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PART III:

Experiential Faith

TABLE OF CONTENTS

title page / table of contents 1 - 4

| | |
|---|-------|
| Commentary on the Odes of Solomon and the Odes | p. 3 |
| John the Baptist, the Mandaean connection | p. 20 |
| The experience of baptism | p. 24 |
| The waters of purification | p. 26 |
| God our <i>mikva</i> | p. 28 |
| Theraputae | p. 30 |
| Never the twain shall meet? | p. 34 |
| Dharma and Didache | p. 35 |
| The story of the Buddha | p. 37 |
| The prodigious Father from a Buddhist perspective | p. 51 |
| Gospel of Thomas, a Buddhist gospel? | p. 54 |
| The subversion of Christianity | p. 59 |
| The luckiest or unluckiest man in the world | p. 62 |
| Aristotelean philosophy | p. 69 |
| Christendom's genocide of Native Peoples | P. 73 |
| Alexander and Dandimis | P. 78 |
| Dandimis rebukes Alexandria | P. 80 |
| Natural desirers | P. 81 |
| Possessions | P. 82 |
| The unseen | P. 82 |
| Our Judeo-Buddhist heritage | P. 83 |

COMMENTARY ON THE ODES

J. Rendel Harris, 1909

The Odes and Psalms of Solomon is an important addition to our knowledge of the literature which immediately anticipates or directly follows the time of Christ. It contains, on the one hand, a hitherto unknown version of the Psalms of Solomon, a collection which has often been studied, from the standpoints both of the higher and lower criticism, and which is, by common consent, referred to the middle of the first century B.C.; and on the other hand it presents a new collection which I have called, for the sake of distinction, and in harmony with the references in ancient writers, by the name of the Odes of Solomon ; they are here edited and translated from a Syriac (Aramaic) manuscript in my own possession. I believe that their value and antiquity will at once be recognized. The Odes are marked by a vigor and exaltation of spiritual life, and a mystical insight, to which we can only find parallels in the most illuminated periods of the history of the Church.

In the Odes, there is little that can be traced to the Old Testament, almost nothing that is to be credited to the Gospels or other branches of Christian literature. Their radiance is no reflection from the illumination of other days, their inspiration is first-hand and immediate. It answers very well to the summary which Aristides made of the life of the early Christian Church when he described them as indeed 'a new people with whom something Divine is mingled.'

In the Odes, there is not a sad note, and there is hardly a vindictive note in the whole collection. And on the theological side, the leading characteristic is experience, and not dogma: and experience is much harder to date than dogma, and shows fewer of the weather marks of evolution. Sometimes, the expressions of the Odists rise to such a height that they catch from the object of their Faith something that is everlasting rather than evolutionary. It is difficult to date a man who has disclosed the fact that he is supremely happy and that God has made his face to shine with the light of heaven. The only way in which we could date such a phenomenon would be to say that, if he is not an isolated specimen, the songs must proceed from some time of spiritual elevation; and since it is historically verifiable, that the experimental time of the bloom of Church life is the first age, then these hymns or odes must belong to the first days of the Church.

There can be no reasonable doubt of the antiquity of the recovered Book of Odes. That which seems to be the latest composition amongst them is attested already by Lactantius in the beginning of the fourth century as having place in the collection which it occupies in our manuscript. The portions of the Odes which have

been transcribed by the author of the *Pistis Sophia* towards the end of the third century, are evidently taken from a book which was either canonical or not very far removed from canonicity ; so that it is easy to carry the Odes back into the second century.

Our own investigations have shown that the Odes agree in the extent of their composition with the statistical data for their measurement, preserved in the early Stichometries. We have also shown that they agree in sentiment with the beliefs and practices of the earliest Ages of the Church. It came out clearly in the investigation that the writer, while not a Jew, was a member of a Community of Christians, who were for the most part of Jewish extraction and beliefs, and the apologetic tone which is displayed, in the Odes, towards the Gentiles, as a part of the Christian Church, is only consistent with the very earliest ages, and with communities like the Palestinian Churches where Judaism was still in evidence and in control.

We think therefore, that it will be admitted on all hands, that the discovery of this collection of Odes and Psalms is not only valuable for the fact that it presents us, for the first time, with the Syriac version of the extant Psalms of Solomon, but that the Odes of Solomon is in itself a memorial of the first importance for rightly understanding the beliefs and experiences of the Primitive Church. We have expressed our belief that in part, at least, the collection belongs to the latter quarter of the first century (75 A.D.), but if it should be objected that this is too early a date, it cannot be many years in excess. Even if the writings do not fall within the actual time of the composition of the books of the New Testament, they scarcely fall outside the limits of the same, and we may, therefore, be sure that the Christian Church of today has been enriched by the discovery of a literary monument of the highest value.

THE ODES OF SOLOMON.

translated by J. Rendel Harris.

Ode 1.

1. The Lord is on my head like a crown, and I shall not be without Him. 2. They wove for me a crown of truth, and it caused thy branches to bud in me. 3. For it is not like a withered crown which buddeth not: but thou livest upon my head, and thou hast blossomed upon my head. 4. Thy fruits are full-grown and perfect, they are full of thy salvation.

Ode 2.

missing.

Ode 3.

1 ... I put on. 2. And his members are with him. And on them do I hang, and He loves me: 3. For I should not have known how to love the Lord, if he had not loved me. 4. For who is able to distinguish love except the one that is loved? 5. I love the beloved and my soul loves Him: 6 And where His rest is, there also am I; 7 And I shall be no strangers for with the Lord Most High and Merciful there is no grudging. 8 I have been united to Him, for the Lover has found the Beloved, 9 And because I shall love Him that is the Son, I shall become a son;. 10 For he that is joined to Him that is immortal, will also himself become immortal; 11 And he who has pleasure in the Living One, will become living. 12 This is the Spirit of the Lord, which doth not lie, which teacheth the sons of men to know His ways. 13 Be wise and understanding and vigilant. Hallelujah.

Ode 4.

1 No man, O my God, changeth thy holy place; 2 And it is not (possible) that he should change it and put it in another place: because he hath no power over it: 3 For thy sanctuary thou hast designed before thou didst make (other) places: 4 That which is the elder shall not be altered by those that are younger than itself. 5 Thou has given thy heart, O Lord, to thy believers: never wilt thou fail, nor be without fruits: 6 For one hour of thy Faith is days and years. 7 For who is there put on thy grace, and be hurt? 8 For thy seal is known: and thy creatures know it: and thy (heavenly) hosts possess it: and the elect archangels are clad with it. 9 Thou hast given us thy fellowship: it was not that thou wast in need of us: but that we are in need of thee: 10 Distill thy dews upon us and open thy rich fountains that pour forth to us milk and honey: 11 For there is no repentance with thee that thou shouldest repent of anything that thou hast promised: 12 And the end was revealed before thee: for what thou gavest, thou gavest freely: 13 So that thou mayest not draw them back and take them again: 14 For all was revealed before thee as God, and ordered from the beginning before thee: and thou, O God, hast made all things. Hallelujah,

Ode 5.

1 I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, because I love thee; 2 O Most High, thou wilt not forsake me for thou art my hope: 3 Freely I have received thy grace, I shall live thereby: 4 My persecutors will come and not see me: 5 A cloud of darkness shall fall on their eyes; and an air of thick gloom shall darken them: 6 And they shall have no light to see: they may not take hold upon me. 7 Let their counsel become thick darkness, and what they have cunningly devised, let it return upon their own heads: 8 For they have devised a counsel and it did not succeed: 9 For my hope is upon the Lord and I will not fear, and because the Lord is my salvation, I will not fear: and He is a garland on my head and I shall not be moved; even if everything should be shaken, I stand firm; 11 And if all things visible should perish, I shall not die; because the Lord is with me I and I am with Him. Hallelujah.

Ode 6.

1 As the hand moves over the harp, and the strings speak, 2 So speaks in my members the Spirit of the Lord, and I speak by His love. 3 For it destroys what is foreign and everything that is bitter: 4 For thus it was from the beginning and will be to the end, that nothing should be His adversary, and nothing should stand up against Him. 5 The Lord has multiplied the knowledge of Himself, and is zealous that these things should be known, which by His grace have been given to us. 6 And the praise of His name He gave us: our spirits praise His holy Spirit. 7 For there went forth a stream and became a river great and broad; 8 For it flooded and broke up everything and it brought (water) to the Temple; 9 And the restrainers of the children of men were not able to restrain it, nor the arts of those whose business it is to restrain waters; 10 For it spread over the face of the whole earth, and filled everything: and all the thirsty upon earth were given to drink of it; 11 And thirst was relieved and quenched: for from the Most High the draught was given. 12 Blessed then are the ministers of that draught who are entrusted with that water 13 They have assuaged the dry lips, and the will that had fainted they have raised up; 14 And souls that were near departing they have caught back from death: 15 And limbs that had fallen they straightened and set up: 16 They gave strength for their feebleness and light to their eyes: 17 For everyone knew them in the Lord, and they lived by the water of life forever. Hallelujah.

Ode 7.

1 As the impulse of anger against evil, so is the impulse of joy over what is lovely, and brings in of its fruits without restraint: 2 My joy is the Lord and my impulse is toward Him: this path of mine is excellent: 3 For I have a helper, the Lord. 4 He hath caused me to know Himself, without grudging, by His simplicity: His kindness has humbled His greatness. 5 He became like me, in order that I might receive Him: He was reckoned like myself in order that I might put Him on; 7 And I trembled not when I saw Him: because He was gracious to me: 8 Like my nature He became that I might learn Him and like my form, that I might not turn back from Him: 9 The Father of knowledge is the word of knowledge: 10 He who created wisdom is wiser than His works: 11 And He who created me when yet I was not knew what I should do when I came into being: 12 Wherefore He pitied me in His abundant grace: and granted me to ask from Him and to receive from His sacrifice: 13 Because He it is that is incorrupt, the fulness of the ages and the of them. 14 He hath given Him to be seen of them that are His, in order that they may recognize Him that made them: and that they might not suppose that they came of themselves: 15 For knowledge He hath appointed as its way, hath widened it and extended it; and brought to all perfection; 16 And set over it the traces of His light, and I walked therein from the beginning even to the end. 17 For by Him it was wrought, and He was resting in the Son, and for its salvation He will take hold of everything. 18 And the Most High shall be known in His Saints, to announce to those that have songs of the coming of the Lord: 19 That they may go forth to meet Him, and may sing to Him with joy and with the harp of many tones: 20 The seers shall come before Him

and they shall be seen before Him, 21 And they shall praise the Lord for His love: because He is near and beholdeth. 22 And hatred shall be taken from the earth, and along with jealousy it shall be drowned: 23 For ignorance hath been destroyed, because the knowledge of the Lord hath arrived. 24 They who make songs shall sing the grace of the Lord Most High; 25 And they shall bring their songs, and their heart shall be like the day: and like the excellent beauty of the Lord their pleasant song; 26 And there shall neither be anything that breathes without knowledge nor any that is dumb: 27 For He hath given a mouth to His creation, to open the voice of the mouth towards Him, to praise Him: 28 Confess ye His power, and show forth His grace. Hallelujah.

Ode 8.

1 Open ye, open ye your hearts to the exultation of the Lord: 2 And let your love be multiplied from the heart and even to the lips, 3 To bring forth fruit to the Lord, living [fruit], holy [fruit], and to talk with watchfulness in His light. 4 Rise up, and stand erect, ye who sometime were brought low: 5 Tell forth ye who were in silence, that your mouth hath been opened. 6 Ye, therefore, that were despised be henceforth lifted up, because your righteousness hath been exalted. 7 For the right hand of the Lord is with you: and He is your helper: 8. And peace was prepared for you, before ever your war was. 9. Hear the word of truth, and receive the knowledge of the Most High. 10 Your flesh has not known what I am saying to you: neither have your hearts known what I am showing to you. 11 Keep. my secret, ye who are kept by it. 12 Keep my faith, ye who are kept by it. 13 And understand my knowledge, ye who know me in truth, 14 Love me with affection, ye who love! 15 For I do not turn away my face from them that are mine; 16 For I know them and before they came into being I took knowledge of them, and on their faces I set my seal: 17 I fashioned their members: my own breasts I prepared for them, that they might drink my holy milk and live thereby 18 I took pleasure in them and am not ashamed of them: 19 For my workmanship are they and the strength of my thoughts: 20 Who then shall rise up against my handiwork, or who is there that is not subject to them? 21 I willed and fashioned mind and heart: and they are mine, and by my own right hand I set my elect ones: 22 And my righteousness goeth before them and they shall not be deprived of my name, for it is with them. 23 Ask, and abound and abide in the love of the Lord, 24 And yet beloved ones in the Beloved: those who are kept, in Him that liveth: 25 And they that are saved in Him that was saved; 26 And ye shall be found incorrupt in all ages to the name of your Father. Hallelujah.

Ode 9.

1 Open your ears and I will speak to you. Give me your souls that I may also give you my soul, 2 The word of the Lord and His good pleasures, the holy thought which He has devised concerning his Messiah. 3 For in the will of the Lord is your salvation, and His thought is everlasting life; and your end is immortality. 4 Be enriched in God the Father, and receive the thought of the Most High. 5 Be strong and be redeemed by His

grace. 6 For I announce to you peace, to you His saints; 6 That none of those who hear may fall in war, and that those again who have known Him may not perish, and that those who receive may not be ashamed. 8 An everlasting crown forever is Truth. Blessed are they who set it on their heads: 9 A stone of great price is it; and there have been wars on account of the crown. 10 And righteousness hath taken it and hath given it to you. 11 Put on the crown in the true covenant of the Lord. 12 And all those who have conquered shall be written in His book. 13 For their book is victory which is yours. And she (Victory) sees you before her and wills that you shall be saved. Hallelujah.

Ode 10.

1 The Lord hath directed my mouth by His word: and He hath opened my heart by His light: and He hath caused to dwell in me His deathless life; 2 And gave me that I might speak the fruit peace: 3 To convert the souls of them who are willing to come to Him; and to lead captive a good captivity for freedom. 4 I was strengthened and made mighty and took the world captive; 5 And it became to me for the praise of the Most High, and of God my Father. 6 And the Gentiles were gathered together who were scattered abroad. 7 And I was unpolluted by my love for them, because they confessed me in high places: and the traces of the light were set upon their heart: 8 And they walked in my life and were saved and became my people for ever and ever. Hallelujah.

Ode 11.

1 My heart was cloven and its flower appeared; and grace sprang up in it: and it brought forth fruit to the Lord, 2 For the Most High clave my heart by His Holy Spirit and searched my affection towards Him: and filled me with His love. 3 And His opening of me became my salvation; and I ran in His way in His peace even in the way of truth: 4 from the beginning and even to the end I acquired His knowledge: 5 And I was established upon the rock of truth, where He had set me up: 6 And speaking waters touched my lips from the fountain of the Lord plenteously: 7 And I drank and was inebriated with the living water that doth not die; 8 And my inebriation was not one without knowledge, but I forsook vanity and turned to the Most High my God, 9 And I was enriched by His bounty, and I forsook the folly which is diffused over the earth; and I stripped it off and cast it from me: 10 And the Lord renewed me in His raiment, and possessed me by His light, and from above He gave me rest in incorruption; 11 And I became like the land which blossoms and rejoices in its fruits: 12 And the Lord was like the sun shining on the face of the land; 13 He lightened my eyes and my face received the dew; the pleasant odour of the Lord; 14 And He carried me to His Paradise; where is the abundance of the pleasure, of the Lord; 15 And I worshipped the Lord on account of His glory; and I said, Blessed, O Lord, are they who are planted in thy land and those who have a place in thy Paradise; 16 And they grow by the fruits of the trees. And they have changed from darkness to light. 17 Behold! all thy servants are fair, who do good works, and turn away from wickedness to the pleasantness that is thine: 18 And they have turned back the bitterness of the trees from them, when they

were planted in thy land; 19 And everything became like a relic of thyself, and memorial for ever of thy faithful works. 20 For there is abundant room in thy Paradise, and nothing is useless therein; 21 But everything is filled with fruit; glory be to thee, O God, the delight of Paradise for ever. Hallelujah.

Ode 12.

1 He hath filled me with words of truth; that I may speak the same; 2 And like the flow of waters flows truth from my mouth, and my lips show forth His fruit. 3 And He has caused His knowledge to abound in me, because the mouth of the Lord is the true Word, and the door of His light; 4 And the Most High hath given it to His words, which are the interpreters of His own beauty, and the repeaters of His praise, and the confessors of His counsel and the heralds of His thought and the chasteners of His servants. 5 For the swiftness of the Word is inexpressible, and like its expression is its swiftness and force; 6 And its course knows no limit. Never doth it fail, but it stands sure, and it knows not descent nor the way of it. 7 For as its work is, so is its end: for it is light and the dawning of thought; 8 And by it the worlds talk one to the other; and in the Word there were those that were silent; 9 And from it came love and concord; and they spake one to the other whatever was theirs; and they were penetrated by the Word; 10 And they knew Him who made them, because they were in concord; for the mouth of the Most High spake to them; and His explanation ran by means of it: 11 For the dwelling-place of the Word is man: and its truth is love. 12 Blessed are they who by means thereof have understood everything, and have known the Lord in His truth. Hallelujah.

Ode 13.

1 Behold! the Lord is our mirror: open the eyes and see them in Him: and learn the manner of your face: 2 And tell forth praise to His spirit: and wipe off the filth from your face: and love His holiness, and clothe yourselves therewith: 3 And be without stain at all times before Him. Hallelujah.

Ode 14.

1 As the eyes of a son to his father so are my eyes, O Lord at all times towards thee. 2 For with thee are my consolations and my delight. 3 Turn not away thy mercies from me, O Lord: and take not thy kindness from me. 4 Stretch out to me, O Lord, at all times thy right hand: and be my guide even unto the end, according to thy good pleasure. 5 Let me be well-pleasing before thee, because of thy glory and because of thy name: 6 Let me be preserved from evil, and let thy meekness, O Lord, abide with me, and the fruits of thy love. 7 Teach me the Psalms of thy truth, that I may bring forth fruit in thee: 8 And open to me the harp of thy Holy Spirit, that with all its notes I may praise thee, O Lord. 9 And according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, so thou shalt give to me; and hasten to grant our petitions; and thou art able for all our needs. Hallelujah.

Ode 15.

1 As the sun is the joy to them that seek for its daybreak, so is my joy the Lord; 2 Because He is my Sun and His rays have lifted me up and His light hath dispelled all darkness from my face. In Him I have acquired eyes and have seen His holy day: 4 Ears have become mine and I have heard His truth. 5 The thought of knowledge hath been mine, and I have been delighted through Him. 6 The way of error I have left, and have walked towards Him and have received salvation from Him, without grudging. 7 And according to His bounty He hath given to me and according to His excellent beauty He hath made me. 8 I have put on incorruption through His name: and have put off corruption by His grace. 9 Death hath been destroyed before my face: and Sheol hath been abolished by my word: 10 And there hath gone up deathless life in the Lord's land, 11 And it hath been made known to His faithful ones, and hath been given without stint to all those that trust in Him. Hallelujah.

Ode 16.

1 As the work of the husband man is the ploughshare: and the work of the steersman is the guidance of the ship: 2 So also my work is the Psalm of the Lord: my craft and praises: 3 Because His love hath nourished my heart, and even to my lips His fruits He poured out. 4 For my love is the Lord, and I therefore I will sing unto Him: 5 For I am made strong in His praise, and I have faith in Him. 6 I will open my mouth and His spirit will utter in me the glory of the Lord and His beauty; the work of His hands and the operation of His fingers: 7 The multitude of His mercies and the strength of His word. 8 For the word of the Lord searches out all things, both the invisible and that which reveals His thought; 9 For the eye sees His works and the ear hears His thought; 10 He spread out the earth and He settled the waters in the sea: 11 He measured the heavens and fixed the stars: and He established the creation and set it up: 12 And He rested from His works: 13 And created things run in their courses, and do their works: 14 And they know not how to stand and be idle; and His heavenly hosts are subject to His word. 15 The treasure-chamber of the light is the sun, and the treasury of the darkness is the night: 16 And He made the sun for the day that it may be bright, but night brings darkness over the face of the land; 17 And their alternations one to the other speak the beauty of God: 18 And there is nothing that is without the Lord; for He was before any thing came into being: 19 And the worlds were made by His word, and by the thought of His heart. Glory and honour to His name. Hallelujah.

Ode 17.

1. I was crowned by my God: my crown is living: 2 And I was justified in my Lord: my incorruptible salvation is He. 3 I was loosed from vanity, and I was not condemned: 4 The choking bonds were cut off by her hands: I received the face and the fashion of a new person: and I walked in it and was saved; 5 And the

thought of truth led me on. And I walked after it and did not wander: 6 And all that have seen me were amazed: and I was regarded by them as a strange person: 7 And He who knew and brought me up is the Most High in all His perfection. And He glorified me by His kindness, and raised my thoughts to the height of His truth. 8 And from thence He gave me the way of His precepts and I opened the doors that were closed, 9 And brake in pieces the bars of iron: but my iron melted and dissolved before me; 10 Nothing appeared closed to me: because I was the door of everything. 11 And I went over all my bond men to loose them; that I might not leave any man bound or binding: 12 And I imparted my knowledge without grudging: and my prayer was in my love: 13 And I sowed my fruits in hearts, and transformed them into myself: and they received my blessing and lived; 14 And they were gathered to me and were saved; because they were to me as my own members and I was their head. Glory to thee our head the Lord Messiah. Hallelujah.

Ode 18.

1 My heart was lifted up in the love of the Most High and was enlarged: that I might praise Him for His name's sake. 2 My members were strengthened that they might not fall from His strength. 3 Sicknesses removed from my body, and it stood to the Lord by His will. For His kingdom is true. 4 O Lord, for the sake of them that are deficient do not remove thy word from me! 5 Neither for the sake of their works do thou restrain from me thy perfection! 6 Let not the luminary be conquered by the darkness; nor let truth flee away from falsehood. 7 Thou wilt appoint me to victory; our Salvation is thy right hand. And thou wilt receive men from all quarters. 8 And thou wilt preserve whosoever is held in evils: 9 Thou art my God. Falsehood and death are not in thy mouth: 10 For thy will is perfection; and vanity thou knowest not, 11 Nor does it know thee. 12 And error thou knowest not, 13 Neither does it know thee. 14 And ignorance appeared like a blind man; and like the foam of the sea, 15 And they supposed of that vain thing that it was something great; 16 And they too came in likeness of it and became vain; and those have understood who have known and meditated; 17 And they have not been corrupt in their imagination; for such were in the mind of the Lord; 18 And they mocked at them that were walking in error; 19 And they spake truth from the inspiration which the Most High breathed into them; Praise and great comeliness to His name. Hallelujah.

Ode 19.

1 A cup of milk was offered to me: and I drank it in the sweetness of the delight of the Lord. 2 The Son is the cup and He who was milked is the Father: 3 And the Holy Spirit milked Him: because His breasts were full, and it was necessary for Him that His milk should be sufficiently released; 4 And the Holy Spirit opened His bosom and mingled the milk from the two breasts of the Father and gave the mixture to the world without their knowing: 5 And they who receive in its fulness are the ones on the right hand. 6 The Spirit opened the womb of the Virgin and she received conception and brought forth; and the Virgin became a

Mother with many mercies; 7 And she travailed and brought forth a Son, without incurring pain; 8 And because she was not sufficiently prepared, and she had not sought a midwife (for He brought her to bear) she brought forth, as if she were a man, of her own will; 9 And she brought Him forth openly, and acquired Him with great dignity, 10 And loved Him in His swaddling clothes and guarded Him kindly, and showed Him in Majesty. Hallelujah.

Ode 20.

1 I am a priest of the Lord, and to Him I do priestly service: and to Him I offer the sacrifice of His thought. 2 For His thought is not like the thought of the world nor the thought of the flesh, nor like them that serve carnally. 3 The sacrifice of the Lord is righteousness, and purity of heart and lips. 4 Present your reins before Him blamelessly: and let not thy heart do violence to heart, nor thy soul to soul. 5 Thou shalt not acquire a stranger by the price of thy silver neither shalt thou seek to devour thy neighbour, 6 Neither shalt thou deprive him of the covering of his nakedness. 7 But put on the grace of the Lord without stint; and come into His Paradise and make thee a garland from its tree, 8 And put it on thy head and be glad; and recline on His rest, and glory shall go before thee, 9 And thou shalt receive of His kindness and of His grace; and thou shalt be flourishing in truth in the praise of His holiness. Praise and honour be to His name. Hallelujah.

Ode 21.

1 My arms I lifted up to the Most High, even to the grace of the Lord: because He had cast off my bonds from me: and my Helper had lifted me up to His grace and to His salvation: 2 And I put off darkness and clothed myself with light, 3 And my soul acquired a body free from sorrow or affliction or pains 4 And increasingly helpful to me was the thought of the Lord, and His fellowship in incorruption: 5 And I was lifted up in His light; and I served before Him, 6 And I became near to Him, praising and confessing Him; 7 My heart ran over and was found in my mouth: and it arose upon my lips; and the exultation of the Lord increased on my face, and His praise likewise. Hallelujah.

Ode 22.

1 He who brought me down from on high, also brought me up from the regions below; 2 And He who gathers together the things that are betwixt is He also who cast me down: 3 He who scattered my enemies had existed from ancient and my adversaries: 4 He who gave me authority over bonds that I might loose them; 5 He that overthrew by my hands the dragon with seven heads: and thou hast set me over his roots that I might destroy his seed. 6 Thou wast there and didst help me, and in every place thy name was a rampart to me. 7 Thy right hand destroyed his Wicked poison; and thy hand leveled the way for those who believe in thee. 8 And thou didst choose them from the graves and didst separate them from the dead. 9

Thou didst take dead bones and didst cover them with bodies. 10 They were motionless, and thou didst give them energy for life. 11 Thy way was without corruption and thy face; thou didst bring thy world to corruption: that everything might be dissolved, and then renewed, 12 And that the foundation for everything might be thy rock: and on it thou didst build thy kingdom; and it became the dwelling place of the saints. Hallelujah.

Ode 23.

1. The reference to the sealed document sent by God is one of the great mysteries of the collection. 1 Joy is of the saints! and who shall put it on, but they alone? 2 Grace is of the elect! and who shall receive it except those who trust in it from the beginning? 3 Love is of the elect? And who shall put it on except those who have possessed it from the beginning? 4 Walk ye in the knowledge of the Most High without grudging: to His exultation and to the perfection of His knowledge. 5 And His thought was like a letter; His will descended from on high, and it was sent like an arrow which is violently from the bow: 6 And many hands rushed to the letter to seize it and to take and read it: 7 And it escaped their fingers and they were affrighted at it and at the seal that was upon it. 8 Because it was not permitted to them to loose its seal: for the power that was over the seal was greater than they. 9 But those who saw it went after the letter that they might know where it would alight, and who should read it and who should hear it. 10 But a wheel received it and came over it: 11 And there was with it a sign of the Kingdom and of the Government: 12 And everything which tried to move the wheel it mowed and cut down: 13 And it gathered the multitude of adversaries, and bridged the rivers and crossed over and rooted up many forests and made a broad path. 14 The head went down to the feet for down to the feet ran the wheel, and that which was a sign upon it. 15 The letter was one of command, for there were included in it all districts; 16 And there was seen at its head, the head which was revealed even the Son of Truth from the Most High Father, 17 And He inherited and took possession of everything. And the thought of many was brought to nought. 18 And all the apostates hastened and fled away. And those who persecuted and were enraged became extinct, 19 And the letter was a great volume, which was wholly written by the finger of God: 20 And the name of the Father was on it and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, to rule for ever and ever. Hallelujah.

Ode 24.

1 The Dove fluttered over the Messiah, because He was her head; and she sang over Him and her voice was heard: 2 And the inhabitants were afraid and the sojourners were moved: 3 The birds dropped their wings and all creeping things died in their holes: and the abysses were opened which had been hidden; and they cried to the Lord like women in travail: 4 And no food was given to them, because it did not belong to them; 5 And they sealed up the abysses with the seal of the Lord. And they perished, in the thought those that had existed from ancient times; 6 For they were corrupt from the beginning; and the end of their

corruption was life: 7 And every one of them that was imperfect perished: for it was not possible to give them a word that they might remain: 8 And the Lord destroyed the imaginations of all them that had not the truth with them. 9 For they who in their hearts were lifted up were deficient in wisdom and so they were rejected, because the truth was not with them. 10 For the Lord disclosed His way and spread abroad His grace: and those who understood it, know His holiness. Hallelujah.

Ode 25.

1. I was rescued from my bonds and unto thee, my God, I fled: 2 For thou art the right hand of my Salvation and my helper. 3 Thou hast restrained those that rise up against me, 4 And I shall see him no more: because thy face was with me, which saved me by thy grace. 5 But I was despised and rejected in the eyes of many: and I was in their eyes like lead, 6 And strength was mine from thyself and help. 7 Thou didst set me a lamp at my right hand and at my left: and in me there shall be nothing that is not bright: 8 And I was clothed with the covering of thy Spirit, and thou didst remove from me my raiment of skin; 9 For thy right hand lifted me up and removed sickness from me: 10 And I became mighty in the truth, and holy by thy righteousness; and all my adversaries were afraid of me; 11 And I became admirable by the name of the Lord, and I was justified by His gentleness, and His rest is for ever and ever. Hallelujah.

Ode 26.

1. I poured out praise to the Lord, for I am His: 2 And I will speak His holy song for my heart is with Him. 3 For His harp is in my hands, and the Odes of His rest shall not be silent. 4 I will cry unto him from my whole heart: I will praise and exalt Him with all my members. 5 For from the east and even to the west is His praise: 6 And from the south and even to the north is the confession of Him: 7 And from the top of the hills to their utmost bound is His perfection. 8 Who can write the Psalms of the Lord, or who read them? 9 Or who can train his soul for life that his soul may be saved, 10 Or who can rest on the Most High, so that with His mouth he may speak? 11 Who is able to interpret the wonders of the Lord? 12 For he who could interpret would be dissolved and would become that which is interpreted. 13 For it suffices to know and to rest: for in rest the singers stand, 14 Like a river which has an abundant fountain, and flows to the help of them that seek it. Hallelujah.

Ode 27.

1. I stretched out my hands and sanctified my Lord: 2 For the extension of my hands is His sign: 3 And my expansion is the upright tree [or cross].

Ode 28.

1 As the wings of doves over their nestlings; and the mouth of their nestlings towards their mouths, 2 So also are the wings of the Spirit over my heart: 3 My heart is delighted and exults: like the babe who exults in the womb of his mother: 4 I believed; therefore I was at rest; for faithful is He in whom I have believed: 5 He has richly blessed me and my head is with Him: and the sword shall not divide me from Him, nor the scimitar; 6 For I am ready before destruction comes; and I have been set on His immortal pinions: 7 And He showed me His sign: forth and given me to drink, and from that life is the spirit within me and it cannot die, for it lives. 8 They who saw me marveled at me, because I was persecuted, and they supposed that I was swallowed up: for I seemed to them as one of the lost; 9 And my oppression became my salvation; and I was their reprobation because there was no seal in me; 10 Because I did good to every man I was hated, 11 And they came round me like mad dogs, who ignorantly attack their masters, 12 For their thought is corrupt and their understanding perverted. 13 But I was carrying water in my right hand and their bitterness I endured by my sweetness: 14 And I did not perish, for I was not their brother nor was my birth like theirs. 15 And they sought for my death and did not find it: for I was older than the memorial of them; 16 And vainly did they make attack upon me and those who, without reward, came after me: 17 They sought to destroy the memorial of him who was before them. 18 For the thought of the Most High cannot be anticipated; and His heart is superior to all wisdom. Hallelujah.

Ode 29.

