the kingdom is in your inside
3.10 Whenever you know yourselves,
3.11 then you will be known
3.12 and you will be aware that you are the children of the living Father.
3.13 But if you will not know yourselves,
4.3 to ask a little young child of seven days
4.4 concerning the abode of life {ônh},
4.5 and he will live {ônh}.
4.6 For many of the first are going to become last,
5.2 "Know (sg) what is in front of your face
5.3 and what is hidden from you will reveal itself to you
5.4 for there is nothing hidden that is not about to manifest {ouônh}
6.1 His disciples asked him, they said to him,
6.5 And what diet {ouôm} shall we observe?
6.9 all things are revealed before heaven
6.10 There is nothing hidden that is not about to manifest {ouônh}
6.12 that shall remain without revealing itself
7.2 Happy is the lion whom the man will eat {ouôm}
7.5: and the lion will become man
8.2: The Man is comparable to a fisherman, a wise man;
8.3 this one cast {nouje} his net to the sea
8.4 he drew it upward in the sea
8.5 being full of small fish.
8.6 Within them, he discovered {he e} a large fish
8.7 being a good one, namely the wise fisherman
8.8 He cast {nouje} all the small fish
8.9 down to the bottom {epesét} of the sea
9.2 Behold, the sower came out.
9.3 He filled his hand
9.4 he threw {nouje}.
9.5 Some seeds indeed fell {he} on the road
9.8, .11 fell {he}
9.9 and did not plant roots downwards {epesét} to the earth

9.10 and did not send spikes of wheat upwards to the sky.
9.13 and the worm ate them
9.14 And some others fell upon good earth
9.15 and it gave good fruit upwards to the sky {pe}.
10.2 I have thrown {nouje} a fire upon the world
10.3 and behold, I am guarding it
11.2 This heaven {pe} will pass away
11.7 you made {eire} it what is alive.
11.8 Whenever you come about in the light
11.9 what is that you will do {eire}?
11.11 you made {eire} the two.
11.13 what is it that you are about to do {eire}?
12.3 who will make {eire} (himself) great above us?"
12.6 it is to James the Just that you will go
12.7 it is for his sake that the heaven {pe} and the earth came about."
13.5 You resemble a just angel
13.9 Teacher, my mouth will entirely not receive
14.3 you will beget {jpo} a sin for yourselves
14.13 For what goes into your mouth
15.2 Whenever you see him who was not born {jpo} from woman
15.5 he who is there is your father
16.2 Perhaps they think, the people {rôme}
16.10 the father over the son
16.11 and the son over the father,
16.12 and they will stand firmly as monachos
17.5 and what has not lifted up in the heart of man {rôme}
18.2 "Tell us: it is in which way {he} that our end will occur?"
18.8 Happy is he who will stand firmly at the beginning
18.9 and he shall know the end
18.10 and he shall not taste death
19.2: Happy is he who came into being beforehand
19.7: For there are five trees for you in Paradise
19.9 and their leaves do not fall {he} away
19.10 He who will know them
19.11 shall not taste death
20.2 "Tell us: `To what is the Kingdom of the heavens comparable?'"

20.6 But whenever it falls upon the earth
20.7 which is worked,
20.8 it sends forth a large branch
21.2 Whom do your disciples resemble?
21.4 They resemble little children
21.5 dwelling in a field (worked earth)
21.18 to cut into his house of his kingdom
21.30 his sickle in his hand
22.3 "These little ones who are receiving milk are comparable to*
22.4 those who enter into the Kingdom."
22.9 "Whenever you (pl) make the two One,
22.14 into a single one
22.18 and a hand in the place of a hand,
22.19 and a foot in the place of a foot
23.3 one {oua} from a thousand and two from ten thousand,
23.4 and they will stand on their feet
23.5 being a single one
24.6 There is light existing within a person of light
25.2 Love your brother
25.5 like the pupil/child of your eye
26.2 The speck that is in your brother's eye
26.3 that you see
26.5 that you do not see.
26.7 the beam from your eye,
26.8 then you will be able to see to cast out
27.1 If you do not fast to the world
27.4 you will not see the Father.
28.2 I stood firmly in the midst of the world
28.3 I manifested to them in the flesh
28.8 and they do not see
29.2 If it is for the sake of the spirit that the flesh has come into existence
31.2 There is no prophet accepted in his town
32.2 A city being built on top of a high mountain
32.4 it is impossible for it to fall
32.5 nor will it be able to hide

