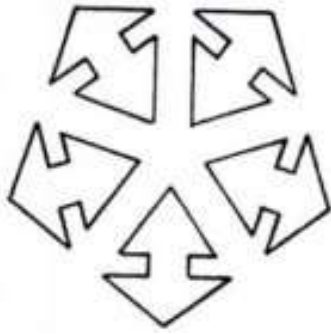


# **Mysterium and Historia**



**THE BLENDING OF TWO STREAMS  
IN THE EARLY CHURCH**

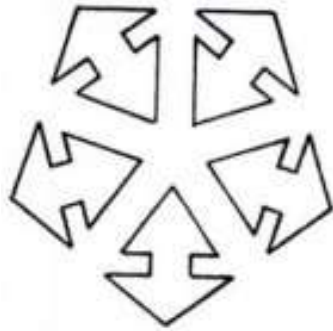
**By**

**MARK OLIVER SMITH**

25 Dec 2019



# **Mysterium and Historia**



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IN THE EARLY CHURCH**

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## INTRODUCTION

‘Jesus of Nazareth and the Gospel Story cannot be found in Christian writing earlier than the Gospels, the first of which (Mark) was composed in the late first century. There is no non-Christian record of Jesus before the second century!’

*Earl Doherty*  
The Jesus Puzzle  
Ottawa Canadian  
Humanist Pub, 1999

The great secret of the Mystai was precisely that they creatively release the divine child in themselves

The new spiritual child had a miraculous birth because it came from the creative process (the Father) and by the process of the spirit in natural processes (the Holy Spirit)

R. Steiner

Christianity As Mystical Fad  
Pp: 20-21

# INTRODUCTION

## I

### History and Mystery: Aspects of My Christian Journey

#### Early Fundamentalism

In my early teenage years I espoused a typical fundamentalist approach to Christianity. The bible was not only 'holy it was inerrant and the literal Word of God. It was written and compiled by chosen men of god who wrote under divine spiritual inspiration. If there were any errors these were only 'apparent' errors. They were due to mistranslations or errors of printing. The Holy Bible was a book of revelation from God.

#### My Quest For The Historical Jesus

My early youthful naivety began to collapse after I read Albert Schweitzer's: '**Quest of The Historical Jesus**'. This book, and others by Bultmann, Wilder, Goguel, Cadman, Cadoux, Streeter and Brandon threw considerable doubt on the reliability of the texts and the doctrines from the text. This aspect of my own 'quest' drew me into a study of historical criticism, textual criticism, form and source criticism and tradition criticism.

These earlier investigations were later supplemented by the claims of the 'Jesus Seminar' and the more recent writings of Burton Mack, Marcus Borg, Geza Vermes, John Dominic Crossin, Joan Taylor, Hugh Schonfield, Morton Smith, Douglas Lockhart, Paula Fredriksen and Elaine Pagels.

#### The Mystery Religions

My father-in-law had been taught by Dr Samuel Angus, a noted Hellenistic and New Testament scholar. His books introduced me to the importance of the mystery schools in the formation of the Christian tradition. His '**The Mystery Religions and Christianity: A Study in the Religious background of Early Christianity**' opened my eyes to an entirely different perspective to the origins of Christianity. Dr Angus's early approach eventually led me to the investigations of Rudolf Steiner.

#### Cultural Movements

The lectures and writings of Rudolf Steiner introduced me to the cultural importance of Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and Hermeticism. Elements of these traditions contributed to the shaping of Zoroastrianism, Mithraism and Jewish thought. In the search for the historical basis of primitive Christianity the influence of these teachings and impulses had to be assessed. Such an assessment would also have to include an understanding of Egyptian thought and the Hellenistic thought of Greece, Persia and Rome.

## II Demystifying the Holy Bible

It took me some time to see through the mystifying tricks used by the Churches to promote the 'Holy Bible' as a direct revelation from God.

### Compilation

The publication and compilation of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament is rarely accompanied by an explanation of why at least 13 other gospels were excluded, 10 Epistles, 2 Acts and 6 other letters. There is also no explanation of why the Gnostic Gospels of Nag Hammadi Egypt were excluded from the canon and sequencing.

### Order of the N.T. Books

The positioning of the four gospels before the Epistles of Paul not only conveys the impression that the 'Jesus story' preceded the 'Christ story' but it obscures the role that Paul played in the founding of Christianity.

The ordering of the synoptic Gospels also obscures the primacy of Mark in the formation and structure of Matthew and Luke.

### Textualisation

While the textualisation of the N.T. may assist in the memorisation and localisation of specific texts, it also conveys a subtle message of legality and authority. Stories and letters are not ordinarily segmented and coded by a numbering system.

The justification of the design and formatting of the 'Holy Bible' with its Old and New Covenants may be helpful to the reader but its hidden agenda is to mask its purposes of construction. It helps to invest the bible with an authority that cannot be questioned.

## III St Paul: St Peter = Mysticism: Historicism

This work is based on the fundamental proposition that St. Paul was a founder of Christianity. As a practising Jew he established a new Jewish Mystery sect. On the other hand, St. Peter was intent on finding a new 'Joshua' who would overthrow the bondage of Roman rule. Christianity arose out of the union of the two secret societies and their teachings. Both secret societies were pursuing Jewish ends. Paul's aim was to widen Jewish influence by adopting the framework of the Mithraic mysteries. Peter's intention was to groom a new Joshua. The Roman version of Christianity successfully integrated the two objectives. Other branches of Christianity achieved success too but with varying emphasis between the two societal objectives.



## IV Experiencing the Mystical, The Liturgical and The Drama of the Mass in 3 Countries

### **A Wakeup Call from Three Countries**

I had, for many years, based my investigations into the origins of Christianity on history rather than mystery. I became aware that my typical protestant and rational approach was leading to a morass of unconvincing assertions masquerading as historical evidence. I received a glimpse of a different approach from three events. These were a visit to a Roman Catholic Cathedral in Manila, the watching of a TV documentary of a Mass in Goa and my attendance at a Mass in a Catholic Cathedral in Nha Trang, Vietnam.

### **The Basilica of the Immaculate Conception (The Manila Metropolitan Cathedral)**

My visit to the sixth reconstruction of the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Manila occurred in May 1993. The building is an imposing Romanesque edifice made of adobe. Its bronze doors depict the history of the building. There are many interesting features to see inside the Cathedral. These include the large organ, the stone carvings and rosette windows and the stained glass window of the clerestory. The crypt beneath the altar entombs the remains of several Spanish archbishops. However I was most struck by the relatively minor chapel accorded to the worship of Jesus. I was familiar with the status conferred on Mary by Pius XII and I understood the special nature of the designation 'Basilica Minore' by Pope John Paul in 1981 but I was still bewildered at the apparent relegation of Jesus to a minor chapel. This raised some important issues for me.

### **A TV Documentary on Catholic Worship in a Goa Church (India)**

Saint Thomas is designated the Apostle to India. The TV documentary I witnessed was of a RC Mass being celebrated by today's worshippers of the descendants of the early Indian converts to Christianity. The church building was old and modest and the ritual of the mass was even more modest. The sanctuary and altar were hidden from the congregation by a sheet hung from a curtain rod by rings. At the appropriate time the curtain veils were drawn and the 'mystery' of the Mass was revealed! It was a mysterious ritual, drama performed by a priest! The drama of the situation and its staging seemed to be the most important aspect of the service. This primitive re-enactment of the mysterious changing of the bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lamb of God was a magical ritual that heightened wonder. A protestant would have looked for symbolism in the celebration. The Catholic was content with the mystery.

### **An Attendance at Saint Joseph's Cathedral, Nha Trang, Vietnam**

In August 2005 I paid a visit to St Joseph's Cathedral in Nha Trang, Vietnam. I accompanied a tour guide who came with our tour group from Ho Chi Minh City. Fortunately, we arrived for the Mass early because the congregation overflowed into

the church grounds. I was surprised to discover that the Catholic Church comprised about ten percent of Vietnam's population and was a growing religion. As a non-Catholic I felt embarrassed to be occupying a seat inside the church when so many adherents stood outside.

The very fact that the service was said in Vietnamese meant that I had to follow the Order of Service as a complete outsider. I was forced to interpret everything as gestural even though it was in sound. I witnessed a drama without understanding its rational basis! The celebrant was in resplendent attire and when he lifted the 'shew' bread it was as if he were holding the sun aloft. The choir sang from the mezzanine. Members of the choir were dressed as if they were angels. while the pianistic accompaniment had all the hallmarks of a concert. The gestures of the celebrant and the congregational responses added to the overall theatricality of the celebratory occasion. I began to understand this is what the Mass was supposed to be all about. It was meant to be a drama which highlighted a mystery.

The Mass was liturgical not logical, mystical not rational and dramatic rather than hortatory. Whereas the sermon was centre stage in protestant services the mystical was central to the enactment of the Catholic Mass. I had not known this before. I had assumed that the essence of Catholic worship was pre-scientific whereas it was based on a mystical tradition. My protestant understanding of the Mass was too pre-occupied with debunking its magic that I could not see its true nature. The Mass dramatises and poeticizes the incarnation of spirit in matter. The protestant Holy Communion seeks to justify and explain the mystery of incarnation rather than poeticise it.

### **Blending Mystery and History**

I had spent a great deal of my time trying to understand Christianity from an historical point of view. The three events listed above supplied the evidence that Christianity could be understood in an entirely different way. I had found my way into the mystical origins of Christianity.

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## **CHAPTER 1. CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS**

‘Historical myths were the Jews’ speciality. The Exodus initiation allegory, which also appears to have no basis in actual history, is written in the form of a pseudo-historical narrative ... As with the Exodus myth, the creators of the Jesus story mixed together mythical figures such as Jesus and Mary, with a handful of historical figures which were also used to play symbolic roles in the initiation allegory ... It was set in the recent past and incorporated figures who were important to Jewish Gnostics, such as the revered John the Baptist and the much hated Pontius Pilate, the Roman ruler of Judea.’

*Jesus and the Goddess*  
T. Freke and P. Gandy  
(p. 22)

## Chapter 1. CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS

### Exploring the John-Jesus Relationships

This work does three things. Firstly it explores the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus. Secondly it explores the relationship between history and mythology. Thirdly it is an attempt to understand the origins of Christianity from a cultural point of view rather than from an historical point of view. These three ventures are inter-connected. It is the author's claim that New Testament studies must alter its focus from history into the realms of mythology and mystery. Once this is done investigators will understand that the origins of Christianity are not what is generally thought. Furthermore, with the emergence of the Gnostic Gospels there is a greater understanding that what the church rejected in its early years was closer to primitive Christianity than what is portrayed in the canonical Gospels.

This investigation of the John-Jesus relationship is my fourth attempt to find a satisfactory solution to the many puzzling aspects of the gospel data that call for explanation. When one also seeks to accommodate oneself to extra-gospel data there are some surprising twists and modifications to the more orthodox and conventional views.

### The Conventional View

In Chapter 1, I outline the conventional view of the relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus. I also call this the '**cursor view**'. Simply to regard John as a herald to the cosmic Messiah, Jesus, ignores a lot of contrary data.

### John as the Original Messiah

In my '*A Speculative Reflection on the Relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus*' I advanced the proposition that John was the original Messiah and Jesus was his replacement. While there are some appealing aspects to this proposition I thought this theory needed a convincing context. The gospels drew attention to their differences. What context could explain a natural transition of authority from John to Jesus? There was no 'hand-over take-over'.

### The Dual Messiahship Theory

In my monograph: '*A Backpacker's Attempt to See Beneath the Tapestry of the Gospel of Mark*' I modified my earlier speculative proposal and I argued that there were two contemporaneous Messiahs. John was a political messiah while Jesus was, originally, a religious messiah. This dual messiahship theory was based on a literal application of the Zerubbabel – Joshua model which can be found in the book of Zechariah. I have now conceded ground on this speculative formulation. It has become clear to me that the relationship of John to Jesus has three literary models; any one of which is as valid as the others. There is the Moses – Aaron model, the Elijah – Elisha model and, of course, the Zerubbabel – Joshua model.

### **The Christ and the Usurper Theory**

This is, essentially, the Mandaean model. In short, this theory regards John the Baptist as a member of a secret society in which he held the office and rank of a Christ. This Christ figure was an archetypal/spiritual being known sometimes as Zerubbabel (or Solomon) in the Judaic culture. On the other hand, Jesus only held the office and rank of a Joshua (or Zadok). Jesus, however, aspired to the rank of a Zerubbabel or King and wrongfully claimed succession. This secret society had office-bearers who simulated roles in the new revolutionary government. They also enacted rituals of initiation and advancement. In addition, they enabled graduates to advance beyond the 'veil'. Such advancement was dependent on knowing the key words, signs and tokens. Candidates thus progressed from the 'outer' mysteries to the 'inner' mysteries.

### **John and Jesus as Literary Creations Rather than Historical Personages**

There appears to be growing speculation that both John and Jesus are creations of the mythological imagination rather than real characters of history. John is a more historical character than is Jesus. This speculation is supposedly based on the confusion of the role of 'The Christ' in the Secret Society rituals with the actual occupant of that role. The Christ roles were sometimes known as Zerubbabel (Kingly) and Joshua (Priestly). Another source of confusion relates to the gospel usage of typologies and the midrashic style of reportage.

### **John and Jesus as Mythological Types in Different Cultures**

The more that one investigates the historical credentials of John and Jesus the more they disappear into a cosmic haze. John looks like a re-incarnation of the Sumerian god Enki and Jesus closely resembles the Persian/Mithraic Sol Invictus. John advocates a water baptism which has, for aeons, been associated with the Sumerian religion while Jesus advocates a baptism of fire which is strangely reminiscent of Persian Zoroasterianism.

### **The Blending of Mystery and History**

In Chapter 9 the relationship between History and Mystery is examined. This relationship is best understood as a process of metamorphosis over a long period of time.

Early Christianity arose from the confluence of two streams. The first of these arose from Saint Paul. The second of these had its origins in a tradition that sprang from Saint Peter. Both streams had their origins in a secret society. Saint Paul's message was a new mystery religion. Saint Peter's secret society was actually concerned with the grooming of a New **Joshua** who had a hidden political/messianic role to overthrow the Roman rulership of Israel.

### **Appendices**

I have attached three Appendices to this present disquisition. The final of these outlines the paucity and inadequacy of references to an actual Jesus of history. The first differentiates the '**historical Jesus**' from the '**story of Jesus** as an exemplar of a spiritual saviour'. This argument draws on the writings of **Tom Harpur** and **Freke and Gandy**. Appendix B seeks to provide a reply to **Bishop Spong's** dismissal of the arguments of these two/three authors.

Appendix C contains extracts, from articles concerning the '**vesica pisces**'. This symbol was employed by Christian writers to embody aspects of the exemplar god-man. The **Kabbalistic** technique of **notarikon** was used to reveal the secret claim '**Jesus Christ, God's son, saviour**'. The mathematical term '**logos**' is the mediatorial overlap of the two intersecting circles from which the vesica is derived. A third hidden reference to the vesica appears in the story of **the miraculous catch of 153 fishes**.

