



Noesis

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About the Mega Society

The Mega Society was founded by Dr. Ronald K. Hoeflin in 1982. The 606 Society (6 in 10⁶), founded by Christopher Harding, was incorporated into the new society and those with IQ scores on the Langdon Adult Intelligence Test (LAIT) of 173 or more were also invited to join. (The LAIT qualifying score was subsequently raised to 175; official scoring of the LAIT terminated at the end of 1993, after the test was compromised). A number of different tests were accepted by 606 and during the first few years of Mega's existence. Later, the LAIT and Dr. Hoeflin's Mega Test became the sole official entrance tests, by vote of the membership. Later, Dr. Hoeflin's Titan Test was added. (The Mega was also compromised, so scores after 1994 are currently not accepted; the Mega and Titan cutoff is now 43—but either the LAIT cutoff or the cutoff on Dr. Hoeflin's tests will need to be changed, as they are not equivalent.)

Mega publishes this irregularly-timed journal. The society also has a (low-traffic) members-only e-mail list. Mega members, please contact the Editor to be added to the list.

For more background on Mega, please refer to Darryl Miyaguchi's "A Short (and Bloody) History of the High-IQ Societies,"

<http://www.eskimo.com/~miyaguch/history.html>

and the official Mega Society page,

<http://www.megasociety.org/>

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Editorial

Kevin Langdon

In *Noesis* #138 (September 1998) we printed an essay by Miriam Berg, “The Synoptic Problem,” in response to which several interesting articles on topics related to the Bible (primarily the Gospels) were submitted. I intended to create a special issue to include these articles but the project remained on the back burner until I received the submissions by Tom Hutton and Robert Dick included herein.

This special issue does not mean that the Mega Society has gotten religion. Our society, and the nonmember contributors responsible for the majority of the material in this issue, include both believers (in a variety of religious notions) and nonbelievers, and it would be inappropriate for Mega to endorse any one viewpoint, but the Christian scriptures are of considerable interest even from the point of view of a thoughtful skeptic and the ideas contained in this issue are meant to stimulate thought on these subjects. In the future we might do a special issue on Buddhism.

Jesus of Nazareth is one of the most interesting figures in history but there is very little in the way of direct documentation of his life and teaching. There are many schools of thought on who he was and what he did. These pages contain writings on this subject by several scholars, most of whom are not Mega members and none of whom are academic experts.

Dale Adams writes:

I started with “Streeter’s Gospels,” as a direct response to Ms. Berg’s article in *Noesis* that you kindly sent. It assumes knowledge of her article.

To present the substance of the Four-Source theory, I wrote “Underlying Sources of the Gospels”. I stratify the Synoptic gospels by their stages of development

Displaying some original work for this project, “Resurrection Sources” separates the Resurrection stories verse by verse into two constituent parts.

This is a culmination of 35 years of work I have spent considering, investigating, and writing on this topic.

Miriam Berg writes:

I am now working on a third article called “The Gospel according to Miriam” since everyone else seems to be writing theirs. It will be a summary of those incidents and sayings which I think are authentic. Incidentally, I’ve also written an article about the correct dating of the ancient Israelite and Judean kings (books I and II Kings in the bible) if you’re interested.

The deadline for *Noesis* #182 is August 15.

Origin of Scriptures

Albert Clawson

11/15/01

Many religions worship the bible instead of worshipping God: this is an abomination and the Old Testament contains a history of what this will lead to.

Many people misunderstand the nature and construction of the Bible—and if you lack knowledge of even the basic organization, how can you possibly understand the book as a whole?

There are two parts of the bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is *exclusively* the writings of the Jews. The first five books are traditionally credited to Moses and contain, among other things, their legal code. The remainder is largely a historical record with bits of poetry thrown in (Song of Solomon is considered by many scholars not to have been an inspired work, for example). The New Testament is exclusively the writings of Christians, who say that Jesus was the Messiah that the Jews were waiting for, only they missed the arrival.

The first four books of the New Testament were written with the purpose of convincing people that the man named Jesus who was recently killed was the Messiah. One of the four gospels was written with the specific intent of convincing the Jews that Jesus was The Christ, the other three were written for somewhat disparate groups of individuals. The remaining books of the New Testament were mainly administrative letters and dogmatic clarification sent to various bodies of believers, with some journalistic entries and historical narrative thrown in. These were organized in order of size, largest to smallest, with the book of Revelation placed at the very end because it seems to refer to the end of the world.

With the possible exception of the Five Books of Moses, the writings which appear in the Bible were never intended to be collected as a single book: they were parts of a larger collection which were grouped together by a committee which was organized with the goal of getting the best and most important parts all together—there were thousands of letters, scrolls, teachings and other records from which to choose, but a decision had to be made. Even today that decision does not have universal support—the Catholics, for example, also include within their canon the books which are known as the Apocrypha. The Bible itself makes reference to various texts which have been lost through the years. Even the name “The Bible” is a misrepresentation. The title comes from the original reference of *ta biblia* which in ancient Latin meant “the books.” Plural.

What many people consider to be a divinely inspired book which was written as a single unit and remained unchanged for centuries has a very complex and interesting history. The four books known as the Gospels, for example, had no punctuation when originally written, let alone chapter and verse divisions. Considering that the United States once lost hundreds of thousands of dollars because of a missing comma in a tax bill, it is easy to see how people could come up with something entirely different than the original intent because somebody broke everything up into convenient chunks several decades, if not centuries after the original authors had died. This point alone renders suspect any claims that the Bible is “perfect” and “unchanged”—and unless this caution is firmly planted in mind, no serious study of the Bible can ever be accomplished.

The stories of the creation and the great flood as recorded in the bible are the account written down centuries after the fact. The ‘Pentateuch’—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—are said to have been written down by Moses. As Moses obviously never met Adam, Eve or Noah, the stories written down were obviously part of an existing record passed down either orally or perhaps through written records of some sort. For the parts about Moses, as everything is written in the third person there is always the possibility that the credit given to Moses is similar to the credit given to King James.

Genesis is an accounting of how the Jews got into Egypt in the first place—answering the question “where did we come from?”

Exodus is an accounting of why the Jews wanted to leave Egypt and how they did it, and ends with the creation of the tabernacle and the first accounts of God having complete oversight—the Jews are no longer under man (Pharaoh) but are instead living their lives devoted to God for the first time.

Leviticus and Numbers contain administrative and legal specifications—how to punish various deeds, the social contract—and a ledger of significant events of the time.

Deuteronomy is the farewell of Moses—he gave a recap of everything that had happened, a few final instructions to be good, a quick trip to the top of a mountain to look at everything that the people were going to inherit and then Moses disappears. At this point it is obvious that these words are written at some point after the death of Moses (possibly a commission formed under the direction of Moses or a later prophet—you’d have to ask a biblical scholar exactly how this all works) as they state that nobody knew where Moses had been buried.

Much more information is to be had about the period of time covered: acting as prophets there is zero doubt that Moses, Abraham, Jacob and others had much more to say as they lived a life devoted to the God of Israel. This all ties into my writings on the context of “The Bible” as we know it today: the Bible contains the Word of God in a holier fashion than the telephone book contains the phone numbers of individuals and businesses in a city. A telephone book will have intentional omissions because not every number is intended for general access, and other numbers will simply fall through the

cracks. A telephone book will have the occasional error creep in as people make copies and corrections.

According to the Bible, Noah lived for several centuries—950 years, to be exact. God gave us reason, so should anybody *not* apply reason to understanding the scriptures? Is there any possible way that every inspired word and deed of a 950-year-old prophet could ever be included in a mere four chapters? There is obviously a lot more to the story—perhaps it would make more sense if we had more information.

The Bible was *never* intended to rule our lives, to be worshipped or even used as a crutch. As far as I can tell, God's plan is to get a few nuggets of truth into our thick skulls and then step back to see what we do with it. Our lives, our destiny, our liberty, our choice, for good or for evil. The Bible should be used as idea fodder to capture our attention just long enough to wonder if there really is something out there—actual relationship with God not included.

Common Sense Gospel Study

Dale Adams

The four Gospels and Acts can be shown by simple common sense to be very early in date. Putting aside a priori theology that Christ is God on the one hand, or on the other hand historical method that proceeds as if supernatural events cannot happen, let's see what the texts themselves show.

The proper starting point is the Gospel of Luke and its continuation, The Acts of the Apostles. In the second half of the latter, the author at times slips into "we" (or "us" or "our") sayings that indicate he was with Paul of Tarsus during the latter's missionary journeys. These three passages are Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18, and 27:1-28:16. At the conclusion of these, Paul is still alive and in Rome, which can be dated by reference to Paul's epistles in the New Testament to be about 64 A.D. The most sensible date for the Gospel of Luke and its complementary Acts is thus 64 A.D. The author (presumably Luke) could have written this much later in his life, but it would by common sense analysis still be early.

The Lucan author employed sources, as he himself tells us in Luke 1:1-4.

These would necessarily have been earlier. At least one source bears some connection to the apostle Peter, whose name appears frequently in the Gospels and in the first fifteen chapters of Acts. The mention in Acts 15:7-11 occurs in the context of Acts chapters 13 to 28 that focus on Paul, so the source connected with Peter seems to end at Acts 12:19. The death of King Herod Agrippa I (12:23) sets the date at 44 A.D. This likely sets the date of the writing of the source and also establishes the likely author, as this is when Peter "went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark." Church tradition also supports this logic, that Peter's scribe was Mark, and critical scholarship calls this source "Ur-Marcus." It would have been as well titled "Ur-Lucas" to acknowledge that it underlies not just the Gospel of Mark, not just the Gospel of Luke, but also the Acts also written by the writer of Luke.

The earliest version of this Ur-Marcus was evidently written in Aramaic and included at least the Passion Narrative and the Feeding of the 5,000, as these are recounted in all four of the canonical Gospels. The composition of the Fourth Gospel, John, seems best regarded as having been rotated in composition among a team of the apostles, making an early date sensible for it as well.

Peter (after Jesus, of course) is the focus of the Ur-Marcus Aramaic draft, but his name is primary in many other passages of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) as well. Verbal identities in the Greek among these passages between the Gospels of Mark and Luke establish that this second (?) draft should be called Greek Ur-Marcus.

This stage of the collaboration between the men Peter and Mark would thus be most likely not long after 44 A.D.

The Gospel of Luke is widely regarded by critical scholars as containing a source we call "Q." Simply by comparing Luke with the Gospel of Matthew, anyone can see for himself that they share a large body of text in common that is not found in Mark. However, it is over-simplifying to hold that all this common material traces back to a common source, Q, and that no *other* sayings are from Q. The true-blue Q sayings are not verbally exact between Matthew and Luke. Any verses that are verbally exact were copied into Matthew from Luke and are not likely from Q. These are found largely in Matthew chapters 23 and 24, particularly 23:23 to 23:39 and 24:26 to 24:51. This shows that Matthew was written later than Luke, but still was most likely complete by 70 A.D., as it does not mention the Fall of Jerusalem in that year.

One commonly hears that there are no Q passages in the Gospel of Mark. This is incorrect. The discovery of the complete text of the Gospel of Thomas at Nag Hammadi in 1946 revealed sayings in it that are in Mark, and not just from Matthew and Luke. Although this could mean that the text of Thomas was based on the completed Synoptic Gospels, close study shows that it is more likely that the parts of Thomas that overlap the canonical Gospels are based on a source text they share in common, namely Q or some variant thereof. Unless the writer of Thomas also had access to Ur-Marcus, this shows that Thomas picked up some of the same parables from Q that Mark included. It thus seems that Ur-Marcus was almost completely narrative text with even fewer sayings than we commonly attribute to Mark.

