

From Saul to Paul

From Bondage to Freedom

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Who is weak, and I not weak? Who is offended and I grieve not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. . . . And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

(II Corinthians 11:29-30, 12:7-9)

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Addenda

The path of duty is the way of life

He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. (I Corinthians 7:32-33)

A steady, purposeful determination is required to successfully pull off the unmarried way of life. This we see in Paul. Others such as Peter, were married but not so Paul, who found it expedient, as an itinerant representative of the Gospel, to forgo having a family, that he might do justice by his role in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Self-abnegation as an end in itself wouldn't make good sense, for who in their right mind would deny themselves a lawful, legitimate pleasure? Yet Paul was not pleasure deprived, for he was animated by the joy of the Lord. Moreover, as a practical matter, his work, involving peril and finally death, rendered him incapable of doing justice by family responsibilities. Another, of like spirit as Paul, namely, Francis of Assisi built snow men and declared them to be his family. G. K. Chesterton aptly characterized Francis as one who "was tempted by nothing wilder than wedding bells."

Generally speaking, monasticism and asceticism were not biblical Jewish practices. True, there was the Nazirite vow, but this was just for a season; also, Elijah's School of the Prophets, which seems to have had a developed, communal system. It is not that a contemplative community was incompatible *per se* with Jewish tradition, just that it was not customary. And yet at least two of Mary and Joseph's sons, Jesus and James, and one of their cousins, John the Baptist, were ascetics.

It is hardly necessary to postulate that Jesus needed any outside source or family influences to do what he did. Nevertheless, it is beyond uncanny the extent to which his doctrines mirrored those found amongst the Buddhists, such that on first arriving in the Orient, Christian missionaries were astounded by the similarities. They exclaimed: "Buddhism is the Christianity of the East!" Inasmuch as Buddhism long pre-dated Christianity, they might more aptly have exclaimed: Christianity was the Buddhism of the West.

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

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

Buddha: "If you do not tend one another, then who is there to tend to you? Whoever would tend me, he should tend

the sick." (*Vinaya, Mahavagga 8:26:3*)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(*Dhammapada*)

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

Jesus came to fulfill the Law and Buddha, though not born under the Law, also fulfilled the Law. This he did through enlightenment, doing by nature the things the Law requires. By the same token, whether Jesus was personally acquainted with the Buddha's Four Noble Truths, or consciously applied them, yet, he fulfilled them, too. In recognition of a universal faith principle, Paul wrote:

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

(*I Corinthians 7:19*)

As for Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, it appears to be essentially Buddhist. The commandment "love thy neighbor as thyself," is *Leviticus 19:18*, but until Jesus came along, it was Buddha who did the most to flesh it out with specifics. Said Buddha:

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

Reasonably one might ask when and how would Jesus, a Jew, have been exposed to Buddhism? Since the *New Testament* gives us little clue about the 17 years, the so-called "hidden years" when Jesus was between the age of 13 and 29, ample room for speculation exists. As one legend has it, Jesus spent those years in Tibet. Frankly, it's not a story to which I lend much credence.

Another legend, one of a persistent nature and backed by interesting detail, is that Joseph of Arimathea was a merchant who dealt in tin. (According to one account, the Romans conferred on Joseph the title '*Nobilis Decurio*' or Minister of Mines to the Roman Government.) And it is further said that on one occasion Joseph took with him his little nephew, Jesus, on a buying expedition to Cornwall, England. If such a trip occurred, who knows what might have transpired or what influences Jesus might have exposed to?

But if Jesus did not go to Tibet or meet with Druids in England, perhaps India came

to him in the form of a Buddhist missionary. After all, Nazareth, being just four miles from Sepphoris, the Galilee's most cosmopolitan Greek city, could have provided a point of contact. Another possibility, when Joseph and Mary scooped up their son and fled from Herod, they went to Egypt's closest, big city, Alexandria. Possibly 'twas there on the Nile's diluvial plain that they first made contact with the Therapeutae and possibly there found succor in their community.

THE THERAPUTAE

Thanks to Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, whose book, titled: *The Contemplative Life* (*De Vita Contemplativa*), has survived time's vicissitudes, we have an excellent, first-hand account of the Therapeutae. (From this name our words "therapy" or "therapeutic" are derived). Extracts therefrom follow:

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

And they depart, not to another city as those do who entreat to be purchased from those who at present possess them, . . . but they take up their abode outside of walls, or gardens, or solitary lands, seeking for a desert place, not because of any ill-natured misanthropy to which they have learnt to devote themselves, but because of the associations with people of wholly dissimilar dispositions to which they would otherwise be compelled, and which they know to be unprofitable and mischievous. Now this class of persons may be met with in many places, for it was fitting that both Greece and the country of the barbarians should partake of whatever is perfectly good; and there is the greatest number of such men in Egypt, in every one of the districts, or nomes as they are called, and especially around Alexandria; and from all quarters those who are the best of these therapeutae proceed on their pilgrimage to some most suitable place as if it were their country, which is beyond the Mareotic lake, lying in a somewhat level plain a little raised above the rest, being suitable for their purpose by reason of its safety and also of the fine temperature of the air. (para 18-22)

And in every house a sacred shrine exists called the holy place, and chapel in which they retire alone to perform all the mysteries of a holy life, bringing in nothing, neither food, nor drink, nor anything else to sustain the physical body, but they study there the laws and the sacred oracles delivered by God's holy prophets,

and hymns, and psalms, and like matters by reason of which knowledge and piety are increased and brought to perfection. Therefore they always retain an imperishable recollection of God, so that not even in their dreams is any other object ever presented to their eyes except the beauty of the divine virtues and of the divine powers. . . . Twice every day, at morning and at evening they pray; when the sun is rising entreating God that the happiness of the coming day may be real happiness, so that their minds may be filled with heavenly light, and when the sun is setting they pray that their soul, being entirely lightened and relieved of the burden of the outward senses, and of the appropriate object of these outward senses, may be able to trace out truth existing in its own consistory and council chamber. (para. 25-27)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the *Book of Acts*, the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem had “all things in common.” How very alike they were to the semi-monastic Therapeutae in Alexandria:

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

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

One of history's little ironies is that Philo's Jewish brethren have paid him scant attention over the centuries, this despite his having been one of Judaism's premier philosophers but Christians, confused over the sequence of events, entertained the notion that Philo and the Theraputae were Nazarenes and so preserved for posterity much of Philo's voluminous writings. Eusebius was of this opinion and so was Jerome, who even included Philo among the Church Fathers! Theirs was an understandable misapprehension but in truth, Philo's writing predate the rise of the Nazarene movement, for just as the Old Testament is a precursor to the New, so also were the Theraputae precursors to the Nazarenes.

If ever we find something wisely said by the pagans, we should not scorn it with the name of the author

... but as the apostle says, "Test all things, holding fast what is good." (Origen, *Homily on Exodus*)

The cultural attainments of Israel's mighty neighbors, Egypt, Persia, and Greece in turn tempted and repelled. What was of Truth in their cultures and to be accepted? And what was of idolatry and to be rejected? Either way, let it be observed that biblical Judaism did not simply fall from the sky as some might suppose (or fervently wish), for there is overwhelming evidence of judicious borrowings.

From its inception, Israel has drawn inspiration from a multiplicity of sources: Moses, for instance, came of age in the courts of the Pharaoh where he became conversant with the learning and wisdom of Egypt. Later on, fleeing to the wilderness, he was refreshed by the Midianites, particularly Jethro, the Midianite priest, who became his father-in-law. Exposure to primitive, tribal religion infused Judaism with a kind of hybrid vigor.

Later, Greek ideas and modes of expression also left an imprint on the biblical rec-

ord, especially on the *New Testament* but elsewhere as well. Many scholars think, for instance, that the complete absence of Jewish features in *Job* may be because its origin wasn't Jewish at all but Greek. None of this, if true, detracts from its value. Nor does it negate the existence of direct revelation.

The Holy Land is where East meets West and where Oriental mysticism and Occidental logic combine. Only blind parochialism could keep us from seeing the reality of this, that the Israelite commonwealth was no cultural backwater. As John Henry Newman put it:

She began in Chaldea, and then sojourned among the Canaanites, and went down into Egypt, and thence passed into Arabia, till she rested in her own land. Next she encountered the merchants of Tyre, and the wisdom of the country, and the luxury of Sheba. Then she was carried away to Babylon, and wandered to the schools of Greece. And wherever she went, in trouble or in triumph, still she was a living spirit, the mind and the voice of the Most High; "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions"; claiming to herself what they said rightly, correcting their errors, supplying their defects, completing their beginnings, expanding their surmises, and thus gradually by means of them enlarging the range and refining the sense of her own teaching. So far, then, from her creed being of doubtful credit because it resembles foreign theologies, we even hold that one special way in which Providence has imparted divine knowledge to us has been by enabling her to draw and collect it together out of the world and, in this sense, as in others, to "suck the milk of the Gentiles and to suck the breast of kings."