Appendix D list the non-canonical gospels and parallels to other N.T. texts.

The Bibliography contains references across a wide range of viewpoints. With the emergence of the Gnostic gospels there is a wider entry into origins and the early development of Christianity. The Gnostic gospels and the apocryphal works enable the N.T. scholars to gain an altogether different historical perspective on early Christianity.

## Chapter 2

### A CHALLENGE TO THE CONVENTIONAL VIEW

‘The Gospel’s depiction of John was designed to sever him from the Jewish world around him so that his characterisation as the precursor and pointer to Jesus would not be blurred by distractions. In terms of history, however, John’s context cannot have been simply the desert. He cannot have come into existence in some magical way as a voice in the wilderness calling people to look towards Jesus. This is the stuff of myth.’

Joan E. Taylor  
*The Immerser:  
John the Baptist within  
Second Temple Judaism*  
(p. 12)

'We have attempted to bring out the allegorical meaning of the whole Christian myth cycle and show its origins in the ancient Gnostic tradition.

All of this evidence, taken together, we feel conclusively endorses what we have called the Jesus Mystery Thesis – That Christianity was originally a Jewish adaptation of the Pagan Mysteries.'

Freke and Gandy

The Goddess p 189.



## Chapter 2 A CHALLENGE TO THE CONVENTIONAL VIEW

### I

#### The Conventional Understanding or Cursory View

##### **John as a Herald to Jesus**

The conventional understanding of the relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus is to ascribe an inferior status to John and portray him as a herald to the advent of Jesus as a promised Messiah. John is:

‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’

(Lk 3:4)

##### **Repentance and Water Baptism of John**

John also preached a preparatory gospel of repentance and water baptism: -

‘John did baptise in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.’

(Mk 1:4)

One of the best attested facts of the four gospels is that Jesus submitted to baptism by John:

‘And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptised of John in the Jordan.’

(Mk 1:9)

##### **Baptism with the Holy Ghost and Fire by Jesus**

The gospels also declare that whereas John baptised with WATER, Jesus would baptise with the Holy Ghost and with FIRE.

‘I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.’

(Mt 3:11)

##### **The Beheading of John the Baptist by Antipas**

Most orthodox believers in the conventional explanations of the gospels accept the story that John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod Antipas and at the behest of his daughter-in-law, Salome, John was beheaded.

‘And he sent and beheaded John in the prison.’

(Mt 14:10)

##### **John and Jesus as Cousins (Six Months Apart)**

Also, most Christians are aware of the gospel accounts that claim John and Jesus were related through their respective mothers Elizabeth and Mary.

‘And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son.’

(Lk 1:36)

They were born six months apart.

### **The Ephesian Converts of Apollos**

Not so well known by rank-and-file Christians is the existence of twelve Ephesian disciples who had only been baptised by Apollos according to the baptism of John. Paul instructed them and they were subsequently baptised 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Act 18, 19).

### **Summary Statement of Cursory View**

The cursory view presents a harmonious and ordered relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus. While Jesus is undoubtedly superior to John the relationship is not one of jealousy but rather one in which their respective roles dovetail in a complementary manner.

## **II**

### **Challenges to the Conventional View**

#### **The Mandaean and the Nasorean Sect**

In the seventeenth century, Jesuit missionaries returning from Iraq related tales about the existence of a sect. This sect was once referred to as 'St John's Christians' but they were not Christians as normally understood. Indeed, while they venerated John the Baptist, they regarded Jesus as a false prophet and a liar (see Chapter 15, *The Templar Revelation* by Picknett, L. and Prince, C). The Nasorean Sect were actually Priests of a community known as Mandaeans. The Mandaeans were Gnostics and their name derived from the word 'Manda' which means 'secret knowledge'. According to Knight and Lomas, they employed a ritual handshake, known as 'Kushta' which, some have suggested, resembles that used by Freemasons (Knight, C. and Lomas, R. – *The Hiram Key*, pp. 98-99).

#### **The Protoevangelion – The Apocryphal Gospel of James**

In this account of the birth stories of John and Jesus the focus of Herod's wrath is directed towards the infant John and NOT Jesus! The apocryphal gospel reverses the roles that the gospel accounts give to John and Jesus. It is Elizabeth who has to flee with John from Herod's wrath:

'XXIII. Now Herod sought for John and sent officers to Zacharias....  
And Herod was wroth and said: His son is to be King over Israel.'

It is difficult to understand how someone could get the story so wrong – especially when the author shows familiarity with more orthodox details.

#### **The Reportage of the Death of John the Baptist as Literary Fiction?**

Ian Jones, in *Joshua, The Man They Called Jesus*, enjoins his readers: 'We must treat the Gospel versions of John's death with great wariness' (pp. 96-97). When we examine the correspondences in the Elijah-Ahab story we can see close parallels in the telling of the John-Antipas story in the gospel of Mark. The promise of Ahaseuras to Esther is almost verbatim the same as Antipas to Salome. This is difficult to explain away since such a promise could never happen in reality. 'Antipas did not, in fact, have a kingdom; he had a tetrarchy, and this was not his to freely give away to his stepdaughter.' (p. 247, *The Immerser: John the Baptist* by Joan E. Taylor). Why would anyone embellish a story with false details if it were not for the purposes of gaining from a midrashic effect?

<b>1 Kings 21</b>	<b>Mark 6</b>
Elijah's dealings with Ahab	John's dealings with Antipas
King Ahab is married to the pagan Jezebel	Antipas is illegally married to Herodias
Jezebel contrives the death of Naboth	Herodias contrives the death of John
<b>Esther 7</b>	<b>Mark 6</b>
Ahasuerus to Esther: 'What is your request? It shall be given you, even half of my kingdom'	Antipas to Salome: 'Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom'
Esther requests the death of Ahasuerus's trusted official, Haman	Salome requests the death of John the Baptist

### III

#### **Attempting to Reconcile the Conventional Understanding of the John – Jesus Relationship with Extra-Biblical Information**

In my lifetime of investigating the origins of Christianity I eventually came face-to-face with the awkwardness of the John – Jesus relationship. The gospels seemed to be concerned with 'damage control'. They seemed over-concerned with explaining how Jesus could be the natural successor to John and yet supersede him.

After examining and rejecting a number of possible John – Jesus relationships, I have ultimately come to the surprising conclusion that John the Baptist was an historical person who was mythologised, while Jesus was a mythic being who was historicised!

#### **John : History = Jesus : Myth**

Although Paul tells us nothing about John the Baptist or Jesus, the Jewish historian Josephus refers to John in '*The Antiquities of the Jews*', which was written in 93-94 CE. The '*Acts of the Apostles*' tells us that Simon Magus was a follower of John. We also learn that John's form of baptism was superseded by the one attributed to Jesus. However the life story of Jesus is that of an **exemplar initiate**. 'Nazarene' means 'initiate'. By imitating the life of Jesus, the perfect initiate, the adherent undergoes initiation and achieves Gnosis. **The events of the Jesus story are allegories**. They highlight baptism, crucifixion and resurrection. The true adherent of Jesus had to bury his lower self by crucifying his eidolon and raising his higher self (his daimon) to a new life.

‘To you it is given to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest of them, it is only given in allegories.’

Jesus in the Gospel of Luke

## **Chapter 3**

### **SOME PUZZLING QUESTIONS**

'And they asked him,  
and said unto him, (i.e. John)  
Why baptizest thou then,  
If thou be not that Christ...?'

St John's Gospel 1:25

Why did some of the people think that Jesus was  
John the Baptist?

See Mt.16:14

## Chapter 3 SOME PUZZLING QUESTIONS

### I A Preliminary Comparison

#### Gospel Statistics on John the Baptist

The gospels contain the following number of verses about John the Baptist:

Matthew	61/1071	or	5.6%
Mark	29/661	or	4.4%
Luke	92/1153	or	7.1%
John	50/869	or	5.8%

The Acts of the Apostles contains 15 verses concerning John the Baptist. The Marcan material is largely subsumed by Matthew and Luke. Luke elaborates on the birth story of John the Baptist and introduces details about his parents and his mother's relationship to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. The Gospel of John is probably dependent on the other gospels but the author is more concerned with describing John as a subordinate witness to the authority of Jesus.

‘There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.  
The same man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men  
through him might believe.  
He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that light.’  
John 1:6-8

#### Sickening Tone of John's Subservience to Jesus

According to Geza Vermes the insistence of the gospel writers to make it clear that John is subordinate to Jesus are 'laboured'. "Indeed, to objective readers, there is something deeply suspicious about John's repeated, and rather sickening, emphasis on the superiority of 'one that cometh after'. Here we have a John the Baptist who is actually **grovelling** before Jesus." (p. 406, *The Templar Revelation* by Picknett and Prince).

#### The Parallelism of the Two Birth Stories

John Dominic Crossin, in his *Jesus – A Revolutionary Biography*, details the parallelism of the twin infancy accounts of John and Jesus. On four of the five indices Jesus is given a more exalted rating.

##### 1. **Gabriel's Announcements to Zechariah (John's father)**

‘He will be great in the sight of the Lord’

(LK 1:15)

##### **To Mary (Jesus' mother)**

‘He shall be great, AND shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his Father David.’ (Caps mine)

(LK 1:32)

**2. *The Publicised Birth of Each Child***

**John**

When John is born only  
'neighbours and cousins rejoiced' (LK 1:58)

**Jesus**

When Jesus is born there is  
'with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising god'  
(LK 2:13)

**3. *The Circumcision***

Only in the reportage of the circumcision and naming of each child is the parallelism given an equal rating. See LK 1:59-63a for John and LK 2:21 for Jesus.

**4. *Public Presentation***

In the public presentation and prophecy of destiny of each child there is a marked difference in what is said about John and what is said about Jesus.

**John**

This presentation takes place in his parents' home and the reports  
'were raised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea'  
(LK 1:65)

**Jesus**

Jesus' presentation takes place not at home but in the temple where Simeon and Anna the prophetess awaited. Anna.  
'spake of him to ALL THEM THAT LOOKED FOR REDEMPTION IN JERUSALEM' (Caps mine).  
(LK 2:38)

**5. *Pattern of Development of Each Child***

In the description of each child's growth similar words are used about each child. However, Luke embellishes the final phrasing about Jesus so that it is beyond doubt he is the more exalted person.

**John**

'He will be great in the sight of the Lord' (LK 1:15)

**Jesus**

'He shall be great AND shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David'. (Caps mine)  
(LK 1:32)

Note that John was reared in the deserts while Jesus 'went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover' (LK 2:41).



## II

### Comparison of Baptismal Policies of John and Jesus

#### John's Baptism with Water and Jesus' Baptism with Fire

Josephus, the pro-Roman Jewish historian, records the baptising activities of John and the gospel accounts accord with his records. The baptising by John occurred in Perea, in the waters of the Jordan River whereas the disciples of Jesus baptised in the land of Judea. The writers of the gospels make it clear that the baptismal policies of John and Jesus were not identical.

John's baptism was a WATER baptism of repentance whereas Jesus' baptism was with the Holy Ghost and with FIRE (see Mt; 3:11). Matthew and Luke also add:

‘whose fan is his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire’  
(see Mt 3:12 and LK 3:17)

Tom Harpur reminds us that ‘esoterically, this unusual symbol (a winnowing fork or fan) is a clear pictograph for the principle of the mind. Intellect is to sweep out the chaff of sensuality and free the golden grain. Those who were initiated into the greater mysteries were washed with water and then breathed upon and symbolically fanned and winnowed by the purifying wind or spirit’. (*The Pagan Christ*, p. 107).

#### Jesus as a Type of Horus

In Egypt, the fan, called the Khi, was the sign of air, breath, and spirit. Both Horus and Jesus are described as coming forth as the Winnower. Harpur also reminds us that Horus was baptised in the River Eridanus (or Arutana) by an Egyptian John the Baptist, Anup, who was also beheaded! (see *The Pagan Christ*, p. 83).

## III

### Fourteen Puzzling Aspects About the John-Jesus Relationship

My original essay alluded to a number of puzzling aspects about the John-Jesus relationship. Of course, some of the mystery disappears once we surrender the historical basis of the narrative. The following aspects present puzzles if the text is assumed to be based on history:

- Why did Jesus need to have his sins remitted?
- Why did Jesus get baptised by John and not vice-versa?
- Why didn't John become a follower of Jesus?
- Why did Luke report of John the Baptist: ‘All men mused in their hearts whether he were Christ or not’ (Luke 3:15)?
- Why did John the Baptist have second thoughts about the messianity of Jesus? (see Luke 7:19)?
- Why did Luke insert the words ‘And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended by me’ (Luke 7:23)?
- Why did Jesus designate John as an Elijah (Matt. 11:14) when John himself expressly denied it (John 1:21)?

- Why did John 'fast off' but the disciples of Jesus 'fast not' (Mt: 9:14)?
- Why did John baptise others with water while Jesus did not baptise at all (John 4:2)?
- Why did some say of John: 'Why baptisest thou then, if thou be not that Christ?' (John 1:25)?
- Why did some of the people think that Jesus was John the Baptist: 'Some say that thou art John the Baptist ...' (Mt 16:14)?
- After he beheaded John, why did Herod listen to some who said 'John was risen from the dead' (LK 9:7)?
- Why do the gospels report Jesus as evasive and unwilling to respond to the question: 'The baptism of John whence was it? From Heaven or men?' (Mt 21:25; MK 11:30; LK 20:4)?
- Why was the mission of Jesus understood in Priesthood terms by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews when no such slant is even hinted at in the gospels? (see Heb. 7:11).

## Chapter 4

### JOHN AND JESUS

# THREE TYPOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS CANVASSED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

'And it came to pass,  
when they were gone over, (the River Jordan)  
that Elijah said to Elisha,  
Ask what I shall do for thee,  
before I be taken away from thee,  
And Elisha said, **I pray thee,**  
**let a double portion of thy spirit**  
**be upon me.'**

II Kings 2: 9

## Chapter 4 JOHN AND JESUS THREE TYPOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS CANVASSED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### Introduction

#### **Literature not History**

In my article '*A Speculative Reflection on the Relationship Between John the Baptist and Jesus*', I developed an argument which relied heavily on the Zerubbabel-Joshua relationship. This relationship is found in the Book of Zechariah. I can now see that my reliance on this Kingly Messiah-Priestly Messiah connection was too literal and that I historicised a relationship that was meant to be a literary one. John was a Zerubbabel and 'Jesus' was a Joshua **PRECISELY BECAUSE THE GOSPEL STORY WAS CONSTRUCTED TO MAKE THEM SO!** It is not that it was an historical fulfilment but a literary moulding. I shall recast my thoughts about the Zerubbabel-Joshua typology in Section 3 (below).

#### **A Choice of Three Midrashic Models Concerning the John-'Jesus' Relationship**

In the melange of historical fiction which comprise the gospels there lay hidden three midrashic formulations. These are the Moses-Aaron model, the Elijah-Elisha model and the Zerubbabel-Joshua model.

