

'Rediscovering the Realities of Jesus'

his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and celibacy

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Preface

The Human Quest...

Discovering, and at times rediscovering, aspects of Reality is an integral part of human life. It is a process by which persons acquire higher or better knowledge of things. The quest to discover higher knowledge about the Supreme Being or for some, knowledge of the Real Nature of the unknown, is defined as *Gnosticism*. This often-misunderstood word, derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, simply means “knowledge”. The human quest to understand better Supreme Realities begins at the very moment we commence serious contemplation of surrounding mysteries, within and without ourselves. None of us can afford to close the doors of *gnosis* that may lead us to knowledge of the root cause of our own existence upon this earth. Between the second and sixth centuries, the theologians of the Catholic Church denounced *Gnosticism*. For them it was a kind of foreign religion in competition with their own. Any quest to discover the “Creator” and/or His Nature from sources outside of the Church’s prescribed documents was pronounced as “heretical”.

In that event, one would have expected the Church to be very liberal in giving out its own literature and allowing those who were seeking to discover the Realities of the Supreme Being from the Church’s perspective. Contrary to logical expectations, access to the Bible, which the evangelists claim; “Reveals the Mind of God”, was denied by the Church to its own members, never mind outsiders. Only clergy had privileged access to the books of the Holy Bible. For as late as the fourteenth century, the translation of the Bible into any “foreign” language, language that the laity could understand, was expressly forbidden. In other words, for more than a thousand years, the Bible was confined to the sanctuary of the Church, out of reach of the laity. Today, it has been discovered that the biblical texts were edited. Deletions were made and unauthorized texts were added to the original manuscripts that were written by the four apostles. Had copies of the Bible been in circulation during the first half of the Church’s history, such liberties would not have been taken because they would not have gone unnoticed by the laity. Recent discoveries of ancient handwritten manuscripts, prominently, Codices Sinaiticus, Syriacus and Vaticanus tell us which texts do not belong to the ancient manuscripts. Many versions of the Bible translated from the Greek texts have marginal notes indicating that the older manuscripts lack the texts that are placed within parenthesis. The ensuing chapters will enable readers to discover how these later date modifications have changed some of the fundamental beliefs in the prophet Jesus ^[1], from what they were in the early years.

A translator of the Holy Bible was burnt alive...

Many churchgoers today might be shocked to discover certain realities concerning the Bible from the history of the Catholic Church before the advent of Protestantism. During the early thirteenth century, copies of the Bible in the German language were

burned by the order of Pope Innocent III. Several owners of foreign Bibles were imprisoned, whipped and sent to the galleys by the Roman Catholic Inquisition. William Tyndale, the pioneer of the English Bible, was forced into exile in 1524. Tyndale was lured to England and burned alive on October 6, 1536 as a heretic for translating the Bible into English. Surprisingly, nearly ten centuries ago the Church promoted the translation of the Bible into Latin done by Jerome. His version was called *Vulgate* literally meaning “of the common people”. Latin was the language of the most people then. Dr. Raymond Brown^[2] notes that Jerome had translated Greek word *monogenes* of Jn. 1:18 and 3:16 into *unigenitus* meaning “only begotten” instead of the “unique”. This was done in response to the Arian controversy. The possibilities are that Tyndale could have restored texts to their original meaning.

The One who created us did not place any restrictions on the use of any particular language to discover His Kingdom. On the contrary, the Creator Himself encouraged the discovery of His own Realities in several languages by sending Messengers that spoke different languages. Jesus Christ, one in that link of the Messengers of “God’s Kingdom” spoke *Aramaic*, yet only two sentences of that language appear in the entire Bible. One of which he cried out from his cross, pleading his God: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me? The opening passage of Psalm 22 he was reciting continues; “Why are you so far from helping me?” The readers will discover in the ensuing chapters that the God had not forsaken His righteous messenger and messiah. Instead, He had pre-planned a prolonged life after the test he was undergoing and eternal glorification of him and his mother, who were being chastised by the enemies.

The *Gnostic Gospels* means “The Hidden Good News”...

It is erroneous to assume that there were only four gospels in existence during the early part of the Christian era. The reality is that only four gospels out of many more that were written by the apostles of Jesus were selected by the Catholic Church and translated into Latin. Some of those not selected were the Gospels of Thomas, Peter, Phillip, Mary and the Apocryphon of James. Over time, the collection of the non-selected gospels became abandoned, discarded and finally buried in the earth. The Supreme Entity had probably planned that these buried treasures – the trove of religious documents rejected by the Vicars of Jesus, the Popes - should resurface at the appropriate time in human history. In 1945, under mysterious circumstances, not one but two such treasures were unearthed: one from some caves in Palestine and another from Upper Egypt. Both were discovered by local Arabs who had no idea of the significance of these finds. In the ensuing chapters readers will discover the solemn secrets contained in the Dead Sea Scrolls^[3] and the Nag Hammadi Library.^[4]

The Christology of Jesus...

Jesus of Nazareth was a historical figure. The famous historian Flavius Josephus^[5] records: “There was a wise man who was called *Jesus*. And his conduct was good, and he

was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. *Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die.*” One may be inclined to add; the members of the Jewish Council in Jerusalem pressurized Pilate to deliver such a verdict. When one adds to this historical image his personal beliefs, such as, Jesus was anointed by God, the realm of his realities moves from the pages of history to the documents of faith written by those who had become his disciples. Within these documents of faith, even the improper placing of a comma within the spoken words of Jesus, that were reduced to “writings” decades later in Greek and then translated into English, can greatly alter the Christology^[6] of Jesus.

Here is a text from Luke’s Gospel. Jesus said to the one who was tied to a cross next to him: “Truly, I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.” Upon reading the same text after moving one comma, it reads: “Truly, I say to you today, you shall be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43). Did Jesus and his neighbor both go to Paradise on that particular day when Jesus spoke the above words? Or, did they go to heaven at different times and then meet each other in Paradise?

Just as the interpretation of the above sentence could lead to two sets of beliefs depending on a single comma, some of the ambiguous passages from the New Testament can very well split Christology into two. One is called high Christology, which places greater emphasis on the *divinity* of Jesus from passages such as the prologue of the last gospel attributed to the apostle John. The other stresses the *humanity* of Jesus and focuses on the physical performances of the historical Jesus. It is called low Christology.

Rediscovering the Realities of Jesus is an exercise...

To strive, discover and understand as the truth, what has been “rediscovered”, is not an easy exercise. Within the next few chapters it does exactly what the title conveys. It is an exercise for those who follow the Bible, as well for those who have placed their faith in the revealed verses of the Qur’an (Koran), wherein the name of Jesus appears twenty-five times. The readers will discover in this document, the texts of the Qur’an that reveals the Realities of Historical Jesus which are different from the time-honored tales that are prevalent among the followers of Islam. Two varying perceptions: (1) Jesus, as recorded within the verses of the Qur’an. (2) Jesus, as derived by from the inherited traditional beliefs of Muslims.

Dr. Hamid Algar^[7] a veteran Muslim scholar explains this issue in *Jesus in the Qur’an*^[8]:

“Although very often when discussing Jesus (as)^[9] we use expressions such as “Jesus (as) according to the Qur’an,” “Jesus (as) according to Islam”, “as conceived of by Islam”, this is placing too much of a conditional and limiting stamp upon the matter. When we use such terms we concede that there are varying understandings of Jesus (as) all of which have an equal claim to attention. I would submit that on the contrary we have in Qur’an, as revelation, the only sure source of knowledge

concerning Jesus; other sources... have to be measured very carefully against what we find in the Qur'an.

While rediscovering the realities of the historical Jesus it is perfectly possible to examine the related verses of the Qur'an in the light of what has been recently discovered. And, if they both tell us that the life of Jesus was prolonged it simply upholds the Truth and does not make the upholder a member of Ahmadiyya sect. Details to follow.

INTRODUCTION

JESUS CHRIST... the accounts of his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension recorded in the New Testament have never before been so critically scrutinized as in the past fifty years. This is largely due to the discoveries of: a) hundreds of handwritten ancient Scrolls in Hebrew and Aramaic ^[10] from various caves in the Judean Desert in the vicinity of Dead Sea; b) handwritten Gnostic Gospels and other texts unearthed from the delta of Upper Egypt near Nag Hammadi; c) the fourth century handwritten “Codex Sinaiticus” ^[11], discovered from the monastery of St. Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai, by the German scholar Dr. Constantin Tischendorf. Except for the Codex Vaticanus, an inaccessible manuscript ^[12] this copy of the Bible discovered at Mount Sinai is the world’s oldest known Bible. Some leaves of Codex Sinaiticus that were not discovered by Dr. Tischendorf were later found at the monastery by the famous American scholar, Dr. James H. Charlesworth. The scholar was given the privilege of reading the text of those missing pages of the manuscripts, but he was made to promise Archbishop Damianos of the monastery that he would not reveal what he had seen and read. ^[13] Charlesworth has kept his part of the deal. Maybe one day we shall learn what is hidden within these missing pages that needs to be guarded with utmost secrecy.

The emergence of conflicting reports from the Church-authorized four Gospels and the above-cited ancient texts have raised serious questions regarding the accuracy and dependability of the historical records of the Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Celibacy of Jesus. The reports and reviews of the discrepancies between the Church publicized sources and the non-canonical sources have prompted greater interest in the study of the latter. As this study progresses further readers will also learn that the texts recorded by the four apostles; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John do not concur with each other on critical subjects. Matthew and Mark recorded that while Jesus was being arrested by the Roman soldiers, “All the disciples left him and fled.” (Mt. 26:56; Mk. 14: 50). The authors of the Gospels were not present to witness the events of the Crucifixion, the lowering of the body from the cross with the nail marks, the application of herbs and the wrapping of the body with the linen cloth, the placing of the body on a flat stone slab within the rock tomb and to witness the resurrection of Jesus in the tomb. The details of these events that were recorded decades later by these authors do not qualify as first hand eyewitness reporting. Hence, the Gospel records do differ in some respects. Here we will attempt to ascertain which account comes closest to reality. The recently discovered handwritten documents go far beyond the gospel accounts, more importantly as to what transpired after the ordeal of Jesus.

THREE SIGNIFICANT DISCOVERIES OF OUR TIMES

THE FIRST DISCOVERY:

In 1862, with the aid of the Russian government Dr. Lobegott Friedrich Konstantin Von Tischendorf (1815-1874) -- an eminent bible scholar of the nineteenth century discovered *Codex Sinaiticus* from St. Catherine's Monastery. Tischendorf was hoping to find a manuscript of the New Testament which would, as he wrote, "approach very nearly to the original text, as it came from the hands of the Apostles"^[14]. And indeed, he found a fifth century handwritten Codex from the same sacred mountain where God gave to Moses the 'Ten Commandments'. The Codex was later purchased by the British Government in 1933.

Upon comparison of the discovered version and the prevalent versions of the four gospels, Tischendorf discovered the non-existence of several significant verses within the Codex. Besides others, most importantly he found the absence of the last twelve verses in the Mark's Gospel (16: 9 to 20); verse number 53 from chapter seven and the first eleven verses from chapter eight in the John's Gospel and verse number 12 from chapter 24 in the Luke's Gospel.

Within the missing verses from the Mark's Gospel are the accounts of the various appearances of the "Resurrected Jesus" to several, the Great Commission to preach the gospel to every creature, the ascension of Jesus to heaven and his sitting on the right hand of God. Within the missing verses from the John's Gospel is the entire story of a woman taken in adultery and Jesus asking the crowd "He that is without the sin among you to cast the first stone at her". Within the missing verses from the Luke's Gospel is the account of Peter running to the tomb of Jesus, looking inside and marveling after finding it was empty. In other words, these missing verses which are not to be found in the discovered Codex were inserted later within the prevalent versions. The details are to follow.

THE SECOND DISCOVERY

In 1945, a semi-nomadic Bedouin shepherd boy named Muhammad adh Dhib from the tribe of Taamirah^[15] discovered a set of hand written scrolls. They were written on sheepskin and kept in a jar in a cave on a cliff in the Judean Wilderness near the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea at a place called Qumran, seven or eight miles south of modern Jericho. Later, in the fifties, more scrolls and related objects were found in the eleven caves near ruins, called Khirbet Qumran.^[16] Today, that collection of the Dead Sea Scrolls has grown to over nine-hundred scrolls containing portions from books of the Old Testament, the War scrolls and the Manual of Community Rule.

As Providence would probably have it, the Palestinian shepherd boy and his friend had been pasturing their flock in the vicinity of Qumran. One of the flocks, either a goat or a sheep, strayed away. Noticing a small hole in the side of the cliff, the curious boys pulled themselves up to the opening and threw a rock inside. Instead of the dull thud they had expected, they heard what seemed to be the shattering of an unknown object. The next day the boys returned for a more thorough investigation and they were rewarded for their efforts. Muhammad and his friend found eight large jars on the floor of the cave, averaging about two feet in height and ten inches in diameter. Seven jars were empty, but the eighth contained one large leather scroll and two smaller ones. This was Cave Number One at Qumran. It was the beginning of an exciting episode in the history of archeology and biblical study of the Jews of Palestine living in the era of Jesus and earlier.^[17]

THE THIRD DISCOVERY

As if the sighting of the unedited ancient handwritten written documents pertaining to the life and the ministry of the “historical Jesus” from Mount Sinai and Qumran were not enough to establish the Truth, God intervened again and this time at a different location. A third significant discovery was made in 1945 at the mountain named Jabal at-Tarif in Upper Egypt – cache of handwritten Gnostic Gospels recorded on papyrus sheets with leather covers, by a peasant named Muhammad Ali and his brother Khalifah Ali.

Someone – perhaps a monk at the monastery of St. Pachomius -- gathered dozens of the books from the monastery library, sealed them in a heavy six-foot jar and buried them on a nearby hillside cemetery near Nag Hammadi.^[18] While digging in the cemetery for free fertilizer -- pulverized bones of corpses mixed with soft soil provided natural fertilizer for their budding crops – these two Egyptian peasants unearthed an earthen jar containing the first known Gnostic Gospel written by the Apostle Thomas. It is the most often quoted Gnostic Document. Today, not even the Church or the Church-goers regard these “Sayings of Jesus” or the document which record them as “heretical”.

Dr. Tischendorf was earnestly searching for the authentic texts of the New Testament but neither the Palestinian shepherds nor the Egyptian peasants who discovered these buried treasures knew that they had made the most significant finds of our times that would change the traditional beliefs of more than three billion individuals: Over two billion Christians and one million Muslims.

However the most significant fact which emerges from these recently discovered Christian texts, namely the nineteenth century discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus and the twentieth century discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the material from Nag Hammadi is that the final events of the life of Jesus recorded in these materials are very similar to the relevant verses of the Qur’an. Now it is possible to read and understand the verses in the same light and spirit.

A century or so ago, prior to these three discoveries, it would not have been possible to compare the Qur’anic texts with the Old Testament and New Testament texts concerning

the final days of the life of Jesus. That also answers the question as to why no scholar of the Qur'an has in the past, claimed in his or her writings that the life of Jesus was prolonged until he reached the old age and similar to the earlier Messengers of Allah, Jesus too was married and had offspring. Although these realities of the "historical Jesus" were revealed within the verses of the Qur'an which Muslims have been reciting since the day they were revealed to the prophet Muhammad, some fourteen centuries ago. Below are just two such verses:

Then will Allah say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My Favor to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the Holy Spirit ^[19] so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in old age.

Qur'an 5: 110

And verily We sent messengers (to mankind) before thee, and We appointed for them wives and offspring, and it was not (given) to any messenger that he should bring a portent save by Allah's leave. For everything there is a time prescribed. ^[20]

Qur'an 13: 38.

(Further details and commentaries are presented in chapter 20).

The prescribed time for having the necessary evidence to rediscover the Realities of Jesus from the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Qur'an has arrived.

WHO WERE THE AUTHORS OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS?

A colored reproduction of a segment of the scroll called *The Community Rule Scroll* along with a brief text on the Dead Sea Scrolls appeared in Canada's leading national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*.^[21] This article was in connection with the exhibition of three out of the around nine-hundred Dead Sea Scrolls and other artifacts that were to go on display the following day at the Canadian Museum of Civilizations in Gastineau, Quebec, near Ottawa, Canada. The exhibition is called *Ancient Treasures and the Dead Sea Scrolls* and is to remain open to the public until April 12, 2004. Interestingly, the title given to the brief news item read: "Dead Sea Scrolls 'belong to all civilizations'". During an interview Adolpho Rotiman, the 47 year old curator of the Shrine of the Book, which houses the Israel Museum's entire collection of Dead Sea Scroll fragments, said;

"Most of the scrolls are believed to have been written by a break-away group of deeply devout Jews, who in the first century B.C. rejected Temple rites and moved to the western shores of the Dead Sea. Some historians believe these were Essenes; others think they were Sadducees. It's like looking at the history of a political party. One group breaks away, but keeps some policies of the old party. Then another group splits and it keeps some of both. But this happened 2,000 years ago, so it's very difficult to establish the facts."

The day after the exhibits were opened, a news item appeared in *The Vancouver Sun*^[22] informing the readers that one of the three Scrolls on display contained a portion of *Book of Isaiah*. The other two displayed contained portions from the *War Scrolls*, describing a war between the forces of good and evil at the end of time, and the scroll of *Community Rule*, which is also called the *Manual of Discipline*, and applied to the one hundred and twenty or more people who lived in caves along the Dead Sea near Jerusalem who collected or wrote the scrolls. Rabbi Adolfo Rotiman said to the interviewer that the scrolls "changed all our understandings of ancient Judaism and have shed light on the development of [today's] rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity." One of the two burial chests on exhibit held the bones of Caiphas, the high priest and chief prosecutor who delivered Jesus to Pontius Pilate the Roman Governor, who conducted the trial.

To resolve many debates and contradictory theories presented in the past on several issues related to the Dead Sea Scrolls, Dr. James H. Charlesworth and other internationally renowned experts on the scrolls have published a scholarly study *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, after years of painstaking hard work. This publication has earned its rightful place in the prestigious *Anchor Bible Reference Library* published by Doubleday, New York. Briefly, this in-depth study tells us that the Dead Sea Scrolls were probably copied or composed in Qumran (pg. xvii). The authors did not come from an

insignificant group of Jews living in isolation in the Judean desert. Philo and Josephus have reported that the Essenes living in Palestine numbered more than four thousand. Philo commented that the Essenes lived throughout Judea. (pg.6). The Qumranites tended to vilify the cult in the Jerusalem Temple and scorn the Hasmonean dynasty. The Qumranites' arch rival at the time of their expulsion from Jerusalem was called by them "the Wicked Priest," who was then the ruling high priest and one of the Maccabees, probably Jonathan or Simon. (pg. xxxiv). Near the end of the preface to *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Charlesworth writes:

Three strains ring throughout the following pages: (1) The figure of Jesus begins to emerge out of the shadows of history. (2) The Dead Sea Scrolls are clarifying not only Jesus' time but also his own life and teachings. (3) Jesus' sayings, which have been misunderstood, ring forth with new dimensions of vitality."^[23] In the conclusion of his preface, Charlesworth writes; "Jesus was certainly not an Essene, as some authors have claimed. Christianity is not a form of Essenism. (pg. 37).