C. S. Lewis came to the same general conclusion:

To a human mind this working-up (in a sense imperfectly), this sublimation (incomplete) of human material, seems, no doubt, an untidy and leaky vehicle. We might have expected, we may think we should have preferred, an unrefracted light giving us ultimate truth in systematic form – something we could have tabulated and memorized and relied on like the multiplication table. One can respect, and at moments envy, both the Fundamentalist's view of the Bible and the Roman Catholic's view of the Church. But there is one argument which we should beware of using for either position: God must have done what is best, this is best, therefore God has done this. For we are mortals and do not know what is best for us, and it is dangerous to prescribe what God must have done – especially when we cannot, for the life of us, see that He has after all done it.

(Reflections on the Psalms)

Obliquely, Philo makes reference to the “writings of men of old who were the founders [of the Thraputae],” yet without identifying who they were or from whence they hailed. Possibly he didn’t know. Fortunately, sources both ancient and modern exist to whom we can turn to assist us in making the identification. According to Zacharias P. Thundy, a linguist, the word “Theraputae,” is derived from the Buddhist term “*Thera-vada*,” a form of Buddhism currently practiced throughout Southeast Asia.

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

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

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

It is acknowledged, historical fact that the Nazarene Faith quickly spread from the Holy Land southwest to Egypt and from there further south to Ethiopia; northward to Syria and eastward to Persia and beyond, even as far as India; also to Greece and Italy, even reaching as far as England and this before the close of the 1st century.

Few, however, seem to have a clue how this amazing spread could have occurred. It was not exclusively, or even primarily, Paul’s doing. Paul was active in Asia minor and Greece, yet this was a worldwide phenomenon occurring within the boundaries of the Roman Empire and far beyond its boundaries.

The thesis advanced here is that in God’s providence, the ground had been prepared ahead of time by Mandaean, Buddhists, Stoics, Druids, Zoroastrians, and others.

Not just the ground which had been prepared in advance. Beginning with John the Baptist, the seed of Jesus' teaching had been sown in advance, in part due to worthy contributions made by Gentile seekers of Truth, Wisdom, and Light.

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

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

Between the language of the Buddha and his disciples, and the language of Christ and his apostles, there are strange coincidences. Even some Buddhist legends and parables sound as if taken from the New Testament, though we know that many of them existed before the beginning of the Christian era. We may go back even farther into antiquity, and still find strange coincidences between the legends of India and the legends of the West, without as yet being able to say how they traveled, whether from East to West, or from West to East. That at the time of Solomon there was a channel of communication open between India and Syria and Palestine is established beyond doubt, I believe, by certain Sanskrit words which occur in the Bible as names of articles of export from Ophir, articles such as ivory, apes, peacocks, and sandalwood, which, taken together, could not have been exported from any country but India.

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

While biblical Judaism is rich in revelation, Buddhism is rich in contemplation. Bringing the two together: Jewish prophecy / Buddhist sensibility is simply divine. A further consideration: one of Jesus' designations was "the Wisdom of God." In this he was not unlike the Buddha who was also noted for his wisdom. As Buddha said:

To him who has finished the path and passed beyond sorrow, who has freed himself on every side, and thrown away all fetters, there is no more fever of grief. . . . Such an one remains like the broad earth unvexed; like the pillar of the city gate, unmoved; like a pellucid lake, unruffled. . . . Tranquil is the mind, tranquil the words and the deeds, of him who is thus set at rest and made free by wisdom. . . . The heart, scrupulously avoiding all idle dissipation, diligently applying itself to the holy law of Buddha, letting go all lust, and consequent disappointment, fixed and unchangeable, enters on Nirvana.

THE MANDAean CONNECTION

The Nazarene movement began, not with Jesus, but with John. Unique in all the world, it was a religious movement whose founder from the get-go confessed that he was a placeholder for someone else, whose identity he didn't know:

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

As we see from his words above, John's primary purpose in baptism was that the Messiah might be revealed and, in that it was a "baptism of repentance," his purpose was that the people might be spiritually prepared to receive their Messiah. As he said:

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

Well before making this pronouncement, well before becoming "a voice in the wilderness," John himself underwent a long period of preparation. As the *Nazarene Gospel Narrative* relates:

And as soon as he [John] had come of age, he went into the desert and dwelled there until the Holy Ghost commanded him to go and preach the coming of Jesus Christ. ... he went into the desert until he was thirty years old. (chaps. 2, 7)

It is reasonable to infer that John the Baptist spent no less than 10 to 12 years in the wilderness and maybe much more depending on how the expression "had come of age" is interpreted. Since an Essene community is thought by many to have been situated on the Dead Sea, it's widely assumed that John, if not fully associated with

them, must at least have been in contact with them. So strong runs this assumption that it's not uncommon to see him termed in some circles as "John the Essene."

Yet, somehow, none of this quite computes. The Essenes, because of their rigorous purification laws, lived a highly structured existence, necessitating their creating a closed society isolated not only from Gentiles but from other Jews as well. Also, they were highly nationalistic and believed in predestination. Left unexplained is how a free-wheeling John the Baptist would have accepted, much less been accepted in, a rigid, sectarian environment where devotees were all conformed, not only as to doctrine, but down to dress and manners, as well, for:

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

Does that mean by default that John's only option was that of living as an isolated hermit? Not necessarily, for others than Essenes existed in the Judean wilderness with whom he might have fellowshiped. At the very time of John's wilderness sojourn, a little-mentioned group, not even Jewish, were residing along Jordan's banks. Could possibly this group, called "Mandaean" (an Aramaic word meaning "knowledge"), have had contact with John?

Is it possible that this obscure group played a crucial role in the development of the nascent Nazarene movement? It would seem that they did. Daily baptizers, they lived in stark simplicity. Of a morning, the turbaned, white-robed, Mandaean holy men awaited the rising sun; then, when it burst forth, they descended into the water. Who were they? Buddhists? Zoroastrians? Ganges River bathers? some mixture of these? or something else altogether? At this late date it's hard to say. Anthropologists think they originated in Persia. As did the Jews of Jesus' day, they spoke the *lingua franca* of the Middle East, that being Aramaic.

To this day this sect continues to exist (though just barely on account of the mayhem created by Jew-dominated America) in southern Iraq on the Euphrates, eking out a modest living as simple farmers, while practicing their age-old rites. In their ancient Scriptures, the *Ginza Rba*, that is, in the *Book of Souls*, are found surprising parallels with *John's Gospel* and the *Gospel of Thomas*, particularly in distinguishing light from darkness; also, references to living water, the true vine, and like themes.

Evidently the Mandaeans and John the Baptist hit it off quite well for there is a highly favorable recollection of John in the Mandaean's Scriptures. One can hardly imagine that any of this went down too well with Pharisaical traditionalists who thought ill of outsiders associating with Jews or Jews associating with outsiders.

Who, then, were the Mandaeans? Wise men from the East. Does this not ring a bell? Who were "the three kings" (NGN)? Wise men from the East who knew how to read the stars, who were among the first to herald the newborn Messiah.

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

*In the name of the Life!
I rose up from the Jordan
And I met a group of souls,
A group of souls I met,
who surrounded our father Shitil
Saying to him
"By thy life, our father Shitil,
Go with us to the Jordan."
"If I go with you to the Jordan
Who will be your witness?"
"Lo, Sun hath risen above us;
He will be our witness!"
"It is not he whom I seek,*

Not he whom my soul desireth.
 The sun of which ye spake,
 Riseth early, setteth at dusk.
 The sun of which ye spake,
 the sun Is vanity and cometh to an end.
 Sun cometh to an end and becometh vanity
 And his worshippers come to an end and are vanity."
 I rose up from the Jordan
 And a group of souls I met,
 A group I met of souls
 Who surrounded our father Shitil,
 Saying to him,
 "By thy life, our father Shitil,
 Go with us to the Jordan!"
 "If I go with you to the Jordan,
 Who will be your witness?"
 "Lo, Moon who shineth above us,
 He will be our witness!"
 "It is not he whom I seek,
 Not he whom my soul desireth.
 The moon, of whom ye spake,
 Riseth at dusk and setteth at dawn.
 The moon of which ye spake,
 the moon is vanity and cometh to an end
 And his worshippers come to an end and are vanity."
 I rose up from the Jordan
 And a group of souls I met,
 A group I met of souls
 Who surrounded our father Shitil,
 Saying to him,
 "By thy life, our father Shitil,
 Go with us to the Jordan!"
 "If I go with you to the Jordan
 Who will be your witness?"
 "Lo, there burns a fire.
 It will bear witness for us."
 "That is not what I seek,

Not that which my soul desireth.
 the fire of which ye spake
 Once a day needs a firebrand.
 The fire of which ye spake –
 Fire, is vanity and cometh to naught
 And its worshippers come to naught and are vanity."
 I rose up from the Jordan
 And a group of souls I met,
 I met a group of souls
 Who surrounded our father Shitil,
 Saying to him,
 "By thy life, our father Shitil,
 Go with us to the Jordan!"
 "If I go with you to the Jordan,
 Who will be your witness?"
 "The Jordan and its two banks
 Will bear witness for us;
 Pihta, kushta and mambuha
 Will bear witness for us;
 Habshaba, (Sunday) and Kana-d-Zidqa
 Will bear witness for us;
 The sanctuary in which we worship
 Will bear witness for us;
 The alms that is in our laps
 Will bear witness for us;
 And our father who is our head
 Will bear witness for us."
 "This is that which I seek,
 This is that which my soul desireth!
 When I rise to the House of Life
 And travel to the Everlasting Abode,
 When Life questioneth me, (these) witnesses
 Will come and will bear witness.
 Witnesses of the truth are they,
 Sure is all that they say!"
 And Life is victorious!