33.7 nor does he put it in a hidden place
33.9 everyone who goes in and comes out
33.10 may see its light
34.2 If a blind man...
34.3 both together are wont to fall down to the bottom of a pit
35.2 "It is not possible for one to go into the house of the strong
36.2 Take {fi} no thought
36.5 what will you put on yourselves?" (subject of clothing)
37.2 It is on what day that you will manifest forth to us
37.3 and it is on what day that we will see you?
37.6 and you take {fi} your clothing
38.6 There will be some days you will seek me
39.5 They did not enter into the interior
40.2 A grapevine was planted at the outside of the Father
43.2 Who are you, to say these things to us?
43.6 they love the tree
43.7 they hate the fruit
43.6 they love the fruit
43.7 they hate the tree
44.2 He who speaks a blasphemy about the Father
45.2 "Wine grapes are not wont to be gathered from thorn bushes (acacias),
45.3 nor are figs wont to be picked from camel's thistles;
45.4 [for?] they are not wont to give fruit.
45.5 A good man brings forth good
45.9 and he speaks misery
46.2 From Adam (meaning "man" in Hebrew) until John the Baptist
46.7 `He who amongst you (pl) shall become a little one
47.2 "It is not possible for a man to mount two horses and to stretch two bows;
47.3 and it is not possible for a servant to serve two masters;
47.4 or he will honor the one {oua}
47.6 A man is not wont to drink old wine
47.7 and immediately he longs to drink young wine
48.2 If two make peace with each other
48.3 in this single {ouôt} house,
48.4 they will say to the mountain

49.2 Among the happy are the monachos and the chosen
49.4 because you are from the heart of it
50.2.,.10 If they say to you
50.3 `From where have you come into being {shôpe}?'
50.5 we come from the light
50.6 the place where the light came forth into being {shôpe}
50.14 and we are the chosen of the Living Father
50.18 `It is a movement and a repose.'"
51.3 that the repose of the dead will occur {shôpe}
52.3 and they all spoke about you
52.6 and you have spoken about those who are dead."
53.5 their father would have begotten them circumcised in their mother
53.7 has found all profit
55.2 He who will not hate his father and his mother
55.6 will not become worth as much as {axios} I
56.3 has discovered a corpse
56.4 and he who has discovered a corpse
56.5 the world is not worthy {èmpsha} of him.
57.2 The Kingdom of the Father is comparable to a man
57.6 The man did not permit them to pluck the darnel
58.2 Happy is the man who has suffered
58.3 he has discovered the life
59.2 "Take heed of (pl) that which lives
59.3 that you may live
59.4 so that you may not die
59.5 and you seek to see it
60.6 "So that he may kill it «and» eat it."
60.8 "As it is alive
60.9 he will not eat it,
60.10 but «only» if he kills it
60.15 "You yourselves, you seek an abode for yourselves
61.2 "Two are going to rest there on a bed;
61.3 one is going to die; one is going to live."
61.5 Who are you, man?
61.8 and you have eaten at my table?"
61.16 he will be filled with light

61.18 he will be filled with darkness
63.2 There was a wealthy man
63.3 who had many resources (money) {chréma}.
63.7 and fill my storehouses with fruit
63.9 These were his thoughts on these matters in his heart.
63.10 and during that night he died
63.11 He who has ears,
63.12 let him hear.
64.2 "A man had some visiting strangers
64.4 He sent his servant (also .35)
64.7 `My master invites you.' (also .14, .27, .35)
64.9 `I have some money {hômt} for some merchants.
64.33 The servant came; he said to his master,
65.2 A good man had a vineyard
65.5 and he would receive his fruit from their hands
65.6 He sent his servant (also .9, .12, .16)
65.13 he said to his master (also .14, .18)
65.20 Perhaps they will be ashamed before his heart
65.24 He who has ears,
65.25 let him hear
66.4 it is the corner-stone (stone of making level) {kôh}
67.3 lacking {crôh} himself alone (word-play to 66)
67.4 lacks the whole place.
68.2 Happy are you
68.3 whenever they hate you and seek after you<rselves>;
68.5 in the place where they have sought after you<rselves> within your heart.
69.2 Happy are they
69.3 who have sought after themselves within their heart.
69.5 who have known the Father in Truth
69.6 Happy are they who are hungry
70.2 "Whenever you (pl) give birth to that which is in you,
70.4 If you do not have that in you,
70.5 this which you do not have in you will kill you."
72.3 so that {shina} they will divide/cut up the vessels of my Father with me
72.8 Surely I am not a divider/cutter {pôshe}?