The Q Source could have been written very early. It was written in Aramaic, judging by the sections that Mark and Luke have in common that lack verbal exactitude. The word "Twelve" (meaning the 12 Apostles) appears so often in this that it is commonly called the Twelve-Source. The name Matthew (or Levi) occurs where this text begins (as at Luke 5:27), and early external tradition names the writer as this Matthew, so this material could have been from an eye-witness or could even have been first put in writing during the lifetime of Jesus.

Late dates for the Gospels have not disappeared from scholarship, as seen in Burton Mack. However, the more fashionable tendency has been toward early dating. No one has stepped forward to prove wrong the early dating reached by the liberal Anglican Bishop John A. T. Robinson. In *Redating the New Testament* (1976, pp 352-354) he gave approximate dates for all four Gospels as between 40 and 65 A.D.

Proceeding beyond this point is somewhat supererogatory, but provides additional support for the main point I am making. As I have said above, the earliest writing attributable to Peter was what I call Aramaic Ur-Marcus. It must have included the sections in the Gospel of John that are also found in the Synoptics, which include the Feeding of the Five Thousand (John. 6: 5-21) and the Passion Narrative (John. 18:1-19,26-35, 38-40); and most of Ch. 19. These elements are distinct from, but were early merged with, what most scholars agree should be called the Signs Gospel. This is a

biography of Jesus formed around what are thought to be seven miracles, and scholars acknowledge an early date for it. The names Andrew and Phillip occur frequently in this stratum; thus one of them seems to be the eye-witness source. However, the largest part of this Fourth Gospel is composed of teachings generally called Discourses. Scholars (including many orthodox believers) tend to view these as having too advanced a Christology to be from the first generation of Christians. This High Christology tends to be well respected by Christians whose Tradition teaches them that the Apostle John wrote this down during his very old age, and tends to be disparaged by critics who find its elevation of Jesus to Godhead to be late and unreliable. However, this late dating would be reversed if we looked upon these discourses as very early and very rough notes of just the most startling things Jesus said. “Why would this be?”, one would ask.

Well, the Gospels make clear that Jesus had many enemies, particularly among the religious establishment. In the Gospel of John a member of that hierarchy is mentioned, one Nicodemus. Not coincidentally, I say, the extended teachings portion of John begins with the first mention of his name at John 3:1 and ends at the last mention at John 18:39. He is mentioned at one other time, at John 7:50-52, at which time he is commissioned by the other Pharisees to “Go into the matter, and see for yourself: prophets do not arise in Galilee.” But when Nicodemus did this investigation, he did not write down the general teachings of Jesus and included none of his moral code, but only the high-flown and self-exalting theology that proved Jesus to be a madman, a liar, or the God he claimed to be. Unbelievers thus find the Gospel of John to be blasphemous or just ridiculous, whereas believers find in it the substance of their worship of Jesus as Christ. When these notes by Nicodemus became incorporated in the Fourth Gospel, it made it seem to be irreconcilable with the Synoptic Gospels because all the other Gospel writers were interested only in the practical teachings of Jesus or were simply incapable of understanding theology.

My view of the Gospel of John leaves hardly any of it to be written by the supposed author, the Apostle John. I limit him to the role of Editor, except that most of Chapter 13 can be attributed to him. I acknowledge him to be the Beloved Disciple (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, and 21:20). All in all I find this gospel to have been written as the Muratorian Canon says it was, by a team of apostles (I name them as Peter, Andrew, and John), incorporating the posthumous notes of Nicodemus. The final work on this Gospel was done before 70 A.D. by John Mark, who was also an eyewitness as the son of Mary of Bethany—see Chapter 11, the raising of Lazarus. (I went into this in great detail in my “The Significance of John” in the May-July 1988 *Cincinnati Society Journal* no. 3, pp. 1-13. My true name for it was “The Three Sources and Five Editions of John.” I also have a book-length version I wrote in 1979.)

The rest is anti-climactic. The gospels Matthew and Mark remain to be accounted for. There are two or three chapters out of Mark’s sixteen that are not paralleled in Luke, mostly the sixth through eighth chapters of Mark. Almost all of this is found in the Gospel of Matthew (although the Mark as we have it today adds a few verses and parts of verses). The person, not likely the person Mark, who added this to Mark was also associated with the writing of Matthew. This person seems not to have been a close

associate of Jesus. He seems to have gotten his information at second or third hand, including gossip on the street. He adds a number of chapters worth of new teachings of Jesus, but they seem like Jesus's other teachings, so are probably largely genuine. This material is called Matthean, although few believe their source is the apostle Matthew. (Incidentally, the most questionable parts include the verses the Roman Catholics use to prove the primacy of the pope.)

I have variously guessed that this writer was the James who was *not* an apostle or, of all people, Barabbas, the man who lived after Jesus died in his place. It remains to mention that the author Luke found some teachings of Jesus that were not in any of his sources and added to the Gospel of Luke several chapters of obviously genuine teachings of Jesus (such as the parables of Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan). With the possible exception of Matthew, which as I stated above paradoxically includes some Lucan material, all these four Gospels were written before 70 A.D.

Scholarly Note: Regarding the information above, whatever I say about the Synoptic Gospels can be said to represent an amalgam of consensus scholarship of the last 100 years. (Well, combining some scholarship of the mid-20th Century no longer regarded as consensus with some new scholarship *not* known in the mid-20th Century, that is.) What I say about the Gospel of John is largely based on idiosyncratic scholarship combined (together with my original contributions) in a way that is uniquely my own. To cite the scholars whose source-criticism is buried within my own would include books in the 1970's by Howard Teeple, Sydney Temple, Robert Fortna, and W. Nicol; and Urban von Wahlde's article in the 1979 *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Proper source-criticism of *John* only became possible after the 1966 publication of photocopies of ancient papyri such as P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵.

Streeter's Gospels

Dale Adams

In Miriam Berg's "The Synoptic Problem" in *Noesis* #138, September 1998, she presents a substitute for the widely accepted Four-Source solution to the origin of the first three gospels. She starts with a generally serviceable review of early attempts at Higher Criticism of the synoptic gospels. She winds up touting what she calls the 5-source hypothesis devised in 1899 by Ernest Dewitt Burton. She claims to have had access to the "Records" preserved by this school. Are the diagrams she appends to her article a synopsis of this model?

Ms. Berg attacks the conventional Four-Source hypothesis and its proponent, B. H. Streeter. Her knowledge of his work is apparently second-hand. She observes, "Streeter himself pointed out three questions which the 4-source theory didn't answer, however." She takes this as a platform to demonstrate that the 5-source theory solves the difficulties Streeter found in the 4-source model. Ms. Berg apparently was unaware that Streeter used these three difficulties as a springboard to perfecting an even more extreme version of the 4-source theory. Streeter's idea is known as Proto-Luke. I not only believe in Proto-Luke as the solution to the Synoptic Problem, I can even show who wrote it.

Let me first show why conventional scholarship regarding the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke fails and why it continues to confuse so many people. Mark is commonly acknowledged to be a precursor of Luke as we now have it. Over-simplifying, most scholars assume that almost the entirety of Mark was available to the writer of Luke. Ms. Berg follows Burton and these over-simplifiers. The 5-source hypothesis requires us to assume that Luke had a definite process of editing that eliminated certain portions of Mark from usefulness to him. Closely examined in page 14 of her article, the Burton theory makes arbitrary and unprovable assumptions throughout, at all of his points 1 through 7.

Mark and Q

We should not assume the ancient writers made sophisticated, systematic editing decisions. The evidence is much more that documents just tended to grow. Yes, the basic building blocks were Mark and Q, but neither of these is just simply delineated. Even Mark had several stages of development. Originally there was a very short version in Aramaic that is found wherever the Synoptics overlap with the Fourth Gospel, John. This is mostly the Passion Narrative plus the Feeding of the Five Thousand. This can be established simply by comparing the two gospels and seeing that wherever they overlap, the agreement of words is so loose that both must have been translated independently into Greek. In contrast, wherever Mark overlaps with the other two gospels, the words are so often the same that a Greek translation must have already existed for most of the document, best called Greek Ur-Marcus. (The other portion I would call the Twelve-

Source.) But this was still not as big as our present Mark. (6:17-29, 6:53-8:26 was missing.) This shorter version was used by Luke. The above is very elementary, yet all kinds of phony arguments are based on ignoring this simple, gradual growth.

The next obvious source is Q. Q is basically the portions where Matthew and Luke overlap. Scholars tend to over-simplify again and say that Luke took Mark and Q and then added in his special material from L, his own source or sources. The genius of Streeter was to recognize that Q and L were first joined together before the material from Mark was added in. He called this Proto-Luke.

Proto-Luke

This Q-Twelve-Source text remained in Aramaic. Next came a further stage of additions in Aramaic. The traces of who did this can be discerned by looking for personal clues. We need active characters in Luke who appear nowhere else in the Synoptics. The key name is Simon. The personal experience introduced at this stage starts with a Simon and ends with a Simon. I call this stage of the document “Proto-Luke”, a modification of B. H. Streeter’s theory. Luke 7:36-50 tells of Jesus going to a dinner at the home of Simon the Pharisee. Luke 24:13-35 is about the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus with two disciples. One is Cleopas. As to the other, “The Lord has indeed risen and has appeared to Simon.” Traditionally everyone assumes this refers to Simon Peter. However, scripture does not mention any prior appearance of the risen Jesus to Peter. No, the plain meaning is that Jesus had appeared to Cleopas and a different Simon. Just as the Q-Twelve-Source ended at this point, so did Proto-Luke.

This Simon may be a well-recognized figure in the early Christian Church. The so-called brothers (probably cousins) of Jesus were James, Joseph, Jude, and Simon. James was the first leader of the Church. When he was killed (c. 62 A.D.), Simon, his brother, became Bishop of Jerusalem.

This Proto-Luke hypothesis easily answers the objections to the 4-source theory stated by Streeter himself. The three points are listed by Ms. Berg on page 14. (1) “Why did Luke insert portions of L only into Q, and never into Mark?” Answer: the writer of Proto-Luke had only Q to work with, thus could only insert L items into Q. Only at the next stage did Luke combine Proto-Luke with the original Ur-Marcus material. (2) The “unrelated quotations” in the middle third of Luke came from Proto-Luke. Luke takes its chronological and geographical settings mostly from the later strata from Ur-Marcus. Proto-Luke was dominated by sayings material from Q, and Lucan (L) sayings tended to be interspersed therein. Throughout Luke the L and Q materials seem to be interwoven from one source and the other. (3) “Why does Luke vary so much from Mark and Matthew in the very beginning of the story and in the final week in Jerusalem?” Streeter’s answer was that the final week in Luke comes basically from non-Markan sources. As for the beginning, either at the Proto-Luke stage or at the Luke stage the Infancy Narrative came in from its special source (presumably Mary or a close relative, by my hypothesis Simon, her son or nephew).

Thomas

As shown, the Proto-Luke hypothesis best answers Streeter's own objections to the standard 4-source hypothesis. Let me continue on to demolish some of the further details of Burton's 5-source theory. Burton believed there were several distinct sub-sets of Q. Fifty years after Burton wrote, the discovery of a complete Greek text of the Gospel of Thomas gave us a way to gauge the nature of Q. In Thomas the parables of Jesus come from all parts of Q and from Matthew and Luke as well. Scholars have largely agreed that Thomas did not have all the Synoptic gospels to work from, but that he worked from underlying sources or source, namely Q. If that is so, then much of the material only in Matthew or only in Luke is nevertheless from Q. Q was both a bigger document and not so easily divided as Burton guessed.