Essenes were known for wearing white garments and practicing the art of body healing. Some biblical scholars are of the opinion that a man sitting near the empty tomb of Jesus "wearing a white robe" (Mk. 16:5) or two men "in dazzling apparel" (Lk. 24:4) or "two angels in white sitting on the either ends of the body" (Jn. 20:12), belonged to this sect. It has also been suggested that the unknown disciple who requested from Pilate the body of Jesus and took it and placed it in a rock tomb (Jn. 19:38) could be a member of this community who knew the art of healing a human body in pain. The details are to follow.

Envisaging a threat from the pagan Romans, probably after the fall of Jerusalem, the Essenes hid the precious scrolls, manuscripts and documents in jars and placed them in various mountain caves of Qumran and Wadi Murabaat.

VIEWS OF ESSENES AND JESUS ON WOMEN AND CELIBACY

The Qumran community existed from the middle of the second century B.C.E., until 68 C.E. Originally, the community consisted of priests who had been expelled from, or had left, the Temple in Jerusalem. They were led into the Judean desert by a priest called “the Righteous Teacher”, before the birth of Jesus. This community was enlarged sometime around the beginning of the first century B.C.E. ^[24]

If the Qumran covenanters were the most conservative and strict Essenes, and if they were celibate, it follows that there were other groups of Essenes living throughout ancient Palestine who resided in villages (and perhaps cities) and were married. This reconstruction derives from a critical reading of the ancient sources, especially Josephus and Philo, and of the major scrolls, notably 1QS and CD. The Qumranites (and Essenes, if these groups are different) existed during the time of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth (26-30 C.E.). But none of the Dead Sea Scrolls refer to him, and they do not mention any follower of Jesus described in the New Testament. ^[25]

One may or may not fully agree with the results of the study conducted by Dr. Charlesworth and his contributors, but none could deny the historical fact that Jesus of Nazareth and the community of the Essenes or the Qumran covenanters that lived during his ministry shared the same geographical location and lived side by side as neighbors. Both belonged to the same race, and more importantly they both tended to vilify the cult of the Jerusalem Temple – the source of their religious and cultural roots.

As for their attitudes towards women, Jesus and the Essenes were at opposite ends of the spectrum. Upon reading Luke’s story of Jesus’ visit to the home of two sisters, Mary and Martha, (10: 38) we learn that Jesus was not only friendly with women but also used to teach them Scriptures. The gospel reports that Jesus even broke the Jewish taboos by conversing with a Gentile woman from Syrophenicia and a woman of Samaria. As R. Merron-Kelly has shown “Jesus broke the forms of the patriarchal family in the name of God the Father, and recognized the natural right of woman to equal humanity with man.” This perspective is developed by numerous scholars including B. Witherington and E. Schussler Fiorenza. ^[26]

The Essenes, in stark contrast to Jesus, considered women unreliable and faithless and strove to separate themselves from a woman’s “natural wantonness” (Josephus, *War*, 2.121). One of the Essenes statutes prohibited a man from having intercourse with his wife in Jerusalem. (CD 12).

This last sentence confirms that there were Essenes who were married, and it was not objectionable to have sexual relationships with wives outside the city of Jerusalem. Jesus was closer to the non-Qumran Essenes than to the strict and withdrawn Essenes living in seclusion within the wilderness of the Judean desert.

FROM THE WOODEN ALTAR TO THE WOODEN CROSS

The initial discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran in Palestine and the trove of Gnostic Gospels from Nag Hammadi in Egypt were made in the same year, 1945. The Arabs of the area found both these handwritten ancient biblical treasures. The former discovery received enormous publicity from world media, so much so that almost everyone interested in the Old or New Testament texts knew the story of the shepherd boy's goat going astray. On the other hand, the discovery at Nag Hammadi remained unnoticed for a long period, except to academics and research scholars. After reading and comparing both these sets of discovered documents, we know that the Nag Hammadi gospels, epistles and apocalypses are of far greater consequence to the history and biographies of Jesus that are recorded in the New Testament gospels. Critics raised serious questions concerning the authorship of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the identities of individuals mentioned in them. But the authors of the Nag Hammadi Gospels (*Good News of Jesus*), were the historical figures of the New Testament, namely, the brother of Jesus, James the Just; Simon Peter, the Rock upon which Jesus intended to build his Church; Judas; Thomas the Contender, who doubted the story of Resurrection; one of the earliest apostles named Phillip whom Jesus himself invited to join him; Mary Magdalene, who had personally witnessed the nailing of Jesus to the cross and had inspected the empty tomb; and many other disciples who knew Jesus intimately.

Today, people feel a need to rediscover the bigger picture of the “historical Jesus” from all available sources and to compare it with the traditional picture they have known for so long. The statement made in this last paragraph is very much supported by a recent article published in *Time Magazine*. The Canadian Edition of December 22, 2003 ran a front page story with a full page of bright and brilliant colored image of Jesus. His head was raised upwards and his eyes were looking into the heavens above. The caption read: “THE LOST GOSPELS. Early texts that never made it into the Bible are suddenly popular. What do they tell us about Christianity today?” The article on the opening page read: “Dozens of Christian Scriptures were Holy Writ, then heresy, the forgotten. Why are we looking at them again?” The article contained a quote in boldface capitals from Marcus Borg's book, *The Heart of Christianity*. It reads: “MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE LEFT THE CHURCH – AND SOME WHO ARE STILL IN IT – ARE LOOKING FOR ANOTHER WAY OF BEING CHRISTIAN”, a very powerful statement published by an international newsmagazine with a worldwide readership running into millions.

Nearly fifteen years ago I was doing research for my book *Understanding the Bible through Koranic messages*^[27]. I was looking for the “unedited” Old Testament story from its first book, Genesis. There was a narration of the sacrificial offering by Abraham of his “Only Son”. Having read the popular story of the shepherd boy whose goat had gone astray, I began my research with the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1956, the Hebrew

University and Magnus Press of Jerusalem had published a few columns from the scrolls discovered in *Cave One* of the Judean Desert. These scrolls took me back to the original Massoretic text of the Old Testament. However, accounts of Abram and Sarai ^[28] that were published from the unrolled portion of that scroll did not reveal the name of the son who had accompanied his father to be sacrificed as a burnt offering. In 1968, the texts recovered from *Cave Four* were published by J. M. Allegro in his book, *Discoveries in the Judean Desert*. Some four years later the discovered texts also appeared in the *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23 (1972). Here, too, the account of the sacrifice by Abram of his “Only Son” ended without disclosing the name of that son. Allegro’s publishers noted that these scrolls were in such a delicate and fragile condition that they could not be unrolled any further without damaging the writings – a great disappointment to all scholars.

My desire to establish with certainty the name of the son who was bound and laid on the altar was imperative, since he was the one who had earned God’s exceptional promise. God had undertaken to bless “all the nations of the world” through him (or through his descendants). Here is the text of Gen. 22: 18 KJV: “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.” Was he Ishmael (Ar. *Ismail*), the eldest son of Abraham who was born before the birth of his brother Isaac (Ar. *Ishaq*)? Or, was he Isaac, who was born when Ishmael was already fourteen years old? It is most unlikely that God could have in His Command used the phrase “*thy only son*” (Gen. 22: 2), when Abraham had more than one son. At times it is argued that Hagar the mother of Ishmael, although married to Abraham, was an Egyptian handmaid. A child born to her would only qualify as a seed of Abraham but not as Abraham’s son. Notably, the above quoted verse 22: 18 mentions “seed” and not “son”. In that case the one who is qualified for that honour must be Ishmael. But the name recorded in Genesis 22: 2-3 and 7 is that of Isaac.

Nuzi Texts of marriage laws and customs...

Dr. Jacob M. Myers ^[29] writes in his book *Invitation to the Old Testament* ^[30]

Archaeological discoveries help us to fill in the details of the biblical narrative and to explain many of the otherwise obscure references and strange customs that were commonplace in Abraham’s world and time... A Nuzi marriage contract provides that a childless wife may take a woman of the country and marry her to her husband to obtain progeny. But she may not drive out the offspring even if she later has children of her own. The child born of the handmaid has the same status as the one born to the wife. That is why, when Sarah wanted to drive out Hagar and Ishmael, it was quite objectionable to Abraham – because the legal custom of the region from which he came, he was reluctant to do so. It required a special divine dispensation to act contrary to that custom. (See Gen. 21: 12-13). ^[31]

After the death of the prophet Abraham, the Bible records: “Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah.” (Gen. 25: 9). This verse refutes the argument, often put forward, that after Sarah had her own son Isaac, the son of her handmaid Hagar – Ishmael, was no longer regarded as the son of Abraham.

I continued my search in the canonical Old Testament and found a very similar story in the *Book of Ruth*. Here a young Moabitess^[32] widow named Ruth, a slave girl of Boaz, marries her master Boaz and has a son named Obed. This son becomes the founder of the line of Israel, the ancestors of King David and of Jesus Christ. Since Ruth’s son Obed’s descendants were neither deprived of their birthrights nor of the bestowed honors for being the Great King and the Great Messiah, I found no legitimate reason or reasons to deprive the descendants of Ishmael, the Divine Blessings that God Himself promised, because his mother was an Egyptian handmaid to Sarah.

To widen my research I went to a public library in Vancouver, British Columbia and addressed my needs to the Social Service librarian. I was looking for books published after 1972 on the Dead Sea Scrolls. The librarian suggested that I should go through the translations of the handwritten Gnostic Gospels discovered side by side with the Dead Sea Scrolls from Egypt. I was handed a copy of the book *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels^[33] to pursue further. Just by reading the heading and the opening text of the initial chapter, I was motivated. The title read: “The Controversy over Christ’s Resurrection: Historical Event or Symbolic?” The opening sentences recorded were: “Jesus Christ rose from the grave. With this proclamation, the Christian church began”. Later on, I learned that Elaine Pagels was recognized for her work and awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award and the National Book Award in 1980 for that famous book.

I had entered the library to confirm the historical accuracy of the “*only son*” who was bound and laid on the wooden altar by Abraham as a burnt offering. I came out of that library with a book that was to become my first step toward Rediscovering the Realities of Jesus the “*unique son*” who was nailed to a wooden cross by Roman soldiers. The one who was bound for the sacrifice did not die at the hand of his father on that wooden altar. Jesus who was nailed to the wooden cross also did not die at the hands of Roman soldiers. The son of Abraham was saved and exalted by God after that trial and tribulation. Jesus too, was saved and exalted by his God after that trial and tribulation. The details are to follow.

Below are the excerpts from *The Mysteries of Jesus*.^[34] The author has skillfully presented the underlying purpose of these two offerings:

The important message in Abraham’s willingness to slay his son was that God was *testing* him. Having proved his obedience, God intervened and the son lived to see his offspring and the prolonging of his days.

After quoting the sign of Jonah who was for three days and three nights in the belly of a whale, from Mt. 16:4 and 12: 38-41, the author continues:

This has always been taken by Christians to refer to the ‘three days and nights’ that Jesus spent in the tomb between his death and resurrection. Of course, anyone with a little maths can work out that from the time of his purported death at 3pm on a Friday, to his resurrection before 5am on a Sunday, three days had *not* elapsed at all, but the much shorter interval of about 36 hours. It could even have been less, since we are not told the hour the resurrection occurred. Once again, we have an Aramaic idiom here: the phrase ‘three days’ doesn’t necessarily mean three literal days. It implies a ‘short time’, as opposed to a ‘long time’ which was usually referred to as ‘forty days’. A *very* long time was ‘forty years’.

Christians are therefore wrong to emphasize the three days as the meaning of the sign. The time is not the significant factor. Indeed, Luke’s version mentions every part of the quotation except the business of the three days.

What was *really* the sign of Jonah? Surely it was that here was a man who ‘went down into the depths’, who was swallowed up *alive* by his dire fate, and who was then restored to the world again *alive*. (Lk. 11:29; Jonah 2:4-5)

I changed my direction of research from the altar to the cross. And, this publication is the final outcome of my research, presented before you.

Jesus said: “Let one who seeks not stop seeking until one finds. When one finds, one will be troubled. When one is troubled, one will marvel and will rule over all”.^[35]

AUTHORS AND PRESERVERS OF THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY

Dr. James M. Robinson writes:

The Nag Hammadi library is a collection of religious texts that vary widely from each other as to when, where, and by whom they were written. Even the points of view diverge to such an extent that the texts are not to be thought of as coming from one group or movement. Yet these diversified materials must have had something in common which caused them to be chosen by those who collected them. ^[36]

The Nag Hammadi library has preserved in Coptic translation many important Greek works that have been lost. One noticeable difference between the New Testament Gospels and the Nag Hammadi Gospels is that there is frequent use of the term “Saviour” e.g., “The Saviour answered” and the “Saviour appeared”. The canonical texts tend to read: “Jesus replied” and “Jesus came”. In Luke’s Gospel there is the famous story of Peter’s confession. When Jesus asked Peter: “But what do *you* say that I am?” Peter answered, “The Messiah of God”. (Lk. 9: 20). Within the Bible, several other Messiahs have come before Messiah Jesus. King Cyrus the founder of the Persian Empire and the conqueror of Babylon was not from the line of Israel and yet God, who is the power over all powers, chose a gentile to be “anointed”, records the prophet Isaiah in 45: 1. Coming of a Messiah to liberate them from the rulers was a common Jewish expectation in those days. The term *Saviour* in Christian connotations goes beyond that of the *Messiah* (in English; *Christ*). The devotion expressed for Jesus by the authors of the hidden gospels exceeds that of the writers of the four canonical gospels, which the Church has approved.

Here is a noteworthy passage on the efforts to preserve the Nag Hammadi Library texts and the extraordinary reverence shown for them in the past, by Egyptian monks. Elaine Pagels writes:

Yet the discoveries at Nag Hammadi show how widespread was the attempt “to seek God”—not only among those who wrote such “secret writings” but among the many more who read, copied, and revered them, including the Egyptian monks who treasured them in their monastery library even two hundred years after Irenaeus had denounced them. But in 367 C.E., Athanasius, the zealous bishop of Alexandria—an admirer of Irenaeus—issued an Easter Letter in which he demanded that Egyptian monks destroy all such writings, except for those he specifically listed as “acceptable”, even “canonical”—a list that constitutes virtually all of our present “New Testament”. But someone—perhaps monks at the monastery of St. Pachomius—gathered dozens of books Athanasius wanted to burn, removed them from the monastery library, sealed them in a heavy six-foot

jar, and intending to hide them, buried them on a nearby hillside near Nag Hammadi. There an Egyptian villager named Muhammad 'Ali stumbled upon them sixteen hundred years later. ^[37]

ONE JESUS -- TWO SOURCES -- FOUR GOSPELS

Majority of the readers of the New Testament are unaware of the realities of the time frame sequence in which the “Four Gospels” were composed and by whom. Many believe the gospels were composed in the same order in which they have been placed in the Bible. Some also believe that these gospels were written independently and by the apostles whose personal names appear in the headings. However, most bible scholars are of the opinion that the Gospel of Mark was written prior to that of the Matthew, Luke and John.

The editors of the revised King James Version record: “The Book of Mark, being written earlier than the other Gospels, **has about ninety-three percent of its material repeated in Matthew and Luke, many times using the same words.** The details that Mark gives in his brief account, however, are more graphic than in other accounts.”^[38]

It is strange that the most critical portion of the First Commandment – the capsule credo of the Jewish faith -- the *Shema*, (from Hebrew “*Hear!*”) is not copied by both Matthew and Luke from Mark’s Gospel. Jesus had himself acknowledged *Shema* to be the foremost. Mark recorded it in verse 12: 29. The text from Mark’s Gospel reads:

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he (Jesus) had answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all? (12: 28).

And Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, is one Lord: (12: 29).

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. (12: 30).

In the Gospel of Matthew the response reads:

Jesus said unto him, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.” (Mt. 22: 37 – 38).

In the Gospel of Luke as well one does not find: **“THE LORD OUR GOD, IS ONE LORD.”**^[39]

The above quoted last line called *Shema* was written down on tiny scrolls and placed in little containers that were put on the doorposts of houses, according to the continuation of the command. Every time a devout Jew went in and out of the house, he/she would touch

the little box (called *Mezuzah*), and recite the words of that scroll. It is unlikely that Matthew and Luke would not have known that critical passage to be the key passage of the First Commandment. There is also a possibility that some converted copyist, while copying Mark's version which is more Jewish than the others, may have removed the *Jewish Shema* from the *Christian Gospel*. Is not the Lord God of Jews, Christians and Muslims – ONE? Some Jews often act as if “OUR LORD” of the *Shema* was meant to be considered - Our EXCLUSIVE Lord!

The first three gospels of the New Testament are called the *Synoptic Gospels* meaning; the recorded data created by Matthew, Mark, and Luke can be “viewed together” or compared with a “parallel perspective”. But, the reality of these Synoptic Gospels goes further.

Most scholars are in agreement that the first three gospels have come from ONE SOURCE. The N.R.S.V. ^[40] records: “The other gospels [of Matthew and Luke] have quoted all but 31 verses of Mark.” This observation was made by the Editors of the New Revised Version in 1990.

The hypothetical “Q” Document...

While collating or tabulating the data of the *Synoptic Gospels*, created by the three separate authors, it is apparent that there are remarkable similarities in the sequence of the events, material and more importantly the language of these three gospels. To explain that abnormal interrelationship, the bible scholars have come up with a hypothetical “Q” document. What was that document, if there was one?

The answer to the above question is to be found in *The Mysteries of Jesus* ^[41]

It was a document written and revered by Christians prior to our existing Gospels, which acquired its ‘name’ Q simply from the capital letter of the German word *Quelle*, meaning ‘source’. How it was discovered? In fact, physical pieces of ancient papyrus with Q-text written on it have never been discovered, not even in fragments; but scholars poring over the Synoptic Gospels, trying to work out which one was written first, realized it must have existed once. ...As scholars set the texts side by side for comparison, they noticed something else. There were around 200 verses identical or nearly identical in Matthew and Luke which were not in Mark at all. Again, this was either a miracle, or both Matthew and Luke were copying *something else*: another written document. This, then, is what scholars mean by Q.
[42]

This hypothetically theorized document *does not alter* the perplexing literary relationship that exists between these three documents, written independently by three apostles. The justification sought by the scholars can possibly apply to a certain degree to the “Sayings of Jesus”, but not to narrated historical events from the life of Jesus. Not overlooking the fact that “all but 31 verses of Mark” have been copied by Matthew and Luke.

Who was Apostle Mark?