### I

#### **The Moses-Aaron Model**

This John-Jesus relationship appears to be the most articulated in the relationship of Moses to Aaron. Jesus is the Moses of the New Covenant and John the Baptist, although an important mouthpiece, is an Aaron and of a lesser significance.

There are overtones of the birth stories of Moses and Aaron hidden in the birth stories of Jesus and John. Moses miraculously escapes death at the hands of the Egyptian Pharaoh. Similarly the N.T. 'Pharaoh', Herod, 'slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts' (Mt 2:16). Aaron and his sister Miriam (or Mary) have their New Testament counterparts: Aaron's wife is Elisheba and Zachariah's wife is Elizabeth. Elisheba's name is only mentioned once in the Old Testament (see Exodus 6:23). Thus Elisheba and Miriam were sisters-in-law. This would make their offspring first cousins. The New Testament Elisheba is Elizabeth and the New Testament Miriam is Mary. Their respective offspring are John and Jesus. Elisheba and Miriam were sisters-in-law whereas Elizabeth and Mary were cousins. However, the offspring of both in-laws (and cousins) are still cousins!

Again, the father of John the Baptist, Zachariah, was 'of the course of Abiah' (Abijah) and his wife was of the 'daughters of Aaron' (Luke 1:5). We learn from 1 Chronicles 24:7-19 that Abijah was the eighth of twenty-four 'lots'. In the ordering Abijah precedes Jeshua. In like manner, John (descendant of Abijah) precedes Jeshua, an alternate name for Jesus.

## II The Elijah-Elisha Model

A second attempt to find a relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus is canvassed in the gospels. This is done by using the Elijah-Elisha connection as a model. In this model John is earmarked as Elijah while Jesus is the unstated Elisha. There are two aspects to this claim:

**(i) Establishing that John the Baptist was to be regarded as an Elijah**

The New Testament has a clear statement, attributed to John, in which John denies that he is Elijah:-

‘And they asked him What then? Art thou Elijah? And he said I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered. No.’

(John 1:21)

John’s denial is doubly attested in John 1: verse 25:

‘Why baptisest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?’

Despite the clear denial by John the gospels ALSO want to assert that John was indeed an Elijah:

‘And if you will receive it, this (i.e. John) is Elijah, which was for to come.’

(Matt 11:14)

ALSO

‘But I say unto you, That Elijah is come already .... Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist’

(Matt 17:12-13)

We may take it for granted that the two pronouncements attributed to Jesus (above) have to be believed rather than the statements attributed to John about himself.

**(ii) Establishing that Jesus was to be regarded as an Elisha**

The New Testament does not have a clear statement that Jesus is an Elisha. In fact the name ‘Elisha’ is only mentioned once and it has nothing to do with the identity of Jesus. The argument to support the claimed relationship is inferential. It is a judgement based on the cumulative weight of a number of deductions. The argument depends on:

**(a) *Establishing the superiority of Jesus over John.*** (The arguments for this claim are outlined in Chapter 2).

Once it can be accepted that the gospel writers made a determined effort to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus over John then it becomes a relatively easy task to associate Jesus with Elisha. Although Elijah was great, his successor Elisha, was greater!

**(b) *Establishing the superiority of Elisha over Elijah***

As the successor to Elijah the prophet Elisha was given a 'DOUBLE PORTION' of Elijah's spirit (see 2 Kings 2:9-15).

Some of the miracles of Jesus appeared to be intended to prove that he was as equally adept as Elisha: Cf 2 Kings 5:1-14 (the cure of Naaman the leper by Elisha) with Mark 1:40-55 (the cure of a leper by Jesus). Compare also the raising of the Shunnammites dead son (2 King 4:32-37) with the raising of Jarius dead daughter by Jesus (MK 5:22).

Thus it may be deduced that if John were an Elijah then anyone who was an Elisha would have to be superior to John. The gospel writers wish their perceptive readers to conclude that Jesus was an Elisha and therefore of a higher status.

### III

#### The Zerubbabel-Joshua Model

The Zerubbabel-Joshua relationship of John to Jesus cannot be proven as convincingly as the Moses-Aaron and the Elijah-Elisha relationships. It can, however, be perceived. The 'evidence' is inferential because there is no such open claim in the New Testament. Indeed, the name of Zerubbabel (Zorobabel) only appears in the genealogical tables of Matthew and Luke (see Mt: 1 (1-17) and Luke 3 (23-38)).

#### Three Observations

The case for the Zerubbabel-Joshua relationship of John and Jesus rests on an acceptance of three observations: firstly, the cultural historical importance of Kings and Priests in Jewish history; secondly, the centrality of the Temple in Jewish religion; and thirdly, the familiarity of the writer of Matthew's Gospel with the Old Testament Book of Zechariah. It is the Book of Zechariah which contains information about Zerubbabel and Joshua.

#### 1. *The Cultural-Historical Importance of Kings and Priests*

The significance of Kings and Priests in Jewish cultural life was enshrined in the political and religious separation of powers from the days of King Solomon and Zadok, his High Priest. It was even pre-figured in the relationship between secular and religious leaders as far back as Abraham.

Secular/ Political Leader	Religious Leader	Reference
Abraham	Melchizedek	(Gen. 14:18)
Jacob/ Israel	Levi	(Numbers 18; 1-7)
Moses	Aaron	(Exodus 7:1)
Saul	Samuel	(1 Samuel 3:20)
David	Nathan	(2 Sam 2:7)

## 2. **The Centrality of the Temple in Jewish Religion**

The Temple was the focal point of Jewish religious practice and worship. Jesus was 'presented' at the Temple (Luke 2:22) where he received a blessing from Simeon (LK 2:28). At the age of twelve he probably visited the Temple on his parents' annual visit to Jerusalem (LK 2:41). Jesus obviously held the sanctity of the Temple in high regard. The gospels highlight his 'cleansing' of the Temple at the beginning of his ministry (John 2:13-17) and also at the conclusion of his ministry (see Matt 21:12; MK 11:15; LK 19:45).

### **The Three Jerusalem Temples**

The Temple that Jesus visited was actually the third of its kind:

#### (i) **Solomon's Temple – The First Jewish Temple**

**Solomon** (King), **Zadok** (High Priest)

The Temple of Solomon was built in about 970 B.C. and was in use until Jerusalem was destroyed in 597 B.C.

#### (ii) **Post-exilic Temple – The Second Jewish Temple**

**Zerubbabel** (King), **Joshua** (High Priest)

Zerubbabel was appointed Governor of Palestine by Darius around 520 B.C. and he was responsible for the rebuilding of the original Temple of Solomon. Joshua was Zerubbabel's High Priest.

'These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the  
whole earth' (Zechariah 4:14).

In 168 B.C. Antiochus IV, known as Epiphanes, took possession of the Jerusalem temple and profaned it by offering heathen sacrifices on the altar to Jehovah.

The Maccabean Rebellions (175-135 B.C.) were led by Mattathias and his son Judas. The sons of Mattathias were accepted, by popular approval, as rightful heirs to the High Priesthood. This incurred the displeasure of the Essenes who dedicated themselves to the restoration of the Zadokite Priesthood. They expected a Messiah from Aaron to be preceded by a 'Star' or a 'Lawgiver' and 'Teacher of Righteousness'. This expectation differed from the tradition of a Messiah born from the tribe of Judah. (see Neil Asher Silberman's *The Hidden Scrolls*, esp. pps 59-60).

#### (iii) **Herod's Temple – The Third Jewish Temple**

**Herod the Great** (26 BC – 4 BC)

**(Pilate)**

**(Caiaphas)**

Herod's rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple began in about 26 BC and continued after his death in 4 BC. The Temple of Jerusalem was finally destroyed by Titus in 70 AD.

It would seem inconceivable that this historical legacy would be unknown to 'Jesus' OR that it did not impact on him and his followers in a significant manner.

Although the passion story highlights the Kingship of 'Jesus' it is not until we read the Epistle to the Hebrews that we learn of the early church's claim that 'Jesus' was a Priest after the Order of Melchizedek' (Heb. 7:17). This designation is entirely absent from the gospels.

### 3. ***The Familiarity of the Writer of Matthew's Gospel with the O.T. Book of Zechariah***

The Old Testament Book of Zechariah was obviously known to the writers of the passion narrative (see Matthew 26 and MK 14). The book of Zechariah was ostensibly written by a priest named Joshua between 520 BC and 518 BC. There are a number of direct references taken from it in the gospels:

Zech. 9:9	'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' (Cf. Matt 21:5) AND
Zech. 11:12	'So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver' (Cf. Matt. 27:9) AND
Zech. 12:10	'They shall look upon me whom they have pierced' (Cf. John 19:37) AND
Zech. 13:7	'Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered' (Cf. Mark 14:27).

Again, it seems inconceivable that the gospel writers, with their knowledge of the contents of the Book of Zechariah, would not have had the thought that the relationship between John and Jesus was similar to that of Zerubbabel and his High Priest Joshua!

### **Concluding Remarks**

The three typological formulations were each canvassed in the gospels. However, it was the Elijah-Elisha formulation which had the greatest appeal to the church. Even though John did not accept that he was Elijah, he is designated as such by Jesus.

'if you will receive it (says Jesus) this is Elias (Elijah) (i.e. John the Baptist) which was for to come' (Mt 11:14).



## Chapter 5

### SIMON MAGUS – CONTROVERSIAL DISCIPLE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

The relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus is more crucial to the development of church doctrine than is admitted by the Church Fathers. The efforts by the editors of the gospels to minimise the importance of John are 'laboured' and somewhat suspicious. Likewise, the ridicule heaped on John's disciple, Simon Magus, is overdone and points to a Gnostic threat to the doctrines of the Early Church. The attempts by the Literalists to excise the original Gnostic influence from the New Testament texts were only partly successful. The perceptive reader will discover that even some explicit Gnostic references survive:

'we speak the wisdom of God (Sophia) in a **mystery**, even the **hidden** wisdom which God ordained before the world.'

1 Cor. 2: 7

‘All those who in any way corrupt the truth, and  
harm the teaching of the church, are the disciples of  
Simon Magus of Samaria’

Ireneus

Quoted by Elaine Pagels in  
**The Gnostic Gospels** p. 69

## Chapter 5 SIMON MAGUS – CONTROVERSIAL DISCIPLE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

### I

#### Changes of Doctrine Contained in Apocryphal and Gnostic Gospels

#### Apocryphas, Dead Sea Scrolls and Gnostic Gospels

The New Testament layman can be easily bewildered by the vast array of literary sources drawn upon by New Testament scholars. The following brief introduction is given as a necessary prelude to the literature that has been **excluded** from the New Testament.

#### Apocryphas

There are both Old Testament and New Testament Apocryphal works. The term 'Apocrypha' is derived from the Greek word meaning something 'hidden'. It is now used in a derogatory sense as 'non-canonical' or 'non-approved'. It also needs to be distinguished from two other terms:

**'Apocalyptic' Texts** are about revelations and prophecies relating to the end days. The book 'The Revelation' is an approved canonical text but there are many other non-approved apocalyptic texts.

**'Pseudipigraphia'**. The term 'pseudipigraphia' is applied to 'writings under assumed names' and many apocryphal writings bear the names of patriarchs and apostles when they were not written by those people.

#### The Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumram)

The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947 at Qumram overlooking the Dead Sea. By 1960 the contents of the total collection of documents on goatskin, sheepskin and papyrus were known. The copper scroll presented difficulties of unravelling.

#### Rabbinic Judaism

The contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed the texts of unknown psalms, biblical commentaries, calendrical texts, liturgical texts, purity laws and Rabbinic-like expansion of biblical stories. The scrolls date from about 250 BC to 68 AD when the Romans destroyed Qumram.

The scrolls provide cultural insights into Rabbinic Judaism and provide further insights into the modes of thought that shaped the early Christian community.

#### The Gnostic Gospels of Nag Hammadi, Egypt

In 1945 an Arab peasant, Muhammad 'Alī smashed a red earthenware jar a metre high while digging around a massive boulder. The jar contained thirteen papyrus books bound in leather (or codices). Included in this cache of Coptic texts was a version of the **'Gospel According to Thomas'** and bound into the same volume was the **'Gospel of Philip'**. These gospels attribute acts and sayings to Jesus quite different to those in the New

Testament. The noted scholar Elaine Pagels in her book '**The Gnostic Gospels**' records:

'Other sayings in this collection criticise Christian beliefs, such as the virgin birth, or the bodily resurrection, as naive misunderstandings. Bound together with these gospels is the **APOCRYPHON** (literally, 'secret book') **OF JOHN** which offers to reveal 'the mysteries [and the] things hidden in silence' which Jesus taught to his disciple John.'  
(p.15)

Furthermore the collection included:

'**The Gospel of Truth**' and the '**Gospel to the Egyptians**' which identifies itself as 'the [sacred book] of the Great Invisible [Spirit]. Another group of texts consists of writings attributed to Jesus' followers, such as the '**Secret Book of James**', the '**Apocalypse of Paul**', the '**Letter of Peter to Philip**', and the '**Apocalypse of Peter**',

## II

### The Traditional Gospels Contain Evidence of Doctrinal Disputes

#### The Evolution of Baptismal Policy

It is sometimes assumed that Christian doctrine was expounded once and for all time. Yet even a casual reading of the New Testament reveals that doctrinal stances on baptismal policy, the second coming, marriage, animal sacrifices and so on were subjects of debate among the Apostles. The status of women and the admission of gentiles into the new organisation were matters which were hotly contested. An especially thorny issue related to the admission of John's disciples. Were they to be re-baptised? One such disciple was Simon Magus. He represented a Gnostic line of thinking which threatened to undermine a great deal of church doctrine.

#### Gnosticism as a Threat to the Early Church

'Gnosis' is a Greek word for 'knowledge'. Elaine Pagels explains thus: 'we could translate as 'insight' for 'gnosis' involves an intuitive process of knowing oneself ... to know oneself at the deepest level, is simultaneously to know God. This is the secret of Gnosis.' (*The Gnostic Gospels*, p. 18). Simon Magus the Gnostic is actually mentioned in the New Testament. He is referred to in such a disparaging manner that the reader would not give him a second thought (see Acts 8: 9-24). He is also mentioned in the **Apocryphal Acts of Peter** quite extensively. Castigations of Simon Magus can be found in the writings of **Origen** (185-254 CE), **Eusebius** (260-340 CE) and **Hippolytus** (170-236 CE). His condemnation by well known Literalists is so vitriolic and sustained that it has the opposite effect. If his teachings were such a threat why wouldn't this be obvious? What did the Church have to fear? Why did the Church Fathers feel threatened?

#### Transitioning from John's Baptism to a New Policy

The New Testament writers make heavy-going in effecting the transition from the world-view of John the Baptist to the new order proclaimed in Church teaching. Firstly they had to acknowledge the validity of the relationship between John and

Jesus and, at the same time, diminish the Baptist's importance! Initially this meant differentiating the types of baptisms, deciding on re-baptismal policy, initiatory formulae, deciding on admission criteria and confirmation policy.

### **Differentiating Types of Baptism**

While John's baptism was a water baptism of repentance for the remission of sins the baptism of Jesus was with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Mt. 3: 11).