1. The Lord is my hope: in Him I shall not be confounded. 2 For according to His praise He made me, and according to His goodness even so He gave unto me: 3 And according to His mercies He exalted me: and according to His excellent beauty He set me on high: 4 And brought me up out of the depths of Sheol: and from the mouth of death He drew me: 5 And thou didst lay my enemies low and He justified me by His grace. 6 For I believed in the Lord's Messiah: and it appeared to me that He is the Lord; 7 And He showed him His sign: and He led, me by His light, and gave me the rod of His power 8 That I might subdue the imaginations of the peoples; and the power of the men of might to bring them low: 9 To make war by His word, and to take victory by His power. 10 And the Lord overthrew my enemy by His word: and he became like the stubble which the wind carries away; 11 And I gave praise to the Most High because He exalted me His servant and the son of His handmaid. Hallelujah.

Ode 30.

1 Fill ye waters for yourselves from the living fountain, of the Lord, for it is opened to you: 2 And come all ye thirsty and take the draught; and rest by the fountain of the Lord. 3 For fair it is and pure and gives rest to the soul, Much more pleasant are its waters than honey; 4 And the honeycomb of bees is not to be

compared with it. 5 For it flows forth from the lips of the Lord and from the heart of the Lord is its name. 6 And it came infinitely and invisibly: and until it was set in the midst they did not know it: 7 Blessed are they who have drunk therefrom and have found rest thereby. Hallelujah.

Ode 31.

1 The abysses were dissolved before the Lord: and darkness was destroyed by His appearance: 2 Error went astray and perished at His hand: and folly found no path to walk in, and was submerged by the truth of the Lord. 3 He opened His mouth and spake grace and joy: and He spake a new song of praise to His name: 4 And He lifted up His voice to the Most High and offered the sons that were with Him. 5 And His face was justified, for thus His holy Father had given to Him. 6 Come forth, ye that have been afflicted and receive joy, and possess your souls by His grace; and take to you immortal life. 7 And they made me a debtor when I rose up, me who had been a debtor: and they divided my spoil, though nothing was due to them. 8 But I endured and held my peace and was silent as if not moved by them. 9 But I stood unshaken like a firm rock which is beaten by the waves and endures. 10 An I bore their bitterness for humility's sake: 11 In order, that I might redeem my people, and inherit it and that I might not make void my promises to the fathers to whom I promised the salvation of their seed. Hallelujah.

Ode 32.

1 To the blessed there is joy from their hearts, and light from Him that dwells in them: 2 And words from the Truth, who was self-originate: for He is strengthened by the holy power of the Most High: and He is unperturbed for ever and ever. Hallelujah.

Ode 33.

1 Again Grace ran and forsook corruption, and came down in Him to bring it to nought; 2 And He destroyed perdition from before Him, and devastated all its order; 3 And He stood on a lofty summit and uttered His voice from one end of the earth to the other: 4 And drew to Him all those who obeyed Him; and there did not appear as it were an evil person. 5 But there stood a perfect virgin who was proclaiming and calling and saying, 6 O ye sons of men, return ye, and ye daughters of men, come ye: 7 And forsake the ways of that corruption and draw near unto me, and I will enter into you, and will bring you forth from perdition, 8 And make you wise in the ways of truth: that you be not destroyed nor perish: 9 Hear ye me and be redeemed. For the grace of God I am telling among you: and by my means you shall be redeemed and become blessed. 10 I am your judge; and they who have put me on shall not be injured: but they shall possess the new world that is incorrupt: 11 My chosen ones walk in me, and my ways I will make known to them that seek me, and I will make them trust in my name. Hallelujah.

Ode 34.

1 No way is hard where there is a simple heart. 2 Nor is there any wound where the thoughts are upright: 3 Nor is there any storm in the depth of the illuminated thought: 4 Where one is surrounded on every side by beauty, there is nothing that is divided. 5 The likeness of what is below is that which is above; for everything is above: what is below is nothing but the imagination of those that are without knowledge. 6 Grace has been revealed for your salvation. Believe and live and be saved. Hallelujah.

Ode 35.

1 The dew of the Lord in quietness He distilled upon me: 2 And the cloud of peace He caused to rise over my head, which guarded me continually; 3 It was to me for salvation: everything was shaken and they were affrighted; 4 And there came forth from them a smoke and a judgment; and I was keeping quiet in the order of the Lord: 5 More than shelter was He to me and more than foundation. 6 And I was carried like a child by mother: and He gave me milk, the dew of the Lord: 7 And I grew great by His bounty, and rested in His perfection, 8 And I spread out my hands in the lifting up of my soul: and I was made right with the Most High and I was redeemed with Him. Hallelujah.

Ode 36.

1 I rested in the Spirit of the Lord: and the Spirit raised me on high: 2 And made me stand on my feet in the height of the Lord, before His perfection and His glory, while I was praising Him by the composition of His songs. 3 The Spirit brought me forth before the face of the Lord: and, although a son of man, I was named the Illuminate, the Son of God: 4 While I praised amongst the praising ones, and great was I amongst the mighty ones. 5 For according to the greatness of the Most High, so He made me: and like His own newness He renewed me; and He anointed me from His own perfection: 6 And I became one of His Neighbours; and my mouth was opened; like a cloud of dew; 7 And my heart poured out as it were a gushing stream of righteousness, 8 And my access to Him was in peace; and I was established by the Spirit of His government. Hallelujah.

Ode 37.

1 I stretched out my hands to my Lord: and to the Most High I raised my voice: 2 And I spake with the lips of my heart; and He heard me when my voice reached Him: 3 His answer came to me and gave me the fruits of my labours; 4 And it gave me rest by the grace of the Lord. Hallelujah.

Ode 38.

1 I went up to the light of truth as if into a chariot: 2 And the Truth took me and led me: and carried me across pits and gulleys; and from the rocks and the waves it preserved me: 3 And it became to me a haven of Salvation: and set me on the arms of immortal life: 4 And it went with me and made me rest, and suffered

me not to wander because it was the Truth. 5 And I ran no risk, because I walked with Him; 5 And I did not make an error 4 anything because I obeyed the Truth. 7 For Error flees away from it and meets it not: but the Truth proceeds in the right path, and 8 What ever I did not know, it made clear to me, all the poisons of error, and the plagues of death which they think to be sweetness: 9 And I saw the destroyer of destruction, when the bride who is corrupted is adorned: and the bridegroom who corrupts and is corrupted; 10 And I asked the Truth, 'Who are these?'; and He said to me, 'This is the deceiver and the error: 11 And they are alike in the beloved and in his bride: and they lead astray and corrupt the whole world: 12 And they invite many to the banquet, 13 And give them to drink of the wine of their intoxication, and remove their wisdom and knowledge, and so they make them without intelligence; 14 And then they leave them; and then these go about like madmen corrupting: seeing that they are with out heart, nor do they seek for it.' 15 And I was made wise so as not to fall into the hands of the deceiver; and I congratulated myself because the Truth went with me, 16 And I was established and lived and was redeemed, 17 And my foundations were laid on the hand of the Lord: because He established me. 18 For He set the root and watered it and fixed it and blessed it; and its fruits are for ever. 19 It struck deep and sprung up and spread out and was full and enlarged; 20 And the Lord alone was glorified in His planting and in His husbandry: by His care and by the blessing of His lips, 21 By the beautiful planting of His right hand: and by the discovery of His planting, and by the thought of His mind. Hallelujah.

Ode 39.

Great rivers are the power of the Lord: 2 And they carry headlong those who despise Him: and entangle their paths: 3 And they sweep away their fords, and catch their bodies and destroy their lives. 4 For they are more swift than lightning and more rapid, and those who cross them in faith are not moved; 5 And those who walk on them without blemish shall not be afraid. 6 For the sign in them is the Lord; and the sign is the way of those who cross in the name of the Lord; 7 Put on, therefore the name of the Most High, and know Him and you shall cross without danger, for the rivers will be subject to you. 8 The Lord has bridged them by His word; and He walked and crossed them on foot: 9 And His footsteps stand firm on the water, and are not injured; they are as firm as a tree that is truly set up. 10 And the waves were lifted up on this side and on that, but the footsteps of our Lord Messiah stand firm and are not obliterated and are not defaced. 11 And a way has been appointed for those who cross after Him and for those who adhere to the course of faith in Him and worship His name. Hallelujah.

Ode 40.

1 As the honey distills from the comb of the bees, 2 And the milk flows from the woman that loves her children; 3 So also is my hope on Thee, my God. 4 As the fountain gushes out its water. 5 So my heart gushes out the praise of the Lord and my lips utter praise to Him, and my tongue His psalms, 6 And my face exults with His gladness and my spirit exults in His love and my soul shines in Him: 7 And reverence

confides in Him; and redemption in Him stands assured: 8 And His inheritance is immortal life, and those who participate in it are incorrupt. Hallelujah.

Ode 41.

1 All the Lord's children will praise Him, and will collect the truth of His faith. 2 And His children shall be known to Him. Therefore we will sing in His love: 3 We live in the Lord by His grace: and life we receive in His Messiah: 4 For a great day has shined upon us: and marvellous is He who has given us of His glory. 5 Let us, therefore all of us unite together in the name of the Lord, and let us honour Him in His goodness, 6 And let our faces shine in His light: and let our hearts meditate in His love by night and by day. 7 Let us exult with the joy of the Lord. 8 All those will be astonished that see me, For from another race am I; 9 For the Father of truth remembered me: He who possessed me from the beginning: 10 For His bounty begat me, and the thought of His heart: 11 And His Word is with us in all our way; 12 The Saviour who makes alive and does not reject our souls; 13 The man who was humbled, and exalted by His own righteousness, 14 The Son of the Most High appeared in the perfection of His Father; 15 And light dawned from the Word that was beforetime in Him;. 16 The Messiah is truly one; and He was known before the foundation of the world, 17 That He might save souls forever by the truth of His name: a new song arises from those who love Him. Hallelujah.

Ode 42.

1 I stretched out my hands and approached my Lord: 2 For the stretching of my hands is His sign: 2 My expansion is the outspread tree which was set up on the way of the Righteous One. 4 And I became of no account to those who did not take hold of me and I shall be with those who love me. 5 All my persecutors are dead; and they sought after me who hoped in me, because I was alive: 6 And I rose up and am with them; and I will speak by their mouths. 7 For they have despised those who persecuted them; 8 And I lifted up over them the yoke of my love; 9 Like the arm of the bridegroom over the bride, 10 So was my yoke over those that know me: 11 And as the couch that is spread in the house of the bridegroom and bride, 12 So is my love over those that believe in me. 13 And I was not rejected though I was reckoned to be so. 14 I did not perish, though they devised it against me. 13 Sheol saw me and was made miserable: 16 Death cast me up and many along with me. 17 I had gall and bitterness, and I went down with him to the utmost of his depth: 18 And the feet and the head he let go, for they were not able to endure my face: 19 And I made a congregation of living men amongst his dead men, and I spake with them by living lips: 20 Because my word shall not be void: 21 And those who had died ran towards me: and they cried and said, Son of God, have pity on us, and do with us according to thy kindness. 22 And bring us out from the bonds of darkness: and open to us the door by which we shall come out to thee. 23 For we see that our death has not touched thee. 24 Let us also be redeemed with thee: for thou art our Redeemer. 25 And I heard their voice; and my name I sealed upon their heads: 26 For they are free men and they are mine. Hallelujah.

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE MANDAEAN CONNECTION

A WILDERNESS PREPARATION

The Nazarene movement commenced not with Jesus but with John. Unique in all the world, this was a religious movement whose founder from its inception said that he was merely a placeholder for someone else whose identity he didn't know. As he said:

I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing by water.
(John 1:31)

As we see above, John's primary purpose in baptism was that the Messiah would be revealed. (And that should be ours.) John's consistent message was this:

"Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2)

Long before he made this pronouncement, John first underwent a protracted period of preparation, for:

As soon as he had come of age, he went into the desert and dwelled there until the Holy Ghost commanded him to go and preach the coming of Jesus Christ. . . . He went into the desert until he was thirty years old.
(Nazarene Gospel Narrative, chapters 2, 7)

It is reasonable to infer from this report that John spent no less than twelve years and maybe as many as eighteen years in the wilderness, this depending on how the expression "had come of age" is interpreted.

Since an Essene community is thought to have been situated on the Dead Sea (Khirbet Qumran which was excavated 1951-1954), it's widely assumed that John, if not fully associated with this sect, must at least have been in contact with it and on favorable terms. Indeed, so strong runs this assumption that it is not unheard of to hear him identified as "John the Essene." Yet somehow none of this quite computes. The Essenes, because of their rigorous purification laws, lived a highly structured existence, necessitating their creating a closed society isolated not only from Gentiles but, as well, closed from fellow Jews. Also, they were highly nationalistic; as well, they believed in predestination. Left unexplained is how a free-wheeling John the Baptist would have accepted, or been accepted by, a rigid sect whose devotees were all conformed, not only as to doctrine but down to dress and manners, for:

St. John ate nothing but wild garlic and bryony and his clothes were of camel's hair, and he had a thong about his waist.
(Nazarene Gospel Narrative, chapter 7)

Found amongst the Dead Sea scrolls is a document called the *Manual of Discipline* or, alternatively, *The Rule of Yahad* ["Yahad" being the Hebrew word for community.] This Rule specifies that:

A man shall not speak a word which is not to the liking of his superiors [and] any man who has a word to say to the superiors, the man shall stand up on his feet and say: I have a word to say to the superiors: if they tell him, he will speak.

Can anyone imagine John the Baptist submitting to such dictates even for one minute? I can't. But the manual goes on to say with regard to those who were submissive to this cult's commands:

By the spirit of uprightness and humility all his sins will be atoned, and by the submission of his soul to all the ordinances of God, his flesh will be purified for the sprinkling with water for impurity.

As for those who decline to associate with this sect, the *Manual of Discipline* enjoins:

He cannot be cleansed by mere ceremonies of atonement nor cleansed by waters of ablution, nor sanctified by immersion in lakes or rivers, nor purified by any bath.

One would almost think that it was to thwart John the Baptist that they came up with some of the language they did but why would they want to do that? Because they saw themselves, not John, as being the authorized forerunner of the Messiah:

And when those will form themselves a *Yahad* in Israel according to the rules, they shall be separated from the midst of the sessions of the men of evil to go to the wilderness to prepare there His way as it is written: in the wilderness prepare the way, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Does that mean that John's only option by default was that of living as an isolated hermit? Not necessarily, for others than Essenes existed in the Judean wilderness with whom he might have fellowshipped. At the very time of John's wilderness sojourn, a little-mentioned group, not even Jewish, resided along Jordan's banks. Could this group, called "Mandaean" (an Aramaic word meaning "knowledge"), have had contact with John? If so, is it possible that this group played a crucial role in the development of the nascent Nazarene movement? Daily baptizers, of a morning, the turbaned, white-robed, Mandaean holy men awaited the rising sun; then, when it burst forth, they descended into the water.

Who then were these Mandaeans? Buddhists? Zoroastrians? Ganges River bathers? some mixture of these? or something else altogether? At this late date it's hard to say. Anthropologists think they originated in Persia. As did the Jews of Jesus' day, they spoke the *lingua franca* of the Middle East, that being Aramaic. To this day this sect continues to exist in southern Iraq on the Euphrates, eking out a modest living as simple farmers, while practicing their age-old rites. Their ancient Scriptures, the *Ginza Rba*, that is, in the *Book of Souls*, contains surprising parallels with *John's Gospel* and the *Gospel of Thomas*, particularly in distinguishing light from darkness; also, references to living water, the true vine, and so on.

Evidently the Mandaeans and John the Baptist hit it off quite well for there is a highly fa-

avorable recollection of John in the Mandaean's Scriptures. One can hardly imagine that any of this went down too well with Pharisaical traditionalists who thought ill of outsiders associating with Jews or Jews associating with outsiders.

Who, then, were the Mandaeans? They were wise men from the East. Does this not ring a bell? Wise men from the East who knew how to read the stars, who were among the first to herald the newborn Messiah.

Let us not lightly write off the Mandaeans' holy men as heathen idolaters for their sense of the sacred had been awakened in the solitude of the wilderness, where stark, natural beauty, was incorporated into their vision quest, affording them a remarkable degree of spiritual clarity. Camped out under star-studded skies such as only desert nights can provide, their days were spent under the blazing desert sun. Thus did they live with a heightened sense of dichotomy. Cool, life-giving waters, warming fire, aerial breezes, the cyclical passage of seasons, time's effect on sun-bleached bones, clouds, moon, sky, rain, soil, crawling things that go snap in the night, all became an invitation to them to move on up to an ethereal abode of expanded consciousness beyond the reach of earthly language. In the freshness of the new dawn, they baptized in the Jordan River. Thus did the Creator become known to them through the experience of his Creation, for Mother Nature is the commonly knowable aspect of God and becomes the experience of Divinity.

The *Ginza Rba*, chap. 21:

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>In the name of the Life!</i> | <i>Not he whom my soul desireth.</i> |
| <i>I rose up from the Jordan</i> | <i>The sun of which ye spake,</i> |
| <i>And I met a group of souls,</i> | <i>Riseth early, setteth at dusk.</i> |
| <i>A group of souls I met,</i> | <i>The sun of which ye spake,</i> |
| <i>who surrounded our father Shitil</i> | <i>the sun is vanity and cometh to an end.</i> |
| <i>Saying to him</i> | <i>Sun cometh to an end and becometh vanity</i> |
| <i>"By thy life, our father Shitil,</i> | <i>And his worshippers come to an end and are vanity."</i> |
| <i>Go with us to the Jordan!"</i> | <i>I rose up from the Jordan</i> |
| <i>"If I go with you to the Jordan</i> | <i>And a group of souls I met,</i> |
| <i>Who will be your witness?"</i> | <i>A group I met of souls</i> |
| <i>"Lo, Sun hath risen above us;</i> | <i>Who surrounded our father Shitil,</i> |
| <i>He will be our witness!"</i> | <i>Saying to him,</i> |
| <i>"It is not he whom I seek,</i> | <i>"By thy life, our father Shitil,</i> |

Go with us to the Jordan!"
"If I go with you to the Jordan,
Who will be your witness?"
"Lo, Moon who shineth above us,
He will be our witness!"
"It is not he whom I seek,
Not he whom my soul desireth.
The moon, of whom ye spake,
Riseth at dusk and setteth at dawn.
The moon of which ye spake,
the moon is vanity and cometh to an end
And his worshippers come to an end and are vanity."

I rose up from the Jordan
And a group of souls I met,
A group I met of souls
Who surrounded our father Shitil,
Saying to him,
"By thy life, our father Shitil,
Go with us to the Jordan!"
"If I go with you to the Jordan
Who will be your witness?"
"Lo, there burns a fire.
It will bear witness for us."
"That is not what I seek,
Not that which my soul desireth.
the fire of which ye spake
Once a day needs a firebrand.
The fire of which ye spake –
Fire, is vanity and cometh to naught
And its worshipers come to naught and are vanity."
I rose up from the Jordan
And a group of souls I met,
I met a group of souls

Who surrounded our father Shitil,
Saying to him,
"By thy life, our father Shitil,
Go with us to the Jordan!"
"If I go with you to the Jordan,
Who will be your witness?"
"The Jordan and its two banks
Will bear witness for us;
Pihta, kushta and mambuha
Will bear witness for us;
Habshaba, (Sunday) and Kana-d-Zidqa
Will bear witness for us;
The sanctuary in which we worship
Will bear witness for us;
The alms that is in our laps
Will bear witness for us;
And our father who is our head
Will bear witness for us."
"This is that which I seek,
This is that which my soul desireth!
When I rise to the House of Life
And travel to the Everlasting Abode,
When Life questioneth me, (these) witnesses
Will come and will bear witness.
Witnesses of the truth are they,
Sure is all that they say!"
And Life is victorious!

John the Baptist got along fine with the Mandaeans but not so well with the Pharisees:

Then came the religious folk called Pharisees, for to be baptized by him. And Saint John told them that they should seek repentance, and that they should not put their trust in their kinship connection with those who sometime past were well pleasing to God: for God might make good men of those also who have no such hope before them. And God would not delay having each man done by him according As he deserved. And then asked these folk what they should do, and how might they be saved. And John answered them that they should give alms to the poor for the love of God. *(Nazarene Gospel Narrative, chap 7)*

Being already God's covenant people in the ethnic, historical sense, the Jewish leadership took umbrage with John for demanding an additional ceremonial act, baptism, which they viewed as an assault on the adequacy of their corporate identity as the sons of Abraham. The Pharisees, too, practiced baptism, but not of Jews; rather, they traversed sea and land to baptize proselytes who went under the water as Gentiles and emerged as Israelites. For them to admit that they, too, were sinners in need of getting right with God, would be to admit that being Jewish in and of itself was not enough. Anticipating their objection, John said to the Sadducees and Pharisees who came to him in the wilderness:

"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits fit for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father: for I say to you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." *(Matthew 3:7-9)*

John's message of personal repentance represented a radical departure from the religious assumptions of the day, an innovation which those in leadership positions were not about to countenance. Yet John knew whereof he spoke in warning the Pharisees "not to put their trust in their kinship connection," for that was the problem, their holier-than-thou, Chosen People's Complex.

Completely misunderstanding who John the Baptist was, or Jesus, or Paul, the narrow-minded evangelical churches go at the world today, like the Pharisees of old, with maniacal hatred, missing entirely the integrity of the Mandaeans' or anyone else's quest for truth.

T H E E X P E R I E N C E O F B A P T I S M

Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan and were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins. *(Matthew :5-6)*

John's baptism left an indelible impression on those who submitted to it. I refer to its lyrical aspect. Conceivably he could have conducted his ceremony in the pool of Siloah in Jerusalem but, instead, he stayed in the wilderness where the people came to him, not he to

them. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they did so by crossing dry shod over the Jordan River. It was the last leg on their 40-year journey. Fast-forwarding 1500 years in time, travel was still not easy. The road from Jerusalem down to Jericho was fraught with peril, for highwaymen were out plying their trade, that of luring pilgrims over for quick and easy seizure. Other privations awaited in the wilderness, yet the folk came, if only to leave their footprints in the sand, the pilgrimage itself being part of the experience, a time to reflect, a time to take stock. The river itself had its headwaters in Lebanon nearly two miles up and more than a hundred miles away. On Jordan's banks where John ministered were reeds and willows and birds of every description. Its waters spoke of healing, cleansing, refreshment, a good place to wash away ones sins and be reconciled with God.

As it is written: John baptized in "Bethabara beyond Jordan" (*John 1:28*). "A compound word, *beth* means "the place" and *abara* means "crossing over." Just such a place is to be found in the river bend east of Jericho where the otherwise swift-flowing river broadened out and became shallow and one could hop from rock to rock so as to ford the river.

There on Jordan's far side, John pitched camp at the base of *Tel Mar Elias*, i.e., Elijah's Hill, a naturally-occurring mound from whence Elijah ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot.

Jesus asked rhetorically, "What went ye out to the wilderness to see, a man clothed in soft raiment?" Answering his own question, Jesus said:

"For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist. . . . if you will receive it, this is Elijah, which was for to come." (*Matthew 11:8, Luke 7:28, Matthew 11:14*)

Years before Gabriel said to Zechariah, John's father, regarding his son's mission:

"He [John] shall go before him [Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
(*Luke 1:17*)

To better understand who John the Baptist was, let us recall to mind who Elijah the Tishbite was, that he was the greatest of Israel's non-writing prophets, also the most honored. Such was his natural vitality that he ran before King Ahab's chariot from Carmel to Jezreel, some 25 miles. Later, when fleeing from Ahab's wife, Jezebel, he traversed close to a hundred miles. After that he went to Mt. Sinai, an even greater distance.

Such was his power with God that when Elijah prayed for the rain to stop, the heavens closed and it ceased to rain three years and six months. And when he prayed again, the heavens opened and the rains fell and the earth returned to its former fruitfulness.

In the spirit and power of Elijah John the Baptist called on the nation to repent. In the

spirit and power of Elijah who stood up to the priests of Baal, John stoutly opposed the Pharisees and Sadducees. In the spirit and power of Elijah, John proclaimed Jesus, saying:

“I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.” (*John 1:34*)

It all came together on the 3rd day of creation when *mayim* (water) fell from the *shamayim* (heavens) to become a *mikva*, that is to say, a collected body of water. Thus did Earth receive its first baptism:

And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering of waters (*mikvah mayim*) he called Seas: and God saw that it was good. (*Genesis 1:9-10*)

Because we are so accustomed to the Greek-derived word “baptism,” we neglect to look for its Hebrew equivalent. That would be “*t’vilah*,” meaning immersion. Also, as we have already seen, one can say “*mikvah*” which is the general Hebraic term for a natural body of water, but, in a more specialized sense, it stands for a baptismal font.

Our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all *baptized* unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. (*I Corinthians 10: 1-2*)

In addressing those who spoke Greek, Paul wrote Greek. But in the original account in *Exodus*, naturally one does not find a Greek word but a Hebrew word, that word being *t’vilah*. Thus Pharaoh's army was “cast into the sea [i.e., immersed], while later in the same verse the agency of immersion, that is, a body of water, the word *mikvah*, is employed:

Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he [YHWH] cast [*t’vilah*] into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned [*mikvah*] in the Red Sea.” (*Exodus 15:4*)

Afterward, when God gave the law from Mt Sinai, the Israelites underwent a second baptism, in other words, a second *t’vilah*:

YHWH said to Moses, “Go to the people and set them apart today and tomorrow, and let them wash [*t’vilah*] their clothes, and be ready by the third day: for on the third day Yahveh will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.” And Moses went down from the mount to the people, and set apart the people, and they washed [*t’vilah*] their clothes. (*Exodus 19:10,11,14*)

THE WATERS OF PURIFICATION

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (*Hebrews 10:22*)

When studying Baptism’s origins, it is not with the idea of re-instituting that which does not now apply; rather, to understand what does apply:

"He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean. Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of YHWH. That person shall be cut off from Israel. He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness is still on him."
(Numbers 19:11-13)

The purpose of ceremonial washing was to prepare the people to come into the Divine presence. Understandably the people wanted, not only to be clean but to feel clean. They not only wanted to feel clean, they wanted assurance from the priests that they were clean.

Water symbolizes life. Nevertheless, that which was life for some, the escaping Israelites, became death for others, the pursuing Egyptians. But then, the same water as flows in the river Jordan as living-giving water, becomes stagnant water in the Dead Sea. Also to be observed is that those who survived the first baptism crossing the Red Sea may not have lived to see the second baptism at Sinai, for many of them had succumbed to the cult of the golden calf and were struck down and perished. As Paul informs us, the Israelites had consumed spiritual food and spiritual drink; nonetheless, they fell in the wilderness.

Not a magical amulet, baptism is a milestone along the Way of Life which in and of itself guarantees nothing, yet comforts and instructs. Thus today we can no more rest our confidence on having been baptized, than could the fleeing Israelites. We can no more afford to become complacent on account of it than they could. How then does baptism benefit? Holy Writ shows us how, just as it did John the Baptist, which is why he needed no Essene, no Mandaean, no Pharisee to teach him about baptism, nor did he derive his ceremony from theirs, for just as the rain fell from the heavens above and immersed the earth below, so also was the knowledge of God poured forth upon John. With Heaven above and the Spirit within and with Holy Writ before him, John had an abundance of material to work with, as well, the power to utilize it, and we too if only we will access that which is ours.

As one of priestly lineage, of Aaronic descent, John, from that connection alone, would have been familiar with the symbolic use of water in Temple purification rites. For instance, in the outer court of King Solomon's Temple there was a huge brazen sea. An imposing structure, it consisted of a basin measuring ten cubits across and five cubits deep which basin was carried aloft on the backs of twelve outward-facing oxen each of which represented one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Three oxen faced to the north, three to the south, three eastward, three westward. The volume of this gathered body of water was the equivalent of 2000 baths or 150 *mikvas*. Priests who were to serve before the altar were required to be immersed, preparatory to their being considered ceremonially clean.

(See *I Kings 7:23-27*, *II Chronicles 4:2-6* for a fuller description.)

Between pure and impure, between clean and unclean, between holy and profane, lies a body of water, a *mikva*. No priest was allowed to approach a holy God to serve Him in the holy place, especially in the inner sanctum, the holy of holies, without first achieving ritual cleanliness through immersion. With *t'vilah* (immersion) and *mikva* (the gathered water), purification, restoration, sanctification, ordination, initiation, consecration, were achieved.

As well, a psychological component existed – a washing of the spirit, that being an affirmation that things are right between God and man. Before a priest would be immersed in a ceremonial bath, he took a bath. The ceremony was never about physical cleanliness.

On each side of the molten sea were 5 lavers, or ten in all, each Paul advanced linguistically when he told Titus (*Titus 3:5*) that we are saved “through the washing [laver] of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” As well, Jesus said to Peter: “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” (*John 13:8*)

G O D O U R M I K V A H

O YHVH, the hope [*mikvah*] of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

(*Jeremiah 17:13*)

There is a perfectly good Hebrew word for hope and it is not *mikvah*, rather, *tikvah*. Is it possible that certain translators, not comfortable with the prophet Jeremiah’s metaphorical way of speaking, decided to fix things up just a bit, or why else would they not translate that which was before their very eyes? True, without *mikvah* there is no *tikvah*. Be that as it may, God is our *mikvah*. God is our baptism. With that thought in mind, let us ponder Jesus’ words to one who came to him by night, to Nicodemus, a leader among the Pharisees, and a member of the Sanhedrin:

“Truly, truly, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

(*John 3:3*)

Provocatively, perhaps facetiously, Nicodemus asked Jesus:

“How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

(*John 3:4*)

Nicodemus seems to imply by his response that amniotic fluid might be the type of water to which Jesus was referring. Many theologians in our day also credit physical water, albeit baptismal, not amniotic. If we have in mind, however, that Jesus is our baptism, our *mikva*,

then I believe we will draw a conclusion truer to his words' intent, not only here but elsewhere about "living water," that he is speaking metaphorically:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14)

And when Jesus commissioned his apostles "to go into all the world and to baptize all nations" (*Matthew 28:19*), it may be that he had more in view than water baptism for, as the verse continues, the underlying Greek can well be translated "baptizing them *into* the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," meaning that our salvation is to be immersed in them, Father, Son, and Spirit, that they are our *mikvah*, our baptism. It is not "he that is baptized" who shall be saved, rather, "he that *believeth* and is baptized" who "shall be saved." (See *Mark 16:16*.)

"The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?" (*Luke 20:4*)

The Temple authorities wanted Jesus to tell them by what authority he acted but immediately Jesus turned the tables on them by asking them about the origin of John's baptism. An adroit move, Jesus tapped into a hidden reservoir of support from untold thousands of Jerusalemites and Judaeans who had been to the wilderness and had witnessed John's power and integrity and had been baptized by him. John's baptism was no abstract, theological construct to them but a personal commitment to ready themselves to receive their long-sought Messiah. The Temple authorities clammed up, knowing from biblical history what had befallen the priests of Baal who had opposed Elijah, that all 850 of them were executed in the space of a single day; privately, they voiced concern that the people might stone them.

At Jordan three witnesses were given: the epiphany of the Father,

"Thou art my Son, in thee I am well pleased";

the observable descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove; and finally John's testimony:

"This is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

It was the Spirit's anointing of Jesus that made him the Messiah, the "Anointed One," for the word "anoint" in Hebrew is our word "Messiah." In Greek the word for anoint is *Christos*, and obviously that is where we get our word "Christ." But where did it all began? On Jordan's bank. We, however, do not have to go to the physical Jordan River, for Jordan has come to us in Christ, making his baptism ours in him.

THE THERAPUTAE

The semianchoritic character of the Therapeutae community, the renunciation of property, the solitude during the six days of the week and the gathering together on Saturday for the common prayer and the common meal, the severe fasting, the keeping alive of the memory of God, the continuous prayers, the meditation and study of Holy Scripture were also practices of the Christian anchorites of the Alexandrian desert."