73.2 The harvest {pôhs} is indeed {men} abundant
73.3 but {de} the workers become few.
73.4 However, ask the master
73.5 so that {shina} he will cast «a» worker out to the harvest
74.2 Lord (Master), there are many around the penetration\well
74.3 but there is {mèn de} no one in the well.
75.2 There are many
75.4 but the monachos
75.5 are those who will go into the place of marriage
76.4 «and» discovered a pearl.
76.7 he bought this one single pearl for himself
76.10 persevering in the place
77.4 out of my heart the All came forth
77.8 and you shall discover me there
78.2 Why did you come forth to the country?
78.8: and they will not be able to recognize the truth
79.2 Blessed be the womb {hé} that carried you
79.5 Blessed are those who have listened to the logos of the Father
79.6 and have guarded it in truth
80.2 He who has known the world
80.4 but he who has discovered {he} the body
81.2 He who has become rich
81.3 let him become king
81.4 and he who has a power
82.2 He who is near me
82.3 is near the flame
82.4 and he who is far from me
82.5 is far from the Kingdom."
83.2 The images manifest outwardly to people
83.3 and the light that is amongst them is hidden
83.5 and his image is hidden by his light
84.4 But whenever you see your images
84.5 which came into being in you beforehand
84.6 - they are neither wont to die nor to manifest outwardly -
85.2 "Adam {man in Hebrew} came into being
85.6 he [would] not [have tasted] the death."

86.4 but the son of the Man does not have a place
90.5 you will discover {he} repose for yourselves
91.3 so that {shina} we may believe you
92.2 seek {shiné} and you will find {cine}
92.7 and now you no longer seek {shine} after them
93.1 Do not give that which is pure to the dogs
93.4 so that {shina} they do not not make it [...]
94.2 He who seeks {shine} shall find {cine}
95.3 do not give at interest
95.5 to him from whose hand you will not receive {ji} them."
96.2 The Kingdom of the Father is comparable to a woman
96.3 she took {ji} a little colostrum
96.4 she hid it in the flour
96.6 He who has ears {maaje}, let him hear
97.2 The Kingdom of the Father is comparable to a woman
97.3 carrying a jar full of flour
97.5 The handle {maaje} of the jar broke
97.8 she did not understand toil
97.9 When she reached her house
98.2 The Kingdom of the Father is comparable to a man
98.3 wishing to kill a noble
98.4 He drew out the sword in his house
98.6 so that he might understand that his hand was going to persist.
99.2 "Your brothers and your mother are standing firmly on the outside."
99.4 "Those who are in these places who do the wish of my Father,
99.5 they «are» my brothers and my mother.
99.7 who shall enter the Kingdom of my Father
100.5 "Give to Caesar those things which belong to Caesar;
100.6 give to God those things which belong to God;
100.7 and what is mine, give it to me."
101.1 "He who will not hate his [father] and his mother in my way
101.3 and he who will [not] love his [father and] his mother in my way
101.5 for my mother [...][gave birth to me],
101.6 but [my] true [mother] gave me the life."
103.7 before they come inside.
104.2 Come let us pray today and let us fast!