### **Re-Baptismal Policy**

Although Jesus had submitted himself to John's baptism, ('thus fulfilling all righteousness'), the church leaders decided that the New Covenant Church required more than John's baptism. Those wishing to join the church who had already undergone John's baptism were required to be re-baptised (see Acts 18: 24-28 and 19: 1-7).

### **Initiatory Formulae**

The Acts of the Apostles presents some evidence that there were alternative pronouncements to the one outlined in Matthew's 'grand commission' statement:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them IN THE NAME  
OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY GHOST  
...'  
(Mt. 28: 19) (Caps. mine)

Compare the above formula with the statements in Acts:

'... only they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Acts 8: 16)

'... and he commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord.  
(Acts 10: 48)

### **Laying on of Hands**

In Acts 8: 17 the reader learns that the new baptismal policy is not like John the Baptist's policy: 'They laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost'.

### **Baptism for the Dead**

Once the Church Fathers had decided baptism was necessary for salvation it then raised the question of the fate of those forebears who had died. Were they to be denied salvation because they had not been baptised? Paul asks

'Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead  
rise not at all? Why are they then baptised for the dead?'  
(1 Cor. 15: 29)

This practice was not institutionalised in the church. It is an example of a practice which was discussed and debated but never officially sanctioned. Today, this practice has returned as an essential element in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints.

## Multiple Baptisms

The original Christians conceived the process of initiation as a series of elemental baptisms. Later, the Literalists insisted that there be only

**‘One Lord, one faith, one baptism.’**

(Eph. 4: 5)

This clear statement certainly trued-out the efficacy of John’s baptismal rite.

## Proselytising the Samaritans

At one time the Samaritans outnumbered the Jews and the early Church Fathers in Jerusalem had to decide whether their neighbours were to be admitted into the new movement. The book of The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of Philip’s missionary journey into Samaria and his encounter with Simon Magus (see Acts 8: 5).

## Admission Policy

### Circumcised or Uncircumcised?

The early church originally defined itself as a product of Jewish thought with its early headquarters in Jerusalem. Jesus was described as a practising Jew, who worshipped in the synagogue and in the Jewish temple. Since all male Jews must by law be circumcised we may take it that the record in Luke 2: 21 indicates that Jesus was reared as a Jew. Thus the church that grew from the life and teaching of Jesus was, initially, a Jewish church.

**‘These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, GO NOT INTO THE WAY OF THE GENTILES, AND INTO ANY CITY OF THE SAMARITANS ENTER YE NOT.’**

(Mt. 10: 5) (Caps. mine)

Following the death of Jesus the church began to re-examine its ethnocentric origins and permitted admission of gentiles into its ranks. Male circumcision was not a prerequisite for church admission.

## III

### Simon Magus and Samaritan Gnosticism

#### Samaria

The gospel of John informs its readers that ‘the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans’ (Jn. 4: 9). This attitude presented a challenge to the early church once it broadened its missionary goals. Philip spearheaded the challenge and led the missionary overtures into Samaria:

**‘Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them’.**

Acts 8: 5

'Samaria had its own distinct religious tradition' (Freke and Gandy). This was based on the Books of Moses and the centrality of their own temple worship on Mount Gerizim. They regarded Mount Gerizim as the legitimate temple site.

'And it shall come to pass when the Lord thy God hath brought thee in unto the land wither thou goest to possess it, that thou shall put the blessing on mount Gerizim and the curse upon mount Ebal.'" Deut. 19: 29

### **The Struggle Between Literalism and Gnosticism**

Samaria's Jewishness was, on the whole, repellent to orthodox Jewry. This distrust was later shared by the fathers of the emerging Christian church. According to Freke and Gandy this distrust was based on the literalism of orthodox Jewry, and early Christian teaching. This literalism was poles apart from the Gnostic teachings of the Samaritan theologians. Certainly the Fathers of the early church regarded the Samaritan Gnostic Simon Magus as their prime target!

### **Simon Magus**

According to Freke and Gandy, Simon Magus is the man most vilified by later Christian Literalists as the 'father' of Christian Gnosticism. Simon was the most outstanding disciple of John the Baptist and was a Samaritan.

'The story goes that when John died Simon was in Alexandria, where he had received a Greek education, so another Samaritan Gnostic, Dositheus, became John's successor. When Simon returned home, however, he became the acknowledged master.'

Freke and Gandy *Jesus and the Goddess*, (see p. 26)

### **The Condemnation of Simon Magus by Irenaeus**

Simon Magus must have been an extremely important figure during the formation of the early church. He receives a great deal of attention in the apocryphal '**Acts of Peter**'. In Section X Marcellus apologises to Peter for persecuting Christians AND for setting up 'A STATUE TO HIM with this inscription: 'TO SIMON THE NEW GOD'!

The Church Father **Irenaeus** called Simon 'the father of all heretics'. Irenaeus calls 'the followers of the Gnostic sage Simon Magus '**Mystery Priests**' and accuses them of worshipping an 'image of Simon made in the form of Zeus' (see Freke and Gandy *The Jesus Mysteries*, Chapter 5, *The Gnostics*, p. 111.

To be condemned by Irenaeus is praise indeed! Irenaeus (130-202 CE) was the chief opponent of Gnostic thought in early Christianity and wrote a massive work '**Against All Heresies**'. However historians such as Alexander Wilder say that 'men like Irenaeus, Epiphanius and Eusebius have transmitted to posterity a reputation for such untruth and dishonest practices that the heart sickens at the story of the crimes of the period.' (see *The Pagan Christ* by Tom Harpur, p. 55). Why was Simon such a prime target?

### **Gnosticism as the Original Christian Religion**

Since the discovery of the Gnostic gospels there is growing evidence that Christianity was originally a mystery religion that became hijacked by an authoritarian institution. On this reckoning Eusebius fabricated the historical origins

of Christianity at the behest of the Roman Emperor Constantine. It was Constantine who 'oversaw' the creation of the Nicene Creed. Christians who refused to assent to this creed were banished from the Empire or otherwise silenced' (*The Jesus Mysteries* by Freke and Gandy, p. 13).

### **Elements of Gnosticism**

There is no clear and single definition of Gnosticism. Most Gnostic teachers share an opposition to any institutional religion. Gnostics generally proclaim the primacy of interior/ self direction in the religious life. They see in the nature of man the nature of deity. Man (**Anthropos**) possesses the nature of God (**Theos**). In Jungian terms the archetypal parents are present in the anima/ animus of man. The parents emanate from the **archetypes** which make up the **pleroma**. The last of the archetypes (the aeons) is expressed by **Sophia** (Wisdom). Sophia, the Goddess, seeks to conceptualise the mystery and this leads to error. One of Simon Magus' leading thoughts expresses the great gulf between Gnostic thought and the Literalist teaching of the institutional Church:

'Everything manifests from two emanations. Consciousness and thought – Male and Female. In essence they are one. When separated they appear as two.'

Quoted by Freke and Gandy from *Hippolytus*, Ref., 6.18.47, and see Mead, G.R.S. (1906), 173-4-*Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, The Theosophical Publishing Society.



## Chapter 6

# THE QUEST FOR THE NON-HISTORICAL CHRIST

'My point, once again, is not that these ancient people told literal stories, and we are now smart enough to take them symbolically, but that they told them symbolically and we are dumb enough to take them literally.'

John Dominic Crossin  
*'Who is Jesus?'*

## Chapter 6 THE QUEST FOR THE NON-HISTORICAL CHRIST

### I

#### Religion as a Product of Culture

Religions are cultural products. They are spawned from both the conscious and the unconscious forces which issue from the peoples who occupy a specific place at a specified time. Religion has to reconcile cosmology and anthropology; theology and philosophy; mythology and history and sociology and psychology.

#### Place

Biblical events are described as happening on holy ground or at the centre of the world, the axis of creation where god speaks to man. Jerusalem is the capital of 'the promised land' and the River Jordan is a symbol of spiritual regeneration.

#### Time

There are at least four aspects of time assumed by New Testament writers: eschatological time, Kairos time, the fulfilment of time and midrashic time.

- (i) **Eschatological Time** or the End Time.  
There is no doubt about the urgency of the gospel preaching:  
'You shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come'  
(Mt. 10:23)
- (ii) **Kairos Time**  
Not everything is possible at every time. There needs to be a concatenation of necessary events to make Kairos time. The gospel writer wrote of Jesus:  
'My time is at hand'.  
(Mt. 26:18)
- (iii) **The Fulfilment of Time**  
The gospel writer records of Jesus:  
'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled'  
(Mt. 24:34)  
The idea of fulfilment is dependent on the division of history into two periods: preparation and reception thus creating a centre of history.
- (iv) **Midrashic Time**  
The midrashic technique of recording an event entails writing about it as if it is an archetypal event which is being repeated. It is a method which attempts to understand history as the 'eternal present'.

#### Cosmology and Anthropology

Religion may be defined as that system of beliefs which attempts to explain the relationship of man to the cosmos. In ancient societies this is sometimes expressed as seeing the relationship between heaven and earth, sky and earth or macrocosm and microcosm.

### **Theology and Philosophy**

Again, in the polarity of theology and philosophy there is a reflection of the relationship of cosmology and anthropology. Theology seeks to explain the relationship of the gods to man while philosophy seeks to express man's relationship to the hidden wisdom of the cosmos.

### **Mythology and History**

Myths arise from the collective unconscious whereas history seeks to tell man's story from man's rational consciousness. Most cultures have their own myth of creation and their own sacred history which relates to the feats of heroes and the deeds of ancestors.

### **Sociology and Psychology**

The events of history have a social as well as an individual context. In order to understand the events of the New Testament it is necessary to be aware of the Roman occupation of Palestine, the beliefs of Pharisees, Sadducees, the Essenes and the political setting in which events take place. It is also necessary to understand the New Testament assumptions about the nature of man. The New Testament defines man as a tripartite being of body (soma), psyche (soul) and spirit (pneuma).

## **II**

### **Understanding the Gospels**

#### **The Gospels as Historical Narratives**

I began my reading of the gospels supposing that they were historical narratives, written by the authors whose names they bear. After 50 years of investigation I have little faith in both these assumptions. Today, I am more impressed by the approach of John Dominic Crossin:

*'My point, once again, is not that those ancient people told literal stories, and we are now smart enough to take them symbolically, but that they told them symbolically and we are dumb enough to take them literally'*

John D. Crossin, *Who is Jesus?*

#### **The Gospels as Mysteries**

Crossin explains in his autobiography, *A Long Way From Tipperary*, that:

*'The Annunciation, Visitation, Birth, Presentation, and Finding in the Temple. The Agony, Scourging, Crowning, Cross-carrying and Crucifixion on the Cross, The Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, Assumption, and Coronation of Mary – they were not called stories but mysteries. They were distinguished as, respectively, the **Joyful**, the **Sorrowful**, and the **Glorious** Mysteries, any one was presumably as mysterious as another. Nobody suggested they were literal, nobody suggested they were not.'* (p. 132).

## The Jesus Myth as a Replay of the Exodus Allegory

Freke and Gandy clearly explain that the Jesus myth used by Gnostic Christians for initiation was based on the Exodus allegory. This allegory has the following elements:

- Moses was God's Christ (see Hebrews 11: 24-27).
- Initiation by baptismal purification is imaged in "the cloud" and the Red Sea. 'And were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and the sea' (1 Cor. 10: 1-3).
- The 40 years of wandering in the wilderness is imaged in the Jesus myth by his 40 days in the wilderness following his baptism (see Matthew 4: 2).
- The death of Moses is an image of the death of the old self which precipitates gnosis. In the Jesus myth this is imaged in the crucifixion.
- The achievement of gnosis is imaged by Joshua entering the promised land. In the Jesus myth the resurrection stories provide glimpses of the new promised land.

### Preaching the Gospel in a Pre-Literate Society

The gospels were never meant to be read by each and every Christian worshipper. The differences in worship between the Roman Catholic community, the Orthodox Churches, the Coptic Churches and the Protestant Churches testify to a wide range of liturgical and sacerdotal practices. These practices derive from the same New Testament doctrine and, in large part, they seek to add meaning and intensity to the MYSTERY in the gospel message. Apart from the Protestant Churches, the liturgical practices have all of the elements of a highly staged drama with costumery, music and a stage setting with lighting effects in an architecturally-tailored auditorium. The gospels were more scripts for mystery plays than historical documents. They provided resource material for homilies and were not assembled by Hansard reporters. In fact the gospels were assembled from an assortment of pronouncement sayings, so-called prophetic checklists, utopian fantasies and apocalyptic predictions. Only later when Rome became interested were the gospels edited and given a quasi-historical dress.

## III

### Jesus as a Joshua

#### The Three Joshuas

- **Joshua ben Nun** was, and still is, highly honoured in Judaism. He, not Moses, led the Children of Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land.

'When Israel was a child, then I loved him and called him out of Egypt.'  
Amos 11: 1

'So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses.'

Joshua 11: 23

- **Joshua the son of Josedech** was an High Priest, appointed by 'the angel of the Lord' (Zech 3: 1) and he, together with Zerubbabel the King, led the Israelites out of the Babylonian captivity.

'These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.'

Zechariah 4: 14

- **Joshua (or Jesus) the Longed-for Messiah**

Ian Jones provides the following explanation of the names 'Joshua' and 'Jesus':

'Christians are often surprised to learn that 'Jesus Christ' is an Anglo-Latin version of the Greek, Iesous Christos, from the Hebrew Yeshua Mashiah which means 'Joshua the Messiah'. The translators of the King James Bible underlined the fact by twice naming Jesus when the Old Testament's Joshua was intended – in Acts 7: 45 and Hebrews 4: 8.

Whereas Ian Jones accepts the historicity of the third Joshua it was not so with Saint Paul or with Jewish historians. Paul was focussed on the 'Christ' concept.

### **Gematria of the Name 'Iesous'**

Freke and Gandy remind us that:

'The name 'Iesous' which we translate as 'Jesus', is an artificial transliteration of the Jewish name 'Joshua' into Greek to make sure that it equals the mystically significant number 888'.

(I E S O U S  
10 + 8 + 200 + 70 + 400 + 200 = 888)

*The Jesus Mysteries* (see p. 159)

They earlier explain:

'It is well known that according to the Revelation of John the number of the 'Beast' is 666.'

(Ibid, p. 142)

### **Paul's Silence About the Historical Jesus**

The epistles of Paul are generally regarded as documents written before the synoptic gospels yet Paul does not mention the cleansing of the temple story. This event led to his conflict with the authorities. He does not refer to Gethsemane or the trial under Pontius Pilate. There is no mention of Joseph or Mary, the Sermon on the Mount or any miracles performed by Jesus. Yet, in his Letter to the Colossians he states that his message is to

'fulfil the word of God;

EVEN THE MYSTERY WHICH HATH BEEN HID FROM AGES .....  
WHICH IS CHRIST IN YOU.

(Colossians 1: 25-27)

Paul's Jesus 'is a mythic figure whose story teaches initiates the path they must follow to realise the Christ within.'