A further complication. The comparison with Thomas readily shows that the primary parable in Mark, the Parable of the Sower, is also in Thomas. There is no reason to think that Mark was available to Thomas. The presence in Mark of the Parable of the Sower thus means that Mark had access to Q! This messes up all the neat divisions between Mark and Q that so many over-simplifiers use to bolster their weak arguments. Note that Q was used by all writers in the Synoptics. It must have been very early. It could even have been written when Jesus was alive.

Why did Q disappear? No gospels survive in Aramaic, so this is not surprising at all. It is easy to demonstrate, from the word-use in Matthew and Luke in most of their shared Q passages, that they must have had to translate independently from the Aramaic Q. We thus have no evidence that a Greek Q ever existed. A further note: there are passages where word-use is identical between Matthew and Luke. However, Boismard has demonstrated that these are passages where the author of Matthew has copied from Luke. See Matthew 23:23-24:51 and compare the Greek text with the comparable passages scattered throughout Luke. (Note that this means that these passages are probably not from Q, as almost everyone heretofore had believed.)

I agree with Ms. Berg where she attacks the Jesus Seminar. These radical critics (in their book, *The Five Gospels*) have deviously misused the evidence from the Gospel of Thomas. (See my article "The Five Gospels Deep-Sixed" in the August 1995 *Vidya* [the journal of the Triple Nine Society] #145/146.)

The Resurrection

As for the most substantive issue, Ms. Berg notes the absence of birth or resurrection stories from Burton's best sources. Birth stories would have to come from special sources, as these were private events from thirty years earlier than the public ministry of Jesus. The author of Proto-Luke had such knowledge. Simon was the son or nephew of Mary. The author of Matthew is unknown, as is where he obtained his information. His story of the Virgin Birth is more general, as if coming from public sources. The lack of agreement between the two gospels proves nothing one way or the other.

As for the Resurrection, Ms. Berg (following Burton?) is not insightful in drawing parallels. The stories are basically the same in all four gospels. The differences are what would be expected from different eye-witnesses telling about a period of time when they rarely were all together when Jesus appeared to them. John has the story from Aramaic Ur-Marcus (from Peter, probably) and from its own special eye-witnesses (John or John Mark). (I have shown in my "The Significance of John (Five Strata)", May-July 1988 *Cincinnati Society Journal*, No. 3, that John was very early.) The Synoptic Gospels drew less from Ur-Marcus, utilizing the Twelve-Source (probably from Matthew or Levi) heavily. (Yet Matthew 28:9-10 is similar to John 20:11-18.) The Journey to Emmaus appears only in Proto-Luke, from Simon. The Ascension described in Acts 1:6-11 bears similarities to Matthew 28:16-20. (See also my "Doubting Apostles" in the December 1988 *Vidya* #98. More generally see "Disproving Resurrection not Easy" in the November 1996 *Telicom* [the journal of the International Society for Philosophical Enquiry] XII,5 and the November 1997 "The (Wrong) Way: Some Truth and Light," XII, 16. Also available is my unpublished "Q, Twelve-Source, or Both", where I grapple with the details of source-separation, especially pertaining to the Resurrection.)

Underlying Sources of the Gospels

Dale Adams

Ur-Marcus

The sources underlying the gospels can be established by general comparison and by detailed analysis. The general picture is that even John has textual overlaps with the other three gospels, the Synoptics. This shows that there was originally a gospel with only a few chapters covering the life of Jesus. Comparison with the Acts of the Apostles shows that there is no reason to assume that this text stops with the end of Jesus's life in 29 A.D. If we look for the logical end-point, it comes near the end of chapter 12. Just before the death of Herod Agrippa I in 44 A.D., the Apostle Peter arrives at the home of John Mark. The underlying text had focused on Peter to this point. Since we hear of Peter only once again, we can assume that this source ends here. It is best called "Petrine Ur-Marcus". It was written in Aramaic at that time. It can be found in Mark (and comparable verses in Matthew, Luke, and even John):

Mark 1:16-28, 2:17-3:5, 5:1-43, 6:30-52, 8:27-9:13, 9:30-31, 9:38-42, 10:13-34, 11:27-33, 12:18-23, 12:35-13:15, 13:28-31, 14:1-9, 28-42, 14:46-54, 15:1-27, 34-40, and continuing in Luke 24:1-3, 9, 11-12, 36-47, 51; John 20:1-23, 26-27; and Acts 1:6-4:31, 5:17-42, 9:32-11:18, 12:1-17.

No other Synoptic sources were employed in the Gospel of John, so we can deduce that 44 A.D. slightly preceded the major development of the writing of John. Its textual mark is identity of word-use between Mark and Luke, but not with John. This shows that it must have been translated into Greek by the time it was used in Mark and Luke.

Q (or Twelve-Source)

The other major source of the Synoptic gospels is generally acknowledged to be Q. Q is usually assumed to be the portions of Matthew and Luke that overlap, but are not in Mark. This is only generally true. The truly Q material underlies Matthew, Luke, and also Mark as an Aramaic original that causes the word use to be different in the derivative gospels. The parables in Mark are generally not exact in word-choice with Luke, so this is a bold statement, but comparison with the (non-canonical) Gospel of Thomas shows that the Q material Thomas draws from also includes texts used in Mark. (Scholarship has had fifty years to absorb this, but still resists learning it. The Jesus Seminar is the worst example of continuing misuse of Thomas.)

Once the barrier is broken that Q material exists in Mark, the radical change is that even narrative in Mark may be from Q. The portions of Mark not already listed

above could be largely from Q. The narrative material in question is called by scholars the Twelve-Source. We cannot tell whether Q and Twelve-Source are distinct.

That Q and Twelve-Source are not distinct is suggested by external criticism. Tradition says that Matthew wrote this gospel. The Higher Critics have suggested that this may have been Q, limited to sayings that occur only in Matthew and Luke. Conservatives have continued to hold that Matthew wrote the gospel with his name. I say split the difference. Acknowledge that Matthew wrote most of the Q discourses, but also allow for the Twelve-Source narrative, which would seem most likely to have come from him. His name (=Levi) occurs first at Mark 2:14, and very little occurs before that. The Q-Twelve-Source in Mark is the following:

Mark 1:9-15, 1:29-2:16, 3:13-4:41, 6:2-16, 9:14-29, 9:33-37, 10:41-11:11, 1:15-19, 12:1-17, 24-34, 13:17-23, 33-37, 14:10-25, 14:43-45, 62-72, 15:29-32, 15:42-16:8.

As I stated above, the mark of this document is that it was not available in Greek at the time it was utilized to bring in to Mark and Luke. As an Aramaic text, it was not likely to survive. Conversely, the Petrine Ur-Marcus did get translated into Greek in time. Why then has it survived? Likely because it was soon merged in with the Twelve-Source to form Greek Mark.

That Q was available for Mark and yet so little was used, seems strange. We do know, of course, that we have a text, our Mark, that for the most part excludes Q. More to our common sense, another text developed that included all this Q, the Twelve-Source. The additional Q portions not in Mark are as follows in Luke:

Luke 11:29-36, 11:52-12:38, 12:47-13:17, 13:23-30, 14:3-33, 15:1-16:31, 17:22-25, 19:11-27.

Viewed this way, the sayings from Q in Mark are of significant quantity compared to the omitted passages.

Proto-Luke

This Q-Twelve-Source text remained in Aramaic. Next came a further stage of additions in Aramaic. The traces of who did this can be discerned by looking for personal clues. We need active characters in Luke who appear nowhere else in the Synoptics. The key name is Simon. The personal experience introduced at this stage starts with a Simon and ends with a Simon. I call this stage of the document “Proto-Luke”, a modification of B. H. Streeter’s theory. Luke 7:36-50 tells of Jesus going to a dinner at the home of Simon the Pharisee. Luke 24:13-35 is about the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus with two disciples. One is Cleopas. As to the other, “The Lord has indeed risen and has appeared to Simon.” Traditionally everyone assumes this refers to Simon Peter. However, scripture does not mention any prior appearance of the risen

Jesus to Peter. No, the plain meaning is that Jesus had appeared to Cleopas and a different Simon. Just as the Q-Twelve-Source ended at this point, so did Proto-Luke.

This Simon may be a well-recognized figure in the early Christian Church. The so-called brothers (probably cousins) of Jesus were James, Joseph, Jude, and Simon. James was the first leader of the Church. When he was killed (c. 62 A.D.), Simon his brother became Bishop of Jerusalem.

Luke

At the final stage the Proto-Luke text was used by Luke the Physician in writing his gospel in 63 A.D. He translated it into Greek in his own style. A Greek text of most of Mark came available to him. He added in whatever portions of Mark were not in Proto-Luke. This was the early Petrine Ur-Marcus material. Sometimes he just copied phrases or sentences of this Greek translation. Also, he followed the order of events in Mark.

Luke is thus a particularly complex text. Its foundation is Matthew's Q-Twelve-Source Aramaic document. (The parts of this in Mark are usually not regarded as Q.) Simon added much from his personal experience in Proto-Luke. Luke brought in Petrine material that had already been translated into Greek "Proto-Mark". Luke also brought in other sources.

Matthew

Once Luke was finished, some of Simon's or Luke's additions were copied over into Matthew. These passages usually mislabelled as Q are found at Matthew 23:23-39 and 24:27-51. (Word-use is too exact to be possible in translations from a common Aramaic source.) So Matthew had to be later than Luke, but not later than 70 A.D. (The Fall of Jerusalem, to which it does not refer.)

The final phases of Matthew and Mark were written before 70 A.D., as was John. For the Synoptics, the classic 4-source theory still fits. I have already dealt with the Marcan source, the Q-Twelve-Source, and the L source (Proto-Luke additions to Luke). The M source should be understood as not just the additions to Matthew, but as also the late strata in Mark (Mark 1:1-8, 3:6-12, 6:14-29, 6:53-8:26, 9:43-10:12, 11:12-14, 20-25, 13:24-27, 14:55-61, but not the even later 16:9-20).

As for John, it is not classed among the Synoptics, though I have shown there is reason to do so. In any case, I have written up my work in "The Significance of John", Cincinnati Society Journal, No. 3, May-July 1988.

Resurrection Sources

Dale Adams

The sources underlying the four gospels are quite different from those presented by Miriam Berg in the September 1998 *Noesis*, “The Synoptic Problem.” Let me focus on the crucial claim she made, “None of the resurrection stories in any of the four gospels agree with each other or with the reports in the epistle to the Corinthians by Paul. The earliest manuscripts of Mark do not contain a resurrection story. . . .”

Some apologia is necessary to explain how the texts reached their present status. The earliest extant manuscripts of Mark break off before completing the resurrection story, true. A fairer assessment would be that the earliest manuscripts did have a complete resurrection story, we just lack proof of what they were. Most scholars accept Ur-Marcus and Q as very early texts, to which I and some others would add the Twelve-Source (unless the Twelve-Source is simply the narrative portions of Q, as I believe it is).

The text of Mark 16:1-8 is so similar to Matthew 28: 1-8 that we can see it is probable that the remainder of Matthew continues it, particularly 28:9-10, 16-20. Compare 16:16-7, “. . . he has risen, he is not here. . . . Go and tell his disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you to Galilee . . .”, with Matthew 28:16, “Meanwhile the eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them.” It continues with a resurrection story, so there is one at least. But is it the earliest?

The prime source underlying the Synoptic gospels is the Twelve-Source. It is identified by what is common to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but is not in John. Applying this to the resurrection accounts, the following is extracted as the Twelve-Source:

Twelve-Source

Mk 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome

Mt 28:1 went to visit the sepulchre

Lk 24:1 with the spices they had prepared, at the first sight of dawn.