(Ginza Rba, chapter 21)

SAID THICH NANH HANH:

**WE DON'T WANT TO SAY THAT BUDDHISM IS A KIND OF CHRISTIANITY AND
CHRISTIANITY IS A KIND OF BUDDHISM. A MANGO CANNOT BE AN ORANGE.
I CANNOT ACCEPT THE FACT THAT A MANGO IS AN ORANGE. THEY ARE TWO
DIFFERENT THINGS.**

WE HAVE TO PRESERVE THE DIFFERENCES. VIVA LA DIFFERENCE.

**BUT WHEN YOU LOOK DEEPLY INTO THE MANGO AND INTO THE ORANGE,
YOU SEE THAT ALTHOUGH THEY ARE DIFFERENT, THEY ARE BOTH FRUITS.
IF YOU ANALYZE THE MANGO AND THE ORANGE DEEPLY ENOUGH,
YOU WILL SEE THE SAME ELEMENTS ARE IN BOTH, LIKE THE SUNSHINE,
THE CLOUDS, THE SUGAR, AND THE ACID, ... THE ONLY DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THEM LIES IN THE DEGREE OF EMPHASIS.**

**AT FIRST YOU SEE THE DIFFERENCES ... BUT IF YOU LOOK A LITTLE DEEPER,
YOU DISCOVER MANY THINGS IN COMMON.**

**BUDDHA AND JESUS ARE TWO BROTHERS WHO HAVE TO HELP
EACH OTHER ... NOT FOR THE SAKE OF BUDDHISM, NOT FOR
THE SAKE OF CHRISTIANITY, BUT FOR THE SAKE OF HUMANKIND
AND FOR THE SAKE OF OTHER SPECIES ON EARTH.**

(GOING HOME: JESUS AND BUDDHA AS BROTHERS)

Gnosis (knowledge) / *Epignosis* (higher, spiritual knowledge)

"We cannot but speak of the things which we have *seen* and *heard*." (Acts 4:20)

At one time there were, indeed, real eyewitnesses and real ear-witnesses, to whom Jesus said:

"... and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

These days the term 'witness' is often bandied about rather loosely. When one hears of "witnessing for Jesus," usually what is meant is the giving ones personal testimony, such as, "The Lord has washed me off all my sins." While such declarations at times seem credible, at other times they are best taken with a grain of salt. In Greek, the word "witness" is "martyr," and martyrdom, we know, is serious business. But personal witness aside, the issue here has to do with a witness to Jesus, the historical person.

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made
known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,
but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. . . .
[for] We have also a more sure word of prophecy [i.e., prophetic witness];
whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, . . .

(II Peter 1:16-19)

Jesus' followers *saw*, they *heard*, they *read*. What they saw were mighty deeds; what they heard were wise teachings; which deeds and which words, they sought to relate to the prophetic Scriptures. Since the Gospel record purports to be about real events, not "cunningly devised fables," we should hold it to that standard as we work to arrive at a settled opinion regarding it.

As a principle of biblical interpretation, we're often advised that when we find the literal meaning, we should seek no other meaning. In other words, why spiritualize, why allegorize? Yes, we need to honor the meaning of words used according to their normal signification. But it need not be an either/or proposition. We benefit from both facts *and* their spiritual interpretation, both *gnosis* and *epignosis*. Credible observational data, merits passing through various mental filters, as we ponder their implications and applications.

It only makes sense, given that none of us are either eye-witnesses or ear-witnesses, to give the Gospel accounts a critical read. Does the conviction steel over us that this is the real deal and not just someone's overactive imagination? What could possibly have induced Jesus' disciples to noisily all over Jerusalem their report that he was risen, that he was risen, indeed, if he wasn't? If in our integrity we can say, yes, that these are historic accounts worthy of belief, then we are more likely to come into the good of the Good News, after which our witness is more likely to be received as credible by others.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me [Paul] also, as of one born out of due time. (I Corinthians 1-8)

Paul above invites us to start with historical knowledge (*gnosis*) but then, below, he goes on to consider the spiritual implications (*epignosis*):

But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. (I Corinthians 15:13-26)

SELECT EXAMPLES OF PAUL'S USE OF *GNOSSIS*

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and *knowledge* of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33)

Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. (I Corinthians 8:1)

For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Howbeit there is not in every man that *knowledge*: . . . (I Corinthians 8:5-7)

For if any man see thee which hast *knowledge* sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy *knowledge* shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend. (I Corinthians 8:10-13)

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all *knowledge*; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. . . . Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be *knowledge*, it shall vanish away. (I Corinthians 13:2-8)

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by *knowledge*, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. (II Corinthians 6:4-10)

. . . the love of Christ which passeth *knowledge* (Ephesians 3:19)

. . . the excellency of the *knowledge* of Christ (Phillipians 3:8)

. . . to the acknowledgment [*epignosis*] of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and *knowledge*. (Colossians 2:2-3)

Epignosis

- A. The noun *epignosis* comes from the *ginosko* word group:
 1. *Ginosko* (γινωσκω) (verb), "to know personally, intimately and experientially."
 2. *Gnosis* (γνῶσις) (noun), "knowledge that is the intelligent comprehension but is not personal and experiential."
 3. *Epignosis* (ἐπιγνῶσις) (noun), "intimate, personal, experiential knowledge."
 4. *Epiginosko* (ἐπιγινωσκω) (verb), "to perceive."
- B. Liddel and Scott (page 627):
 1. Recognition
 2. Determination of a fact
 3. Knowledge
 4. Decision
- C. Richard Chenevix Trench notes, "In comparing *epignosis* with *gnosis*, the *epi* must be regarded as an intensive use of a preposition that gives the compound word a greater strength than the simple word alone possesses" (*Synonyms of the New Testament*, page 300).
- D. Quoting Culverwell, he writes, "*Epignosis* and *gnosis* differ. *Epignosis* is the complete comprehension after the first knowledge (*gnosin*) of a matter. It is bringing me better acquainted with a thing I knew before; a more exact viewing of an object that I saw before afar off. That little portion of knowledge which we had here shall be much improved, our eye shall be raised to see the things more strongly and clearly" (*Synonyms of the New Testament*, page 300).
- E. He goes on to say on the same page, "All Paul's uses of *epignosis* justify and bear out this distinction. This same intensive use of *epignosis* is confirmed by similar passages in the New Testament and in the Septuagint. It also was recognized by the Greek fathers. Thus Chrysostom stated: 'You knew (*egnōte*), but it is necessary to know thoroughly (*epignōnai*).'"
- F. J.B. Lightfoot commenting on *epignosis*, notes, "The compound *epignosis* is an advance upon *gnosis*, denoting a larger and more thorough knowledge...Hence also *epignosis* is used especially of the knowledge of God and of Christ, as being the perfection of knowledge" (*St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, page 138).
- G. The verb *epiginosko* appears 46 times in the NT and the noun *epignosis* is found 21 times.
- H. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, "*epignosis*, akin to A, No. 3, denotes "exact or full knowledge, discernment, recognition," and is a strengthened form of No. 1, expressing a fuller or a full "knowledge," a greater participation by the "knower" in the object "known," thus more powerfully influencing him. It is not found in the Gospels and Acts. Paul uses it 15 times (16 if (Heb. 10:26) is included) out of the 20 occurrences; Peter 4 times, all in his 2nd Epistle. Contrast (Rom. 1:28) (*epignosis*) with the simple verb in (v. 21). "In all the four Epistles of the first Roman captivity it is an element in the Apostle's opening prayer for his correspondents' well-being, (Phil. 1:9; Eph. 1:17; Col. 1:9; Philem. 6)" (Lightfoot). It is used with reference to God in (Rom. 1:28; 10:2; Eph. 1:17; Col. 1:10; 2 Pet. 1:3); God and Christ, (2 Pet. 1:2); Christ, (Eph. 4:13; 2 Pet. 1:8; 2:20); the will of the Lord, (Col. 1:9); every good thing, (Philem. 6), RV (KJV, "acknowledging"); the truth, (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25), RV; (3:7; Titus 1:1), RV; the mystery of God. (Col. 2:2), RV, "(that they) may know" (KJV, "to the acknowledgment of"), lit., "into a full knowledge." It is used without the mention of an object in (Phil. 1:9; Col. 3:10), RV, "(renewed) unto knowledge."
- I. Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, volume 2:
 1. To possess more or less definite information about, possibly with a degree of thoroughness or competence – 'to know about, to know definitely about, knowledge about' (page 334).
 2. The content of what is known – 'knowledge, what is known' (page 336).
- J. The Analytical Greek-Lexicon Revised (page 155):
 1. The coming at the knowledge of a thing, ascertainment
 2. A distinct perception or impression, acknowledgement
- K. The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon (page 237):
 1. Precise and correct knowledge
 2. Knowledge of things ethical and divine
 3. Of God, especially knowledge of His holy will and of the blessings which He has bestowed and constantly bestows on men through Christ
 4. Of Christ, i.e., the true knowledge of Christ's nature, dignity, benefits