*Jesus and the Goddess* (p. 21)

### **The Gospels as Artifice**

Despite the fact that the gospels were assembled to assist preachers in a non-literate society, when they later became edited, they show considerable artifice in construction. It is no easy matter to detect that the passion narrative is totally derived from an assemblage of Old Testament texts. The New Testament contains no mention of any bad Romans despite the fact that it was against Roman oppression that the early Christians sought deliverance! Like Augustus, Jesus is designated a Son of God and although he may not have been an Emperor he was a poor man's King! If Augustus could trace his lineage back to the gods so, too, could Jesus!

## Chapter 7

# SUMERIAN, PERSIAN AND EGYPTIAN PARALLELS TO THE LIVES OF JOHN AND JESUS

'Like the Jews in 'Exodus', in the gospel story Jesus is called out of Egypt, where he has been in hiding, like the soul within the body. The Gospel of Matthew explains that this is to fulfil prophecy

'Out of Egypt I have called my son'

Here, as elsewhere in the gospels, we should read 'fulfil the prophecy' as a coded reference to the source of the symbolic motif and its intended allegorical meaning. This is a prophecy in retrospect. Jesus fulfils Jewish scriptural expectations precisely because the Jesus story has been constructed from them.'

Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy  
*Jesus and the Goddess*  
(p. 17)

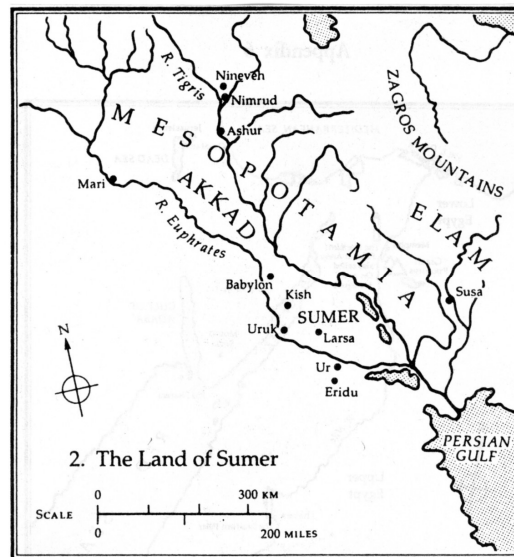
## Chapter 7

### SUMERIAN, PERSIAN AND EGYPTIAN PARALLELS TO THE LIVES OF JOHN AND JESUS

#### Sumer

##### ***A Home to Many Civilisations***

The ancient land of Sumer encompassed most of modern day Iraq. It developed an early civilisation which became greatly influential throughout the Middle East and Europe.



From '*The Hiram Key*' by Knight and Lomas  
p. 480

The economic bases of this civilisation were the rich alluvial plains between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. They also invented new materials including glass. They were workers in metal (gold, silver, copper and bronze) and they were accomplished stone masons. Above all, they are credited with the invention of the wheel and the cuneiform script. The land of Sumer has been known at various times by the name of Akkad, Babylonia, Assyria, Chaldea, Mesopotamia and Iraq.

##### ***Elements of Sumerian Religion***

Each of the twenty cities of ancient Sumer (including Ur, Kish, Eridu, Lagash and Nippur), was politically autonomous with a King and a separable priesthood. The early Sumerians developed the many towered Ziggurat with its summit sumptuously furnished for the abode of its favoured local god (Nannar or Nihursag or the water-god Enki). At Nippur the air-god Enlit was the favoured god.

##### ***Biblical Indebtedness to Sumer***

There is little doubt that the biblical references to the Genesis account of creation, the Flood, the Ten Commandments and the origins of Abraham are derived from Sumer. A lesser known indebtedness concerns a New Testament identity – John the Baptist!



### ***Oannes the Baptiser***

The mythologist, Joseph Campbell, draws attention to the Babylonian Priest Berossos (and his writings in Greek), in his work '*Oriental Mythology*' (p. 107). These writings tell of a rite of baptism and of a Baptist named 'Oannes', which is Greek for 'John': -

'The rite of baptism came from the temple-city of Eridu. (Named to honour the god Enki whose name e-a means God of the House of Water and the other 'the Lord' of the goddess Earth (Ki)).'

Enki functioned as a god of purification in the water rituals known as rituals of the house of baptism or of washing.

### ***The Symbolism of the Water-god Enki***

Enki's symbolic animal had the foreparts of a goat but the body of a fish: the form still familiar as Capricorn, the symbol of the tenth sign of the zodiac, into which the sun enters at the time of the winter solstice, for rebirth (see *Oriental Mythology*, by Joseph Campbell, p. 107).

### ***Were John and Jesus Mythological or Historical Characters?***

Freke and Gandy quote Joseph Campbell:

'Several scholars have suggested that there was never either John or Jesus, but only a water-god and a sun-god'.

(see *The Jesus Mysteries*, p. 42)

## **Persia**

### ***Hidden Influence***

The influence of Persia on the development of early Christianity, though hidden, was very pronounced. It came as a result of the semitic world's absorption of some key elements of Zoroastrianism and the Roman Empire's widespread adoption of Mithraism.

### ***Zoroastrianism***

The Persian (Iranian) prophet Zarathustra (Zoroaster) founded the religion of Zoroastrianism. This religion once had a profound influence on Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Zarathustra has been called the first monotheist and his teachings included concepts such as heaven and hell, the coming of a saviour figure, the resurrection of the dead and a last judgement.

### ***Mithras***

The birth of the Persian sun-god, Mithras, was believed to have occurred in a cave at the winter solstice sometime between 3000 and 2400 BCE.

'The birth of the Persian sun-god Mithras was celebrated on December 25. Mithraism, a contemporary and keen rival of early Christianity, had a Eucharistic-type meal, observed Sunday as its sacred day, had its major festival at Easter (when Mithras' resurrection was celebrated), and featured miracles, twelve disciples, and a virgin birth.'

(*The Pagan Christ* – Tom Harpur, p. 81).

### ***Jesus as the TRUE light***

The attempt to identify Jesus with the light of the Sun is an echo of the Persian religion even though it also appears in a similar metaphor from the religions of Egypt.

‘That was the TRUE LIGHT, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world’.

(John 1:9)

### ***The Science of Astrology***

The Persians, neighbours of the Sumerians, adopted Zoroastrianism as a state religion in about 600 BC. Religious observances were made by making offerings to water and fire. Fire was understood to be the symbol of truth and righteousness. The Persians inherited many of the astrological skills of their near neighbours and their religious festivals were governed by strict adherence to a calendar which featured solar events. The astrologer-priests who presided over these festivals were the Magi.

### ***The Three Wise Men (Magi)***

The story of the three wise men is only told in the Gospel of Matthew. It is not about three Kings but three ‘magoi’, who were Persian priests versed in magic and astrology.

### ***Interpretations of the Story of the Three Wise Men***

There have been many attempts to interpret the import of the story. Literalists have consulted astronomical almanacs for the appearance of a ‘star’ (‘we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him’, Mt 2:2). Midrashic scholars draw attention to the appearance of a star at the birth of Abraham, at the birth of Moses and the birth of Isaac. Historians recall an event recorded by Cassius Dio of a visit by Tirades, the King of Armenia, in the 66th year of our common era. Tirades was accompanied by three Parthian rulers and they all travelled to Rome to pay homage to the Roman God-King Nero. This entourage, also, did not return the way they came. The Roman historian Pliny referred to these visitors as magi.

Biblical scholars have seen correspondences to the story of the three wise men in the Old Testament story of Balaam and Balak in Numbers (Chs. 22-24). Balaam was an occult visionary (magus) who came from the east, accompanied by two servants. Balaam told King Balak, King of Moab, of the future greatness of Israel and the rise of a royal ruler! The parallels sound convincing.

### ***Mintaka, Alnilam and Alnitak***

A most unusual interpretation of The Story of the Three Wise Men draws on the astrological wisdom of Sumer, Babylon and Egypt. The ‘three kings’ of the nativity story echo a trio of solar deities symbolised by the three stars in the belt of the constellation Orion. Mintaka, one of these stars, sits on the celestial equator, the projection of the Earth’s equator out onto the sky. Alnilam and Alnitak are the names of the other two stars. Orion can be seen from every inhabited country in the world. If you follow the line of the belt upwards and to the east, you will come to Sirius, the brightest star in the sky in the constellation of Canis Major.

### ***The Bright and Morning Star***

In the Old Testament we read:

‘there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel.’  
(Prophecy of Balaam: Numbers  
24:17)

In the New Testament we read:

‘I am the root and offspring of David, AND THE BRIGHT AND MORNING  
STAR.’ (Caps mine).  
(Rev. 22:16).

Thus Christians were asked to identify Jesus as the bright and morning star.

## **Egypt**

### ***The Gospel Account of Jesus’ Visit to Egypt***

There is not much in the gospels which cannot be paralleled in Egyptian religion. However, there is scant indebtedness acknowledged by the pseudonymous authors of the gospels. The only ‘tell tale’ clue of Egyptian borrowings are the enigmatic ‘throwaway lines’: -

‘the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take  
the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt’.  
(Mt: 2:13).

AND

‘When he arose, he took the young and his mother by night, and departed into  
Egypt’.  
(Mt 2:14).

### ***The Reason Why Jesus Had to go to Egypt***

Matthew explains that the reason why Jesus had to go to Egypt was to fulfil a ‘so-called’ prophecy (see Mt 2: 15).

There is absolutely nothing prophetic about this quotation from Hosea 11: 1.

‘When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt’.

A Gnostic would understand it to mean that ‘when a man is young he is in bondage to his desires as the Israelites were to the Egyptians’. Only a Literalist would historicise such a reference and attempt to use it as a prophecy! The text is a clumsy attempt to identify Jesus as a type of Joshua.

### ***Galilee not Egypt***

If Luke’s record has an historical basis, Jesus cannot have had time to be taken to Egypt. For we read that after his circumcision on the eighth day after his birth, and when the days of Mary’s ‘purification according to the law of Moses were

accomplished', Jesus was brought to the temple of Jerusalem. Here he received a blessing from Simeon. We are then told:

‘And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord,  
THEY RETURNED TO GALILEE TO THEIR OWN CITY NAZARETH.’  
(see Luke 2 – especially v. 39).

### ***History as Compliance to a Checklist!***

The clumsy insertion of the story of Jesus' escape to Egypt is an editorial embellishment that gives a clue to the reader as to how the story should be understood. It is certainly NOT history. The reason given for the escape to Egypt is tendentious and is patently in compliance to a checklist of so-called prophecies:

#### **‘Thus Fulfilling’**

- ‘Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled ...’ (Mt 1:22)
- ‘and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled...’ (Mt 2:15)
- ‘Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet saying...’ (Mt 2:17)
- ‘And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled...’ (Mt 2:23).

#### **Joseph’s divine messages through dreams**

The divine messages given to Joseph were given to him in dreams:

- The injunction to take Mary as his wife, the name of the son to be born.
- The warning to flee to Egypt.
- The messages to return from Egypt.
- The warning not to remain in Judea.

### ***The So-called Prophecies All Misapplied***

The checklist of so-called prophecies that Matthew utilises in his nativity stories are: Isa 7:14, Hos 11:1, Isa 11:1 or 4:3, Judges 16:17, have all been misapplied to support a theological claim. We may take it that the journey of Jesus from Bethlehem to Egypt to Ramah, with its echo of exile, to Nazareth was a theological, not a geographical journey.

### ***Christianity’s Links with Earlier Civilisations***

Christianity, although claiming to be a new form of Judaism, seeks to maintain its links with the previous civilisations of the past. It does so by establishing links with Sumer (Babylon), Persia and Egypt.

## Chapter 8

# JOHN THE BAPTIST AND EQUINOCTIAL CHRISTOLATRY

“The first thing Jesus does when he begins his mission, deliberately echoing the Jesus of Exodus, is to surround himself with 12 disciples representing each of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jewish Gnostics understood the 12 tribes to be a reference to the 12 signs of the zodiac. The idea of 12 tribes is not a specifically Jewish mythological motif. Plato teaches ‘There are 12 feasts to the 12 gods who gave their names to the 12 tribes (Laws, 745 d-e).’”

Freke and Gandy  
*Jesus and the Goddess*  
p. 113

## Chapter 8 JOHN THE BAPTIST AND EQUINOCTIAL CHRISTOLATRY

### John the Baptist and John the Evangelist

In *'The Secret History of Freemasonry'* by Paul Nandon reference is made to the importance of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist to the Freemasons:

'Because of their spiritual affinity and their roles as guardians and patron saints of the Templars as well as the Hospitallers, the two Saint Johns – John the Baptist and John of the gospels, the announcer of and the witness to the Light, respectively – were worshipped together by all free and enfranchised craftsmen of the Templar Commandery'.

(see pps. 158-159).

### The Grand Lodges of England and Scotland

It is well known in masonic circles that the Grand Lodge of England, was 'revived' on the feast of John the Baptist, 24 June 1717. An annual festival was held on the feast day of John the Baptist until 1727 when it was switched to the feast of John the Evangelist, i.e. 27 December. The Grand Lodge of Scotland also held their annual celebrations on the feast of John the Baptist, but this was swapped in 1737 to the feast of St Andrew which occurs on 30 November. It should be noted that all Masonic buildings, or lodges, in the English craft system are dedicated to the two Johns.

### Cancer and Capricorn

John the Baptist's birth is celebrated at the summer solstice in the northern hemisphere when the sun is in Cancer. The birth of Jesus is celebrated six months later at the winter solstice when the sun is in Capricorn. In Roman times, according to Kenneth Mackenzie (1833-86) in *The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia* midsummer was seen as the moment when Sol, the sun-god, was in his majesty. Around midwinter, usually 25 December, the celebrations were reserved for the rebirth of the sun or Sol Invictus. In astrology Cancer is ruled by the Moon, the mistress of life, Capricorn by Saturn, the master of death.

'Cancer is the gate through which psyches descend, but Capricorn is the gate through which they ascend'.

### Solomon, Zerubbabel and John the Baptist

Arthur E. Waite's *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* asserts that from the building of the First Temple under King Solomon (c. 1004 BC) until its destruction Masonic buildings were dedicated to Solomon himself. During Second Temple Judaism, Masonic buildings were dedicated to Zerubbabel. From the time of Herod's Temple until the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus, Masonic buildings were dedicated to John the Baptist. We may take Waite's view as purely speculative. Notwithstanding, speculative Masonry makes ample provision for these three archetypal figures. For example, in the Royal Arch degree, as explained by Rudolf Steiner, when a new member is to be initiated never more than twelve members are allowed to be present.