Since the apostles Matthew and Luke were the copyists and apostle Mark was the historian cum narrator, it is important to learn more about this apostle whose first name was John and whose Roman surname was Mark. John Mark was the nephew of Barnabas, a converted Levite disciple of Jesus and a friend of Paul. He was neither an eyewitness to the most of the recorded testimonies of Jesus nor was he one of the Twelve Apostles. According to the theologian Origen ^[43], Mark composed his Gospel “in accordance with Peter’s instructions.” ^[44]

Mark did accompany Paul on his missionary journey (Acts 13:13), but Paul could not be the source for Jesus’ history. Paul, who has contributed more texts to the New Testament than the four gospels combined, had not seen or heard Jesus while he was alive on this earth. Mark wrote his gospel in Rome. Upon reading Mark’s Gospel one notices that the author was trying to preach the history of Jesus to the Romans (the majority of whom were pagans), with stories of miracles and wonders. Mark’s gospel contains more miracles than any other canonical or Gnostic gospel.

Dr. James Bentley, an Anglican priest, past Senior Chaplain at Eton College and author of several books including *Our Christian Heritage* (1984), writes:

Now so long as it was assumed that Mark was the copyist rather than Matthew or Luke, the status of these two evangelists as reporting eye-witness testimony of the events they describe was not necessarily in doubt. But once the scholars begin to assume that Matthew and Luke had themselves been dependent on Mark, the notion that their Gospels are based on the evidence of Jesus’ actual disciples became harder to maintain. If St. Matthew had been an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus, why should he copy from someone like Mark, who was not? ^[45]

The Catholic Study Bible ^[46] contains the following critical notes for *The Gospel according to Mark*:

Although the book is anonymous, apart from the ancient heading ‘According to Mark’ in manuscripts, it has been traditionally assigned to John Mark, in whose mother’s house (at Jerusalem), Christians assembled (Acts 12, 12). ... Traditionally, the gospel is said to have been written shortly before A.D. 70 in Rome, at a time of impending persecution and when destruction loomed over Jerusalem. ...Modern research often proposes as the author an unknown Hellenistic Jewish Christian, possibly in Syria, and perhaps shortly after the year 70.

The above quoted text coming from the Editors and Publishers of a ‘*Study Bible*’ does not make it easier to accept the actuality of the recorded gospel text, even though it is

authorized by the Church. The fact that the book is anonymous and/or written by an unknown Hellenistic individual with a Roman surname, who was not from among the “Twelve”, does *not* have the appeal that would volunteer the required credibility for being a cover to cover “inspired Gospel Truth”. That may be one of the reasons that within Mark’s Gospel, unlike the others, the scholars have discovered TWO SETS of endings.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL – the author’s name does not appear in this last gospel – the second source. Why did John, if he was the author, prefer to remain anonymous? John was a common Palestinian name. There were several individuals with that name who were the followers of John the Baptist and Jesus. Many believe that due to the publicity given over a number of years, the Apostle John was the son of Zebedee and Salome. However, it has been suggested that he was an uneducated fisherman. Peter and John were “unlearned and ignorant men”, records the Book of Acts 4: 13.

Reading the language and the text of the last gospel one can visualize that it is highly unlikely that a fisherman with no education could have written a prologue so difficult to decipher for the majority of readers. The reality is that the ambiguity within the interpretation of the opening passage of the fourth gospel has no doubt developed the High as well as the Low Christology.

The passage could either be understood to be similar to the opening of the Book of Genesis that records everything was created by the “spoken words” (*logos*) or be regarded that everything that God had created was through “Jesus” (*logos*). One Greek word *logos* with Two Interpretations, giving the readers Two Images for the Creation Story.

The last gospel has twenty-one chapters of the history of Jesus written in Greek. Was that entire text written by an uneducated fisherman? Scholars, who have studied the texts of the “Hidden Gospels” discovered in the last sixty years, are of the opinion that this last gospel was written by a beloved disciple of Jesus who is called *The Apostle of the Apostles* and whom Jesus personally taught things that he had not taught the other male disciples. The details are to follow.

ONE JESUS -- TWO IMAGES -- FOUR GOSPELS

Jesus was sent to proclaim the “*Good News of God’s Kingdom*” and that he proclaimed. After John the Baptist was arrested, Jesus went throughout Galilee proclaiming the “Gospel [*Good News*] of the God’s Kingdom” and he taught in the synagogues, records the First Gospel.^[47] The gospels do not record Jesus having proclaimed a faith that was to be named after him or to be associated with his designation. While Jesus was on the Mount of Olives the worried disciples questioned him about the end of this age. Jesus declared, referring to the “abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet,” that the end shall come when the “*Gospel of the God’s Kingdom* shall be preached throughout the world as a testimony to all the nations.” (Mt. 24:14). Jesus did not respond that his “second-coming” from heaven will be a perceptible sign for the end of this age. Jesus, who refused to take any glory for himself, told them in explicit terms: “I do not seek my own glory, there is One who seeks it and he is the Judge.” Jn. 8: 50. When a man ran up to Jesus and addressed him as “Good Teacher”, Jesus rebuked him and declared: “No one is good but God alone”. (Mk.10: 18). It is inconceivable that the historical Jesus, who refused to take the glory for him, could have approved many of the prominently displayed texts on bill-boards, outside of Christian churches today. Jesus also declared that he only spoke (preached) what God had taught him. (Jn. 8: 28). If the God of the New and the Old Testament is the same; He would **not** teach His anointed Jesus that which would **not** concur with what He wrote on the two tablets and gave to the prophet Moses for Proclamation in His name.

Undoubtedly – there is also the widely accepted faith-based Divinity Image of Jesus among the vast majority of his worshippers. To them, their “Lord Jesus” is ‘Co-eternal in Time’ as well as ‘Co-equal in Majesty’ with the “Lord God”. The roots for their ‘Divinity Image’ of Jesus also go into the same Four Gospels depending upon the comprehension of the reader. Here are some often preached quotes from the fourth gospel. Jesus said: “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.” (8: 58). “I and the Father are one.” (10: 30). “He who has seen me has seen the Father, how can you say, ‘Show us the Father.’” (14: 9). “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me?” (14: 10). If one reads these verses, with a perspective diverse from the one observed earlier, it is possible to assume that there are two separate images of Jesus emerging out of the same Four Gospels.

Conclusion: There was only one “Historical Jesus of Nazareth” that lived in Palestine during the first century. There are only four Church authorized gospels included within the New Testament, out of the several that were written by the apostles of Jesus. Upon reading the texts of these four gospels – with the edited as well as the unedited records, the two variant images of that historical Jesus are likely to emerge depending upon what one prefers to believe and what not.

“FAINTING AWAY” DURING THE ORDEAL, FORETOLD

Jesus by self-admission was a prophet. This title by itself conveys that he came to reveal God’s Will and to convey His Message. In the Old Testament one finds several prophets of God who have made prophecies which have come true. It is not unusual for a Jewish prophet to foretell events that are to happen at a future date to his people. When some of the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a specific “sign”, Jesus gave them the “sign” of his own future. And that indeed became his future. Recalling the encounter of the past prophet named Jonah, who was in the belly of a sea monster for a brief period of time and was saved by God, Jesus told them “**so shall the Son of man be**”^[48] in the belly of the earth. (Mt. 12: 40).

Here is the brief story of Jonah from the Old Testament. Jonah, the son of Amittai, was traveling in a boat. God hurled a mighty storm into the sea. The concerned sailors cast lots. The lot fell on Jonah and they all suspected Jonah to be the cause. So to safeguard the lives of his fellow travellers, Jonah asked the sailors to throw him into the sea. Once Jonah was in the sea it ceased from its raging. God appointed a large sea monster to swallow the prophet Jonah. And this prophet remained in the belly of that fish for three days and three nights. Jonah writes;

“While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to Thee, into Thy holy temple.”

Then the Lord commanded the fish and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land. (Book of Jonah 2: 7 and 10). The righteous Jesus, after giving this sign of Jonah, informed the worried disciples that his own fate would be similar. Since this was a sign given by Jesus for his own future we can ill-afford to take it lightly or ignore the above prophecy while Rediscovering his Realities.

Examining the similarities between the fates of these two prophets, especially during the climax of their life threatening ordeals, how they called upon their God and the way God responded to their groaning and pleadings we notice an uncanny similarities this is probably what was meant by Jesus when he told his disciples to bear that in mind concerning his final hours of the trial.

JONAH: The prophet Jonah prayed to God from the belly of a giant fish while he was about to faint and die in the belly of the fish. That was the climax of his trial from God. Jonah did not give up his faith. He called upon God for help. God heard Jonah and the God’s righteous prophet **did not die** in the belly of the fish but was **kept alive** and was thrown out on the land. Jonah recovered his senses and regained his strength after he had rested on the dry land. Jonah walked his way to meet his people.

JESUS: The prophet Jesus prayed to God from the cross while he was about to faint and die on that wooden cross. That was the climax of his trial from God. Jesus did not give up his faith either. He called out from the cross with a loud voice to his God for help. He recited a verse from the Book of Psalms: My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Mt. 27: 46). God heard Jesus and God's righteous prophet **did not die** on his cross but it **so appeared** to his enemies and they lowered him from the cross. Jesus recovered his senses and regained strength after he had rested on the slab of a rock inside of a rock tomb. Jesus quietly walked away and met his disciples. After reading the clear cut similarities it is not easy to refute them or turn blind eyes and say;
JONAH LIVED WHEREAS JESUS DIED!

Jesus claimed: "But I speak these things as the [heavenly] Father taught me." (Jn. 8: 28). A little later he said: "If you abide in my word ...you will know the truth." (Jn. 8: 31). Thus, the knowledge of what Jesus had foretold came to him from God. He also said: "Whoever is from God hears the word of God. The reason you do not hear these words is that you are not from God." (Jn. 8: 47).

The results of scientific experiments conducted by Dr. F. Zugibe upon volunteers, after suspending them to T-Shaped crosses similar to that of Jesus Christ, have demonstrated that Jesus could not have died on that T-Shaped cross having been suspended on it for a short period. Details in chapter number fifteen.

Presented later in chapter number eighteen are the details concerning the verses from Luke's Gospel that indicate and do give rise to the concept that the disagreeing members of the Great Sanhedrin - the Jewish Judicial High Court in Jerusalem, played important roles in saving the life of Jesus after the body was lowered from the cross.

WALKING TO GALILEE, AHEAD OF THE DISCIPLES, FORETOLD

Once again Jesus knew ahead of time that he will be able to walk away from the place of his trial and tribulation to a far away mountain in Galilee and conduct a meeting with the disciples. Jesus foretold the meeting in Galilee to his disciples. The gospel accounts record that the Roman soldiers broke the legs of two other individuals that were nailed on either side of Jesus. But the soldiers did not break the legs of Jesus. If that was the will of God, Jesus probably knew it. He foretold; “**But after I am awakened, I will go before you into Galilee.**” (Mk. 14: 28).

In the Hebrew/Greek Key Study Bible – King James Version 6th edition, the translation of the above verse reads; “But after that I am risen (1453), I will go before you into Galilee.” The number 1453 printed after “**am risen**” is a number of Strong’s Concordance that refers to the original Greek word used by the author. It is interesting to learn that within the same copy of the bible, on page 1710, under the *LEXICAL AIDS* to the New Testament, appears the under mentioned dictionary meaning for the Greek word “1453” used by Mark.

1453. Egeiro; *to awaken, wake up. Primarily used of waking up those who sleep.* Thereafter appears a reference to Matt. 1:24. The translated text for that verse within that same copy of the Bible, reads:

“Then Joseph **being raised from sleep** did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him...” (Matthew 1: 24).

One may ask, if the dictionary meaning of the original Greek term used by the apostle is “**to awaken**” or “**to wake up [from sleep]**” would it not be more appropriate for the translators of the New Testament to keep that recorded dictionary meaning of the original Greek phrase No. 1453.

However, the recorded Greek version by Mark supports the historical reality of Jesus that he had fallen into a deep sleep or he swoons for a brief period and was “**awakened**” or he himself “**woke up**” from his sleep. If one was to carefully consider the various conditions and circumstances, as well as the actual day and time of the crucifixion, it is evident that Providence of God probably played a major role in these events. The body of Jesus remained on the cross for the least possible time due to the beginning of the Sabbath that evening. The enemies of Jesus wanted him to be disgraced as a malefactor and a failed messiah. Instead, God immensely elevated the status of His Messenger and Messiah Jesus after the ordeal. “They plot and plan and Allah too plans, but the best of the planners is Allah.”^[49]

Today, more than half the population of the world – Christians and Muslims, reckons Jesus to be the one sent by God as His Messenger and / or Messiah. Indeed, God EXALTED Jesus in status and eminence, eternally. Many believe Jesus was physically RAISED UP into the heaven of God. However we shall soon discover that the physical eye-witness evidence for that event is not to be found within the unedited original texts of the four gospels that were written by the authors of these documents. In brief, the evidence for the “physical ascension” of Jesus to heaven is lacking within the texts of the recently discovered fourth century Codices and the ancient manuscripts.

WHO WROTE THE STORY OF ‘PHYSICAL ASCENSION’?

Here are some noteworthy facts concerning the story of the ‘Physical Ascension’ of Jesus:

1. Jesus foretold about his forthcoming ordeal and his meeting with the disciples in Galilee. Nowhere did he foretell about God sending His angels to earth to lift him with his physical body to the heaven after the ordeal.
2. Dr. Constantine von Tischendorf (1815 – 1874), who had found the fifth century handwritten copy of the Bible *Codex Sinaiticus*, safeguarded by the monks of the St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai, did not find the ending of Mark 1/1 ^[50] and also verses 16/9 to 16/20 in that ancient copy. The reports of these findings were printed and published in 1985. ^[51] Within these missing twelve verses of Mark appears the story of the physical Ascension of Jesus to heaven. This absence from the fifth century manuscript proves that these twelve verses, 16: 9 to 16: 20 were inserted into Mark’s Gospel, some time after the fifth century.
3. The *Codex Syriacus*, another ancient manuscript of the Bible, does not have the verses 16/9 to 16/20 in Mark’s Gospel.
4. The apostle Matthew, who had copied all but 31 verses of Mark, does not have this story of the physical ascension of Jesus. This gives rise to the notion that these twelve verses were not there when Matthew copied the text from Mark’s gospel.
5. In the gospel of Luke verse 24: 51 reads: “While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.” However in N.R.S.V. of the Bible the footnote to this verse reads: “Other ancient authorities lack ‘*and was carried up into heaven.*’” This indicates that the story of being *carried into heaven* is an addition.
7. The story of the physical ascension of Jesus does not appear in the Fourth Gospel.
8. The renowned early theologian and scholar of Christianity, Clement of Alexandria (died 215 C. E.), never quoted from Mark verses 16/9 to 16/20. ^[52]
9. The head of the Catechetical school of Alexandria and a well known biblical critic and exegete, Origen (died 254 C. E.); also did not quote from Mark verse 16/9 to 16/20. ^[53]
10. In chapter 17, there are translations of the verses of the Qur’an, their commentaries and a detailed study of the revealed texts. They too indicate that after the ordeal Jesus the son of Mary, was greatly “exalted in status” by Allah but was not physically “raised to heaven” with his body.

Today, the bible scholars and the bible editors are of the opinion that the Gospel of Mark has TWO SETS OF ENDINGS. Most editors of modern versions of the Bible place verses 16: 9 to 16: 20 within parentheses and mention within the marginal notes that these verses do not appear in the older manuscripts. The Catholic Study Bible ^[54] goes a step further and has published both endings for the Gospel of Mark: THE LONGER ENDING as well as THE SHORTER ENDING.

THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK...

The text of chapter 16, verses 9 to 20 read:

[The Appearance to Mary Magdalene. 9/ When he had risen, early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. 10/ She went and told his companions who were mourning and weeping. 11/ When they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

The Appearance to Two Disciples. 12/ After this he appeared in another form to two of them walking along on their way to the country. 13/ They returned and told the others; but they did not believe them either.

The Commissioning of the Eleven. 14/ (But) later, as the eleven were at table, he appeared to them and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had been raised. 15/ He said to them, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. 16/ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17/ These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. 18/ They will pick up serpents (with their hands), and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

The Ascension of Jesus. 19/ So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, **was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God.** 20/ But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.]

A portion from the footnote reads; “...the vocabulary and style indicate that it was written by someone other than Mark.”

THE SHORTER ENDING OF MARK...

The text reads:

[And they reported all the instructions briefly to Peter’s companions. Afterwards Jesus himself, through them, sent forth from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.]

Since the evidence for the “Physical Ascension” to heaven is found only within the modified (inserted) texts and not within the original texts of the gospels written by the apostles themselves, any expectation of the return of Jesus from heaven can only be wishful thinking.

There are several stories for the “Second coming of Jesus” within the Secondary Document of Islam called *Hadith* (the re-narrated sayings and deeds of the prophet Muhammad). These orally re-transmitted sayings were compiled more than two centuries after the death of the prophet. Earlier generations had not compiled the prophetic sayings due to the strict ban on their writing imposed by the prophet. Dr. Akbar S. Ahmed ^[55] and other scholars have noted that a prominent compiler of *Hadith* – Bukhari, had rejected nearly ninety-nine percent of the narrations in circulation. He found these *Hadiths* to be weak, spurious or fabricated. Most of those falsely attributed to the prophet were to establish the personal, sectarian or politically motivated beliefs. Scholars are of the opinion that many of them have been the bases of schisms within Islam. The returns of *Messiah* and *Mahdi* (the hidden Shiah leader), from the heaven are strongly advocated by the minority sects. Probably, that was one of the reasons; the prophet had banned the writing of *his sayings* except what was revealed to him. The prophet had even commanded to **efface** whatever was already written. It is often discovered that a person who claims to LOVE the prophet the most, is the one who strongly propagates the compiled texts that the prophet had personally BANNED. The revealed verses of the Qur’an that were dictated by the prophet and recorded by the companions in his presence do not have accounts of the second coming of Jesus from heaven. That probably should convey the Message. The Prophet had no knowledge of the future, unless revealed to him.

“In what statement (Ar. *Hadiithim*), after this, will they believe?” -- Say: “Allah's guidance is the (only) guidance, and we have been directed to submit ourselves to the Lord of the worlds.” –
“Nor be of those who reject the Signs of Allah, or thou shalt be of those who perish.”
Qur’an 77:50; 6:71; 10:95

JESUS MET THE DISCIPLES “510 DAYS” AFTER ASCENDING TO HEAVEN

The term “The Ascension” refers to the bodily ascending or rising of Jesus Christ into heaven forty days after his Resurrection – a fundamental belief of Christianity. This belief by itself supports the earlier discussed claim that Jesus was resurrected in a physical, not spiritualized, body. The Christian community celebrates the fortieth day after Easter, the Day of Ascension, as a major feast day. This annual celebration reminds believers that since the Day of Ascension, Jesus has returned to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God. Christ will return to this earth sometime in the future, and believers should look forward to that day of his “Second Coming”. However, the conclusion drawn in the earlier chapters has shown that evidence to substantiate the physical ascension of Jesus to heaven is lacking within the recently discovered *unedited texts* of the Four Gospels.

