



JOHN-
THE
ODD MAN

Among
The
Gospel
EVANGELISTS

First Presented to the Sixth Annual
One-God Seminar
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By

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*Error never shows itself in its naked reality,
in order not to be discovered.
On the contrary, it dresses elegantly, so that the unwary may be
led to believe that it is more truthful than truth itself."*
-Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130-200 AD)



FOREWORD

This Paper was presented to the sixth annual One-God Seminar in the Albany, New York area on Friday, June 8, 2007. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I was unable to present the gist or the thrust of my premise, and only a few examples of John's contradictory Gospel, before having to hastily end the presentation on the shortest of notices. Only about half of the time was made available to me that I thought had been allotted for my entire presentation. As a result, I failed to deliver a professional lecture. This, of course, was frustrating. As an inevitable consequence, a number of the attendees misunderstood what I was trying to say. One even suggested that he thought I was rejecting the Gospel of John out of hand, even though I mentioned at least twice within my half-done presentation that that was not my intention at all. I don't blame them, of course—I would have had problems following the presentation myself, given the prevailing unprofessional circumstances. I also made a basic mistake respecting my presentation—I failed to anticipate the amount of passion with which some people, even those of the One-God persuasion, cling emotionally to traditions surrounding the Gospel of John and how much many fear serious criticism of John's writing. I was disappointed with my whole presentation, a later intense discussion, and ultimately, I do believe that in one big sense my time at this convention was unproductive. On the other hand, that substandard trip moved me to edit my paper with this *Foreword* included.

In response to unwarranted fears respecting my wholesale dumping of the Gospel of John, I do want to say that, as a disciple of Yahweh, the Almighty singular (and only true) God of both the Old (**Deut.6:4-5**) and the New (**Mk.12:29-33; Jn.17:3**) Testaments, and as a believer in the divine agency and messiahship of the highly exalted man, the Lord Jesus (Yahshua), I will progress in my studies wherever and as far as I believe I am directed or sent by Yahweh. And if this means that I must excise some parts of the Gospel of John (in particular) as being hostile to Yahweh's teaching (some parts *are* hostile to

Yahweh's teaching), then so be it; that's what I will do without concern for what others may think. I cannot be deterred from my walk with Yahweh.

My purpose in this paper is to examine, interrogate, and analyze John's Gospel, not to discard it. Tradition is a poor reason to accept the Gospel of John (or any other Christian writing, especially when your salvation is at stake), all the while endeavoring to reconcile the contradictory parts by means of artificial and contrived solutions. One point I insist needs to be made and thoroughly understood is this: *the mere fact that one or another portions of a text were added at a later time to this Gospel, does not automatically invalidate that inserted passage or the Gospel as a whole, but does suggest that one should at least question and objectively investigate it.* That makes good sense to me. Any resultant invalidation of a text should only be based upon serious contextual investigation and interrogation. Additionally, imprudent emotional attachment has no residence in scholarly biblical textual analysis. We have to learn to "cut our losses."

Immediately at the end of my aborted presentation, I was not a little surprised and quite taken aback by the following defensive question:

What does all this that you are presenting have to do with the One-God Movement—or with what we are trying to accomplish here?

In my response from the podium, I simply pointed out that the question was addressed within the body of my paper. I then emphasized that the *reason* it was not clearly presented (and therefore known to the questioner) was the fact that I had not been allowed sufficient time to cover this critical point. That seemed to satisfy the man. (I might have said more.) Nevertheless, my considered (and extended) response follows:

If the Gospel of John represents a large part of the very foundation of the preexistence of Jesus concept or the idea that he is a God (and it does), and if we One-God people reject the preexistence of Jesus (and we do), and if the Gospel of John contains some of the most important proof texts of the Trinitarian view (and it does), and if the Gospel of John represents the primary support for the Armstrong Binitarian (Bitheist or Arian) Movement and the idea of the preexistence of Jesus (and it does), then it makes good sense to closely examine the Gospel of John and attempt to ascertain why some of these passages lend themselves to such overt and covert Polytheistic movements, and, further, what prompts otherwise bright people to select certain of these passages as proof texts and ignore a mountain of others that contradict their concept, some even within the same Gospel. If it can be shown that a number of these passages in John's Gospel have been fiddled with or added, certainly, it can only help our One-God cause if someone points this out. We should not hyperventilate over the impression that someone might be "attacking" the Gospel of John or "rejecting" the book we have adoringly accepted for so many years. I do not worship the Bible, but over the years I have discovered that some professing Christians do.

Now if in fact your Bible, the one you use, is so doctrinally fragile, delicate, and easily broken or damaged such that it cannot withstand close scrutiny—if it cannot hold up against scholarly critical analysis, then I submit that you are using a defective Bible;—or that you may be holding your Bible up as a divine god, or deity, in your own eyes. If the Bible is truly “THE Word of God” as many contend, and thus “holy,” sacrosanct, and to be revered, and the word of God (or Scripture) *cannot* be broken (**Jn.10:35**), then why should anyone disallow or fear scholarly critical analysis of the Bible? It makes no sense. Christians especially should welcome objective scholarly analysis. If God’s word (Scripture) cannot be broken, you need have no fear, it won’t be! “Scripture,” however, when used in the New Testament, virtually always refers to Old Testament writings.

I disagree with the claim (by some English-speaking persons) that the Bible IS the “Word of God.” On the other hand, I contend that the word of God can be found within the Bible—and *that* is what believers ought to be searching for; they should not be defending the Bible as untouchable by outside criticism. In response to the claim about the Bible being THE “Word of God,” I ask (and have asked) the advocates of that idea: *Which version of the Bible would you say IS the Word of God? —Would the NIV be that Word, or the KJV, The Message, the Holman Christian Standard Bible, James Murdock’s NT, The Good News Bible, The Bishop’s Bible, or perhaps the New English Bible, or Luther’s German Bible, The Latin Vulgate by Saint Jerome in about 382 AD, or the more recent Cotton-Patch (vernacular) Version of New Testament writings?* And if you suggest, rather, that the “original” manuscripts represent THE word of God, be advised that there are NO originals extant today; no, not one. One person at the seminar suggested that because the prologue was contained within his Greek New Testament, he could not believe that it was “added later.” Be advised that there is *no* ONE Greek New Testament that confidently or surely represents the original manuscripts in spite of what Christian apologists may assert. Greek New Testaments are all collections assembled by someone of various copies (eclectic collections) of MSS that date from the 4th century (only 2, *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*), with the vast majority of manuscripts and manuscript fragments being of a *much* later period than this. About that prologue hymn: *having a Greek text with the hymn in there proves nothing; it does not prove that it was always there or that it was not a later addition to John’s Gospel.*

The letters included in the Bible, especially the New Testament, are letters from men generally written prior to the Gospels, and translated over many years by many other men, although the original writings were undoubtedly inspired in some manner by God. To think that God inspired every person’s thoughts and words who set his hand to writing, re-writing, editing, redacting, copying, translating, or interpreting the New Testament especially, infallibly, without error, over a span of some 2,000 years, to me is to live in a wacky dream world—a world where blind faith is the norm. One is supposed to simply

“trust” all those people who fiddled with the NT writings to be honest—I do not. But *that* is the very concept often imposed upon professing Christians by other professing Christians; the faithful are to cling to incongruent or incoherent teachings even in the face of any nagging gut feelings to the contrary. In spite of any illogical, incoherent doctrinal positions taken by the church hierarchy in Trinitarian/Binitarian/Bitheist Polytheistic organizations, people are strongly discouraged from openly voicing their concerns about inconsistencies within these organizations. The code: *It's our way or the highway*. And to cling to these fanciful belief systems, the orthodox or near-orthodox believer has to somehow reconcile contradictory New Testament writings in order to *not* discount *any* of them. It seems that people have to become politically/religiously correct sheep to survive as Christians within some organizations these days.

Indeed, one *cannot* be a Christian it seems, according to authoritarian and legalistic orthodox teachings, unless one accepts, as a point of blind faith and on pain of excommunication, belief in the Triune God. (Some Binitarian/ Bitheist groups employ the same tactic regarding their current twofold Gods.) Yet, it can readily be shown that the nonsensical doctrine of the Triune God was created within the fertile and imaginative minds of the early Roman church and forcefully laid upon the backs of the ignorant faithful, and is truthfully not a product of New Testament documents. Even now, under heavy intimidation of traditional ways, not many professing orthodox Christians dare argue the issue since they are compelled to accept the Triune doctrine. Of course, most professing Christians are woefully ignorant of what the Bible really teaches, anyway.