Mk 16:3 They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” 16:4 But when they looked they saw that the stone—which was very big—had already been rolled back.

Lk 24:3 But on entering they could not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

Lk 24:4 As they stood there puzzled about this

Mk 16:5 They saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right hand side and they were struck with amazement.

Mk 16:6ab But he said to them, "There is no need to be so amazed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.

Lk 24:6 He is not here, he has risen.

Mt 28:6 Come and see the place where he lay."

[To this point this Twelve-Source text has no conflicts with the extant texts of Matthew and Mark, but I will attempt to reconstruct the underlying Twelve-Source that explains how Luke diverged from the other two at this point. I will bracket my interpolations.]

Lk 24:7 . . . He told you . . . in Galilee that the Son of Man was destined to be handed over into the hands of sinful men and be crucified. [In Galilee he told you he will] rise again on the third day.

[Observe! If Galilee existed a second time in the original text, a simple scribal elide from the first occurrence to the second would read:]

In Galilee he told you he will rise again on the third day.

[Then assume translation from Aramaic to Greek:]

Galilee [is where] he told you he will rise again...

[Leading right to present extant texts:]

Mt 28:7c=Mk16:7b He is going ahead of you to Galilee: that is where you will see him.

[Resuming the Twelve-Source, following Lk 24:7:]

Mk 16:8 And the women came out and ran away from the tomb because they were frightened out of their wits.

[Perhaps also this verse:]

Mt 28:9-10 Suddenly, coming to meet them, was Jesus. "Greetings", he said. And the women came up to him and, clasping his feet, they did him homage.

Lk 24:10 The women were Mary of Magdala, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James.

[The source that underlies all four gospels I call Petrine Ur-Marcus. Like the Twelve-Source, it is a very simple, detailed narrative regarding the resurrection, but with apparently very little overlap with the Twelve-Source. My analysis seeks to separate them from each other.]

Petrine Ur-Marcus

Mk 16:2 And very early in the morning on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb. . . .

Lk 24:2 They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb,

Lk 24:3 but on entering they could not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

Lk 24:9 And they returned from the tomb and told all this to [us] the Eleven and to all the others.

Jn 20:2bc "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we do not know where they laid him."

Lk 24:11b But this story of theirs seemed pure nonsense, and they did not believe them.

Jn 20:3 Then [we] Peter went forth and came running to the tomb.

Jn 20:4 And the two were running together. And [I] the other disciple ran faster than Peter and came first to the tomb.

Jn 20:5 And having stooped down, [I] he sees lying there the linen shroud, nevertheless [I] he did not go in.

Lk 24:12b Peter bent down and looked in and saw the linen cloths.

Jn 20:7 and the napkin which was on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself.

Jn 20:8 Then [I] the other disciple went in and saw and believed.

Lk 24:12c [We] He then went back home, amazed at what had happened.

Jn 20:11b Then when Mary was weeping, she peered into the tomb.

Jn 20:12 And she sees two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

Jn 20:13 And those say to her, "Why do you weep?" She says to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

Jn 20:14 Having said these things, she turned back and sees Jesus standing.

Jn 20:16-17 Jesus says to her, "Mary". Having turned, that one says to him, "Rabbouni", which means "Teacher". Jesus says to her, "Touch me not, for not yet have I ascended to the Father, but go to my brethren and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father.'"

Jn 20:19a Then when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors had been closed on account of fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you."

Jn 20:20 And having said this, he showed hands and side to them. Then the disciples rejoiced at seeing the Lord.

Lk 24:42-43 "Have you anything here to eat?" And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes.

Jn 20:21c "Even as the Father sent me, I also send you."

Jn 20:22 And having said this, he breathed on them and says to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

Jn 20:23 "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven to them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."

Jn 20:26 And after eight days his disciples were inside, and Jesus came when the doors had been closed and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be to you."

Jn 20:27 Next he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and put your hand here . . ."

Lk 24:44 Then he told them, "This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me, in the law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, was destined to be fulfilled."

[To this point I have largely followed Howard Teeple in *The Literary Origin of the Gospel of John* for my derivation of Ur-Marcus from John chapter 20.]

Jn 21:1 After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples

Mt 28:16 at the mountain arranged.

Mt 28:18 All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[Or]

Acts 1:7 It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority.

Mt 28:19a Go therefore, make disciples of all nations.

Acts 1:8b Then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judea and indeed to earth's remotest end.

[Except for the last few verses of each of the above reconstructed sources, the flow and unity of each helps establish that each once existed in about that form. Both sources are very detailed, as would be expected from eye-witnesses. The Twelve-Source is very banal about introductory events, barely getting to an encounter with Jesus. Jesus appears only to the women on Easter day. Petrine Ur-Marcus gives us more sayings, but focusing on banalities before getting on to important teachings. In the above reconstructions I have restored the details from whichever of the extant texts they still appear. For the important teachings, they tend to survive, but loosely, leaving it difficult to tell which of the four gospels best preserves the source. Matthew especially abbreviates, but it does tend to retain important sayings.

[Both above sources are texts that precede Mark as we now have that gospel.]

Appendix

The above concludes my specific response to Miriam Berg's statement I quoted. To carry the theme further, I want to point to a particularly obvious early source, though it appears only in Luke. This is the account called the Walk to Emmaus. It stretches across Luke 24:13-35. It starts, "Now that very same day, two of them were on their way. . . ." In verse 18 one is identified as Cleopas. The other is believed to be anonymous. However, each gospel writer tended to omit his own name or just say "I" for himself.

Yet his name does slip through, I believe. At the conclusion of the story, the text reads at verse 34, "The Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon." The two source stories above do not specify that Simon Peter had seen Jesus. More reasonably by the grammar, the other traveler also was named Simon, and I have good reason to believe he was the son of Cleopas.

This was an eye-witness account by the author of an intermediate stage in the development towards Luke often called Proto-Luke. It includes several important features. Two witnesses see and talk to the resurrected Jesus.

Jesus humorously engages them in a Socratic dialogue. Jesus finally has to tell them the higher meaning of it all. "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory?" Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself. (Verses 26&27)

Further Examination of the Synoptic Gospels

Miriam Berg

12/8/98 (first written 1995)

Does it matter whether Matthew copied from Mark, or Mark copied from Matthew, or Luke copied from both or from Mark only? Does it matter if Matthew and Luke each had another written source document or not? These conclusions of modern scholarship regarding the synoptic gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke are virtually unchallenged today.

Furthermore, does it matter whether the gospels report accurately what Jesus said, or only approximately, or not at all, and which, and how do we know? Again, does it matter how much of the narrative reported in the gospels is historical, or whether it was invented by the early Christians?

Let me offer some answers to these questions.

The Original Sources

The reason that it is of importance to know that there were older source documents Mark and Quelle is that we can then realize that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are not three independent witnesses. Mark and Quelle are the two oldest independent witnesses. Matthew and Luke together by their reproduction of nearly all of Mark in the same words and the same order demonstrate the prior existence of Mark, and Matthew and Luke again by their reproduction of many sayings and some episodes demonstrate the prior existence of another document possessed by both.

John appears to be another independent source, but the story conflicts so much with that of Mark that we can only conclude that either Mark was mistaken in his story, or that John was mistaken in his. Thomas also appears to be another independent source, but it is a collection of sayings only.

Matthew reports many sayings found only in his gospel, and a few fanciful incidents not found in any other gospel. Since these passages are not duplicated elsewhere, it is not possible to prove that they are from another written document, because they could have been from oral stories. The style, however, is that of a written document, and it is called the Matthean document by scholars. It may have been written originally in Aramaic, although some scholars think that the form of the Greek indicates that it was originally written in that language. We will call it Mattheus, or M for short.

Luke contains many anecdotes, parables, and sayings not found in any other gospel. A few of these are found in Thomas but not in Matthew. These items are found in many parts of Luke, and were assigned by Streeter to another older document which he called the Lucan document, but again it is not provable that they are from a written document.

However, Luke in his first four verses refers to “many” older written documents which he has “traced accurately”, and there is nothing to disprove the hypothesis that these were found by him in written form. Furthermore, most of them occur in the three sections of Luke which have no parallels in Mark but many in Matthew, and none of them occur between portions which are clearly copied from Mark. This is most easily explained by the assumption that they were in Quelle originally, but omitted by Matthew, rather than that Luke intermixed them somewhat randomly with sections from Quelle but never with sections of Mark. This was De Witt Burton’s hypothesis, that the material called “Quelle” included two documents, one called Galileus or G, and the other Pereus or P, which Luke reproduced completely but Matthew did not.

But whether “Q” was one document or two documents, it compels us to deny independent authenticity to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and to accept instead the independent authenticity of Mark, Quelle, Mattheus, and Thomas, and to ascribe independent witness to John although it must be examined more carefully since it conflicts with the others throughout.

Mark and Quelle

Let us ask therefore, what narratives or teachings are found in both Mark and Quelle, since they are probably the oldest documents and independent witnesses. At first glance this question would seem to conflict with the assertion that Quelle contained passages found in Matthew and Luke but not Mark. However, there are clearly duplications of stories between them where Matthew or Luke tells both the version found in Mark and the version found in Quelle.

- 1) The description of the preaching of Yohanan must have been found in both Mark and Quelle. Matthew copied Mark’s version more or less exactly and inserted a few verses from the Quellan version, whereas Luke copied the Quellan version. Luke 3:16 appears to be copied from Mark, but since it is a memorable quotation from Yohanan, it could have easily been found in both versions.
- 2) The tale of Yeshua being tempted by Satan must have been found in both Mark and Quelle. Mark reported it as a brief narrative only, but Quelle contained a fanciful narration of those temptations which was inserted by both Matthew and Luke into the Marcan version.
- 3) The tale of healing in the synagogue on the sabbath is reported in Mark, copied by both Matthew and Luke, and two other versions of the tale, or perhaps other occasions, in Quelle. The evidences that the two other occasions were in Quelle and not in Luke’s special source is that Matthew inserts Yeshua’s response from Quelle into the Marcan version, which means that the incident was in his copy of Quelle, unless it was also in Mattheus, or he got it from hearsay.
- 4) The tale of the dispute over casting out Satan occurs in both Mark and Quelle. Matthew skillfully conflated the two versions, whereas Luke simply omitted the version from Mark.

- 5) The tale of Yeshua's refusal to give a sign is found in both Mark and Quelle. Matthew reports both versions, the one interpolated with another saying from Quelle and the other exactly as found in Luke, but Luke has again omitted the version from Mark.
- 6) The tale of Yeshua's sending out his disciples to recruit other followers is found in both Mark and Quelle. Here also Matthew has conflated the two versions by incorporating verses from the Quellan version into the Marcan version. But this time Luke reported both versions, the one exactly as found in Mark, and the second as found in Quelle as demonstrated by parallels from Matthew.
- 7) The tale of Yeshua's visit to his hometown must have been found in both Mark and Quelle (or both Mark and Lucus) since the narrative in Luke is completely different from that in Matthew and Mark.
- 8) The tale of Yeshua's call of the first disciples must also have been found in both Mark and Quelle (or both Mark and Lucus) since the narrative in Luke is again completely different from Mark and Matthew.
- 9) The tale of the woman washing Yeshua's feet must have been found in both Mark and Quelle (or both Mark and Lucus). Matthew included the Marcan version only, and Luke included only the Quellan version and omitted the Marcan version.
- 10) Both Mark and Quelle contained a version of a longer discourse in which Yeshua predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and tragedy for all the Judeans. Luke reports both versions, but Matthew copies portions of the Quellan version into the Marcan discourse and into the discourse on instructions to the disciples on their tour.