5. Of God and Christ, i.e., to keep the knowledge of the one true God which has illumined the soul
- L. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, page 291:
 1. Knowledge, recognition
 2. Knowledge of God
 3. Knowledge of God and Christ
 4. Renewed in knowledge
 5. Real knowledge
- M. Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, volume 2, page 25:
 1. Knowledge as recognition of the will of God that is effective in the conduct of the one who knows God
 2. Christian faith
- N. *Epignosis* has 2 basic meaning in the Greek New Testament:
 1. Acknowledge, acknowledgement
 2. Experiential knowledge (of God and Christ).
- O. The following is a list of passages in which the word is used.
 1. Ro. 1:28, "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge (*epignosis*) God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper."
 2. Ro. 3:20, "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the acknowledgement (*epignosis*) of sin."
 3. Ro. 10:2, "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*)."
 4. Eph. 1:17, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a lifestyle of wisdom and of revelation by means of an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of Him."
 5. Eph. 4:13, "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of the Son of God into a mature man into the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ."
 6. Philippians 1:9, "Now, this I make it a habit to pray that your divine-love might continue to flourish yet more and more by means of a total discerning experiential knowledge (*epignosis*)."
 7. Col. 1:9-10, "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the accurate knowledge of God."
 8. Col. 2:2, "that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together by means of divine-love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself."
 9. Col. 3:10, "and have put on the new self, the one being renewed for an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) according to the image of the One who created him."
 10. 1 Tim. 2:4, "who desires all men to be saved and to come to an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of the truth."
 11. 2 Ti. 2:25, "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them a change of mind leading to an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of the truth."
 12. 2 Ti. 3:7, "always learning and never able to come to an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of the truth."
 13. Tit. 1:1, "Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of the truth which is according to spirituality."
 14. Phm. 1:6, "and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake."
 15. Heb. 10:26, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins."
 16. 2 Pe. 1:2-3, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you by means of an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of God even Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and spirituality, through an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of the One having called us by His own glory and excellence."
 17. 2 Pe. 1:8, "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful with respect to an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of our Lord Jesus Christ."

18. 2 Pe. 2:20, “For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by an experiential knowledge (*epignosis*) of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.”

- P. Therefore, with the exception Romans 1:28 and 3:20, the noun *epignosis* means “experiential knowledge.”
- Q. It is used many different adjuncts such as God, Christ, divine-love, truth, divine assets and provisions and the will of God.
- R. To experience means, “to personally encounter, observe or undergo something through a process, to have knowledge or practical wisdom gained from what one has observed, encountered or undergone,” and implies being affected by what one meets.
- S. Thus, in Ephesians 1:7 and 2 Peter 1:3, *epignosis* means an “experiential knowledge” of the Father in the sense of personally encountering through the process of experiential sanctification the Father as He is revealed in the pages of Scripture and prayer by God the Holy Spirit and being affected by this encounter with the Father resulting in the gaining of practical spiritual wisdom and more of the character of Christ.
- T. In Colossians 1:9 *epignosis* means an “experiential knowledge” of the Father’s will in the sense of personally encountering through the process of experiential sanctification the Father’s will as it is revealed by the Holy Spirit in the pages of Scripture and prayer and being affected by this encounter with the Father’s will resulting in the gaining of practical spiritual wisdom and more of the character of Christ.
- U. In 1 Timothy 2:4, 25; 2 Timothy 3:7; Titus 1:1 and Hebrews 10:26, the noun *epignosis* means an “experiential knowledge” of Word of Truth, which is the mind of Christ in the sense of personally encountering through the process of experiential sanctification the mind of Christ as it is revealed by the Holy Spirit in the pages of Scripture and prayer and being affected by this encounter with the mind of Christ resulting in the gaining of practical spiritual wisdom and more of the character of Christ.
- V. In Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 2:2; 3:10 and 2 Peter 1:2, 8; 2:20 the noun *epignosis* means an “experiential knowledge” of the Lord Jesus Christ in the sense of personally encountering Him through the process of experiential sanctification as He is revealed by the Holy Spirit in the pages of Scripture and prayer and being affected by this encounter with the Lord resulting in the gaining of practical spiritual wisdom and more of the character of Christ.
- W. In Philemon 1:6, the noun *epignosis* means an “experiential knowledge” of every good thing in the sense of personally encountering through the process of experiential sanctification the divine assets and provisions given to the believer by the Father as they are revealed by the Holy Spirit in the pages of Scripture and prayer and being affected by this encounter resulting in the gaining of practical spiritual wisdom and more of the character of Christ.
- X. In Philippians 1:9, the noun *epignosis* means an “experiential knowledge” of Christ’s love in the sense of personally encountering through the process of experiential sanctification the love of Christ as it is revealed by the Holy Spirit in the pages of Scripture and prayer and being affected by this encounter with the love of Christ resulting in the gaining of practical spiritual wisdom and more of the character of Christ.

Triumphalism, the church militant

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

Among those branded as heretics, was the Church's mother, the Nazarenes! What the Roman emperors wanted was an organization to unify their empire religiously to motivate their subjects to be disciplined soldiers, willing to fight their wars. What the Church wanted was an exclusive franchise, self-consciously fashioning itself to get it.

During the 1st century BC, a cult of Mithra made much progress in Rome after enduring persecution, when some Emperors adopted the religion. . . . The worship of Mithra was first recognized by Emperor Aurelian and he instituted the cult of "*Sol Invictus*" or the Invincible Sun. Emperor Diocletian also [was] a worshiper of Mithra, . . . Emperor Constantine . . . declared himself a Christian but at the same time maintained his ties to the Mithra cult. He retained the title "Pontifus Maximus" the high priest. On his coins were inscribed: "*Sol Invicto comiti*" which means, committed to the invincible sun. This new blend of the two faiths, he officially proclaimed as Christianity. In 313 A.D., Emperor Constantine declared December 25th to be the birthday of Jesus (December 25th was prescribed earlier as the birthday of Mithra, by emperor Aurelian). Sabbath day, which is literally Saturday (as the Jews still maintain), became Sunday as it was the day of the Sun, another element from the Mithra worship. (www.geocities.com/raqta24/christ.htm)

On its face, with few tangible assets, the Nazarenes were not an inviting target. It took some serious reworking of Nazarene doctrine, which mirrored those of Buddha, to get it to more resemble the stern, austere teachings of a hierarchical, male-dominated, ancient mystery cult of Mithra but it had to happen if the Church was to keep its rendezvous with destiny, that of becoming a powerful, world religion under Rome's aegis.

For instance, not the Nazarenes' love feast but Mithraism's sacramental meal, with a round sun wafer placed on the tongue by a priest, became the Church's Eucharist. As well, enter into the equation such enticements as buildings, rituals and entertainments and it worked! Mithraism, once the Empire's most influential cults, the one most favored by legionaries and emperors alike, by the 5th century AD had disappeared entirely, absorbed into the Church, while the Church replaced all other religions.

Meanwhile, synchronism became a matter of State policy. Local deities were transmuted into Christian saints, even as Christian saints took on the attributes of local deities; temples became churches, even as churches carried out rites suitable to pagan temples, with Christian priests therein transformed into magicians. Thus did Rome attempt to blur the distinction between Church membership and Roman citizenship.

Before Rome was ever on the scene or could gather in its hands the reins of power, already a false leadership principle had been introduced, at least in certain locales. For instance, in 107 AD (thereabouts, authorities differ), Ignatius, Antioch's celebrated bishop, was led captive to Rome, in the course of which journey, he is credited with having written seven letters to seven churches. Actually, amongst scholars there is a question whether he really *did* write the letters attributed to him. Anyhow, it's long been believed that Ignatius wrote:

It is well to reverence both God and the bishop. . . . He who honors the bishop has been honored by God; and he who does anything without the bishop does [in reality] serve the devil. . . . It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord himself.