104.6 But whenever the bridegroom comes out of the bridal chamber,
105.3 will they call him: `the harlot's son'?"
106.2 Whenever you (pl) make the two One {oua}
106.3 you will become the sons of the man
107.2 The Kingdom is comparable to a man, a shepherd,
107.4 One among them went astray, the largest.
107.6 he sought after the one
107.7 until he discovered {he e} it.
108.3 will become like me (in my way) {he}
108.5 and the hidden things will manifest to him
109.2 The Kingdom is comparable to a man
109.3 having a treasure [hidden] in his field
109.10 While plowing he discovered {he e} the treasure
110.2: He who has found {cine} the world
110.4 let him renounce the world
111.2 "The heavens will roll back and the earth
111.5 will not see death."
111.7 He who alone will discover {he e} himself
111.8 the world is not worthy of him
113.2 "On what day is the Kingdom about to come {néu}?"
113.5 `Behold, it is in this direction,'
113.6 or `Behold, this is the time.'
113.7 But it is upon the earth that the Kingdom of the Father is spread out
113.8 and people do not see it."
114.2 "Let Mariham come {ei} out from amongst us,
114.5 Behold! I myself shall draw her
114.10 will go into the kingdom of the heavens.

Here is the final tabulation of what sayings go together:
1-23 (not 4+5 but 4+6, not 17+18 but 16+18)
24-29 ("light" in 24 is linked with "eye" in 25)
31-40 (not 34+35 but 33+35; the link between 39 and 40 is a little tenuous)
43-65 (no 54 or 62)
66-70
72-86
90-101 (not 94+95 but 93+95)

103-104

105-114 (not 108+109 but 107+109; no 112)

Standing on their own with no catchword links are mostly short sayings: 30, 41, 42, 71, 87, 88, 89, and 102. Sayings 54, 62 and 112 are not linked but sayings around them are.

It is hard to know what to make of this; I do not discern any deeper order behind this arrangement but there might be one that we simply cannot see. In any case, it is clearly not random. The fact that there is such an internal order already contradicts the verdict of scholars who say that the sayings are a "heap of heterogeneous sayings"; this seems like a highly structured heap.

The most likely reason to have such catchword associations is to allow the sayings to be easily memorized; there would be little reason for it if it was only in written form. Perhaps Thomas or even later editors felt that something written can easily be destroyed and even entirely eradicated, as has certainly proven true with the Gospel of Thomas, whereas once committed to memory the work could theoretically be passed down from generation to generation.

APPENDIX V: NUMEROLOGICAL MEANING

There is a completely unexpected order in Thomas and it seems to have little to do with the content of the sayings. Rather, it has to do with the introductions to each saying and with numerology.

If we look at the introductory phrases in the 114 sayings of the Gospel of Thomas we find that the one most commonly used is "Jesus said." There are exactly 86 sayings which are introduced by "Jesus said" (with two variants "Jesus said to his disciples" in 13 and "Jesus said to them" in 14). As Claus Schedl shows in a fascinating article (Schedl), the number 86 is a sacred number which is equivalent to one of the names for God in Hebrew.

In the Hebrew alphabet the 22 letters of the alphabet also equal numbers, so the tradition of gematria has found many layers of interpretation by converting letters to numbers. There are two names for God in the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh (YHWH) and Elohim. The numerical equivalent for YHWH is 26 (10+5+6+5) and the equivalent for Elohim is 86 (1+30+5+10+40)! So the 86 sayings that begin with "Jesus said" are not random!

In addition, the remaining 28 sayings can be subdivided as follows:

Disciples

The disciples said - 12 sayings (6, 12, 18, 20, 24, 37, 43, 51, 52, 53, 99, 113)
They said - 2 sayings (91, 104)
They saw, they showed - 2 sayings (60, 100)
Jesus
He said - 4 sayings (1, 8, 65, 74)
No introduction - 3 sayings (27, 93, 101)
Other
A man said to him - 1 saying (72)
A woman from the multitude said to him - 1 saying (79)
Jesus saw children - 1 saying (22)
Mary said to Jesus - 1 saying (21)
Simon Peter said to them - 1 saying (114)

Now, the 22 Hebrew letters are normally subdivided as 3 "mothers", 7 double consonants (corresponding to the 7 planetary spheres) and 12 simple consonants (corresponding to the 12 signs of the zodiac). To reach the number 26 of God's name the number 4 is added. In addition, the number 1 symbolizes the ultimate Unity of God. If we look at the above division of sayings, it fits this Hebrew numerological scheme perfectly. It should first strike the attentive reader that there are exactly 12 sayings that begin with "the disciples said" - that is not random either! The numbers 3, 4, 7 and 12 are all of course highly significant numbers with astronomical and symbolic significance.