(Scouteris, The Therapeutae of Philo and the Monks as Therapeutae according to Pseudo-Dionysius)

On a personal note, it all came together for me one evening in November, 2007, when I read Philo of Alexandria's "The Life of Contemplation," an essay about a semi-monastic sect called "Theraputae" with whom Philo was personally acquainted. Sitting bolt upright I exclaimed, "Eureka! they're Nazarenes! the Theraputae are Nazarenes!" I wasn't the only one to so react. The Church preserved much of Philo's voluminous work based on the understanding that the Theraputae were indeed Christians. This was Eusebius' idea and he was the foremost Church historian of his day. Jerome even included Philo amongst the Church Fathers! Their's was an understandable misunderstanding in that the Theraputae were so very like the Nazarenes and so like early Christian monastics that they could be confused as one and the same. In consequence, much of Philo's voluminous writings were preserved for posterity by the Church. One of history's little ironies, however, is that Philo's Jewish brethren did not bother to preserve his writings and have paid him scant attention over the centuries, this despite his having been one of Judaism's premier philosophers, but Christians, confused over the sequence of events, entertained the mistaken notion that Philo wrote about the Therapute after 30 AD when in fact he wrote in the 20's. Philo wrote:

Then, because of their anxious desire for an immortal and blessed existence, thinking that their mortal life has already come to an end, they leave their possessions to their sons or daughters, or perhaps to other relations, giving them up their inheritance with willing cheerfulness; and those who know no relations give their property to their companions or friends, . . . (para. 13)

And they depart, not to another city as those do who entreat to be purchased from those who at present possess them, . . . but they take up their abode outside of walls, or gardens, or solitary lands, seeking for a desert place, not because of any ill-natured misanthropy to which they have learnt to devote themselves, but because of the associations with people of wholly dissimilar dispositions to which they would otherwise be compelled, and which they know to be unprofitable and mischievous. Now this class of persons may be met with in many places, for it was fitting that both Greece and the country of the barbarians should partake of whatever is perfectly good; and there is the greatest number of such men in Egypt, in every one of the districts, or nomes as they are called, and especially around Alexandria; and from all quarters those who are the best of these therapeutae proceed on their pilgrimage to some most suitable place as if it were their country, which is beyond the Mareotic lake,

lying in a somewhat level plain a little raised above the rest, being suitable for their purpose by reason of its safety and also of the fine temperature of the air. (para 18-22)

And in every house a sacred shrine exists called the holy place, and chapel in which they retire alone to perform all the mysteries of a holy life, bringing in nothing, neither food, nor drink, nor anything else to sustain the physical body, but they study there the laws and the sacred oracles delivered by God's holy prophets, and hymns, and psalms, and like matters by reason of which knowledge and piety are increased and brought to perfection. Therefore they always retain an imperishable recollection of God, so that not even in their dreams is any other object ever presented to their eyes except the beauty of the divine virtues and of the divine powers. . . . Twice every day, at morning and at evening they pray; when the sun is rising entreating God that the happiness of the coming day may be real happiness, so that their minds may be filled with heavenly light, and when the sun is setting they pray that their soul, being entirely lightened and relieved of the burden of the outward senses, and of the appropriate object of these outward senses, may be able to trace out truth existing in its own consistory and council chamber. (para. 25-27)

And the interval between dawn to dusk they devote entirely to meditation and practice of virtue, for they take up holy writ and investigate the allegories of their ancestral philosophy, since they view the literal meaning as symbols of some hidden inner meaning of nature, intended to be conveyed in those figurative expressions. (para. 28)

And these expounders of the law, having first of all laid down temperance as foundational for the soul, proceed to build up other virtues on this foundation, and none of them partake of food or drink before sunset, adjudging philosophical work as one worthy of the light, but bodily needs as suitable only to darkness, on which account they appropriate the day to the one occupation, and a brief portion of the night to the other; . . . (para. 34)

And they do not employ slave labor, viewing the possession of servants of slaves as something entirely contrary to nature, for nature has created all men free, . . . (para. 70)

And the banquet table, too, has nothing on it which has blood, but there is bread for food and salt for seasoning, to which also hyssop is sometimes added as an extra sauce for the sake of the fastidious, for just as right reason commands priests to offer up sober sacrifices, so also these men are commanded to live soberly, for wine is the medicine of folly, and costly seasonings and sauces excite desire, the most insatiable of all beasts. (para. 73-74)

[their president] . . . picks out some passage in the sacred scriptures, or explains some difficulty proposed by another, doing so without any thoughts of display on his own part, for he is not aiming at reputation for cleverness and eloquence, but is only desirous to see some points more accurately, and is content when he has thus seen them himself not to bear ill will to others, who, even if they did not perceive the truth with equal acuteness, have at all events an equal desire of learning. (para. 75)

And these explanations of the sacred scriptures are delivered by mystic expressions in allegories, for the whole of the law appears to these men to resemble a living being, and its express commandments seem to be the body, and the invisible meaning concealed under and lying beneath the plain words resembles the soul, in which the rational soul begins most excellently to contemplate what belongs to itself, as in a mirror, beholding in these very words the exceeding beauty of the sentiments, and unfolding and explaining the symbols, and bringing the secret meaning naked to the light to all who are able by the light of a slight intimation to perceive what is unseen by what is visible. (para. 78)

. . . and then some one rising up sings a hymn which has been made in honour of God, either such as he has composed himself, or some ancient one of some old poet, for they have left behind them many poems and songs in trimetre iambics, and in psalms of thanks giving and in hymns, and songs at the time of libation, and at the altar, and in regular order, and in choruses, admirably measured out in various and well diversified strophes. (para. 80)

And after the feast they celebrate the sacred festival the whole night through. . . . two choruses are formed, one of men and the other of women, singing hymns composed in honour of God in many metres and tunes, at one time all singing together, and at another moving their hands and dancing in corresponding harmony, and uttering in an inspired manner songs of thanksgiving, . . . (para. 83-84)

. . . therefore, being intoxicated all night till the morning with this beautiful intoxication, without feeling their heads heavy or closing their eyes for sleep, but being even more awake than when they came to the feast, . . . [and] when they saw the sun rising they raised their hands to heaven, imploring tranquillity and truth, and acuteness of understanding. And after their prayers they each retired to their own separate abodes, with the intention of again practicing the usual philosophy to which they had been wont to devote themselves. (para. 89)

This then is what I have to say of those who are called therapeutae, who have devoted themselves to the contemplation of nature, and who have lived in it and in the soul alone, being citizens of heaven and of the world, and very acceptable to the Father and Creator of the universe because of their virtue, which has procured them his love as their most appropriate reward, which far surpasses all the gifts of fortune, and conducts them to the very summit and perfection of happiness. (para. 90)

How like the *Book of Acts* where the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem had “all things in common” and met “daily in the Temple” for praise, prayer, and contemplation! Obliquely, Philo makes reference to the “writings of men of old who were the founders [of the Therapeutae],” yet without identifying who they were or from whence they hailed. Possibly he didn’t know. Fortunately, sources both ancient and modern exist to whom we can turn to assist us in making the identification. According to Zacharias P. Thundy, a linguist, the word “Thera-

putae,” is derived from the Buddhist term “*Thera-vada*,” a form of Buddhism currently practiced throughout Southeast Asia. A Hellenization of Pali, “*theraputa*’ means literally, “son of the elder.” But how did Buddhism get to Egypt? For one, in 326 BC, Alexander the Great pushed the borders of Macedonia to the banks of the Indus River. Thereafter a constant contact with the Indian subcontinent was maintained by Alexander’s Hellenistic Seleucid successors. In about 240 BC, India’s King Ashoka (who ruled from 273-232 BC), famous for his wise and beneficent edicts, sent Buddhist missionaries to Antioch in Syria, to Macedonia, and to Alexandria and to Iraq (Magga). So reads his 13th edict which he had engraved on stone pillars, which pillars exist to this day.

One might reasonably ask: when and how could Jesus, a Jew, have been exposed to Buddhism? Since the *New Testament* gives us little clue about the 17 years, the so-called “hidden years” when Jesus was between the age of 13 and 29, ample room for speculation exists. As one legend has it, Jesus spent those years in Tibet. Another legend of a persistent nature and backed by interesting detail, is that Joseph of Arimathea, Jesus’ uncle, being a tin merchant, had conferred on him by Roman authorities the title '*Nobilis Decurio*' or Minister of Mines. It is further alleged that on one occasion Joseph took with him his little nephew, Jesus, on a buying expedition to Cornwall, England. If such a trip had occurred, who is to say what influences Jesus might have been exposed to?

But if Jesus did not go to Tibet or meet with Druids in England, perhaps India came to him in the form of a Buddhist missionary. After all, Nazareth, being just four miles from Sepphoris, the Galilee’s most cosmopolitan Greek city, could have been a point of contact. Another possibility, when Joseph and Mary scooped up their infant son and fled from Herod, they may well have gone to Egypt’s closest, big city, Alexandria. Possibly there on the Nile’s diluvial plain that they found succor from a semi-monastic group called “*Theraputae*.”

Further evidence of continuing contact between East and West comes from the Greek geographer Strabo. Writing in the 20s of the 1st century AD, he observed that there were 120 ships preparing to set sail from a Red Sea harbor for India. But Buddhist missionaries didn’t stop at the Red Sea, or with the Levant, or the Mediterranean litoral, for as Origen (ca. 185 - ca. 254 AD) wrote:

The island (Britain) has long been predisposed to it [Christianity] through the doctrines of the Druids and Buddhists, who had already inculcated the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead. (*Commentary on Ezekiel*)

It is acknowledged, historical fact that the Nazarene Faith quickly spread from the Holy Land southwest to Egypt and from there further south to Ethiopia; northward to Syria and eastward to Persia and beyond, even as far as India; also to Greece and Italy, even reaching

as far as England and this before the close of the 1st century. Few, however, seem to have a clue how this amazing spread could have occurred. It was not Paul's doing. He was active in Asia minor and Greece. Nor was it a phenomenon that occurred within the boundaries of the Roman Empire. The thesis advanced here is that in God's providence, the ground had been prepared ahead of time by Mandeans and Buddhists and Socrates and many other righteous Gentile seekers of Truth, Wisdom, Light.

NEVER THE TWAIN SHALL MEET OR DID THEY ALREADY MEET?

"East is east, and west is west, and never the twain shall meet"

Or so goes Rudyard Kipling's famous poem. However, long before his time and, indeed, long before there were Christians or Christian missionaries, Buddhist monks (*dharmabhanakas*) were traveling the Silk and Spice Routes, spreading abroad the Buddha's *dharmā*, i.e., his teaching. With reference to this, renowned orientalist and Sanskrit scholar, Frederick Max Muller (1823-1900), the same scholar as had introduced many of India's ancient religious texts to the West, wrote:

Between the language of the Buddha and his disciples, and the language of Christ and his apostles, there are strange coincidences. Even some Buddhist legends and parables sound as if taken from the New Testament, though we know that many of them existed before the beginning of the Christian era.

We may go back even farther into antiquity, and still find strange coincidences between the legends of India and the legends of the West, without as yet being able to say how they traveled, whether from East to West, or from West to East. That at the time of Solomon there was a channel of communication open between India and Syria and Palestine is established beyond doubt, I believe, by certain Sanskrit words which occur in the Bible as names of articles of export from Ophir, articles such as ivory, apes, peacocks, and sandalwood, which, taken together, could not have been exported from any country but India.

If I do find in certain Buddhist works doctrines identically the same as in Christianity, so far from being frightened, I feel delighted, for surely truth is not the less true because it is believed by the majority of the human race. I believe we have made some progress during the last thirty years. I still remember the time when all heathen religions were looked upon as the work of the devil. We know now that they are stages in a growth, and in a growth not determined by an accidental environment only, but by an original purpose, a purpose to be realized in the history of the human race as a whole. Even missionaries have begun to approach the heathen in a new and better spirit. They look for what may safely be preserved in the religion of their pupils, and on that common ground they try to erect a purer faith and a better worship, instead of attempting to destroy the sacred foundations of religion, which, I believe, exist, or at least, existed, in every human heart. (See Max Muller's book: *India: What it can teach us*)

On coming to the Orient, Christian missionaries for the first time made contact with Buddhist Scripture. Astounded by uncanny coincidences with Christian teachings, they exclaimed: "Buddhism is the Christianity of the East!" Inasmuch as Buddhism long predated Christianity, they might more aptly have exclaimed that Christianity is the Buddhism of the West.

D H A R M A A N D D I D A C H E

There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages has had different names; it is deep and inward, confined to no form of religion nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. (John Woolman)

Jesus: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (*Luke 6:31*)

Buddha: "Consider others as yourself." (*Dhammapada 10:1*)

Jesus: "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." (*Mat. 25:45*)

Buddha: "If you do not tend one another, then who is there to tend to you? Whoever would tend me, he should tend the sick." (*Vinaya, Mahavagga 8:26:3*)

Buddha: The light of the sun and the moon illuminates the whole world, both him who does well and him who does ill, both him who stands high and him who stands low." (*Sadharmapundarika Sutra 5*)

Jesus: "Your father in heaven makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous." (*Matthew 5:45*)

Buddha: "Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so, cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings. Let your thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world." (*Metta Sutta*)

Jesus: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friend." (*John 15:12-13*)

Buddha: "The avaricious do not go to heaven, the foolish do not extol charity. The wise one, however, rejoicing in charity, becomes thereby happy in the beyond." (*Dhammapada 13:11*)

Jesus: "If you wish to be perfect, go sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." (*Matthew 19:21*)

Buddha: "Do not look at the faults of others, or what others have done or not done; observe what you yourself have done and have not done." (*Dhammapada 4:7*)

Jesus: "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? (*Luke 6:41*)

Buddha: "Just as rain penetrates a badly-covered house, so passion enters a dispersed mind. Just as rain does not penetrate a well-covered house, so too does passion not enter a well-developed mind." (*Dhammapada 1:13-14*)

Jesus: "Everyone who hears my words and does them is like a man who built a house on rock. The rain fell, a torrent broke against the house, and it did not fall, for it had a rock foundation.

Buddha: "Hatreds do not ever cease in this world by hating, but by love: this is an eternal truth. Overcome anger by love, overcome evil by good. Overcome the miser by giving, overcome the liar by truth." (*Dhammapada 1.5, 17.3*)

Jesus: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. From anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them back." (*Luke 6:27-30*)

Buddha: "If anyone should give you a blow with his hand, with a stick, or with a knife, you should abandon all desires and utter no evil words." (*Majjhima Nikaya 21:6*)

Jesus: "If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also." (*Luke 6:29*)

Buddha: "The faults of others are more easily seen than one's own, but seeing one's own failings is difficult." (*Dhammapada*)

Jesus: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? (*Matthew 7:3*)

Jesus came to fulfill the Law and Buddha, though not born under the Law, also fulfilled the Law for, through enlightenment, he did by nature the things the Law requires. By the same token, whether Jesus was personally acquainted with Buddha's Four Noble Truths, or not, or consciously applied them or not, yet, he fulfilled them all. As for Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, it appears to be essentially Buddhist in nature. The commandment "love thy neighbor as thyself," is *Leviticus 19:18* but until Jesus came along, it was Buddha who did the most to flesh out this commandment with specifics. Said the Buddha:

"Hostility is never conquered by hostility in this world;
hostility is conquered by love. That is the eternal law."

While it was his place to minister to the lost sheep of Israel, Jesus was not exclusively the Jewish messiah but the Universal messiah. And while biblical Judaism is rich in revelation, Buddhism is rich in contemplation. It is not inherently a conflict to bring the two together,

Jewish prophecy and Buddhist sensibility. The combination is simply divine, for Gentiles, too, were looking for the Messiah and in doing so, they often demonstrated a greater sensitivity for spiritual things than the Temple/synagogue authorities ever did.

“All that we are is the result of what we have thought. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.” (Buddha)

“For to the pure everything is pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but their mind and conscience is defiled.” (Titus 1:15)

THE STORY OF THE BUDDHA

1. The hero of our story is Prince Siddhartha, the Buddha-to-be, who lived more than 2,500 years ago. His father was the Rajah of the Sakya clan, King Suddhodana, and his mother was Queen Maha Maya. They lived in India, in a city called Kapilavatthu, in the foothills of the Himalayas.
2. Siddhartha's parents belonged to the Indian warrior caste. They lived in a great palace in their capital city of Kapilavatthu, beneath the majestic mountains of the Himalayas. Queen Maha Maya was beautiful, intelligent and good. King Suddhodana was honoured and respected because he ruled well. Both of them were admired and loved by the people they ruled.
3. After many years, Queen Maha Maya became pregnant. She and her husband were very happy about it. On the full moon day in the month of May, she gave birth to a boy in Lumbini Park, while she was on her way to see her parents. Five days after the prince's birth the king asked five wise men to select a name for his son. They named him Siddhartha. This name means "the one whose wishes will be fulfilled".
4. There had been much rejoicing at the birth of the prince, but two days after he was named, Queen Maha Maya died. Everybody was shocked and felt very sad. But the saddest person was, of course, her husband King Suddhodana. He was worried, too, because his wise advisers had predicted that if the prince saw someone old, someone sick, a dead person, and a monk, he would want to leave the palace and become a monk himself, instead of being a prince.
5. The Queen's sister Prajapati Gotami took care of the baby prince with as much love as if he were her own son. Prince Siddhartha was a healthy and happy boy. He liked to learn and found it easy to study, and was the cleverest in his class and the best at games. He was always considerate to others and was popular among his friends.
6. The prince was kind to everyone. He was gentle with his horse and other animals. Because he was a prince his life was very easy, and he could have chosen to ignore the problems of others. But he felt sympathy for others. He

knew that all creatures, including people, animals and all other living beings, like to be happy and don't like suffering and pain.

7. Siddhartha always took care not to do anything harmful to any creature. He liked to help others. For example, one day the prince saw one of the town boys beating a snake with a stick. He immediately stopped the boy, and told him not to hurt the snake.

8. One day, Siddhartha was playing with his friends in the palace garden. One of the boys was his cousin, Prince Devadatta. While Siddhartha was gentle and kind, Devadatta was by nature cruel and liked to kill other creatures. While they were playing, Devadatta shot a swan with his bow and arrow. It was badly wounded. But Siddhartha took care of the swan until its wounds healed. When the swan was well again, he let it go free.

9. Siddhartha liked to watch what was happening and think about different things. One afternoon his father took him to the annual Ploughing Festival. The king started the ceremony by driving the first pair of beautifully decorated bullocks. Siddhartha sat down under a rose-apple tree and watched everyone. He noticed that while people were happily enjoying themselves, the bullocks had to work terribly hard and plough the field. They did not look happy at all.

10. Then Siddhartha noticed various other creatures around him. He saw a lizard eating ants. But soon a snake came, caught the lizard, and ate it. Then, suddenly a bird came down from the sky, picked up the snake and so it was eaten also. Siddhartha realised that all these creatures might think that they were happy for a while, but that they ended up suffering.

11. Siddhartha thought deeply about what he saw around him. He learned that although he was happy, there was a lot of suffering in life. So he felt deep sympathy for all creatures. When the king and the maids noticed that the prince was not among the crowd, they went to look for him. They were surprised to find the prince sitting with legs crossed, in deep meditation.

12. The king did not want his son to think about deep things in life too much, because he remembered that the wise men had predicted that his son might one day want to leave the palace and become a monk. So, in order to distract him, the king built Siddhartha a beautiful palace with a lovely garden to play in. But this did not stop the prince from thinking about the suffering and unhappiness that he noticed around him.

13. Siddhartha grew up to be a handsome young man of great strength. He was now of an age to get married. To stop Siddhartha from thinking of leaving home, King Suddhodana arranged for him to be married to his own beautiful cousin, Princess Yasodhara.

14. Following the ancient tradition, Siddhartha had to prove how brave he was to be worthy of Yasodhara. In the presence of her parents he was asked to tame a wild horse. Siddhartha tamed the horse not by beating it, as some suitors might, but by talking to the horse to calm it and stroking it gently. Yasodhara wanted to marry the prince, and no one else. They were married in a great ceremony. Both were only sixteen years old.

15. To stop the prince from thinking about unhappiness or leaving home, King Suddhodana built a pleasure palace for Siddhartha and Yasodhara. Dancers and singers were asked to entertain them, and only healthy and young people were allowed into the palace and the palace garden. The king did not want Siddhartha to know that everybody gets sick, grows old and will die. But in spite of the king's efforts, the prince was not happy. He wanted to know what life was like for people who lived outside the palace walls.

16. Finally, the king allowed Siddhartha to go on short visits to the nearby towns. He went with his attendant, Channa. On his first visit Siddhartha saw a white haired, wrinkled man dressed in rags. Such a sight surprised him, as he had never seen anyone old before. Channa explained to him that this man was old and that everyone will be old one day. Siddhartha felt frightened by that and asked Channa to take him back home. At night, he could not sleep and he kept on thinking about old age.

17. Although Siddhartha felt frightened by the vision of getting old, he wanted to see more of the world outside. On his next visit, he saw a man lying on the ground and moaning. Out of compassion, he rushed over to the man. Channa warned him that the man was sick and that everyone, even noble people like Siddhartha or the king could get sick.

18. On the third visit, Siddhartha and Channa saw four men carrying another man on a stretcher. Channa told Siddhartha that the man was dead and was going to be cremated. He also said that no one can escape death, and told the prince that everyone will die one day. When they returned to the palace, Siddhartha kept on thinking about what he had seen. Finally, he made a strong decision to find a way out of the suffering of old age, sickness and death.

19. Some time later, while the prince was riding in the garden, he saw a man in a yellow robe. He noticed that the man looked very peaceful and happy. Channa explained to him that the man was a monk. The monk had left his family and given up his desire for pleasures to search for freedom from worldly suffering. The prince felt inspired by the sight of the monk and began to want to leave home to search for freedom in the same way. That day, his wife gave birth to a lovely baby boy. Although he loved the boy, Siddhartha could not rejoice because he wanted to become a monk. He realised that now it would be more difficult for him to leave home.

20. From the day when he decided that he wanted to leave the palace the prince lost all interest in watching the dancing girls and other such pleasures. He kept on thinking instead about how to free himself and others from sickness, ageing and death. Finally, he decided he had to leave the palace and his family and become a homeless monk, in order to understand life and what caused suffering.

21. One night, when everyone in the palace was asleep, Siddhartha asked Channa to prepare his horse, Kanthaka. In the meantime he went into the room where Yasodhara and their newborn boy Rahula slept. He was filled with loving-kindness towards them and promised himself that he would come back to see them. But first he had to understand why all creatures suffer, and find out how they could escape from suffering.

22. In the silence of the night, Prince Siddhartha mounted Kanthaka. Accompanied by Channa, he left the palace and the city of Kapilavatthu. They stopped at a river some distance from the city and the prince took off his expensive dress and put on the robes of a monk. Then he told Channa to take the horse back to the palace. At first, both Channa and Kanthaka refused to go back, but Siddhartha insisted that he had to go on alone. With tears rolling down his face, Kanthaka watched as the prince walked out of sight.

23. So, at the age of 29, Siddhartha began the homeless life of a monk. From Kapilavatthu, he walked south to the city of Rajagaha, the capital of the Magadha country. The king of this country was named Bimbisara. The morning after Siddhartha arrived, he went to the city and obtained his meal for the day by begging.

24. After his meal, Siddhartha decided to go to the mountains where many hermits (people who live alone) and sages (wise people) lived. On the way there, he came across a flock of sheep. Shepherds were driving the herd to Rajagaha to be sacrificed in a fire ceremony. One little lamb was injured. Out of compassion Siddhartha picked up the lamb and followed the shepherds back to the city.

25. In the city, the fire was burning on the altar, and King Bimbisara and a group of priests were chanting hymns. They all worshipped fire. When the leader of the fire-worshippers lifted his sword to kill the first sheep, Siddhartha quickly stopped him. He asked the king not to let the worshippers destroy the lives of the poor animals. Then Siddhartha turned to the worshippers and told them: "Life is extremely precious. All living creatures want to live, just like people."

26. He continued: "If people expect mercy, they should show mercy. By the law of cause and effect (karma), those who kill others will, in turn, be killed. If we expect happiness in the future, we must not harm any creatures. Whoever sows suffering will reap the same fruits." This speech completely changed the king's mind, and the minds of the fire-worshippers. He stopped the killing ceremony and invited Siddhartha to stay and teach his people. But Siddhartha declined, as he had not yet found the truth he was seeking.

27. After Siddhartha left Rajagaha, he went to see a sage (wise person) named Alara Kalama. He stayed with the sage and studied diligently. Soon, he knew as much as his teacher. But although he had learned how to make his mind very calm, he still did not know the way to freedom from all suffering. So he thanked Alara Kalama and left to find another teacher.

28. Siddhartha then studied with a sage named Uddaka Ramaputta. He learned how to make his mind very still and empty of all thoughts and emotions. But he still did not understand the mystery of life and death, and did not find the complete freedom from suffering that he sought. Again, Siddhartha thanked his teacher and left. But, this time, he decided to find the ultimate truth by his own wisdom and effort.

29. In those days, there were many wandering monks who belonged to various cults. They had left their families to become ascetics. They believed that by starving themselves or tormenting their bodies (asceticism) they would be reborn in heaven. Their belief was that the more they suffered in this life, the more pleasure they would receive in the future. So some ate extremely little food, some stood on one foot for a long time, and others slept on boards covered with sharp nails.

30. Siddhartha also tried to become an ascetic. He thought that if he practiced hard enough, he would become enlightened (that is, know the way and be able to overcome suffering). So he found a place at Uruvela near a river and a village, where he could wash and obtain his daily food. There were five other men living there, and they became his companions. Like Siddhartha, they also practiced asceticism. Their names were Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji.

31. Siddhartha practiced various forms of asceticism for six years. He reduced his eating more and more until he ate nothing at all. He became extremely thin, but still he did not want to give up such practice. One day, while meditating alone he fainted, exhausted by the ascetic practices.

32. At that time, a shepherd boy with a goat walked by. He saw Siddhartha and realised that without any food Siddhartha would die very soon. So he quickly fed him some warm goat's milk. Soon Siddhartha regained consciousness and began to feel better. He realised that without the boy's help, he would have died before attaining enlightenment.

33. From then on, Siddhartha began eating normally. Soon his health was completely restored. It was clear to him now that asceticism was not the way to enlightenment. However, his five friends continued with their ascetic practices. They thought that Siddhartha had become greedy and so they left him. One morning, a girl named Sujata offered Siddhartha some delicious milk-rice porridge and said to him: "May you be successful in obtaining your wishes!"

34. On the same day, Siddhartha accepted an offering of straw from a straw-peddler, made a seat from it and sat down to meditate under a large bodhi tree, facing east. He made a promise to himself: "I will not give up until I achieve my goal, until I find a way of freedom from suffering, for myself and all people."

35. As he meditated, Siddhartha let go of all outside disturbances, and memories of pleasures from the past. He let go of all worldly thoughts and turned his mind to finding the ultimate truth about life. He asked himself: "How does suffering start? How can one be free from suffering?" At first many distracting images appeared in his mind. But finally his mind became very calm, like a pond of still water. In the calm of deep meditation, Siddhartha concentrated on how his own life had started.

36. First, Siddhartha remembered his previous lives. Next, he saw how beings are reborn according to the law of cause and effect, or karma. He saw that good deeds lead the way, from suffering to peace. Then he saw that the origin of suffering is being greedy, which arises from thinking that we are more important than everybody else. Finally, he became completely free from thinking in a way that caused him any suffering. This freedom is called nirvana. So, at the age of 35, Siddhartha became the Buddha, the Supreme Enlightened One.

37. After attaining the supreme enlightenment, the Buddha remained sitting in the happiness of nirvana for several days. Later, a Brahmin, an upper caste man, came by the tree where the Buddha sat. He greeted the Buddha and asked: "What qualities does one have to have to be a true Brahmin and a noble person?" The Buddha replied: "The true Brahmin must give up all evil. He must give up all conceit, try to understanding all things and practice pure living. This way he will deserve to be called a Brahmin."

38. After a long rest, the Buddha began to plan what to do in the future. He thought: "Although the Dharma (teaching) is deep and will be difficult for most people to understand, there are some who only have a little craving. Such people may be able to accept the Dharma. They are like the lotuses that extend their stalks from the bottom of the pond up in the air, to receive sunshine. So I should not keep this radiant truth a secret. I should make it known everywhere, so that all people can benefit from it."

39. Then the Buddha thought: "Who should I teach first? The person must be interested in the Dharma and quick to understand it." First he thought of his old teachers, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta. But they had both died. Then he remembered his five ascetic friends, Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji. When he found out that they were living at Sarnath, near Varanasi, he left soon afterwards to find them.

40. At Sarnath, when the five ascetics saw the Buddha coming, they decided not even to greet him or talk to him. They still thought that he was greedy and had given up his search for truth. But as he got closer, they realised that

he was surrounded by a brilliant light and looked very noble. They were so astonished that they forgot about their previous decision. They greeted him, offered him some water and quickly prepared a seat.

41. After sitting down, the Buddha told them: "Monks! I have realised the truth of the end of suffering (nirvana), and the way to end suffering. If you learn and practice it, you will soon become enlightened. You must take responsibility for working to understand these things." At first, the five monks doubted his words and asked him many questions. But finally they began to trust him and wanted to hear his teaching. And so the Buddha gave his first teaching to the five monks at Sarnath.

42. The Buddha taught them the Four Noble Truths. The first Noble Truth was about the fact that suffering exists. The second was about the cause of suffering; the third was that it is possible to end suffering; and the fourth explained the path to be followed if you want to end suffering. During this first teaching, Kondanna understood everything and attained the first stage of enlightenment. Then he asked the Buddha to ordain him as a monk. Soon the other four also joined the Buddha's order. All five monks practiced diligently and with the help of the Buddha they soon became fully enlightened ones, or arahants.

43. The Buddha continued teaching at the Deer Park in Sarnath. After hearing the teachings Yasa, a young man from a wealthy family, and his best friends left home and became monks. Later, fifty young men from high-caste families also left their homes and joined the community of monks to spend their lives practising the Buddha's teachings.

44. When the Buddha had sixty monks as his disciples (students) he held a meeting. He told them: "Go and spread the Dharma to other places, to give more people the chance of gaining freedom from suffering. Spread the Dharma so that human lives may be purified and brightened. There are people ready for the Dharma. They will be able to understand it. I myself will go to teach at Uruvela."

45. After the Buddha sent out his sixty-arahant disciples for the first time, he travelled to Magadha in the southeast, to Uruvela village. After hearing the Buddha's teaching, many men left their homes and became monks. Later, more than 1,000 of them became fully enlightened arahants.

46. Then the Buddha took his arahant disciples to Rajagaha. He went to teach and enlighten King Bimbisara and his people, as he had previously promised the king he would. After hearing the Dharma, King Bimbisara took refuge (look for protection and help) in the Buddha and became his follower. Later, he donated Veluvana Park as a residence for the Buddha and the monks. Veluvana became the first Buddhist monastery.

47. One morning, on his way from Veluvana to beg for his daily alms food, the Buddha came across a young man named Sigala. The man was bowing to the east, south, west and north. Then he saluted the sky above and the earth below. He finished by scattering seeds in these six directions. The Buddha asked him why he did such things. Sigala replied that his father, before he died, asked him to do this ritual daily, to protect himself from any evil that might happen to him.

48. The Buddha then explained to Sigala what his father had really meant. By asking him to bow in the six directions, his father really wanted him to remember, respect and be kind to all living beings in all directions. By doing this he would create good karma and he would be protected. Finally, the Buddha instructed Sigala not to kill, steal, be unfaithful to his wife, lie or take intoxicants. These are the training rules known as the Five Precepts.

49. During the Buddha's stay near Rajagaha, there was a well-known teacher of one of the traditional schools. He had about two hundred students, and among them were Upatissa and Kolita. These two students were best friends. They wanted to learn more about life and death than their teacher had been able to teach them. So they agreed with each other that they would search for the highest knowledge, and as soon as one of them found it, he would share it with the other.

50. One morning Upatissa was walking towards Rajagaha. On the way there he met a monk who looked very peaceful and seemed to be free from all fear. This monk was the arahant Assaji, one of the five former ascetics. Upatissa went towards him and said: "Venerable master! Who is your teacher and what did he teach you?" The monk replied with a smile: "My teacher is a great sage of the Sakya clan. He is the Buddha, and I practice according to his teaching."