The New Jerusalem Bible on John: *It is difficult to determine the precise scheme adopted by John for this great theme. In the first place, the arrangement of the Gospel is not always easy to explain: the sequence of ch. 4, 5, 6, 7:1-24 is awkward; ch. 15-17 are placed after the farewell of 14:31; passages like 3:31-36 and 12:44-50 break into their context. The way the Gospel was both written and edited may be responsible for this. It would seem that we have only the end stage of a slow process that has brought together not only component parts of different ages, but also corrections, additions and sometimes even more than one revision of the same discourse. Finally, all this was published not by the eyewitness himself, but by disciples after his death, 21:24. It seems that these disciples had a number of Johannine fragments which they were reluctant to abandon; though uncertain of their place, they worked them into the primitive Gospel... ... It is today freely accepted that the fourth Gospel underwent a complex development before it reached its final form.* # (The New Jerusalem Bible, *Introduction to John*, pp.1739, 1741)

Bart Ehrman: *In no small measure, debates over doctrine are debates over power, and deciding what is "correct" to believe means who can wield that power. ... While these christological issues [various "heretical" views] were under debate, before any one group had established itself as dominant and before the proto-orthodox party had refined its christological views with the*

*nuance that would obtain in the fourth century, the books of the emerging Christian Scriptures were circulating in manuscript form. The texts of these books were by no means inviolable; to the contrary, they were altered with relative ease and alarming frequency. Most of the changes were accidental, the result of scribal ineptitude, carelessness, or fatigue. Others were intentional, and reflect the controversial milieu within which they were produced. # (Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp.274-275)*

The New American Bible: *Modern critical analysis makes it difficult to accept the idea that the gospel [of John] as it now stands was written by one person. John 21 seems to have been added after the gospel was completed; it exhibits a Greek style somewhat different from that of the rest of the work. The prologue (John 1:1-18) was apparently an independent hymn, subsequently adapted to serve as a preface to the gospel. Within the gospel itself there are signs of some disorder, e.g., there are two endings of Jesus' discourse in Last Supper (John 14:31; 18:1). To solve these problems, scholars have proposed various rearrangements that would produce a smoother order. However, more and more students are coming to believe that the inconsistencies were probably produced by subsequent editing in which the homogenous materials were added to a shorter original. ... 1-18: The Prologue is a hymn, formerly poetic in style—perhaps originally an independent composition and only later adapted and edited to serve as an overture to the Gospel. ... The Roman writer Pliny (AD 111) mentions the Christians of Asia Minor as singing hymns to Christ as a god. # (Introduction, p.252, 253; footnote, p.255)*

John R. Donahue: *Throughout his [John R. Brown (1928-1998), an internationally respected New Testament scholar] commentary, examples of this [historical-critical] methodology abound. I mention three here, simply to remind you of the care and caliber of his contribution. • Along with many scholars of his generation, Brown was convinced that the Prologue (John 1:1-18) was originally a Christian hymn, taken over by the redactor and used as a prologue to the Johannine narrative. The background to the use of the logos was primarily Jewish Wisdom speculation, and the two passages dealing with John the Baptist (vv.6-8, 15) were added by the redactor to the original hymn in order to clarify the nature of the relationship between the Baptist and Jesus. # (John R. Donahue, *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown, S.s.*, p.21)*

Interpreter's Commentary: *1:1-18. The Prologue. The Gospel [of John] opens with a hymn that celebrates God's revelation of himself to the world. ... The prologue hymn thus summarizes the themes developed in the gospel... ... The author has inserted in the hymn several prose comments—in modern works they would be footnotes—that anticipate the "witnesses" to God's Word of revelation which he will unfold in his gospel: the testimony of John the Baptist (vv.6-8, 15), ... the belief of the new people of God (vv.12-13), ... [and],*

Jesus the Word himself (v.17). # (The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary of the Bible, Intro of the Messiah, pp.709-710)

Dr. Peder Borgen: *Analyses of the Prologue of John in recent years have concentrated particularly on the question of poetic and prose stylistic forms, and on the question of unity and unevenness in thought, both within the Prologue itself, and the Prologue in relation to the rest of the gospel. As far as form is concerned, several scholars, such as R. Bultmann, E. Kasemann, R. Schnackenburg and R.E. Brown, have suggested that the evangelist has used and supplemented a hymn. Bultmann's analysis of the Prologue has resulted, amongst other things, in the direct reference to John the Baptist, John 1:6 ff, and v.15 being considered a secondary addition, as it is prose, thus not belonging to the original poetic hymn. According to Bultmann, the evangelist as a former disciple of the Baptist added these words about him as a testimony to Jesus, to resolve his problem in leaving the Baptist's sect and becoming a Christian. (JSTOR, Logos was True Light, contributions to the Interpretation of the Prologue of John, Dr. Peder Borgen, Bergen, Norway)*

Elizabeth A. Johnson: *At first, early Christians saw Jesus as a wisdom teacher, speaking sage words in parables, beatitudes, and evocative sayings. More than this, they depicted him as an envoy sent by Wisdom, one of her prophets uttering oracles and laments in the pattern of her speech, and offering consolation and knowledge of the intimate ways of God. He does her deeds, too, so that when Jesus' acts of power enable the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the lepers to be cleansed, Matthew can affirm that 'Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds' (11:19). There is yet more. The identification of Jesus with Holy Wisdom becomes so intense that he himself is perceived as personified Wisdom—indeed, the incarnation of Sophia herself. The prologue to John's Gospel, which more than any other scriptural text influenced subsequent development in Christology, actually presents the pre-history of Jesus in terms lifted right from the story of Sophia: present with God 'in the beginning', an active agent in creating the world, a radiant light that darkness cannot overcome, one who descends from heaven to pitch a tent among the people, rejected by some, but giving life to those who seek (John 1:1-18). Biblical scholarship holds this prologue to be originally an early Christian hymn to Wisdom/Sophia which at its climax identifies her with Jesus the Christ. It is a matter of some dispute why the Gospel's final redactor substituted the symbol of Logos/Word for Sophia/Wisdom in the hymn. At least one reason would seem to lie with the gender issue. # (Elizabeth A. Johnson, The Pastoral Review, July 1999, Jesus, Wisdom and our World, www.thepastoralreview.com)*

Comment: If *none* of the above seven quotes has anything to do with the One-God Movement, or has any impact on the theology of the One-God Movement, I am baffled. I am certainly mystified. I am at a loss to understand

why anyone would think that additions to the Gospel of John, or other manipulations, would not affect the authority of the Gospel of John.
Folks, this is an unfinished work; an incomplete work in progress.

—F. Paul Haney



GREETINGS!



HAD INTENDED to present another topic, but due to the receipt of a certain book, the current subject struck me as being more engaging, and for me, a subject that I have long wanted to expose as being not quite what we have been led to believe it was.

(Unfortunately, I left myself only several days to compose this presentation, so, if it seems a bit incoherent, bear with me as best you can. Don't make me sic my dogs on you.)



By the way, on the way in this morning, I noticed just down the street from here, a large impressive white building with the sign: "HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE." I immediately felt safe. So, I came on in.

For quite some time, I have had a number of lingering doubts about the complete authenticity of *The Gospel According to John* and its substance as many present it. Is it a writing that can be depended upon to convey accurate information about the first-century historic Jesus?

I have believed for a number of years that the 4th Gospel, almost universally attributed to "the apostle" John, simply was not written by him. Nor was it, I later discovered and believe, even written within a reasonable time-frame for it to be his work. If the apostle John (**Matt.10:1-16**) was, say, 30 years old in about 27 AD (around the same age as Christ) when he was sent out to preach, he would have been something like 90 to 104 years old or so at the turn of the century, when the Gospel of John is traditionally thought to have been written (90-150 AD). I have always had a problem with the "old man John" scenario—but perhaps old John was senile. As time went on, my gut kept telling me there was something seriously wrong with the 4th Gospel, but I couldn't put my finger on it. The prologue, of course, is a hymn that was a later addition, so it does not count as helping turn Jesus into a God—besides, nowhere is Jesus directly identified as the preexistent "Word," **John 1:14** notwithstanding.

But the fact that John was not written by John should give us pause. Yet, beyond this, striking contradictions between John's writing (I will, for the sake of convenience, refer to the anonymous Gospel writer as "John") and the Synoptic Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, as well as with historical facts, should make us sit bolt upright. Which are we to believe? Remember also that Trinitarians (who bow before a Triune or three-headed God) and Binitarians (actually, Binitarians are Bitheists) both practice Polytheism at the same time both falsely claim to be practicing Monotheism. You see, the Trinitarian brand of Modern Christianity, as well as the Binitarian brand, posits a single God that is not just multi-faceted, but encompasses multiple personages and persons as well. Contrary to their claims, this is not Monotheism but Pseudo-Monotheism. The practice represents rank Polytheism and veiled Tritheism/Bitheism.

• **That elusive 90 to 99 percent**

Christian apologists and commentators typically suggest (and I have been told) that "90 to 99% of the New Testament is accurate" and that only 1 to 10% has been corrupted to some extent. And they go on to assert that any corruption, real or imagined, has no bearing whatsoever on biblical or church doctrine. This is a common perception and I am hard put to find a legitimate *scholarly* source for these percentages or to verify such an estimate, although I did locate a single source that comes close. There may be others. Unsupported assertions by Christian apologists do not satisfy me. I need verification. One person wrote that **99%** of all the variations in the NT manuscripts are insignificant. That leaves only 1% as significant. Another writes that only 0.5% of the NT words are in question, and further, that these variations are *insignificant*—that they mean nothing. He goes on: *For more than ninety-nine percent of the cases the original text can be reconstructed to a practical certainty.* Notice the *qualification* of the word "certainty"—it is not absolute.