*'The first, who represents the most important in the circle of twelve is called Zerubbabel. He is the leader, the sun (Zerubbabel means 'the bright Lord, the sun') from whom radiates the light which is to illuminate the others... The next officer is Joshua, the high priest; the third Haggai the prophet. Together these three compose the Grand Council. The first and second Principals come next, then the two scribes, Esra and Nehemia, and the Janitor or Tyler without the Door. After that come the so-called lesser companions ... These twelve represent the twelve signs of the zodiac...*

*The positions taken up by the participants is closely prescribed by ceremony. The novices, who are last to enter, take their places in the North, as they are not yet able to endure warmth. In the East stands Zerubbabel. In the West is the High Priest Joshua, and the Prophet Haggai. And those who take their places in the South are roped together. Each of them has the rope wound around him three times, uniting him with his fellows at a distance of three or four decimetres...*

*He who is initiated into this Fourth Degree ... has to pass three veils ..."*  
(see pps 89-92 *'The Temple Legend* by Rudolf Steiner being Lecture 8 'The Essence and Task of Freemasonry from the Point of View of Spiritual Science'. Rudolf Steiner Press London 1985. This lecture was given by Rudolf Steiner in Berlin on the 9th December 1904).

### **An Egyptian John the Baptist**

Anubis (also known as Anup) is an Egyptian counterpart to John the Baptist and Horus is the equivalent to Jesus. Both Horus and Jesus received their baptisms at the age of thirty! The minor deity Anubis, though distinguished, was only a star god – that is, a precursor to the much greater solar light, the sun itself. Tom Harpur explains:

*'In the Egyptian planisphere or chart of the heavens, the star Phact, which was the dove, was in the position to announce the coming of the solar year, and hence of the sun god Horus.'*

*The Pagan Christ, pg. 94.*

### **Jesus the Nasorean**

It was mentioned in Chapter 1 that the Nasorean Sect were priests of a community known as Mandaeans, whose members trace their religious heritage back to Yahia Yuhana or John the Baptist. They believe that Yshu Mshiha, or Jesus, was a rebel and heretic who betrayed secret doctrines entrusted to him by the sect.

A 'nazir' is a person who has taken a vow not to cut his hair, contact corpse uncleanness, or touch grapes or their by-products. These characteristics are outlined in Numbers 6:1-21 under the Law of Moses concerning the law of the Nazarite.

### **The Non-Existence of Nazareth**

According to Knight and Lomas, the town of Nazareth did not exist at the time of Jesus. Thus, the verses of Mathew 5:12-13 cannot mean what they say:

'Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: THAT IT MIGHT BE FULFILLED WHICH WAS SPOKEN BY ESAIAS THE PROPHET, SAYING.....

(Mt 4:13-15).

It also strikes the perceptive reader as a strange justification for moving from Nazareth to Capernaum so that a so-called prophetic utterance might be fulfilled!

### **The Alignment of Christian Festivals with Astronomical Markers**

Rudolf Steiner drew attention to the Church Fathers' attempt to develop an inner astronomy which reflected the magi-wisdom and the nature-wisdom of the shepherds. The festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whitsunday were assigned to recognisable astronomical markers. Christmas was related to the birth of the sun (in the northern hemisphere). This demonstrated the relationship of the Sun to the Earth. The Easter festival was held on a variable date according to the relative position of the Sun to the Moon. The Whitsunday Festival sought to connect each individual with *'the spark of spiritual life out of the whole universe. The fiery tongues represent what lives alike in man, in the stars and the world.'*

(See 'The Festivals and their Meaning by Rudolf Steiner, pps 282-287).

### **John the Baptist and Equinoctial Christolatry**

In the northern hemisphere John is born in midwinter to an infertile mother at the summer solstice when the sun begins to wane. Jesus is born six months later to an unfertilised mother at the winter solstice when the sun begins to grow stronger. The birth of John the Baptist is celebrated in June, replacing a Pagan midsummer festival of water. The birth of Jesus is celebrated on 25 December replacing the birthday celebration of Mithras, the Persian Solar God worshipped widely throughout the Roman Empire. The 25th day of December was chosen by Pope Julius in 345 AD. The date was chosen to be the third day after the 'death' of the winter solstice and the same day on which the births of Mithras, Dionysius and the Sol Invictus were celebrated.



## Chapter 9

# MYSTERIUM AND HISTORIA

'For the original Christians the resurrection is a mythical and not a literal event. It represents a spiritual transformation rather than a physical one.'

*Teaching of the Nassene School of  
Christian Gnosticism – See Freke  
and Gandy Jesus and the Goddess  
p128*

## Chapter 9 MYSTERIUM AND HISTORIA

### I

#### The Mythic Foundations of Christianity

##### **Christianity as a Jewish Mystery Religion**

Christianity as known today purports to be historically based. It did not begin that way. It began as a Jewish version of the pagan mysteries and borrowed heavily from Egyptian and Persian mystery traditions. Later elements of Greek and Roman mystery traditions were incorporated into its beliefs and rituals. At the same time as these influences were being absorbed an opposing literalist opposition gathered strength. Eventually the literalist forces ousted the mystery traditions. The literalists wiped out as much evidence against them as they could. They labelled the early mystery teachings as heretical and aimed their theological weaponry at Simon Magus.

##### **Mystery Centres**

At the heart of non-literate societies and cultures around the Mediterranean lay the Mystery Centres.

‘At the heart of the Mysteries were myths concerning a dying and resurrecting godman, who was known by many different names. In Egypt he was Osiris, in Greece Dionysus, in Asia Minor Attis, in Syria Adonis, in Italy Bacchus, in Persia Mithras.’

*The Jesus Mysteries*

Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy

(p. 5)

These Mystery Centres had an inner and outer teaching about the godman which was conveyed in ritual and drama through symbol and allegory. They assumed a doctrine about the nature of man. This doctrine was based on a belief in man’s Daimon and Eidolon.

##### **The Egyptian Mysteries of Osiris as an Important Influence on Christianity**

Christianity did not emerge from a cultural vacuum. Its Egyptian borrowings were very extensive. The Jewish Christians living in Alexandria were well aware of the Osiris mysteries of the Egyptians. In the development of their own mystery religion they saw Osiris as a mythological prototype.

Tom Harpur cites the noted historian Sir Wallis Budge in *‘The Pagan Christ’*:

‘The Egyptian believed that Osiris was of divine origin, that he suffered betrayal, death and mutilation at the hands of the powers of evil and that after a great struggle with these powers, he rose again.’

**And**

‘The worship of Osiris was so widespread and the belief in him as the god of resurrection so deeply ingrained that he represented the ideal’

(p70)

## **The Greek Version of Osiris**

### **Pythagoras (581 – 497 B.C)**

The Egyptian myth of Osiris found its way into Greek culture via Pythagoras (581 – 497 BC) and his disciples. The notable mathematician and mystic had travelled widely in Egypt, Phoenicia and Babylon. He spent twenty two years in the temples of Egypt and was an initiate of the ancient Egyptian mysteries. He founded communities of mystics in the Greek colonies of southern Italy. His teachings had a direct influence on Plato and the Greek philosophical tradition which, in turn, influenced Christian teaching.

### **Dionysis**

The Greek version of Osiris was Dionysius. Freke and Gandy outline the resemblances that Dionysius has with the Jesus of Christianity:-

*'Dionysius is a saviour hero of mankind, God incarnate; born of a virgin in a cave on December 25<sup>th</sup>; he has a star appear at his birth; is visited by magi from the east; and turns water into wine at a wedding; he is transfigured before his disciples, rides a donkey into a special city, is betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, and celebrates a communal meal with bread and wine, he is put to death on a cross, descends into hell, and is resurrected on the third day; he dies to redeem the world's sins, he ascends into heaven and is seated beside God as the divine judge.'*

Cited by Tom Harpur in 'The Pagan Christ'. (p38)

### **Sophia and Logos**

Christianity not only incorporated the important elements of the Osiris/Dionysian mystery drama. It also drew on the inner mysteries associated with the cosmic roles of Sophia and the Logos. Sophia was the primordial mother goddess who was eventually expressed in the Christian concept of 'Mother of God', 'Queen of Heaven' etc. The logos acted as the mediator between the worlds of spirit and matter (represented in Christian symbolism as the Christ). These gnostic and esoteric elements found their way into Roman Christianity.

### **The Persian Mithras and His Christian Counterpart**

Freke and Gandy refer to the dominance of Mithraism throughout the Roman Empire at the birth of Christianity. Its influence on Christianity is so evident that its teachings could easily be mistaken for Christian ones. Mithras was both a sun deity and a saviour god. Freke and Gandy believe the mythical existence of Mithras was a model used to portray a mythical Jesus.

Michael Bagent et al provide a summary statement of Mithraism's influence on Christian doctrine in their '*The Messianic Legacy*'

*'Mithraism exerted a particularly powerful influence on the coalescence of Christian tradition. It postulated an apocalypse, a day of judgement, a resurrection of the flesh and a second coming of Mithras himself, who would finally defeat the principle of evil. Mithras was said to have been born in a cave or a grotto where shepherds attended him and regaled him with gifts. Baptism played a prominent role in Mithraic rites. So, too, did the communal meal. There is a passage in Mithraic communion which is particularly interesting: 'He who*

*shall not eat of my body nor drink of my blood so that he may be one with me and I with him shall not be saved.'*

*(Vermaseran, Mithras, p 104)*

*When Tertullian, one of the early Church fathers, was confronted with this passage, he insisted it was the Devil, centuries in advance, parodying the Christian Communion in order to diminish the import of Jesus's words. If this was indeed the case, the Devil must also have been very busy brainwashing Paul. As one modern commentator observes:*

*Even with the comparatively slight knowledge we have of Mithraism and its liturgy, it is clear that many of Paul's phrases [in his letters] savour much more of the terminology of the Persian cult than that of the Gospels.'*

*(pps 105 – 106)*

The Roman Catholic Church adopted the usage of '*Pontifex Maximus*' as a title for the Pope, the priestly title of 'Father' and the use of the Mitre headdress. These were all direct borrowings from Mithraism.

## II

### Transitioning From The Mythical To The Historical

#### The Historicising of the Basic Myth

The new Testament contains some references to the early influences of the mystery religions but these are well hidden. Usually they have been blended with a supposed historical incident. This makes them less discoverable.

*'It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven'*

*(Mt 13 : 11)*

*'I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundations of the world'*

*(Mt 13 : 35)*

*'Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God: but to other in parables; that seeing they might **not** see, and hearing they might **not** understand'*

*(Lk. 8 : 10)*

#### A Long Gestation Process

The historicising of the basic myth of death and resurrection was a cultural process which was achieved by the Church over a few hundred years. An essential element in this process was the excision of all pagan Gnostic influences and a realignment with ancient Jewish history. Neither of these processes was ever fully completed. The discovery of the Gnostic gospels near Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945 reveal a hidden library of documents unknown to modern Christianity. The attempt to establish a New Covenant onto the existing Old Testament represented an underlying need to create a new 'chosen people' who were representative of a new age. In a cultural sense Christianity was to represent the death of the old Jewish order and the birth of a new consciousness.

### **The Death of the Eidolon and the Resurrection of the Daimon**

The belief in the existence of the Daimon and the Eidolon in man was widespread in Mystery Centre teachings. The **Daimon** of man was his Higher Self. The **Eidolon** was his Lower Self. The Daimon and the Eidolon were dual aspects of man's nature. The pagan mysteries taught that spiritual progress depended on the death of the initiate's Eidolon or baser ego and the birth of the higher self (the Daimon). In the Christian expression of this basic truth baptism became the symbol of the death of the Eidolon and the resurrection to new life of the Daimon. To find one's true self one had to crucify the ego and acquire a higher god-like consciousness. The ritual of baptism symbolised in one act the twin processes of death and resurrection.

### **Jesus As An Exemplar 'Nazarene'**

In the original 'Jesus' Mystery narrative the saviour hero was described as a 'Nazarene'. The literal rendition of this status was mistakenly ascribed to a geographical place where Jesus supposedly dwelt. We are also told that it was necessary that he came from this place in order to fulfil a prophecy!

'And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.'  
(Mt. 2:23)

The so-called 'prophecy' cannot be found in the Old Testament! Again calling Nazareth a 'city' also seems strange. At the time of the Jewish revolt the historian Josephus was in command of Galilee and in his writings he lists all the region's main towns and villages. He makes no mention of a town or city called Nazareth. So not only was there no prophecy there was apparently no town or 'city' called Nazareth! Freke and Gandy comment on these anomalies by saying:

*'It is widely held (by scholars) that Nazarene refers to the sect of the **Nazarenes**. The Gospel of Philip explains 'The Nazarene' as 'He who reveals what is hidden'.'*

*Jesus and the Goddess*  
Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy  
(p. 259)

In his book '*Jesus – A Revolutionary Biography*' the noted New Testament scholar, John Dominic Crossin declared:

*'It is a little sad to say so, but the journey to and from Nazareth for census and tax registration is a pure fiction.'*

### **The Transformation of the Exemplar into an historical Person**

It is little wonder that Albert Schweitzer's '*Quest of the Historical Jesus*' ended in failure:-

*'There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the life of Jesus'*

There could be no success in the quest for the historical Jesus. The plain truth is that there never was an historical Jesus! The Jesus of the gospels was a spiritual ideal, a

theological exemplar. In the new Jewish Mystery religion the new saviour hero was proclaimed a new Joshua who would lead his followers into a promised new land.

### **Historicising Processes**

It is possible to delineate five phases in the process of historicising the myth of Jesus into history. These are: anchoring, fusing, idealising, fantasising and editing.

#### **Anchoring**

This phase is concerned with finding anchor points to the Jewish religious and cultural inheritance. Christianity proclaims a New Covenant, a New Sabbath and a New Joshua.

#### **Fusing**

This phase explores further relationships to the Jewish religious and cultural inheritance. Jesus is not only a new Joshua he is a new Moses, a second Adam, a second Abraham with his new twelve. He is also a new Elisha and he does everything to fulfil every Old Testament prophecy.

#### **Idealising**

In this phase the Christian Fathers reach beyond the Jewish character of their new saviour and elevate him into a pantocrator (higher than Augustus) and a member of the godhead. The new message of salvation is for the whole world and universal in its application.

#### **Fantasising**

Once the boundaries of national appeal had been exceeded and a cosmology had been enunciated the phase of fantasising was entered. This resulted in the imaginative exploration of hitherto undeclared deeds and teachings of the new godman. This phase gave issue to the apocryphal works of the New Testament and the pseudepigraphia.

#### **Editing**

The canonisation of the scriptures and the outlawing of non-approved records ushered in the final phase of the historicising process. It began with an agreed narrative and a quasi-historical context which connected to the old order. The process was completed when the texts were assigned chapter and verse and given the imprimatur of popes and Kings. This new 'dress' ushered in a new form of consciousness.

### III Doctoring History and Intentional Ambiguity

#### **Eusebius (260 – 340 AD)**

Eusebius is generally recognised as the greatest hijacker and falsifier of early Christian teaching. Charles Waite called Eusebius 'Christianity's most conspicuous liar'.

'The statements of this historian are made, not only carelessly and blunderingly, but in many instances in falsification of the facts of history.'

*The Pagan Christ*  
Tom Harpur (p. 54)

#### **St Augustine (354 – 430 AD)**

Saint Augustine is still regarded as one of the greatest of all early church thinkers boldly asserted

'There are many things that are true which it is not useful for the vulgar crowd to know; and certain things which although they are false it is expedient for the people to believe otherwise.'

St Augustine, *City of God*.