51. Then Upatissa asked Venerable Assaji: "What is the teaching of the Buddha?" Assaji replied: "I will tell you the meaning of the Buddha's teaching very briefly. The Buddha said that there is a cause for everything and he also taught how things decay." Upatissa was so clever that when he heard this he understood that whatever comes into existence will also decay, and he attained the first stage of enlightenment. Then he thanked Assaji, asked him where he might find the Buddha, and left.

52. After this encounter Upatissa was filled with happiness, and went straight to see Kolita. He told Kolita what the noble monk Assaji had told him. Instantly, Kolita also understood the Buddha's teaching and attained the first stage of enlightenment. Finally, the two friends went to see the Buddha. They asked him to accept them as monks and the Buddha agreed. After practicing diligently, they both attained arahantship. Later, they became the Buddha's chief disciples and were known under their monks' names as Sariputta and Moggallana.

53. When the Buddha was living at Rajagaha, a conference was held at Veluvana on the full moon of the third month of the year. One thousand two hundred and fifty monks attended the meeting. They were all arahants and all of them arrived on the same day.

54. On this special occasion, the Buddha told his disciples to practice and teach following the same basic principles. The essence of this teaching was: do not do anything bad, do good and purify your mind.

55. When King Suddhodana learned that his son had become a Buddha and was staying at Rajagaha, he sent an officer to invite the Buddha to Kapilavatthu. The Buddha promised to visit his family. So one day the Buddha took his disciples to Kapilavatthu. They arrived in the evening and stayed in a garden outside the city. The next morning, the Buddha and his disciples went to the city to beg for alms food.

56. When the king found out that the prince was begging for food, he felt very angry and disappointed. He asked his driver to take him straight to the Buddha. When he saw the Buddha, he spoke to him in an angry way: "My son! Today you have done a most disgraceful thing to the royal family and me. Have your ancestors ever done such a thing? Have they ever accepted food like beggars?"

57. The Buddha spoke calmly to his angry father: "Father! I am not following the custom of my worldly ancestors. I am following the tradition of the Buddhas of the past. All past Buddhas begged for food, to inspire people to follow the teachings. Then the Buddha explained some basics of the Dharma to the king. Then King Suddhodana calmed down and asked the Buddha and his disciples to accept food at the palace.

58. In the palace, after finishing a delicious meal, the Buddha taught the Dharma to the king, his relatives, and other people. Then he took two of his senior disciples to see Yasodhara, the cousin he had married at the age of sixteen, and Rahula, his son. Yasodhara was very sad. The Buddha could see past lives, and he compassionately told her about the good actions she had done in the past and explained the Dharma to her.

59. Later Rahula, who was seven years old, was ordained by the Buddha and became the first novice in the Buddhist tradition. (A novice is someone who is in training but has not yet taken the full vows of a monk or nun.) Besides Rahula, the Buddha also converted his step-brother Nanda and several princes of the Sakya clan. Among them were his cousins Ananda and Devadatta.

60. Many years after he left Kapilavatthu, the Buddha went back to visit his father King Suddhodana, who was very ill. The king was very happy to see the Buddha again and felt better. But because he was very old, he could no longer resist the illness, and two or three days later he passed away. Everyone felt very sad.

61. When King Suddhodana died, Lady Prajapati Gotami felt very sad. She and several other women decided to leave the worldly life and join the Buddha's group of monks to practice the Dharma. So she led the women to see the Buddha. She asked him to accept them as nuns, but the Buddha refused. The women felt very disappointed and cried. But they did not give up their wish to become nuns.

62. When the Buddha was residing at the Mahavaha Monastery, Lady Prajapati Gotami and her group of women went to the monastery and told Ananda what had happened. Ananda felt compassion for them and promised to help them. He went to see the Buddha to ask him to be merciful and let the women join the monastic order. But the Buddha refused again.

63. Ananda then said: "I beg you, Lord Buddha, please do a favour to Prajapati Gotami and accept her and other women as nuns, because she has done you great favours in the past. She brought you up as her own son." So finally the Buddha said: "Alright, if they are willing to follow the monastic rules I give them, they can leave home and become nuns and practise the Dharma."

64. After leaving the Buddha, Ananda went to tell Lady Prajapati Gotami the good news. All the women were very happy and promised to observe the eight rules of conduct that the Buddha gave them. Ananda then went back to the Buddha and told him that the women were happy to follow the rules. So Prajapati Gotami became the first Buddhist nun.

65. Of all the disciples of the Buddha, his cousin Ananda, was the most devoted to him. So the Buddha selected him to be his close attendant. Another of the Buddha's cousins also became a monk. His name was Devadatta. But he was envious of the Buddha and competed with him, trying to take over the leadership.

66. Devadatta was very conceited, and was jealous of the two chief disciples of the Buddha. So he left the Sangha (the community of monks and nuns) and made friends with the crown-prince Ajatasattu, son of King Bimbisara. The prince built a private monastery for Devadatta. Devadatta then persuaded the prince to kill his father, King Bimbisara, and make himself king. The prince followed Devadatta's evil scheme and starved his father to death so he could become king.

67. Now Devadatta felt very powerful, because the new king was his friend and supporter. So he decided to kill the Buddha. One evening, while the Buddha was walking past a rocky hill, Devadatta pushed a huge stone down the hillside, intending to kill the Buddha. But the rock suddenly broke into many pieces and only one sharp piece hit the Buddha, on his foot. The Buddha returned to the monastery and was treated by the famous physician Jivaka.

68. Although his evil plot had failed, Devadatta tried to kill the Buddha again. When the Buddha was on his daily alms-round at Rajagaha, Devadatta set loose a wild elephant. But as the wild elephant ran towards the Buddha, it became calm because of the Buddha's enormous loving-kindness. After this incident, Devadatta gave up trying to kill the Buddha, but he still wanted to break up the Sangha.

69. To impress the other monks and nuns and disrupt the Sangha, Devadatta asked the Buddha to make stricter rules of conduct for the Sangha. He asked that monks not be allowed to sleep in houses or eat any meat. But the Buddha refused Devadatta's proposal. He said: "If some monks prefer to sleep in the open or not eat meat, they are free to do so. But if they do not wish to live this way they do not have to." Finally, the Buddha said: "Devadatta, if you try to break up the Sangha you will reap the evil fruits."

70. Devadatta ignored the Buddha's warning, led away a group of monks and made himself their leader. One day, when Devadatta was asleep, the Buddha's chief disciple Sariputta came and warned the monks about the consequences of evil actions. The monks realised their mistake and returned to the Buddha. When Devadatta woke up he was so angry that he became ill. Eventually, he began to regret his actions, and he asked his servants to take him to see the Buddha. But he died unexpectedly on the way there.

71. The Buddha taught people for forty-five years. He travelled to different kingdoms in India, always on foot. During the rainy seasons, he stayed at monasteries built for him and the Sangha by different supporters. The places the Buddha stayed at most often were Veluvana, near Rajagaha, and Jetavana, near Savatthi. During all these years, the Buddha worked hard every day to spread the teachings.

72. The Buddha usually got up before sunrise, took a bath, and then contemplated on whom to teach. When he found someone ready to understand and accept the teaching, he would go and teach that person the same day. After sunrise, the Buddha went to beg for alms from people in the neighbourhood. Sometimes he went alone, and sometimes with his monks. Some people also invited him to their homes to accept offerings. After the meal, he taught them the Dharma. Then he returned to the monastery.

73. Back at the monastery, the Buddha rested quietly in the hall, under a tree or in his room, waiting for the monks to return from their alms round. When all the monks and nuns had assembled in the hall he gave a Dharma talk or just encouraged them to practice the Dharma. Some monks also asked him for personal instructions for their Dharma practice. The Buddha then considered their natures and gave to each of them the individual advice that suited them best.

74. In the summertime, the people from the neighbourhood used to visit him in the evenings. Some came to offer him gifts, others to hear his teachings. The Buddha taught them the Dharma using skillful language, so that everyone would benefit. After the talk everyone would feel happy and satisfied.

75. After the people left, the Buddha usually took a bath. Then he would meditate for some time. After that, he

would instruct monks who came from other places. He helped them to understand the difficult parts of the Dharma and so made them very happy. At sunset, the Buddha usually went for a walk to refresh himself. After this he would again give talks to his monks. Late at night, distinguished people, such as kings, came for advice and instruction in the Dharma.

76. After this, the Buddha went to sleep, usually for four hours only. He slept on his right side and woke up before sunrise. Then he entered into deep meditation to explore the natures of his audience for that day.

77. The Buddha always worked very hard to spread the Dharma. When he was not travelling, he spent time not only explaining the Dharma, but also in helping people to solve their daily problems. He was always willing to help people from any station in life, whether they were a housewife, a farmer, or just somebody in need of help.

78. The Buddha was never reluctant to answer difficult questions or explain complicated problems. He never felt irritated by the person asking questions, and always was able to answer correctly. The Buddha always explained the Dharma in a way that was most suited to the natures of his listeners. He welcomed all people. Many who doubted him at first became convinced of the truth of his teaching. They then became his loyal disciples.

79. After 45 years of travelling and teaching, the Buddha had reached his eightieth year. Although his mind was strong, he felt that his body was getting weaker. He realised that his life was coming to an end. So he decided to go north to the foothills of the Himalayas, the region where he was born. He wished to enter the final nirvana, or freedom from suffering. On the way north, the Buddha and Ananda stopped in the Bamboo Grove Village, in the kingdom of Patali. The Buddha decided to stay there for the rainy season.

80. During his stay in the village the Buddha fell seriously ill. After he recovered, he told Ananda: "Ananda, by now the Sangha should know the way to practice, be able to check their practice and attain nirvana. I do not keep any secrets. With all my heart I wish the best for all the monks and nuns. I am an old man now. You should depend on yourselves. You should rely on the Dharma."

81. In the morning, after eating, the Buddha went to the Pava Stupa to meditate. He sat on a rock in the shade of a tree and investigated with his mind when he would be due to pass away. He concluded that he would enter the final nirvana after three months. When he told this to Ananda, Ananda begged him: "Please stay and continue helping people to end suffering!" The Buddha replied: "Ananda, the life of the Buddha is drawing to its close. He will attain final nirvana three months from now. Death is unavoidable."

82. Then the Buddha called the monks and gave them many important instructions. He encouraged them to practice his teaching for the benefit of all people in the world, and to help others to learn and practice the Dharma.

He also encouraged them to serve as good examples for the people of the world. Finally he instructed: "All things must grow old and pass away. Study the truths I have taught you and put them into practice; guard your own minds; do not be careless, so that you can be freed from suffering and rebirth."

83. One morning, to have a last look at the city of Vesali, the Buddha and Ananda went there to beg for alms. After that the Buddha and his disciples visited neighbouring villages, and the Buddha taught the Dharma to people. The Buddha also told his disciples that when anyone teaches them the Dharma, they should carefully verify it against the Dharma taught by the Buddha. He said that if it was not consistent with his teaching, they should reject it. Then they continued to the city of Pava and rested in the Mango garden, which belonged to Cunda, the son of a goldsmith.

84. The Buddha taught Cunda and his family. They gained confidence in the Dharma and took refuge in the Buddha and the Dharma. But the meal that Cunda offered to the Buddha contained a fungus that made the Buddha feel very ill. However, in spite of the pain, the Buddha and his disciples continued their journey to Kusinara. On the way they met a prince of the Malla clan. The Buddha taught him the way to live in peace. The prince then took refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (the Three Jewels), and offered two rolls of fine gold-coloured cloth to the Buddha. The Buddha kept one and gave the other to Ananda.

85. Finally the Buddha and Ananda arrived at the boundaries of Kusinara. When they came to Salavana, a holiday resort of the royal clan of the Mallas, the Buddha felt he could go no further. So he asked Ananda to prepare a place for him to lie down. Ananda took the Buddha's outer robe and placed it on a bed between two big sal trees. The Buddha then lay down on his right side. He did not fall asleep, but rested to relieve his pain and fatigue. His mind remained as tranquil as it had ever been.

86. Ananda felt that the Buddha was really leaving him this time, and he felt deep grief in his heart. So he left the Buddha, and went to an isolated place among trees to cry. He thought: "Unlike the other monks, I still have not reached the stage of an arahant, and I shall lose my compassionate master forever, and be left alone." His face became flooded with tears. When the other monks told the Buddha that Ananda was weeping in a hidden place, the Buddha asked them to bring Ananda back.

87. On Ananda's return, the Buddha praised him in front of the other monks. He told them: "Ananda has, at all times, been my most excellent attendant. He knew how to arrange just the right time for me to meet with visitors. He always treated all visitors well." Later, Ananda said to the Buddha: "Lord Buddha, please do not enter nirvana in such a small and unimportant place. Please select one of the large cities, such as Rajagaha or Vesali, and enter the final nirvana there. In those cities there are many rich and powerful people who are your disciples. They can take responsibility for your holy remains."

88. The Buddha said to Ananda: "No Ananda, do not say that. This is not a small and insignificant place. Long ago this was a prosperous city, and the residence of a righteous king. Ananda, go to Kusinara and tell the king and the people that late tonight the Buddha will enter the final nirvana in this forest. If they wish to, they should come to see me before this time." So Ananda went to Kusinara with several monks and told King Malla and his people what the Buddha had said.

89. When the people of Kusinara learnt that the Buddha was about to enter nirvana, they all felt very sad and cried. They said: "It is too early for the Buddha to enter final nirvana. The light of the world is going to be extinguished too soon!" Men, women and children, crying loudly, went to Salavana, where the Buddha was staying. They all hoped to see the Buddha one more time.

90. A wandering young man from an ascetic cult, whose name was Subhadda, happened to be in Kusinara. When he learnt that the Buddha was about to enter the final nirvana, he decided to visit him. He wanted to ask the Buddha some questions that bothered him. He believed that only the Buddha would be able to give him a thorough explanation. So he went to Salavana, and asked Ananda to allow him to see the Buddha. However Ananda refused him permission, as he thought that the Buddha was too tired to see visitors.

91. But Subhadda was very anxious to see the Buddha and asked Ananda again and again. When the Buddha heard them both talking, he knew Subhadda's good motivation. So he told Ananda to let Subhadda come in. Having listened to Subhadda's questions, the Buddha taught him until any problems in Subhadda's mind were cleared up. Subhadda gained confidence in the Buddha and the Dharma and asked the Buddha to accept him as a monk. Thus Subhadda became the last person to be ordained by the Buddha.

92. Later the Buddha gave the monks and nuns the last chance to ask any questions. He asked them if any of them still had doubts about the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. But none of them had any doubts about the Triple Gem. Finally the Buddha said to the monks: "Monks, this is the last time for me to talk to you. All things change. Work hard to gain your own salvation!"

93. The Buddha then entered into meditation, deeper and deeper, until his mind was purely balanced and steadily focused. And then he passed away. Thus, the Buddha, the Blessed One, had attained that final freedom known as nirvana. Soon after the death of the Buddha a meeting of 500 arahants was held to collect together all his teachings. They were memorised and handed down from one generation of monks to the next. In this way, the teachings of the Buddha were not lost, and we can still hear them today. (Buddha Dharma Educational Association)

The Prodigious Father from a Buddhist perspective
(*The Influence of Buddhism on Primitive Christianity* by Arthur Lillie, 1893)

At one time a favorite disciple of Buddha was athirst, having traveled from afar. At a well he encountered a girl, Matanga, and asked her to give him water to drink. But as one of low caste, she was afraid of contaminating a holy Brahmana and humbly declined.

"I ask not for caste, but for water!" said Ananda. His saying this won her heart.

It so happened that Matanga had a cunning mother, well versed in magic arts. When this woman heard how much her daughter was in love, she threw her spell round the disciple and brought him to her cave. Helpless, he prayed to Buddha, who forthwith appeared and cast out the wicked demons.

But the girl Matanga remained in a wretched state. At last she determined to repair to Buddha himself and appeal to him. The Great Physician, reading the poor girl's thought, questioned her gently:

"Supposing that you marry my disciple, can you follow him everywhere?"

"Everywhere!" said the girl,

"Could you wear his clothes, sleep under the same roof?" said Buddha, alluding to the nakedness and beggary of the "houseless one." By slow degrees the girl began to take his meaning, and at last she took refuge in the Three-Great Jewels: *Tsing-tu-wan*, the loving father of all that lives; our loving Father of all that breathes; and *loca pita Swayamhua*, the Healer and protector of all creatures.

Albeit living many centuries before Jesus' time, albeit coming from a different culture, Buddha taught, as did Jesus, in parables. The parables of Buddha are reported in the Lotus of the Perfect Law to be veiled from the ignorant by means of an enigmatic form of language. Because his sons feel no joy on hearing spiritual things, Buddha was forced to veil much of his thought, for only by slow degrees can their minds be trained and disciplined for higher truths. Such is the case concerning the parable of the burning mansion:

Once there was an old man, broken, decrepit, but very rich. He possessed much land and many gold pieces. Moreover, he possessed a large rambling mansion which also showed plain proofs of Time's decay. Its rafters were worm-eaten; its pillars were rotten; its galleries were tumbling down; the thatch on its roof was dry and combustible. Inside this mansion were several hundreds of the old man's servants and retainers, so extensive was the collection of rambling old buildings. Unfortunately, this mansion possessed only one door.

One day there was a smell of burning, and he ran out by the solitary door. To his horror he saw the thatch in a mass of flame, the rotten old pillars were catching fire one by one, the rafters were blazing like tinder. Inside, his children, whom he loved most tenderly, were romping and amusing themselves with their toys. The distracted father said to himself,

"I will run in and save my children. I will seize them in my strong arms. I will bear them harmless through the falling rafters and the blazing beams!"

Then the sad thought seized him that his children were romping and ignorant.

"If I tell them that the house is on fire they will not understand me. If I try to seize them they will romp about and try to escape. Alas! not a moment is to be lost!"

Suddenly a bright thought flashed across the old man's mind. "My children are ignorant," he mentally said, "but they love toys and glittering playthings. I will promise them some playthings of unheard-of beauty. Then they will listen to me!" So the old man shouted out with a loud voice, "Children, children, come out of the house and see these beautiful toys. Chariots with white gold and tinsel. See these exquisite little antelopes! Whoever saw such goats as these! Children, children, come quickly or they will all be gone!"

Forth from the blazing ruin came the children in hot haste. The word "playthings" was almost the only word that they could understand. Then the fond father, in his great joy at seeing his offspring freed from peril, procured for them some of the most beautiful chariots ever seen. Each chariot had a canopy like a pagoda. It had tiny rails and balustrades, and rows of jingling bells. It was formed of the seven precious substances. Chaplets of glittering pearls were hung aloft upon it; standards and wreaths of the most lovely flowers. Milk-white oxen drew these chariots. The children were astonished when they were placed inside.

The meaning of this parable is thus rendered in the "White Lotus of Dharma." The old man is *Tathagata*, and his children the blind, suffering children of sin and passion. *Tathagata* fondly loves them, and would save them from their unhappiness. The old rambling mansion, unsightly, rotten, perilous, is the Domain of Karma, the Domain of Appetite. This old mansion is ablaze with the fire of mortal passions, and hates, and lusts. *Tathagata* in his "immense compassion" would lead all his beloved children away from this great peril, but they do not understand his language. Their only thought is of tinsel toys and childish pastimes. If he speaks to them of the great inner quickening which makes man conquer human pain, they cannot understand him. If he talks to them of wondrous supernatural gifts accorded to mortals, they turn a deaf ear to him. The tinsel chariots provided for the children of *Tathagata* are the "Vehicles" of the Buddhist teaching. Another parable:

A certain man had a son who went away into a far country. There he became miserably poor. The father, however, grew rich, and accumulated much gold and treasure, and many storehouses and elephants. But he tenderly loved his lost son, and secretly lamented that he had no one to whom to leave his palaces and fine things at his death.

After many years the poor man, in search of food and clothing, happened to come to the country where his father had great possessions. And when he was afar off his father saw him, and reflected thus in his mind:

"If I at once acknowledge my son and give to him my gold and my treasures, I shall do him a great injury. He is ignorant and undisciplined ; he is poor and brutalized. With one of such miserable inclinations 'twere better to educate the mind little by little. I will make him one of my hired servants."

Then the son, famished and in rags, arrived at the door of his father's house; and seeing a great throne upraised, and many followers doing homage to him who sat upon it, was awed by the pomp and the wealth around. 'Instantly he fled once more to the highway. "This," he thought, "is the house of the poor man. If I stay at the palace of the king perhaps I shall be thrown into prison."

Then the father sent messengers after his son; who was caught and brought back in spite of his cries and lamentations. When he reached his father's house he fell down fainting with fear, not recognizing his father, and believing that he was about to suffer some cruel punishment. The father ordered his servants to deal tenderly with the poor man, and sent two laborers of his own rank of life to engage him as a servant on the estate. They gave him a broom and a basket, and engaged him to clean up the dung-heap at a double wage.

From the window of his palace the rich man watched his son at his work: and disguising himself one day as a poor man, and covering his limbs with dust and dirt, he approached his son and said:

"Stay here, good man, and I will provide you with food and clothing. You are honest, you are industrious. Look upon me as your father."

After many years the father felt his end approaching, and he summoned his son and the officers of the king, and announced to them the secret that he had so long kept. The poor man was his son, who in early days had wandered away from him; and now that he was conscious of his former debased condition, and was able to appreciate and retain vast wealth, he was determined to hand over to him his entire treasure. The poor man was astonished at this sudden change of fortune, and overjoyed at meeting his father once more.

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Dragon thunders | Excellent, |
| Rainclouds | Fruits grow and taste delicious |
| Lightning | As Buddha nature blossoms |
| Power | The world has no regrets |
| Strength | But experiences the dharma [teaching] |
| Warrior proclaims: | And rejoice in the Great Eastern Sun |
| Gentle | Let us wake as buddha! |

GOSPEL OF THOMAS, A BUDDHIST GOSPEL?

Jesus spoke in parables to the masses but in private to his disciples, he said:

Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God:
but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; . . . (*Mark 4:11*)

Although Jesus' teachings about "the mystery of the kingdom of God" are present to some degree in the *New Testament*, they are abundantly present in the *Gospel of Thomas*. From its outset there is an oblique reference to this mystery:

These are the hidden sayings which the living Jesus spoke, and which Didymos Judas Thomas transcribed.

In the translation above, the word "hidden," not "secret," is used because a negative connotation attaches to the word "secret." The surviving Coptic text was made from the Greek, which was made from Syriac. Translators are obligated to exercise a cautious freedom to supply the logical word. The idea of Jesus going around whispering secrets in people's ears and obligating them to keep his secrets does not comport with what else we know of him. Certain things were hidden, not because Jesus or the apostles wanted to be secretive but because of an affliction of spiritual blindness making concealment a prudent measure. Instead of sequestering knowledge, Jesus made it his business to reveal hidden things.:

"To those worthy of my mysteries, I disclose my mysteries." (*Logion 62a*)

Next is the claim of Gnosticism. Various authors say unreservedly that the *Gospel of Thomas* was "GNOSTIC." Were it truly Gnostic, as critics allege, also as many of its friends say, then, contrary to Gnostic beliefs, why does it praise one who was overtly Law-observant such as James? (See *logion 12.*) As was Jesus, James was very Mosaic, whereas Gnosti-

cism is noted for having being overtly anti-Mosaic. Unlike texts which are truly Gnostic, it does not posit a God above YHVH. Also, it lacks any reference to intermediaries: *Demi-urges*, *Plaromas*, or *Aeons* or the like.

In view of this, some will retort, "alright it's not Gnostic, it's proto-Gnostic." True, Gnostic writings pick up some of *Thomas'* sayings but, these same writings also use canonical expressions. Does that make the canonicals proto-Gnostic? Some say, since it was preserved among Gnostic writings, that *Thomas* must be Gnostic, in other words, guilt by association.

Occasionally canonical writings turn up among those considered heretical. This proves nothing. That the *Gospel of Luke* was favored by Marcionites or the *Gospel of Matthew* was favored by Ebionites proves nothing. If anything, the reference in *Logion 12* advising the disciples to repair to James is an indication that *Thomas* was an early composition, perhaps even contemporaneous with James, when such advice could actually have been acted upon. If so, then it predated the Gnostic-Christian movement for James died in 62 AD, a full generation before them.

An enduring mystery for scholars has been the unmistakable contrast in tone and content between *John's Gospel* and the three synoptics: *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*. This centuries-old puzzle only deepened with the discovery in 1909 of the earliest Christian hymnbook, the *Odes of Solomon*, and deepened further in 1945 with the discovery of the Coptic text of the *Gospel of Thomas*, for these texts have surprising affinities with themes found in *John's Gospel*. Instead of just one aberrant text, now scholars found themselves trying to account for an entire body of related literature. Initially the assumption was that such congruencies as existed amongst these texts were based on dependence on *John's Gospel*. Additional study, however, has not borne this out. Instead, it is generally thought that all these writings arose from a common milieu.

Two elements emerge as important here: first, the *Gospel of Thomas* has material that comes from the earliest traditions of the sayings of Jesus; second, the *Gospel* shares theology and perspective with the Johannine community (although that common material is often very different, and even polemical). The *Gospel of Thomas*, then, connects to early Christian literature in two ways: some of its contents parallel the material in the Synoptic Sayings Source Q, from primitive Christianity; some of the way in which that material is developed parallels the work of the Johannine community.

(Richard Valentasis, (*Gospel of Thomas*))

In his book *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?*, Harold Bloom, albeit falling into the common error about *Thomas* being "Gnostic," makes these trenchant observations:

If you turn to the *Gospel of Thomas*, you encounter a Jesus who is unsponsored and free. No

one could be burned or even scorned in the name of this Jesus, and no one has been hurt in any way, except perhaps for those bigots, high church or low, who may have glanced at so permanently surprising work. . . . this Jesus is a wisdom teacher, gnomic and wandering, rather than a proclaimer of finalities. You cannot be a minister of this gospel, nor found a church upon it. Everything we seek is already in our presence, and not outside ourself. What is most remarkable in these sayings is the repeated insistence that everything is already open to you. What is best and oldest in you will respond fully to what you allow yourself to see. . . . implied in nearly every saying: there is light in you, and that light is not of the created world. It is not Adamic. . . . what is best in us was never created, so cannot fall. The Gospel of Thomas addresses itself only to . . . those capable of knowing, who then through knowing can come to see what Jesus insists is plainly visible before them, indeed all around them. . . .

Richard Valentasis, in his book, *Gospel of Thomas*, helps us to see its purpose:

A collection of sayings by nature cannot fulfill expectations of a systematic presentation of discursive theology, It must be made clear, however, that the Gospel of Thomas does indeed present a recognizable and articulated theology, but both the mode and the content of that theology differs from other theological discourses. . . . I would characterize this theology as a performative theology whose mode of discourse and whose method of theology revolves about effecting a change in thought and understanding in the readers and hearers (both ancient and modern). The sayings challenge, puzzle, sometimes even provide conflicting information about a given subject, and in so confronting the readers and hearers force them to create in their own minds the place where all the elements fit together. The theology comes from the audience's own effort in reflecting and interpreting the sayings, and, therefore, it is a practical and constructed theology even for them. . . .

This mystagogic Jesus describes himself as the light, the "all" found in every place, the one who is the origin and destiny of all creation (Saying 77). As a bearer of secret wisdom (Prologue), Jesus is portrayed as a divine figure who not only permeates all life, but enables true vision to occur (Saying 37), and who guides people to the fulfilling of their deepest desires (Saying 51). Moreover, Jesus' presence becomes merged with the seekers so that there can be no distinction between Jesus and those who follow him (Saying 108). . . .

The Gospel of Thomas connects the hearer and seeker to the very voice of the living Jesus speaking in the midst of an interpreting community.

Kenneth Arnold, in presenting to the Buddhist-Christian Studies Association in 2000, his essay "The Circle of the Way: reading the Gospel of Thomas as a Christen Text," states:

Elaine Pagels in *The Gnostic Gospels* notes that the living Jesus of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts

speaks of illusion and enlightenment, not sin and repentance." Instead of coming to save us from sin, he comes as a guide who opens access to spiritual understanding. But when the disciple attains enlightenment, Jesus no longer serves as his spiritual master: the two have become equal – even identical" (Pagels, xx). (Hence, the voice of Thomas is Didymus Judas Thomas, revered in the early Syriac church as an apostle and twin brother of Jesus.) Jesus said, "I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become drunk from the bubbling stream which I have measured out. . . . He who will drink from my mouth will become as I am: I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him." (Thomas, 35 and 50)

This comes close to Paul's formulation of the exchanged life, his: "Christ in you the hope of glory." On notable critic of the *Gospel of Thomas*, however, didn't see it that way. Robert Grant, in his very scholarly, erudite book, *The Secret Sayings of Jesus*, states that:

It [the *Gospel of Thomas*] is probably our most significant witness to the early perversion of Christianity by those who wanted to create Jesus in their own image.

Robert Grant goes on to say:

The Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas is obviously related to the Jesus of the canonical gospels, but he has been transformed into the Gnostic revealer of secret wisdom and saving truth.

That's it, "a revealer of secret wisdom and of saving truth"? What is the big problem with that? Grant is grasping at straws. What he and other critics are really exercised about is not so much any particular heresy that *Thomas* presumably promotes; rather, that it exists at all and by existing, demonstrates that the Church's *New Testament* gospels may not be the be-all-and-end-all that they would have us to think.

The following is an offer by Jesus Christ to give us spiritual experience, unmediated by the Church. This Jesus said:

"I shall give you
that which eye hath not seen
and that which ear hath not heard
and that which no hand hath touched
and what hath not occurred to the mind of man."

"Whoso is nigh unto me is nigh unto the fire,
and whoso is far from me is far from the kingdom."

"Whoso drinketh from my mouth shall become like me. I myself
will become like him, and to him the hidden things shall be revealed."

(*Gospel of Thomas* 17, 82, 1208)

We might want to be open to the idea that *Thomas* in its present form is not entirely the work of a single individual, that in the course of its transmission, particularly in translation, certain embellishments, expansions, contractions, were introduced. This I say based on a comparison of the Coptic and Greek texts. Much of the scholarly disagreement as exists revolves around textual critics focusing too narrowly on a single example and running with that to the exclusion of all other considerations. Doing justice by this subject means taking a more global approach. Unlike the New Testament where many texts have survived, in this instance, we have only one fairly complete Coptic text, one fragmentary Greek text, and a limited number of quotes from Church fathers. Given such a slender record to work with, we must recognize the somewhat tentative or provisional nature of our findings. Let us begin by addressing the issue of age. A certain substrate of material in *Thomas*, as witnessed to in antiquity, is derived from the first century, pre-canonical *Hebrew Gospel*.

“Let not him who seeketh cease from seeking until he hath found; and when he hath found, he shall be amazed; and when he hath been amazed he shall reign; and when he hath reigned he shall have rest.”

So also reads Greek Oxyrhynchus version of *Thomas*, logion #2. So also Clement of Alexandria. But this is somewhat at variance from the the Nag Hammadi Coptic version’s ending:

“Let him not cease who seeks until seeking he finds and when he finds, he will be troubled, and being troubled, he will be astonished, and rule over the All.”

Whereas the end goal in the Greek version is to “rest,” the end goal in the Coptic version is to “rule.” Meanwhile, the later, truncated synoptic version reads, “Seek and ye shall find (*Matthew 7:7*), which says less about process. But *II Timothy 2:12* states is also about process when it states: “if we suffer [with Jesus], we shall also reign with him.” In this we see reigning and resting as being related concepts.

In *Thomas* saying # 3, Jesus states:

“If those who would attract you should say to you, 'Behold, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they should say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fishes will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is within you, and outside of you. When you know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if ye know not yourselves, then you dwell in poverty and you are that poverty.”