Surprisingly, a hidden Gnostic document recovered from Nag Hammadi which has now been identified as *The Apocryphon of James*, (I, 1) ^[56] records that “the Saviour” (Jesus Christ), was on this earth “*five hundred and fifty days*” after his supposed Resurrection ^[57] to heaven and had a meeting with his disciples. This important document that questions the popular belief of Christianity is attributed to James – the brother of Jesus. (Mk. 6: 3). James ^[58] was well acquainted with the ministry of his own brother. The Bible also records that during the early days of Christianity, James was a leader and an overseer of the Christian congregation at Jerusalem. In the canonized Bible there appears a “Letter of James” that has been canonized in the Vatican Manuscript No. 1209. In the opening verse of his letter, James confirms that he was “a servant of God” and of “Jesus Christ”. The famous lines from his canonized letter read; “You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.” (James 2: 24). “Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow... You ought to say; if the Lord Wills, we shall live and also do this or that.” (James 4: 14-15). There is no reason to suspect the veracity of the rest of the writings of a person who was and is also recognized as “James the Just”.

Dr. Robert H. Eisenman ^[59] suggests that the “Teacher of the Righteousness” of the Dead Sea Scrolls and particularly the “Habakkuk Commentary” could be James, the acknowledged leader of a sectarian religious community whose members were “Zealous for the Law”. Jesus, the half brother of James, was also “Zealous for the Law”. As to the authorship and the time in which the canonized “Letter of James” was written, today most scholars suggest that this book was written by James shortly before his martyrdom in A.D. 62, acknowledges the K.J.V. ^[60] The other James, the brother of apostle John, died in 44 A.D., when he was executed by Herod Agrippa I, by the sword.

The “secret writings” were detested by Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons (c. 180). He denounced them but did not ban them. Nearly two centuries later in 367 C.E., Athanasius, the zealous bishop of Alexandria and an admirer of Irenaeus, issued an Easter letter

ordering the Egyptian monks to destroy such documents that he had listed. Someone disobeyed and what was not burnt was discovered and became the Nag Hammadi Library, sixteen hundred years later. ^[61] Author Elaine Pagels writes: “But the Secret Book says that Jesus astonished his disciples by suddenly coming back—a year and a half after he had departed – and explained that he had not actually removed himself from his disciples”. ^[62] After this remark Pagels quotes the following passage.

Lo, the Saviour appeared.... And *five hundred and fifty days* since he had risen from the dead, we said to him, “*Have you departed and removed yourselves from us?*” But Jesus said, “*No; but I go to the place whence I came. If you wish to come with me, come!*” ^[63]

The fact that Jesus had not removed himself from his disciples means that Jesus was *living on earth* during the period he was supposed to be *in heaven*. This is a powerful statement coming from “James the Just”, a leader of the early Christian congregation at Jerusalem and the brother of Jesus. It supports the claim that the belief in Jesus’ physical ascension may be a later date innovation.

What James had written was known as the “Secret Book” (*Apocryphon*). It was meant for “only a few selected disciples”, records the Nag Hammadi Library. The reason is obvious; the threat to the life of Jesus (who was neither killed on the cross nor had ascended to heaven) from his religious and secular enemies had neither subsided nor vanished. In other words the knowledge that Jesus was alive after the “Day of his Ascension” remained a well guarded secret and was not publicized as long as Jesus was alive. Thereafter, the early theologians drew an eternal curtain on the “Historical Jesus” and his family members by inserting the story of his “physical ascension” within the gospels and giving the “Jesus of the Gospel” a heavenly seat, on the right hand of God.

TWO IMAGES OF CHRISTIANITY

The inevitable difference in Christianity, in the New Testament documents prior and subsequent to the inserted texts about the physical Ascension of Jesus, gives rise to TWO IMAGES OF CHRISTIANITY. We have no historical accounts to describe the earlier form of Christianity but it is obvious that if there were no documented records for the Ascension, there cannot be celebrations such as the ones that we see today. Many have watched scenes of peace-time Palestine on television, of tourists crowding the streets to glimpse the Easter celebrations. A lone bearded Greek patriarch emerges from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher just outside the old city wall of Jerusalem, with two huge lighted torches, one in each of his raised hands. A huge crowd of faithful believers who have been waiting impatiently outside, surges forward with their small candles to light them from the Holy Fire. All the candles inside the Holy Sepulcher and in other churches are put out to symbolize the darkness of the tomb or the death of Jesus. Devout followers of Jesus believe that the Holy Fire brought out of this Holy Sepulcher, built on the supposed location of the Crucifixion of Jesus and his tomb, is ignited every year on Easter Sunday by the miracle of his Resurrection. Jesus, who is the Light of the world, has been raised. The Light from the Holy Torches must be carried to the altars of churches at the utmost speed and hence there is a struggle to light hundreds of individual candles at the same time. The joyful news of the Resurrection of Christ Jesus is thus carried from the place of his suffering and his Resurrection to all the churches. Jesus himself never said after the Resurrection, that he was the New Light and the Old Light had been extinguished.

Those who desire to practice Christianity according to the modified New Testament documents and those who wish to practice according to the re-surfaced Gnostic Gospels give rise to *TWO IMAGES OF CHRISTIANITY*. The terms “New Testament Christianity” and “Gnostic Christianity” may not yet be familiar but the concepts are not foreign to the millions who have read the recent publications. The texts from some of them are quoted in this work. And they are also becoming familiar to millions all over the world who have watched in their homes the documentaries produced and projected by leading television broadcasting stations within the last few years that are based upon the *Hidden Documents* unearthed within the last fifty years. New images of *Historical Christ* and *Historical Christianity* are slowly emerging. In the words of Marcus Borg: “Many people who have left the Church – and some who are still in it – are looking for another way of being Christian”^[64]; which may well be based upon the *Gnostic - Hidden Gospels*.

THE REALITIES OF JESUS FROM THE QUR'AN (KORAN)

After the event of September Eleven 2001, a kind of curious awareness has grown among non-Muslims, to learn first hand about Islam as a faith and more about their Holy Book – the Qur'an (Koran). They are curious to learn what is said in the Qur'an about the earlier scriptures and the earlier prophets, in particular about Jesus. The Qur'an commands the Believers to believe in the earlier messengers of Allah (lit., "*The God*") and make no distinctions between them.

“Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.”
Qur'an 2: 136

Dr. Hamid Algar's comments below give a better understanding of the above text. He writes:

It would be entirely mistaken to regard the appearance of these prophets in the Qur'an as the result of some attempt to retrospectively incorporate them into Islamic tradition, or some type of ecumenical and tolerant gesture towards the followers of Judaism and Christianity. In a very clear and obvious sense all of the preceding prophets are prophets of Islam, Islam in the sense of submission to the will of Allah, this being the core of each scripture or message from the beginning of history, from the descent of Adam (as) to earth down to the time of the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (saws).^[65]

To the “People of the Gospels” (Ar. *Ahlul Injeeli*), the Qur'an says:

...We sent him (Jesus) the Gospel; therein was guidance and light and confirmation of the Torah that had come before him: A guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah.

Let the People of the Gospel Judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by what Allah hath revealed, they are those who rebel.
Qur'an 5: 46-47

The *Hidden Gospels* of the first and second century (that had been safe-guarded in the earth of Nag Hammadi and had escaped from being revised or edited), record that Jesus was alive and had lived on this earth beyond the 'Day of Ascension'. It is no surprise that

the Qur'an, a scripture of the seventh century, also reveals in explicit terms that Jesus spoke to people (around him) in his old age^[66] and had a wife and offspring like all other earlier prophets that were sent by Allah.(Qur'an 13: 38).^[67] The prophet Jesus was no exception. If that was the case, Allah would have so revealed. Instead, at the end of that verse Allah has clearly recorded: **“For everything there is a time prescribed.”** This could be the right era in the history of mankind for the unveiling of the “Gospel Truth” safeguarded within **“Gnostic Hidden Gospels”**.

It is essential that we examine the *TWO IMAGES* of Jesus (*‘Isa a.s.*) within Islam, when there should be a unified single image of Jesus. The image that is found within the verses of “The Qur'an” is the *PRIMARY IMAGE*. The roots of it go into the Primary Document. The *SECOND IMAGE* emerges from the Secondary Documents. In Dr. Hamid Algar's opinion: “The supreme source of the truth in the matter (of Jesus) is the Qur'an itself.” Surprisingly, the two images are so intermingled that some Muslim authors do not know which stories of Jesus have their roots in the Qur'an and which have in the Traditional Legends.

Below is a typical example. The intention is not to criticize the author or author's work but to demonstrate that the prevalent Legendary Image of Jesus has been so firmly well grounded that it is being portrayed as the image revealed by Allah Himself, when it is not.

A Muslim from United States has recently and incorrectly written what has been reproduced below within the indented paragraphs:

“The Qur'an describes the beginning of the end of the world: famine, storms, floods, vandalism, and rampant immorality prompting the arrival of Dajjal, the name of the anti-Christ in the Qur'an. Dajjal is described as a monster of God's creation, brought into existence by, and as an expression of, man's increasing savagery.”

The language of the text is of a scholar, but unfortunately the name “Dajjal”, repeated so often, does not appear once in the Qur'an. The story continues...

“Dajjal's reign of terror lasts only forty days, however because God sends Jesus down from Heaven on a white horse with a lance in his hand to save the world for the righteous people- those who have lived their lives in service of God and with kindness to others. Jesus' throne will also be lowered to Earth from Heaven, and the faithful will rejoice seeing it.”

Again, there is not a single verse in the Qur'an that reveals the coming of Jesus or his throne or his horse or his lance to Earth, from Heaven. The author adds:

“Jesus finds Dajjal and kills with God's lance. Jesus will bring the reign of righteousness over the Earth for roughly eighty years. The Apocalypse and Judgment Day are still to come, though, with the death of Jesus.”

This sounds like a borrowed tale from another faith.

“Jesus will return to Jerusalem, at the end of the period of his reign, and pray at the Dome of the Rock, dying and returning to God.”

The author concludes with:

“However, most [Muslims] agree that Jesus, or at least a person who is a composite of Jesus and another holy figure, will return to the Earth as a messiah, as described above, and a saviour of mankind. As a result, Jesus is one of Islam’s most special prophets.”^[68]

Just as the author has depicted the image of Jesus, borrowed by many Muslims from another faith, here the author has also incorrectly borrowed the belief in Jesus as the Saviour of mankind from another faith. In Islam, Allah is “The Only Saviour” and to believe in anyone besides Him is an unpardonable sin of *Shirk*^[69]. In verse 2: 136 of the Qur’an quoted earlier, Muslims are commanded by Allah to make “no distinction between any of the Prophets”. To say Muslims do regard **“Jesus is one of Islam’s most special prophets”** is hard to believe.

There is a chapter in the Qur’an^[70] entitled ‘*Maryam*’ (Mary – the mother of Jesus). The Qur’an is not a book of history but an exposition and confirmation of the earlier books as well as the brief records of the earlier Messengers. The story of Jesus begins with a prelude about the birth of his mother Mary. It is narrated in chapter three which is aptly entitled ‘The Family of Imran^[71]’. The verse reads; “Behold! A woman of Imran^[72] said: ‘O my Lord! I do dedicate unto Thee what is in my womb for Thy special service: So accept this of me: For Thou hearest and knowest all things.’” (Q. 3: 35). When she delivered a female child, the astonished mother dedicated the child to God as pledged and named her Mary. God graciously accepted Mary and “He made her grow in purity and beauty: To the care of Zakariya (Zachariah) was she assigned.” (3: 37). The angels told Mary that she was purified by God and chosen above the women of all nations. (3: 42). Jesus acknowledged that he was “sanctified” by God and then sent into the world. (Jn. 10: 36).

Concisely, the lineage of Jesus from the House of Levi and the purity of his mother the Virgin Mary are established by the Qur’an.

Then will Allah say: “O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My Favor to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the Holy Spirit^[73] so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in old age. Behold! I taught thee The Book and Wisdom, The Torah and the Gospel^[74]. And behold! Thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird by My leave. And thou breathest into it and it becometh a bird by My leave. And thou healest those born blind and the lepers by My leave. And behold! thou bringest forth the dead by My leave. And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee. When thou didst show them the Clear Signs and the unbelievers among them said: ‘This is nothing but evident magic’”.

Qur'an 5: 110.

The above translation is by Abdullah Yusuf Ali and it is printed in the revised edition. The phrase “old age” is the translation of the Arabic word *Kahl'lan*. The same phrase “old age” is also used by M. H. Shakir in his translation published from New York and by F. Malik whose translation is on the well known computer CD *Alim*. However, several translators have preferred to use the phrase “maturity” instead of “old age”. In verse 46: 15, the Qur'an specifies that men attain physical strength (maturity) at the age of forty. Spiritual maturity comes later. Jesus was not even thirty-five years old when he was tried by the Roman Governor and was nailed to the cross.

Some Muslims do profess that since Jesus is *ALIVE* with his physical body in heaven and is not yet dead, the Words of Allah will come true after the “second coming” of Jesus. However, this hypothetical theory has a fundamental flaw. Please read the text of the Qur'an quoted below:

“Behold! I strengthened thee with the Holy Spirit so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in old age.”

The text of the above verse is in the past tense. The acts of talking in “childhood” and in “old age” both have a common verb which is in the past tense. It would be grammatically incorrect to split these two acts of Jesus into two separate tenses.

RESULTS OF SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENTS FOR NAILING TO T-SHAPED CROSSES

Jesus was nailed to a cross that had one horizontal wooden bar. With the exception of a few, there are no painted or carved images to show that Jesus was suspended on an upright single bar and his hands were nailed above his head. The angle of the victim's arms plays a critical role. The conclusion drawn after the scientific experiments which are recorded in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* ^[75] proves that Jesus had no breathing difficulties while being suspended on his cross.

Recent research by an American physician, F. Zugibe, challenged the earlier studies of Le Bec and Barbet. Dr. Zugibe agreed that while death by asphyxiation is the probable cause of death when the victim is suspended by his hands, it is no longer tenable when the arms are positioned perpendicular [horizontal] to the torso. To test this hypothesis, Dr. Zugibe suspended student volunteers with special foot and hand supports from a conventional T-shaped cross and monitored their physiological response. According to Dr. Zugibe, the critical issue involved here is the angle of the victim's arms to the upright. If the arms were out stretched, there was no evidence whatsoever of breathing difficulty despite their suspension, which ranged from five to forty-five minutes. On the basis of these experiments Dr. Zugibe concluded that hypovolemic shock, which is brought on by the traumatic shock of crucifixion, is the cause of death.

Jesus did suffer punishments and pains at the hands of the Roman soldiers on his way to the place of his crucifixion called Calvary. However, Luke records that on his "Way to the Cross" Jesus was seen talking and preaching to the company of people, and to women, who also bewailed and lamented him ^[76]. We also know from the gospel accounts that Jesus did not die immediately after the act of his nailing to the cross. This proves that Jesus had survived the events of the road as well as the trauma and the pains of his nailing to the cross.

Jesus was heard praying in a loud voice from his cross. Those who heard him thought he was calling for Elijah. Jesus had a conversation with the two malefactors who were nailed to their crosses on either side. Jesus even pleaded with his God to forgive those who knew not what they were doing. These acts of Jesus show that he was very much alive, after he was nailed to his cross. The scientific study confirmed that the suspension on a T-Shaped cross could not be the cause of his death. We also know from the gospel records that the legs of Jesus were not broken by the Roman soldiers. Breaking of the legs and thereby placing the entire weight of the victim's body on the upper part of the torso of the victim was one of the common practices employed by the Romans to speed up the death of those nailed to the crosses.

However, Jesus was made to walk a considerable distance, carrying his own wooden cross until he was exhausted. He even stumbled on his way. The Soldiers asked a passerby to carry the cross for the rest of the way. A man gave Jesus the drink of “wine mingled with myrrh” to drink. The totally exhausted Jesus who had a drink of wine was more likely to “fall asleep” or “faint” on the cross like the prophet Jonah did in the belly of a fish. Jesus and Jonah both regained their senses.

JESUS WAS NAILED TO THE CROSS BUT WAS NOT CRUCIFIED

Apostle Matthew records: “at about the ninth hour” (i. e. 3 p.m.), Jesus was seen praying to his God from the Cross. Some of the people, who heard him, began saying: “This man is calling for [prophet] Elijah”. A man from the crowd ran and brought back a sponge full of sour wine, which Jesus drank. (Mt. 27: 46-48). This act of drinking demonstrates that Jesus was alive even after 3 p.m.

Matthew records, little later: “And when it was evening” a rich man named Joseph took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in a new rock tomb. ^[77] The important factor to note is that Jesus was on a T-shaped cross for a very brief period of time. It was a normal practice to leave the crucified person on the cross overnight. That was the reason why Pontius Pilate, one who had issued the judgment, “wondered if he [Jesus] was dead by this time, and summoning the Centurion, he questioned him as to whether he was already dead.” (Mark 15: 44). Matthew records that the next day was the one: “which is the day after [the day of] preparation”. In other words the Sabbath was to begin after sunset and hence the body was lowered from the cross before sunset. During that very brief span of time, the exhausted Jesus who had walked a fair amount of distance carrying the wooden cross probably fainted. After a day of rest, lying on a stone slab in a spacious rock tomb, Jesus regained his consciousness. With the help of the two secret disciples - Joseph and Nicodemus, he got out of the wrappings that were later found by Mary Magdalene on ground inside the tomb. Jesus stood up again in his old body.

The Greek word *ana stasis* (Strong’s # 386) translated as “*resurrection*” in the New Testament means “standing up again”. The word is derived from a Greek verb that translates “to stand up” (see Strong’s # 450). Did Jesus “stand up” (resurrected) from death, or from his sleep? One resurrected from death has a spiritualized body. But Jesus had the same body before his ordeal. Thomas refused to believe the story of unless he saw Jesus with his own eyes and personally felt the nail marks on the hands of Jesus. (Jn. 20: 24–25). Jesus went an extra length to prove to Thomas and also to those who were to follow him in the future, that he was the same Historical Jesus of Nazareth who was born to Mary and was nailed to the wooden cross by his enemies. Luke goes even further and records that Jesus said to his “frightened” disciples: “Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; Touch me and see; for a spirit has no flesh and bones, as you see that I have.” (Lk. 24: 38-39).

In the fourth gospel the above incident is narrated as follows:

Then he (Jesus) said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. ^[78] Do not doubt but believe.”
Thomas exclaimed: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20: 27-28).

Some versions instead read; “Thomas answered:” instead of exclaimed, and have also removed the mark of exclamation (!) after the word God. And that gives the evangelical missionaries a reason to promote that Thomas had called Jesus Christ “his Lord and his God” but Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for saying that. And it proves that Jesus was indeed “Lord, God”. But we see no question asked by Jesus. Upon reading the text further, in verse 20: 31 the author writes that his purpose in writing his book was to make the readers believe: “Jesus is the Messiah”, meaning; Jesus was one whom God had anointed.