Thus we find that both Mark and Quelle confirm the following facts about Yeshua's life.

- 1) Yohanan came preaching and baptizing in the desert, which is also reported by Josephus. He apparently was preaching the end of the world, but had a clear ethical and moral message as well, as reported by Matthew, Luke, and Josephus.
- 2) Yeshua came to Yohanan to be baptized.
- 3) Yeshua withdrew into the wilderness where he underwent internal struggles which he must have later reported as temptations of Satan, and described them as little parables about himself, since that is the only way in which Mark and Quelle could have found out about them.
- 4) He called his first followers by some form of the saying, Come to me and I will make you fishers of men.
- 5) He visited his hometown and was rejected by them as a "fresh kid", on which occasion he made some form of the saying, No prophet is appreciated in his hometown. This saying is found also in John and Thomas, but without context.
- 6) He healed persons in the synagogue on the sabbath, and when criticized for this he retorted, Wouldn't you lift even your ox or

your donkey out of a well on the sabbath? John also reports that he healed a man on the sabbath and was criticized for it.

- 7) He was accused by the authorities of being possessed by Satan, because of his exorcisms, to which he retorted, How can Satan cast out Satan? and, A house divided against itself cannot stand, nor can a kingdom divided against itself.
- 8) He also told a parable about binding a strong man before you can raid his house, found in both Mark and Quelle, and also in the gospel of Thomas but without context.
- 9) And he made some form of a saying about the unforgiveableness of some actions, since that is found not only in Mark and Quelle, but also in Thomas. The exact form of the saying cannot be affirmed, however.
- 10) He refused to give a sign when asked for one. In the Marcan version the refusal is absolute, accompanied by a weary sigh: There shall no sign be given to this generation. In the Quellan version he makes an exception for “the sign of Jonah”, as attested to by the exact parallel between the wording of Matthew and Luke. But what did he mean by the sign of Jonah? Jonah did not claim his experience with the whale (more likely a fish, if there’s any truth to the story) as evidence of the destruction of Nineveh; but he did preach repentance to the people of Nineveh, and Yeshua probably meant to compare his own preaching to the preaching of Jonah as “the sign of Jonah”.
- 11) At some point in his career around the sea of Galilee he sent out his disciples to gather other disciples, and gave them instructions on how they were to comport themselves. These included: Take no money with you; do not take extra clothes; do not go from house to house finding places to stay; eat what is set before you; and, if people do not receive you, simply shake the dust off your shoes at them as a gesture.
- 12) Also at some point or perhaps several points in his career he gave a longer statement on events of the future. In Mark’s story he answers the disciples about the temple by saying, There shall not be left here one stone upon another which will not be thrown down. Later he expands on this by telling them, Those days shall be tribulation such as there has never been the like from the beginning of creation.

These bare essentials of his early career may be affirmed with confidence since they are attested to by both Mark and Quelle, and in some cases by Thomas as well.

Mark and Thomas

Now let us ask what are the likenesses between Mark and the so-called gospel of Thomas. Since Thomas consists of sayings only, introduced usually by a question put to him by his disciples, we can not obtain very much information on the events of his life, but perhaps we can of his teaching.

- 1) Both Mark and Thomas report that he told the parable of the sower.

- 2) Both Mark and Thomas report that on one occasion he asked the disciples to describe him, and what their responses were.
- 3) Both Mark and Thomas report that he made a statement about how only the things coming out of a person's mouth could defile him.
- 4) Both Mark and Thomas report that he told the parable of the mustard seed, and this parable is also found in Quelle.
- 5) Both Mark and Thomas report that he told a parable of the grain ripening without anyone understanding how it occurs, although the version in Thomas is extremely rudimentary and does not clearly follow from the previous clause in the context.
- 6) Both Mark and Thomas report that he said that children were like those who would enter into the kingdom of God.
- 7) Both Mark and Thomas report that he said that there was no need to fast until the bridegroom had left the bridal chamber, although Thomas refers the act of fasting to the presence of sin.
- 8) Both Mark and Thomas report that he referred to the folly of patching old garments with new cloth, or perhaps new garments with old cloth.
- 9) Both Mark and Thomas report that he referred to the folly of putting new wine into old bottles, and also that he said that people who have tasted old wine do not desire new wine. The last statement is found in Luke's version of Mark's incident report, but it is not in Matthew or Mark.
- 10) Both Mark and Thomas report that he referred to being able to move mountains if you had the right attitude.
- 11) Both Mark and Thomas report the parable of the wicked husbandmen.
- 12) Both Mark and Thomas report the saying about the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone.
- 13) Thomas says that he said, I will destroy this house and no one will be able to build it up again. John reports that he said to the priests, Destroy this temple and in three days I will build it up, different both in that the statement is a challenge to the authorities and his response is to build it up rather than no one will be able. Mark reports that he was accused of saying, I will destroy this temple and build it up again in three days, but that it was false witness and the witnesses did not agree with each other. The historical foundation for these three variations on a theme is probably his statement that there would not be left one stone upon another which would not be thrown down, as reported by Mark.
- 14) Both Mark and Thomas tell of an event in which his mother and brothers were outside, and he responded that his mother and brothers were those who heard the will of God, and did it.
- 15) Both Mark and Thomas report an event in which Yeshua is presented with a gold coin and told that they are required to pay taxes to the emperor and he replies, Give to Caesar the things belonging to Caesar and to God the things belonging to God.

- 16) Both Mark and Thomas report that he said, To him who has, more will be given, and to him who has nothing, even that will be taken away.

Quelle and Thomas

Quelle and Thomas have many sayings in common. Some of them are proverbial expressions which could easily have been put in Yeshua's mouth by the editors, such as, Whoever has ears to hear, use them and listen!

- 1) Quelle and Thomas both report that he spoke three of the so-called Beatitudes: Blessed are the poor; blessed are the hungry; blessed are the persecuted. The last one Thomas reports twice, as does Matthew.
- 2) Quelle and Thomas both report that he enjoined unconditional love: Love your brother even as your own soul; love your enemies and do them good.
- 3) Thomas and Quelle both report that he urged lending without hope of return: If you have money, do not lend it at interest, but to him who will not be able to return it to you; Give to him that asks of you, and to him that takes your goods ask them not again. Matthew amends this Quellan statement to finish, From him who would borrow of you do not turn away.
- 4) Both Quelle and Thomas give the saying about the mote and the the beam.
- 5) Both Quelle and Thomas give the saying about not being able to pick grapes from thistles, or figs from brambles.
- 6) Both Quelle and Thomas report that he asked, What did you go out into the desert to see? a wind-shaken reed, or a man in fine clothes? Quelle reports that he said this about Yohanan, whereas Thomas reports that he said it in the abstract.
- 7) Both Quelle and Thomas report that he gave Yohanan the highest praise when he said, Among them that are born of women there is none greater than John the Baptist. Both append the statement that one who finds the kingdom of God shall be greater than John.
- 8) Both Quelle and Thomas report that he said, The foxes have dens and the birds have nests, but the son of man doesn't have any place to lay his head.
- 9) Both Quelle and Thomas report that he said, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.
- 10) Quelle and Thomas both report that in his instructions to his disciples, Yeshua said, Eat such things as are set before you, and heal the sick among them.
- 11) Quelle and Thomas both report that Yeshua said, Seek and you shall find, for everyone that seeks finds; knock, and it will be opened, for to everyone that knocks it will be opened.

- 12) Quelle and Thomas both report that he said, No one lights a lamp and hides it under a bushel basket.
- 13) Quelle and Thomas both report that Yeshua said, I came to set fire to the earth, and I am impatient until it be kindled.
- 14) They both report that he blamed the Pharisees for hiding the key of knowledge and neither entering in themselves nor allowing anyone else.
- 15) Both Thomas and Quelle report that he was asked to compel someone to divide their inheritance, and that he replied, Who made me a judge or a divider over you?
- 16) Both Thomas and Quelle report that he urged non-anxiety: Take no thought for what you shall have to eat or to wear.
- 17) Quelle and Thomas both report that Yeshua said, The kingdom of God will not come upon demand. Rather it is around you and among you.
- 18) Both Thomas and Quelle report that he said that he had not come to bring peace but division, and that he predicted strife between family members. But these latter words are a quotation from Micah.
- 19) Both Thomas and Quelle report that he told the parable of the leaven.
- 20) Both Thomas and Quelle report that he told the parable of the wedding supper.
- 21) Both Thomas and Quelle report that he told them that if they did not disown their family, they could not be his disciple.
- 22) Both Thomas and Quelle report that he told the parable of the lost sheep.
- 23) Both Thomas and Quelle report that he told them, The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the son of man, and you will not see it.
- 24) Both Thomas and Quelle report that he told them, Two people will be in one bed, one will live, and the other will die.

Thomas and Mattheus

Thomas and Mattheus (the Matthean document or document M) also have some sayings and parables in common.

- 1) They both quote Yeshua as saying, A city set on a hill cannot be hid.
- 2) They each quote Yeshua as listing fasting, praying, and charity as undesirable activities, and as saying that you shouldn't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing.
- 3) They both give the quotation, Don't throw your pearls before the pigs, or what is sacred before the dogs.
- 4) They both tell the parable of the wheat and the weeds.
- 5) They both tell the parables of the pearl of great price, and of the treasure in the field, and of the net full of fish.
- 6) They both quote Yeshua as saying, Come to me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light, and you will find rest for yourselves.

- 7) They both quote Yeshua as telling them, You be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.
- 8) They both quote Yeshua as saying, Any plant not planted by God will be pulled up and will perish.
- 9) They both report a statement about many being left outside and not everyone being allowed to enter.

Conclusion

From these observations we are in a better position to assay the authenticity of sayings and doings in the gospels. If a passage is found in three or more independent sources, it can be taken as having a high degree of certainty. If a passage is found in two independent sources, it can be taken as having a high degree of probability. If a passage is found only in one source, it may be doubted, unless it is consistent with other material found in other sources.

Thus, when we are told that Yeshua appeared on Mount Hermon with Moses and Elijah, we do not have to accept it, since it is attested in only one source. But if we are told that Yeshua refused to give a sign, we can believe that happened, since it is attested in two sources, even if we are uncertain as to whether he made an exception for the sign of Jonah. And when we are told that Yeshua said, No prophet is appreciated in his hometown, we can believe that with some certainty, since it is attested to in three sources, in fact, in four sources: Mark, Quelle, Thomas, and the gospel of John.

But if we are told that Yeshua drove the moneychangers out of the temple, we can believe that but with some hesitation, since it is attested to in two sources, but with considerable differences: Mark reports it on Yeshua's entrance into Jerusalem, whereas John reports it at the beginning of his career on the first of four visits to Jerusalem; Mark reports Yeshua as quoting exactly from Isaiah and Jeremiah, but John reports Yeshua as claiming that the temple is his own father's house and changes the word "robbers" to "merchants". And when we are told that Yeshua told a parable about how no one would believe in a sign such as someone rising from the dead, we do not have to believe that, since it is attested to in only one source; but we can accept it nevertheless since it is consistent with his refusal to perform a sign found in two other sources.

Similarly, when we are told that he told a parable about a Samaritan rescuing a Jew who had been beaten by robbers, we do not have to believe that, since it is attested to in only one source; but still we can accept it because it is consistent with his teachings that we should love our enemies, and the Jews considered the Samaritans their enemies.