This verse builds on the one proceeding it by advocating reigning through self-empowerment as opposed to dependency on a leadership which misleads. The value of the *Gospel of Thomas* is that it promotes the Way, the Truth, and the Life without having to resort to rituals or hierarchy. That is what made it so dangerous to the hierarchical Church then and

to the militaristic, Zionized Church now. Mithraism hates Buddhism. In this the age of the internet people are discovering for themselves this non-threatening gospel. I have yet to hear of anyone having been led into a den of iniquity because of it.

The similarity between John and Thomas lies in their portrayal of Jesus as a fully self-conscious sage-redeemer whose words and judgments are true and flawless. Both gospels claim: to understand Jesus and his words is to achieve salvation. (Alexander Mirkovic, Johannine Sayings in the Gospel of Thomas)

The challenge, as I see it, is to be vigilant, be alert. We don't want to dispense with sayings original to Jesus on the one hand or be manipulated by antinomian Gnostics. How we approach this book will be determinative what we take away from it for better or for worse.

THE SUBVERSION OF CHRISTIANITY

*The Church and the World walked far apart
on the changing shores of time.
Said the World to the Church
"your dress is too simple to please my taste;
I will give you pearls to wear,
rich velvets and silks for your graceful form,
and diamonds to deck your hair."*

So begins a quaint poem familiar to many evangelical Christians. Actually, it is code language alluding to Rome's embrace of the Church in 325 AD, at which time Constantine made Christianity the Empire's state religion. That is when Protestantism dates the falling away from primitive virtue. Without gainsaying that particular moment's importance as a historical turning point, I would note an earlier one - almost 200 years earlier - whose greater significance has somehow been forgotten, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem by Hadrian in 135 AD, after which the Church assumed the Nazarene's literary legacy.

Remarkable what can slip down a memory hole into a lake of collective forgetting. For instance, how many among us know that George Washington was not the U. S.'s first President but its 8th or that John Hanson was its 1st? Or how many of us know it was not the *U.S. Constitution* for which American insurgents fought and died but, rather, *The Articles of Confederation*? A bait and switch operation, the patriots of the American Revolution were baited to fight on the promise of sovereign statehood but, once the fighting was done, their individual States were subsumed into a consolidation. And if this can happen in modern times in our own land - yet mostly without our being aware of it - as well, it can happen in the

distant past in a faraway land, again without our being cognizant of it. The world would be a different place today (in my opinion, a far better place) had *The Articles of Confederation* not been set aside; likewise the Way of the Nazarene. At issue is the nature of religious enterprise. Is it about controlling us or liberating us? Are we to be *conformed* or *transformed*?

Intellectual renewal is sparked when challenging ideas or long-lost documents are brought to the fore but spiritual renewal occurs when head and heart are brought into balance, both being fully engaged by the passion and pathos of our Lord.

It is our pleasure that all nations, which are governed by our clemency and moderation, should steadfastly adhere to the religion which was taught by Peter to the Romans. . . . We authorize the followers of this doctrine to assume the title of Catholic Christians; and as we judge, that all others are extravagant madmen, we brand them with the infamous name of Heretics. (Emperor Theodosius edict of 380 AD)

Included among the heretics were the Nazarenes! What the Roman emperors wanted of the Church was an institution that would unify their empire religiously, while motivating its subjects to fight their wars. As for the Church's hierarchy, they saw this as their rendezvous with destiny. Thus, to win Rome's favor, they reworked the Nazarene faith by de-emphasizing the peaceable Buddhist aspect in favor of something more muscular, namely, attributes borrowed from the cult of the Sun God, Mithra. In 313 AD, Mithra's birthday, December 25th, became Christ's. The goddess, Astarte, became our Easter. A warriors' religion, the one preferred by Rome's legionaries, this ancient cult was highly regarded. Its sacramental meal, involved the administration of a round "sun" wafer by a priest. This, not the Nazarene's love feast, became the model for the Church's Eucharist. Naturally, being a sun cult, worship occurred on Sunday.

Once the Empire's most influential cult, Mithraism by the 5th century AD had disappeared entirely, having been absorbed into the Church as syncretism became the order of the day, whereby local deities were transmuted into Christian saints, even as Christian saints took on the attributes of local deities; and as temples became churches even as churches carried out rites suitable to pagan temples, wherein Christian priests were transformed into magicians. Thus did Rome blur the distinction between Church membership and Roman citizenship.

Once monopoly status was obtained, Christendom lost much of its ability to go down to the marketplace of ideas and there argue its case. Instead, too often, it reaches for a gun.

Lecturing in Ascona, Switzerland some years ago, a 91 year-old Zen Buddhist, D. T. Suzuki, put his finger on the problem, namely Western Christendom's ugly proclivity for unbridled aggression. He said:

Man against God. God against man.
Man against Nature. Nature against man.
God against Nature. Nature against God.
Very funny religion.

Funny religion, indeed! Alas, the evidence is in, writ large for all to see, that Christendom overall these last 2000 years has been an abject failure, its numerous felonies rising as a stench in the nostrils of God. The broken dreams and lost opportunities have alienated millions or even billions of people worldwide, causing them to turn away in disappointment. But it didn't start out that way. Rather, it was subverted. We need to see what Christianity was before being hijacked by dark forces. We should know too about the dark forces, that we might not ourselves be taken unawares and be subverted. How the Uberschwein did chortle and jubilate as the B29 Bockscar took off on its grizzly mission and this with the blessings of clergy.

St. Mary's Cathedral, located in Nagasaki City's Urakami River district, was a massive structure and a landmark easily visible from 31,000 feet above. The cathedral was one of the landmarks on which the Bock's Car's bombardier had been briefed for weeks before the mission. The cathedral was briefly seen through a break in the clouds, and the drop was ordered. The bomb exploded in a searing fireball as hot as the sun 500 meters above the church. The Urakami Cathedral was Ground Zero for the second atomic bomb ever used against civilian populations in war time, and most Nagasaki Christians who lived in the area did not survive. 6000 of the church members died instantly, including all who were at confession at 11:02 am that morning. Of the 12,000 members of the church, eventually 8,500 died as a direct result of the bomb. Three orders of nuns and a Christian girl's school were incinerated. Tens of thousands of innocent people died instantly and hundreds of thousands were mortally wounded, some of whose progeny are still living in agony as a result of the cross-generational contagiousness of the deadly plutonium. An irradiated crucifix was photographed in the days following the blast, lying helpless and forlorn and lying on its back, a deeply profound symbol of a religion gone wrong.

The Urakami Cathedral was the oldest and largest Christian church in the Orient, and Nagasaki was the oldest, largest and most influential Christian community in Japan, having been founded by the Jesuit missionary, Francis Xavier, in 1549. The Nagasaki Christian community is legendary in the history of Japanese Christianity because of its two centuries of catacomb-like existence during the horrible persecutions by the Imperial Japanese government - including mass crucifixions of faithful Christians who refused to give up the faith. Despite the persecutions and the formal outlawing of the religion (it was a capital crime to be a Christian - as it was for the original non-violent form of Christianity - for over 2 centuries), Nagasaki Christianity survived and ultimately flourished - until 11:02 am, August 9, 1945. What Imperial Japan could not do for over two centuries of brutal persecution and the arbitrary use of the death penalty, fellow Christians from America did in 9 seconds. The Cathedral was totally destroyed by the plutonium bomb and thousands of Nagasaki Christians were instantly boiled, incinerated, carbonized or vaporized. Radiation-induced disease and deformities among the surviving victims and their progeny continues to this day as a gruesome testament to the horrors of nuclear war. (Gary Kohls, August, 2010)

THE LUCKIEST OR UNLUCKIEST MAN IN THE WORLD

Richard Lloyd Parry, 2009

Four years ago, shortly before the 60th anniversary of the end of the war, I interviewed Mr Yamaguchi, and two of his fellow double-hibakusha, over the course of several days. Here is the long piece which I wrote about them for the Times Magazine.

Tsutomu Yamaguchi, Akira Iwanaga and Kuniyoshi Sato are either the luckiest or the unluckiest men alive, and after three days in their company and long hours of conversation, I still had no idea which. It is sixty years since their monstrous ordeal and all three are well into their ninth decade. Mr Sato, who is 86, uses a wheelchair after injuring his back, and 89-year old Mr Yamaguchi is almost deaf in one ear. But all of them exude the dignified vigour of elderly Japanese, the world's healthiest and longest living race. "I was a heavy smoker," Mr Yamaguchi told me during our first meeting, "but I gave up smoking and drinking when I was 50. I didn't expect to live to 80. And now I'm well over 80." The miracle is not that he is alive now, but that he made it past the age of 29.

Mr Yamaguchi and his friends are freaks of history, victims of a fate so callous and improbable that it almost raises a smile. In 1945, they were working in Hiroshima where the world's first atomic bomb exploded 60 years ago this morning, on 6 August 1945. 140,000 people died as a result of the explosion; by pure chance, Mr Yamaguchi, Mr Sato and Mr Iwanaga, were spared. Stunned and injured, reeling from the horrors around them, they left the city for the only place they could have gone – their home town, Nagasaki, 180 miles to the west. There, on 9th August, the second atomic bomb exploded over their heads.

In a century of mass killing, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked the beginning of a new age. The end of the world was transformed from an imaginative notion, the fancy of poets and prophets, into a real and living possibility. Three men survived the beginning of the end of the world, not once, but twice. Sixty years later, all three of them are alive.

They still send one another New Year cards with news of friends and family, but until I met up with Mr Yamaguchi and Mr Iwanaga in the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Park, it was the first time they had seen one another since 1969. "We sat down by the fountain of peace with young Sato, and talked for a long time," said Mr Yamaguchi. "That was more than thirty years ago now. But we always have a mental bond, no matter how much time passes."

These days Nagasaki is famous in the west as a symbol of tragedy, but long before 1945 it had established itself as one of the most dynamic, cosmopolitan and romantic cities in Asia. For centuries, Western innovations, western learning and western technology flowed into Japan through Nagasaki's beautiful and celebrated harbour, surrounded on three sides by green mountains. Japan's first gun, its first telephone, its first metal type printing press and its first pumpkins made their appearance in Nagasaki. Christianity was introduced here in the 16th century before being brutally quashed by the shoguns 100 years later. And when Japan embarked on its long war, first against China in the 1930s and then against the United States, Nagasaki was a crucial military and industrial base.

It was a city dominated by one company, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, and it was there that Yamaguchi, Iwanaga and Sato worked as technical draughtsmen designing oil tankers. The beginning of the war with the United States was as big a surprise to ordinary Japanese as it was to the US Navy in Pearl Harbour. But by the middle of 1942, the runaway military successes of the first six months of the war went into a grinding reverse, and the country was stricken by terrible shortages.

"I never thought Japan should start a war," said Mr Yamaguchi. "It seemed so sudden – I was amazed. Soon we were running out of iron, steel and oil, but the tankers bringing in the oil were constantly being sunk by submarines. If ten tankers went out, and one of them came back, that was considered a success. At work, I could see the shortage of materials and the loss of personnel, but we couldn't keep up with demand and quite soon thought that Japan couldn't win."

In May 1945, Mr Yamaguchi's first child, a boy named Katsutoshi, was born. "I thought about what I would do when we were defeated and the enemy would invade this country," he said. "I thought about what to do with my wife and family when the enemy came. Rather than letting them be killed I should do something, give them sleeping pills and kill them, kill my wife and family. I was seriously considering such things." As Mr Yamaguchi was preoccupied with these appalling thoughts came bad news. Along with Sato and Iwanaga, he was to be dispatched to work in another shipyard of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries – in Hiroshima.

For a new father, the timing could not have been worse, but there was no choice. From spring until summer, the three men worked long days in the southern outskirts of Hiroshima on the waters of the Seto Inland Sea. After three months the job was done and orders were given to return to Nagasaki on 7th August 1945. The day before they rose early, packed their bags, and set out from their lodgings to say goodbye to their colleagues.

On the bus, Mr Yamaguchi realised that he had forgotten something important – the personal name stamp which he needed to sign off on his departure documents. While his two colleagues went ahead of him, Mr Yamaguchi hurried back to the company dormitory, picked up the stamp, jumped back on the bus and got off at the last stop. Then he began the thirty minute walk to the Mitsubishi Shipyard.

We were sitting outside as Mr Yamaguchi described all of this, in the garden of his daughter's house on a beautiful hillside outside Nagasaki. The hillside was covered with fruit trees; Mr Yamaguchi's daughter, Toshiko, brought bowls of sweet loquats. "I was walking towards the shipyard," said Mr Yamaguchi. "It was a flat, open spot with potato fields on either side. It was very clear, a really fine day, nothing unusual about it at all. I was in good spirits. As I was walking along I heard the sound of a plane, just one. I looked up into the sky and saw the B-29, and it dropped two parachutes. I was looking up into the sky at them, and suddenly ... it was like a flash of magnesium, a great flash in the sky, and I was blown over."

The American B-29 bomber 'Enola Gay' had flown from the Pacific island of Tinian 1500 miles away. It had dropped

a 13 kiloton uranium atomic bomb, nicknamed 'Little Boy', which exploded 580 metres above the centre of Hiroshima at thirty seconds after 8.15 am.

"I didn't know what had happened," Mr Yamaguchi went on. "I think I fainted for a while. When I opened my eyes, everything was dark, and I couldn't see much. It was like the start of a film at the cinema, before the picture has begun when the blank frames are just flashing up without any sound. I saw my baby son, and I saw my wife and brothers – they all came to my eyes in a flash. I thought I might have died, but eventually the darkness cleared and I realised I was alive.'

"When the noise and the blast had subsided I saw a huge mushroom-shaped pillar of fire rising up high into the sky. It was like a tornado, although it didn't move, but it rose and spread out horizontally at the top. There was prismatic light, which was changing in a complicated rhythm, like the patterns of a kaleidoscope. The first thing I did was to check that I still had my legs and whether I could move them. I thought, 'If I stay here, I'll die.'

"Two hundred yards ahead, there was a dugout bomb shelter, and when I climbed in there were two young students already sitting there. They said, 'You've been badly cut, you're seriously injured.' And it was then I realised I had a bad burn on half my face, and that my arms were burned."

After two hours in the shelter, Mr Yamaguchi set out again for the shipyard. He walked past a small hill which lay between it and the city centre. Anti-aircraft guns had been mounted there; the bodies of the gunners lay sprawled and motionless. But the shelter of the hill had saved the lives of Mr Iwanaga and Mr Sato and their colleagues in the shipyard.

They had been inside the works office at the moment of the explosion, saying their goodbyes. Glass and furniture had flown across the room, but apart from a few cuts and bruises no one had been seriously injured. They had gone out to look for Mr Yamaguchi, but returned in despair, beaten back by the fires and the broken bridges. "I was glad to see them, and they were glad to see me too," he said. "The three of us were together again, and we had survived."

City-dwelling Japanese were well used to being bombed by this stage in the war, but everyone immediately recognised that this was something new. "We had no idea what kind of bomb it was, of course," said Mr Yamaguchi. "All we knew was that it had been just a single bomb, but it had done all this." The one thing that everyone remembered was that the explosion had two distinct components. First came the soundless flash of blinding magnesium light, and fractionally later the blast wave and the roar. It was this observation that gave the bomb its earliest name in Japanese, based on the onomatopoeic expressions for a flash and boom: pika-don.

The three took a motor launch to try to find a way back in to the city and to their lodgings. "From the boat we could see the city burning," said Mr Yamaguchi. "Every branch of the delta was burning. The sky was dark, so you could clearly see these pillars of flame. I thought that all of Hiroshima was finished." But it was only after they disem-

barked and began the walk back to their lodgings that they understood what this new kind of bomb had done to people. These are the scenes that every survivor of Hiroshima or Nagasaki remembers, the images that crawl through their dreams and wake them up in the middle of the night.

To Mr Yamaguchi, there seemed to be children everywhere, some running, many limping along the side of the road. "They didn't cry," he said. "I saw no tears at all. Their hair was burned, and they were completely naked. I saw so many of these children. Behind them big fires burned. Miyuki Bridge, next to our dormitory, was still standing, but all over it there were burned people, children as well as adults, some of them dead, some of them on the verge of death. They were the ones who couldn't walk any more, who had just lain down. None of them spoke, none of them had the strength to say a word. It's funny that during that time, I didn't hear human speech, or shouts, just the sound of the city burning. Under the bridge there were many more bodies, bobbing in the water like blocks of wood."

After a sleepless night in an air raid shelter, they retrieved their bags from the ruins of their dormitory and made for the west of the city, where a single railway station was operating. They passed more scenes of human agony: blinded people, people with their faces so swollen it was impossible to tell if they were men or women, people with their skins hanging off their bodies. "We saw a mother with a baby on her back," said Mr Iwanaga. "She looked as if she had lost her mind. The child on her back was dead and I don't know if she even realised. There were some things I couldn't look at – internal organs hanging out, the tongue or the eyes hanging loose. If you have a normal set of nerves it's very difficult to look at something like that."

They were corpses along every road and in all the rivers, as well as the corpses of horses. At one downed bridge, the three men had to wade through a river, parting before them a floating carpet of dead bodies. They reached the station, and forced their way through the crowds which were pressing to get on the train for the overnight journey to Nagasaki. Mr Sato got separated from his two friends and it was he who witnessed the final horror.

A young man sat opposite him in the carriage clasping on his knees an awkward bundle wrapped in a cloth. An appalling smell issued from the bundle; with every bump and lurch of the train, the young man gripped it tightly. "I asked him what it was," remembered Mr Sato, "and he said, 'I married a month ago, but my wife died yesterday. I want to take her home to her parents.'" He lifted the cloth and showed Mr Sato what lay beneath: it was an upturned helmet containing the severed head of the young man's wife.

At the distance of 60 years it seems incredible, a cosmic joke, that anyone should be exposed to two atomic bombs, but at the time that was exactly what Mr Yamaguchi and his friends expected. They had no way of knowing that the United States possessed only two of the weapons, or that Hiroshima was the only city to have been attacked with them. When they got home all three men thought the same thing: that it could only be a matter of time before the same thing happened in Nagasaki, and that urgent preparations needed to be made.

Mr Sato and Mr Iwanaga went to their homes on the outskirts of the city and set about removing the glass from their windows and deepening their dug out air raid shelters. Mr Yamaguchi went straight to the hospital where his burns

were treated and bandaged – it is this prompt treatment, he believes, which saved him from the appalling keloid scars which disfigured other victims of the bomb. Other men might have used exposure to an atomic bomb as an excuse to take a few days off work. But the next day, as perhaps only a Japanese worker would, he reported for work at the shipyard.

“I was covered in bandages,” he said. “People could only see my eyes, lips and nose. Until I opened my mouth, my own mother didn’t recognise me. I reported to the director who had sent me to Hiroshima and he asked me what was going on there. I said that I didn’t know what kind of bomb it was but that a single one had destroyed the entire city. I told him that I had come back with Iwanaga, but that I failed to come back with Sato, although I knew he was alive.

“Well, the director was angry. He reproached me for losing Sato. He said: ‘A single bomb can’t destroy a whole city! You’ve obviously been badly injured, and I think you’ve gone a little mad.’ At that moment, outside the window, I saw another flash and the whole office, everything in it, was blown over.

“We were both on the ground. The director was shouting, ‘Help me! Help me!’ I realised at once what had happened, that it was the same thing as in Hiroshima. But I was so angry with the director. I climbed out of the window and got away because I had to help myself.”

A second B-29, ‘Bock’s Car’, had left Tinian that morning. It had dropped a 25 kiloton plutonium bomb, known as ‘Fat Man’, which exploded above the northern part of Nagasaki at 11.02 am.

At that moment, Mr Iwanaga was dozing on a suburban train bound for central Nagasaki. The glass on the side of the train facing the city was blown in, but he escaped without injury.

Mr Sato was also in the shipyard, standing by the quayside. “People were asking me what happened in Hiroshima, because they had heard rumours,” he said, “I was just explaining when I saw the flash of light. Instinctively I knew what was happening, so I jumped immediately into the water.” He trod water for an hour, and escaped without a scratch.

Mr Yamaguchi crawled home to his wife and baby, who had no more than scratches and bruises. The blast had blown off his bandages, exposing the raw burns. The hospital where he had been treated the day before was destroyed; 70,000 people were dead or dying. Mr Yamaguchi curled up in the shelter behind his damaged house, and lay there for days, semi-conscious, in a high fever, hovering between life and death.

“I must have stayed there for a week,” he said. “I didn’t know if it was night or day. Then one day, it was the 15th August, I realised that people around me were crying. Some were crying, some were delighted.” They were listening to the famous broadcast by Emperor Hirohito, the first one ever made by a Japanese emperor, announcing Japan’s surrender. “I had no feeling about it,” Mr Yamaguchi said. “I was neither sorry nor glad. I was seriously ill with a fever, eating almost nothing, hardly even drinking. I thought that I was about to cross to the other side.”

For sixty years, soldiers, politicians and historians have argued about the morality of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Did it bring an end to the war, removing the need for a land invasion which would have killed many more civilians and soldiers than the bomb itself? Or was it a cynical test of a new weapon on an enemy which was already on the verge of collapse? Whatever moral doubts exist about the bombing of Hiroshima, they are redoubled in the case of Nagasaki.

In the three days since the first bomb, no word had come from Tokyo suggesting imminent surrender. But American intelligence was fully aware of the confusion which reigned in the Japanese High Command: the question under debate was not whether, but how, to submit to the inevitable. It knew too that, with the entry into the Pacific War of the Soviet Union, Japan's decline was irreversible. "Why did they have to drop another bomb on Nagasaki?" Mr Yamaguchi asked me as we sat in the fruit garden. "They could have made their point by dropping one bomb. I think they were in a hurry to show their superiority. It would have been one thing if they had used it on a battlefield. But they knew that it would kill women, children, babies. How could they do that?"

The years after the war were hard ones for the three men from the Mitsubishi shipyard. But all of them eventually won their share in Japan's astonishing post-war prosperity. Mr Iwanaga became a civil servant in the Nagasaki City Office, and Mr Sato had a career in the local government of nearby Amakusa island, where he still lives. Mr Yamaguchi worked first for the US military occupation, then as a teacher, and finally returned to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. He is the oldest of the three, and the most emotional and imaginative. Sato and Iwanaga, practical engineers and bureaucrats, seemed to me to have overcome the anguish of the atomic bombings. But in Tsutomu Yamaguchi, I sense, it lives on undiminished.

"I write poems, songs of the atomic bomb," he said, and he wept as he spoke. "People often ask me to write new ones. When I'm writing a poem like that, I have to transport myself back to when it happened, and that's tough for me. That's tough. On those nights I dream of what I saw. I dream of the dead lying on the ground. They get up from the ground and they walk past me, one by one. This is the dream I have when I write poems, when I remember the wasteland."

I read one of Mr Yamaguchi's tanka, a traditional Japanese stanza, which he wrote in 1969.

*Thinking of myself
As a phoenix
I cling on until now.
But how painful they have been,
These twenty-four years past.*

I asked Mr Yamaguchi if he felt optimistic about the future. He hesitated, then said: "I have hope for the future."

Where did that hope come from? "I believe in love, in human beings," he said, and he was weeping again. "The reason that I hate the atomic bomb is because of what it does to the dignity of human beings. Look at the photographs of the aftermath of the atomic bombing, those dead bodies in the photographs. When you forget the dignity of individual human beings, that it is when you are heading towards the destruction of the earth."

What did it mean, I asked, to have lived through two atomic bombs? "I think that it is a miracle," he said. "But, having been granted this miracle, it is my responsibility to pass on the truth to the people of the world. For the past 60 years, atomic bomb survivors have declared the horror of the atomic bomb, but I can see hardly any improvement in the situation."

Towards the end of our long conversation, Mr Yamaguchi wept repeatedly. It was the week of the United Nations conference on non-proliferation Treaty. The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had travelled to New York to make an appeal for disarmament on behalf of the survivors of the atomic bomb. But the meeting had ended in failure, and Mr Yamaguchi was taking it hard.

There was another reason for his sadness. His wife had lived in an old people's home for five years, and in March, Katsutoshi, the baby son born amid such trepidation, had died too. "My son was born in February 1945," Mr Yamaguchi said. "He was exposed to the radiation of the bomb when he was just six months old. He died this February 4th at the age of 59. He had cancer. The son of 59 died, leaving the father of 89 behind. He was still a baby to me. The death of my son takes away my will to live." Mr Yamaguchi was consoling himself with a demanding spiritual exercise. He was painting the images of Buddhas, representing the 88 temples of a famous pilgrimage on the island of Shikoku. "I am too old to visit those places physically," he said. "But by painting in their colours, I want to pray for the spirits of the people who died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and for my son."

I heard from Mr Yamaguchi's daughter the other day. He had worked day and night to colour in the drawings of the Buddhas of the Shikoku pilgrimage, she said, and had finished all 88 of them; afterwards he fell into an exhausted depression. He seemed calmer these days, but detached, and she understood the reason. It was as if he was preparing to cross over to the other side.

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ARISTOTELEAN PHILOSOPHY

The rule of the strong over the weak is a moral consequence, since the strong party always enjoys a superiority in something good, it is clear that force cannot be destitute of virtue. (Aristotle)

Aristotle (384 - 322 BC), one of history's great names, was a Greek philosopher who sat at Plato's feet and who later was Alexander the Great's tutor. He is largely thought of these days in popular imagination as an observer of the natural world but in reality his main influence has always been in the moral and political realms. In making this very point, the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* neatly sums it up:

Aristotle's *Politics* has had a deep influence on political philosophy until the present day, because it contains deep and thought-provoking discussions of perennial concerns of political philosophy: the role of human nature in politics, the relation of the individual to the state, the place of morality in politics, the theory of political justice, the rule of law, the analysis and evaluation of constitutions, the relevance of ideals to practical politics, the causes and cures of political change and revolution, and the importance of a morally educated citizenry.

The notion of natural superiority as we see advocated above is one which led Aristotle to claim that if one were born a slave it is because one was inherently inferior and therefore deserving to be a slave. Likewise if one were born a king, it is because one was born inherently superior with the right to subjugate his inferiors. This IS the concept that *might makes right*. On such grounds as these was conquest legitimized.

Aristotle's theorizing, because it was congenial to imperial enterprise, was employed by the Roman Empire to justify its deeds. And though Aristotle's prescriptions contradicted, if not totally contravened, those of Jesus, nonetheless, they were taken up by many Church fathers and ultimately enshrined in Church doctrine. This then is the doctrine of Christian superior dominion as advanced by Thomas Aquinas:

Unbelievers deserve not only to be separated from the Church, but also . . . to be severed from the World by death. (*Should Heretics be tolerated among us? Summa Theologica*, 1271 AD)

Thus it came to pass in Church thinking, as it was in Roman property and contract law, that human beings do *not* have inherent, inalienable rights granted to them by their Creator but that the Magistrate and/or the Church grant mankind privileges based on their determination as to who are worthy in their eyes to have them. This concept is reflected in modern political theory. As political theorist Thomas Hobb in the 17th century wrote:

"The dominion of the master over his servant is acquired by any victor who shall have the use thereof over the conquered."

This is purely Aristotelean principles at work justifying slavery. Embedded in our language itself is this concept. For instance, the Latin word for property and legal title is *Dominum*. Its root in the Sanscrit means “he who subdues.” Thus, inherently “Christendom” (as opposed to “Christianity”) is about subjugation. The fusion of State power with religious authority remains an inherently dangerous combination.

When did this begin? We can date it specifically to 325 AD when the Church received exclusive State sanction. But even before that time, in 317 AD, the Church, so as to receive benefices and inheritances, incorporated under Roman law. As a corporate entity, the Church became accountable to the State, its responsibility being that of raising up its members to be dutiful Roman subjects; meanwhile, the State’s responsibility was to provide tax-free status and ultimately to outlaw all rivals. Once the Roman Empire fell, however, the Church’s role expanded to overseeing many nations.

The ultimate expression of Aristotelean principles by the Church was the papal bull *Inter Caetera* of 1493 in which Church and State conspired together to divvy up peoples and continents worldwide, not through persuasion leading to conversion but through coercion leading to subjugation, slavery, and/or death. In its entirety it reads:

[Pope] Alexander [vi], bishop, servant of the servants of God, to the illustrious sovereigns, our very dear son in Christ, Ferdinand, king, and our very dear daughter in Christ, Isabella, queen of Castile, Leon, Aragon, Sicily, and Granada, health and apostolic benediction. Among other works well pleasing to the Divine Majesty and cherished of our heart, this assuredly ranks highest, that in our times especially the Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, that the health of souls be cared for and that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself. Wherefore inasmuch as by the favor of divine clemency, we, though of insufficient merits, have been called to this Holy See of Peter, recognizing that as true Catholic kings and princes, such as we have known you always to be, and as your illustrious deeds already known to almost the whole world declare, you not only eagerly desire but with every effort, zeal, and diligence, without regard to hardships, expenses, dangers, with the shedding even of your blood, are laboring to that end; recognizing also that you have long since dedicated to this purpose your whole soul and all your endeavors - as witnessed in these times with so much glory to the Divine Name in your recovery of the kingdom of Granada from the yoke of the Saracens - we therefore are rightly led, and hold it as our duty, to grant you even of our own accord and in your favor those things whereby with effort each day more hearty you may be enabled for the honor of God himself and the spread of the Christian rule to carry forward your holy and praiseworthy purpose so pleasing to immortal God. We have indeed learned that you, who for a long time had intended to seek out and discover certain islands and mainlands remote and unknown and not hitherto discovered by others, to the end that you might bring

to the worship of our Redeemer and the profession of the Catholic faith their residents and inhabitants, having been up to the present time greatly engaged in the siege and recovery of the kingdom itself of Granada were unable to accomplish this holy and praiseworthy purpose; but the said kingdom having at length been re-gained, as was pleasing to the Lord, you, with the wish to fulfill your desire, chose our beloved son, Christopher Columbus, a man assuredly worthy and of the highest recommendations and fitted for so great an undertaking, whom you furnished with ships and men equipped for like designs, not without the greatest hardships, dangers, and expenses, to make diligent quest for these remote and unknown mainlands and islands through the sea, where hitherto no one had sailed; and they at length, with divine aid and with the utmost diligence sailing in the ocean sea, discovered certain very remote islands and even mainlands that hitherto had not been discovered by others; wherein dwell very many peoples living in peace, and, as reported, going unclothed, and not eating flesh. Moreover, as your aforesaid envoys are of opinion, these very peoples living in the said islands and countries believe in one God, the Creator in heaven, and seem sufficiently disposed to embrace the Catholic faith and be trained in good morals. And it is hoped that, were they instructed, the name of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, would easily be introduced into the said countries and islands. Also, on one of the chief of these aforesaid islands the said Christopher has already caused to be put together and built a fortress fairly equipped, wherein he has stationed as garrison certain Christians, companions of his, who are to make search for other remote and unknown islands and mainlands. In the islands and countries already discovered are found gold, spices, and very many other precious things of divers kinds and qualities. Wherefore, as becomes Catholic kings and princes, after earnest consideration of all matters, especially of the rise and spread of the Catholic faith, as was the fashion of your ancestors, kings of renowned memory, you have purposed with the favor of divine clemency to bring under your sway the said mainlands and islands with their residents and inhabitants and to bring them to the Catholic faith. Hence, heartily commending in the Lord this your holy and praiseworthy purpose, and desirous that it be duly accomplished, and that the name of our Savior be carried into those regions, we exhort you very earnestly in the Lord and by your reception of holy baptism, whereby you are bound to our apostolic commands, and by the bowels of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, enjoy strictly, that inasmuch as with eager zeal for the true faith you design to equip and despatch this expedition, you purpose also, as is your duty, to lead the peoples dwelling in those islands and countries to embrace the Christian religion; nor at any time let dangers or hardships deter you therefrom, with the stout hope and trust in your hearts that Almighty God will further your undertakings. And, in order that you may enter upon so great an undertaking with greater readiness and heartiness endowed with benefit of our apostolic favor, we, of our own accord, not at your instance nor the request of anyone else in your regard, but out of our own sole largess and certain knowledge and out of the fullness of our apostolic power, by the authority of Almighty God conferred upon us in blessed Peter and of the vicarship of Jesus Christ, which we hold on earth, do by tenor of these presents, should any of said islands have been found by your envoys and captains, give, grant, and assign to you and your heirs and successors, kings of Castile

and Leon, forever, together with all their dominions, cities, camps, places, and villages, and all rights, jurisdictions, and appurtenances, all islands and mainlands found and to be found, discovered and to be discovered towards the west and south, by drawing and establishing a line from the Arctic pole, namely the north, to the Antarctic pole, namely the south, no matter whether the said mainlands and islands are found and to be found in the direction of India or towards any other quarter, the said line to be distant one hundred leagues towards the west and south from any of the islands commonly known as the Azores and Cape Verde. With this proviso however that none of the islands and mainlands, found and to be found, discovered and to be discovered, beyond that said line towards the west and south, be in the actual possession of any Christian king or prince up to the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ just past from which the present year one thousand four hundred ninety-three begins. And we make, appoint, and depute you and your said heirs and successors lords of them with full and free power, authority, and jurisdiction of every kind; with this proviso however, that by this our gift, grant, and assignment no right acquired by any Christian prince, who may be in actual possession of said islands and mainlands prior to the said birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ, is hereby to be understood to be withdrawn or taking away. Moreover we command you in virtue of holy obedience that, employing all due diligence in the premises, as you also promise - nor do we doubt your compliance therein in accordance with your loyalty and royal greatness of spirit - you should appoint to the aforesaid mainlands and islands worthy, God-fearing, learned, skilled, and experienced men, in order to instruct the aforesaid inhabitants and residents in the Catholic faith and train them in good morals. Furthermore, under penalty of excommunication "late sententie" to be incurred "ipso facto," should anyone thus contravene, we strictly forbid all persons of whatsoever rank, even imperial and royal, or of whatsoever estate, degree, order, or condition, to dare without your special permit or that of your aforesaid heirs and successors, to go for the purpose of trade or any other reason to the islands or mainlands, found and to be found, discovered and to be discovered, towards the west and south, by drawing and establishing a line from the Arctic pole to the Antarctic pole, no matter whether the mainlands and islands, found and to be found, lie in the direction of India or toward any other quarter whatsoever, the said line to be distant one hundred leagues towards the west and south, as is aforesaid, from any of the islands commonly known as the Azores and Cape Verde; apostolic constitutions and ordinances and other decrees whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding. We trust in Him from whom empires and governments and all good things proceed, that, should you, with the Lord's guidance, pursue this holy and praiseworthy undertaking, in a short while your hardships and endeavors will attain the most felicitous result, to the happiness and glory of all Christendom. But inasmuch as it would be difficult to have these present letters sent to all places where desirable, we wish, and with similar accord and knowledge do decree, that two copies of them, signed by the hand of a public notary commissioned therefor, and sealed with the seal of any ecclesiastical officer or ecclesiastical court, the same respect is to be shown in court and outside as well as anywhere else as would be given to these presents should they thus be exhibited or shown. Let no one, therefore, infringe, or with rash boldness contravene, this our recommendation, exhortation,

requisition, gift, grant, assignment, constitution, deputation, decree, mandate, prohibition, and will. Should anyone presume to attempt this, be it known to him that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God and of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul. Given at Rome, at Saint Peter's, in the year of the incarnation of our Lord one thousand four hundred and ninety-three, the fourth of May, and the first year of our pontificate.