Luke records that the disciples were not yet convinced (even after having seen the nail marks) and were wondering, and then Jesus said to his disciples: “Have you here any meat?” and “They gave him a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb.” Jesus who was hungry ate in their presence. (Lk. 24: 41-42). It is evident from the above that Jesus himself confirmed by his spoken words as well as by his deeds that the “historical Jesus” who was born to mother Mary and was recently nailed to cross was the same one that was standing before them with those spear and nail marks which can be physically verified.

Furthermore, though safeguarded by God like the prophet Jonah, Jesus not only needed food and water to continue living but he must also live the rest of his life or as long as he lived in the land ruled by the Romans, as “one who had escaped the punishment of death by nailing to the cross” -- a judgment issued against him by the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. These are the realities of the “Historical Jesus” whose life was to be prolonged by God after the grief, as He had prophesied through His prophet Isaiah. (Is. 53: 10). This is one of the reasons that some of the writings of the apostles that had the records of the prolonged life of Jesus were never made public by the authors or the disciples who had read the texts.

Jesus never claimed he had died on the cross and was now a “born again” as a Second Jesus or told his disciples that he had “conquered death”.

17

IT WAS MADE TO APPEAR, JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED

Since Jesus had “fainted” or fallen into a deep sleep like Jonah and regained his senses it is incorrect to say Jesus was “crucified” or “killed” on or by the cross. In the Oxford dictionary the verb “crucify” means; “Put to death by fastening to a cross.” The following verse of the Qur’an enlightens and justifies the facts of “non-crucifixion” of Jesus in its own sublime style:

That they [Jews] said (in boast), “We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah”; But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them. And those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge but only conjecture to follow. For of a surety They killed him not.
Qur’an 4: 157

Jesus did not at any time claim that he had returned from death. All the subsequent acts and deeds of Jesus were rather to dispel such notions and to firmly establish and promote the true fact that he was the same “historical Jesus” whom they had known intimately before ordeal. None of his disciples who had met Jesus, after the act of his nailing to the cross, wrote that the angel of death was defeated at the hand of Jesus or that he was given the new soul. In the *Gospel of Mary*^[79] discovered from Nag Hammadi Jesus taught Mary the following truth concerning the death of a human:

The Savior teaches that at death, the human body dissolves into the elements out of which it came; only the spiritual soul is immortal and lives forever. This knowledge leads people to discover the truth about themselves – that they are spiritual beings made in the Image of God -- and it allows them to overcome the worldly attachments and bodily passions that lead to suffering and death. Therefore the final goal of salvation is not the resurrection of the body at the end of the age, but the ascent of the soul to God...

The Qur’an also reveals that death is the separation of the body and soul. It is Allah who recalls the souls of men upon their death. (39: 42). At the Resurrection, the souls will be given a *New Body*. The Qur’an questions in chapter 75 *Al-Qiyamat* (The Resurrection), verses 3 and 4: “Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones? Nay, We are able to put together in perfect order the very tips of his fingers.” One thousand four hundred years ago people did not know the secret of this statement. Today, we learn from the science of dermatology that the most difficult part of a human anatomy to recreate is the “finger tips”.

There is another context to the issue of “crucifixion” and “killing”. Dr. H. Algar writes:

“...the alleged crucifixion or killing of Jesus (*as*) by the Jews comes within a context of general reproach against them. They claim not only to have killed preceding prophets, which indeed they did; they also claim to have killed Jesus, which they did not.” After quoting the text of the above verse, Dr. Algar writes: “Here a question arises; since the Jews clearly did not believe in Jesus, why should they be referring to him as the messenger of Allah? Clearly by way of mockery; they were saying in effect, “here is this man who proclaims himself the messenger of Allah and yet we were able to kill him.” And then the response comes from Allah, “They did not kill him and they did not crucify him.”^[80]

Since the issue of the Crucifixion of Christ is critical for Christians as well as for Muslims it needs to be considered further. Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood^[81] writes in *The Mysteries of Jesus*^[82]:

There is considerable dispute about the meaning of these verses (Qur'an 4: 157-159). Some commentators insist that the passage simply means that God did not allow his enemies to kill Jesus, who was instead saved by being raised to Heaven; in other words, they accept the Ascension, but not the crucifixion. Others hold that he did die (see Sura 5: 20), but not at the crucifixion. Still others believe that he is still living in the body and will appear just before the Final Day, when the world will be purified of sin and unbelief.

One could argue, alternatively, that what is meant is that even though Jesus *did* die in the earthly sense, he was not *overcome* by death, and through the action of God he became the sign pointing the way to the everlasting life for all believers. For example, Ahmadiyya sectarians – usually not regarded as Muslim at all - took the view that Jesus was crucified, but that he did not die as a result. They suggested that he survived the ordeal and was resuscitated in the coolness of the tomb. He then recovered, and lived on long enough to travel as far afield as Kashmir, where he married and had children, and in due course died. The tomb of this person can be seen to this day at a shrine called the Rozabel in Srinagar. Certainly the shrine, grave and legend exist, but the documentary evidence for the 'Jesus' who came there in tenuous in the extreme.

Here a problem arises. No orthodox Christian can accept that Jesus was not crucified; and no Muslim can accept that even a single word of the Qur'an might be incorrect, since it is the pure and unadulterated revelation of God. However.. .there is one way in which both faiths could concur, namely, if we consider the possibility that Jesus was indeed crucified, but instead of dying, was miraculously saved.

The interpretation and understanding of the revealed text of the Qur'an by any Muslim, on this particular issue of the Crucifixion of 'Isa (Jesus), if they do happen to concur with that of the followers of the Ahmadiyya sect, does not in any way or form deduce or infer that that person has left the mainstream of Islam and accepted the teachings or beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Sect and or has joined that community. To join the community of Ahmadiyya Sect one has to accept Mirza Gulam Ahmed as the prophet of Allah, which one has not.

Contrary to that, any Muslim who believes that the life of Jesus was prolonged and so propagates has in fact acknowledged the revealed verse number 5: 110 of the Qur'an. This verse clearly indicates that the prophet Jesus *didst speak* to the people in old age. (See chapter 14 for details). Similarly, one who believes Jesus was married and had an

offspring and so propagates has in reality upheld the verse number 13: 38 of the Qur'an. It reveals that Allah had *appointed wives and children* for the Messengers of Allah that had come before the prophet Muhammad. (See chapter 20 for details). Today, the needed support from the Christian documents to UPHOLD these Revealed Truths concerning Jesus are available.

But they who disbelieve, and deny our revelations, {after knowing the Truth} such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein.

Qur'an 2: 39.

The works recently published by the Christian authors like Dan Brown, Margaret Starbird, Laurence Gardner, Lynn Picknett and in the past by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln have all indicated France -- and not Kashmir, to be the final abode of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The Hidden Lineage of Jesus with a detailed genealogical account starting from France has been published by Laurence Gardner in 2003.

THE BODY OF JESUS THAT WAS PIERCED BY A SOLDIER'S SPEAR

“But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.” (Fourth Gospel 19: 34, K.J.V.).

In the Strong's Concordance, the primary word used within the Greek text for the verb “pierced” - translated above, is classified as # 3572. The appropriate translation for it would be “pricked” under that classification. The impression one gets from the above translation is that the Roman soldier had made a deeper cut through the flesh and hence out came blood and water.

Author of *The Mysteries of Jesus* writes:

The term used for the stabbing was *nyssein*, which in fact signifies a light scratch or puncture, rather than a forceful thrust or deep penetration. ...It was not a death thrust: an experienced soldier would hardly make a fatal thrust through the side, but into the heart.

...Corpses do not bleed, apart from the slight natural flow downwards due to the law of gravity. They cannot pump blood upwards and out, the blood serum is not seen on the wounds of a body which has just died. ...The point was rather that the stab of the lance produced a copious flow: and that is what surprised the eye-witness, for Jesus was supposed to be dead.
[83]

The *Encyclopedia Biblica* [84] records: “Jesus was alive when the spear was thrust.” The above quoted verse does not record that the blood and water gushed out or they continued to be emitted for a long period of time. This shows that not a single major blood circulating artery or vein of Jesus was cut by the spear. Similarly, not a single major lymph circulating vessel or lymph gland of Jesus had been cut.

Disagreeing members of Sanhedrin save Jesus...

The following passage from Luke gives us interesting details. Luke records:

“Now there was a good man and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid.” (23: 50-53).

Was there a conspiracy from within the Council, to save Jesus? Joseph and his friend Nicodemus were both reputable members of the Jewish Judicial High Court (Council) in Jerusalem called the Great Sanhedrin comprising of seventy-one members. Joseph **“though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action”** gives a clear indication that he knew the Sanhedrin’s plan to do away with Jesus. Since he and Nicodemus – a Pharisee (Jn. 3-1), having disagreed with Joseph Caiaphas – a jealous Sadducee (Acts 5:17), most probably made their own plans to save the life of Jesus. Nicodemus was greatly impressed with the signs that Jesus had performed at Passover, records the fourth gospel. Joseph came from Arimathea. The word “Arimathea” comes from Hebrew meaning “Heights”. Scholars are of the opinion that this unknown disciple was probably an Essene, living on the heights of Judean wilderness. The Essenes used to wear white garments and were well known for their art of body healing. A person from the crowd poured a sponge full of vinegar into the mouth of Jesus with a reed, while on the cross, could be a strong drink of vinegar – a sedative, to make him “fall into a deep sleep”. The Centurion who looked at the sedated Jesus, declared him being dead. Joseph being a member of the Jewish Judicial Council, Pontius Pilate – though not sure of Jesus having died so soon, had no hesitation in giving the body of Jesus to him. In the darkness of night Nicodemus brought at night one hundred pound weight of medicinal herbs and spices. Matthew records that Joseph had placed the body “in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock.” This tomb was in the ‘Garden of Joseph’.

The body of Jesus was not buried in the ground and covered with the earth. In the K.J.V version appear the misleading subtitles to Matthew 27: 57-61; Luke 23: 50-56 and John 19: 38-42. These erroneous titles read *‘The Burial of Jesus’*. The body of Jesus was *not* placed underground or below the earth but was laid on a rock slab high above the ground that permitted an easy and normal breathing while he was unconscious.

The next day being the Sabbath, no one visited the tomb. Early on the Sunday morning when Mary Magdalene entered the tomb, she found it empty and “saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying”, records the last gospel. (Jn. 20: 12). These two could be Joseph and Nicodemus. Jesus having been awakened, they probably un-wrapped Jesus, rolled away the stone guarding the tomb entrance and then waited for the expected arrival of the family members of Jesus to tend the body. When Mary arrived, Jesus who had regained his faculties and strength was standing outside of the tomb. The weeping Mary Magdalene was astonished when Jesus called her by her first name. The “awakened” Jesus remembered the meeting he had planned before his trial and told Mary to inform the disciples of that pre-planned meeting at a particular spot on a mountain in Galilee. This demonstrates that the mind, memory and the brain faculties of the nailed Jesus remained unaffected.

ISAIAH FORETOLD; THE DAYS OF JESUS WILL BE PROLONGED AND WILL HAVE OFFSPRING

Earlier we saw the historical facts concerning Jesus, who too had a wife and offspring like the other messengers, from a document written nearly six centuries after the birth of Jesus – the Qur’an. Now a document written nearly seven centuries before the birth of Jesus, the one that is included in the Holy Bible, has a prophecy that acknowledges what the Qur’an has revealed. It declares that Jesus’ life will be prolonged by God after he has been bruised and put to grief by God, not just for a brief period but long enough for Jesus to have offspring. To have an offspring, Jesus must have been married.

Just as the majority of commentators of the Qur’an have maintained their silence on the issue, although the text is explicit, the editors and commentators of the Bible have never ventured to endorse what the prophet Isaiah had prophesized for Jesus. The prophet Isaiah is called one of the major prophets of the Old Testaments. Both Jews and Christians read *The Book of Isaiah* with great reverence. The prophethood of Isaiah lasted for over forty years from between 740 and 697 B.C. During this long period Isaiah wrote more prophecies about the “anointed suffering servant” than are contained in any other book of the Old Testament. Augustine called this book the fifth gospel. Even before he started his ministry, Jesus went into a synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the scriptures, as it was the Jewish custom, records Luke. He was given a scroll of the prophet Isaiah to read. Jesus, a youth from Nazareth, unrolled the scroll of Isaiah and read the opening of chapter 61. Translated text of the passage reads:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me. ^[85]
Because the Lord has anointed me – ^[86]
To bring good news to the afflicted.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives,
And freedom to prisoners;
To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

Jesus rolled up the scroll, sat down and said to those whose eyes were fixed on him; “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”, indicating he was the one who was mentioned in the scroll he had read. (Lk. 4: 16 to 21). It has been long upheld by Christian scholars and theologians that some of the famous “Servant of God” songs written by Isaiah are divinations and prophecies of Jesus Christ. Jews may not uphold that. Before his prayer on the Mount of Olives and after the famous Passover meal, Jesus spoke of things concerning him that must be accomplished:

For I say unto you, that this that is written [by Isaiah] must yet be accomplished in me, “and he was reckoned among the transgressors”; for the things concerning me have an end. Lk. 22: 37.

Here Jesus quoted directly from Isaiah 53: 12 that reads: “and he was numbered with the transgressors”. In this same chapter there are several other verses that scholars say relate to Jesus. For example: he was the one to be despised and rejected rather than being esteemed (53:3), and he was the one, though oppressed and afflicted, who would not open his mouth as a lamb brought to slaughter and a sheep before the shearers. The prophecy by the prophet Isaiah continues and the text reads:

But the Lord was pleased to bruise him ^[87], putting him to grief ^[88]; if he would render himself as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring. He will prolong his days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his hand. (53:10)

This prophecy clearly proves that the life of the “suffering servant” on this earth was to be extended not for just forty days but for a much longer period. To say otherwise would be to discard the entire prophecy. Chapter 53 contains twelve verses. Denying the veracity of verse number ten and authorizing the verses before and after it would amount to hypocrisy. To *rediscover the realities*, one has to accept all the verses of the prophecy and not pick and choose what one likes. This logical conclusion is endorsed by Jesus himself. He said:

Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah (Christ) should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” (Lk. 24: 25-26).

There is no record in the canonized Four Gospels that says Jesus lived a life of celibacy. To say that he was married does not reject the gospel records. Also, there is nothing unholy in sexual relationships between husband and wife and in begetting children. In fact God had commanded Adam to multiply. The prophet Moses who received “The Law” from the Lord God on the Mount Sinai and spread it far and wide was married to more than one wife and had offspring. All the major Prophets that came before and after Moses also obeyed the first command of God to Adam and were married and had offspring.

GOD HAD APPOINTED WIVES AND OFFSPRING FOR EARLIER MESSENGERS...

Since these are significant and vital issues in rediscovering the realities of the historical Jesus; reproduced below are two translations of the verse number 13: 38 of the Qur'an for comparison:

And verily, We sent messengers (to mankind) before thee, and We appointed for them wives and offspring, and it was not (given) to any messenger that he should bring a portent save by Allah's leave. For everything there is a time prescribed.
Qur'an 13: 38

Translation by M. M. Pickthall

We did send apostles before thee, and appointed for them wives and children: And it was never the part of an apostle to bring a Sign except as Allah permitted (or commanded). For each period is a Book (revealed). Qur'an 13: 38

Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali

The revelation is explicit and begins with the phrase “And verily” that emphasizes the gravity of this revealed text. There is no mention of any earlier Messenger or Apostle of God (not an apostle of a messenger), being exempted from the above appointments. Hence Jesus, a messenger of Allah who came before Muhammad, - whose name is so often mentioned within the Qur'an - should also be included in this revelation. The majority of the commentators of the Qur'an have chosen to avoid commenting on this issue. However, the renowned translator Abdullah Yusuf Ali, who has often quoted texts from the Bible and historical records of the biblical prophets and their communities, opted to go along with the prevalent Christians beliefs and wrote the following commentary to the verse:

All the apostles (messengers) of whom we have any detailed knowledge, except one, had wives and children. The exception is Jesus the son of Mary. But his life was incomplete; his ministry barely lasted three years; his mission was limited; and he was not called upon to deal with the many-sided problems that arise in a highly organized society or State. We pay equal respect to him, because he was God's Messenger: but that is not to say that his Message covers the same universal ground as that of Mustafa.^[89]

While paying “equal respect to Jesus” and yet excluding him from the verse regarding wives and offspring, the commentator was not firm in his stand. We have detailed

knowledge of Jesus in the Qur'an; hence he cannot be excused from being included. There are a few messengers whose history is not revealed but Jesus is not one of them. Every believing Muslim (unless due to an oversight) ends the recitation of the verse(s) of the Qur'an in Arabic, with the phrase that translates: **“Allah the Most High has spoken the Truth”**. Allah who knows the past, present and the future added at the end of this crucial verse: **“for everything there is a time prescribed”**. The prescribed time had not come when the above commentary was written by Yusuf Ali.

Today, many scholars have made in-depth studies and translated hundreds of handwritten parchment sheets rolled into scrolls that have been discovered since from 1945. These documents as well as the rediscovered ancient manuscripts of the New Testament have collectively exposed the Truth about the Historical Jesus and the community of early Christians and Jews that lived in vicinity of the discoveries. After a brief period of time, when the rediscovered realities of Jesus are sufficiently publicized and promoted, the new generation of the Muslim Brotherhood would boldly declare that the prophet Jesus was no exception to the above quoted verse 13: 38 of the Qur'an. Allah commands the prophet of Islam to declare:

“Say: The Holy Spirit ^[90] has revealed it from your Lord with Truth, in order to strengthen those who believe, and as guidance and good tidings for those who have surrendered.” ^[91]

However, the impact and aftermath of the above commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali have been far-reaching. Since the day it was first published in 1977, millions of copies of this translation with the commentaries have been published and sold all around the world. Hundreds of millions of Muslims have read it and believed it to be true. This is indeed sad. The time alone will expose the Truth.

ABC TV'S SPECIAL PRESENTATION

JESUS, MARY AND DA VINCI

In November 2003, a leading US television news network, ABC, presented an hour of documentary to its millions of viewers, the majority of whom were the followers of Jesus. This presentation asked some serious questions. Did Jesus have a wife? Was there a woman sitting at the right hand of Jesus at "The Last Supper" on the eve of his trial? Why is the Cup, the Holy Grail, missing from the famous painting by Da Vinci in a church in Italy? Did Pope Gregory the Great, depict Mary Magdalene as a "fallen woman" in the sixth century? This controversial program was entitled *Jesus, Mary and Da Vinci*. Elizabeth Vargas of ABC admitted: "You can't talk about this subject without intriguing people or offending people." These questions were directed at author Dan Brown for his recent best selling publication, *The Da Vinci Code*. Theologians and authors invited to express their opinions on the subjects included: Father Richard McBrien, MD of the University of Norte Dame; Joseph Feo of the Catholic League; Karen King; Margaret Starbird; Elaine Pagels and Jeffery Bingham.