While Ignatius' courage is not at question, the wisdom and propriety of his advice, as quoted above, is, for it amounts to a poison pill, which, if swallowed, all but guarantees first authoritarianism, then, ultimately, subjugation. Clearly Ignatius (or, if not he, then whoever forged the above statements) was well down the slippery slope of false assumption of authority. History offers many an object lesson as to where it all ends. But first, let us consider how it begins. It begins with a falling away from apostolic principles by those be they leaders or followers who would rather take their guidance from men whom they could see, than from God whom they could not see. The Nazarenes could not have been subverted so easily had they stuck to their core principles, which some did, but from which many apostatized.

Those willing to settle for State subjugation generally shrink from freedom, preferring regimentation instead, while finding safety in numbers, but remember this, hierarchy begets hierarchy, with one usurpation leading to – and justifying – another, for once individual autonomy is violated, then the collegiality of the eldership can be breached.

Top down organizations rely on imposed uniformity, not spiritual unity. This then is the progression: an eldership assumes an unjust authority over its flock setting the stage for the next power play, when an elder of elders assumes an unjust authority

over the other elders. Then, once a monarchical bishop has been installed, there arises a bishop of bishops, that is, an archbishop who assumes an unjust authority over a group of communities, thereby terminating community autonomy. But it continues up the line from there until a power pyramid is formed with the capstone in the West being the Pope, who is allegedly:

The vicar of Jesus Christ on earth and the visible head of the Church. (Catechism of Pius X)

Now, therefore, we declare, say, determine and pronounce that for every human creature it is necessarily for salvation to be subject to the authority of the Roman pontiff. (*Unam Sanctam*, 1302) *

In 190 AD, Pope Victor I sought to excommunicate throughout the Roman Empire all those observing Christ's passion at Passover instead of at Easter. Fancy that, apostolic tradition replaced on pain of excommunication, and all for Eastre's sake, a pagan deity! While coerced conformity may satisfy the sectarian imperative to establish group discipline and a unique corporate identity, the more arbitrary the better, to subdue the rational mind, the Spirit requires freedom and so do the spiritually-minded.

The evidence has been gathered, the verdict is in, writ large for all to see: futile wars, broken hopes, dashed dreams, interminable wrangles, pogroms, inquisitions, a violated environment has ruined the testimony of Jesus Christ for millions, if not for billions, worldwide. From this succession of power plays humanity struggles to awaken. Such has been the effect of unleashing a false leadership principle on the world. Nor did this happen entirely because of pressure applied from Rome. Rather, a trusted insider, the second bishop of Antioch, embraced an unworthy concept of theocratic authority, raising high his seat over his fellows. This did not happen at the periphery (nor, so far as we know), at the center, in Jerusalem, but at Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas had ministered a generation before.

By reason of reading Paul anachronistically, through the matrix of later Church development, we miss the fact that Paul was a Nazarene, that his purpose was to empower people, not subjugate them, whether to himself or to an organization.

In conclusion: despite apparent similarities, which are superficial, the Nazarenes and the Church represent diametrically opposed principles, which is why they ended up as mortal rivals. Meanwhile, the Nazarene Way is as valid today as it ever was and it continues today, as ever, to provide an antidote to Judeo-Christian bellicosity.

OUTREACH

From Jerusalem round about as far as Illyricum I have
fully preached the gospel of Christ. (Romans 15:19)

Adopting a strategic approach, Paul evangelized big cities and let the message flow forth from there into the hinterland. A team player, operating under the authority of the community at Antioch, Paul and Barnabas worked together facing down many challenges and faithfully returned repeatedly to Antioch to give their report.

Paul must have been good at delegating, for he attracted bright, capable co-workers, from whom he got good results, and for whom he was palpably grateful. Adaptable, Paul could work under authority, as well, exercise authority:

Apart from these external things, there is the responsibility that weighs on me every day, my concern
for all our communities. (II Corinthians 2:28)

With prayers and supplication, as a father to his son, Paul concerned himself with the well-being of the communities of Christ he founded, for they were his family:

I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten
thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you
through the gospel. (I Corinthians 4:14-17)

Paul lavished much attention on the crisis-prone community at Corinth and it may well have prospered but a generation later Clement wrote to them, saying:

Take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached? Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you. But that inclination for one above another entailed less guilt upon you, inasmuch as your partialities were then shown towards apostles, already of high reputation, and towards a man whom they had approved. But now reflect who those are that have perverted you, and lessened the renown of your far-famed brotherly love. It is disgraceful, beloved, yea, highly disgraceful, and unworthy of your Christian profession, that such a thing should be heard of as that the most steadfast and ancient Church of the Corinthians should, on account of one or two persons, engage in sedition against its presbyters. And this rumor has reached not only us, but those also who are unconnected with us; so that, through your infatuation, the name of the Lord is blasphemed, while danger is also brought upon yourselves.

Paul's associates

TITUS

Paul formed intense, collegial friendships:

I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence [Troas] into Macedonia. . . . For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; . . .

(II Corinthians 2:13, 7:5-7)

BARNABAS

Over many years, Paul collaborated with Barnabas and much good came of it:

I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas ... And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. ... And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; . . . Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And to this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down: I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up: so that the rest of man-kind may seek the LORD. Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' So says the LORD who made these things known from the beginning of the world. (Galatians 1:18, 2:9, Acts 15)

Paul is often portrayed as the dominant figure of this twosome but that was not necessarily the contemporary perception:

And they called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. (Acts 14:2)

Of course Paul and Barnabas were appalled to be compared with pagan gods but, indicative of the striking impression they made on their pagan auditors, the comparison was made. Note be taken, Jupiter stood above Mercury in the Greek pantheon.

The most theologically significant writing in the New Testament is the Epistle to the

Hebrews. The one thing we can say about it with absolute assurance is that Paul didn't write it and, with somewhat lesser assurance, we can say that Barnabas did. Unless he had a brain transplant, which they weren't doing in Paul's day (and mercifully, not yet in ours), Paul couldn't have written it. It wasn't him, his style, his subject matter, whereas Barnabas, a Levite, would have had the requisite specialized training to speak in detail about the inner-workings of the Temple, such as this Epistle displays.

LUKE THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN

Only Luke is with me. (II Timothy 4:11)

Toward the end, as the "we sections" of Acts attest, it was Luke who was Paul's traveling companion.

Luke of Antioch in Syria, by profession a physician; who, having been a disciple of the Apostles, and having afterward followed Paul until his martyrdom, and having served the Lord continually, without wife and without children, fell asleep at the age of 84 in Boeotia, being full of the Holy Ghost.

(2nd century Latin intro to *Luke's Gospel*)

According to the 11th edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, the apostles "were so absorbed in the expectation of the speedy return of Christ that they did not feel called to make provision for the instruction of subsequent generations." Now that's the bunk! The clear implication is that those whom Jesus instructed in prophecy, his appointed leaders of a messianic movement, were somehow the last to know what the score is. As well, Britannica implied that they going to wing it on a verbal.

No way were the apostles, Paul or an other, so contemptuous of the written word as to have left to others the recording of the greatest story ever told, when the responsibility for committing the Gospel to parchment was entirely their own. In fact, they turned immediately to the task at hand so essential to the accomplishing of their commission, namely, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

It is widely assumed these days that Luke was a Gentile writing to a Gentile audience, a modern idea with no backing in antiquity. I will concede that Luke had a Gentile audience in mind, but only if it is also conceded that he had a Hellenistic Jewish audience in mind. What belies the common belief about Luke's nationality is the finding of scholars that embedded in Luke's *Gospel* to a degree beyond what is found in *Matthew* or *Mark* are numerous Semitic constructions:

Hebraisms proper are special characteristics of Luke. There is reason, therefore, for a closer scrutiny of this evangelist with its wealth of Hebraisms. (Gustav Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*)

For all its good Greek, Lukan style has always been noted for a significant amount of Semitisms.

(Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*)

TIMOTHY

Another close collaborator of Paul's was Timothy. "I have no one like him," said Paul to the Philippians, "who will naturally care for your welfare." As well, he wrote:

I send to you Timothy my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere among the summoned-out people. (I Corinthians 4:17)

Timothy's name appears right next to Paul's as a co-sponsor of five of Paul's letters to four different communities. As well, Timothy is mentioned as having been Paul's representative to the Macedonian communities (Acts 18:, 19:22), as well, to those at Thessalonica (I Thessalonians 3:2), Philippi (Philippians 2:19), Corinth (Romans 16:21), and Ephesus (I Timothy 1:3).

Paul's second letter to Timothy from prison, his farewell discourse, is of the genre called "parenetic," meaning that it contains exhortations of goals to pursue and things from which to refrain or avoid.

SELECT ADVICE OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (II Timothy 1-2)

The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (II Timothy 2:24-26)

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. (II Timothy 3:10-11)

In summation

Having seen the glory of the Lord, Paul was animated by a new dynamic. Though often in trouble and on the run, yet he was filled with joy. With a will and a purpose, he fought the good fight. He finished the course. He kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness, and not just him, but for all who love the Lord's appearing. After giving it his all, Paul said:

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. (II Timothy 4:6)

This essay, which began with Paul's plaintive cry in Romans ch. 7, ends with his exultant cry in Romans ch. 8, that "nothing can separate us from the love of God."