CHRISTENDOM'S GENOCIDE OF NATIVE PEOPLES

In fourteen hundred and ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue.

In fourteen hundred and ninety-three, Columbus stole all that he could see.

Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) undertook four expeditions to the New World, presumably to make contact with and to trade with the great empires of the east but on his first journey, Columbus loaded up his ships with cheap trinkets suitable for impressing a primitive people hardly suitable for impressing the Emperor of China or Japan. I am not prepared to say how he knew but somehow Columbus had advanced knowledge as to what to expect and prepared accordingly. Another mystery: how he knew to utilize the prevailing winds, for they operate in a huge circuit. Had he not applied this knowledge properly, he and his crew might well have starved to death.

There's no mistaking Columbus's immediate objective, for by his own hand on his first day in the New World, October 12, 1492, he said in his journal:

I spotted several of them [Indians] wearing GOLD! They tell me that islands to the north and south are where the gold will be found, so I ordered my men to set sail for the gold!

A few months earlier in a letter to the Spanish court dated February 15, 1492, Columbus gave away the source of his lust for gold. He wrote:

... to conquer the world, spread the Christian faith and regain the Holy Land and the Temple Mount.

Making his way to "Hispaniola," as he termed it, Columbus took a few hapless natives captive whom he then mercilessly pumped for information regarding the source of their gold. After several months of diligent searching and inquiry, as soon as he thought he had accurate information, at great personal risk, for it was the dead of winter and storms were brewing, Columbus immediately set sail for Spain to raise up an armada. On his first day back in Spain, his journal entry, March 15, 1493, read:

I am anxious to return to the land that I discovered because I still have not found the gold that I know is there.

As seen above, Columbus's motivation wasn't entirely one of personal enrichment, for that would be to misread the man. A religious zealot who wore a Franciscan habit and re-

ferred to himself by the title of “Christ-bearer,” Columbus’ expressed intention was to obtain New World gold to fund an Old World expedition – one he would gladly have led – to retake the Holy Land from the “infidel” Muslims. In pursuit of this ambition, he would have been acting in his capacity as King Ferdinand’s agent, the same who on his deathbed in 1516 said to his minions he could not yet die for God had told him that he would lead a great crusade to retake Jerusalem. Though he died, the impulse to control Jerusalem remains. To be king of God’s Holy Hill, Mount Zion, is an enduring historical principal which has led to unimaginable bloodshed and carnage.

On September 29, 1494, Columbus wrote:

I have spent the last year on my second voyage across the Ocean Sea. I built a new village on another island [Hispaniola]. My men found gold on this island! I sent a load of gold back to Spain. The Indians were not as friendly this time, and I was forced to kill many of them.

That he did. Columbus killed and killed and killed until the land ran with blood:

According to the customs of the times the prisoners of war were regarded as rebels, reduced to slavery, and five hundred of these were sent to Spain to be sold. It is certain that the condition of the Indians became much worse thereafter, that they were forced into unaccustomed labours, and that their numbers began to diminish rapidly. That these harsh measures were authorized by Columbus there can be no doubt. *(Catholic Encyclopedia)*

When the Spaniards took prisoners they hanged them or burned them to death. Among the Arawaks, mass suicides began, with cassava poison. Infants were killed to save them from the Spaniards. In two years, through murder, mutilation, or suicide, half of the 250,000 Indians on Haiti were dead.

When it became clear that there was no gold left, the Indians were taken as slave labor on huge estates, known later as *encomiendas*. They were worked at a ferocious pace, and died by the thousands. By the year 1515, there were perhaps fifty thousand Indians left. By 1550, there were five hundred. A report of the year 1650 shows none of the original Arawaks or their descendants left on the island.

The chief source - and, on many matters the only source of information about what happened on the islands after Columbus came is Bartolome de las Casas, who, as a young priest, participated in the conquest of Cuba. For a time he owned a plantation on which Indian slaves worked, but he gave that up and became a vehement critic of Spanish cruelty. In Book Two of his *History of the Indies*, Las Casas (who at first urged replacing Indians by black

slaves, thinking they were stronger and would survive, but later relented when he saw the effects on blacks) tells about the treatment of the Indians by the Spaniards. It is a unique account and deserves to be quoted at length:

"Endless testimonies . . . prove the mild and pacific temperament of the natives. . . . But our work was to exasperate, ravage, kill, mangle and destroy; small wonder, then, if they tried to kill one of us now and then. . . . The admiral, it is true, was blind as those who came after him, and he was so anxious to please the King that he committed irreparable crimes against the Indians. . . ."

Las Casas tells how the Spaniards "grew more conceited every day" and after a while refused to walk any distance. They "rode the backs of Indians if they were in a hurry" or were carried on hammocks by Indians running in relays. "In this case they also had Indians carry large leaves to shade them from the sun and others to fan them with goose wings."

Total control led to total cruelty. The Spaniards "thought nothing of knifing Indians by tens and twenties and of cutting slices off them to test the sharpness of their blades." Las Casas tells how "two of these so-called Christians met two Indian boys one day, each carrying a parrot; they took the parrots and for fun beheaded the boys."

The Indians' attempts to defend themselves failed. And when they ran off into the hills they were found and killed. So, Las Casas reports, "they suffered and died in the mines and other labors in desperate silence, knowing not a soul in the world to whom they could turn for help." He describes their work in the mines:

". . . mountains are stripped from top to bottom and bottom to top a thousand times; they dig, split rocks, move stones, and carry dirt on their backs to wash it in the rivers, while those who wash gold stay in the water all the time with their backs bent so constantly it breaks them; and when water invades the mines, the most arduous task of all is to dry the mines by scooping up pansful of water and throwing it up outside. . . ."

After each six or eight months' work in the mines, which was the time required of each crew to dig enough gold for melting, up to a third of the men died. While the men were sent many miles away to the mines, the wives remained to work the soil, forced into the excruciating job of digging and making thousands of hills for cassava plants.

Thus husbands and wives were together only once every eight or ten months and when they met they were so exhausted and depressed on both sides . . . they ceased to procreate. As for the newly born, they died early because their mothers, overworked and famished, had no

milk to nurse them, and for this reason, while I was in Cuba, 7000 children died in three months. Some mothers even drowned their babies from sheer desperation. . . . In this way, husbands died in the mines, wives died at work, and children died from lack of milk . . . and in a short time this land which was so great, so powerful and fertile . . . was depopulated. . . . My eyes have seen these acts so foreign to human nature, and now I tremble as I write. . . ."

When he arrived on Hispaniola in 1508, Las Casas says, "there were 60,000 people living on this island, including the Indians; so that from 1494 to 1508, over three million people had perished from war, slavery, and the mines. Who in future generations will believe this? I myself writing it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it. . . ."

(Howard Zinn, *Christopher Columbus and the Indians*)

It is not simply that Columbus was a nasty guy. Rather, as a son of the Church, his actions were informed by longstanding Church concepts, namely that Christians have the right, nay, the duty, to help themselves to other peoples' lands and to all that was theirs because as non-believers, "heathens" in the eyes of the Church, hell-bound thus having no rights that a Christian need honor.

A cluster of concepts go along with this, one being that equality is a betrayal of faith, that it is an obligation of "believers" to vanquish "heathens." Another, the discovery principle, is that the Land belonged to the first Christian to claim it, for in the absence of Christians, the land is *terra nullius*, that is, it is as if it had been newly formed by a volcano rising out of the sea. To this day, it is commonplace to hear it said that America's Pilgrim founders came to "virgin territory," despite the fact that the Americas have been inhabited for many thousands of years. Another corollary is those engaged in the overthrow of Natives are automatically in the eyes of the Church absolved of any misdeeds committed. Meanwhile, non-Christians have no rights whatsoever, including no right to resist.

One contemporary authority on the way Christendom's relates to Native peoples is former Canadian, Anglican minister Kevin Annett. In his introductory lecture based on two books he wrote, one, *Hidden From History: The Canadian Genocide* and, two, *Love and Death in the Valley*, he said:

For a long time a lot of us have been looking into the details of what went on in terms of genocide of Native people but not the why, that is, the reason that compelled Europeans to come here and felt that they had the legitimate right to destroy other people. I wanted to introduce this whole topic with a quote: and it's actually from *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad. He was a European writer who described in *Heart of Darkness* what the face of colonialism looked like in Africa. And he has this quote that I want to share with you because it puts a lot of what I want to share with you tonight in a context:

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking of it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only, an idea at the back of it, not a sentimental pretense, but an idea, and an unselfish belief in the idea, something you can set up and bow down before and offer a sacrifice to.

Well That idea behind colonialism is what we want to look at tonight and the idea behind genocide in the New World was simply Christianity, and specifically the notion that those who believed in Christ were morally and in other ways superior people than everybody else on the planet and hence had the right to take their land from them.

In further elaborating these points, Annett goes on to say:

Now what's amazing about the discovery principle is that it had to effectively ignore all other European laws and traditions. For example, the Saxon peoples in Europe had something called the occupation laws which everybody in Europe practiced and that is, if you live in a place for three generations or more it is your inherent land and no one has a right to take it from you, even in a time of war. So, in other words, people in France couldn't go over to England and say, "Oh, we discovered this, therefore it is ours." When the Normans conquered the Saxons, they acknowledge the law, that it was still Saxon land, except that we have it now. They never made the statement that this is now absolutely ours and you have no rights. If that was the case, why did they incorporate so much of Saxon law within Norman tradition?

No, on the contrary, they had to totally ignore all of their own European traditions to come into the New World. Suddenly a new set of standards applied. There was no precedent in Europe, whereby discovery alone gave people a right to totally take over the land of another people. That was a totally new idea. So where did they get it from? Where did Europeans get this notion from? They invented it out of thin air apparently.

Actually what happened was a very neat trick that went on. They relied on genocidal philosophy, the belief that there's two standards that apply, one to the conquerors and one to the subjected people. And here's how the logic went: civilized laws, such as the Saxon occupation law, apply only to Christian people, and this is a neat trick since the Saxons weren't even Christians when they invented the law, and yet somehow it's a Christian law that applies only to Christian people. And yet there's another set of standards that apply to non-Christian people. Non-Christian people have an inherent right and that is to be subjugated by Christian people.

When you read all the commentary on this over centuries, its all rooted in this notion, well, we can't apply the same law to them, they're not Christians, kind of like an unstated fact. So there's a double standard principle at work and it's operated for 500 years and it still operates today. For only this two-tiered understanding of the different rights of so-called superior and inferior people could have allowed the conquest of the New World in the first place.

So what we have forgotten as a culture and a people is the fact that this notion of two standards was founded on religious principle, that is, on the fact that the notion that Christians were superior to non-Christian people. Clearly if aboriginal people were recognized as equal, we would never have had any basis either morally or legally to conquer the New World. So they had to be reduced in status and their inferiority would have to be created, even if it didn't already exist within Christianity.

The assumption of Christianity's superior dominion provided this legitimation and the means of legally extinguishing Native title to their own land. How did they do this? They couldn't look to their own laws since the law in Europe said that they didn't have the right to be here, you don't have the right to do this to Indian people.

That legal tradition was superceded by a simple idea and that is the just war principle developed by Augustine. In the just war philosophy, the ultimate morality is simply the conquest of another people by the Church and for the Church, because the conquest of non-Christian people is required for the sake of their spiritual salvation.

It is a very neat philosophy. It means, unless we conquer you, you are going to be damned. You have to be conquered for the sake of your own spiritual welfare. That may seem laughable to us but that in fact was the philosophy that guided it all, that is according to the *Inter Caetera* bull of 1493 and all the papal edicts and laws passed since then, that non-Christian people have no religion and thus no moral or spiritual life.

Now the most famous I quote about this is from Christopher Columbus himself. A year after he got to the Caribbean he said, "These people should make excellent slaves, since they don't appear to have any religion." That's what he wrote in his diary.

ALEXANDER & DANDAMIS

While the Greeks never much got the hang of administering an empire, for a while at least they were able to master the art of conquering to get one. Number one in this category was none other than Aristotle's number one student, the illustrious Alexander the Great from Macedonia. He conquered all the way to the Indus River in the 4th century BC at which

point his army mutinied and he ended up back in Persia but while in India he came into contact with one of the most Christ-like individual known to history, namely, Dandamis the Bragman. We are familiar enough with Alexander the Great who was so great that the Greek philosopher, Diogenes, the Greek (Cynic) philosopher asked him not to block the sun but what do we know of Dandamis? In terms of greatness as Jesus defined it Dandamis far outshone Alexander, yet few in the West have heard of him. And this should give us pause to ask, where were Jesus' roots located anyway, in the East or in the West? Actually, there has been a kind of tug-of-war between East and West. We see this in the word of Hippolytus (c. 225 AD), one of the most notable of Rome's heresy hunters. He wrote:

There is . . . among the Indians a heresy of those who philosophize among the Brahmins, who live a self-sufficient life, abstaining from (eating) living creatures and all cooked food . . . They say that God is light, not like the light one sees, nor like the sun nor fire, but to them God is discourse, not that which finds expression in articulate sounds, but that of knowledge (gnosis) through which the secret mysteries of nature are perceived by the wise.

Strong word that "heresy." Let us get a Hindu perspective on the matter:

As there is no Church of Hinduism everyone holds their own spiritual and philosophical opinions. It is difficult then to understand someone's spirituality simply by looking at their religious trappings. So, in India it is more common to hear someone ask, "What is your practice (or sadhana)?" than, "What do you believe?"

Then when we ask how we can see spirituality in Hindus, the answer comes, by behaviour and practice. We can ask are we humble, are we tolerant and are we non-violent, and can we control our senses and our mind? Are we aware of others suffering and are we willing to give up our comfort to help them? Looking at these criteria Jesus measures up as a Sadhu, a holy man. He preached a universal message, love of God and love of brother, which was beyond any sectarianism or selfishness. Jesus was one of those people who appealed from heart to heart, and that's what makes him such a good Hindu Saint. In my particular tradition, and among other Hindus, He is seen as much more, as an Avatar, specifically a Shaktavesha Avatar or an empowered incarnation. This means that God has sent Him to us for a specific mission to fulfil God's will on earth.

(Jesus through Hindu eyes by Shaunaka Rishi Das)

Returning then to consideration of Dandamis, a famous Indian recluse of the 4th century BC. who lived at the time of the Macedonian conquest. His name came to the attention of Alexander and there was an encounter between them.

DANDAMIS REBUKES ALEXANDER

The following is an excerpt from J.W. McCrindle's translation of Greek historians who accompanied Alexander to India. McCrindle uses the word "Bragman" to mean Brahmin.

They (the Bragmanes) subsist upon such fruits as they can find, and on wild herbs, which the earth spontaneously produces, and drink only water. They wander about in the woods, and sleep at night on pallets of the leaves of trees.

We have ... amongst us a sage called Dandamis, whose home is the woods, where he lies on a pallet of leaves, and where he has nigh at hand the fountain of peace, whereof he drinks, sucking, as it were, the pure breast of a mother.

King Alexander, accordingly, when he heard of all this, was desirous of learning the doctrines of the sect, and so he sent for this Dandamis, as being their teacher and president. Onesikratês was therefore despatched to fetch him, and when he found the great sage he said,

Hail to thee, thou teacher of the Bragmanes. The son of the mighty god Zeus, king Alexander, who is the sovereign lord of all men, asks you to go to him, and if you comply, he will reward you with great and splendid gifts, but if you refuse will cut off your head."

Dandamis, with a complacent smile, heard him to the end, but did not so much as lift up his head from his couch of leaves, and while still retaining his recumbent attitude returned this scornful answer:—

God, the supreme king, is never the author of insolent wrong, but is the creator of light, of peace, of life, of water, of the body of man, and of souls, and these he receives when death sets them free, being in no way subject to evil desire. He alone is the god of my homage, who abhors slaughter and instigates no wars.

But Alexander is not God, since he must taste of death, and how can such as he be the world's master, who has not yet reached the further shore of the river Tiberoboas, and has not yet seated himself on a throne of universal dominion? Moreover, Alexander has neither as yet entered living into Hades, nor does he know the course of the sun through the central regions of the earth, while the nations on its boundaries have not so much as heard his name.

If his present dominions are not capacious enough for his desire, let him cross the Ganges river, and he will find a region able to sustain men if the country on our side be too narrow to hold him.

Know this, however, that what Alexander offers me, and the gifts he promises, are all things to me utterly useless; but the things which I prize, and find of real use and worth, are these leaves which are my house, these blooming plants which supply me with dainty food, and the water which is my drink, while all other possessions and things, which are amassed with anxious care, are wont to prove ruinous to those who amass them, and cause only sorrow and vexation, with which every poor mortal is fully fraught. But as for me, I lie upon the forest leaves, and, having nothing which requires guarding, close my eyes in tranquil slumber; whereas had I gold to guard, that would banish sleep. The earth supplies me with everything, even as a mother her child with milk. I go wherever I please, and there are no cares with which I am forced to cumber myself, against my will.

Should Alexander cut off my head, he cannot also destroy my soul. My head alone, now silent, will remain, but the soul will go away to its Master, leaving the body like a torn garment upon the earth, whence also it was taken. I then, becoming spirit, shall ascend to my God, who enclosed us in flesh, and left us upon the earth to prove whether when here below we shall prove obedient to his ordinances, and who also will require of us, when we depart hence to his presence, an account of our life, since he is judge of all proud wrong-doing; for the groans of the oppressed become the punishments of the oppressors.

Let Alexander, then terrify with these threats those who wish for gold and for wealth, and who dread death, for against us these weapons are both alike powerless, since the Bragmanes neither love gold nor fear death. Go, then, and tell Alexander this: 'Dandamis has no need of aught that is yours, and therefore will not go to you, but if you want anything from Dandamis come you to him.' "

Alexander, on receiving from Onesikratês a report of the interview, felt a stronger desire than ever to see Dandamis, who, though old and naked, was the only antagonist in whom he, the conqueror of many nations, had found more than his match. (See: J.W. McCrindle's, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, Calcutta, Bombay, and London, 1877, (pp. 123-126)

N A T U R A L D E S I R E S

In this passage, Dandamis speaks to Alexander.

But, thirst being a natural desire, if you drink the water you thirst for, your desire for it ceases. Similarly, if feeling hungry, you receive the food you seek, your hunger comes to an end. If, then, man's appetite for gold were on the same natural level, no doubt his cupidity would

cease as soon as he obtained what he wished for. But this is not the case. On the contrary, it always comes back, a passion never satiated, and so man's craving goes on without end, because it does not proceed from an inclination implanted by nature."

(Dandamis, from S. V. Yankowski, *The Brahman Episode*, p. 21–23, quoted by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, <http://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/brother/br-radh.htm>)

POSSSESSIONS

In this passage, Dandamis speaks to Alexander:

I have just as much of the earth as you and every other person; even if you gain all rivers, you cannot drink more than I. Therefore I have no fears, acquire no wounds and destroy no cities. I have just as much earth and water as you; altogether I possess everything.

Learn this wisdom from me: wish for nothing, and everything is yours.

(Dandamis, from Jean W. Sedlar, *India and the Greek World; A study in the transmission of culture*, New Jersey, 1980, Section III, "Classical Notes on India")

THE UNSEEN

The following is from an editorial in the Indian Express.

Apparently, when Alexander the Great came to conquer India, he met a sanyasi, who was actually a great sage. The sage's name was 'Dandamis'; at least, that is how Greek historians seem to have pronounced it. Alexander questioned the sage: "Do you believe in God?" The sage remained silent.

Alexander said, "I cannot see, so how can I believe? How do you believe without seeing him?" The naked sage laughed. He took Alexander by his hand towards the marketplace. Alexander followed — maybe he was taking him somewhere where he could show him God.

A small boy was flying a kite, and the kite had gone so far away that it was impossible to see it. The sage smiled secretly and stopped there, and the king of the Macedons waited impatiently. The sage asked the little boy, "Where is your kite? Because we cannot see it, and without seeing, how can we believe it is actually in existence? So where is that kite of yours? How do you still believe the kite exists?"

The boy laughed merrily and looked pityingly at the sage for asking such an absurd question. He said, "I can feel the pull of it." And the sage said to Alexander, "I can also feel the pull of it."

(Swami Chaitanya Keerti, "Taking God on Trust")

As it was in the days of Alexander, so now also, the armies of the West are back in Af-

ghanistan and are fast approaching the Indus River and they are there for the same reason now as then, for world conquest. Little has changed in 2500 years. Many times over the centuries the imperialistic Occident has sought to subdue the Orient. Wouldn't it make sense, rather than to make war against the East, for the West to sit at the feet of the great oriental sages and learn wisdom in peace?

OUR JUDEO-BUDDHIST HERITAGE

an antidote to Judeo-Christian bellicosity

Gentlemen, go to the rising sun of the East, not to the setting sun of the West, if you wish to see Christ in the plenitude of his glory and in the fullness and freshness of his divine life. Behold he comes to us in his loose flowing garments, his dress and features altogether oriental, a perfect Asiatic in everything."

(Keshub Chandra Sen. *Who Is Jesus Christ?* Calcutta, 1919)

As a transcendent figure, making transcendent claims, Jesus is neither inherently Eastern or Western; nevertheless, because it can be helpful to our understanding his ministry, we might want to consider anew his antecedents.

We don't want to say that Buddhism is a kind of Christianity
and Christianity is a kind of Buddhism.

A mango cannot be an orange.

I cannot accept the fact that a mango is an orange.

They are two different things.

But when you look deeply into the mango and into the orange,
you see that although they are different, they are both fruits.

If you analyze the mango and the orange deeply enough,
you will see the same elements are in both,

like the sunshine, the clouds, the sugar, and the acid, . . .

the only difference between them lies in the degree of emphasis.

At first you see the differences . . .

but if you look a little deeper, you discover many things in common.

Buddha and Jesus are two brothers who have to help each other

. . . not for the sake of Buddhism, not for the sake of Christianity,

but for the sake of humankind and for the sake of other species on Earth.

(Thich Nanh Hanh)

OUR JUDEO-BUDDHIST HERITAGE

an antidote to Judeo-Christian bellicosity

Lecturing in Ascona, Switzerland some years ago, a 91 year-old Zen Buddhist, D. T. Suzuki, put his finger on the problem, namely Western Christendom's ugly proclivity for unbridled aggression. As he put it:

Man against God.
God against man.
Man against Nature.
Nature against man.
God against Nature.
Nature against God.
Very funny religion.

Funny religion, indeed! But it didn't start out that way. Rather, it was subverted. We need to see what Christianity was like before it was hijacked by dark forces. We should know more about the dark forces, that we might not be taken unaware our ourselves subverted.

Mary and James:

the Elevated and the Just

| | |
|---|--------|
| Mary and James: the Elevated and the Just | p. 216 |
| Jesus' right hand and his left | p. 217 |
| Mary and James in prophecy | p. 218 |
| James, the brother of Jesus | p. 218 |
| James the <i>Tsadik</i> | p. 220 |
| Eschatological High Priest | p. 221 |
| The burial shroud | p. 222 |
| Living in community | p. 224 |
| Martyrdom in Jerusalem | p. 226 |
| Pure religion | p. 226 |
| Mary Magdalene | p. 227 |
| From whence cometh the title "Magdalene"? | p. 229 |
| Daughter of Zion | p. 231 |
| Bride of Christ | p. 232 |
| The cry of the penitent | p. 232 |
| Did the Magdalene produce a gospel account? | p. 234 |
| A family account | p. 235 |
| Deeds of James the Just | p. 242 |

JESUS' RIGHT HAND AND HIS LEFT

The missing ingredient in most gospel studies is any consideration of those who created the gospel accounts. It is like a hanging predicate without a subject. Surely the gospels did not come about in a vacuum but each one arose in select communities under the guidance of key personalities. Let us rectify this shortcoming in scholarship by turning our attention to two of the Nazarene movement's more important personalities: Mary and James, the Elevated and the Just. No monolith, from its inception the Nazarene movement demonstrated a tolerant maturity, making room, as it were, under one roof for a wonderful variety of characters, each with his own concerns, ministry, or emphasis. Because of Jesus' transforming influence, there was a blossoming of individuality and scope for bold, new approaches to spirituality. Never was there only one "normative" way to be Christian but the mountain of faith was always approachable from many directions.

By the word the will of God is made known and through the living word, Jesus, the will of God is made known. In just that way, with head and heart working in tandem, James excelled in his handling of Scripture while Mary excelled in her devotion to the Man. No one knows a brother like a brother; that was James. No one knew her beloved as did the beloved one; that was the Magdalene. As a high tower, she was of all women most elevated; he of all men, most just. This one most passionate, that one most mild. Having qualities which balance and complement, this one most vulnerable, that one most venerable; the one deeply caring, the other thoughtfully wise. Very different personalities, each one carved out their own separate identity, each one shaped his or her own unique sphere of influence.

Before appearing to the Twelve, early on the first day of the week, Jesus appeared first to the Magdalene, then, as the *Gospel of the Hebrews* reports, later that morning to James "the brother of the Lord." Priority of appearance after his resurrection was a signal honor for them but for us a sign. The Twelve vied amongst themselves for the honor of sitting on Jesus' right hand and his left in the Kingdom to come but all for naught, for it was not theirs to ask any more than it was his to grant. Nor were they necessarily given first place in the messianic community. One of the Twelve, Judas Iscariot, ended up in last place. Honor given to whom honor is due; so, also, dishonor. In pointing this out, it is not to make light of the institution of the Twelve, for its members' contributions were great and they are with Jesus always. Rather, the purpose is to restore to memory the role played by James and Mary. In so doing, we redress an ancient wrong committed by those Church Fathers who with their stubby pens, as much as they dared, expurgated them both from the *New Testament* and from history. Nevertheless, in the Spirit, these two stood on Jesus' right hand and on his left.

Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks. (*Psalms* 48:9,13)

MARY AND JAMES IN PROPHECY

As one might expect, the bulk of messianic prophecies apply directly to the Messiah but a few also apply to members of his immediate entourage, as well to the larger messianic movement. For instance: "A virgin shall conceive" – would that not be a prophetic reference to Jesus' mother, *Isaiah 7:14*? "A voice crying in the wilderness:" is that not the Forerunner, John, *Isaiah 40:3*? "The son of perdition" – would that not be Judas Iscariot, *Psalms 109:8*? And so it goes from Jesus on down, there was a prophetic delineation of various key players in the messianic movement. Among this select number stands James the Just, otherwise known as "the Bulwark of the People;" and Mary Magdalene whose epithet "Magdalene" means "high tower" or "elevated."

In the Bible, a name change often signified a change of status. Abram became Abraham; Sari, Sarah; Jacob, Israel. Likewise with the granting of titles: Simon became *Petros*, i.e., "a small stone," indicating as it were that he was a chip off of "The Rock." As the 4th century's most renowned biblical scholar, Jerome, (c. 340-420 AD) wrote regarding the Magdalene:

Mary of Magdala received the epitaph "fortified with towers" because of her earnestness and strength of faith, and was privileged to see the rising of Christ first before even the apostles.

And of James, the historian Eusebius (c. 260-340 AD) wrote:

Because of his superlative righteousness, he was called the Righteous [or Just] One [*Dikaios*] and Oblias, which from the Greek translates as "Bulwark of the People."
... as the Prophets declare of him.

JAMES, THE BROTHER OF JESUS

In the aftermath of the Messiah's life, death, and resurrection, Jesus' band of followers, numbering about 120, established themselves in Jerusalem as a society of friends in intentional community with James the Just, the brother of our Lord, as their leader. Yet, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, few particulars relating to this are provided. Curiously missing from this account until chapter 12 is any mention of James. And even when he is introduced into the story line, it's done most peculiarly, simply: "tell James ..." (*Acts 12:17*). Somehow the reader is supposed to divine which of two Jameses was intended or why it might be important to tell him anything at all. To that point, the only Jameses mentioned in *Acts* was James, a son of Zebedee, reported as killed in *Acts 12:2*, and James a son of Alpheus. That James, the Lord's brother, over thirty years the Nazarene community's leader in Jerusalem, not to be recognized is most curious. Folks, this is not the normal way to tell a story! The only way I know to make sense of it is to assume that something fell out of the text. In all probability it

didn't just "fall" out. Though conjectural and not proven, almost certainly a sizable portion of text was removed in a mid- 2nd century, Church-sponsored edit. As if it were a big shark, the Church came along and chomped off an essential piece of the story not suitable to its purposes. Not only missing are James' deeds but, also, much of the real story of the Jerusalem community is missing. Still discernable, however, is the gaping hole left behind.

So long as there existed a thriving Nazarene movement, the emerging, proto-Catholic Church felt its own authority at risk which could explain why James was viewed with such jaundiced eye that even his *Epistle*, which comes closest of any in the *New Testament* in atmosphere and perspective to *Matthew's Gospel*, was not granted unqualified canonical status but was placed in the disputed category where it remained in limbo for many centuries. Only after the Nazarene movement was toast, was James heartily embraced.