Two days prior to this controversial presentation, the BBC released a news report on it with the heading: *US TV Set for "Jesus Wife" Storm*. The Bible does not say Jesus was married but it does not say Jesus was single either. Vargas said that ABC had not found any proof as to whether Jesus had a wife, but could not completely discount the theory either. If Jesus was married who could have been his wife? The last gospel records: "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved" (Jn. 13: 23). Only the person sitting next to Jesus could lean on the bosom of Jesus! Was that person he or she? The *Gnostic Gospels* record; Jesus loved Mary more than all the other disciples.

The next passage from the Church authorized Gospel of John is important hence the text of it has been reproduced from a K.J.V., CD. Please read the quoted text carefully. The narration is about three women who were standing by the cross of Jesus. There is no mention of any male disciple standing with the women (except for the pronoun used by the editor). Most of the male disciples had fled when they learnt of the arrest.

Jn. 19: 25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, *Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.* (*Italics* are by the editors).

Jn. 19: 26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Jn. 19: 27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

Is it possible that the original pronoun been replaced? If not, one has to admit that the name of that disciple has been inadvertently omitted. On the early Sunday morning at the

rising of the sun when the Sabbath was over, Mary the mother of James ^[92], and Salome came to the sepulcher with Mary Magdalene. These women brought with them sweet spices to anoint Jesus. Mark records that they were saying to one another: “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” (16: 1-3). This dialogue indicates that the women had come by themselves and no male disciple had accompanied them.

MARY MAGDALENE

SAINT OR SINNER?

The above heading was printed in extra bold face over a two-page spread in the Canadian Edition of TIME magazine ^[93]. The sub-title read: A new wave of literature is cleaning up her reputation. How a woman of substance was “harlotized”. Under the heading “MARY MAGDALENE” were two pictures. One was of a young woman, absolutely nude, sleeping on the ground with leaves scattered around, her hands raised towards her raised head to show her bare breasts, her right leg raised higher than her body to hide her lower body. That was the image of “The Adulteress” or “The Sinful Woman” of the Gospel. In other words, Mary Magdalene was either of the two. There was also a chalk drawn sketch. The portrait of an innocent looking face of a young woman, with her long hair neatly tied and her eyes gazing downwards to the earth. That image was of “Saint Mary Magdalene”. Here are some interesting excerpts from that TIME magazine:

Mary Magdalene’s image became distorted when early church leaders bundled into her story those of several less distinguished women whom the Bible did not name or referred to without the last name.

The mix-up was made official by Pope Gregory the Great in 591: “She whom Luke calls the sinful woman, whom John calls Mary [of Bethany], we believe to be the Mary from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark.” Gregory declared in a sermon. That position became church teaching. Although it was not adopted by Orthodoxy or Protestantism when each later split from Catholicism.

Magdalene’s witness to the Resurrection, rather than being acclaimed as an act of discipleship in some ways greater than the men’s, was reduced to the final stage in a moving but far less central tale about the redemption of a repentant sinner.

Jane Schaberg ^[94] writes in *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*: “The pattern is a common one, the powerful woman disempowered, remembered as a whore or whorish.” She added: “I think it was a power struggle, and the canonical texts that we have [today] come from the winners.” David Van Biema, author of the four page article in TIME, writes: “any retrieval of Magdalene as a “winner” inevitably shakes up current assumptions about male church leadership. After Pope John Pope II prohibited even the discussion of female priests in 1995, he cited ‘the example recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of Christ choosing his apostles only from among men...’” Van Biema has also given details of an active group in San Jose, California called ‘Neo-Magdalenes’.

Thirteen centuries later and more than two decades after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi Library in 1945, “In 1969, in the liturgical equivalent of fine print, the Catholic Church officially separated *Luke’s* sinful woman, Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene as part of a general revision of its missal”, records the author David Van Biema. I, for one, do not see any apology or sincere attempt on the part of the Church to reinstate Mary Magdalene to her rightful status.

The stigma of “the sinful woman” attached to Mary Magdalene - a dedicated disciple and apostle of Jesus, may be erased gradually by the waves of new literature that are crusading for the truth and justice for this woman. On the other hand, a passionate movement appealing to the Christian Church to admit the past error of the “mix-up” and recognize Mary as the first woman apostle could remove the shame instantly. The true story of Mary could inspire other women to participate actively in the Church.

If the “Good News” of Jesus was for equal consumption by men and women, then the “Gospel of Jesus according to Apostle Mary” could be the Fifth Gospel of the New Testament. No one can deny, not even the Pope or the Archbishop of Canterbury that God had sent the “historical Jesus” upon this earth through the womb of a woman who carried the weight of Baby Jesus for months. All the Messengers of God (with the exception of Adam), and all the Popes and the Archbishops came on this earth only after their mothers carried them in the womb.

JESUS EXALTED IN STATUS -- NOT PHYSICALLY RAISED TO HEAVEN

Below are two translations and two commentaries:

1. Translation by Dr. Mohammad Asad:

**“For, of a certainty, they did not slay him [Jesus]: nay, God exalted unto Himself –
and God is indeed almighty, wise.”
Qur’an: 4: 157/158**

Commentary # 172 by Dr. Asad:

Cf. 3:55, where God says to Jesus, "Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and shall exalt thee unto Me." The verb *rafa'ahu* (lit., "he raised him" or "elevated him") has always, whenever the act of *raf* ("elevating") of human being is attributed to God, the meaning of "honouring" or "exalting". Nowhere in the Qur'an is there any warrant for the popular belief that God has "taken up" Jesus bodily, in his lifetime, into heaven. The expression "God exalted him unto Himself" in the above verse denotes the elevation of Jesus to the realm of God's special grace - a blessing in which all prophets partake, as it is evident from 19:57, where the verb *rafa'nahu* ("We exalted him") is used with regard to the Prophet Idris. ^[95] (See also Muhammad Abduh in *Manar* III, 316 f., and VI, 20f. ^[96]) The "nay" (*bal*) at the beginning of the sentence is meant to stress the contrast between belief of the Jew that they had put Jesus to a shameful death on the cross and the fact of God's having "exalted him unto Himself."

2. Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali:

**“For of a surety they killed him not: - Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and
Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise:”
Qur’an 4: 157/158.**

Commentary # 664 by Yusuf Ali: (The first edition)

There is a difference of opinion as to the exact interpretation of this verse. The words are: “The Jews did not kill Jesus, but God raised him up (*rafa'a*) to Himself.” One school holds that Jesus did not die the usual human death, but still lives in the body in heaven; another holds that he did die but not when he was supposed to be crucified, and that his being “raised up” unto God means that instead of being

disgraced as a malefactor, as the Jews intended, he was on the contrary honoured by God as His Apostle: see also next verse. The same word *rafa'a* is used in association with honour in connection with Mustafa ^[97] in 94. 4. ^[98] (End of commentary).

Another verse in connection with the exaltation:

**Lo! God said: “O Jesus! Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and shall exalt thee
(*mutawaffe-ka wa-raafi'u-ka*), unto Me and cleanse thee
of those who are bent on denying the truth...”
Q. 3: 55**

The sequence of the above Message is crucial. The first action is; “cause thee to die” and thereafter comes the action of “shall exalt thee”. To say; Jesus has been Raised up with his physical body to Heaven and is yet “alive” and will die after his “Second Coming” to earth at the ‘End Time’ is to reverse the sequence of that revealed Message. The dictionary ^[99] meaning of *ascension* reads; “the action of ascending in status” and God did raise the status of Jesus, after the event of his nailing.

THE LESSON FOR MEN ENDOWED WITH DEEPER KNOWLEDGE – *THE GNOSIS*

“We appointed immortality for no mortal before thee. What!
if thou diest, can they be immortal?”
Qur’an 21: 34.

“Muhammad is but a messenger, messengers
(the like of whom) have passed away before him...”
Qur’an 3: 144.

“And before thy time, We never sent [Our messengers] any but [mortal] men, whom
We inspired, [and whom We always chose] from among the people of the
community [to whom the message was sent]...”
Qur’an 12: 109

The last revelation is in its negative form and empathetically tells us that all the messengers of God were mortal men and as such they have died. There is no mention that Jesus was an exception. Two verses later, the Qur’an reveals in verse 12:111:

Indeed, in the stories of these men [the earlier messenger] there is a lesson for those who are endowed with insight. It is not a discourse invented, nay indeed, it is [a divine writ] confirming the truth of whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations], clearly spelling out everything and [offering] guidance and grace unto people who will believe.

The Arabic phrase *Uulil’albab* translated above as “those who are endowed with insight” is a reference to men who have insight into Gnosticism. The enigmatic term “Gnostic” is derived from the Greek word *gnosis* meaning “knowledge” and is also understood to be “a divinely endowed insight”. The stories of the earlier messengers (including Jesus) have lessons in the documents that remain for us to read and discover. They offer “guidance and grace” to people who have deeper knowledge and insight than normal. Some of the passages from the church canonized fourth Gospel and the letters of Paul are also Gnostic philosophies. Biblical editors have described these canonized passages as the “combating forms of Gnosticism”.^[100] Thus there are “Gnostic texts” inside and outside of the canonized Gospels. Those endowed with *gnosis* should not be unwilling to rediscover realities within the documents created by the apostles of Jesus whom he himself chose during his ministry. The Greek word *apostolos* simply means “sent forth”. In this sense Jesus was an apostle of the one and only true God, who sent him to this earth to glorify Him, which he accomplished. (Jn. 17: 3). None has seen God, but *His Realities* are known to mankind through the Apostles of God. Only those who have placed their faiths in these Apostles of God have felt the presence of God through *Gnosis*.

The scriptures record no one has seen or can see the God. Even on the Mount Sinai, God spoke to Moses from behind the burning bushes. Yes, many have felt His Presence through His Words and Signs sent forth to mankind through His Messengers. This is exactly what Jesus meant when he conveyed that one who has – seen my signs/known me – has seen/known the Heavenly Father who had sent him to glorify HIM. And, HE that had sent the Christ, alone posses immortality. The Qur'an also reveals to us that all the earlier messengers had died and Jesus was no exception.

JESUS LOVED MARY MORE THAN ALL OTHER DISCIPLES

Jesus was a Jew and so were his disciples. They prayed in Jewish synagogues. Jesus religiously followed the Mosaic Law. He was circumcised according to the Jewish Law, records the Bible. To interpret the mind and thoughts of Jesus one has to examine him as a Jewish prophet. God prophesied that He sent him, as Jesus himself declared, a prophet “like” Moses. (Dt. 18: 18). Moses with his persistent efforts was successful in consolidating the early Semite tribes that finally became a community of Jews. Jesus belonged to this consolidated community. It has been general practice throughout the history of the Jewish community to encourage its members to marry at an early age and have offspring. The community strongly believes that the very first Commandment that came from God was to Adam and Eve. God said to them: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen. 1: 28). All the major prophets of God have obeyed that First Commandment of God.

Jesus came in the footsteps of the prophet Moses who was married, had more than one wife and had offspring. It is unlikely that the prophet Jesus, whose life was prolonged by God, as seen earlier in the prophecy by Isaiah (53: 10), would have disobeyed the first Command of God and remained celibate during that extended period. Isaiah also recorded that he will see his offspring. The *Gospel of Phillip* recovered from Nag Hammadi, tells us that this prophecy of Jesus seeing his offspring was fulfilled and he had a son.

In Jesus’ culture, to have offspring one must have a wife. Was Jesus married to Mary? Jesus, a Rabbi, raised the standard of the Seventh Commandment of the Decalogue to the highest pinnacle for his disciples. The Command that was given to Moses by God read: “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14). Jesus elevated this Commandment further when he said:

“But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offends thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Mt. 5: 28-29).

This passage demonstrates the mind and thoughts of Jesus a Jewish Rabbi and the Messiah. His abhorrence of an individual’s carnal lust and lower desires for the opposite sex are transparent.

Could or would a teacher of such high morality and ethical precepts turn around and act in a manner that would warrant the plucking out of an eye? If this is beyond belief then one must seriously consider that Jesus and Mary Magdalene who often used to kiss each

other were united as “holy partners for life” or matrimonially united as “holy companions of each other”. The apostle Phillip was probably trying to be modest and diplomatic when he recorded in his Hidden Gospel ^[101] that Mary Magdalene was “the companion of the Saviour” and the Saviour loved Mary more than all the disciples. The Saviour used to kiss this much-loved companion on the mouth, in front of these disciples who were offended by it.

Elaine Pagels who has examined the original texts of these Gnostic Gospels, records in her book *The Gnostic Gospels* that **Christ [used to] kiss Mary [often] on her [mouth]. The rest of [the disciples were offended] by it...** ^[102]

The question is; was Mary Magdalene the *companion* of Jesus or the *life partner* and the *consort* of Jesus Christ?

John’s gospel records a few incidents that indicate that Phillip by nature was more modest than Peter in his approach to the critical issues facing the disciples. The apostle Phillip was one of the earliest disciples whom Jesus invited by saying: “Follow me” (Jn. 1: 43). Phillip was also present when Jesus fed the five thousand with the “Two hundred pennyworth of bread” (Jn. 6: 7). When certain Greeks wanted to join the congregation and wished to see Jesus, Andrew and Phillip were the ones who presented their petition to Jesus for sympathetic consideration. (Jn. 12: 20-22). Phillip’s tactful manner in dealing with the issues facing the apostles contrasts Peter’s bluntness and brusqueness apparent in John’s Gospel.

Mary Magdalene was the first and the only individual to have seen and conversed with the awakened (resurrected) Jesus, in the Garden of Joseph where the rock tomb was located. Jesus called by her name and she was given a message to be conveyed to his disciples. This act of conveying the “message of Jesus” makes her an apostle. When Mary heard Jesus calling her by name she turned around and tried to “cling” Jesus. In the modern age we would translate this to mean that Mary wanted to embrace Jesus. But the physical body of Jesus that was in an unconscious state for such a long period needed a purification bath or wash before embracing another human being!

Mark records in chapter sixteen that when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome came early morning at the rising of the sun to the sepulcher where Jesus was laid. They brought sweet spices to anoint – rub down the body of Jesus with spices. The Jewish custom would not permit a young un-married woman to anoint or give a body massage to the dead body of a young unmarried male that was not related by marriage or by birth. This record gives an indication that Mary Magdalene, whom Jesus was seen kissing on the mouth ^[103] by disciples, must be related by the holy matrimony. The mother of Jesus, was she accompanied by an “adulterous woman” or by her “daughter-in-law”?

MARY WAS NEITHER “THE ADULTERESS” NOR “THE SINFUL WOMAN”

There are four prominent women in the Gospels with the first name of Mary. 1) Mary the mother of Jesus. 2) Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha. 3) Mary of Magdala (a small town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. This small town was located half way between Capernaum and Tiberias. Hence she is better known as Mary Magdalene or Mary of Magdala. 4) Mary the mother of (John) Mark. There are two other women named Mary in the New Testament, but they are not so prominent. Was Mary Magdalene “The Adulteress” or “The Sinful Women” of the Gospel stories? The answer is that she was neither.

The story of “A Woman Caught in Adultery” appears in John’s Gospel chapter 8: 1-11. The name Mary does not appear in the entire story. Not only that but the verses 8: 1 to 11 in which the story appears, are “not found in most of the old mss” records the New American Standard Bible within its marginal note to these verses. A similar note also appears in The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. “*A Western text type insertion, attested mainly in old Latin translations*” appears in the Catholic Bible. These commentaries leave no room for doubts to assert that this story of “A woman Caught in Adultery” was added during or after the translation of the Greek Bible into the Latin Vulgate by Jerome, in the fourth century. It was a period in the Church’s history when Arius and his followers were claiming that Jesus was created and not begotten.

Instead of the story being expunged from the Holy Bible, to leave it unblemished and pure, in a version published in 1990, the sub-title to the un-pious insertion reads; “Jesus forgives an adulterous woman”^[104] This also supports the argument that the addition was made to proclaim the superiority of Christ Jesus over the Jewish prophets like Moses, who did not or could not forgive the sins of the sinners.

The other story of “The Sinful Women” appears in Luke’s Gospel 7: 36 to 50. Here, too, the name Mary does not appear in the story. Who was this sinful woman? Luke records: “And a woman *in the city* (italics mine) who was a sinner, having learned that he [Jesus] was eating in the house of the Pharisee, brought an alabaster jar of ointment.” This sinful woman, whose name is not recorded by Luke, lived “in the city”. Mary belonged to Magdala - a small town and not a city. Today there are the ruins of that small town, now known as Khirbet Majdal, about 6 km North-North-West of Tiberias. The story sounds embellished when it goes on to record that the sinner bathed Jesus’ feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair. The story ends with Jesus saying to that unnamed woman “Your sins are forgiven”, in a voice loud enough for the people sitting at the table to ask:

“Who is this who even forgives sins?” Here is another account that attempts to prove the superiority of Jesus who forgave sinners, while the Jewish prophets did not.

THE GOSPEL OF MARY OF MAGDALA

Within *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*^[105] published in 1977, appears *THE GOSPEL OF MARY (BG 8502, I)*,^[106]. It contains the first of the four tracts found in the Berlin Gnostic Codex. The text of this early fifth century gospel is vital to Rediscovering the Realities of Jesus and of Mary, the first woman apostle. The important question is: “Where did the *Gospel of Mary* come from?” In her recent 2003 publication, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala – Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*^[107] author Karen L. King^[108] raises the above question and in response follows it up with a detailed account of its discovery. The author has reproduced in her book eight photographs of the original pages from *Berolinensis Gnosticus*, also known as the Berlin Codex, that has the text of the *Gospel of Mary*. Below are a few excerpts from King’s book that answers the earlier question:

Over a hundred years ago, in January of 1896, a seemingly insignificant event took place on the antiquities market in Cairo. A manuscript dealer, whose name history has forgotten, offered a papyrus book for sale to a German scholar named Dr. Carl Reinhardt. It eventually became clear that the book was a fifth-century CE papyrus codex, written in the Coptic language (see Box 1). Unbeknownst to either of them, it contained the *Gospel of Mary* along with three other previously unknown works, the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, and the *Act of Peter*. This seemingly small event turned out to be of enormous significance.

Dr. Reinhardt could tell that the book was ancient, but he knew nothing more about the find than that the dealer was from Achmim in central Egypt.^[109]

Below is a text from “Box 1”, mentioned above:

COPTIC LANGUAGE -- Although the *Gospel of Mary* was originally composed in Greek, most of it survives only in Coptic translation. Coptic is the last stage of the Egyptian language and is still in liturgical use by Egyptian Christians, called Copts. The oldest known Egyptian language was written in hieroglyphs always on stone or some other durable material. In addition, Egyptians also wrote on papyrus, and for this they used a different script called hieratic, employed almost solely for writing sacred literature.

Karen King writes:

Dr. Reinhardt purchased the book and took it to Berlin, where it was placed in the Egyptian Museum with the official title and catalogue

number of Codex Berolinensis 8502. There it came into the hands of the Egyptologist Carl Schmidt, who set about producing a critical edition and German translation of what is now generally referred to as the Berlin Codex (see Box 2).