The glorious liberty of the children of God

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8)

The last journey begins

As soon as it was decided that we should sail away to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were put in charge of a centurion named Julius, of the emperor's own regiment. We embarked on a ship hailing from Adramyttium, bound for the Asian ports, and set sail. Among our company was Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. On the following day we put in at Sidon, where Julius treated Paul most considerately by allowing him to visit his friends and accept their hospitality. From Sidon we put to sea again and sailed to leeward of Cyprus, since the wind was against us. Then, when we had crossed the gulf that lies off the coasts of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we arrived at Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship bound for Italy and put us aboard her. For several days we beat slowly up to windward and only just succeeded in arriving off Cnidus. Then, since the wind was still blowing against us, we sailed under the lee of Crete, and rounded Cape Salmone. Coasting along with difficulty we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which is the city of Lasea. We had by now lost a great deal of time and sailing had already become dangerous as it was so late in the year.

Paul's warning is disregarded

So Paul warned them, and said, "Men, I can see that this voyage is likely to result in damage and considerable loss — not only to ship and cargo — but even of our lives as well."

But Julius paid more attention to the helmsman and the captain than to Paul's words of warning. Moreover, since the harbor is unsuitable for a ship to winter in, the majority were in favor of setting sail again in the hope of reaching Phoenix and wintering there.

Phoenix is a harbor in Crete, facing southwest and northwest. So, when a moderate breeze sprang up, thinking they had obtained just what they wanted, they weighed anchor, and coasted along, hugging the shores of Crete. But before long a terrific gale, which they called a northeaster, swept down upon us from the land. The ship was caught by it and since she could not be brought up into the wind we had to let her fall off and run before it. Then, running under the lee of a small island called Claudia, we managed with some difficulty to secure the ship's boat. After hoisting it aboard they used cables to brace the ship. To add to the difficulties they were afraid all the time of drifting on to the Syrtis banks, so they shortened sail and lay to, drifting. The next day, as we were still at the mercy of the violent storm, they began to throw cargo overboard. On the third day with their own hands they threw the ship's tackle over the side. Then, when for many days there was no glimpse of sun or stars and we were still in the grip of the gale, all hope of our being saved was given up.

Paul's practical courage and faith

Nobody had eaten for some time, when Paul came forward among the men and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not set sail from Crete and suffered this damage and loss. However, now I beg you to keep up your spirits for no one's life is going to be lost, though we shall lose the ship. I know this because last night, the angel of the God to whom I belong, and whom I serve, stood by me and said, 'Have no fear, Paul! You must stand before Caesar. And God, as a mark of his favor towards you, has granted you the lives of those who are sailing with you.' Take courage then, men, for I believe God, and I am certain that everything will happen exactly as I have been told. But we shall have to run the ship ashore on some island."

At last we near land

On the fourteenth night of the storm, as we were drifting in the Adriatic, about midnight the sailors sensed that we were nearing land. Indeed, when they sounded they found twenty fathoms, and then after sailing on only a little way they sounded again and found fifteen. So, for fear that we might be hurled on the rocks, they threw out four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. The sailors wanted to desert the ship and they got as far as letting down a boat into the sea, pretending that they were going to run out anchors from the bow. But Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay aboard the ship there is no hope of your being saved." At this the soldiers cut the ropes of the boat and let her fall away.

Paul's sturdy commonsense

Then while everyone waited for the day to break Paul urged them to take some food, saying, "For a fortnight now you've had no food — you haven't had a bite while you've been on watch. Now take some food, I beg of you — you need it for your own well-being, for not a hair of anyone's head will be lost."

When he had said this he took some bread and, after thanking God before them all, he broke it and began to eat. This raised everybody's spirits and they began to take food themselves. There were about two hundred and seventy-six of us all told aboard that ship. When they had eaten enough they lightened the ship by throwing the grain over the side.

Land at last — but we lose the ship

When daylight came no one recognized the land. But they made out a bay with a sandy shore where they planned to beach the ship if they could. So they cut away the anchors and left them in the sea, and at the same time cut the ropes which held the steering-oars. Then they hoisted the foresail to catch the wind and made for the beach. But they struck a shoal and the ship ran aground. The bow stuck fast, while the stern began to break up under the strain. The soldiers' plan had been to kill the prisoners in case any of them

should try to swim to shore and escape. But the centurion, in his desire to save Paul, put a stop to this, and gave orders that all those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, while the rest should follow, some on planks and other on the wreckage of the ship. So it came true that everyone reached the shore in safety.

A small incident establishes Paul's reputation

After our escape we discovered that the island was called Melita. The natives treated us with uncommon kindness. Because of the driving rain and cold they lit a fire and made us all welcome. Then when Paul had collected a large bundle of sticks and was about to put it on the fire, a viper driven out by the heat fastened itself on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand they said to each other, "This man is obviously a murderer. He has escaped from the sea but justice will not let him live." But Paul shook off the viper into the fire without suffering any ill effect. Naturally they expected him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing untoward happen to him, they changed their minds and kept saying he was a god.

Paul's acts of healing: the islanders' gratitude

In that part of the island were estates belonging to the governor, whose name was Publius. This man welcomed us and entertained us most kindly for three days. Now it happened that Publius' father was lying ill with fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and after prayer laid his hands on him and healed him. After that all the other sick people on the island came forward and were cured. Consequently they loaded us with presents, and when the time came for us to sail they provided us with everything we needed.

Spring returns and we resume our journey

It was no less than three months later that we set sail in an Alexandrian ship which had wintered in the island, a ship that had the heavenly twins as her figurehead. We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days, and from there we tacked round to Rhegium. A day later the south wind sprang up and we sailed to Puteoli, reaching it in only two days. There we found some of the brothers and they begged us to stay a week with them, and so we finally came to Rome.

A Christian welcome awaits us in the capital

The brothers there had heard about us and came out from the city to meet us, as far as the Market of Appius and the Three Taverns. When Paul saw them he thanked God and his spirits rose.

When we reached Rome Paul was given permission to live alone with the soldier who was guarding him.

Paul explains himself frankly to the Jews in Rome

Three days later Paul invited the leading Jews to meet him, and when they arrived he spoke to them, "Men and brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our forefathers, I was handed over to the Romans as a prisoner in Jerusalem. They examined me and were prepared to release me, since they found me guilty of nothing deserving the death penalty. But the attacks of the Jews there forced me to appeal to Caesar — not that I had any charge to make against my own nation. But it is because of this accusation of the Jews that I have asked to see you and talk matters over with you. In actual fact it is on account of the hope of Israel that I am here in chains."

But they replied, "We have received no letters about you from Judea, nor have any of the brothers who have arrived here said anything, officially or unofficially, against you. We want to hear you state your views, although as far as this sect is concerned we do know that serious objections have been raised to it everywhere."

Paul's earnest and prolonged effort to win his own people for Christ

When they had arranged a day for him they came to his lodging in great numbers.

From morning till evening he explained the kingdom of God to them, giving his personal testimony, trying to persuade them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. As a result several of them were won over by his words, but others would not believe. When they could not reach any agreement among themselves and began to go away, Paul added as a parting shot,

"how rightly did the Holy Spirit speak to your forefathers through the prophet Isaiah when he said, 'Go to the people and say, Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you will see, and not perceive; for the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their heart and turn, so that I should heal them.'

"Let it be plainly understood then that this salvation of our God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they at least will listen to it!"

The last glimpse of Paul . . .

So Paul stayed for two full years in his own rented apartment welcoming all who came to see him. He proclaimed to them all the kingdom of God and gave them the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ with the utmost freedom and without hindrance from anyone. (Acts 27-28, J. B. Phillips translation)

Addenda

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God's Zionism OR man's?

There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. (Romans 11:26-27)

Paul above is quoting Isaiah 59:20 (see also Psalm 14:7). It is what observant Jews both before and since have believed, as well, what devout Christians have believed, that is, until recently, when man's Zionism overwhelmed both Judaism and Christianity. But before getting into that, let us first become better acquainted with God's Zionism. Said Jesus, quoting Zechariah 9:9 (see also Isaiah 62:11):

Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass,
and a colt the foal of an ass. (Matthew 21:5)

God's Zionism is about a man who delivers God's people from their sins and, as well, redeems His land and restores fallen Jerusalem:

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of Jehovah, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of Jehovah, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Jehovah hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast labored: but they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise Jehovah; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him,

and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken. (Isaiah 62:1-10)

Meanwhile, man's Zionism has nothing to do with God's; rather, it is an usurpation. It is about violently seizing God's holy hill, Mt. Zion, and, thereafter, playing King of the mountain as a way to increase status and prestige, while establishing a place from which to rule the world.