Despite many searches of old and new reference books and the Internet and elsewhere, I have to date, been totally unable to find any scholarly documentation of any suggested 90%—98% of faultlessness or exactness as asserted by any number of Christian apologists. I would surely welcome and publish such *scholarly* documentation. But please do not give me your opinion about the minute amount of corruption and its low impact—I have opinions of my own and need no more, thank you very much. *My search is for facts, not opinions.*

All of the suggested low percentages of corruption I have found and analyzed thus far have come from unsupported opinions or assertions of assorted apologists from various Christian camps.

One more misleading paragraph: *With all of the massive manuscript evidence you would think there would be massive discrepancies—just the opposite is true. New Testament manuscripts agree in **99.5%** of the text. Most of the discrepancies are in spelling and word order. A few words have been*

*changed or added.¹ There are two passages that are disputed but no discrepancy is of any doctrinal significance (i.e., none would alter basic Christian doctrine).² Most Bibles include the options as footnotes when there are discrepancies. How could there be such accuracy over a period of 1,400 years of copying? Two reasons: **(1)** The scribes that did the copying had meticulous methods for checking their copies for errors. **(2)** The Holy Spirit made sure we would have an accurate copy of God's word so we would not be deceived. The Mormons, theological liberals as well as other cults and false religions such as Islam that claim the Bible has been tampered with are completely proven false by the extensive, historical manuscript evidence.³ Note: Number **(1)** is a half-truth. Number **(2)** is only an opinion.*

Finally, in an email debate with proponents of Islam, Christian missionary and apparent apologist Jochen Katz was reported to say: *I readily admit that there are many different variants of readings in the different manuscripts, **95% of which** are copying errors, misspellings, missing a line or doubling a line while copying etc. I am not denying any of this. And I believe that with the basis of many thousands of manuscripts for comparison we can be very confident that the text is today faithfully restored and the researchers in textual criticism assert that the actual literal text is restored to **99.8%** leaving only a very few uncertainties.*

But as I said, that isn't even my concern. My concern is that Muslims accuse the Christians of corruption in content which is something completely different. And not in minor things, but in the center of the faith and the Gospel. Did Jesus die on the cross? Is Jesus God? and questions like this. And there is NO evidence that the text has been changed anywhere as to meaning and content. Yes, there have been some well-meaning scribes who wanted to correct some bad Greek grammar in a sentence and things like that, but there is no evidence for intentional corruption of CONTENT and that is what this debate is all about.⁴

Among the Gospel Evangelists, John stands out as the "Odd" man. Even a casual reader of the Gospels would notice that. The writer of that certain new book I received (Geza Vermes, *The Changing Faces of Jesus*) entitles one of his chapters from which I will be quoting, "*The Odd Man out Among the Evangelists.*" (Forgive me for stealing part of his title.) I will get to these quotes and many others shortly. But Trinitarian and Binitarian advocates have come to depend upon the Gospel of John in order to "prove" that Jesus was a God in human form. It is one leg of their two-legged stool. Without John's Gospel, neither Binitarian nor Trinitarian disciples would have much ammunition in

¹ In 1John 5:7, a full 22 words have been added, apparently to create a trinitarian proof-text.

² These two cited passages were noticeably absent from the website source.

³ www.danielpipes.org/comments/42806

⁴ <http://groups.google.co.uk/group/soc.religion.islam/msg/8419ce49f4a4792f?output=gplain>

support of their "Jesus-is-God" concept. But if there are serious flaws within the 4th Gospel, such that some parts of it, at least, cannot be depended upon to deliver trustworthy testimony, then, where does that leave those (especially within the Armstrong movement) who have taken an inflexible stand on that writing to support their Polytheistic view that Jesus is a second God being?



Geza Vermes: *However, it (my non-theological sketch) usually received sympathetic hearing from liberally-minded Christians as well as from those in the audience who did not belong to church or chapel, while Jews listened to it with amazement and curiosity. ... "Did I hear you saying," I was often asked, "that there is no evidence in Scripture stating that Jesus was the Messiah or that he was God? But didn't he explicitly assert the opposite, namely that he was the Messiah and the Son of God? ... And so on. Nine times out of ten, the traditionalist's bewildered question derives from some passage in the Fourth Gospel. My customary reply, which echoes the conclusions of most critical scholars, leaves them as a rule somewhat confused, but ultimately unimpressed. They cannot swallow the view that the so-called Gospel of John is something special and reflects not the authentic message of Jesus or even the thinking about him of his immediate followers but the highly evolved theology of a Christian writer who lived three generations after Jesus and completed his Gospel in the opening years of the second century AD. For the average believer, the last Gospel is naturally the best and the most reliable of the four. They hold it to be the work of the apostle and eyewitness of the life of Jesus...*

It is obvious to anyone acquainted with the doctrinal tradition of the church that the theological understanding of Jesus—who he was and what he did—by historic Christianity ultimately depends on the Gospel of John and the letters of Paul. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, is primarily responsible for the church's teaching on Christ, the redeemer of mankind; faith in the divinity of the Son of God and the divorce between Christianity and Judaism, on the other hand, derive first and foremost from the influence of the Fourth Gospel. John's picture of the truly divine Jesus Christ constitutes, it may be said, the climax in the evolution of Christian dogma in the New Testament; its most polished and ultimate expression.

Anyone well-versed in history knows that the Fourth Gospel is a unique phenomenon. It is unlike the first three Gospels, and comparison reveals that it stands out as truly of its own peculiar kind. ...

*The theological canvas painted by this evangelist, his chronology, and the style of teaching and actual message he attributes to Jesus are largely unparalleled in the Synoptics, and sometimes flatly contradict their testimony.*⁵

• Religious authorities, like courts of law, dislike contradictions—they prefer harmony. Christian apologists and leaders really find contradictory testimony or evidence objectionable when it comes to support for their worship models. In support of Vermes' conclusions respecting the Fourth Gospel (other quotes will be forthcoming), scholars have noted that John's Gospel has signs of insertions, additions, and restructuring, suggesting that the composition of that book was a long process—it was not just the writing of a draft that was sent out: *It is today freely accepted that the fourth Gospel underwent a complex development before it reached its final form.* (The New Jerusalem Bible, *Introduction to the Gospel of John*) The question of course becomes: How does this packaging of the Gospel of John affect the Christian theology, but more importantly, one's salvation?

Geza Vermes: *Perturbed by the differences and dissonance in the four records of the life of Jesus, the [Roman] Christian church also made two kinds of attempt at ironing out discrepancies. The first instinctively imitated Judaism, which had converted the four preexisting "sources" into the single Mosaic law. Likewise the early [Roman] church sought to replace the four separate Gospels with one narrative incorporating all the details of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, thus eliminating all the differences. This effort ultimately failed, but for awhile a brilliantly conceived Gospel harmony, known as the Diatessaron, or the Four-in-One, attributed to the mid-second-century Christian apologist Tatian, had considerable success in the churches of Syria, where it almost managed to eclipse the individual Gospels. However, from the 5th century onward it was consigned to near oblivion.* (*Changing Faces*, Vermes, pp.9-10).⁶

This bit of news sent a chill up my spine. We are very fortunate today that these efforts at such harmonization by Roman Church apologists failed.

• **Analyzing the Documentation**

I am not a trained scholar. I like to think of myself as a Professional Researcher and perhaps an Analyst, Observer, Critic, and Commentator of the Bible and biblical matters. While not being a scholar myself, I have a lot of respect for most scholars. But at times it seems to me (to echo another), that biblical scholarship is too important to be left entirely in the hands of trained biblical scholars while we sit on *our* hands. Scholarship is a tool. It is a means to an end—it is not the end itself. I also subscribe to the notion that theology is too important to be left entirely to theologians. I am aware, in some cases, of

⁵ *The Changing Faces of Jesus*, Geza Vermes, copyright 2000, pp.8-9

⁶ Tatian's *Diatessaron*, produced ca. 175 AD, was the most prominent of a number of harmonies of the four Gospels, that is, the material of the four distinct Gospels rewritten as a continuous narrative, resolving conflicting statements and removing duplicated text. Wikipedia

the source of their training, both of scholars and theologians, so that understanding shapes some of my thinking and helps me reason independently while acknowledging the value of different levels of scholarship.


I do claim a certain amount of professional competence in my analysis of biblical writings and events—I have been at this a long time and have accumulated some amount of skill in passing. And I do bristle when someone asserts or implies that unless we are all trained Bible scholars, we have no business in this business and we should humbly and meekly accept as factual and authoritative, virtually all that scholars teach—or what someone *alleges that* they teach. To that concept, I reply “Baloney!”