Below is a text from “Box 2”, mentioned above:

THE BERLIN CODEX The book Reinhardt bought in Cairo in 1896 turned out to be a fifth-century papyrus codex. Papyrus was the most common writing material of the day, but codices, the precursor of our book form, had come into use only a couple of centuries earlier, primarily among Christians.

Under chapter 4, entitled ‘The Body & the World’, appears an important text that reveals to us what were the true teachings of Jesus:

The Saviour’s teaching makes up the substantial core of the *Gospel of Mary*, and Jesus is the central figure in salvation. He is called the Lord and Savior, and his teaching holds the key to eternal life with God. But the interpretation of that teaching in the *Gospel of Mary* differs radically from other common understandings.

The *Gospel of Mary* focuses instead on Jesus as a teacher and mediator of divine revelation. The Savior teaches that at death, the human body dissolves into the elements out of which it came; only the spiritual soul is immortal and lives forever. This knowledge leads people to discover the truth about themselves – that they are spiritual beings made in the Image of God -- and it allows them to overcome the worldly attachments and bodily passions that lead to suffering and death. Therefore the final goal of salvation is not the resurrection of the body at the end of the age, but the ascent of the soul to God -- both in this life by following the Savior’s teaching, and at death when the bonds between the body and the soul are loosened beyond time and eternity.

MARY WAS “AN APOSTLE OF THE APOSTLES”

Below are some more excerpts from *THE GOSPEL OF MARY (BG 8502, I)*, ^[110] A Coptic manuscript of this *Gospel of Mary* has been dated to the early fifth century, and a Greek fragment has been dated to the early third century. ^[111]

After greeting his disciples with the usual greeting of “Peace be with you” Jesus instructs them to go and preach the gospel of the kingdom to others...

When he had said this, he departed. But they [disciples] were grieved. They wept greatly, saying “How shall we go to the Gentiles and preach the gospel of the kingdom of the Son of Man? If they did not spare him, how will they spare us?” Then Mary stood up, greeted them all, and said to her brethren, “Do not weep and do not grieve nor be irresolute, for his grace will be entirely with you and will protect you. But rather let us praise his greatness, for he has prepared us (and) made us into men.” When Mary said this, she turned their hearts to the Good, and they began to discuss the words of the [Saviour].

Peter said to Mary, “Sister, We know that the Saviour loved you more than the rest of women. Tell us the words of The Saviour which you remember- which you know (but) we do not nor have we heard them.” Mary answered and said, “What is hidden from you I will proclaim to you.” ^[112]

Then Mary wept and said to Peter, “My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I thought this up myself in my heart, or that I am lying about the Saviour?” Levi answered and said to Peter, “Peter, you have always been hot tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. But if the Saviour made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely, the Saviour knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us. Rather let us be ashamed...” ^[113]

MARY SAT NEXT TO JESUS AT THE LAST SUPPER

One of the world's widely acclaimed and admired masterpiece of the divine painting, "The Last Supper" painted by Leonardo Da Vinci, has started a significant controversy.

This masterpiece of art was commissioned by the Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza in 1495 and was completed by Leonardo in 1498. It is painted on the northern wall of a Church named Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy. This painting measures fifteen by twenty-nine feet. The technique employed by Leonardo was unprecedented. It is not a fresco but a sort of tempera on stone. Many other painters of the *Last Supper* have shown six apostles facing the viewer and the other six with their backs to the onlooker. Leonardo has arranged all the thirteen (Jesus included) facing the viewer so they can be easily identified. To appreciate this masterpiece of art which billions have admired and to understand the nature of this controversy, one should visit the under mentioned Internet Website (see the footnote), ^[114] or obtain a full colored reproduction.

Upon having a closer look at the apostle number six from left to right one immediately notices that this disciple has no beard or mustache and has long reddish brown hair flowing down the neck. The face and the upper body look like that of a young woman. Moreover this person is sitting at a prestigious position, on the right hand of Jesus. Is this disciple apostle John or Mary Magdalene? The appearance of the painting alone may not be conclusive. The "Fourth Gospel" has recorded text concerning the individual sitting next to Jesus, who was in a position to lean on the bosom of Jesus.

'THE LAST SUPPER'
A Masterpiece Divine Painting
by Leonardo Da Vinci



Please read the following verses carefully. For the time being, please read the verses ignoring the gender of the pronoun used by the editor:

When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified,
“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.”

Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.

He then lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?
(Fourth Gospel 13: 21 to 25).

The bible scholars and editors have suggested that this disciple whom Jesus loved and was found lying on Jesus’ breast was the author of the “Fourth Gospel” and his name was John. The important question is how do they know that for a fact? In the above verses no name of that disciple is given nor any indication that that disciple had written the gospel. Nowhere in the New Testament is it recorded that the name of the person sitting on the right hand of Jesus at the Last Supper was John.

The following introduction to the fourth gospel by editors of the New Revised and Updated 6th edition of K.J.V., reads: “John’s name is never mentioned in the book, but it is assumed that he is referring to himself when he speaks of the disciple ‘whom Jesus loved’ and who leaned against the bosom of Jesus.” The above introduction is in reality an admission by the editor of KJV that this is an “assumption” and not a fact.

As for the apostle John having written the fourth gospel we know that he was a fisherman before he joined the ministry of Jesus. The Book of Acts records that when Peter and John were brought before the Jewish rulers, the rulers “perceived that they [Peter and John] were unlearned and ignorant men,” (Acts 4: 13, K.J.V.).

In chapter nineteen of the fourth gospel there are detailed accounts of what transpired on the cross and the giving of Jesus’ body by Pilate to Joseph of Arimathea. Matthew records that when Jesus was arrested: “all the disciples forsake him, and fled.” (Mt. 26: 56). However, Mary Magdalene and other women who were standing in front of the cross had observed first hand the details of what had transpired. Mary being an eyewitness was in a better position than John to write the accounts that have been recorded in the fourth gospel.

The *Gospel of Mary* has been recently discovered from Nag Hammadi and that supports the likelihood of her having written this gospel. The Bible does not record; “Jesus loved John more than the other disciples”. On the other hand the Nag Hammadi documents clearly record; Jesus loved Mary more than other disciples.

Under the circumstances the leaning of Mary on the bosom of Jesus among disciples is very likely and understandable. Even in this era of a “permissible society” a Jewish male of marriageable age with a beard would not encourage or permit a younger Jewish male without a beard to “lean on his bosom”, especially before the other members of his own community to whom he is preaching the Jewish Laws. Whereas, it would *not* be abnormal for a married Jewish woman, to lean on the bosom of her husband, before the close knit members of her own community. It is likely that Mary Magdalene, whom the *Gnostic Gospels* call a “companion of the Saviour”, had a marital relationship. Was “companion” a *Gnostic terminology*, for “spouse”? Leonardo had collected old biblical manuscripts. One such was recently purchased by Bill Gates. ^[115] Did he know from these original documents that the one sitting next to Jesus was his life long companion? If Leonardo knew that person was Apostle John, it is unlikely he could have painted John without beard or moustache on a temple wall.

JESUS HAD A SON...

The apostle Philip was probably the third disciple to join Jesus and probably accompanied Jesus during most of his ministry. He was an eyewitness to several historical events that took place in the life of Jesus, before and after the event of the Cross. *The Gospel of Phillip* includes crucial texts concerning Jesus having offspring. Wesley W. Isenberg, the translator of the text, observes that the gospel has made an important contribution to our knowledge of early Christian beliefs and that the author Philip was not a radical person.

The *Gospel of Philip* makes an important contribution to our rather limited knowledge of Gnostic sacramental theology and practice. The sacraments exhibited in the *Gospel of Philip* are similar to those used by Christians in the Great Church for the initiation of candidates. Thus the Gnostics who wrote and used the present text had not departed radically from the orthodox sacramental practice; yet the interpretation provided for the sacraments clearly remain Gnostic.”^[116]

It is no surprise that the following text from *The Gospel of Philip* upholds the prophecy made by Isaiah and recorded in (53: 10). One can now say that the *rediscovered* portion of the *New Testament* supports the text of the *Old Testament*.

“There is the Son of man and there is the son of the Son of man. The Lord is the Son of man, and the son of the Son of man is he who is created through the Son of man. ...He also has the ability to beget.”^[117]

Jesus often called himself “Son of man”.^[118] If Jesus – the Son of man, had a son then the mother of that child could be Mary Magdalene the one who was sitting on the right hand of Jesus and was leaning on his bosom at the Last Supper.

May the *Gospel Truth* that remained “Hidden” for the last 1600 years in the belly of Nag Hammadi, prevail upon the hearts, the minds and the souls of the *People of the Gospel*. May the *Qur’anic Truth* that was “uncomprehending” for the last 1400 years, prevail upon the hearts, the minds and the souls of the *People of the Qur’an*.

THE 'RETURN OF JESUS' AT THE "END TIME"!

For those who are anxiously waiting for the imminent 'Return of Jesus' from heaven and have their beliefs based upon the Church advocated Gospels, here is the Rediscovered Truth:

Bible scholars like Dr. Constantine von Tischendorf, who after having personally examined the original hand written copies of the oldest available Four Gospels have noted that the texts for the physical ascension of Jesus to heaven or Jesus being carried by the angels to heaven, are lacking in these ancient documents. The texts that are found within the published copies of the circulating gospels on the subject of the physical ascension of Jesus have been *added* centuries later.

Since the True (unedited) Gospels do not record the physical ascension of Jesus to heaven, to wait for his return can be regarded as ***building a house*** upon soft ground.

For the vast majority of those who are eagerly waiting for the 'Return of Jesus' from the heaven and have their beliefs based upon the verses of the Qur'an, here is the Revealed Truth:

The verses of the Qur'an were revealed to the prophet in Arabic. Within Arabic Text of the Qur'an, the evidence for the coming of Jesus at the End Time or at any time in the future is lacking. The name of Jesus does not appear in the Arabic Text of the verse 43: 61, the only verse put forward by some scholars as an evidence for his second coming. The translators who have already accepted the concept for the "Second Coming of Jesus" from the traditional beliefs have inserted the name "Jesus" within brackets in their translations. One such example from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English translation is given below. Besides, inserting the name of Jesus with the brackets, Yusuf Ali has mistranslated the Arabic word *I'lm*. Literally, this Arabic word translates "knowledge" but instead we find the word "Sign" in its place. The verse number 60, which immediately precedes the verse 43: 61, deals with the "angels" and not with Jesus.

Hence, the insertion of name "Jesus" in the ensuing verse number 61 is a pure conjecture and lacks the needed support from the Qur'an.

Please compare the following two translations as well as their related commentaries. The first translator has taken the liberty of inserting "within the brackets" the name of Jesus. The second has not taken such a liberty with the revealed text. Please also notice how the concepts have changed drastically by such an insertion:

1. Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali ^[119]:

**And (Jesus) shall be a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment): therefore have no doubt about the (Hour) but follow ye Me: this is a Straight Way.
Qur'an 43: 61.**

Commentary Number 4662 by A. Yusuf Ali:

This is understood to refer to the second coming of Jesus in the Last Days before the Resurrection, when he will destroy the false doctrines that pass under his name, and prepare the way for the universal acceptance of Islam, the Gospel of Unity and Peace, the Straight Way of the Qur'an.

2. Translation by Dr. Muhammad Asad:

AND, BEHOLD, this [divine writ] is indeed a means to know [that] the Last Hour [is bound to come]; hence, have no doubt whatever about it, but follow Me: this [alone] is a straight way.

Commentary Number 41 by Dr. Muhammad Asad:

Whereas most of the commentators regard the pronoun *hu* in *innahu* as relating to Jesus and, consequently, interpret the above phrase as "he is indeed a means to know [i.e., an indication of the coming of] the Last Hour", some authorities - e.g., Qatadah, Al-Hasan Al-Basri and Said ibn Jubayr (all of them quoted by Tabari, Badhawi and Ibn Kathir) - relate the pronoun to the Quran, and understand the phrase in the sense adopted in my rendering. The specific mention of the Last Hour in the above context is meant to stress man's ultimate responsibility before the Creator and, therefore, the fact that worship is due to Him alone: and so this parenthetic passage follows logically upon the mention of the false deification of Jesus.

The translation Number One contradicts the following revealed verses of the Qur'an. To believe that Jesus will come first and will rule the earth for such and such period and will wipe out all the evils from the earth and thereafter will come the End Time is to negate the following two verses of the Qur'an, which declares that the End Time will come suddenly. Jesus also spoke of the agreed time to come suddenly and none knows of its day or hour except the God.

**And they say: When will this promise be fulfilled, if ye are truthful? They await but one Shout, which will surprise them while they are disputing. Then they cannot make bequest, nor can they return to their own folk.
Qur'an 36: 48 – 50**

There are sects within Islam that have sprung up based upon the concept of "some one" physically coming down from the heaven and playing a major role for their own

community. Again the question is why would not Allah mention within the revealed Arabic text the name of the entity that is to come and spare the Muslim Brotherhood from schism? The Qur'an declares that Muhammad is the seal of the Prophets meaning no Prophet of God will come after him. Are the anxiously awaiting followers of Islam also going to follow the Christ along with the awaiting Christians, or they will have a contest for Christ?

CONCLUSION

THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE...

THE HISTORICAL JESUS was a Jew who lived in Palestine in the days of the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate, records the historian Flavius Josephus, a Pharisee who was working for the Romans. Josephus records that many Jews and Greeks were attracted by the words and deeds of this wise man. The gospels record that the ministry of Jesus was short-lived. During that brief period, he preached the “Good News of God’s Kingdom”. To those who believed in him, Jesus told these essential things: (1) “If you abide in my word, *then* you are truly disciples of mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (2) “I do nothing on my own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught me.” The fourth gospel also records that Jesus amazed his disciples with the performances of great miracles and informed his listeners that he *always* did the things that were pleasing to his Father. Jesus was a “Righteous Prophet” acknowledges the Qur’an. Many Jews rejected him and some used to confront him to his face. Jesus simply told them to discover his realities in their own books. If they had believed in their own prophet Moses, they would have found Jesus in the writings of Moses. Jesus acknowledged, according to the prophecy of Moses, that he was similar to Moses.

The Qur’an reveals:

And in their [earlier prophets] footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming The Torah that had come before him: We sent him The Gospel: therein was guidance and light and confirmation of The Torah that had come before him. A guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah. ^[120]

The Qur’an also reveals that all the earlier prophets were married and had offspring. ^[121] That Jesus was no exception to this rule is supported by the text of the *Gnostic Gospels* discovered in 1945. The history of the earlier prophets recorded in the Qur’an tells us that the One who had sent His Prophets upon this earth had caused them to undergo a trial but in most cases when the prophets have called upon Allah, He had safe-guarded their lives. And thereafter, in the majority of the cases, the prophets’ prestige had been restored and status elevated. 1) When the prophet Noah prayed to his God, he and his believers were saved from the great deluge and his disbelievers were drowned. 2) The prophet Abraham also prayed to his God when he was being cast into the burning fire. God saved Abraham. 3) The prophet Moses and his followers also prayed when they were being pursued by the mighty army of the Pharaoh and came to the Red Sea. Pharaoh and his army perished in that sea but Moses and his followers safely crossed. 4) The prophet Jonah also prayed from the belly of a great fish while he was “fainting” and God saved him. 5) The prophet Jesus also cried to his God from the cross, while he was in great pain. Jesus had also “fainted like Jonah” but to his enemies it was made to appear that he had died, when he had not. 6) The prophet Muhammad was also saved during his flight from Mecca to

Medina when his enemies were on his trail. The prophet and his companion hid in a cave and also prayed like the earlier prophets. A freshly built spider's web on the mouth of that cave misled the enemies into believing that no one had entered that cave. We also know that all these prophets obtained their due respect and honour only after their ordeals. Jesus was no exception. Today we know from the Nag Hammadi documents that God had fulfilled the prophecy made by Isaiah, and that supports the claim that this special prophecy was for Jesus. The Scrolls of Isaiah were written before the birth of Jesus Christ is well established from the fact that one such scroll was read by Jesus in a synagogue when he was known as a young son of Joseph the carpenter.

Just as Protestantism separated from Roman Catholicism, Jesus at the most may perhaps have thought of a schism in Judaism and liberating his fellow Jews from the dictates of the High Priests of the Temple in Jerusalem. Neither the prophet Abraham started a new religion bearing his own name, nor did the prophet Moses or prophet Jesus. History records that it was in Antioch, long after the ministry of Jesus had been concluded, that a ruler of northern and eastern Palestine named Herod Agrippa II asked a blunt question of Paul: "Are you so quickly persuading me to become a Christian?" With that perplexing counter question of Agrippa came into being the terms Christian and Christianity, unknown before that date. These two terms are not found in the Four Gospels, the Dead Sea Scrolls or in the Gnostic Gospels.

'THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST'

Mel Gibson, a born Catholic, invested over \$ 25 million and co-scripted a 'mega movie' with the above title. This film projects the graphic and at times violent accounts of the repeated beatings and unending brutal scourging of Jesus by the Jewish Temple Guards and the Roman soldiers. These are far beyond what the gospel accounts have recorded. This highly publicized film was projected simultaneously all over the world on February 28, 2004 - a day of repentance for the Christians -- Ash Wednesday. The film will continue to rouse the feelings of millions of viewers, Christians and non-Christians around the world. The historical Jesus, who had no army, was no threat to Rome. Jesus - the one who was preaching the Law of Moses, was tried on several concocted charges by the Jewish Council. The High Priest found him guilty. The Chief Prosecutor of the Council handed Jesus to Pontius Pilate for a trial before the Roman Court. The Roman Governor refused to sentence Jesus. The Council members and the crowd finally got what they wanted. A verdict for the death of Jesus on the cross as a malefactor and a false Messiah. These scenes of the movie became a major issue of religious controversy. Did Mel Gibson make an anti-Semitic Movie? The world media unreservedly exploited that controversy by publishing its reviews on the front pages of newspapers and on television screens during prime times. The Church that had failed to sustain the attendance of church-goers during the last century found that kind of media publicity as the God given opportunity of its lifetime to glorify Jesus.

The acts of the "historical Jesus" leading to the event of his trial, as recorded in the gospels, suggest that Jesus of Nazareth wanted to liberate his fellow Jews from the dictates of the Temple High Priests in Jerusalem. A noteworthy question from a historical

perspective is: Did that community and its progeny, for whom Jesus underwent what this film depicts, remain liberated or did they simply move from the Temple Hierarchy in Jerusalem to the Church Hierarchy in Rome? Under the latter, the early Christian community lost its freedom to read freely the historical records and preaching of their Liberator (Saviour). If the laity had had that freedom, it is unlikely that the texts of the four gospels could have been re-written or the texts of Gnostic *Gospels* written by the apostles would have gone underground.