Are modern-day Israelis even descended from the Israelites of old? Strong evidence exists suggesting otherwise. According to Shlomo Sand, a history professor of Tel Aviv University:

Then there is the question of the exile of 70 AD. There has been no real research into this turning point in Jewish history, the cause of the diaspora. And for a simple reason: the Romans never exiled any nation from anywhere on the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean. Apart from enslaved prisoners, the population of Judea continued to live on in their lands, even after the destruction of second temple. Some converted to Christianity in the 4th century, while the majority embraced Islam during the 7th century Arab conquest.

Most Zionist thinkers were aware of this: Yitzhak Ben Zvi, later President of Israel, and David Ben Gurion, its first prime minister, accepted it as late as 1929, the year of the great Palestinian revolt. Both stated on several occasions that the peasants of Palestine were the descendants of the inhabitants of ancient Judea. Yitzhak Ben Zvi, the second president of the State of Israel, wrote in 1929 that "the vast majority of the peasant farmers do not have their origins in the Arab Conquerors, but rather, before then, in the Jewish farmers who were numerous and a majority in the building of the land."

But if there was no exile after 70 AD, where did all the Jews who have populated the Mediterranean since antiquity come from? The smokescreen of national historiography hides an astonishing reality. From the Maccabean revolt of the mid-2nd century BC to the Bar Kokhba revolt of the 2nd century AD, Judaism was the most actively proselytizing religion. . .

The most significant mass conversion occurred in the 8th century, in the massive Khazar kingdom between the Black and Caspian seas.

If those currently ruling the Promised Land, namely, the Ashkenazi, are not racially Semitic, but Asiatic, the offspring of a Turkish Khazar tribe, then they are not blood-related to Abraham. But are they religiously Abrahamic? Most Israeli Jews, indeed,

the vast majority, are non-observant and, in fact, are non-believers. So what of the rest? Mostly they are Talmudic. That is to say, they have substituted the Mishnah, the Oral Law, so-called, for the Written Law. This is not the religion of Abraham. Yet these fraudsters come to the Promised Land claiming the Law of Return, when they were never there in the first place, and say to the inhabitants thereof: "your land is our land, now get out!"

Meanwhile, gullible American Protestants actually believe it; they actually believe that it is their place "to bless the Jew," that is to say, the Ashkenazis, Gentile interlopers, by supporting their claim to the Promised Land. In so doing, they make themselves doubly Abraham's foes!

It is not just fundamentalist Protestants who have fallen for the Big Lie, which is political Zionism. Normative Judaism is in the same boat. Said Rabbi Henry Siegman, former head of two of America's major, establishment Jewish organizations: the American Jewish Congress and the Synagogue Council of America:

For many American Jews, and I suspect, for most American Jews, Israel has become the content of their Jewish religious identification and has very little other content. I rarely have been at a *Shabbat* service where the rabbi gives a sermon, where Israel isn't the subject of the sermon. And typically the sermons are not in the spirit of an Isaiah, who says, My God is this what God wants from you, your hands are bloody, they are full of blood.

ASHKENAZI INTERLOPERS GENOCIDING ABRAHAM'S CHILDREN

Irradiation of 100,000 Sefardi Jewish Children, Barry Chamish 0/17/05 – abridged

On August 14, at 9 PM, Israeli television station, Channel Ten, broke all convention and exposed the ugliest secret of Israel's Labor Zionist founders; the deliberate mass radiation poisoning of nearly all Sephardi youths. Every Sephardi child was to be given 35,000 times the maximum dose of x-rays through his head. For doing so, the American government paid the Israeli government 300,000 Israeli liras a year. The entire Health budget was 60,000 liras. The money paid by the Americans is equivalent to billions of dollars today.

To fool the parents of the victims, the children were taken away on "school trips" and their parents were later told the x-rays were a treatment for the scourge of scalpal ringworm. 6,000 of the children died shortly after their doses were given, the many of the rest developed cancers that killed them over time and are still killing them now. While living, the victims suffered from disorders such as epilepsy, amnesia, Alzheimer's disease, chronic headaches and psychosis.

Yes, that is the subject of the documentary in cold terms. It is another matter to see the victims on the screen. ie. To watch the Moroccan lady describe what getting 35,000 times the dose of allowable x-rays in her head feels like. "I screamed make the headache go away. Make the headache go away. Make the headache go away. But it never went away."

To watch the bearded man walk hunched down the street. "I'm in my fifties and everyone thinks I'm in my seventies. I have to stoop when I walk so I won't fall over. They took my youth away with those x-rays."

To watch the old lady who administered the doses to thousands of children. "They brought them in lines. First their heads were shaved and smeared in burning gel. Then a ball was put between their legs and the children were ordered not to drop it, so they wouldn't move.

The children weren't protected over the rest of their bodies. There were no lead vests for them. I was told I was doing good by helping to remove ringworm. If I knew what dangers the children were facing, I would never have cooperated. Never!"

Because the whole body was exposed to the rays, the genetic makeup of the children was often altered, affecting the next generation. We watch the woman with the distorted face explain, "All three of my children have the same cancers my family suffered. Are you going to tell me that's a coincidence?"

Everyone notices that Sephardi women in their fifties today, often have sparse patchy hair, which they try to cover with henna. Most of us assumed it was just a characteristic of Sephardi women. We watch the woman on the screen wearing a baseball-style hat. She places a picture of a lovely young teenager with flowing black hair opposite the lens. "That was me before my treatment. Now look at me." She removes her hat. Even the red henna can't cover the horrifying scarred bald spots.

The majority of the victims were Moroccan because they were the most numerous of the Sephardi immigrants. The generation that was poisoned became the country's perpetual poor and criminal class. It didn't make sense. The Moroccans who fled to France became prosperous and highly educated. The common explanation was that France got the rich, thus smart ones. The real explanation is that every French Moroccan child didn't have his brain cells fried with gamma rays.

The film made it perfectly plain that this operation was no accident. The dangers of x-rays had been known for over forty years. We read the official guidelines for x-ray treatment in 1952.

The maximum dose to be given a child in Israel was .5 rad. There was no mistake made. The children were deliberately poisoned. David Deri, makes the point that only Sephardi children received the x-rays.

"I was in class and the men came to take us on a tour. They asked our names. The Ashkenazi children were told to return to their seats. The dark children were put on the bus."

The film now quotes two noted anti-Sephardi racist Jewish leaders, Nahum Goldmann and Levi Eshkol. Goldmann spent the Holocaust years first in Switzerland, where he made sure few Jewish refugees were given shelter, then flew to New York to become head of the World Jewish Congress headed by Samuel Bronfman. According to Canadian writer Mordecai Richler, Bronfman had cut a deal with Prime Minister Mackenzie King to prevent the immigration of European Jews to Canada.

The Moroccan lady is back on the screen. "It was a Holocaust, a Sephardi Holocaust. And what I want to know is why no one stood up to stop it."

David Deri, on film and then as a panel member, relates the frustration he encountered when trying to find his childhood medical records. "All I wanted to know was what they did to me.

I wanted to know who authorized it. I wanted to trace the chain of command. But the Health Ministry told me my records were missing." Boaz Lev, the Health Ministry's spokesman chimes in, "Almost all the records were burned in a fire."

Here was the government cabinet at the time of the ringworm atrocities:

Prime Minister - David Ben Gurion

Finance Minister - Eliezer Kaplan

Settlement Minister - Levi Eshkol

Foreign Minister - Moshe Sharrett

Health Minister - Yosef Burg

Labor Minister - Golda Meir

Police Minister - Amos Ben Gurion

The highest ranking non-cabinet post belonged to the Director General Of The Defence Ministry, Shimon Peres.

That a program involving the equivalent of billions of dollars of American government funds should be unknown to the Prime Minister of cash-strapped Israel is ridiculous. Ben Gurion was in on the horrors and undoubtedly chose his son to be Police Minister in case anyone interfered with them.

~ "ZIONISM IS NOT JUDAISM" ~

Rabbi Ahron Cohen, an address he delivered at Birmingham University, England 02/26/2003

As you have already been told, I am an orthodox Jew (that is a Jew who endeavors to live his life completely in accordance with the Jewish religion). I am involved in ecclesiastical duties within the Jewish Community and am particularly involved in educating our youth and in helping them to achieve healthy and correct attitudes. It is therefore of particular interest to me to be able to talk to you, a student body, today.

I have been asked to talk to you about Judaism and Zionism. This subject is of course tremendously relevant in the light of the current situation in Palestine, where you have - let's face it - one side, the Zionists (who are also Jews), wishing to impose a 'sectarian' State over the heads of an indigenous population, the Palestinians. A confrontation which has resulted in horrific bloodshed and brutality with no end in sight unless there is a very radical change.

My qualification to talk on this subject is by virtue of my being one of many orthodox Jews who absolutely sympathize with the Palestinian cause, and we protest vehemently against the terrible wrongs being perpetrated against the Palestinian People by the Zionist illegitimate regime in Palestine. . . .