I have professional reservations about the reliability of a percentage of the New Testament documents and some of the documentations. This does not mean that I reject them out of hand, but that I accept documentation based on what I understand and how I feel; how the stuff strikes me. I know how men act and react when they attain power over others, and I submit that many men, at one time perhaps honorable individuals, become dishonorable in a hurry when it's their turn to rule or preside over even a small group, and this includes theologians as well as politicians. May God save us from the politicians!

If the church at large claims it receives its authority from the first-century apostles, I want to see the documentation and examine the line of authority. If the church at large (or practitioners thereof) claims that this or that biblical personage had the authority to act in any given manner, I want to see the documentation. But not only will I examine the documentation presented, I will make a thorough search for opposing voices, voices that may have been silenced over the centuries, or simply buried under an avalanche of criticism, and give them the ability to speak to the issue once again.

• **When was the Gospel of John written?**

Scholarship has placed the writing of John variously from 60 AD (highly unlikely) all the way to 170 AD or even later, so scholars, as much as they are esteemed and thought to have all the answers, are not in agreement as to when this writing was set down. But we do have one piece of evidence that limits the upper number for the composition of the Gospel. It was written before 150 AD (CE). This much is assured and has been settled by the discovery of a papyrus fragment now kept at the John Rylands University Library in Manchester, England, that contains two verses of the gospel on one side and three verses on the other side. By considering the style of handwriting, scholars are said to have dated the fragment to around 135 to 150 AD. So, assuming reasonable scholarship on the fragment, we can say with some assurance that *this fragment* of John's Gospel was *not* written after 150 AD. Evidently, no one knows if this fragment is a copy of a copy or if it is an original piece of the Gospel. All we can really conclude here is that this fragment was written before 150 AD; not that the entire Gospel was then as it is now.



This small fragment of St. John's Gospel, less than nine centimetres high and containing on the one side part of verses 31-33, on the other of verses 37-38 of chapter xviii is one of the collection of Greek papyri in the John Rylands Library, Manchester. It was originally discovered in Egypt, and may come from the famous site of Oxyrhynchus (Behnesa), the ruined city in Upper Egypt where Grenfel and Hunt carried out some of the most startling and successful excavations in the history of archaeology; it may be remembered that among their finds of new fragments of Classical and Christian literature were the now familiar "Sayings of Jesus." The importance of this fragment is quite out of proportion to its size, since it may with some confidence be dated in the first half of the second century A.D., and thus ranks as the earliest known fragment of the New Testament in any language. It provides us with invaluable evidence of the spread of Christianity in areas distant from the land of its origin; it is particularly interesting to know that among the books read by the early Christians in Upper Egypt was St. John's Gospel, commonly regarded as one of the latest of the books of the New Testament. Like other early Christian works which have been found in Egypt, this Gospel was written in the form of a codex, i.e. book, not of a roll, the common vehicle for pagan literature of that time. JRUL

The upper limit for the composition of John's Gospel has been reasonably set at 150 AD. But what about the Lower Limit? Is it possible that John could have written this book before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD? One writer claims that internal proof suggests that the lower limit should be about 90 AD.

There came a time when Jesus healed a blind man and this healing took place on the Sabbath Day. According to the report, the man was dragged to the Pharisees who immediately became divided over the issue and asked the man again who had healed his eyes and what he thought of the person who did it. The man called this person a prophet, whereupon the Pharisees disbelieved that he had ever been blind in the first place.

"The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.' His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue" (Jn.9:18-22; cf. 16:2).

• **The point:** the woman feared the Jews because of the possibility of being ejected from the synagogue.

One writer states that *around 90 CE the Jews excluded the Christians from synagogue worship by means of an insertion in the congregational prayer a curse on the "Nazarenes and heretics."* Assuming this to be an accurate statement, we can reasonably and I imagine safely conclude that John's writing was completed after 85-90 AD. This would be the lower limit of the composition of the Gospel of John. I hasten to admit, however, that others might disagree. The late John A.T. Robinson was an excellent scholar. He wrote that the wording in the Benediction (prayer) that includes the curse above, has *suffered such modification that the original form cannot be established with certainty, is in any case, far from precise and contains no specific reference to excommunication* (J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, p.272). However, the citation (and quote of the Benediction) he produces, comes from another scholar, J. Jozef, who reconstructed and translated a book (*The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*) wherein the translated writer seems to have quoted yet another scholar named Barrett. Sometimes the thread of scholarly support gets tricky.

It would seem that any Jewish-Christian attending synagogue would be detected by his silence during the Test Benediction or prayer. According to Luke and Acts, Jewish-Christians and Jews generally shared Temple worship without incident. **"And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God" (Lk.24:52-53; cf. Acts 5:42).** It would seem that this passage implies that no systematic exclusion of Jewish-Christians from the synagogue occurred until the Benediction was set in place.

The traditional date for the composition of the Gospel of Luke has been 80-85 AD. After discussing some finer points, Bruce Metzger writes: *In any case, it is widely held that the Lucan Gospel was composed ca. 80-85 CE, even though one cannot maintain this date with certainty* (Bruce Metzger, Michael Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, p.472). Metzger: *The date of Acts cannot be considered in isolation from that of the Gospel of Luke. ... If we date the composition of the two-fold work toward the end of Vespasian's rule (69-79 CE), most of the evidence will be satisfied* (ibid. p.8).

Bruce Metzger, long recognized as an extremely competent scholar, writes about the dating of John: *An upper limit may be set at 150 CE or a little earlier. Two manuscripts, written on papyrus and discovered in Egypt, are relevant to dating the gospel. One, known as the Rylands Papyrus, contains a few verses of John 18 and may be dated to 135-150 CE. A second papyrus (Egerton 2) includes part of an unknown gospel that probably used John as well as Mark, Matthew, and Luke; this manuscript dates from ca. 150 CE and probably earlier. The existence of these witnesses suggests that John's gospel must have been written at the very latest by the beginning of the second century CE, and probably earlier. There are no other conclusive external grounds for an earlier date and no firm evidence that any writers before ca. 150 CE knew the gospel. ... One important clue is provided by the reference in 9:22 and 16:2 (cf. 12:42)*

*to the possibility of Jews who confessed Christ being "put out of the synagogue." This may be an allusion to the Test Benediction that was introduced by the Rabbi Gamaliel II (ca. 85-90 CE) as a means of excluding Nazarenes and other "heretics" from Jewish worship. If so, a date in this period (ca. 85 CE) may be assigned to the gospel. Such a date is also suggested by the fact that John's theology presumably took some time to develop. It is deeper and more sophisticated than that of the other evangelists, whose texts probably emerged earlier than 85 CE. (Bruce Metzger, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, pp.375-376, underscoring mine)*

Why is it important to know the date of the composition of the Gospel of John? It is important because the date is one piece of the puzzle that helps tell us the historical context of the writing. The book of John being composed so far beyond the times of the actual events (some 50 or more years) gives rise to difficulties in accurate composition and structure, especially if it were composed solely from a person's memory. But it has been said that John's writing was not a memory piece after all, but an assembly of accounts, in some cases, from existing documents.

• **Who was the author of the Gospel of John?**

The author of the Gospel of John is anonymous. This means that no one knows who wrote or composed the book. Some of you may be shocked at the above conclusion. You may rebel against such a bald-faced assertion, but alas, John did not write the Gospel attributed to him. —At least, not the "Apostle" John. It may have been another John, as there were many men named John at that time in history, just as there are now in any given locale.

Tradition, that Grand Old Lady that many religious folks defer to when facts are hard to find, suggests that the Gospel of John was written by John, the son of Zebedee, who is said to be the "beloved disciple" within chapters 13:23, 20:2, and 21:7. **"One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus; so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, "Tell us who it is of whom he speaks" (Jn.13:23-24).** If this were true, then John's Gospel would be a great eyewitness account of all the events it contains. But you may peruse the 20 chapters of John all you like, but you will find no reference to an author by the name of John.

The publishers of *Nave's Compact Topical Bible* declare, without citations: *Early tradition and internal evidence of the Gospel [of John] show that this book was written by the apostle John* (p.267). There is Old Lady Tradition again. I wonder who birthed this tradition... They go on: *Early tradition also places the writing of the book sometime toward the close of the 1st century AD.* After looking for the "internal evidence" that they say shows the book to be written by the apostle John, I was unable to find it and they never gave internal citations.

RSV Preface to John: *Who wrote this Gospel? [Old Lady] Tradition says it was the apostle John. Many scholars, however, think that it was composed by a disciple of John who recorded his preaching as Mark did that of Peter. In any*

case, when the Gospel was published toward the close of the first century, the [Roman] church accepted it as authentic and apostolic testimony to Jesus (21:34), written that men might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," and thus "have life in his name" (20:31) (The RSV Oxford Annotated Bible). I find it interesting that the reason this book was written was so that people might believe Jesus was the Christ, the son of God. Chalk that up to my suspicious nature.