Whereas the tendency has been to view the Magdalene absent any reference to her Jewishness, as if perhaps she was divorced from her roots, James often is seen as being too Jewish. That was Luther's assessment. In his edition of the *New Testament*, he bumped James' epistle, which he deprecated as "a strawy epistle," from its accustomed location, relegating it to an appendix at the rear. His expressed intention: to do away with it altogether:

The Epistle of James is written by a Jew who so far as Christianity is concerned has indeed heard the bell ring, but does not know where the clapper is. Here in Wittenberg we have cast James out of theology; indeed we have almost thrown him out of the Bible. (Martin Luther, 1542)

Unlike Luther, Catholicism and Orthodoxy have long wanted to identify James with their respective institutions, albeit on their terms. Recasting James as a proto-Catholic, they credit him with authoring the Divine Liturgy of St James, an ancient, still widely-practiced Church rite. However, neither this rite's well-developed Trinitarian theology nor its high-church ceremonialism, could James or anyone else from the 1st century have conceived. Initially, so far from being popular with the Church, James was roundly ignored. For instance, no reference to him is found amongst the sub-apostolic Church Fathers. Nor is his epistle listed in the Roman Catholic Muratorian canon of c. 200 AD. Only in the 3rd century, once the Nazarene movement that James had led had been put to flight and declared a heresy, do we find record of a Church father, namely, Origen, looking favorably upon him. In the 4th century, Augustine embraced him and the church historian, Eusebius, extolled him, making reference to his "episcopal throne." (This very throne, having survived into modern times, on scientific examination, proved, alas, to be a 4th century artifact derived from the same material as the church structure from the same time period associated with it.)

By the way, what a fine piece of nonsense: James "enthroned," ruling from a raised platform as if he were a potentate, when his only authority was moral authority which he exer-

cised mostly from on his knees. The Church's perceived need to connect itself to James by the use of hopelessly anachronistic claims is symptomatic of its inherent insecurity about its origins, all of which reflects adversely on the presumed efficacy of its rituals, which depends on unbroken, physical, apostolic succession.

Though neither the Jewish leadership then or the Church now care to acknowledge this, James, of all Jews, was most observant. He never abandoned tallit or phylacteries, yet, at the same time, he was most Christ-like, thereby demonstrating the compatibility of Moses and Jesus. At the same time that the Jewish leadership found his message to be too universal, the Church was finding it to be too Jewish or, as Edward Gibbon put it:

The Nazarenes were Jews who were converted to Christ, who, because they kept the law of Moses together with the gospel, were cast out of the Church.

(The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire)

In light of all we know about the Magdalene, it would be to blunder to portray James as having been a narrow-minded legalist when we know that the movement to which both belonged was at heart humane. We should know better than to think that James took pride in his religion or his ethnicity instead of his humanity. Instead of parochialism or exclusivist tendencies, by the evidence of his epistle, we can say that he was wonderfully open and generous. He said it all when he wrote:

... mercy rejoiceth against judgment. (*James 2:12*)

J A M E S T H E T S A D I K

In *Genesis*, for his kinsman Lot's sake, and for his kinsman's family's sake, Abraham negotiated with God to save Sodom. He asked of God:

"Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?" (*Genesis 18:24*)

Eventually Abraham bargained God down to ten, whether that for the sake of ten righteous men (the word for righteous in Hebrew being *Tsadik*, or *Zaddik*), God would spare the city. From this incident was developed a generalized application, that humanity's continued existence is predicated on the presence of God's righteous ones among us. James the Just, that is, James the Righteous One, *Ya'akov Ha Tsadik*, was widely considered to be such a one. Thus we read in *Thomas*:

The disciple said to Jesus, "We know that you are going to leave us. Who will be our leader? Jesus said to them, "No matter where you are you are to repair to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being. (Logion 12)

James' reputation for righteousness stems from a variety of causes:

And once during a drought, he [James] 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." (Epiphanius)

1st century Jewish historian, Josephus, speaking of James' "great holiness," "his preeminent righteousness," attributed this to his devotion to prayer. For this reason also was conferred on him the appellation, "camel knees." As James wrote:

. . . the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (*James 5:16*)

Personal piety in his view was not an end in itself but a means to a greater end and without charity piety is a detriment. As for James' regard for the poor, it was not based on sympathy alone but on respect:

Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? (*James 2:5*)

ESCHATOLOGICAL HIGH PRIEST

As Aaron served as his brother's spokesman and was appointed to be the high priest, so was James Jesus' spokesman and high priest after his death and resurrection. Confirming this are accounts from antiquity of his entering the Temple's inner sanctum as opposition high priest:

But we find that he [James] also exercised the Priesthood according to the ancient Priesthood. . . . To James alone was it permitted to enter the Holy of Holies once a year, because he was a Nazarite and connected to the priesthood. . . . Many before me have reported this of him - Eusebius, Clement and others. He was also allowed to wear the [priestly] mitre on his head as the aforementioned trustworthy persons have testified in the same historical writings. (Epiphanius)

For 32 years the Sadducees bided their time, never forgetting Jesus' chastisement of them when he cleansed the temple in 30 AD or whose brother it was who continued to challenge their legitimacy, for all this while James had been a bone in their throat. His mere presence reminded them of their guilt. His modest lifestyle was a daily reproach to their extravagance. Because they were held in contempt by the people, the Sadducees were not anxious to move precipitously against him. Eventually they felt compelled to act, particularly when arose a new controversy regarding their designs on the Temple's treasury. According to Josephus (*Ant. 20: 205-7*), the Sadducees, led by Ananus II, in 58 AD illegally seized that portion of the tithe due the rural priests. Upholding the Temple's integrity, James appears to have championed the rural priests' cause. Dangerous. The Establishment is always greedy.

It was just then that Jerusalem found itself between Roman-appointed governors, that is,

the interregnum between Festus and Albinus. Now, finally, the temple leadership must have thought, whatever the risk, the time was ripe to make their move. Eager to have done with James once and for all, the Sadducees chose as the opportune moment the Passover in 62 AD to query James: "What is meant by 'the door of Jesus'?" A transparent ploy intended to mousetrap him, James responded, as they knew he must:

"Why do you ask me concerning the Son of Man? He is sitting in heaven on the right hand of the great Power and will come in the clouds of heaven."

By identifying Jesus as the Savior, James gave the Temple leadership the pretext they needed to charge him with "having transgressed the law." Thus on such grounds as these did they engineer his demise.

In rounding out our understanding of James' sacerdotal ministry, we should remember that beyond supplication, as we shall see below, other Temple functions existed which also needed to be fulfilled, for the Temple experience was as different again from a Pentecostal shout and praise meeting as that is from a high Episcopal Church service. As C. S. Lewis invites us to do in his book: *Reflections on the Psalms*, picture if you can the festive pageantry of the high holy days, the singers and the minstrels, trumpets blowing and damsels with timbrels and tambourines in hand, following whom was a great throng, as the folk ascended the Temple steps in grand procession. Glorious the shouts of hosanna! James was not just an observer but a participant, and more than that, he presided over this joyful throng. To James, no less than to the Psalmist before him, nothing could be finer than to:

... dwell in the house of God ... to behold the fair beauty of YHWH and to enquire in his temple. ... I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept the holy day. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. (Psalm 27:4, 42:4, 84:10)

THE BURIAL SHROUD

In the *Gospel to the Hebrews*, James and Jesus break bread together, after which Jesus hands to the "servant of the high priest" the grave clothing. Who would that have been? Surely not the servant of the high priest, Caiphas, the same as helped bring about his execution? That makes no sense, for James, not Caiphas, was the eschatological high priest. By handing over to James' servant, and not to James himself, the grave clothes, Jesus preserved James' ability to remain ritually clean in accordance with applicable Mosaic provision. Possibly one of the items Jesus presented James at that time is known to us today as the Shroud of Turin. Certainly possession of such an object would've lent credence to the disciples' eyewitness accounts of the resurrection, as well, help explain the positive response they received.

*I am a priest of the Lord,
and to Him I do priestly service:
and to Him I offer the sacrifice of my thought.
For His thought is not like the thought of the world
nor the thought of the flesh,
nor like them that work carnally.
The sacrifice of the Lord is righteousness,
and purity of heart and lips.
Present your reins before Him blamelessly:
and let not thy heart do violence to heart,
nor thy soul to soul.
Thou shalt not acquire a stranger
by the price of thy silver,
neither shalt thou deprive him of the covering
of his nakedness:
But put on the grace of the Lord without stint;
and come into His Paradise
and make thee a garland from its tree,
and put it on thy head and be glad;
and recline on His rest,
and glory shall go before thee,
and thou shalt receive of His kindness
and of His grace;
and thou shalt be flourishing in truth in the praise
of His holiness.
Praise and honor be to His name. Hallelujah.*

(Ode 20)

LIVING IN COMMUNITY

Just as a coal taken from the hearth burns less brightly in isolation so also do our lights often burn less brightly in isolation. We have God above and within, for he is both transcendent and immanent, yet we are also social beings in need of one another. Whereas walking in the light is a move toward personal transcendence; holy friendship is a move toward mutual transcendence; while the linking of voluntary, face-to-face home-based communities is a move toward societal transcendence.

And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to every man had need. And they continuing daily of one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. (Acts 2:44-47)

A lover of equality, James would have seen in this the opportunity to put into practice the egalitarian principles he advocates so eloquently in his epistle. Perhaps the bartering of services within the community helped offset the lack of money while the tightening of bonds that goes with communal living helped stave off the demoralizing effect of having individuals picked off one-by-one by the authorities.

Unity is the goal of *community*. But this is not to be taken as automatic for we must be aware of intentional community where there are too many intentions, especially of the wrong kind. Either there is transparency with the intentions being clearly articulated or not; either a God dynamic or a group dynamic exists; either coercion or autonomy; either we are liberated or else controlled. That is the choice. The closer people draw to one another, the more the boundaries between them need to be respected. Intentional community is not meant for those with an exaggerated regard for human authority: "I am of Cephas, I am of Paul." Nor should it foster dependency. Purposeful living requires personal initiative. Unity is not uniformity.

As James interpreted it, faith is an active principle, not the substance of things hoped for, but the *substantiating* of things hoped for:

Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. . . . For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:17-18, 26)

Taking Abraham for his example, James related deeds, faith, and friendship:

Was not Abraham our forefather justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do ye see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was

fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. (James 2:21-23)

A friend of God is one who shows himself friendly to the things valued by God. Thus James says it ought not to be that we bless God but curse men which are made after the similitude of God. Friendship with God fits us to be members of a society of friends, holy friendship – not doctrinal formulations or hierarchy – providing the organizing principle.

In living lightly, James was keeping to a way of life which, if broadly practiced, would obviate the need for war. Wars arise from two causes: greed and need. Greed needs to be harnessed, even as needs need to be met. There's room for all under the sun on God's green earth, if we will but accommodate one another.

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask not and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (James 4:1-3)

Another take on James' voluntary simplicity and vegetarian lifestyle:

The abstinence of St. James was not exclusively directed to the mortification of the flesh . . . He who abstains from meat altogether would not be called upon to eat the Paschal Lamb; he who had no land or possessions was not concerned with the laws of Tithe . . . Like Jesus the Temple was for him a House of Prayer: he was Righteous, he kept the Law, so far as it applied to him, but sacrifices were a matter of flesh-eaters and tithes for the rich. (F. C. Burkitt, *Christian Beginnings*)

For the better part of 2000 years, with few exceptions, Christendom has avoided facing the challenge James presents to believers to disengage from the world system and exit from the circle of war. Surely we do not need to be fronting for rapacious corporations, war profiteers or grasping politicians, anymore than we need to involve ourselves in capitalistic or nationalistic conflicts. Much less do we need to be involved in the murderous, One World Global Zionist dictatorship or the Zionized churches promoting it. By contrast, living lightly is an appeal to the conscience, saying by our example that we march to a different drummer and need not live by the law of conspicuous consumption or trying to keep up with the Jones.

An alternative to Judeo-Christian belligerency exists - namely Nazarene faith and practice. Not a sect, organization, or school of thought, it is an attitude toward life that has been there all along, just overlooked or ignored (that is, when not actively being persecuted.) Whereas Zionized Christians are seemingly transfixed by a "my God is bigger than your

god” mentality, priding themselves on their "chosen"-ness, those who are really chosen never try to get a leg up on anyone, much less bomb their neighbors into "democracy," or rip off their art and museum pieces or sow the land with radiation.

The self-perception of a Nazarene is that of inquirer, seeking Life's source, nature, and purpose, with a commitment to ethical standards. Written off as "purists" or as "idealists," then marginalized, they often live and die in profound obscurity. Or, as has been the case with such leading Nazarene luminaries such as Mary Magdalene and James the Just, they have been maligned, misrepresented, and/or martyred.

MARTYRDOM IN JERUSALEM

Unable to endure any longer the testimony of the man, who through a lifetime of ascetic observance and piety was deemed by all men to be the most righteous, they [the priests] slew him [James], using anarchy as an opportunity for power, since at that time Festus [Procurator 60-62] had died in Judea, leaving the province without governor or procurator. . . . (Clement, quoted by Eusebius)

While thus they were stoning him, one of the Priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of Rechabites, spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out, saying, "Stop what you are doing, the Just One is praying for you." And one among them, who was a fuller, took the club with which he beat out clothes and struck the Just One on the head. . . . Thus, he suffered martyrdom, and they buried him on the spot by the temple, and his monument is still there by the temple. (Hegesippus)

From 30 AD, before Pentecost, to 62 AD, at Passover, when he was martyred, James oversaw the messianic community in Jerusalem. As a light on a hill, even holy Mt. Zion, he was most conspicuously placed. Jerusalem, the focus of three world religions, is the navel of the world, where trade routes from three continents meet; where Abraham would have sacrificed Isaac; where the temple in which Jesus was dedicated stood; where prophets prophesied; where David reigned; where pilgrims gather; where armies clashed, where the Messiah suffered passion and died and rose again, to which he will return to reign with the saints in glory. It had to have been a very tough posting, though not without its rewards. For more than three decades, for thirty-two years, James stood in the gap, forestalling judgment, this despite the ire of the religious authorities. Except that they feared the people who held James in awe, the Temple's rulers would have gladly done him in at any time. Eventually they created an opportunity.

PURE RELIGION

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27)

By the definition James provides us above, pure religion is one of good deeds performed, not a belief system or an organization to instill such a belief system, much less is it all the trappings and extraneous paraphernalia that undergird religion. As even a cursory study of history will show that over time religious organizations lose their integrity and fractionate and new ones arise to take their place, and why not? None of them has an innate claim to sanction. Underwriting much of this religious activity are folk afraid to stand on their two feet, afraid of unstructured freedom. Claiming God, they follow man; they want the comfort of knowing what to do, without personally having to figure it out. More than the freedom that is ours in Jesus Christ, what they want is security, even the everlasting arms of the Church. Whereas pure religion is the Golden Rule of compassionate living, impure religion is a crutch leading to closed minds, ritualistic behavior, and blind compulsions. Orthopraxy - *i.e.*, right deeds, not orthodoxy - *i.e.*, right creeds, is a truer indicator of the Nazarene Way.

Beyond good deeds performed, James saw humanity's potential to walk with God, to be blessed by God, and ultimately to:

... receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them which love him. (James 1.12)

M A R Y M A G D A L E N E

Picking our way through the welter of opposing claims about the Magdalene is no small task: in Catholic tradition, there is the fallen Mary, ever submissive to her "betters," ever repenting (thus "maudlin" a word deriving from her name, meaning effusively sentimental); also there is the feminist Mary, a usurper of male prerogatives, jealous for her gender; also, there is Scorsese's tattooed Mary, a lascivious temptress. Then, too, there's the enlightened, Gnostic Mary, "the one who knew the All." (The Egyptian goddess Isis was so termed.) According to this interpretation, when Jesus cast from Mary seven demons, she descended through the seven gates of the underworld before being reborn the initiatrix of sacramental ecstasy. Then, as an avatar of the divine feminine, as the crescent moon rising from the sea to the stars, Mary, through a Gnostic bridal chamber rite presumably carries souls aloft to the apotheosis of divine self-realization. Showered with extravagant praise, the Magdalene has been titled "the gate of heaven," "refuge of sinners," "ark of the Covenant," "second Eve," "the Holy Grail."

But terms meant to demean are also hurled at her, such as "plaiter of hair," euphemistically, a prostitute. It is enough to cause one to exclaim: "will the real Mary Magdalene please stand up?"

This we know, making Mary Magdalene out to be some sort of goddess is to miss the

point entirely, that at every turn the imagery regarding her is not pagan but fits comfortably within the monotheistic tradition. She was worshipful, not worshiped. This we can assert for now, that Mary Magdalene symbolizes the human search for the Divine, even as Jesus symbolizes the Divine search for humanity, and it would seem that the both found in each other what they were looking for.

Along with James, the Magdalene, though she was one of the Nazarene movement's key personalities, yet she is missing *in toto* from *Acts*. As for the canonical accounts, why is it like extracting teeth to pull from them a coherent story about her? Whether by inadvertent omission or by design, the story line is so scrambled that her relationship with Jesus is effectively obscured. Only by conflating the canonicals can we restore to any degree the true state of affairs, yet the composite picture formed thereby remains problematical. For instance, trying to account for anointing scenes which differ in time, place, and circumstance, yet curiously overlapping in coincidental detail. Thus *John's* anointing scene, chapter 12, involved Mary of Bethany in her brother Lazarus' home six days before Jesus' crucifixion, whereas in *Mark*, chapter 14, and *Matthew*, chapter 26, it is an unidentified woman who anoints Jesus in "the house of Simon the Leper" two days before. *Luke*, chapter 7, has an unidentified penitent anointing Jesus, but this happened much earlier in his career, this time, however, "in the house of Simon the Pharisee." In *Matthew* and *Mark*, it was Jesus' feet which were anointed, whereas in *Luke* and *John*, it was his head. Though agreeing in no other particular, *Luke* and *Mark* agree word-for-word that an "alabaster jar of ointment" was used. In none of the canonicals is the woman doing the anointing identified as "the Magdalene." True, *Luke* refers to her by that name in chapter 8, but in another context, as one "out of whom went seven demons." So which, if any, of these was one of the three who stood at the foot of Jesus' cross? Were we to conclude that they were all one-and-the-same individual, how then do we resolve apparent contradictions baffling even to scholars who refer to this as "the muddle of the Marys?" Why all the convoluted reticence?

Was there something to hide? Having only the *New Testament* to go by, one supposition is as defensible or as indefensible as another. The Greek Orthodox Fathers distinguished three persons: the penitent of *Luke* 7:36-50; Martha's sister, *Luke* 10:38-42 and *John* 11; and Mary Magdalene. Protestants, however, generally accede to there having been only two distinct persons, Mary of Bethany and the penitent of *Luke* chapter 7. As for the Latin Fathers of the Catholic Church, they are on record as declaring the three one. Such was the position of Pope Gregory I in 591 AD. There matters rested for many, long centuries, that is, until quite recently when *MS Pepys 2498* confirmed the traditional Catholic position in this matter that Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany are one and the same person.

FROM WHENCE COMETH THE TITTLE "MAGDALENE"?

What does this word "Magdalene" mean? Over this question, a three-way split of opinion exists. Some theologians associate this title with a fishing village southwest of the Sea of Tiberias on the flank of Mt. Arbel called Magdala, (*Matthew 15:39*), a transliteration from the Greek, the Hebrew of which is Migdal meaning tower as in *Joshua 19:8: Migdal-el*, "the tower of God." It could stand for any raised platform as in *Jeremiah 8:4*, where it is translated as "pulpit" but more commonly it was applied to various fortified cities within Israel. As one theory goes, in Migdal Nunaiya "the Tower of Fish" (the name being derived from a fish drying operation), there was a woman, named Mary, who met Jesus on the one occasion we know of that he journeyed there, and subsequently followed him to Jerusalem. Thus, as one from Magdala, she became known ever afterward as "Magdalene," which is to say, she was "of Magdala." One little problem with this explanation: were she the same Mary as was the sister of Martha, whose brother was Lazarus, then it would appear that she was from Bethany in Judea, not from Magdala in Galilee. Another consideration: if she were the same woman as anointed Jesus in *Luke*, chapter 7, then she must have known him well before he went to Magdala, inasmuch as this anointing took place before he went north.

Moving on then to a second explanation: certain other scholars have said that Mary was called "Magdalene" because of the seductive arranging of her hair:

Dr. Lightfoot, finding in some of the Talmudists' writings that Mary Magdalene signified Mary the plaiter of hair, thinks it applicable to her, she having been noted, in the days of her iniquity and infamy, for that plaiting of hair which is opposed to modest apparel. (*Matthew Henry's Commentary*)

Astonishing, really, that anyone would paste a woman with a term of opprobrium, a euphemism for an adulteress, passing this off as an acceptable explanation for her title and resorting to Jesus' and the Nazarenes' sworn enemy, the Talmud, for support of this position! Though a distinguished scholar, Lightfoot is playing fast and loose with the language. On linguistic grounds alone, his suggestion is most dubious in that the underlying Aramaic expression, *magadla nshaya*, a woman's hairdresser, is not even a near fit. He is simply grasping at straws. In dealing condescendingly with the Magdalene, Lightfoot was hardly alone. Over a thousand years before, in a famous address (or infamous, depending on one's point of view), Pope Gregory the Great (540-604 AD), drew a strong connection between demonic oppression and the Magdalene's surmised sinfulness. In his Easter homily of 591 AD, he stated:

She whom Luke calls the sinful woman, whom John calls Mary, we believe to be the Mary from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark. And what did these seven devils signify, if not all the vices? . . . It is clear, brothers, that the woman previously used the unguent to perfume her flesh in forbidden acts.

Notice how Gregory says "it is clear, brothers" at the very point his argument is least clear. So ingrained is this assumption that few Church communicants are aware that no scriptural basis exists for saying that the Magdalene had been a prostitute. In 1969 the Second Vatican Council, in an attempt to make amends, removed from her title "penitent," also removed from the liturgical calendar for her feast day the traditional reading, *Luke*, chapter 7. Yet old stereotypes die hard. Going where no reputable scholar would go, movie producer, Mel Gibson, in his "Passion" identified the woman taken in adultery in *John 8* as being the Magdalene and the late Pope, having been granted an advance screening, is alleged to have said, "it is as it was." No, it isn't "as it was." Not at all. It is as the Church's misanthropic, hierarchical leadership has long misrepresented it as being. Had the Magdalene indeed been an adulteress, as charged, it would not matter, God's grace suffices. What is happening here, however, is a concerted effort to reduce her stature by dredging up an invented past. On this basis, theologians, various ones through the centuries, such as Augustine of Hippo, have laid upon the Magdalene the claim that she had to subject herself to the apostles so as to help her overcome her sinful nature. Or they would say that Jesus let Thomas touch him, whereas he forbade the Magdalene to do so because she was abjectly sinful in a way that Thomas was not. But this "touch me not" verse is entirely absent in *MS Pepys 2498*. But here is the clincher: in *MS Pepys 2498*, the Magdalene is converted in chapter 31, while the incident involving the anonymous woman taken in adultery doesn't take place until chapter 58. Were the adulterous lady really the Magdalene, then she must have done some serious backsliding after her conversion, only to be restored to everyone's good graces just in time for the Passion. Nonsense.

Moving on, let us seek a third explanation, for if Mary hailed from Bethany, then she was not from Magadan, an obscure fishing village north of Galilee. Rather than a place name, "Magdalene" is the title Jesus conferred upon her, its Hebrew meaning being "elevated" – for when everyone else was putting her down, Jesus was lifting her up, setting her on the King's royal highway. The elevated position of the Magdalene in the *Nazarene Narrative Gospel* should be a wake-up call, hopefully, to reconsider the role Jesus envisioned for feminine leadership as the following quote from *Micah* suggests: "Magdalene" does not mean "from Magdala," a Galilean fishing village, but its Hebrew meaning is "elevated," a suitable title for one whom Jesus elevated to be the apostles' apostle. This epitaph for the Magdalene derives not from a place name taken from an obscure fishing village, nor was it a scarlet badge of shame; rather, as the following quote from *Micah* suggests, it was a title of profound and prophetic significance:

In that day, saith YHVH will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her

that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and YHVH shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever. And thou O tower of the flock (*Magdal-eder*), the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. (*Micah 4:6-8*)

What set the Magdalene apart from all others is that she loved Jesus with all her heart and wasn't afraid to show it. Whereas some had scoffed at her for "wasting" expensive ointment on Jesus, Jesus made a point of saying that her deed should be remembered in perpetuity. No idle gesture was this for the Magdalene stood by Jesus after all the rest had fled. Truly, she is deserving of the sobriquet, "O tower of the flock." No wonder she was the first person he chose to reveal himself to on rising from death to life. No wonder his commissioning her to tell his apostles that he had risen, for in this he made her *de facto* apostle to the apostles. No wonder Jesus upbraided his disciples for their unbelief, for they dismissed her report to them out-of-hand. Even then the apostles never could quite accept that Jesus would have elevated a mere woman above themselves. That may explain why the beloved disciple's gospel was not utilized early on, for evidently neither Peter or most of the other apostles were ready to see patrilineal Judaism set on its ear.

Among the last to leave the cross and the earliest to the grave site, the Magdalene gave good evidence as to who was her all. Though she conversed with angels in the garden of Gethsemene, this was not a matter of consequence to her; all she wanted was to know what had been the disposition of the body of her Lord. As she stood without the empty sepulcher weeping, a voice said to her, "Mary." It is this same voice which each will hear who is called to the heavenly marriage feast. By reason of her single-minded devotion, Mary has come to epitomize in idealized form more than just her gender but the entire community of faith which says "Come, Lord Jesus, Come!"

From whence came the term "Magdalene" if not from Jesus, for who else would have been so bold or so insightful as to take a poor, afflicted woman out of whom came seven demons, and apply to her such an honorific title? Jesus wanted this woman to exemplify the transformative power of God's redeeming grace and if it takes 2000 years for his followers to follow him in this, then so be, his judgment stands. Jesus said that the Magdalene's devotion to him would be spoken of wherever the Gospel went in all the world. So shall it ever be.

D A U G H T E R O F Z I O N

Hailing from Bethany, a town but a mile from Jerusalem, Mary was probably witness to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Representationally speaking, she was the Daughter of Zion. Consequentially, the appropriateness of applying *Zechariah 9:9* to her:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;
Shout O daughter of Jerusalem:
behold thy king cometh unto thee:
he is just, and having salvation;
lowly, and riding upon an ass,
and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.

BRIDE OF CHRIST

Like the arm of the bridegroom over the bride, so is my yoke over those who know me. (Odes of Solomon 42:8)

Just as James represented Jesus' family, the house of David, the *Desposyni*, so Mary representationally was God's archetypal Bride. The day when Bride and Bridegroom will consummate their marriage approaches:

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. . . . Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:7-8, 9)

Mary's destiny was bound up with Jesus'. Thus, paraphrasing Paul, when Jesus was crucified, the Magdalene, who was standing at the foot of his cross, through identification, was crucified with him. When Jesus was buried, she, a "bearer of myrrh," through identification, was buried with him, having been baptized into his death. When Jesus arose from death to life, she, through identification, arose with him in newness of life. Thereafter the life she lived was not her own but his in her for she, through perfect identification, had presented herself a holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God. Through this fellowship of sufferings, she found consolation. No longer conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of her mind, she knew in a living way what was the good and acceptable will of God.

THE CRY OF THE PENITENT

*My heart was cloven and its flower appeared;
and grace sprang up in it:
and it brought forth fruit to the Lord,
for the Most High clave my heart by His Holy Spirit
and searched my affection towards Him:*

*and filled me with His love.
And His opening of me became my Salvation;
and I ran in His way in His peace,
even in the way of truth:
from the beginning and even to the end
I acquired His knowledge:
and I was established upon the rock of truth,
where He had set me up:
and speaking waters touched my lips
from the fountain of the Lord without grudging:
and I drank and was inebriated with the living water that doth not die;
and my inebriation was not one without knowledge,
but I forsook vanity and turned to the Most High my God,
and I was enriched by His bounty,
and I forsook the folly which is diffused over the earth;
and I stripped it off and cast it from me:
and the Lord renewed me in His raiment,
and possessed me by His light,
and from above He gave me rest in incorruption;
and I became like the land which blossoms
and rejoices in its fruits:
and the Lord was like the Sun
shining on the face of the land;
He lightened my eyes,
and my face received the dew;
and my nostrils enjoyed
the pleasant odour of the Lord;
and He carried me to His Paradise;
ere is the abundance of the pleasure of the Lord;
and I worshipped the Lord on account of his glory;
and I said, Blessed, O Lord,
are they who are planted in thy land!
and those who have a place in thy Paradise;*

*and they grow by the fruits of thy trees.
And they have changed from darkness to light.
Behold! all thy servants are fair,
who do good works, and turn away from wickedness
to the pleasantness that is thine:
and they have turned back the bitterness
of the trees from them, when they were planted in thy land!
and those who have a place in thy Paradise;
and they grow by the fruits of thy trees.
And they have changed from darkness to light.
Behold! all thy servants are fair, who do good works,
and turn away from wickedness to the pleasantness that is thine:
and they have turned back the bitterness of the trees from them,
when they were planted in thy land;
and everything became like a relic of thyself,
and a memorial for ever of thy faithful works.
For there is abundant room in thy Paradise,
and nothing is useless therein:
I am altogether filled with fruit;
glory be to thee, O God,
the delight of Paradise for ever. Hallelujah.*

(Odes of Solomon, 11)

DID THE MAGDALENE PRODUCE A GOSPEL ACCOUNT?

As does no other gospel text, the *Nazarene Gospel Narrative* makes explicit who Mary Magdalene was. No incidental figure was she; rather, Mary was the penitent who had washed Jesus' feet with her tears; she was the one from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons, who, once freed from her affliction, joined Jesus' entourage; also, she was the one who anointed Jesus beforehand for burial. Also made explicit is that Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany were one and the same person. In other words, Martha was her sister and Lazarus, her brother. The Magdalene was the one of the three Marys keeping vigil at the cross. She helped prepare Jesus' body for burial and later was the first to discover the empty tomb. She was the one in the garden to whom our resurrected Lord first appeared. Moreover, and most relevant to the current inquiry, Mary Magdalene was the Beloved Disciple. It is not that

the other disciples were not loved, or less loved. It is just that this was her title, and, most relevant to this study, I am asserting that she was either the original author or, one of the original authors of what we call “the Fourth Gospel,” otherwise called the *Gospel of John*.

A FAMILY ACCOUNT

A peculiar fact needing to be accounted for is the total lack of references to the Fourth Gospel by Church Fathers before 180 AD. Some scholars say that this is evidence that it didn't exist until then. But left unexplained is who could have written so long after the fact so poignant, so unique a composition, so filled with telling details, could have come to be. Yet "Orthodox" or Catholic" Christianity was unaccountably slow to accept it. The first use of *John's Gospel* that we know of was by the Gnostic, Heracleon, (d. 180 AD). There is a mystery here to be solved.

Decidedly more intimate than the synoptic gospels, this gospel is in some respects more a *private* memoir than a public accounting of Jesus' ministry, featuring as it does one-on-one meetings such as with Nicodemus or with the Samaritan woman by the well. Its detailed recollection of Jesus' passion is more personal, more poignant. Not only does it hone in on Jesus' Judean, not his Galilean, ministry, but it also hones in on a particular family – that consisting of three siblings: Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Plausibly it is the family witness of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary as recorded by the apostle John. Or perhaps it is the Magdalene's personal witness. Whose voice is to be heard? On grammatical grounds alone, we can say that it's not the voice of the John who wrote the *Apocalypse*. He was noted for his incorrect Greek whereas this is beautifully correct. Nor is it the voice of the author of the *Epistles of John* which contain vague resemblances to *John's* prologue but that prologue is not part of proto-John. Had Lazarus been its author, he would have been credited, just as *Luke* and *Mark* were credited, even though they were not apostles.