Let me firstly state quite categorically that Judaism and Zionism are incompatible. They are diametrically opposed. The question must surely arise in the minds of many of you here today that there appears to be a paradox. After all everyone knows that Zionists are Jews and that Zionism is for the benefit of Jews. The Palestinians are the enemies of the Zionists. How come then that I, a Jew, can sympathize with the Palestinian cause?

I would like to try to answer this question and to revert to the subject of my talk - Judaism and Zionism - on two levels, religious belief and humanitarianism. Bearing in mind that to be humanitarian is also a basic religious requirement. Firstly from a Jewish religious belief point of view. One has to take a look at some aspects of the history of the Jewish people and at their basic belief in the Al-mighty's control of our destiny and what the Al-mighty wants of us. All as set out in our Religious teachings, our Torah, and as taught to us through the generations by our great religious leaders. Against this we also have to look at the history of

Zionism, how it developed, what are its aims. Our religion is for us a total way of life. Showing us how to live a life in the service of the Al-mighty. It affects every aspect of our life from the cradle to the grave. We are taught that it was revealed to us by Divine Revelation, as described in the Bible, some three and a half thousand years ago, and that is when the Jewish People came in to being. All of our religious requirements, practical and philosophical, are set out in the Torah which comprises the Bible (the old testament) and a vast code of Oral Teaching handed down to us through the generations.

As mentioned, our religion is a total way of life covering every aspect of our life. One area of our religion is that subject to certain conditions is that we will be given a land, the Holy Land, now known as Palestine, in which to live and carry out various parts of our service of the Al-mighty. Now, before I go any further, I wish to point out something which is very basic to understanding the difference between Judaism and Zionism and that is that the orthodox Jewish concept of nationhood is very different to the concept of nationhood held by most peoples. Most peoples understand a nation to be a specific people living in a specific land. The land is essential for the identity of the nation. They may or may not have a religion, but the religion is immaterial to the national identity. The orthodox Jewish concept of nationhood however, is a specific people with a specific religion. It is the religion that establishes the national identity. They may or may not have a land, the land is immaterial to the Jewish national identity. This is borne out by the fact that the Jewish nation has been without a land for 2000 years, but as long as they retained their religion they retained their identity.

Now I mentioned earlier that we were given a land but under certain conditions. The conditions were basically that we had to maintain the highest of moral, ethical and religious standards. The Jewish People did have the land for approximately the first one thousand five hundred years of their existence. However, regretfully, the conditions were not fulfilled to the required degree and the Jews were exiled from their land. For the last two thousand years or so the Jewish people have been in a state of exile decreed by the Al-mighty because they did not maintain the standards expected of them. This state of exile is the situation that exists right up to the present day. It is a basic part of our belief to accept willingly the Heavenly decree of exile and not to try and fight against it or to end it by our own hands. To do so would constitute a rebellion against the wishes of the Al-mighty. In practical terms, although we have maintained our Jewish identity by virtue of our attachment to our religion, never the less exile for us means firstly that Jews must be loyal subjects of the countries in which they live and not attempt to rule over the established indigenous populations of those countries.

Secondly, that we may not attempt to set up a State of our own in Palestine. This would apply even if the land would be unoccupied and it certainly applies when, as is the case, there is an existing indigenous population. This prohibition is a basic part of our teaching and we are forsworn not to contravene it and we are warned of the dire consequences of doing so. It follows, therefore, that Jews have no right to rule today in Palestine. . . .

The practical outcome of Zionism in the form of the State known as 'Israel' is completely alien to Judaism and the Jewish Faith. The very name "Israel" which originally meant what are known as the Children of Israel i.e. the Jewish People was usurped by the Zionists. For this reason many orthodox Jews avoid referring to the Zionist State by the name 'Israel'.

The ideology of Zionism is not to rely on divine providence but to take the law into ones own hands and to try to force the outcome in the form of a State. This is completely contrary to the approach to the matter of exile which our Torah requires us to adopt, as handed down to us by our great religious teachers. I have spoken till now from the religious belief point of view. But let us consider the humanitarian point of view (and to do so is also a religious requirement as I mentioned earlier).

The Zionist ideology was and is to force the aim of a State irrespective of the cost in life and property to anyone who stands in the way. The Palestinians stood in the way. We have a fact that in order to achieve an ill conceived nationalistic ambition, a shocking contravention of natural justice was committed by the Zionists in setting up an illegitimate regime in Palestine completely against the wishes of the established population, the Palestinians, which inevitably had to be based on loss of life, killing and stealing.

To sum up. According to the Torah and Jewish faith, the present Palestinian/Arab claim to rule in Palestine is right and just. The Zionist claim is wrong and criminal. Our attitude to Israel is that the whole concept is flawed and illegitimate. We have another problem and that is that the Zionists have made themselves to appear as the representatives and spokes-people of all Jews thus, with their actions, arousing animosity against the Jews.

Those who harbor this animosity are accused of anti-Semitism. However, what has to be made abundantly clear is that Zionism is not Judaism. Zionists cannot speak in the name of Jews. Zionists may have been born as Jews, but to be a Jew also requires adherence to the Jewish belief and religion.

So what becomes abundantly clear is that opposition to Zionism and its crimes does not imply hatred of Jews or 'anti-Semitism'. On the contrary Zionism itself and its deeds are the biggest threat to Jews and Judaism. . . .

The strife between Arab and Jew in Palestine only began when the first Zionist pioneers came to Palestine with the express aim of forming a State over the heads of the indigenous Arab population. That strife has continued until this very day and has cost and continues to cost thousands and thousands of lives.

The oppression, abuse and murder in Palestine is a tragedy not only for the Palestinians but for the Jewish people as well. And is in fact part of the dire consequences of which we are warned if we transgress our religious requirement not to rebel against our exile.

I wish to add that the connection between Muslims and Jews goes right back into ancient history. Mostly the relationship was friendly and mutually beneficial. Historically, the situation frequently was that when Jews were being persecuted in Europe they found refuge in the various Muslim countries. Our attitude to Muslims and Arabs can only be one of friendliness and respect.

I would like to finish with the following words. We want to tell the world, especially our Muslim neighbors, that there is no hatred or animosity between Jew and Muslim. We wish to live together as friends and neighbors as we have done mostly over hundreds even thousands of years in all the Arab countries. It was only the advent of the Zionists and Zionism which upset this age old relationship. We consider the Palestinians as the people with the right to govern in Palestine.

The Zionist State known as "Israel" is a regime that has no right to exist. Its continuing existence is the underlying cause of the strife in Palestine. We pray for a solution to the terrible and tragic impasse that exists. Hopefully based on results brought about by moral, political and economic pressures imposed by the nations of the world. *We pray for an end* to bloodshed and an end to the suffering of all innocent people - Jew and non-Jew alike - worldwide. We are waiting for the annulment of Zionism and the dismantling of the Zionist regime, which will bring about an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people.

We would welcome the opportunity to dwell in peace in the holy land under a rule which is entirely in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the Palestinian People. May we soon merit the time when all mankind will be at peace with each other.

Recruiting an Anglo-speaking, dream-team leadership council

Nafeez Ahmed
Mimi Al-Laham (Syrian Girl)
Robert Alvarez, WA D. C.
Judith Andreas, New York
Kevin Annett, Canada
Jacob Appelbaum, USA
Chuck Baldwin, Montana
Kevin Barrett, Wisconsin
William Binney, USA
Jeff Blankfort, USA
Russell Blaylock, USA
Francis Boyle, USA
Ellen Brown, USA
David Chandler, USA
Helen Caldicott, Australia
Michel Chossudovsky, Ontario
Eustace Conway, North Carolina
James Corbett, Japan
Thomas Drake, USA
Sibel Edmonds, Oregon
Pepe Escobar, Brazil
Daniel Estulin, Spain
Nigel Farage, UK
Ron Finley, California
Jane Goodall, England
Dick Gregory, USA
Arnie Gunderson, USA
Wolfgang Halbig, USA
Dean Henderson, USA
Brian Hooker, USA
Tom Horn, USA
Sheikh Imran Hosein, Indonesia
Michael Hudson, USA
Michio Kaku, Canada
Alan Keyes, Illinois

Annie Machon, UK
Mahatier Mohamad, Malaysia
Manitowish, Massachusetts
Rania Masri,
Ray McGovern, USA
Joseph Mercola, USA
Herman Morris, UK
Peter Myers, Australia
Ralph Nader, USA
Leonard Peltier, US political prisoner
Duke Pesta, USA
James Petras, USA
John Pilger, UK
Sraddhalu Ranade, India
Jon Rappoport, USA
William Rodriguez, USA
Paul Craig Roberts, USA
Alan Sabrosky, USA
Adrian Salbuchi, Argentina
Israel Shamir, Russia
Vandana Shiva, India
Jeffrey Smith, USA
Rob Stewart, USA
Sherri Tenpenny, USA
Josh Tolley, USA
Carey Wedler, USA
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