And we do not have to accept John's telling us that Jesus claimed all his healings and miracles as signs, when both Mark and Quelle tell us that Yeshua refused to perform a sign, and Quelle tells us a parable about how no one would be convinced by a miraculous sign anyway. Furthermore Mark and Quelle tell us repeatedly that Yeshua told those who were healed to "go and tell no one", and, "it is your own faith that has healed you", both of which refute any reports that Jesus claimed his healings as signs.

Thoughts on the Ante Nicene Fathers

Tom Hutton

When I was asked to write this essay about approximately 8,000 pages of pre-Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) Christian writings, my first thought was that I hadn't taken any notes while reading them. My memory was reasonably fresh, since I had just concluded this three year effort, but not totally trustworthy. I had been reading for personal enlightenment, not exegesis. My second thought was my difficulty in answering the question: "What have you learned from this?"

If the reader will remember the former, I will attempt to informally answer the latter.

First, some background. The Council of Nicea is one of the significant events in the history of Christianity. It was the first general council of the entire, undivided Church, the first to formally articulate a doctrine (the nature of Jesus), and the first to be associated with an explicit statement of belief—the Nicene Creed. So, it is a good point to demarcate a historical period.

The first three divisions of Christian writings are:

The New Testament, based upon the testimony of those who personally witnessed Jesus and continuing until roughly 70 A.D.;

The Apostolic fathers, derived from those who had personal knowledge of the Apostles, continuing until circa 110 A.D.;

The Ante Nicene Fathers, heirs to the teachings and experiences of the prior generation and reporter of the development of the Church until the Nicene Council. Some were saints, some bishops, some later condemned as heretics. All contribute to the history of the Church long before the first Church history was written by Eusebius in the fourth century.

I undertook reading them for three specific reasons:

I wanted to understand what the early church was really like, not what contemporary denominations and theologians thought it was like. I wasn't looking for a "lost Christianity" because if it's really lost, what's the point? I thought, and think, that I probably understood the New Testament as well as I'm going to in this life, although each reading still gives new insight. I'd already read the Apostolic Fathers but they're fairly brief—a few hundred pages.

My second reason was to identify where the legitimate descendent of the original church was today.

My third reason was to investigate the claim of the Roman Catholic Church that papal infallibility and the legitimacy of its non-scriptural beliefs, practices and doctrines are based upon “Traditions” that are not recorded in the Bible. This, of course, was one of the major issues of the Reformation, with the Roman Church alleging that tradition had equal weight with Scripture and the various Protestant reformers rejecting tradition entirely or accepting it only insofar as it is based on or doesn’t contradict Scripture. Certainly it is reasonable to assume that most of what Jesus said and did is not recorded since His earthly life spanned 33 years and the New Testament is only 600 or so pages. Plus, John states that all the books in the world couldn’t hold all that Jesus said and did. I don’t take that literally, but I think I understand his point.

I only partially answered the first question. In these difficult-to-read 8,000-plus pages is nowhere found a detailed explanation of how the Church(es) functioned on a daily basis, which Eusebius’ history didn’t answer either.

My answer to my second question really disturbs me. I nowhere see a Church or denomination, whatsoever, that accurately reflects my understanding of the “original” church, but I hope no one who reads this takes my word for it. I haven’t drawn any inferences yet and I’m not trying to proselytize.

And to my third question, I see no basis at all for any of the later claims of the Bishop of Rome (now called “pope”, although the term is nowhere used in the New Testament or the Ante Nicene Fathers) to Churchwide authority or infallibility. This absence is consistent with Peter’s own words and actions in the New Testament. I was somewhat surprised at this because I thought that the “Traditions” about the Roman pope would have at least some basis in history. But I concluded that it really isn’t surprising that the early Bishops of Rome would not assert any authority which Peter himself didn’t think he had (nor did Paul). The definitive event, or non-event, is that the Bishop of Rome didn’t call the Council of Nicea, chair it or even attend it. It was convened by the Emperor and the majority of attendees were what would now be called Eastern Orthodox.

So, what did I find, or think I found? Here are the (to me, at least) significant conclusions:

1. Discipline, within the hierarchy of Bishop, Elder and Deacon, seemed to be extremely authoritarian, although because of the authoritarian nature of the era, it is difficult to make comparisons to today. But there is no question that the Bishops ruled with greater authority than in any of the Protestant or non-denominational churches of today. However, there is not a direct correlation with the contemporary Roman Catholic system either, and probably not the Orthodox, because Elders—not “priests”—and Bishops were elected, not appointed. An elected official is fundamentally different from an appointed one. The deaconate

seemed to have real power and significance, rather than being a stepping-stone to higher office.

2. Formal forgiveness of sin and readmission to congregational life was a major undertaking. I thought it was a stark contrast to the immediate unconditional forgiveness which Jesus gave so often and urged others to do as well. I saw no evidence of “Confession” to a presbyter or an assumption that the local cleric has the authority of forgiving sins. The emphasis seemed to be on impressing the congregation that the repentance was sincere. I’m not sure what all the sins were that called for severe punishment but some involved denying the faith while being persecuted or tortured.
3. Abortion, in the few instances when it is mentioned, is unambiguously condemned.
4. The Fourth Century Church seems to have been composed of a majority of congregations which today would be Eastern Orthodox. This isn’t surprising given that the oldest Old Testament text is written in Greek, as is the New Testament. And, with the exception of Romans, which Paul addressed to Christians at Rome but not their Bishop, all of his letters show that the earliest churches were Greek. It makes the name Roman Universal (Catholic) Church sound peculiar.
5. Women were ordained Deacons, but not Presbyters or Bishops. No writings which I have found, through 325, were written by females.
6. I think that Jews continued their persecution of the Church and instigated the Roman authorities for hundreds of years, but I wasn’t specifically focusing on this. It would certainly explain the Christian reciprocity when the tables were finally turned.
7. Extreme torture of Christians, incredibly cruel and terrifying, seemed to be fairly common. One’s sensitivity becomes almost numbed by the many people known to the writers and named by them, who were tortured to death. It makes the Inquisition less surprising if one thinks of “Christians”, or at least Roman Catholics, as the cultural descendants of Roman pagans. I’m not aware of similar behavior in Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

The early Christians were brave, dedicated, uncompromising men and women.

8. I couldn’t come to any conclusion on adult versus infant baptism, but there seemed to be a lengthy period of preparation before baptism, which would preclude infants from being baptized. More significant, I thought, was that Church baptismal procedure and forgiveness of sin both deviated significantly, after a few centuries, from what we find in the New Testament.

9. There were no instances of prayers to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, nor to any saints. I don't recall any mention of statues.
10. I found no claim for any significant "traditions", other than perhaps baptism and forgiveness of sins, not consistent with the New Testament. The Christian writers of the first 3 centuries quoted scripture as frequently as the Protestant Reformers. I cannot prove the non-existence of any supposed traditional beliefs and practices only because of their absence in the literature, but it seems to me they couldn't have been very important to have escaped any notice or documentation.
11. I was amazed at the number of extremely bizarre heresies, which were explained at length and refuted in painstaking detail. Some were almost impossible for me to understand, unlike any pagan or non-Christian literature or methodology with which I am familiar. A few involved the nature of Jesus; some involved the nature of matter itself and are relevant today.

The fragments of the Apocryphal or Gnostic writings seemed obviously counterfeit, supporting the early Church's position that it used valid criteria in establishing the Canon.

In conclusion, I think the reading of the Patristic writings is of value to any serious inquirer into Christian beliefs. I don't maintain that any of my interpretations are accurate, but I'm willing to debate or discuss them with anyone who undertakes the same exercise which I did.

Jesus, Servant of Goys—A Modernist Appreciation

Robert Dick

Introduction

My role in this essay will not be that of a scholar or scientist who must deduce provable assertions, but rather as an intelligence analyst who must deduce systematic unprovable conclusions from incomplete and sometimes false information, in the face of hitherto successfully-kept secrets.

First, some assumptions I reject:

- The events recounted by the Greek Bible were always just as they appeared to contemporary witnesses. On the contrary, while Jesus never lied, he was systematically silent about some facts in order to protect the secretly righteous.
- Jesus, like many of his interpreters, had a parochial mindset. On the contrary, he lived and acted in the most major crossroads of the world.
- Jesus was not rational. On the contrary, he implied that God the executive is never divided against God the legislator. Also, he was capable of learning from experience, cutting down trees that bore no good fruit.

Let me illustrate how understanding secrets can provide rational explanations for seeming miracles:

In the battle of Midway in World War II, when American divebombers left their carriers to attack the Japanese fleet, they headed out in a direction differing from the bearing of their targets. Yet they hit their targets anyway, and from an unexpected direction.

For many years this appeared to be a miracle. Then it was revealed that those divebombers carried some of the first airborne radars. Miracle explained.

Some Miracles Explained

Jesus' miracles of healing were often ways to let sinners repent without revealing their sins. His first miracle, turning water into his host's best wine at a wedding feast, was from deducing that his host had disguised that wine as water. Note what he did *not* do then: he did not expose his host to condemnation for his deception.

Once he had a reputation as a miracle worker, Jesus could then perform miracles of healing to free malingerers from their deceptions, without revealing those deceptions. Evidence:

- There was no reliable art of diagnosis in Jesus' time.
- Even though he appeared to heal many bodies, Jesus said that healing souls was more important than healing bodies.
- Often those he healed told him in advance that he could heal them.
- Often Jesus told those he healed that their sins (such as malingering) were forgiven. Why? Because they repented.
- Jesus said that there is great joy in heaven over sinners who repent.
- Those he healed were sometimes ungrateful later. Why? Because then they had to earn their living in spite of being weakened by idleness.
- Jesus implied that the righteous, but previously idle, could have great charisma when seeking employment, like the lilies of the field.

The secret to Jesus surviving his crucifixion is this: He got Roman soldiers to arrange it. After all, who would know more about secretly surviving crucifixions than men who had carried out thousands of them? The key to understanding this was supplied by Hyam Maccoby, who showed in his book *Revolution in Judaea* that the Romans arrested Jesus at the fall festival of Sukkot, half a year before they crucified him, at Passover. Thus he had time to plot with sympathetic Roman soldiers, such as the centurion who financed a synagogue and whose servant Jesus healed. Note that the centurion who supervised his crucifixion openly called Jesus the Son of God at that time. And what would be more fitting, according to the cruel Pontius Pilate, than making sympathizers execute Jesus?

Jesus Was Not Insane

Before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus openly aspired to become the great king of the Jews prophesied by Zechariah. According to this prophet, great miracles would announce the beginning of this king's reign, including two mighty streams gushing forth in two directions from the Mount of Olives. Also, the succession of day and night would cease at that time, and there would be perpetual twilight (the last day). These events would so overawe the goyim that all nations would accept the leadership of the great king.

To moderns, all this sounds insane, but remember that in the hysteria induced by Roman oppression, it seemed likely to many people. Jesus implied that this tree had borne no fruit, and his Master wanted to cut it down, but he, Jesus, asked for one more chance. I say that Jesus took that chance. But when the tree still did not bear fruit, Jesus then rejected it.

But Jesus, like all good kings, had a fallback strategy. He would convince some goyim to spare his life, in return for his promise to do the goyim generally a great service. He succeeded. Of course, he had to keep his survival a secret from the Roman rulers, even though he showed himself alive to his followers.

Saul/Paul was a follower of the Temple priests, who believed that animal sacrifice could make a sinner right with God. This in spite of a prophet saying, for God, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.” Jesus strongly opposed the Temple. For instance, he commented on a poor widow donating two mites to the Temple treasury. This was a good example of his denunciation (supposedly of the Pharisees) that they “devoured widows’ houses.” Both Jesus and the Pharisees believed strongly that the treasury should have *given* to the widow, not taken from her. Furthermore, Jesus was violently opposed to the idea of the Temple followers that access to God requires money (to purchase sacrifices). This was why he physically attacked the moneychangers in the Temple courtyard. Furthermore, the Romans held the Temple hostage, so that the priests and their followers became Roman collaborators.