The scholars, who have scrutinized the texts of the Gnostic Gospels in their original language, are of the opinion that Jesus did meet his disciples, when he was supposed to be in heaven sitting on the right hand of God. The non-appearance of Jesus in public after the supposed Day of Ascension is quite understandable because the Roman Governor's Judgment for the death of Jesus by crucifixion had not been fulfilled. Likewise, the Gospel records and other written documents within which the account of his life after the "supposed" Day of his Ascension appeared, were regarded as classified documents for circulation in private. Thus the Church circulated stories of Jesus Christ sitting in the heaven got the needed credence. Dr. James H. Charlesworth writes:

“The Jesus traditions were edited by the Jesus followers. They composed their accounts and gospels in light of their fervent belief that God had raised Jesus from the dead and that soon he would return gloriously and triumphantly to earth. They did not intend to publish an objective biography of Jesus that could withstand the acids of modern criticism.” ^[122]

Elaine Pagels, author of *The Gnostic Gospels* questions at the beginning; “Christ’s resurrection, was it a historical event or a symbolic?”

THE BLOOD OF JESUS...

When the Roman Governor Pilate washed his hands before the crowd, and said: “I am innocent of this man’s (Jesus’) blood...” The crowd answered: “His blood be on us and on our children.” ^[123] With that Jesus was handed over to the soldiers to be crucified. Dr. Raymond Brown, the scholar of *Anchor Bible* fame, claims; the responsibility of the voiced line “*blood on our children*” was for a particular group that took that oath rather than an assumed eternal guilt for the entire race.

Truly, the blood and water from the body of Jesus was spilled while on the cross, but his soul did not leave his body. Jesus foretold his own fate and compared it with the fate of the prophet Jonah, who simply fainted in the belly of the fish and did not die. If Jesus had met his death on the cross this would not be a true prophecy. The apostle Matthew records: At 3 p.m. in the evening, when the sky was getting dark, Jesus cried out calling upon his God with the famous opening verse from Psalm 22. Before sunset, when the Sabbath was to begin, Jesus was lowered from the cross. Thus, Jesus stayed on the cross for only a brief period. This was probably God’s Master Plan to defeat his enemies! The experiments conducted by the American physician, F. Zugibe, demonstrate that death by

asphyxiation was not possible within that short period of time, since the arms of Jesus were positioned on the cross, horizontal to the torso. The blood letting of Jesus was upon the crowd but not the physical killing. If the historical Jesus was killed on the cross, as the crowd had intended, then the prophecy from the Book of Isaiah that Jesus will see his offspring would be a false prophecy and Isaiah would be a false prophet according to the teachings of Jesus with regards to the signs of the false prophets.

Tom Harpur ^[124] writes in his book:

Perhaps I am lacking in piety or some basic instinct, but I know I am not alone in finding the idea of Jesus' death as atonement for the sins of all humanity on one level bewildering and on the other morally repugnant. Jesus never to my knowledge said anything to indicate that forgiveness from God could only be granted *after* or *because of* the cross. ^[125]

Ehrman, ^[126] another Christian author, notes that some of the early Christians believed in one God. Some believed in two and others in thirty. "There were some who believed Jesus' death brought about the world's salvation, and others who thought it had nothing to do with it. Others said Jesus never died." ^[127]

The fourth gospel records that the living Messiah – the historical Jesus, had claimed that he was "the way" to approach the God who was in heaven. Some three centuries after his departure, "the way" became or was made "the destination".

THE RESURRECTION OF A 'FALLEN WOMEN'...

In the 6th century, Pope Gregory confused names and Mary Magdalene became a fallen woman. But more interestingly, the entire story of an adulterous woman in the last gospel is found only within the re-written texts. ^[128] The story does not appear in the older manuscripts of the bible. Professor Jane Schaberg of the University of Detroit has coined the term "harlotized" for what was done to the image of Mary. Was this an attempt by the Church to uphold the theory that Jesus was celibate because he could not have possibly married an adulterous woman? On the other hand, even the canonical gospels record that Mary Magdalene never left the place of Crucifixion while all the disciples fled from the scene leaving Jesus alone. Mary was the first one to see, hear and respond, the "awakened" Jesus.

THE ASCENSION OF JESUS TO HEAVEN!

After comparing the ancient fourth century handwritten texts of the Four Gospels, discovered in the middle of the nineteenth century at Mount Sinai with the present day gospel texts that are in circulation, one can easily conclude that the recent texts have been re-written. Most importantly, the stories of the physical ascension of Jesus from earth to heaven were inserted sometime after the fourth century. This was a period in Church history when access to the Bible was forbidden to the laity and only the clergy had that

exclusive privilege. In these circumstances, fingers would most probably point to the Church in Rome as being responsible for the modifications of the gospel texts. A quick question one may ask: Were the original texts modified to raise the status of Jesus and thereby elevate the authority of the Popes in the Vatican, who ultimately became Vicars of the elevated Jesus? Christian theologians of the third century such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen did not quote texts on the Ascension of Jesus, a fact that causes many scholars to believe that the theology of the Ascension was a concept developed later. The apostle Matthew, one of the few eyewitness authors, ended his gospel with the dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. If Matthew had seen or heard of the physical Ascension of Jesus he would not have left out such an important event from his “Good News” of Jesus.

Author Marcus Borg writes in his book *The Heart of Christianity*: “Many people who have left the Church – and some who are still in it – are looking for another way of being Christian.” I would rather say: ...another way of being the disciples of the historical Jesus who said: “If you abide in my word, *then* you are truly disciples of mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

AN ATTEMPT IS MADE IN THIS BOOK TO REDISCOVER THE REALITIES OF
HISTORICAL JESUS IN THE WAY WHICH HE HAD HIMSELF
FORETOLD AND RECOMMENDED...

Knowing the Historical Jesus is to know the Christ...

**Abiding by the words spoken by that Historical Jesus is
the Reliable Way to know The Historical Truth...**

Footnotes:

- [1] Peace and Blessings of God be upon all the Prophets and all the Messengers of God.
- [2] The Anchor Bible – Vol. 29. Doubleday, N.Y., 1966, p. 13-14
- [3] Hundreds of handwritten ancient Scrolls in Hebrew and Aramaic were discovered in 1945 and later, from various caves in the Judean Desert in the vicinity of Dead Sea.
- [4] Ancient handwritten Gnostic Gospels and other texts were unearthed in 1945 and later, from the delta of Upper Egypt.
- [5] Flavius Josephus – a historian of the first century who wrote the history of Jewish people and their religion as the Romans knew them. His works The Jewish Antiquities and The Jewish Wars are often quoted as a source outside the New Testament.
- [6] Christology is a term for the theological doctrines by which one discovers the nature of Christ.
- [7] Hamid Algar is a Ph.D., from Cambridge and a professor at the University of California since 1965.
- [8] Jesus in the Qur'an, Islamic Publications International, P.O. Box 705, Oneonta, NY. 13820. ISBN 1-889999-09-1. pp. 45-46.
- [9] The abbreviations after the names of the prophets are for the Arabic phrases, sending the God's Blessings to those individuals.
- [10] Language spoken by Jesus.
- [11] Codex Sinaiticus, an ancient Greek manuscript of the New Testament discovered in the 19th century and purchased by the British Government in 1933 from USSR for Stg. Pounds 100,000. To learn what has been deleted and added to it, within the KJV Bible, recommended reading; Secrets of Mount Sinai by James Bentley, Orbis Publishing Ltd, London 1985 ISBN 0-85613-528-3.
- [12] Codex Vaticanus is considered to be of "inestimable value in establishing the true text of the Bible. But the Vatican authorities simply refused to let anyone see it." The Secrets of Mount Sinai, pg. 41
- [13] Ibid, pg. 5.
- [14] Secrets of Mount Sinai, pg. 137
- [15] Thurman L. Coss, Secrets from the Caves, Abingdon Press, New York and Nashville, pg. 19.
- [16] James H. Charlesworth, Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Doubleday, New York, ISBN 0-385-47844-5, pg. xxxii.
- [17] Secrets from the Caves, pg. 19.
- [18] Elaine Pagels, Beyond Belief, Random House, New York, ISBN 0-375-50156-8, pg. 97
- [19] The Arabic term translates "Spirit of Purity" and that is the epitaph for angel Gabriel in the Qur'an.
- [20] The translations and commentaries reproduced in this book are from the works of the well known translators Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Dr. Muhammad Asad or M. M. Pickthall. The figures "13: 38" indicate: chapter 13; verse 38. In only a few chapters the verses are numbered slightly different.

- [21] The Globe And Mail, (Daily Newspaper) Toronto, Canada, December 3, 2003, Review Section, pg. R1
- [22] The Vancouver Sun, (Daily Newspaper) Vancouver, Canada, December 5, 2003, Science & Health Section, pg. A14.
- [23] Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls, pg. xvii
- [24] Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls, pg. xxxiii–xxxiv.
- [25] Ibid, pg. xxxv.
- [26] Ibid, pg. 25-26.
- [27] This is an author published publication from Burnaby, B.C., Canada. 1989. ISBN 0-9693571-1-7
- [28] In the earlier part of the ‘Genesis’ Abraham and Sarah were called Abram and Sarai.
- [29] Professor Myers of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, has been a professor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary and a contributor to Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible.
- [30] Doubleday & Co., Inc., New York (1966), pg. 26
- [31] In 1925-31 about 20,000 tablets of social laws were found from a site called Nuzi (modern name Yorghhan Tepe), near Kirkuk, Iraq.
- [32] Moabites and Ammonites the descendants of Lot’s sons were not allowed to enter the assembly of the Lord for ten generations.
- [33] Random House, New York, 1979, ISBN 0-394-50278-7
- [34] The Mysteries of Jesus, by Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood, Sakina Books, Oxford. UK ISBN 0953805662 pp. 172-173
- [35] The Gospel of Thomas – The Hidden Sayings of Jesus translated by Marvin Meyer, Harper San Francisco, ISBN 0-06-065581-X. pg. 23.
- [36] The Nag Hammadi Library General Editor, James M. Robinson, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, ISBN 0-06-066929-2, ‘Introduction’. p. 1.
- [37] ‘Beyond Belief’, Random House, N.Y. ISBN 0375501568 p.97.
- [38] The Hebrew/Greek Key Study Bible, King James Version, New Revised and Updated 6th Edition, Compiled and edited by Dr. Spiros Zodhiates, Th. D., and his team of bible scholars, World Bible Publishers, Inc., June 1991. ISBN 0-89957-653-2. pg. 1229.
- [39] The ‘Ten Commandments’ are listed in Deuteronomy 6: 4 – 6.
- [40] New Revised Standard Version of Bible, World Bible Publishers, Inc., Iowa Falls, Iowa, USA, 1990. ISBN 0-529-06905-9. pg. 1676
- [41] The Mysteries of Jesus pp. 121-122
- [42] Author has made reference to Prof. Burton Mack’s 1993 work.
- [43] Origen (d. 254 CE) was the head of the Catechetical school of Alexandria from 203 to 231. A well known biblical critic and exegete.
- [44] The Ecclesiastic History, Eusebius, VI, XXV, pg. 3-7.
- [45] Dr. James Bentley, Secrets of Mount Sinai, pp 141-142
- [46] The Catholic Study Bible, New American Bible, General Editor Donald Senior, C.P., S.T.D., Oxford University Press, Inc., New York, NY. 1991. ISBN 9-19-528389-9. Pp. 67-68.
- [47] Matthew 4: 23
- [48] During his Ministry Jesus often called himself ‘the Son of Man’.
- [49] Qur’an 8: 30.
- [50] The text of Mark 1:1 ends with: “the Son of God.”

- [51] Dr. James Bentley, *Secrets of Mount Sinai* 1985.
- [52] The source; *The Secrets of Mount Sinai* by Dr. James Bentley.
- [53] The source; *Ibid*.
- [54] *The Catholic Study Bible*, a revised edition published by the Oxford University Press in 1990. ISBN 0-19-528389-9
- [55] *Discovering Islam*, pg. 24
- [56] The word “Apocryphon” derived from the Greek word apokruphos simply means “hidden” or kept secret by the Church. Some of the books included in the Roman Catholic canon are considered as such by the Protestant Church and are not included in their bible.
- [57] “550 days” after Resurrection translates into “510 days” after the ‘Day of Ascension’ to heaven.
- [58] Not to be confused with apostle James who was brother of John and son of Zabedee.
- [59] Director of the Institute for the Study of Judeo Christian Origins at California State University, Long Beach and a consultant for the Huntington Library in its struggle to free [all] the Scrolls [to public].
- [60] 6th New Revised and Updated Edition, *Key Study Bible*, King James Version. Pg. 1528
- [61] *Beyond Belief* pg. 97
- [62] *Ibid* pg. 98
- [63] The quoted text is from a secret letter written in Hebrew by James and addressed to an early Christian heterodox teacher named Cerinthus. The letter was meant for only a few selected disciples. The text of the entire letter appears in *The Nag Hammadi Library – English translation*, pg. 29ff.
- [64] Reported in the ‘*TIME*’ magazine, Canadian Edition of December 22, 2003. Marcus Borg is the author of *The Heart of Christianity*.
- [65] *Jesus in the Qur’an* by Hamid Algar, pg. 2.
- [66] The various translations and the Arabic word used for this term and its meaning, appear in the later chapter.
- [67] The translations and the commentaries appear little later.
- [68] Asma Gull Hasan, *American Muslims – The New Generation*, 2000, The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, New York, N.Y. 10017. ISBN 0-8264-1279-3. Pg. 58
- [69] The Sin of associating any other entity with Allah or sharing Allah’s Glory with others.
- [70] The chapter number 19.
- [71] The biblical name of Imran is Amram who was from the tribe of Levi. Here the term is used in a collective sense, much as is that of Israel in the bible. It means “From the House of Imran.”
- [72] Imran was the father of Moses (Musa) and Aaron (Haroon). Moses was the prophet and Aaron was the High Priest. It is a biblical belief that all the future High Priest would from the house of Aaron. The phrase “woman of Imran” refers to the mother of Mary called Hannah or Anna.
- [73] The Arabic term translates “Spirit of Purity” and that is the epitaph for angel Gabriel in the Qur’an.

- [74] The term “Gospel” is a reference to the “Good News of the Kingdom of God” that Jesus had preached and neither ‘The New Testament’ nor the Church edited narrations and texts.
- [75] Edited by James H. Charlesworth, a publication of The Anchor Bible Reference Library, published by Doubleday, New York, NY., ISBN 0-385-47844-5 pp. 281-282
- [76] Lk. 23: 26
- [77] The tomb was approximately; 7’ High, 5’ Wide and 15’ Deep.
- [78] This indicates that the wounds were probably well treated with the herbs and spices by Joseph and Nicodemus, who knew the art of body healing, to be left exposed and felt by hands.
- [79] The Gospel of Mary Magdala, Published by Polebridge Press, P. O. Box 6144, Santa Rosa, California, 95406. 2003 ISBN 0-944344-58-5. Chapter 4.
- [80] Jesus in the Qur’an. pg. 30.
- [81] The author took her honors degree as a theologian at Hull University, UK in 1963. She has been the Head of Religious Studies at various schools in England.
- [82] The Mysteries of Jesus, Sakina Books, Oxford ISBN 0953805662. pp. 170-172.
- [83] The Mysteries of Jesus, Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood, pg. 190.
- [84] Under the heading ‘Cross’.
- [85] In verse 5: 110, the Qur’an reveals that Jesus was strengthened with the “Holy Spirit” (meaning by the archangel Gabriel).
- [86] In verse 3: 45 of the Qur’an, Jesus is called al-Masih (meaning, the Anointed one, the Christ).
- [87] The nailing to the cross was an act of bruising the physical body. It pleased the God because that act was to be the corner stone of exalting the status of Jesus and his mother were being taunted by the Jews of Jerusalem. The glory of Jesus came about after the event of “nailing”.
- [88] The gospel accounts confirm that Jesus was in agony and cried out aloud to his God from the cross.
- [89] Mustafa is the concise term used for Muhammad the Mustafa.
- [90] In the Qur’an, the angel Gabriel is called ruhul quddus.
- [91] Qur’an 16: 102
- [92] James was the half brother of Jesus.
- [93] August 11, 2003. This interesting four page article was written by David Van Biema. pp. 38-41
- [94] Jane Schaberg, is a professor of religion and women’s studies at Michigan’s University of Detroit Mercy
- [95] The translated text of verse 19: 57 reads: “And We raised him to a lofty station”, and no translator claims that this prophet – Idris, was physically raised up to heaven with his physical body.
- [96] The reference is to the voluminous commentary by Mufti Muhammad Abduh of Egypt.
- [97] One of the names of the prophet Muhammad.
- [98] The text of verse 94: 4, reads; “And [have We not] raised thee in high dignity?”
- [99] ‘Oxford Dictionary of Current English’ 3rd edition
- [100] Catholic Study Bible pg. 429
- [101] The Nag Hammadi Library pg. 138.

- [102] The Gnostic Gospels, Random House, New York, NY, pg. XV.
- [103] The Nag Hammadi Library pg. 138.
- [104] New Revised Standard Version published in 1990, pg. 1938
- [105] Published by Harper & Row, ISBN 0-06-066929-2.
- [106] The Gospel is introduced and translated by George W. MacRae and R. McL. Wilson, Edited by Douglas M. Parrott. The Nag Hammadi Library in English, pg.471.
- [107] The Gospel of Mary Magdala, Published by Polebridge Press, P. O. Box 6144, Santa Rosa, California, 95406. 2003 ISBN 0-944344-58-5.
- [108] Karen L. King is the Winn Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Harvard University in the Divinity School.
- [109] The Gospel of Mary of Magdala pg. 7
- [110] The Nag Hammadi Library in English, pg. 471.
- [111] Ibid pg. 471. The first of the four tractates found in the Berlin Gnostic Codex.
- [112] ibid pg. 472
- [113] Ibid pp. 473-474.
- [114] <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~lbianco/project/home.html>
- [115] <http://www.mos.org/leonardo/bio.html>
- [116] Nag Hammadi Library, English pg. 131
- [117] Ibid pg. 148
- [118] Lk. 5: 24 and 9: 22.
- [119] The late Abdullah Yusuf Ali belonged to the community of the Mustealiyyan Shiah Ismaili Muslim (commonly known as the Bohras). Their last Imam has gone into an extended occultation. The followers are anxiously waiting for their last Imam's "Second Coming", just as the followers of the Christ are waiting for Jesus.
- [120] Qur'an 5: 46
- [121] Qur'an 13: 38
- [122] Dr. James H. Charlesworth of the Princeton University, New Jersey. Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls, 1991. Doubleday, New York. pg.7
- [123] Matthew 27: 25
- [124] Tom Harpur was an ordained Anglican priest for seventeen years, the religious editor for The Toronto Star for twelve years, the professor of New Testament. He has authored dozen or so books on Christianity.
- [125] For Christ's Sake Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1986 pg. 75,
- [126] Ehrman chairs the religious-studies department at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.
- [127] Lost Christianity. Text copied from 'TIME', Dec. 22. 2003.
- [128] Verses 8: 1 to 11 of the John's Gospel do not appear in the ancient manuscripts.