#### **Sir Edwin Gibbon and Alexander Wilder**

Tom Harpur quotes from Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to support his critical evaluation of Eusebius's frauds, deceptions and forgeries. He regarded Eusebius's deliberate insertion of two spurious passages regarding Jesus Christ into the text of Josephus's history as 'vulgar forgery'. Harpur also quotes from the works of Alexander Wilder who claimed

'that men like Iraneus, Epiphanius, and Eusebius have transmitted to posterity a reputation for such untruth and dishonest practices that the heart sickens at the story of the crimes of that period.'

*The Pagan Christ*  
Tom Harpur (p. 55)

#### **An Example of Intentional Ambiguity**

Not all deceptions are as vulgar as those of Eusebius, Augustine, Iraneus or Epiphanius. Some are the result of deliberate exploitation of ambiguity.

#### **Nasorean not Nazarene**

Sometimes the 'Nazarenes' are called the 'Nasoreans' and are identified as part of the larger Mandaean sect who survive as a sect in southern Iraq. Mandaeans trace their religious heritage back to John the Baptist (Yahia Yuhana). 'They believe Jesus (Yshu Mshiha) was a Nazorean but one who was a rebel and heretic who betrayed secret doctrines.' (Knight and Lomas *The Hiram Key*, p. 98). Knight and Lomas also cite Arkon Daraul (*Secret Societies*) concerning the Mandaeans:

'The Mandaean follow an ancient form of Gnosticism, which practices initiation, ecstasy and some rituals which have been said to resemble those of the Freemasons.'

Ibid (p.98)

### **Name and Title Confusion**

Gospel commentators make little effort to distinguish the **name** 'Jesus' from the **title** 'Christ'. They use the name and title as if they were synonyms and interchangeable. This habit is a theological sleight of hand that blends history and theology and makes it difficult to separate fact from value.

### **'Word' of God and Jesus as 'Word'**

Again, the gospel as the proclaimed good news is called the 'Word of God'. This is the same expression used about Jesus himself. The bible is also called the Word of God. As a figure of speech these applications have some acceptability but they paper-over some important distinctions and lead to false conclusions.

### **Footnote**

#### **(I). Historical Onus of Proof Rests on the Churches**

The historical claims about Jesus are so outlandish that the onus of proof rests squarely on the Christian church. It is claimed that Jesus was not only a miracle worker but the only begotten son of the Father. He was not only born of a virgin but when he died he was assumed bodily into heaven. These claims not only defy common sense they make a mockery of the true historical origins of Christianity! They actually work against the truths of the mythology which underpin the original claims of Christianity.

#### **(II). Blending History and Mythology**

While Jesus was a theological exemplar John the Baptist and Pontius Pilate were real historical figures. The blending of history and mythology makes it difficult to investigate the reliability of sayings normally attributed to 'Jesus'. Likewise the insertion of Old Testament quotations into a narrative makes it difficult to give any credence to the passion narrative. The blending of the mythological and historical enabled the early church fathers to satisfy both ends of the faith spectrum. Sadly, the conflict between mythologists and literalists in the early church continues to this day.



## Chapter 10

### LESSONS FROM HISTORY

‘And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them.’

Mark 5: 33-34

## Chapter 10 LESSONS FROM HISTORY

### *My Misguided Quest*

This present re-examination of the relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus brings an end to my journey through the landscape of the gospels. It is the last chapter in my personal 'Quest of the Historical Jesus'. Like Albert Schweitzer, I have been forced to conclude:

*'The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give his work its final consecration, NEVER HAD ANY EXISTENCE. This image has been destroyed by the concrete historical problems which come to the surface one after another.'*

Albert Schweitzer: *Quest of the Historical Jesus* (p. 399)

### **Lesson No. 1**

#### **Gospels are not Historical Narratives**

Probably, the most important lesson that I learned in my studies was the discovery that the gospels contained very little trustworthy history. I have reluctantly concluded there never was a virgin birth or any wise men, there were no miracles and there was no attempt by Jesus to claim that he was a messiah. The account of the passion and crucifixion is theological make-believe and the resurrection stories are incoherent as history.

### **Lesson No. 2**

#### **It is Necessary to Distinguish between Literal and Symbolic Language**

The second most important lesson that I learned was that it is necessary to distinguish between literal truth and symbolic truth. This confusion was expressed succinctly by John Dominic Crossin

*'My point, once again, is not that those ancient people told literal stories, and we are now smart enough to take them symbolically, but that they told them symbolically and we are now dumb enough to take them literally.'*

(John Dominic Crossin – *Who is Jesus?*)

New Testament writers make extensive use of allegory, midrash, personification, metaphor, simile and other figures of speech. This usage is often literalised by readers

### **Lesson No. 3**

#### **The Four Gospels are Accretions of Written Material that have Developed Organically and Editorially Over Hundreds of Years**

The gospels are not the work of single authors. They were not even collated by single authors or by the authors whose name they bear. The four gospels were only a selected number approved by a church council. Other gospels (gnostic) were

excluded from the canon. Even the selected four gospels have undergone considerable modification by editorial borrowings, corrections and extensions. Source and Form critics have detected two processes at work in gospel formation. Each gospel is layered vertically and extended horizontally by accretions over time.

#### **Lesson No. 4**

##### **The Christ Cult and the Jesus Movement were merged into one entity over a period of time**

The Christ Cult has existed from time immemorial. It was based on an understanding that within each person there was an image of the divine, or a spirit self. This ideal self was called by different names in different cultures and was venerated in mystery centres. There was, also, a male and female archetype. These 'Christs' were called Osiris and Isis in Egypt, Adonis and Aphrodite in Syria, Attis and Cybele in Asia Minor, Marduk and Ishtar in Mesopotamia, Mithras and Magna Mater in Persia and Baal and Asherah in the area around Judea. In Greece the male and female Christs were known respectively as Dionysos and Persephone.

In the Jewish culture this ideal self was known as one's **Daimon**. The process of re-ifying the Christ into a Jesus is the story of Christianity. In this process many of the attributes of the different Christs were historicised in the Jesus story. The real achievement was the invention of a story about Jesus retrospectively. It was to tell the story of a new Joshua who would lead his people into another promised land with twelve new tribal leaders. This composite hero was given a set of credentials which outmatched Octavius and would appeal to the hopes and dreams of the most down-trodden citizens of the Roman world.

#### **Lesson No. 5**

##### **The Jesus story trades on the bona fides of the John the Baptist story and not vice-versa**

John the Baptist was probably an historical figure similar to the person believed by the Mandaeans. On the other hand, the Jesus figure is a composite ideal literary creation. His persona and history were created from typical and recognisable characters, each of whom can be related to the hope of a new Israel. This heroic ideal was like a new Joshua, a new Elisha, a new Adam, a new Abraham, a new Moses, a new David, a new Samuel, a new Daniel and a new Jonah. He was even greater than John the Baptist.

#### **Lesson No. 6**

##### **The New Testament is marketed as the NEW WORD and the composite Literary Creation, Jesus – the Christ, is preached as the NEW WORD**

The New Testament not only blurs the distinction between the names Jesus and Joshua, it makes every effort to treat the name Jesus as if it were synonymous with the title 'Christ'. Another one of its theologically blurred conflation is the confusion it creates in preaching the doctrine of Jesus as the Word of God and the scripture as the Word of God. The ambiguity in these usages masks the distinction between literality and myth.

### **Lesson No. 7**

#### **John the Christ was a Model Used By the New Israel Movement to Create a Jesus Cult**

Josephus mentions various would-be Jewish Messiah figures. One of the most popular of these was the preacher – John the Baptist. Many of his words and fulminations were usurped by a small, disenchanting group who developed a secret society into which was injected many of the teachings of the gnostic tradition. This secret society incorporated many of the elements of the Persian, Egyptian and Greek mysteries into their observances. Much later, these mythological and allegorical narratives became literalised. The theologically constructed Jesus eventually usurped the messianic claims attributed to John the Baptist.

### **Lesson No. 8**

#### **History Needs to be Understood Hermeneutically**

Schleiermacher defined hermeneutics as the art of understanding. This not only implies an understanding of the written text. It also implies an understanding of the processes at work in the reader as he seeks to understand the writer's meaning. The two processes are not always in agreement. Even if the reader understands perfectly the writer's intended meaning he may not agree with the judgements made by the writer to derive his conclusion. What is hinted by gospel compilers is often as telling as meanings which are explained. Conversely explanations and expositions sometimes signify underlying turning points in the development of doctrine. Again, the written material excluded from the canon is just as revelatory as that which is included. It reveals the nature of the struggle between the victors and the losers, between those who write history and those who are condemned.

### **Lesson No. 9**

#### **Gnosticism versus Historicism**

The Gnostic elements of the early church are still visible in the rituals of the Catholic, the Coptic and the Orthodox Churches. However they have almost disappeared in the Protestant Churches where historicism has almost replaced mysticism. The Catholic Church still speaks of the Joyful, the Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries. It also makes provision for the Word. On the other hand Protestantism has almost eliminated mystery from Gospel proclamation. It proclaims the triumph of history over mystery.

### **Lesson No. 10**

#### **Christianity Needs a New Age Vision**

The creation of Christianity as a new Jewish Mystery School borrowed heavily from Persian (Zoroastrianism), Roman (Mithraism) and Egyptian (Osiris) traditions. In its beginning it sought to move from Ethnocentrism into Universalism. Its development from Universalism to a Cosmological System has only been partly achieved. With the development of widespread literacy and the adoption of the scientific method Christianity is struggling to maintain its early momentum. Today Christianity may have to gain a new vision if it is to meet the spiritual needs of an electronic age.

**Lesson No. 11****Pauline Gnosticism and Petrine Historicism**

Finally, my N.T. studies taught me that Paul was the founder of esoteric Christianity and not Jesus. Paul's formulation was originally that of a Jewish mystery school which taught the doctrine of: '**Christ in You**'. Later, this teaching was replaced by Petrine historicism. Petrine Historicism told the story of a perfect initiate who was allotted the name 'Iesous'. This name had a numerological value of 888. Stories about this exemplary model gradually converted him into a historical being. The principle of polarisation in large-scale organisations is not peculiar to Christianity. It manifests itself in various guises as liberalism – fundamentalism, spirit-letter of the law or mystery – history.

**Lesson No. 12****Interpreting the True Meaning of the Name 'Jesus Christ'**

The nature of Christian teaching is beautifully summarised in the so-called name of 'Jesus Christ'. It is not a 'christian' name followed by a surname. It is a name followed by a spiritual attribute. In English it means: 'Joshua as an example of a person who possesses the divine spirit given to all mankind.'

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 Jesus the Marginal Jew: John P. Meier  
 Jesus the True Messiah: N.T. Wright  
 Jesus the Social Prophet: Richard Horsley  
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## APPENDIX A

### The Non-Historical Jesus

#### **Tom Harpur and Alvin Kuhn (1880-1963)**

In his book 'The Pagan Christ', Tom Harpur presents a case for the non-literal interpretation of much of the bible's history. In doing so he acknowledges his indebtedness to Alvin Kuhn who claimed: 'the entire Christian Bible', Creation legend, the descent into and exodus from Egypt, the ark and the flood allegory, 'Israelite history' and the imagery of the gospel is simply a revamped and mutilated Egyptianism' (pages 10 and 11)

While Harpur endorses most of Kuhn's claims he retains a hold on Christianity by affirming the reality of the Christ while denying the historicity of Jesus. For Harpur the stories about Jesus are allegorical. They are stories of an exemplar not of an historical person.

#### **Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy**

These two authors collaborated on two books. The first of these, '*The Jesus Mysteries*', examines the claims made by Christians concerning the evidence for the existence of an historical Jesus. They find most of these claims to be spurious and conclude that the original Christians were Gnostics who did not believe in an historical Jesus.

Their second book: '*Jesus and the Goddess*', seeks to identify the secret gnostic teachings of the early church. They not only describe the elements of the Jesus Myth but also introduce the reader to the Christian Goddess Sophia.

#### **Absence of reference by contemporary Roman and Pagan writers**

The Romans were great documenters and were renown for keeping careful records. There is no record of Jesus being tried by Pontius Pilate or being crucified. Freke and Gandy list the names of 27 writers who wrote at, or within, a century of the time that Jesus is said to have lived. Although the works of these authors would be enough to fill a whole library not one of them refers to Jesus. This omission contrasts greatly with the later writings of the Church fathers.

#### **Oblique references to Jesus by Roman Writers**

**Pliny**, the governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor wrote a very short passage to the Emperor Trajan in 112 C.E. requesting clarification on how to deal with troublesome '**Christians**'. **Suetonius** relates that in 64 C.E. '*Punishment was inflicted on the Christians a class of men given to a new and wicked superstition*'. There was no mention of a person called '**Jesus**'. A second oblique reference occurred between 41 and 54 C.E. when Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome: 'Since the Jews constantly made disturbance at the instigation of '**crestus**'. The name Crestus was a popular name and does not have to be taken as a reference to 'Christ' which is a title. Again, the name of Jesus is not mentioned.

**Tacitus (56-117 BCE)** the Roman historian, was not a contemporary of the events he records about Judea under the rulership of Pontius Pilate. He wrote his historical records early in the second century and refers to Christianity as a 'pernicious superstition'. He also states: '*Their originator, Christ, had been executed in the Tiberius region by the procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate*'. However, Pilate was a 'Prefect' not a Procurator. Tacitus is clearly quoting hearsay. Again, the name Jesus is not used.

### Three Jewish Historians

**Philo** Judaeus (25BCE-50CE) was an Alexandrian Jew who styled himself as an hierophant of the Jewish Mysteries. He wrote around 50 works that still survive. They deal with history, philosophy and religion. While they tell much about Pontius Pilate they make no mention of Jesus.

**Justus of Tiberius** was a Jew who lived near Capernaum, where Jesus was said to have stayed. He wrote a history that began with Moses and extended it to his own times. Again, there was no mention of Jesus.

**Josephus** (38-107CE) was a Jewish historian. He was a younger contemporary of the apostle Paul. He wrote two famous history books, '*The Jewish Wars*' and the monumental '*Antiquities of the Jews*'. The works of Josephus were, in fact, copied and preserved by Christian scholars rather than Jewish scribes. Although Robert Funk concedes that some of the text concerning Jesus contains interpolations, additions and revisions he still regards the text as sufficiently reliable to establish the historicity of Jesus (See '*Honest to Jesus*' p223). Others are not so convinced.

### Henry Barnes' Review

The actual existence of Jesus as an historical person rests on very scanty and doubtful evidence from sources external to Christianity. Henry Barnes reviews the meagre number of external mentions of Jesus in his '*Twilight of Christianity*':-

*'a sum total of twenty-four lines from Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Josephus. Given that these passages are virtually all forgeries and interpolations they constitute poor evidence (for claiming that the existence of Jesus is) the best attested event in history'*.