Perhaps in part out of gratitude for restoring her brother Lazarus to life six days before the Passover, the Magdalene anointed Jesus with oil worth 300 denarii. In doing this, unintentionally she raised the stakes even higher because this so angered Judas Iscariot that it led to his betraying Jesus' location to the authorities in return for 30 denarii – that being the tithe on 300 denarii. Was this just a curious coincidence? The question hinges on what had angered him. Only *John's Gospel*, (the *Magdalene's Gospel*, if you will) informs us that Judas Iscariot's was a thief who had been filching from the money-bag. Framing the crime scene:

1. Judas kept the money box.
2. Judas was pilfering from the money box.
3. The betrayal was conceived after a dispute involving 300 denarii.

4. Judas negotiated for thirty denarii (pieces of silver) to perform the betrayal.
5. Judas threw the money obtained from the betrayal into the temple.

The flask of perfume worth 300 denarii was part of the monetary holdings of the group. Note that Judas knew the exact amount the perfume was worth when Mary poured it on Jesus. The loss of the flask of perfume resulted in a 300 denarii loss to the group. However the tithes due on the flask would've been 30 denarii. The moneychanging fee for converting the flask contents into money was ten percent or 30 denarii. Judas in anticipation of obtaining the 30 denarii moneychanging fee for himself advanced himself 30 denarii by pilfering from the money box that contained the tithes to the temple.

With the flask of perfume consumed, Judas was going to be 30 denarii short on the temple tithes that were due at Passover. Thus Mary Magdalene's action which prepared Jesus for burial was also the initial event leading to the betrayal. Somehow, Judas had to obtain 30 denarii before Passover and deliver it to the temple. Otherwise, as the keeper of the money box the temple authorities would've discovered that Judas had embezzled the 30 denarii from the tithes. (Jerry Clontz)

Though this is a subjective judgment – let us call it “informed speculation” – once some of the later, churchly overlayment is stripped away from canonical *John*, in its delicacy, in its sensibility, one can hear the voice of a woman, perhaps even that of the cultured Magdalene who, as one who hailed from a wealthy, distinguished family, would have had the resources to produce a written memoir as well as a translation for Gentiles. But most important of all, she was an eyewitness. It is only this, her Memoir, if that is what it is, which allows us to identify the proximate cause of Jesus' crucifixion. *John 10:40* records what no other gospel records, that Jesus took refuge across the Jordan River where John the Forerunner first baptized. It further records, to his disciples' chagrin, his leaving that haven in what is currently modern-day Jordan so as to return to Bethany which was only a mile from Jerusalem, where his sworn enemies were plotting his demise. This Jesus did that he might raise the Magdalene's brother, Lazarus, from death to life. It was this act that led Caiaphas, the high priest, in a fit of jealous rage to prophesy that one man should die for the nation.

Perhaps out of gratitude for restoring her brother Lazarus to life six days before the Passover, the Magdalene anointed Jesus with oil worth 300 denarii, no small fortune. In doing this, however, unintentionally she raised the stakes even higher because this so angered Judas Iscariot that it led him to betray Jesus' location to the authorities in return for 30 denarii – an amount exactly equal to a tithe for the 300 denarii which the Magdalene had expended on Jesus. Was this just a curious coincidence or was there a reason?

While in a larger sense, Jesus came to die for the sins of the world, the record is clear: he

placed his life on the line for the Magdalene and for her family and that this crucially influenced the timing of his sacrifice.

Most relevant for the current study is the near-complete absence of the expression "the disciple whom Jesus loved" from the Magdalene sections of *MS 2498*. In its stead is the name "John." Is it possible that John, the son of Zebedee, was not the beloved disciple? Neither at the Last Supper (*John* chapter 12), nor in the courtyard of the high priest (*John*, chapter 18), nor at the empty tomb (*John* ch. 20), nor with the risen Christ on the seashore (*John* chapter 21) is he so described in *MS 2498*. Only at the Cross *John* chapter 19, where exists a real possibility of confusion in transmission or translation, is he so identified.

The question arises, why would anyone add this title if it weren't there originally? It's not as if John were unworthy of it. After all, he is portrayed as having been at Jesus' right hand at the Last Supper and, in the community of believers, is often named with Peter and James in a leadership position. Certainly he is worthy of the honor. But what if it was a later addition? What would motivated such an addition? If less than conclusive, there is persuasive evidence indicating that it was the Magdalene's title, which the Church assigned to him to keep from her. It is true to fact to say that the Magdalene, and women like her, played an active role in ministry. It is true to fact that such women later became an embarrassment to an organization which defined leadership – and not just the administrative variety, but real spiritual leadership – as being exclusively male. Not just a male prerogative but a male characteristic. This attitude is the basis for cover-up, literally. For instance, in the apocryphal *Acts of Philip* (which is of a Gnostic character), Jesus advises Mary:

“As for you Mary, change your clothing and outward appearance: reject everything which from the outside suggests a woman.”

Given the prejudices of her times, it has been suggested that for Mary to have acted in any capacity outside the usual domestic one, she needed a male "covering." To that end, some have claimed she turned to the apostle John to be her "head covering," her veil of anonymity. Did the Magdalene internalize this attitude, accepting second-class citizenship as proper and as the norm, or did she merely accede to it as a necessary evil? Then again, maybe neither one nor the other but it was imposed after the fact by the Church. (At least, those are the reasonable alternatives that I am aware of.)

The idea of the Magdalene as being the author who stands behind John's gospel is recent, the first person to publicly posit this being Jusino who, in 1998, in an article posted to the internet and titled "Mary Magdalene: Author of the Fourth Gospel?" He takes as his starting point the scholarship of Raymond F. Brown who is generally recognized as America's foremost Catholic biblical scholar. As have other scholars, Brown's thinking on the

question of authorship has evolved. Backing off from his initial assessment in 1966 that the author of canonical *John* was the apostle John, in 1979 he adopted, instead, the stance that there was little evidence of Johannine authorship. Positing a three stage development, he saw the first as being the contribution of an anonymous Beloved Disciple who was personally known to Jesus, as well as an eyewitness to the events recounted; the second stage he attributed to an unidentified evangelist; and the third stage to a redactor.

Of this final stage, Jusino wrote:

. . . an important assertion of mine is that the redactor carefully concealed the identity of Mary Magdalene as the Beloved Disciple, by referring to her only as an anonymous disciple. As the redactor reworked the seven passages cited above [John 1:35-40; 13:23-26; 18:15-16; 19:25-27; 20:1-11; 21:7; 21:21-24] which refer to the Beloved Disciple, he simply changed any reference to Mary Magdalene by substituting it with an anonymous reference to the Beloved Disciple or to "another disciple." For most of the document this was fairly easy to do and the resulting text appeared to be congruous. Instead of seeing the Magdalene's name, the reader is simply presented with an anonymous male disciple.

Removing references to Mary Magdalene from most of the story was easy. However, in the course of his work, the redactor was confronted with a problem. The tradition placing Mary Magdalene at the foot of the Cross and at the Empty Tomb Sunday morning was too strong to deny. The Magdalene's presence at both these events was common knowledge among most early Christian communities. (This is evidenced by the fact that all three of the other New Testament Gospels report her presence at these events.) The redactor could not simply omit any reference to the Magdalene at the Crucifixion or any reference to her as a primary witness to the Resurrection. However, the redactor still wanted to establish the Beloved Disciple as the founder of his community and as an eyewitness to these major events in the work of salvation. The way he could still maintain that the founder of his community was an eyewitness to the events in the Gospel even though he inexplicably fails to reveal his identity (John 21:24).

At this point the redactor probably asked himself a question very similar to this one: How can I suppress the knowledge of Mary Magdalene having been the founder of our community without being so obvious as to remove her from the Crucifixion/Resurrection accounts, with which most Christians are already familiar?

The redactor's solution to this problem was quite simple. In those two events where he could not deny the presence of the Beloved Disciple, he would rework the text so as to make it appear as if Mary Magdalene and the Beloved Disciple were two different people appearing simultaneously in the same place, at the same time. Consequently, Mary Magdalene and the male Beloved Disciple appear together in the Fourth Gospel in only two passages - 19:25-27 (at the foot of the Cross) and 20: 1-11 (at the Empty Tomb on Sunday morning).

Isn't that interesting? And it is precisely at these two points that we find some major structural inconsistencies within the text of the Fourth Gospel. Brown discusses the inconsistencies in both of these passages. (That shows that I'm not just reading inconsistencies into passages that have none.) Notably, Brown finds no such structural defects in any of the other passages which contain references to the Beloved Disciple.

Let us consider one of Brown's "structural inconsistencies." *John 19:25* begins with three Marys listed as standing by the Cross but not the apostle John. Thus Jesus turned and addressed his mother, about "the disciple whom he loved standing nearby." One might on first blush assume he meant the Magdalene, that is, until reading further along to learn that John was also there. Why was he not listed in the first place?

If Jusino is right in his supposition that the Magdalene was originally the one being addressed, not John, then there are important implications. For one, if the Magdalene was "family," then what Jesus said to his mother was, in essence, this: here is your daughter-in-law and to the Magdalene: here is your mother-in-law. Preparing Jesus' body for burial was a family responsibility and so, for that matter, so was caring for Jesus' mother. Also, as the Magdalene was a woman of financial means, it is more plausible that Jesus would advise his mother to move into the Magdalene's home which was just a mile or so away, rather than into John's home, which, if he had one, would probably have been back in Galilee. As the text reads: "From that time on, this disciple took her into his home." Or was it originally "her home"? Since we know that mother Mary was present at Pentecost in Jerusalem 50 days later, it's likely that she had been staying all the while near at hand to Jerusalem with the Magdalene rather than spending days trudging back and forth to and from Galilee.

In the Fourth Gospel, there is a curious juxtaposing of the apostles John and Peter and when this occurs, of the two, John always comes off on top. When they have a foot race to the Empty Tomb, John wins. When they both see the grave clothes, John understands the implications first and believes. When they both espy Jesus from afar in the fishing boat, John is the first to recognize who it is. Earlier, when they both go to the high priest's home, John is the one who gains them entrance. At the Last Supper, John is closest to Jesus and Peter has to go through John to get a question to Jesus answered. What if the Magdalene is substituted for John? In that case, rather than there being two competing personalities, which in itself is a matter of no real significance, there are two opposing policies: Peter's upholding male dominance; and the Magdalene's upholding Jesus' empowerment of women.

In light of all else we know about the Church, it is plausible enough that the Church Fathers were aware of this gospel but, because they knew it had been written by or authorized by a woman, they assiduously avoided it until the mid-2nd century when they rewrote it, attributing their newly-minted creation to the apostle John. If this supposition is correct, it would

go along way toward explaining what the great cover-up with respect to the Magdalene was all about – a woman so forward as to write Scripture! I can imagine that purloining the Magdalene’s literary heritage probably would have made Church authorities a bit queasy, especially if they were caught in the act. How would they or civil authorities ever justify keeping women in subjection, or for that matter, husbands their wives, if it were widely known that Mary Magdalene wrote scripture? Why the precedent of it! Were notions of female competency to become common knowledge, it could spark a revolution!

Yes, the Magdalene was the beloved disciple. It’s not as if the apostle John or the other apostles were unbeloved. It’s simply that this was her title.

In the canonical version of this gospel, chapter 11, verse 3, is found the Greek expression *hon phileis*, meaning “the one whom you love,” which was said with reference to Lazarus. Then in chapter 12, a meal is hosted by Lazarus in his home; then in chapter 13, verse 23, there’s a second reference to a beloved disciple (not named) and another meal. Anyone not acquainted with the synoptic gospels, might reasonably assume on reaching this point in the text that this was another reference to Lazarus but the canonical text later identifies it as the apostle John. Was this how this gospel originally read or has tampering occurred?

Let us consider on the one hand that Lazarus was a high status person residing near Jerusalem known to the High Priest Caiphas, whereas John the son of Zebedee was a youthful Galilean fisherman. Which one would likely have had access to the courtyard of the High Priest? Also, who was best in a position to have taken Jesus’ mother into his home? Lazarus, a man of means whose home was about a mile away, or John whose home, if he owned one at all, would likely have been in Galilee? Yet the Gospel account reads: “From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.” Since we know from Acts that Mother Mary was present at Pentecost fifty days later, it is more likely that she was staying in or near Jerusalem rather than making the arduous trek back and forth to Galilee.

Most telling that the Beloved Disciple who wrote the Fourth Gospel was not John, the son of Zebedee, is that nothing to which John was a primary eyewitness is included. As one of the three apostle of Jesus’ inner circle, John accompanied Jesus up the Mount of Transfiguration. He was with him when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemene, and he was present when Jesus resurrected Jarius’s daughter but none of this made it into the Fourth Gospel. Meanwhile many scenes to which John was not privy are included, particularly those having to do with Mary Magdalene, Lazarus’s sister. Yet the Fourth Gospel’s postscript, presumably appended after his demise, claims this Gospel to be the Beloved Disciple’s “testimony.” Further, the postscript (21:23) mentions the saying went abroad that the Beloved Disciple “should not die.” From whence arose such an expectation? I would sug-

gest it came from Lazarus's having died and been raised to life, after which some supposed that he would live to see Jesus' return. I would further suggest that it was his experience of being restored to life which gave Lazarus the insight to see Jesus as "the Resurrection and the Life," one of this gospel's key theological insights.

The only scene from north of Galilee included in the Fourth Gospel is the feast in Cana. If Mary and Lazarus had taken Mother Mary into their home, then she was probably their source. But why was Lazarus not part of Jesus' traveling entourage? This may have had to do with a family affliction. As one biblical scholar, Ben Witherington, has discerned:

Scholars of course have often noted how the account of the anointing of Jesus in Bethany as recorded in Mk. 14.3-11 differs from the account in Jn. 12.1-11, while still likely being the same story or tradition. Perhaps the most salient difference is that Mark tells us that the event happens in the home of Simon the Leper in Bethany, while Jn. 12 indicates it happens in the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany. Suppose for a moment however that Simon the Leper was in fact the father of these three siblings. Suppose that Lazarus himself, like his father, had also contracted the dread disease and succumbed to it (and by the way we now know for sure that the deadly form of Hanson's disease did exist in the first century A.D.). Now this might well explain why it is that none of these three siblings seem to be married. Few have remarked about the oddness of this trio of adults not having families of their own, but rather still living together, but it is not at all odd if the family was plagued by a dread disease that made them unclean on an ongoing or regular basis. It also explains why these folks never travel with Jesus' other disciples and they never get near this family until that fateful day recorded in Jn. 11 when Jesus raised and healed Lazarus. Jesus of course was not put off by the disease and so had visited the home previously alone (Lk. 10.38-42). But other early Jews would certainly not have engaged in betrothal contracts with this family if it was known to be a carrier of leprosy. ("Was Lazarus the Beloved Disciple?")

Luke chapter 7 tells of an anonymous "women in the city, which was a sinner" who washed Jesus' feet with her tears. And Jesus is depicted as saying that "her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Compare this then with the same incident as related in *MS Pepys 2498* which explicitly identifies this women as afflicted with "seven fiends," and giving her name as Mary Magdalene. It goes on to depict Jesus as saying: "I tell you many sins have been forgiven her. And therefore I love her much by reason that the one to whom most is forgiven is most loved." The emphasis here is no longer on her feelings but on his. Is it possible that the Magdalene was the Beloved Disciple and that the canonical account was rewritten to disguise this fact?

Preparing Jesus' body for burial was a family responsibility. That the Magdalene was allowed to participate in this sacred duty shows that in some sense she was family. But how

did she get to be family? I cannot answer that. Were they married or betrothed? I do not think so. But were they in modern parlance, an item? Maybe. This I do know, the Church while forward in asserting that Jesus was the Son of God, recoils in horror as if scandalized from the corollary that he was also every inch a man. While giving lip service to Jesus' humanity, the idea of Jesus' having formed a special relationship with Mary, even if entirely on a spiritual plane, was wholly unacceptable.

Is it possible that John, the son of Zebedee, was not the beloved disciple but that Lazarus and Mary were? Neither at the Last Supper (*John* chapter 12), nor in the courtyard of the high priest (*John*, chapter 18), nor at the empty tomb (*John* ch. 20), nor with the risen Christ on the seashore (*John* chapter 21) is John so described in *MS Pepys 2498*. Only at the Cross, *John* chapter 19, where exists a real possibility of confusion in transmission or translation, is he so identified.

DEEDS OF JAMES THE JUST

His family

Then there was James, who was called the Lord's brother, for he too was named Joseph's son.

(Eusebius)

Is this [Jesus] not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James?

(*Mark* 6:3)

And Jude, whose letter it is true is of but a few lines, yet filled with encouraging words of heavenly

grace, said, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James."

(Origen, *Jude* 1)

John's Baptism

Behold, the mother of the Lord and his brothers said to him [Jesus], "John the Baptist baptizes for the remission of sins; let us go and be baptized by him." (Gospel of the Hebrews)

The Nazarite lifestyle

He [James] has been universally called the Just from the time of our Savior down to the present day [c. 170 AD]. For many have borne the name of James; but this one was consecrated from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat meat. No razor came near his head, nor did he anoint himself with oil, and he did not go to the [Roman] baths a place of debauchery]. (Hegesippus, quoted by Eusebius)

James wore no second tunic, but used only a linen cloak,... For it was John and James and James, these three, who walked in this [the Nazarite] way of life: the two sons of Zebedee and James the son of Joseph and brother of the Lord. (Eusebius)

He [James] alone enjoyed the privilege of entering the holy of holies, since, indeed, he did not wear woolen, but only linen clothes, and went into the Temple alone and prayed on behalf of the People, so that his knees were reputed to have acquired the callousness of a camel's knees. (Jerome)

But we find that he [James] also exercised the Priesthood according to the ancient Priesthood. . . . To James alone was it permitted to enter the Holy of Holies once a year, because he was a Nazarite and connected to the priest-hood. Many before me have reported this of him -- Eusebius, Clement and others. He was also allowed to wear the [priestly] mitre on his head as the aforementioned trustworthy persons have testified in the same historical writings. (Epiphanius)

Integrity

Because of his exceedingly great Justice, he was called the Just [*Dikaios*] and *Oblias*, which signifies in Greek, "Bulwark of the People" and "Righteous" [*Dikaiosune*], in accordance with what the prophets declare concerning him. (Hegesippus / Eusebius)

And once during a drought, 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." (Epiphanius)

The disciples said to Jesus, "We know that you will leave us. Who then will become our leader?"

Jesus said unto them, "Whithersoever you are come, repair to James the righteous [for unto the righteous] were heaven and earth created." (Gospel of Thomas, Logion 12)

Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to James

He [Christ] was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that over five hundred brethren at once, ... After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. (I Corinthians 15:5, 6, 7)

Now the Lord, after he had given his linen clothes to the Servant of the Priest, went to James and appeared to him. For James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he drank the Cup of the Lord until he should see him risen again from the dead. The Lord said, "Bring a table and bread." He took the bread, blessed it, and breaking it, gave it to James the Just, saying to him, "My brother, eat your bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among those that sleep." (The Gospel of the Hebrews as quoted by Jerome; Of Illustrious men 2)

To James the Just, to John, and Peter, did the Lord after his resurrection impart knowledge. These delivered it to the rest of the Apostles, and they to the Seventy, of whom Barnabas was one. (Clement / Eusebius)

Living in community in Jerusalem

This James, therefore, whom the ancients, on account of the excellence of his virtue, surnamed the Just, was the first that received the oversight of the summoned-out community at Jerusalem. But Clement, in the sixth book of his Institutions, represents it thus: "Peter, and James [son of Zebedee], and John after the ascension of our Savior, though they had been preferred by our Lord, did not contend for the honor, but chose James the Just as overseer in Jerusalem." (Eusebius)

Neither was there any among them who lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made to every man according to his need. (Acts 4:35)

Of Peter's miraculous release from prison

[Peter:] Go show these things [regarding the circumstances of his release] to James and the brethren. (Acts 12:17)

James and Paul

Then after three years I [Paul] went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto

them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

(Galatians 1:18-19; 2:9-10)

James' counsel regarding obliging Gentile believers to Mosaic observance

And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Except you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. So, being sent on their way by the summoned-out community, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, reporting the conversation of the Gentiles; and they brought great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the summoned-out assembly and the apostles and the elders; and they rehearsed all that God had done with them. But some of the party of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses." And the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter and when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of good tidings and believe. So God who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our forefathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they." Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And to this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down: I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up: so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD. Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' So says the LORD who made these things known from the beginning of the world. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city,

being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole assembly, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

(Acts 15:1-22)

James advises Paul concerning a false rumor

And when we [Luke, Paul, and others] had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he rehearsed one by one those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the Law. But as touching the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that you should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality." Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the Temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

(Acts 21: 17-26)

The circumstances surrounding James' martyrdom

The younger Ananus, who as we have said, had been appointed the High Priest, was of a rash temper and highly insolent. He was also of the party of the Sadducees, who were of all Jews most uncompromising, as we have observed, in executing judgment. Possessed with such a character, Ananus thought that he had a favorable opportunity because Festus was dead and Albinus [the replacement procurator] was on the way. And so he convened the judges of the Sanhedrin and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ.

(Josephus / Eusebius)

Josephus also in the 20th book of his Antiquities and Clement in the 7th of his Outlines mention that on the death of Festus who reigned on over Judaea, Albinus was sent by Nero as his successor. Before he had reached the province, Ananus the high priest, the youthful son of Ananus of the priestly class, taking advantage of the state of anarchy assembled a council and publicly

tried to force James to deny that Christ is the Son of God. When he refused, Ananus ordered him to be stoned. Cast down from the pinnacle of the temple, his legs broken, but still half alive, and raising his hands to heaven, he said, "Lord, forgive them for they know not what they do." Then struck on the head by the club of a laundryman, such a club as laundrymen are accustomed to beat out clothes with, he died. James was buried near the temple from which he had been cast down. His tombstone with its inscription was well known until the siege of Titus and the end of Hadrian's reign. Some of our writers think he was buried on the Mount of Olives, but they are mistaken. (Jerome)

So when many even of the ruling class believed [that Jesus was the Messiah], there was a commotion among the Jews, and scribes, and Pharisees, who said: "A little more and we shall have all the people looking for Jesus as the Messiah." They came, therefore, in a body to James, and said: "We beseech you, restrain the people: for they are gone astray in their opinions about Jesus as if he were the Christ. We entreat you to persuade all who have come hither for the day of the Passover, concerning Jesus. For we all accept what you say, as do all the people; since we, as well as all the people, bear you testimony that you are just, and show partiality to none. Therefore persuade the people not to entertain erroneous opinions concerning Jesus: for all the people, and we also accept what you say. Therefore take your stand upon the pinnacle of the Temple that you may be clearly visible on high and your words readily audible to the entire gathering, for because of the Passover all the tribes have gathered together and numbers of Gentiles too." So the aforesaid Scribes and the Pharisees made James stand on the Temple parapet and shouting to him, cried out, "O Just One, whose word we all ought to obey, since the people are led astray after Jesus, who was crucified, tell us what is meant by 'the door of Jesus?'" And he answered shouting out loudly, "Why do you ask me concerning the Son of Man? He is now sitting in Heaven at the right hand of the Great Power and he will come on the clouds of Heaven?" Many were convinced by these words and gloried in James' testimony, and cried forth, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Then again the Pharisees and scribes said to each other, "We erred in providing Jesus with such testimony, but let us go up and cast him down, so they -- the people -- will be frightened and not believe in him." And they cried out saying "Oh! Oh! Even the Just One has gone astray!" -- fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah: " 'Let us remove the Just One, for he is unprofitable to us.' Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their works." So they went out and cast down the Just One, saying to one another, "Let us stone James the Just," and they began to stone him, since he had survived the fall. But he turned and fell to his knees, saying, "I beseech You, O Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." While thus they were stoning him, one of the Priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of Rechabites, spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet, cried

out, saying, "Stop what you are doing, the Just One is praying for you." And one among them, who was a fuller, took the club with which he beat out clothes and struck the Just One on the head. Thus, he suffered martyrdom, and they buried him on the spot by the temple, and his monument is still there by the temple. (Hegesippus/Eusebius)

Thus, even Simeon bar Cleophas, his cousin, who was standing not far away, said, "Stop, why are you stoning the Just One? Behold, he is praying the most wonderful prayers for you." (Jerome)

Afterwards James, the Lord's brother, whom of old the people of Jerusalem called "the Just" for his extraordinary virtue, being asked by the chief priests, and teachers of the Jews what he thought about Christ, and answering that He was the Son of God, was also stoned by them. (Eusebius)

Unable to endure any longer the testimony of the man, who through a lifetime of ascetic observance and piety was deemed by all men to be the most righteous, they slew him, using anarchy as an opportunity for power, since at that time Festus [Procurator 60-62] had died in Judea, leaving the province without governor or procurator. (Clement, quoted by Eusebius)

After James' martyrdom, the circumstances leading to the siege and fall of Jerusalem Vespasian, who gained distinction in the campaigns against the Jews, was proclaimed sovereign in Judea and received the title of Emperor from the armies there. Setting out immediately, therefore, for Rome, he entrusted the conduct of the war against the Jews to his son Titus. But the people of the community in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea [Transjordan] called Pella. (Eusebius)

And so great a reputation for Righteousness did this James have, that Flavius Josephus, who wrote the Antiquities of the Jews in twenty volumes, when wishing to exhibit the cause why the people suffered so great misfortunes that even the Temple was razed to the ground, said that these things happened to them in accordance with God's wrath for that which they did against James the brother of Jesus who is called the Messiah. And the wonderful thing is, that, though he did not accept Jesus as Messiah, yet he gave testimony that the righteousness of James was so great; and he says that the people thought that they had suffered these things because of James. He ought to have said that the plot against Jesus was the reason why these catastrophes came upon the people, because they had killed the prophesied Messiah; however, though unconscious of it, he is not far from the truth when he says that these disasters befell the Jews to avenge James the Just for having put him to death, although he was a man of preeminent righteousness. (Origen)

This same Josephus records the tradition that James was of such great Holiness and reputation among the people that the fall of Jerusalem was attributed to his death. (Jerome)

So admirable a man, indeed, was James, and so celebrated among all for his Righteousness, that even the wiser part of the Jews were of the opinion that this was the cause of the immediate siege of Jerusalem, which happened to them for no other reason than the crimes against him.

(Eusebius)

James' successor, Symeon

After the martyrdom of James the Just on the same charge as the Lord, his paternal uncle's child Symeon the son of Clopas is next made overseer, who was put forward by all as the second in succession, being the Lord's cousin." (Hegesippus)

It is said that those of the apostles and disciples of the Lord that were still living came together from all direction with those that were related to the Lord according to the flesh (for the majority of them were still alive) to take council as to who was worthy to succeed James. They all with one consent pronounced Symeon. (Eusebius)

It might be safely reasonably assumed that Symeon was one of those who saw and heard the Lord, judging from the length of his life, and from the fact that the Gospel makes mention of Mary, the wife of Clopas, who was the father of Symeon. Under the emperor whose times we are now recording [Trajan], a persecution was stirred up against us in certain cities in consequence of a popular uprising. Certain of these heretics brought accusation against Symeon, the son of Clopas, on the ground that he was a son of David and a Christian; and thus he suffered martyrdom at the age of one hundred and twenty years, while Trajan was emperor and Atticus governor. He was tortured in various ways for many days, and astonished even the judge himself and his attendants in the highest degree, and finally he suffered a death similar to that of our Lord. (Eusebius)

Symeon's successor, Justus

But when Symeon also had died in the manner described, a certain Jew by the name of Justus succeeded to the seat of oversight in Jerusalem [98 AD?]. He was one of many thousands of the circumcision who at that time believed in Christ. (Eusebius)

Continuity of witness

But when this same Domitian had commanded that the descendants of David should be slain, an ancient tradition says that some of the heretics brought accusation against the descendants of Jude (said to have been a brother of the Saviour according to the flesh), on the ground that they

were of the lineage of David and were related to Christ himself. Hegesippus relates these facts in the following words. "Of the family of the Lord there were still living the grandchildren of Jude, who is said to have been the Lord's brother according to the flesh. Information was given that they belonged to the family of David, and they were brought to the Emperor Domitian by the Evocatus. For Domitian feared the coming of Christ as Herod had also feared it. And he asked them if they were descendants of David, and they confessed that they were. Then he asked them how much property they had, or how much money they owned. And both of them answered that they had only nine thousand denarii, half of which belonged to each of them; and this property did not consist of silver, but of a piece of land which contained only thirty-nine acres, and from which they raised their taxes and supported themselves by their own labor." Then they showed their hands, exhibiting the hardness of their bodies and the callousness produced upon their hands by continuous toil as evidence of their own labor. And when they were asked concerning Christ and his kingdom, of what sort it was and where and when it was to appear, they answered that it was not a temporal nor an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly and angelic one, which would appear at the end of the world, when he should come in glory to judge the quick and the dead, and to give unto every one according to his works. Upon hearing this, Domitian did not pass judgment against them, but, despising them as of no account, he let them go, and by a decree put a stop to the persecution of the summoned-out community. But when they were released they led the communities, because they were witnesses and were also relatives of the Lord. And peace being established, they lived until the time of Trajan. . . . until the siege of the Jews, which took place under Adrian [132-135 AD], there were fifteen overseers ... , all of whom were said to be of Hebrew descent, and to have received the knowledge of Christ in purity, so that they were approved by those who were able to judge of such matters, and were deemed worthy of oversight. For their whole community consisted then of believing Hebrews who continued from the days of the apostles until the siege which took place at that time; in which siege the Jews, having again rebelled against the Romans, were conquered after severe battles. But since the oversight of the circumcision ceased at this time, it is proper to give here a list of their names from the beginning. The first then, was James, the so-called brother of the Lord; the second Symeon; the third, Justus; the fourth Zacchaeus; the fifth, Tobias; the sixth, Benjamin; the seventh, John; the eighth, Matthias; the ninth, Philip; the tenth, Seneca; the eleventh Justus; the twelfth, Levi; the thirteenth, Ephres; the fourteenth, Joseph; and finally, the fifteenth, Judas. These are the overseers of Jerusalem that lived between the age of the apostles and the time referred to, all of them belonging to the circumcision.* (Eusebius)

*[These were not as Eusebius seems to suppose, successive monarchical bishops but elders of a deliberative, community body.]

The final struggle

For in the late Jewish war Bar Kochba, [his name signifying 'son of a Star'] the leader of the Jewish rebellion, commanded that Christians alone should be visited with terrible punishments unless they would deny and blaspheme Jesus Christ. (Eusbius / Hegesippus)

As the rebellion of the Jews at this time grew much more serious, Rufus, governor of Judea, after an auxiliary force had been sent him by the emperor, using their madness as a pretext, proceeded against them without mercy, and destroyed indiscriminately thousands of men and women and children. The war raged most fiercely in the eighteenth year of Adrian, at the city of Bithara, which was a very secure fortress, situated not far from Jerusalem. When the siege had lasted a long time, and the rebels had been driven to the last extremity by hunger and thirst, and the instigator of the rebellion had suffered his just punishment, the whole nation was prohibited from this time on by a decree, and by the commands of Adrian, from ever going up to the country about Jerusalem. For the emperor gave orders that they should not even see from a distance the land of their fathers. Such is the account of Aristo of Pella. And thus, when the city had been emptied of the Jewish nation and had suffered the total destruction of its ancient inhabitants, it was colonized by a different race, and the Roman city which subsequently arose changed its name and was called Aelia, in honor of the emperor Aelius Adrian. And the church there was now composed of Gentiles, the first one to assume the government of it after the oversight of the circumcision was Marcus. (Eusbius)

Until then, the community remained as a virgin, pure and uncorrupt . . . but when the sacred band of Apostles and the generation of those who with their own ears had been privileged to hear the Divine wisdom, in diverse ways had passed from the scene, then impious error arose through the folly of false teachers who, seeing that none of the apostles were left alive, shamefacedly proclaimed, in opposition to the preaching of the truth, "knowledge which is falsely so-called.

(Eusbius / Hegesippus)