These then would be the correlations for the Yahweh group:

3 "mothers" - A man said, a woman said, Jesus saw children, symbolizing the trinity of the family

7 double consonants - 7 sayings quoting Jesus, also subdivided into 4+3 (4=He said, 3=No introduction), two of the most symbolic numbers in ancient religion

12 simple consonants - 12 sayings starting with "the disciples said"

4 added - 4 sayings referring to the disciples starting with "they said, they saw, they showed"

1 and 1 - Mary said, Simon Peter said, symbolizing the unity of God as well as the bi-gender nature of God

So overall Thomas divides into 26+1 and 86+1. Clearly the number

of sayings, 114, is not an arbitrary number. What is also interesting is that there are exactly 114 suras (verses) in the Koran, and there they are subdivided into 86 Meccan, 26 Medinan and 2 passing suras. (see Schedl, Suras) Clearly Mohammed uses a much older tradition for his numerology, and it may not be too far afield to assume that he either uses Thomas directly or he knows the Hebrew gematria underlying the Bible.

We can also determine that there is a consistent content to the 26 Yahweh sayings: they have to do with the relationship of Jesus to his disciples and with his family, with the question of comitment of the disciples to the path Jesus teaches and with Jewish religious practices. They are more personal while the 86 Elohim sayings are Jesus' more general spiritual teachings.

Moreover, if we plot the sayings of Thomas according to these introductions, we get a definite pattern (* begins each sub-section):

Unit 1

*1 He said	1
2-5 Jesus said	4
*6 His disciples said	1
7 Jesus said	1
*8 He said	1
9-11 Jesus said	3
*12 His disciples said	1
13-17 Jesus said	5
*18 His disciples said	1
19 Jesus said	1
*20 His disciples said	3
21 Mary said	"
22 Jesus saw	"
23 Jesus said	1

Unit 2

*24 His disciples said	1
25-26 Jesus said	2
*27 (None)	1
28-36 Jesus said	9
*37 His disciples said	1
38-42 Jesus said	5
43 His disciples said	1

44-50 Jesus said	7
*51-53 His disciples said	3
54-59 Jesus said	6
Unit 3	
*60 They saw	1
61-64 Jesus said	4
*65 He said	1
66-71 Jesus said	6
*72 A man said	1
73 Jesus said	1
*74 He said	1
75-78 Jesus said	4
*79 A woman said	1
80-90 Jesus said	11
*91 They said	1
92 Jesus said	1
*93 (None)	1
94-98 Jesus said	5
*99 The disciples said	3
100 They showed and said	"
101 (None)	"
102-103 Jesus said	2
Unit 4	
*104 They said	1
105-112 Jesus said	8
*113 The disciples said	1
114 Simon Peter said	1

There is a repeating pattern here of one Yahweh introduction followed by some number of "Jesus said". Three times this pattern is interrupted by 3 Yahweh introductions followed by "Jesus said", out of which I have made four units. Each unit has at least one of the named figures in Thomas but Mary is mentioned in both the first and the last set. Here is the overall pattern:

(J = "Jesus said")

Unit 1: 1-23 23 (19+4) James, Mary

(1+J) x 5 (J=14)

3+J(1)
Unit 2: 24-59 36 (27+9) John
(1+J) x 4 (J=23)
3+J(6)
Unit 3: 60-103 44 (39+5) Salome, Adam
(1+J) x 7 (J=32)
3+J(2)
Unit 4: 104-114 11 (9+2) Peter, Mary 1+J (J=8)
1+1
This pattern does not seem random!!

Schedl shows in his book Baupläne des Wortes that the entire Bible is replete with numbers based on the Pythagorean tetraktys, that is combinations of the first ten numbers arranged in a triangle.