(From Tom Harpur's '*The Pagan Christ*' pps 162-163)

### The Writings of Early Church Fathers

**Bishop Eusebius** (260-340 CE) was an early church father who was a propagandist for the Roman Church. He seized on the writings of Josephus to substantiate his claims about the historical Jesus. Alex and Wilder reports that *Eusebius along with Irenaeus (130-202 CE) and Epiphanius (315-403 BC), were responsible for transmitting 'to posterity a reputation for such untruth and dishonest practices that the heart sickens at the story of the crimes of that period'*.

(See Tom Harpur's '*The Pagan Christ*' p55)

### The Witness of the Gospels

The so-called 'witness of the gospels' at once raises the issue of what gospels? There were about 20 or so Gospels. Some of these have vanished including 'The Gospel According to the Hebrews', The Gospel of the Ebionites and the Gospel of

the Egyptians. The Gospel of Saint Thomas was once considered non-canonical. The Jesus Seminar accepted it as having the same validity as the traditional four. The Gnostic Gospels discovered at Nag Hammadi in 1946 included the Gospel of St Thomas, The Gospel of Philip, The Apocryphon of John, The Gospel of Truth and the Gospel to the Egyptians. Other texts included Epistles and Apocalypses. These gospels and Gnostic texts contain writings which are at variance with the teachings contained in the canonical gospels. Freke and Gandy make the following comment:-

*'Those who do explore the Gnostic gospels discover a form of Christianity quite alien to the religion with which they are familiar.'*

(p9 The Jesus Mysteries)

Freke and Gandy then proceed to develop their central thesis:-

*'The Jesus story was not a biography at all but a consciously crafted vehicle for encoded spiritual teachings created by Jewish Gnostics.'*

(P11 The Jesus Mysteries)

### **Rudolf Steiner's Two Jesus Children Hypothesis**

The four canonical gospels do not clearly confirm the existence of an historical Jesus! They do not establish a birth date which is unequivocal. The two accounts of the birth of Jesus given in Matthew (1:18-2:23) and Luke (2:1-39) are irreconcilable on several accounts. 'Luke does not mention the star, the wise men, the Massacre of the Innocents or the Flight into Egypt. Matthew omits any reference to the Annunciation, the census, the inn, the manger, the angels or the shepherds. Matthew does not mention a star over Bethlehem and does not specify three wise men.' (See *Joshua, The Man They Called Jesus* by Ian Jones).

Both genealogies seek to prove that 'Jesus' is descended from the line of David, but they overlook the discrepancies in the table of descent. Matthew traces the descent through David's son Solomon while Luke's table is through David's son Nathan. However, the tracing is done through the 'notional' father of Jesus i.e. Joseph. 'If Joseph is not the biological father of Mary's son, how can that son belong to the House of David?

The two tables of descent have given rise to the identification of the 'Solomon Jesus' and the 'Nathan Jesus'. Rudolf Steiner developed a Christology based on the actuality of two Jesus children. Common sense would have recognised that the genealogical tables were fictitious and were supposed to serve a theological purpose not an historical one.

## APPENDIX B

### A Reply to Bishop Spong

'I have no doubt that Jesus was a figure of history'  
John Shelby Spong *'Reclaiming The Bible for a Non-Religious World'* p212.

#### **Bishop Spong's Rejection of Tom Harpur and Freke & Gandy's Claims**

To his credit, Bishop Spong acknowledges the popularity of the two books which deny the historical existence of Jesus. He even has '*great appreciation for Tom Harpur whom I know personally*'. Tom Harpur is the author of 'The Pagan Christ'. The other book, '*The Jesus Mysteries*', is co-authored by Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy. However Bishop Spong does not think either book succeeds in making its case. This is a surprising decision in view of the great number of concessions he makes to the non-historicity of events traditionally associated with the Jesus story.

#### **Some of Spong's Concession**

Bishop Spong is quite open about admitting that the 'profound truths' of the New Testament lie 'beneath the literal words of the text' (p203). He is not a fundamentalist. Indeed, he is quite ready to concede:-

*'that while not all the details of the Jesus story are certifiably historical, Jesus himself is ..... we locate Jesus in human history as having lived roughly 4BCE and 30 CE.'* (p213)

and

*'Many things that we think of as essential to the Jesus story were in fact added to the tradition well after the life of Jesus had come to its earthy end.'* (p217)

#### **Paul's Silence About 'Jesus'**

Bishop Spong correctly identifies Paul as the earliest N.T. writer of 'the Jesus story'. However he does not reveal the fact that Paul never mentions an historical Jesus. Paul is concerned with the 'Christ' concept which is a mystical concept not an historical one.

#### **Paul's Gnostic Christ with a Jewish Character**

Spong readily concedes that 'Paul was not a Christian and neither was Jesus!' (p230). As a practising Jew, Paul did refer to the '**Servant**' or '**Suffering Servant**' and the new '**pascal lamb**'(1 Cor 5:7). Spong claims 'that the memory of Jesus was primarily interpreted through Jewish scriptures' (p232). Spong does not address Freke and Gandy's claim that:

*'Paul's Jesus is the mystical dying and resurrecting godman of the Gnostics, not the historical figure of the Literalists'.*

*'The Jesus Mysteries'* (p200)

and

*'The only place where Paul seems to treat Jesus as an historical figure is in the Letter to Timothy (1 Tim 6:13) where he writes of 'Jesus Christ who swore out so noble a deposition before Pontius Pilate' – but this letter is a forgery.'*

Ibid (p201)

Spong agrees that the Pauline authorship of the pastoral letters of Timothy cannot be sustained. (see p362).

### **Herod and Pilate as Historical Personages**

Spong attempts to trade on the historical bona fides of Herod and Pilate to establish the historical credentials of Jesus. This is an argument by association. Spong even counts the number of instances when the name of Pilate appears in the gospels: Matthew (9), Mark (10), Luke (12), John (21) and Acts (3) and Timothy (1). He makes no allowance for borrowings or repetitions but confidently concludes that

*'the crucifixion of Jesus was connected with the reign of a man named Pontius Pilate as Roman procurator.'* (p212)

Spong does not distinguish the historicity of Jesus from '**the story about Jesus**'. Freke and Gandy's argument that **the Jesus story** is a dressed-up rewrite of the Osiris-Dionysis myth receives no attention.

### **Labelling Herod as a Vengeful Pharaoh**

Herod was made King of the Jews by the Romans in 40BCE and he reigned until 4 BCE. Both Matthew and Luke's gospels claim that Jesus was born 'in the days of Herod, King of Judea'. However, Luke connects the birth of Jesus to the taxation census under Quirinus in about 6-7 CE. That was about ten years after the death of Herod the Great. Does this discrepancy matter? Probably not for any ordinary person. However, for someone given the importance of Jesus it assumes a greater significance. It raises the whole question of whether the birth story is an invention. Matthew's depiction of Herod as another 'Pharaoh' who massacred all of the infants in order to slay the man about to be born King is pure poppy-cock! No such massacre ever took place! Nor, for that matter, did the so-called 'flight of Jesus into Egypt' ever take place either! These details cannot be regarded as minor historical lapses. Indeed, they illustrate the fact that history is being subverted for Theological reasons.

### **Pilate As A Convenient Literary Prop**

Again, the recognition of Pilate as a real historical person does not automatically confer historicity to Jesus. Pontius Pilate and Jesus are in the same 'story' but the truth of the 'story' is another question altogether. History records that Pontius Pilate governed for ten years from 26 to 36 C.E. Josephus recounts two incidents during Pilate's governorship and Philo narrates one incident at the time of Gaius. This is likely to be a variant of Josephus's first story. History attests to the **brutality** of Pilate. However when we read the gospels we are not so sure. He appears to be sweetly reasonable and even-handed. By the time we come to **Tertullian** (160-220CE) Pilate is reported as declaring that Jesus was divine!

(Apology 21.24 quoted in S.G.F. Brandon's *Religion in Ancient History*, Allen and Unwin, 1969).

Tertullian's fantasy about Pilate led to the production of a forged document called '**The Acts of Pilate**'. A second forged document called '**The Gospel of Nicodemus**' continued the fabricated history about Pilate. It tells the story of Pilate arraigned in chains before the emperor and berated for crucifying Jesus. At Pilate's execution the voice of Jesus announced from heaven:

*'All generations and families of the Gentiles shall call you blessed!'*

(See *The Jesus Mysteries* p292)

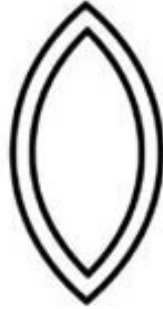
The inscription on the cross, supposedly written by Pilate, is as difficult to believe as is his conversion. The fact that both Pilate and Herod were historical characters in no way proves the historical existence of Jesus. They are mere props in the telling of the Jesus story and they are used to convey a quasi-verisimilitude of events. Unfortunately because of their exaggerated claims they reduce the Jesus story to make-believe.

### **Spong is Poorly Credentialed**

Bishop Spong seeks to dismiss the arguments of Tom Harpur and Freke and Gandy on the grounds that they are 'interdependent' (212). However if he dismisses Harpur he also has to dismiss Alvin Boyd Kuhn whom Harpur acknowledges as 'a key turning point on my spiritual path'. Of course, Kuhn also acknowledged his indebtedness to Gerald Massey the famous Egyptologist and the religious historian Godfrey Higgins. Freke and Gandy's *The Jesus Mysteries* has a Bibliography six and a half pages and ninety pages of End Notes. Spong's work is poorly credentialed by comparison to Harpur and Freke and Gandy.

## APPENDIX C

### Vesica Pisces (Ichthys, Jesus Fish, Mandorla)



#### Notarikon

This symbol, called the **vesica pisces** (piscis) or “**Jesus fish**” has an unusual history. Used almost exclusively today to denote membership in the Christian religion, the symbol once held a very different meaning (even to the early Christians who adopted it). The words usually found inscribed within, ΙΧΘΥΣ (Ichthus), is Greek, meaning *fish*. The emblem became significant to Christians after St. Augustine, who extracted the word from the **acrostic prophecy** of the Erythraean Sibyl, and applied the Kabbalistic technique of **notarikon** to the word to reveal “Jesus Christ, God’s son, savior”. The custom of early Christians to communicate by drawing a portion in the dust was carried over from the practice of the ancient Pythagoreans, who discovered the shape’s unique properties and made it an important part of their teachings.



#### Mandorla

In Pagan times, this glyph was associated with the Goddess Venus, and represented female genitalia. Early depictions of Christ depict him as an infant within the vesica (usually called a mandorla, meaning ‘almond shaped’), which represents the womb of Mary (and often, the coming together of heaven and earth in the body of Jesus - part man, part god). As such, it is also a doorway or portal between worlds, and symbolises the intersection between the heaven and the material plane. The shape of arches in gothic architecture is based on the vesica.

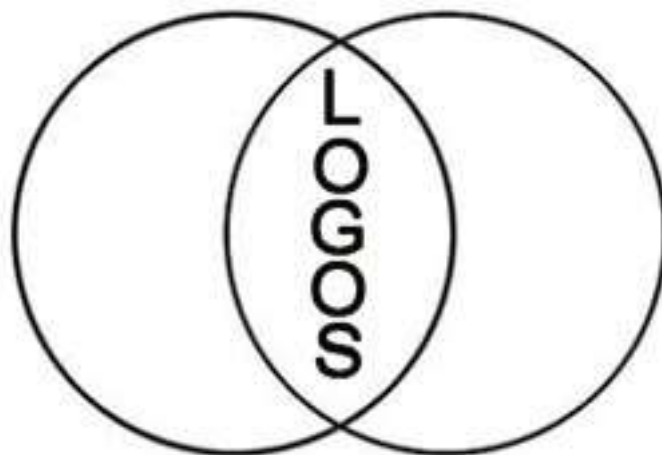


## Logos

The shape of the vesica pisces is derived from the intersection of two circles, the Pythagorean “measure of the fish” that was a mystical symbol of the intersection of the world of the divine with the world of matter and the beginning of creation. To the Pythagoreans, the whole of creation was based on number, and by studying the properties of number, they believed one could achieve spiritual liberation. The vesica pisces was the symbol of the first manifestation, the dyad (reflection) that gives birth to the entire manifest universe. Within the vesica can be found the triangle, the tetrad, the square, the pentacle, and many more polygons, making the vesica a true symbolic womb.

## Ratio

Curiously the New Testament story of the loaves and fishes secretly reveals the geometric formula for the fish shaped device, as does the story of the miraculous catch: “*Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an **hundred and fifty and three**: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken*” (John 21:11). This is little remarked upon by Bible scholars and usually ignored by Christian bible interpreters. It is a veiled reference to the ratio of the width to the length of the vesica pisces which is 153:265 or  $\sqrt{3}$  or 1.7320508 ...

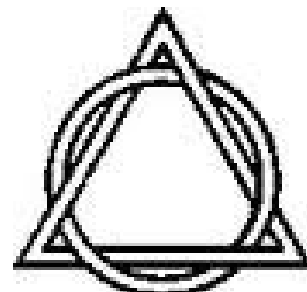
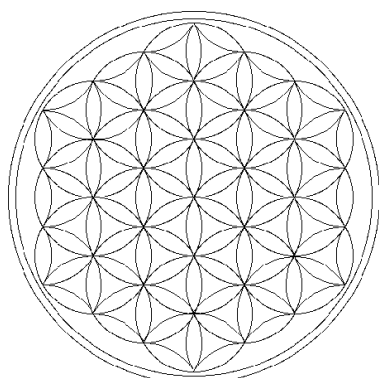






Hidden vesica pisces in an Albrecht Durer engraving

According to St. Augustine: “the verses are twenty-seven, which is the cube of three. For three times three are nine, and nine itself, if tripled, so as to rise from the superficial square to the cube, comes to twenty-seven. But if you join the initial letters of the five Greek words which mean, ‘Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Saviour’, they will make the word, that is, fish, in which word Christ is mystically understood, because he was able to live, that is, to exist, without sin in the abyss of this mortality as in the depth of waters.”

**Related Symbols:****Selected References:**

Skinner, Stephen; *Sacred Geometry Gaia Books*, Octopus Publishing Group Ltd; 2006. Esp ch. 'Christianity and the Sacred Feminine' pps 130-131

## APPENDIX D

### OTHER GOSPELS AND WRITINGS

In the order they were originally set down

The Gospel of the Birth of Mary  
The Protevangelion of the Birth of Jesus Christ by James the Less  
Thomas' Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ  
The Gospel of Nicodemus  
The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Laodiceans  
The Acts of Paul and Thecca  
The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians  
The Epistle of Barnabas  
The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians  
The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians  
The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians  
The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans  
The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians  
The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans  
The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp  
The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians  
The First Book of Hermas  
The Second Book of Hermas  
The Third Book of Hermas  
Letters of Herod and Pilate  
The Gospel According to Peter  
The Acts of Andrew  
The Gospel of Andrew  
The Gospel of Barnabas  
The Writings of Bartholomew the Apostle  
The Gospel of Bartholomew  
The Gospel According to the Egyptians  
The Gospel Under the Name of Judas Iscariot  
The Gospel of Philip  
The Gospel of Thaddaeus  
The Gospel of Thomas

*The Jesus Conspiracy* by Thomas Gordon (p. 352)

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