As to the "external evidence" that John wrote this Gospel, it consists primarily of two kinds, (a) explicit mention of the authorship and (b) implicit high regard. "Implicit high regard for the Fourth Gospel shown by the use made of it in early documents. Irenaeus (bishop of Lyons ca. 185) is "explicit in his statement that John wrote this Gospel in Ephesus after the other Gospels had been issued. At the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen bear witness to the same tradition; with this the Muratorian Fragment⁷ is in agreement" (*The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, p.505). Thus, we see the birth of Old Lady Tradition (OLT) respecting this issue was some 155 years after the death of Christ and about 100 years or so after the composition of John. And the text of the Muratorian Fragment is in such a "wretched state" I suggest that its value to support Clement and the group above is questionable.

Who wrote John's Gospel? James Charlesworth says, "The apostle Thomas." Ben Witherington believes it was Lazarus. And Esther de Boer contends the author of John's Gospel was Mary Magdalene! Many others believe the author was in fact a committee of unknown authors, editors, and redactors—the Johannine community. The traditional view of the Church has been that this

⁷ The Muratorian Fragment (about AD 170). The **Muratorian Fragment** is the oldest known list of New Testament books. It was discovered by Ludovico Antonio Muratori in a manuscript in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, and published by him in 1740. * It is called a fragment because the beginning of it is missing. Although the manuscript in which it appears was copied during the seventh century, the list itself is dated to about 170 because its author refers to the episcopate of Pius I of Rome (died 157) as recent. He mentions only two epistles of John, without describing them. The Apocalypse of Peter is mentioned as a book which "some of us will not allow to be read in church." A very helpful and detailed discussion of this document is to be found in Bruce Metzger's *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 191-201. Below is Metzger's English translation of a critically amended text of the Fragment, from Appendix IV of the same book (pp. 305-7). I include Metzger's footnotes, with their original enumeration, and add some supplementary footnotes of my own. —M.D.M.

* Ludovico Antonio Muratori, ed., *Antiquitates Italicae Medii Aevi*, v. 3 (ex typographia Societatis palatinæ, Mediolani, 1740). Reprinted in Bologna, 1965.

THE MURATORIAN CANON: The following translation usually follows the amended text edited by Hans Lietzmann, *Das Muratorische Fragment und die Monarchianischen Prologue zu den Evangelien (Kleine Texte*, i; Bonn, 1902; 2nd ed., Berlin, 1933). Owing to the wretched state of the Latin text, it is sometimes difficult to know what the writer intended; several phrases, therefore, are provided with alternative renderings (enclosed within parentheses). Translational expansions are enclosed within square brackets. The numerals indicate the lines of the original text. For a discussion, see chap. VIII.1 above, where freer renderings are sometimes given in place of the following literalistic translation.

is the "Gospel according to John," John the apostle, that is, as in John the son of Zebedee. How can reputable scholars dealing with the same evidence come to such drastically different conclusions? (Biblicalfoundations.org).

So who wrote the Gospel according to John if it was not John, the "disciple Jesus loved"? Geza Vermes: *The same majority opinion considers the identity of the author [of John's Gospel] unascertainable. Apart from the title "according to John," which is ambiguous—which John?—and was only later attached to the composition, the Gospel itself from chapter 1 to chapter 20 mentions no author. In chapter 21, appended by someone distinct from the evangelist (cf. verse 24), an attempt is made to identify him with "the beloved disciple of Jesus," who is tacitly assumed to be the Galilean fisherman John, the son of Zebedee. ... Finally, to envisage as the author of the fourth Gospel an "uneducated and common" Galilean fisherman (Acts 4:13), who was a centenarian give or take a few years yet not only still creative but fully at home in Hellenistic philosophical and mystical speculation, requires a leap of imagination which seems to be beyond the reasonable. ... The total irreconcilability with the Synoptics, combined with the late date of composition, would strongly militate against an author who was an eyewitness of the historical Jesus.*⁸

At the end of the day, all arguments aside, only Old Lady Tradition tells us that the apostle John, son of Zebedee wrote the Gospel of John. Why is this important to know? It is important because if we are unable to determine the author, we are also unable to determine his (or their) reasons or motives for writing the book, and we are therefore unable to determine the writer's intent or even his private agenda for so doing. Personally, I dislike reading books by anonymous writers and I seldom read one, let alone purchase any. I think that today, if a person writes a paper or book and does not put his name to it for credit or derision, then, quite frankly, the paper is worthless to me. Not only do I evaluate one's writing, but I evaluate the writer as well, in context. I want to know up front if I can trust this writer or is he full of himself and hot air, or is he someone I might take seriously. To simply accept that the apostle John wrote the Gospel of John because the Roman Church said so is insufficient reason for me to accept John as the author. And to simply accept what was written as though it were laid down by the finger of God is to blind oneself to reality—in effect, to entertain blind faith that what you are reading has been approved by God. If one intends to use the Gospel of John to support doctrinal positions, it should be approached with great caution. But since the Polytheistic crowd of Trinitarians and Binitarians use it so much, one must be prepared to use the text to turn their claims aside, as in **John 17:3** where Jesus is quoted as telling the world that Yahweh is the only true God, and therefore, he himself, Jesus the Messiah, is not God in any substantial sense.

⁸ Geza Vermes, *The Changing Faces of Jesus*, pp.11-12

• **John Differs Substantially from the Synoptic Gospels**

It is odd that the Gospel of John contradicts the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke in a number of places. It would seem that one should accept one or the other account, or, at the very least, attempt to honestly reconcile the differences. Perhaps we should suggest that Old Man John (90 or more years old at the time of the writing?) was getting senile and forgot stuff or added stuff that he thought he remembered.

Much of the following will comprise selected examples of very odd and often contradictory passages with the point of demonstrating the stark differences between John's Gospel and the Synoptics. I am not advocating any sort of wholesale dumping of these writings—but I am advocating intellectual caution when using them.

➤• **The Timetable**—of the Synoptics is about one year. Jesus was born, baptized, had one Passover, died, and was resurrected. All of this can be incorporated into one year with no effort. Mark's Gospel is said to be the first one written, so Matthew and Luke, to some degree, depended upon Mark for information, comprehension, or understanding, or so the scholarly theory goes.

When we get to John, however, we find that he mentions an apparent three Passovers, which, of necessity, means that Jesus ministered for some three years (**Jn.2:13; 6:4; 11:55**). Why the discrepancy? Or, perhaps there was only one Passover within the Gospel of John, but the writing is so scattered that it just *seems to be three* Passovers—kind of like a *docetic* Passover.

If Jesus celebrated three Passovers, that would indicate his ministry lasted three years or so, and that concept would fit into Daniel's prophecy of him being "cut off in the middle of the week." But, is the Johannine timetable genuine or a creation of a zealous mind? If it is genuine and depicts a true 3-year ministry of Jesus, why is it that the three other witnesses do not seem to know this?

Now, as I recall, tradition within a number of Christian churches is that Jesus ministered for three and one half years. Where did that come from? It comes from an interpretation of **Dan.9:27** wherein the last week of a 70-week prophecy indicates that someone seems to be "cut off" in the middle of the week, defined as 3 ½ years. We search the Gospel of John and decide that Jesus ministered for 3 ½ years and was literally cut off from life at that time, therefore fulfilling Daniel's prophecy. But not according to Mark, Matthew, or Luke—it was only one year.

➤• **Ignorant Disciples**—How could an ignorant disciple, or an ignorant apostle, write the Gospel of John in all its eloquence? Did John go to Seminary? No. John was an ignorant, uneducated, common person. And common persons in those days were illiterate. Who needs to learn to write when there are fish to catch and sheep to tend? "**Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they**

marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13, KJV).

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered..." (Acts 4:13, RSV). Ok, maybe God miraculously instilled John with a vocabulary and all the necessary skills to write his book. Maybe not.

➤• **Ignorant Women**—How could the women at the tomb of Jesus miss the fact that some 100 pounds of spices had already been used to anoint the body of Jesus? What—were they blind? **"The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid; then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments" (Lk.23:55-56).** They didn't notice that Nicodemus had already been there?

"Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight. They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews" (Jn.19:39-40).

➤• **Are Believers Judged or not?**—Here it looks like all men (mankind) will answer for their misdeeds and misspoken words. **"I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter" (Matt.12:36).** But John has a different story to tell.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (Jn.5:24). So, according to John, if you are a believer, you are home free, and, I suppose, you go straight to heaven when you die.

➤• **Self-Witness, good Testimony or not?**—Right in the same book of John, Jesus says one thing and then turns around and contradicts himself. **"If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true" (Jn.5:31).** OK. I'll buy this. Notice what is written in Deuteronomy: **"A single witness shall not prevail against a man for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed; only on the evidence of two witnesses, or of three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained" (Deut.19:15).** This is a good law, I would say. But Jesus changes his mind three chapters later. **"The Pharisees then said to him, 'You are bearing witness to yourself; your testimony is not true.' Jesus answered, 'Even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know whence I have come and whither I am going, but you do not know whence I come or whither I am going' " (Jn.8:13-14).** This last passage sounds childish to me. Certainly, within the context, Jesus states that he and the Father bear witness to himself, but how were they (or anyone else) to know what the Father bears witness to? So the statement that the Father bears witness to me is an empty meaningless response. To whom was the Father speaking and to

whom was he testifying? —Apparently, to nobody. Jesus says so. **“And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen” (Jn.5:37).** What good is a mute witness who does not show up to testify?