1
2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9 10

If the corners and the middle are added together, we get 23; if the other six are added we get 32; all numbers together make 55 (Schedl 40-41). Some of these numbers seem to be found in the above chart: in Units 2-3 there are 23+32=55 "Jesus said"s, the number of sayings in Units 3-4 adds up to 55 (44+11), and the number of Yahweh introductions in Units 1, 2 and 4 also adds up to 55 (19+27+9). If you add Units 1, 3 and 4 instead, then you have 19+39+9 which is 55 plus the sacred number 12; 67 is the complete sum of the Sumerian sexagesimal mathematical system (1x1)+(1x6)+(1x60). That number can also be found by adding the number of sayings in Units 1 and 3 (23+44). Farther afield, if you add 23+32+8 "Jesus said"s, then you have 63, used in the dimensions of the Babylonian mythological Tower (Schedl 50). Of course this may all be random and meaningless but it may also be intentional.

We do however know that numerology played a major role in ancient civilizations, in mythology, architecture, philosophy, literature and religious scriptures and observance. In the thinking of the ancients numbers were not merely symbols but had inherent powers. As Cassirer says in his study of myth: "In mythical thinking as elsewhere, number serves as a primary and fundamental form of relation...This relation is never taken merely as such, but appears as something immediately real and efficacious, as a mythical

object with attributes and powers of its own...as an original `entity' which imparts its essence and power to everything subsumed under it...Not only number as a whole but every particular number is, as it were, surrounded by an aura of magic, which communicates itself to everything connected with it...We feel this sacred awe surrounding number, for all magic is in large part number magic...Just as astronomy goes back to astrology and chemistry to alchemy, so arithmetic and algebra go back to an older magical form of number theory, to a science of almacabala...that peculiar magic of number which makes it appear as a fundamental power in the realm of the spirit and in the structure of human self-consciousness. It proves itself to be the bond which joins the diverse powers of consciousness into a mesh, which gathers the spheres of sensation, intuition and feeling into a unity...It acts as the magic tie which not so much links things together as brings them into harmony within the soul" (Cassirer 142-151).

Many numbers, for instance, are encoded into ancient architecture, both in the placement and the dimensions of the sacred structures. Graham Hancock has shown that the great ancient temples are located on a regularly spaced world grid centered on Giza-Heliopolis in Egypt. Angkor lies 72□ east of it, and other highly sacred sites are in relation to Angkor: Nan Madol in the Pacific lies 54□ east, the megaliths of Kiribati and Tahiti lie 72□ and 108□ east, Easter Island lies 144□ and a colossal trident on the Bay of Paracas on the coast of Peru lies 180□ east of Angkor (Hancock 253-254). 72 is an important number as the slow cyclical wobble that is caused by the precession of the axis of the earth displaces the position of all stars at the rate of one degree every 72 years, and thus by 360□ in 25,920 years, which is called the Great Year in ancient astronomy (Hancock 49).

72 is also encoded into other sacred numbers used in ancient writings to describe the Heavenly Jerusalem: 72 x 12 = 864, a solar foundation number related to the diameter of the sun which is 864,000 miles; 72 x 15 = 1080, the number symbolizing the moon; 72 x 17 = 1224, the number of Paradise and 72 x 44 = 3168, the perimeter of the New Jerusalem (Michell Dimensions 170-178). Ultimately, of course, all these numbers have 12 as a factor, which is a particularly sacred number at the root of much mythology, cosmology and measurement.

Numerology in Thomas also comes out in the structure of the strophes and the lines and in the constant contrast in the content of the sayings between unity and duality or polarity. This is what the elementary numbers generally symbolize in ancient writings:

1 - unity
2 - duality
3 - synthesis
4 - stability
5 - life and love
6 - perfection
7 - mystery
8 - auspiciousness
9 - multiplicity
10 - completeness
12 - cosmos

In the Hebrew Bible we find the following use of numbers:

1 - symbolizes the Oneness of God.

2 - symbolizes duality, ambivalence and inner conflict: day versus night, light and darkness, sun and moon, heat and cold, man and woman; 2 tablets of laws, 2 kingdoms (Judea and Israel), 2 sons of Abraham, 2 ladders of Jacob.