After the Crucifixion

Thus Saul/Paul physically attacked Jesus’ followers. Then Jesus shocked him into repenting by confronting him personally, and suggesting a religion to him that he could endorse, yet that answered most of Jesus’ objections. Thereby Jesus showed great love for his enemy, an activity seemingly absent (for Jesus) in the Greek Bible. This religion would:

- Preach the sacrifice of Jesus, not animals.
- Have no physical basis that could be held hostage.
- Have no hereditary positions of honor.
- Redeem Jesus’ promise to his “executioners.”
- Require *no* money for access to God
- Be open to Jesus’ teachings, even though Paul wasn’t.

Jesus personally wrote the first Gospel, the now-lost Gospel of Q. It was later lost because Jesus wrote it in Hebrew. It described, among other things, how to make oneself valuable to one’s oppressors, thereby turning them into exploiters, helping one survive. This is why the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount seem so terrible. Jesus did not advocate submission to evil, as some claim. He advocated ways to befriend sheep in wolves’ clothing, as sheep among wolves are likely to be. He discussed many wise things in this book. For my view of his teachings to the goyim, search the Web for my pen name of Dusty Hesed.

Conclusion

It is no accident that the modern world dates its origin from the birth of Jesus. Jesus, with his charisma, his wisdom in Q, and the religion he inspired Paul to found, revolutionized the world. He “set the world on fire.” We have not yet seen the end of this fire, if, indeed, we ever will.

Did Monotheism Take Root in the Hebrews Due to the Politics of Imperial Egypt? A Contrarian View

Andrew Beckwith

As of the last hundred years, scholars have debated at length what precisely initiated the turn to monotheism in the ancient Hebrew nation. The reasons for asking this question delve into what makes the Bible so compelling a story even to those who disbelieve in the divinity of Christ, but who are enamored of the particulars of the origins of monotheistic practices. And this turn to monotheism had revolutionary implications with regard to the role of religion and subjects of a God-king who allegedly was a stand-in representative of heavenly deities.

Even with this evolution (revolution?) to monotheism, one should never forget the all-too-cynical but accurate observation that “those who have the Gold, make the rules.” The “Gold” in this case being indigenous networking within a society, and built-in cultural reinforcement of social norms which reward members of societies for kicking a dollar to the in-house deities.

This has been an organized racket since Thutmose III of Egypt made the Egyptian religious authorities guardians of all the loot the Egyptian armies stole from their conquests all the way up to southern Turkey in about 1470 B.C. or so. The Priests sat upon a mother lode of loot worth in today’s currencies close to several hundred million dollars, and used it to enrich their religious “schools” and temples.

Ever since then, this alliance between alleged “Blessed by God” rulers and a “temple elite” has been an immovable fixture in religious economic and sociological dynamics. But the Egyptians got it up to a fine pitch 3500 years ago. This makes it all the more remarkable that a small tribal nation, the Hebrews, made such a decisive break from what amounted to an unholy alliance of convenience between a God-king, priests, and the spoils of war from imperial conquest.

Propaganda reinforcing this convenient triad of corruption reached its epitome in the aftermath of the flight of the Hebrews from Egypt. For what it is worth, the battle of Kadesh between Egypt and the Hittite empire led to the first verifiable extradition treaty between two nations, and a mutual pact of mutual aid and alliance against what was seen as a new kid on the block, namely the Assyrian empire, which even at *that* date was a serious threat to both Hittite and Egyptian military garrisons.

Moral: The ancients, albeit far inferior to us in technology, were every bit as smart as we are in geopolitics and in the legerdemain of state craft. Some of the early rulers could teach GWB a thing or two.

If statecraft and sociological common sense lead to such a smooth running system, then why would *anyone* in his or her right mind at that time, thousands of years ago, invest time and energy in monotheistic practices?

My own studies indicate that the Hebrews, in a more polytheistic mindset, existed before the heretic Pharaoh Akhenaten, but that it took Egyptian heresy verging on sociological genius to accelerate the procession to monotheism.

It is entirely possible that the patriarchy of Abraham was a catch-all for a typical Middle Eastern proto-nation about 2500 B.C. or so, and that members of this tribe settled in Egypt, with a time line roughly congruent to Hebrew accounts. That, I believe, is not impossible at all.

I believe that the Old Testament is, in some respects, amazingly accurate as a historical memory, but it conveniently leaves out the intrigue and the raw thirst for power leading to monotheism, which was initially rank heresy in the Middle East.

However, it took political expediency to change this typical proto-Middle-Eastern grouping to become the Hebrew, the at-the-time “insane” belief system of Aten as the sun God and Egyptian in-fighting leading to an Egyptian prince hijacking the descendents of the Hebrews as his “flock” due to the in-fighting occurring during the reign of Ramses II.

A contrarian view of the origin of the Hebrews, Egypt, and the restoration of old Egyptian religion in the New Kingdom? I think it is long overdue and explains much of the situation leading to the unique nature of the Hebrew legacy which affects our worldview today so profoundly.

It is not appreciated, but Ramses II was declared a living god as of the 30th (or so) year of his reign. An actual living deity and a God in his own right. Only two Pharaohs in Egypt’s history were so deified in a ceremony during their reign.

This was after the through purging of the monotheistic heresy of Akhenaten, and his sun cult, which effectively lead to the dismantling of Egypt’s empire and its incomplete restoration in Ramses II’s campaigns in Lebanon.

To wit, being a living God lead to a special place in purgatory for his sons, who were not accorded the usual hierarchical place in Egyptian nobility. And Ramses II’s sons were not accorded the usual rites of passage of dead Egyptian nobility to the afterlife, since a living God was not supposed to have flesh-and-blood descendants.

Sucker bet: One of Ramses II sons took the ancient Hebrews under his wing (they very well may have included Hittite slaves captured by Ramses II during the Kadesh engagement) and took them out to the sea of Reeds, where he ambushed yet another of

his brothers, killing him, and leaving him with no choice but to lead his flock into the Sinai to escape Egyptian justice.

Were Akhenaten's rogue religion, a dissatisfied, out-of-place prince, and a murderer of his own next-of-kin the genesis of my forefathers 3000+ years ago?

Entirely possible. Poignant too. And it also opens up the question of how expediency, political and otherwise, leads to the formation of religious offshoots which have unexpected consequences, even in modern-day society.

The Gospel According to Judas

Kevin Langdon

There have been a number of news stories recently about the discovery of a previously-unknown Gospel manuscript in Upper Egypt. The manuscript was found in the late 1970's but its significance has only recently been recognized. It is a new Gospel, the story of Judas from a very different point of view from that expressed in the canonical Gospels.

From a story on the *Al-Ahram* website
<<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/790/fr2.htm>>, dated April 2006:

According to the Gospel, Judas received 30 pieces of silver for the act of betraying Jesus to Roman soldiers by identifying him with a kiss. Later the guilt-ridden Judas committed suicide. However, the Gospel of Judas identifies him as Christ's favourite disciple and depicts his betrayal as the fulfilment of his mission to enable the crucifixion—and thus the Christian movement—to take place. The text quotes Jesus as saying to Judas: "You will exceed all of them [the other disciples] for you will sacrifice the man who clothes me."

The manuscript exhibits a distinctly Gnostic, world-and-body-denying worldview and exalts Judas as the disciple who best understood the aim of his Master, involving a necessary sacrifice.

G.I. Gurdjieff was born in the region between the Black and Caspian seas which had been on major trade routes for thousands of years and among the residents of which were represented practitioners of many ancient and largely extinct traditional teachings, including some in the Gnostic tradition. The following passage is strikingly aligned with the findings described above. As Gurdjieff himself pointed out, traditional teachings are frequently passed on by word of mouth rather than in writing.

From *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson (All and Everything, first series)*, by G.I. Gurdjieff, pp. 739-40:

"Anyone wishing to draw knowledge of the truth from the present version of this Holy Writ will arrive at the conviction, which will become fixed in his essence, that this Judas was the basest of all conceivable beings, and a conscienceless, doublefaced traitor.

"But in fact, not only was this Judas the most faithful and devoted of all the close followers of Jesus Christ, but it was solely thanks to his Reason and presence of mind that all the acts of this Sacred Individual could produce that result which, if it did not lead to the total destruction of the consequences of the properties of the organ kundabuffer in these unfortunate three-brained beings, was nevertheless, during twenty centuries, the source of nourishment and inspiration for the majority of them, and made their desolate existence at least a little endurable."

An Encounter of the Highest Order of Magnitude

Tal Brooke

I wondered, “Is this what happens when the lone self encounters the Holy?”

I was in a hotel room in South India, having spent two years pursuing various high-octane forms of yoga. By natural bent I was a mystic, a non-dualist *advaitin*. I originally went to India to join the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society in Bengal, with a letter from the head swami in London advocating I undergo *sanyas* and inclusion into the order. But after a grim visit to Calcutta my journey quickly detoured and I encountered Krishnamurti (on one of his last India tours), Maharishi, Chinmayananda, Muktananda, and finally Sai Baba. High adventure—that was now turning to dust.

On embarking to India I believed that my generation would turbocharge the process of consciousness expansion, that those of us on the mystical frontier would boost human consciousness up the elevator shaft to its upper limits—nirvana. It was a challenge that made the church on the corner seem dead, irrelevant and boring, as pastors muttered platitudes to their sleeping flocks.

Having grown up in an atheistic family, from the age of seven I had been left to my own resources in what became a long truth quest to apprehend reality.

Now I was undergoing an improbable and unwelcome conversion to a faith I had mocked for years. Christians were easy targets. Yet an unexpected encounter and the consequent changes within me proved very hard to dismiss. Something unexpected had stopped me on what had been a fast-track road to enlightenment with all the attendant bells and whistles (*kriyas*, out-of-the-body experiences, etc.).

Two elderly Christian missionaries had crossed my path. They had lived in India for over thirty years. At first I was off-handedly blunt with their “narrow” vision of reality, their “meager” intellectual grasp of the big picture. But they had a depth of character, an invisible source of love that I had never seen before. They were humble, pure and reverent souls. The light within them was very different from the light that was in me. Another presence was “with” them. I wanted to look the other way, but seemed caught up in a timeless scene playing once again.

When Jesus would enter a public place, the people of his day became instantly divided. Their reaction to him was explosive and instantaneous. It seemed the sheer magnitude of his presence demanded a response. It was almost impossible for anyone to sit on the fence, looking directly at him while remaining indifferent. There was no time for diplomacy, equivocation, or compromise.

And now this was happening to me. Two intense years in India culminating in a huge choice—a cosmic decision with staggering consequences which I had never planned on.

“Who do you say that I am?” rang out in my mind.

I was kneeling in a hotel room sweating. There was a tangible presence that I can only call grace. Love of the deepest and most familiar kind was palpable. I had to respond. This could not be delayed any longer.

I had been so invested in the mystical path that I had flown to India on a one-way ticket. I had a rare residence permit, almost impossible for Americans to obtain apart from the favor of someone of influence—in my case, a world-class guru and a State Governor. I was in the inner circle of India’s preeminent godman whom the nation believed to be an Avatar. His claims to divinity were unabashed.

Yet I had found a very dark side to him. It resurrected that old issue of the duality of good and evil that I had thought I had resolved once and for all using the purest Vedantic monism. It had made utter sense for years. But now something was telling me otherwise.

Again, the question: “Who do you say that I am?”