➤• **People have a Choice in salvation?**—Christians have been taught that they have a choice to make regarding salvation; that’s what Billy Graham’s popular one-note alter call was all about lo these many years—he was a one message man. **“You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life” (Jn.5:39-40).** This is the substance of the other side of Billy Graham’s monotone message; people were refusing to come to Jesus for life; they *could* come if they wanted to—they just did not want to come to Jesus. Mr. Graham wanted them to come “as you are” to the altar so that they would gain eternal life, be saved, and get into heaven. But wait. We have another passage to look at. **“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn.6:44).** I remember this passage! I have taught it and from it many times. But like most folks, I never tried to reconcile these statements before. But what’s this in context? **“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father” (Jn.6:45-47).** Hold it! This is crazy. You cannot come to the Father unless he draws you; but all those who have learned from the Father do come to Jesus without being drawn, I suppose; but no one can learn anything from the Father because you cannot see him nor can you speak *with* him. You might *feel* as though he answered you in words (and I know God has answered me in deeds), but these passages are irreconcilable as they stand.

But hold it again. This is odd. Jesus states that something is written in the prophets that I could not find. I could not locate the phrase, “They shall all be taught by God.” Who shall all be taught by God? And when?

And while we’re at it, here is another quotation I was unable to locate in the Old Testament passages: **“He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’” (Jn.7:38).** The term “scripture” in the New Testament virtually always refers to Old Testament writings.

➤• **Was Jesus a bit Senile in his old age?**—Peter asked a question of Jesus; he wanted to know where he was going. **“Simon Peter said to him, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ Jesus answered, ‘Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward’ ” (Jn.13:36).** This seems pretty clear. **“Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?’ ” (Jn.14:5).** It looks like the same question is implied here by Thomas. But a little later, Jesus makes

this astonishing remark: **"But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'" (Jn.16:5).** Huh? And just before Thomas said he did not know where he was going, Jesus said he did know. **"And you know the way where I am going" (Jn.14:4).** To make matters worse, Jesus answers this simple question of Thomas' with a confusing response about the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father but by himself (**vv.6-7**). Thomas and Peter, in these few passages, are being treated like they were blockheaded dolts.

➤• **Show me the Beef!**—When the term "scripture" is placed within a passage (often capitalized) that is used to cite an event or saying, it invariably refers to Old Testament writings. At least, that is a common perception, and for the most part, it is true. I have maintained from time to time that this is not necessarily so, but most arguments to the contrary have prevailed. Now I ask, Where's the beef? Where is it written in the Old Testament writings that Jesus must rise from the dead? I have not found it and, I understand others as well have not found it. Did the writer of John insert this passage in order to exalt Jesus? **"Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead" (Jn.20:8-9; cf. Hos.6:2).**

I must confess that I am as ignorant as the disciples on this one; I do not know the OT scripture that says he must rise from the dead.

➤• **What about all those Books?**—On one hand Jesus (in John's Gospel) we are told (by the writer of John who is supposed to be John) that Jesus did (and probably said) a whole lot more than we have or can ever have: **"But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (Jn.21:25).** Yet, in Luke's account of things in the book of Acts, a different story emerges.

"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen" (Acts 1:1-2). So, presuming that the writer of Acts is speaking of Luke's Gospel, then we have everything Jesus did and taught. So, what is John trying to say?

➤• **Yet another Contradiction**—I had always heard that Jesus taught in parables so that the people outside his immediate circle of disciples, all those heathens, would not be saved. This concept has never made good sense to me. I thought Jesus came to save those who were lost, and so on, so if that is true, why speak in garbled or guarded messages, as if you had something to hide? Then someone said it was because only a "few" are being saved now, and the great mass of humanity will be saved later. Sorry. I never bought that ring of baloney, either.

"And when he was alone, those who were about him with the twelve asked him concerning the parables. And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven' " (Mk.4:10-12). This was a secret meeting and in the secret meeting, Jesus gives some secret information. But John has another story. **"Jesus answered him, 'I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together; I have said nothing secretly' " (Jn.18:20). OK. Now which story are we to believe? Are we to accept that Jesus was a secretive person, a man who set about teaching his disciples in secret and keeping information from the masses, or are we to believe that Jesus taught openly and never said anything in secret? Which is the correct story?**

➤• **Are demons really of God?**—No one, of course, believes that demons or devils are "of God" in the same manner as believers. Demons and believers exist in two different categories or planes (except some folks do not believe in demons or the devil). Jesus encountered a demon that needed to be cast out quickly (and by doing so, he proved that the Kingdom of God was established in the first century, **Lk.11:20**). **"And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God' " (Mk.1:23-24). The demon cried out and correctly identified Jesus as being a person who was from God. I have never had a problem with this passage. But when we get to John's writings, over in **First John**, we run into a problem.**

"By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God' " (1Jn.4:2-3). You can see the difficulty. Well, it appears that the demon in Mark's Gospel is in fact, a confessing spirit which means it (he) was "of God." Maybe a godly spirit.

➤• **Did they go in or did they not?**—The Gospels of Mark and Luke tell us that certain women entered the tomb of Jesus. But then John contradicts them and says they did not. Is this a small point? Do "small" details matter?

"And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed" (Mk.16:5).

"And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body' " (Lk.24:2-3). This is a clear picture of women (who were looked down upon in that first century society), who went into the tomb of Jesus.

"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been

taken away from the tomb. **So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple...**

...But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet" (Jn.20:1-2, 11-12). In John's Gospel, however, we find these women being a lot less bold and independent, deciding to run away, probably frightened half out of their wits, and, not knowing what to do, dashed over to the disciples (one being "the one whom Jesus loved") so that the *men* could go in and check it out. Which version of the story is correct?

➤• **So, where were these women, anyway?**—Little details are important, I would say, because they make up the varied mosaic of a picture. Maybe in Christianity, they don't count for much. In Mark's Gospel, as well as in Matthew and Luke, all the women who attended the crucifixion, including Jesus' mother, were a fair distance away from the scene. **"There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome, who, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered to him; and also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem" (Mk.15:40-41).** To me, it seems reasonable that the women would be standing back, so as not to get involved or run over by some big guys.

"So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (Jn.19:25-27). So you might say, well, the women came in closer. OK. But that does not explain the discrepancies between the two stories.

➤• **So, who carried that cross, anyway?**—More little details that, if considered in a vacuum, might not amount to a whole lot, but collect them together, and they can be like drops of rain—one doesn't help the drought, but many altogether becomes a good shower. One drop at a time. In theology, it's called trust—if you cannot trust a writing in one small place, how can you trust it in greater ones? **"As they went out, they came upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; this man they compelled to carry his cross" (Matt. 27:32).** I wonder why they would have someone else, a bystander perhaps, carry the cross. Nevertheless, here it is. John tells a different story.

"So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha" (Jn.19:17). Does it make any difference who carried the cross? Probably not, but it does make a difference when you are trying to paint a picture of the true events.

➤• **So, did Jesus answer Pilate or not?**—A little detail about the trial follows. According to Matthew's Gospel, Jesus never answers the charges put to him—he stands mute and goes to his death. **"But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge; so that the governor wondered greatly" (Matt.27:14).** According to John's Gospel, however, we see a different story.

"Pilate said to him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice' " (Jn.18:37). Here we have Jesus, not just assenting to his death on the stake, but (beginning in v.33) giving a whole discourse of why he was born and what his kingship meant. In choosing between these, this passage sounds phony to me and unlikely to have taken place. But I could be wrong but one of the two stories has to be faulty.

➤• **Was Jesus ratted out or did he step out?**—In Mark's and Matthew's Gospels, Jesus is betrayed by a kiss; in Luke's Gospel, Jesus seems to anticipate the kiss. **"And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Hail, Master!" And he kissed him" (Matt.26:49; cf. Mk.14:44-49).** **"Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of man with a kiss?" (Lk.22:47-48).** But when we get to John's Gospel, Jesus is not portrayed as vulnerable to any man, but voluntarily steps out from the crowd.

"Again he asked them, 'Whom do you seek?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he; so, if you seek me, let these men go' " (Jn.18:7-9). As you can see, Jesus steps out boldly and presents himself to the arresting officers. By the way, this is also the place (v.5) where I think the text was greatly manipulated, such that, when the officers ask for him, he volunteers himself and says "I am he" or "I am the one you seek." Nevertheless, at these words, the crowd falls down as though he were Yahweh and blew them down with the power of his "Benny Hinn" breath. This passage has been used by the Binitarian/Bitheist crowd especially in a failed attempt to "prove" that Jesus was and is a God. The operative words in v.5, printed as "I am he" in most English Bibles, is the Greek *ego eimi* which simply means "I am" and "he" is added to give an English sense of the passage. In no way can this passage, or any passage like it, be construed to mean that Jesus is holding himself out to be Yahweh, or as the Tetragrammaton has it, YHWH, the eternal existing one.