3 - symbolizes a new higher unity, thesis (1) and antithesis (2) creating a synthesis: sacred buldings must be in 3 parts, from the Ark of Noah to the Temple in Jerusalem, Levites have 3 divisions, there are 3 sons of Adam and of Noah, 3 angels visiting Abraham, 3 dark days and nights in the Exodus, 3 main Jewish festivals

4 - is connected with creation, especially of life on earth: the 4th "And God said" created life on earth, the angels are always 4 in number, the earth has 4 winds, seasons and sides. The river in Paradise is 4-fold. Daniel sees 4 animals as symbols of 4 world empires. The Flood takes 40 days, the wandering in the desert 40 years.

5 - of less importance in the Bible, except for the 5 books of Moses.

6 - symbolizes the profane, human world: 6 days shall you work, 6 years shall the servant serve, 6 years shall you sow your land, 60-fold is the yield, There is the six-sided star of David, Noah lived 600 years before the Flood, Pharaoh pursued the 600,000 Israelites with 600 war chariots. The beast rising from the deep in Revelation is 666. 600, 6000, 60,000 and 600,000 are usually warlike numbers.

7 - symbolizes the sacred and divine world and occurs about 1000 times: 7 seals, stars, eyes, horns, angels, trumpets, plagues, crowns, kings and

mountains. Phrases and words are often repeated 7 times in Genesis, and slightly different wordings are used for more than 7. The names of God, Elohim and Yahweh, are invariably mentioned 7 times in each story (Goldberg 7-11).

8 - symbolizes a new beginning: humans were created after the 8th "And God said" in Genesis, Psalm 8 tells the creation story, 2x8 grandsons of Noah continue humankind, circumcision is the new covenant to occur on the 8th day of life, David is the 8th son of Jesse, Hanukah lasts 8 days.

10 - once again a a number of unity: 10 words of God to create the world, the 10 plagues, 10 men in a minyan, the 10 commandments, 10 Sefirot in Kabala.

12 - symbolizes the heavenly and cosmic realm, based of course on the 12 months: 12 tribes of Israel, a city with 12 gates in Ezekiel, 12 sons of Jacob, 2x12 divisions of priests.

Looking at the sayings, we see a predominance of 3: three responses to Jesus in saying 13, three divisions cast upon the earth in saying 16, three objects of blasphemy in saying 44, three actions by the rich man in saying 63, three emissaries sent by the owner of the vineyard in saying 65, three subjects in saying 86, three recipients of "taxes" in saying 100, and three owners of the field in saying 109. This feature is retained in the Synoptics in which Mitton counts at least 64 three-fold sayings: he says in the teaching of Jesus "threefoldness...is not just an occasional feature, but one so recurrent as to be strikingly characteristic of his mode of speaking" (Mitton 228). The prevalence of it in the Synoptics demonstrates to Mitton that they would not have invented it and must have found it in the sources they used; indeed, in many cases they abbreviated three to two, so it was originally more common than they represent (Mitton 229-230).

However, threefoldness may not be unique to Jesus. Axel Olrik has shown that "three is the maximum number of men and objects which occur in traditional narrative. Nothing distinguishes the great bulk of folk narrative from modern literature and from reality as much as does the number three... The Law of Three extends like a broad swath cut through the world of folk tradition, through the centuries and millenia of human culture. The Semitic, and even more, the Aryan culture, is subject to this dominant force. The beginnings of this rule are, in spite of recent excavations and discoveries, lost in the obscurity of prehistory" (Dundes 133-134).

There is also a Law of Four, particularly in stories from India. In Thomas four is found in three sayings: in saying 9 the seeds fall in four places, in saying 22 there are four things made into themselves (eyes, hand, foot, image) and in saying 47 four similes are made of opposites that are

impossible. However, these four things are not equal when looked at closely: saying 9 is a gradation of different spiritual levels, 22 is really 3+1, and 47 is a number of different inner states. Thus, the predominance of the Law of Three still holds.