It was that other avatar, Jesus Christ, bringing up that greatest stumbling block of all, especially to those of us on the mystical path—his claim to utter exclusivity. I had watched the two missionaries closely for six months looking to expose them or see them falter. They didn’t. Their love and purity of heart were real. I could twist them in knots at times in our discussions. Then in utter innocence they would utter a verse of scripture and it would stop me dead in my tracks like hurtling into a stone wall, the words entering deep within me. It was this other God talking.

I thought I had resolved the duality of good and evil. My analogy had been that the cosmos was like white light emerging from a prism in a multi-colored spectrum. Out of oneness came the multiplicity of the universe. Backing it up through the prism again, all the multiplicity resolved as one, all opposites, good and evil, merging.

Now evil had appeared again and this time it was not so easily explained away as an illusion. The wisp had a little too much substance to it. Long story.

“Who do you say that I am?”

I recalled the scene in Ben Hur. The man giving him water and staring at the Nazarene like he was looking at God, in utter awe—the human apprehending the divine. We never see his face, just the man’s awe reflecting back.

Oh, sure, Jesus was an avatar, but what about the others?

You've invested years in them—from Krishna to Ramakrishna. What about that spring day when you tasted enlightenment on that Virginia farm in the wilds? And the pundits and sastris from Benares Hindu University who declared your experience utterly genuine? As did Maharishi, Sai Baba and others?

So why had it all turned to dust?

“Tal . . . , who say you that I am?”

The choice was before me. It had the weight of the universe behind it. I knew that it would require all that I had to answer that question honestly, no veering away or grabbing at some convenient distraction, just a blunt honest answer from the core of my being. I sensed it was the most costly step of my life as I responded.

“You are the Christ, Jesus Christ, and the only true Messiah in the history of the world. You are the son of God.”

Then I wept as I found myself praying.

An indescribable weight was lifted from me, one that I had carried for so long. Gone in a moment. Much more detectable now that it was absent. I stood up and felt something almost alien during my years in India—relief, hope, joy, real joy.

Days later I stood on the porch of the missionaries outside the city of Bangalore. Our eyes met in a brief moment of silence. *They knew*. Not a word had been said. They radiated joy, smiled, then wept.

On the plane leaving India I realized that anything less in magnitude would not have worked for me and I might still be straddling the fence on a decision that was both incredibly hard and incredible easy. My life changed.

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Jesus Out of the Box

Rev. Dr. George Byron Koch

Most “talk of God” and “love of wisdom” (theology and philosophy) produces wide-ranging debates, shared insights, occasional correction, and often astonishingly bitter exchanges. Is there actually a God? Is Jesus God? Did he ever say he was? Did he actually live? Did he say the things the Bible says he said? Do Christians really do the things he said they should? Does believing in Jesus get you into heaven? Does not believing get you into hell? Is there actually a life after this one that contains either a heaven or a hell? Did God make the world from nothing in six days? Is the Bible original, or just a rehash of Babylonian and other myths? What about Buddhism? Tantra? Scientology? Darwin? Fritjof Capra? Behe? Leisure suits and big hair?

For any of us, the questions come about as fast as sentences can be typed, maybe faster. The answers come too, often at odds with the mainstream culture, with others, even with oneself. They come sometimes striding arrogantly, sometimes sheepishly. They grow complex and endless and fetid and make me just want to go fishing. For fish.

But instead I’m going to write about Jesus.

I hope a bit out of the box.

Jesus had one certain kind of encounter—probably many times—that is recited in the Bible in three places in slightly different forms. Rather than simply quote them here, I’ll tell the basic story in some probable historical context, knowing that I’m conflating those that are recorded, and that there were probably others similar to those as well.

I want to show how out-of-the-box Jesus’ teaching was, how it turned the common wisdom upside down, and how it likely rankled and scandalized many in religious and political power. Though I am now a Christian and a pastor, this will not be a Christian puff piece.

The time of Jesus was a time of great rabbis, Hillel and Shammai most notable among many. Each of these had disciples, students, who listened to every word and tried to live as their rabbi taught. These disciples argued with each other about Scripture and interpretation, and how to live.

Many Christians believe that Scripture is rightly understood just one way, and that it is important to learn and teach that one right way. That’s how best to understand God, they believe.

The long Jewish tradition on Scripture is the opposite. It holds that if we do *not* argue, then how do we give God a chance to reveal Himself to us? If we do not wrestle with what is in Scripture and how it applies to our individual lives, if we don’t disagree

and dispute, how do we give God an opening into our lives to show us what His will is and His purpose is and His truth is—speaking to us through that Scripture? They believe that God would much prefer to have an argument with us than to be ignored by us.

So naturally the disciples of Hillel and Shammai contested with each other, inside and outside of their own groups. Rigorous and often heated debate.

One of the debated issues of the day was which of the commandments in the Bible was the greatest. And it is likely with this ongoing sparring underway that this question was brought to Jesus. He too was a respected rabbi with disciples, well-known, popular, a worker-of-miracles and maybe even the Messiah.

Remember that the Christian-Jewish divide had not yet occurred (and didn't because of Jesus but rather because of Bar Kochba one hundred years later, but that's another story). The circumstances are all Jewish. The debaters are all Jewish. The traditions and Scripture are all Jewish.

So, Rabbi Jesus, which is the greatest commandment?

His response starts off well:

The first and greatest commandment is this, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.”

One side might have cheered for this. There were other candidates: “Have no other gods before me.” “Do not covet.” “Go forth and subdue the earth.” Any of these or others could be easily argued as foundational, first, the greatest. But Jesus picks this one, from Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ⁴ Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; ⁷ and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸ And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹ And you shall write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

It is a great choice. It follows the *Shema* (shə-mā'): “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!”—which is still proclaimed by Jews worldwide today, and it is followed by instructions to teach it to children, and even to physically bind it to forehead and arm, and put it on doorposts. This too is done worldwide to this day.

So Jesus chose well, and those who heard him likely nodded appreciatively. But then he started to talk seditiously:

And the second is like it, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments depend all the Law and the prophets.

Now the nodding has probably stopped and faces are getting puzzled and then red. The first makes sense. After all, it follows the *Shema*. It is repeated many times in Scripture. But the second is plucked from the middle of the book of Leviticus, along with commands about breeding cattle, slander, justice and false testimony—all important in their own right—but this one is “like the first?” Blasphemy! And upon these two, together, depend all the Law and the prophets? Scandal! Jesus is basically saying that everything Jews believe about God’s Law—and those who speak for him (the prophets)—are under these two?

This is an equivalence that was more than stunning, it was outrageous. The Source of Everything and “be nice.” The same? And both more important than everything else?

One of the listeners, a lawyer, doesn’t miss a beat (remember they all knew how to argue well, and considered it a holy endeavor). He pushes back at Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” You can almost hear the “who” stretched out, and the edge in his voice.

Not trouble enough? Now comes the *coup de grâce*: Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. The story is perhaps overly familiar to us, and we miss its offensive punch. A Jewish man is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. He is robbed and nearly beaten to death and left at the side of the road. A Jewish priest sees but avoids him. A Levite (also Jewish) does the same. Then a Samaritan sees him, has compassion, bandages him up, takes him to an inn and pays for him to stay and be cared for until he recovers (no hospitals in those days).

Jesus then asks the lawyer: “Which of the three proved to be a neighbor?” He answers, “The one who showed mercy.” Jesus says, “Go and do the same.”

This was likely a moment of profound awakening or angry recriminations for those present—because the Samaritans were despised. They were considered ritually unclean half-breeds who worshipped God in the wrong place and in the wrong way. The favor was returned: the Samaritans despised the Jews.

Pick a place on the planet today where neighboring tribes, countries or religious groups hate each other, where they are bitter enemies. That is the kind of example Jesus chose for his story. It was repulsive, hideous, despicable. It confronted and rejected all of the vocal self-righteousness about neighbor and enemy, us and them.

Moreover, Jesus also said we are to love our enemies and pray for them, and that it is nothing special if we just love those who love us. Anybody can do that. But rather, because the love of God falls on all, not just on those whom He approves, we are to love everyone in this same way.

There is a bit more here even than this, as pithy and out-of-the-box as it was and is already. The word for love, in both Hebrew (*ahav* in Leviticus) and Greek (*agapa*, *agapao* in Matthew), doesn't just mean "warm feelings," though it can include that.

Rather, the idea in context is action for the well-being of another. Charity. Care. Support. Effort. Expenditure. Crossing the divide to bring healing, and intending well-being and productivity even for someone who hates you.

Let's reflect on this. Jesus was not stupid—that's obvious from even the most superficial readings of his exchanges with others. He was not a Pollyanna unable to see true evil. He clearly grew angry at people who cheated others, and even chased some of them with a whip made of rope. He hated hypocrisy, and sharply criticized those in power who used their positions to cheat or burden others. There was nothing artificially sweet about him at all.

Rather, he said what he believed he needed to say and willingly accepted the consequences, which in the end included being whipped and killed. A stand-up guy, who saw what didn't work and said so, and who saw what needed to be different and said so.

If we apply this to Christians, we see this: Everything Christians believe has to stand under these two commandments. Got your theology right, but deliver it in hurtful and bitter rhetoric? Fails the test. Got your Scripture quotes down pat, but use them to manipulate or shame others? Fails the test. Got your economic theory, political ambitions and military capabilities all lined up, and use them to dominate and take advantage of others? Fails the test. Obviously, we Christians have failed the test again and again over the course of two thousand years. We still are failing the test. But we still have the counsel, the teaching, the wisdom. We could start to apply it today.

What about its application to the world, not just the Christian subculture? What if this out-of-the-box approach were thoughtfully (not naïvely) and methodically applied to real current enemies, personal or regional?

For example (as one of hundreds of obvious opportunities in the world) what if the Prime Minister of Israel announced that his country intended not just to allow the Palestinians land and self-government (while protecting the safety of the Israeli people), but that Israel would now dedicate itself to their well-being? Would give real help with construction, water, farming, health, education? Would take action for the well-being of others, especially those called "enemy"?

Name the conflict, the combatants, the location, then think of a new way to a new conclusion, more than the simple "win-win" of negotiations, more than discussing enough to know enough to have better strategy (John Nash), more than brilliant manipulation (Machiavelli), more than an eye for an eye (equity, not revenge), more than *The Art of War*, but rather an intentional strategy to improve an enemy's well-being. That revolutionary approach is implicit and explicit in what Jesus said and did.

Consider this: In simple economic terms, effort spent on conflict and war does not normatively add to the net wealth of humankind (even factoring in technology advancements and other byproducts). Effort spent to make others productive (for their well-being) *does* increase the net wealth of humankind.

This love-as-action is a command that Jesus put on a par with the command to love God, and He said everything else must be under these two.

Regardless of who any of us believe Jesus was (or is), this is an insight that could change the world— if we would grasp it, and be wise and intentional about applying it.

I pray that it may be so. (Or, said in Hebrew and Greek: “Amen.”)

The Rev. Dr. George Byron Koch [pronounced “coke”] was one of the first members of the Four Sigma, Triple Nine, and Prometheus Societies. He has degrees in Physics and Ministry, is the former CEO of Koch Systems Corporation, and was also Senior Vice President at Oracle Corporation, where he ran the worldwide Applications Division. He left the software industry in 1994 to go into full-time ministry. He currently serves as Pastor of Church of the Resurrection in West Chicago, Illinois (www.resurrection.org). He writes extensively: two books (one a bestseller) and hundreds of magazine and newspaper articles, including in The Wall Street Journal, University Bookman, Conference Board magazine, and many others. His avocations include number theory and high temperature ceramic art. More on his Web site at www.GeorgeKoch.com.