• Considering verse 6, Adam Clarke writes: ***They went backward, and fell to the ground—None of the other evangelists mentions this very important circumstance. Our Lord chose to give them this proof of his infinite power, that they might know that their power could not prevail against him if he chose to exert his might, seeing that the very breath of his mouth confounded, drove back, and struck them down to the earth. Thus by the blast of God they might***

have perished, and by the breath of his nostrils they might have been consumed: Job 4:9. —Adam Clarke's Commentary

• But another commentator, Barnes, disagrees with Adam Clarke: ***Verse 6. They went backward***, cause of their retiring in this manner is not mentioned. *Various things might have produced it. The frank, open, and fearless manner in which Jesus addressed them may have convinced them of his innocence, and deterred them from prosecuting their wicked attempt. His disclosure of himself was sudden and unexpected; and while they perhaps anticipated that he would make an effort to escape, they were amazed at his open and bold profession. Their consciences reproved them for their crimes, and probably the firm, decided, and yet mild manner in which Jesus addressed them, the expression of his unequalled power in knowing how to find the way to the consciences of men, made them feel that they were in the presence of more than mortal man. There is no proof that there was here any miraculous power, any mere physical force, and to suppose that there was greatly detracts from the moral sublimity of the scene. —Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*

I suggest that this event occurred in the night, after dark, and under torchlight, so it is understandable and coincidental that they stumbled in the dark, after being surprised by Jesus stepping out. The soldiers did not know him and had no idea if he had a weapon or not, and whether he meant to begin slashing people. There is no telling what rumors they heard about the man, after all, some thought that Christians drank blood.⁹ —FPH Commentary

➤• **Was Jesus ever called Emmanuel?**—In another odd twist to our story, as I read the passage, Jesus was named Jesus to fulfill a prophecy that said his name was to be Emmanuel. An angel of the Lord came to Joseph while he was sleeping and said: “ ‘...she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel’ (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus” (Matt.1:21-25).

Frankly, I have a problem with this passage. OK, she will have a son that Joseph would name Jesus, and his name shall be called Emmanuel or “God with

⁹ *Blood libel against Christians: During the first and second centuries, some Roman commentators had various interpretations of the ritual of the Eucharist and related teachings. While celebrating the Eucharist, Christians drink red wine in response to the words “This is the blood of Christ.” Propaganda arguing that the Christians literally drank blood based on their belief in transubstantiation was written and used to persecute Christians. Romans were highly suspicious of Christian adoptions of abandoned Roman babies and this was suggested as a possible source of the blood. In the Mandaean scripture, the Ginza Rba, a purportedly Christian group called the “Minunei” are accused of it against the Jews: “They kill a Jewish child, they take his blood, they cook it in bread and they proffer it to them as food.” (Ginza Rba 9.1). Wikipedia*

us," which name she did not give to the child. This passage, as slender a thread as it is, has been used as support for the concept of Jesus being a preexistent God, even a post-existent God. The Polytheists among us are grasping at straws with this passage.

➤• **Was John the Baptizer a prophet, or Elijah?**—I remember reading about John and his way and then his beheading. But did not Jesus say he was Elijah? And also that he was a prophet? Would you find it odd that John denied all this? **"Why then did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet" (Matt.11:9).**

"...but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist" (Matt.17:12-13). So Jesus said that John the Baptizer was a prophet and Elijah as well. But the story changes when we get to John's Gospel. **"And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" And he answered, "No" (Jn.1:21).** John the Baptizer in John's Gospel denies that he is anything special—just a voice heralding the exalted Jesus of the 4th Gospel. But then, maybe he just did not understand his position on the world stage.

➤• **Are Believers supposed to Hate people?**—Christianity is supposed to be a religion of love, I hear. But this is odd: no one can be a disciple of Jesus unless he hates his mother, father, his family, or even his life. **"If any one comes to me and does not hate [detest] his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk.14:26).** But the little letter of 1John, supposedly written by the same person who wrote the Gospel of John disagrees: **"Any one who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1Jn.3:15).** (The Greek word here, *miseo*, means to *detest*, not "love less by comparison" as we were lied to by the old Worldwide Church of God.) So believers, or disciples of Christ, who are supposed to "hate" (despise!) their life and their family, are actually murderers and are without eternal life! Further, these same believes who hate their families (by order of Jesus) are liars! **"If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1Jn.4:20).** But there's more. According to Paul, who wrote to the Galatians, he says no one ever hated his own flesh: **"For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church" (Eph.5:29).** Is the act of hating one's life the same as hating one's flesh?

• **Was Jesus really a Preexistent Divine God?**

Let me ask: Is it necessary for anyone's salvation in Yahweh God, for Jesus, the son of God, to have been a preexistent God himself? I think not.

Then, why in the world are we so exercised over the issue? The concern revolves around an element of biblical truth and ultimate deception and the breaking of Yahweh's law respecting the worship of other gods. Most biblical deception contains a portion of truth otherwise it would be difficult to deceive biblically-knowledgeable professing Christians. (Most professing Christians are exceedingly biblically illiterate.) For a clever instance, the Bible states that Jesus is the son of God. That is a true statement. But some theologians have changed that truth into a lie by teaching that Jesus, as the son of God must have God's essence within him, and a substantial amount of it, so that means Jesus and God are of a like "kind," as in animals being of one "kind" or another and procreating after their "kind," so in like manner, Jesus, when he was procreated by God, must be a "God-kind" and therefore, God, having procreated after his "kind," the issue from God then means that Jesus must be God the son. The foolishness of this concept (admittedly a shortened example, as there may be a few more intermediate steps) can only be discovered by stepping back, writing it down, and studying what was just said.

You will quickly notice that while John's Gospel exalts the risen Christ to a place not just of God's glory on his son, but to a place of being God himself, or a type of God, and true deity, the Synoptic Gospels emphasize Jesus the man, and not a God. Evidently, the twelve apostles of Jesus had no idea that he was a true God, but when we get to the Gospel of John, the pictures changes radically and Jesus is morphed into a God that came down from heaven to live as a man for a time, and then return.

It is a myth that Jesus Christ was a preexistent God of any type, or that he was a preexistent angel turned into a God.

Now when I use the capitalized term "God," I mean to refer to Yahweh (the only one) as the Creator God of the Old Testament who has no peer. Others will cleverly delve into the Hebrew behind the word "God" (and behind God's back while thumbing their noses at God!) in an attempt to deceive by suggesting that the word "elohim" should always be used in the plural sense when speaking of the Creator, against virtually all scholarship, and they conclude therefore, that "God" is a plural being or a "Family of Divine Beings." This is just another example of truth mixed with error bringing a person to the wrong conclusion and into the practice of Polytheism.

Geza Vermes: Today as in past centuries, the believing Christian's main New Testament source of faith lies, not so much in Mark, Matthew and Luke and their still sufficiently earthly Jesus, as in centuries of speculation by the church on the theological Gospel of John with its eternal Word becomes flesh, and perhaps, even more on the letters of Paul with their drama of death, atonement, and resurrection. The Christ of Paul and John, on the way towards deification, overshadows and obscures the man of Galilee. ... Such a revised edition of Jesus' message entails also a total shift in religious thought. Jesus' eyes were fixed upon God and his Kingdom. Those of his followers, in particular Paul,

focused on the risen and glorified Lord. The purely theocentric religion of Jesus became a christocentric faith in which the heavenly Father plays practically no role. ... In John's account, of the life of Jesus, the Jews are a blood-thirsty gang who seek to kill Jesus from the onset and do not desist until they have succeeded in their deadly plan. John's Christ, who had nothing in common with the real Jesus, declares to his companions:

"You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn.8:44).

Here is the origin of the Christian tendency to demonize the Jews, the source of all mediaeval and much modern religious anti-Judaism, which directly or indirectly led to the Holocaust.¹⁰

➤• **The Dispersing of Glory**—Yahweh, the Creator God of the Old Testament discusses his glory:

"I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to graven images" (Isa.42:8). This passage is an example of parallelism, with one phrase descending from the previous, all interlocked to present one message. Yahweh clearly states that he will not share his glory with any other [being or god] and he is not specifically talking about sharing glory with graven images, although that is additionally implicit within the phrase. When we say "other" in such a context, it means "other being." If one should write "no others came on board," we would understand that to mean no other "persons" came on board or if the context was Noah's Ark, we might mean no other "animals." He could be suggesting no other "god" but I do not think this would be the primary thrust of the phrase. He would not be saying "no other graven images," of course.

But over in John's Gospel, Jesus the Christ is said to have previously shared that unavailable glory and desires to share in it again.

"...and now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made" (Jn.17:5).

Only in John does Jesus make a claim about glory that opposes the Father's very words.