Another number may be contained in Thomas as well: 19. 12+7=19 and 19 is also a factor of 114, by 6. 19 is the number of kings of Biblical Israel, while 22 (the number of Hebrew letters) is the number of kings of Judah, beginning with David (Meysing 338). 19 is a significant number in the lunar calendar used by Jews and Muslims, for it is the length of the moonrise cycle relative to the solar cycle. Moonrise positions actually repeat their cycle afer 18.61 years, but in Stonehenge, for instance, there are exactly 56 stones in the Aubrey ring around the central set of standing stones, and this calculates 3 lunar cycles: 19+19+18. Using 6 movable stones, every important lunar event for hundrds of years, including eclipses, can be predicted. In addition, the earliest phase of Stonehenge has six lines of holes that allow observations to be carried out for 6 19-year lunar cycles which if applied rigidly would be 114 years, but in reality are 110 years (Hawkins 44, 177-178; Balfour 43). So the numbers 19x6=114 are encoded not just in Thomas but in ancient astronomical observatories as well.

A note on scholarly apparatus

Standard scholarly procedure is to use the bibliography only for often-cited works while having extensive footnotes for five purposes: for works that are cited less often or only once, to indicate a bibliography for specific points made in the text, to make qualifications of statements, to refer to contrary opinions by others and to include additional information that would otherwise interrupt the flow of the text. I have, however, decided to dispense with footnotes and to cite each work, numbered in the bibliography, in parentheses by number and with pages. I am following a mixture of John Crossan's method in his The Historical Jesus which cites references in parentheses with the method used in much scientific literature which numbers the bibliography and cites the number of the work as a footnote. This decision is in part due to my own frustration in trying to determine bibliographic references from the trail of *op. cit.*s in dense scholarly footnotes and due to the fact that constantly flipping to the footnotes interrupts one's train of thought as a reader.

Every piece of information I have used is precisely cited. Every work I have cited is listed in a much larger, more comprehensive and topically organized bibliography. This makes it easy to look up references and it allows the reader to pursue any topic more fully from the bibliography. In addition, my analysis in the text is largely based on synthesizing opposite opinions so I have no need to do that in the footnotes. And I see no reason to spend additional pages on more information that does not fit into the main line of the argument; the book is quite long enough and the reader is free to explore tangents him- or herself.

The standard procedure in scholarly literature is to cite foreign languages and foreign alphabets in the original. However, I would like to make this book accessible to as many readers as possible, not just to specialists, and therefore I have transliterated all foreign alphabets (Coptic, Greek and Hebrew) into the Roman alphabet and I have translated all foreign language citations from the primary and secondary literature into English. All such translations from German, French, Spanish, Latin and Dutch are my own unless there is a published translation in which case I cite that. I take full responsibility for any errors in translation and for any infelicitous style. For original Greek documents I rely on translations, for the Greek text of the New Testament I rely on the truly invaluable interlinear Greek-English edition of Alfred Marshall, for individual Greek words I rely on Liddell's dictionary and for Greek grammatical issues I use standard reference sources listed in the bibliography. 50 translations

Bibliography of Works Consulted

The standard practice in scholarly bibliographies is to list books and articles used only in part in footnotes and to restrict the bibliography to more major works. However, I do not want to clutter up this book with footnotes, and I personally find it distracting when there is too much information in footnotes, interrupting the flow of the text. Thus I have decided to use Crossan's method of indicating references in parentheses within the text. Thus, every book and article I have consulted and cited, even if only once, is listed in this bibliography. To help readers continue their own search, I

have organized the bibliography by topic. Articles are listed alphabetically, rather than by date, which is now standard scholarly practice but hasn't always been. I think they are easier to find when alphabetized. Titles of books and journal articles are underlined rather than italicized; italics are used for citations of titles within titles.

Only the most frequently used periodicals are abbreviated; the others are spelled out in full, saving the reader an often fruitless search for what an unknown abbreviation might mean. Abbreviations:
ET = Expository Times
FFF = Foundations and Facets Forum
HTR = Harvard Theological Review
HTS = Hervormde Teologiese Studies
JBL = Journal of Biblical Literature
JSNT = Journal for the Study of the New Testament JTS = Journal of Theological Studies NT = Novum Testamentum NTS = New Testament Studies
SBL = Society of Biblical Literature TZ = Theologische Zeitschrift VC = Vigiliae Christianae
ZNW = Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

I. Gospel of Thomas

A. Coptic Editions

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