➤• **The Last Words of Jesus**—Matthew and Mark record Jesus' last words as a plea to the Father. **"...My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt.27:46; cf. Mk.15:34).** Luke records: **"Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!' And having said this he breathed his last" (Lk.23:46).** Both of these versions suggest that the Father is in charge. When we get to John, the

¹⁰ Geza Vermes (a fellow of the British Academy and Professor Emeritus of Jewish Studies in the University of Oxford), *The Religion of Jesus the Jew*, pp.210-213

tone changes: **"When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished'; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (Jn.19:30).** What is Jesus supposed to be saying here? What was finished? His work? The vinegar?

Adam Clarke in Clarke's Commentary writes: ***It is finished***—*As if he had said: "I have executed the great designs of the Almighty—I have satisfied the demands of his justice—I have accomplished all that was written in the prophets, and suffered the utmost malice of my enemies; and now the way to the holy of holies is made manifest through my blood." An awful, yet a glorious finish. Through this tragical [sic] death God is reconciled to man, and the kingdom of heaven opened to every believing soul.*

I, I, I, my, my—(bold emphasis mine above) the tone is one not of coming to God or crying out to him as a man, but of a great accomplishment that places Jesus high above all mortals, at least, but implies that he ought to be worshiped.

➤• **Cana; Water into Wine**—Neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke record anything about the marriage in Cana and the miraculous water made into wine event. But when we get to John's Gospel, there it is. And then, in Matthew and Mark, Jesus is driven into the wilderness for a long 40-day fast after baptism and an intellectual wrestling match with an evil being where Jesus quotes the Father but this trip is missing from John.

"The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him" (Mk.1:12-13).

John has Jesus doing his first miracle in Cana: **"On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples" (Jn.2:1-2).**

Why was this event emphasized here? Could it be to highlight the glory of Jesus? **"This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him" (Jn.2:11).** So instead of a troubling trip into the wilderness alone, Jesus gets a chance to show his power.

➤• **Jesus the Judge or not?**—You cannot have it both ways. In one part of John, Jesus is *not* the judge—in another part of John, he *is* the judge. **"You judge according to the flesh, I judge no one" (Jn.8:15).** (According to the flesh could mean as fleshly people or as fleshly people do.) But earlier he said he DID judge people. **"The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father" (Jn.5:22-23).** Why was judgment given to the son? It was given so that people would consider Jesus as the Father as equals—Deity! The Father was honored with worship. Now the son should have the same worship.

Further, Jesus says that God DOES NOT judge in **5:22**. But wait. The Psalmist, David, wrote that God DOES judge the people! **"The LORD judges**

the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me... God is a righteous judge and a God who has indignation every day" (Psa.7:8, 11). It appears that the writer of John neglected to read his MSS. And got mixed up in the judging. In **Rom.2:2**, God DOES judge: **"We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who do such things."** Or was Paul thinking about Jesus as "God" when he wrote these words? No, he knew the difference (**cf. Rom.1:1 ff**).

➤• **The Holy Spirit depended on Jesus leaving?**—By reading Luke's Gospel, we can discover that God's spirit, the holy spirit, was given to believers and special people, early in Jesus' life. Jesus apparently did not have it when he was born. **Lk.1:15**, John the baptizer had it before he was born or before Jesus' birth; **Lk.1:41**, Elizabeth had it before Jesus left; **Lk.1:76**, Zechariah had it; **Lk.2:25**, Simeon had it, and in **LK.3:22**, Jesus first received it. But when we get to John, something very odd happens.

"Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn.7:39). Whoa! The spirit had NOT been given? That is a direct contradiction to Luke's Gospel, which says it WAS given years before. John must have forgotten about all that. Why would this change be in John's Gospel? Could it be there to deify Jesus, as though the spirit came not from God, but from him?

➤• **The Holy Spirit came from Jesus?**—I recall at least one Christian television evangelist, Benny Hinn, waving his jacket at people standing in his audience and them falling down like tenpins. Then he would blow his breath at them and down they would go again, as if the holy spirit knocked them down—as in being "slain in the spirit." I wonder where he got the idea that his actions could have such an effect. Hmmmm.

"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' " (Jn.20:22). I always wondered about this passage but simply dismissed it as an aberration of some sort. I still think it is. In fact, in my gut, I think it was added to enhance Jesus' standing in the world. But when Thomas arrived later, he was only told that the others had seen the Lord; nothing was said about receiving the holy spirit. This is certainly odd. If I had received the spirit in such a grand style from a resurrected God-being, I would surely have said so! But wait! According to **Acts 1:3-5** and **Acts 2:1-4**, the holy spirit was received much later than this. And in fact, Jesus himself, after being resurrected said to the apostles: **"...but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5b).** Then when Pentecost came, they were all "filled" with the holy spirit. Which story is the right one?



Epilogue

This is an unfinished work; it is a work in progress. Forgive me if I had stumbled on some points or left something out. Please let me know what I should include within the next issue. Today there are 28 (now edited to 34) pages, next week there may be more, and next month still more. My hope is that, along with my other unfinished writings, I will someday have studied and researched enough information (and recorded that material) to comfortably say this one, at least, is a completed task. But many more inconsistencies are found throughout John's 4th Gospel over against the Synoptic Gospels than I am able to record at this time, some quite minor, even though I have documented a number of them.

I think Christians should be very careful when using John's Gospel to make hard and fast theological rules, dogmatic doctrines, or establishing tests of faith. We cannot, indeed no one can, know for certain what went on during the recording and subsequent adjusting of the testimonies and writings we call the New Testament. Should we trust all the people who handled and mishandled the NT writings? We know for a fact that certain people went in and changed things around to suit themselves and to support their belief systems. 1John 5:7 is a notorious example of that. Yet, because we have three Synoptic Gospels and a fair amount of extra-biblical writings, we are able to balance one Gospel or one letter against the other, and in large part, at least in speaking of the Synoptics, they agree with one another, although some details may be changed from this one to that one. But John's Gospel is a special case. It came on the scene relatively late and has the distinction of sharply disagreeing in many respects with the Synoptics as well as with some of Paul's writings. But perhaps it will all work out some day. I think it will. —**F. Paul Haney**, June 04, 2007

P.S.: Some extra stuff on manuscripts follows.

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EVIDENCE: Darby Bible Introduction (abridged, from the 1884 NT ed.)

A few additional explanatory remarks are here offered in order to warn the reader against being unduly influenced by what is called *diplomatic* evidence, whether the concurrent testimony of the mass of the authorities, or the preponderating importance of a few very ancient witnesses. The modern editors of the text often furnish proof that conscientious adherence to their systems of comparative criticism may lead to singular mistakes. The latest editions are by no means the most trustworthy; and the reader should be at least cautious against too readily accepting their decisions. Cf. *Revised Version of the first three Gospels considered*, by Cook, and in particular Burgon's *Revision Revised*.

Though of course in many respects an older MS is entitled to greater weight, yet too many sources of corruption and error had already crept in to render admissible the principles laid down by Lachmann and Tregelles, and practically acquiesced in by Tischendorf, without at least a very serious and patient examination being accorded to the many later witnesses, which have often of recent years been too lightly set aside. A few examples, taken from many given by Burgon and others, will serve for illustration. Scrivener says in his *Introduction* (3rd ed. p. 511): *'It is no less true to fact than paradoxical in sound that the worst corruptions to which the New Testament has ever been subjected, originated within a hundred years after it was composed; that Irenaeus and the African Fathers and the whole Western, with a portion of the Syrian Church, had far inferior manuscripts to those employed by Stunica, or Erasmus, or Stephens, thirteen centuries later, when molding the Textus Receptus.'*

Admitting the general soundness of this conclusion, we are no longer surprised to find that {aleph} and B, as well as C L U {gamma}, all interpolate in Matthew xxvii. 49 some words which are in part borrowed, though changed, from John xix. 34, but which have been shown by Burgon in his *Last Twelve Verses* to be really derived from the heretical Tatian's Diatessaron or Harmony of the Gospels, composed in the second century. What is surprising is to find that Westcott & Hort have introduced it in brackets into their text and the Revisers into their margin. Tischendorf and Tregelles have rejected it. Nevertheless it was in the copies used by Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria.

In Luke ii. 14, however, all these editors follow the corrupt testimony of {aleph} B D, besides quoting A for it, though in another part of A, in the hymn at the end of the Psalms, the correct reading is given; and {aleph} and B have both been corrected by later hands. This reading, which originated probably in a mere clerical error, is found in some old versions also: *'in the men of good pleasure.'* The Fathers all reject this, as Burgon has proved; and every spiritual mind instructed in Scripture must resent such an expression, which, as being very anomalous Greek, has given rise to explanations that condemn themselves. Yet the Revisers have introduced it into their text, forcing the translation in an unjustifiable way, and have placed the better text in the margin.

Tischendorf in his 8th edition, influenced no doubt by his favorite {aleph}, supported also by B, 124, and some versions, has in Matthew xi. 19 substituted *'works'* for *'children'*, against all other authority and the evident teaching of scripture. The same corrupted reading has been adopted by Tregelles and the Revisers.

All these follow {aleph} B C D and others in admitting *'holy'* into the text before *'spirit'* in Luke x. 21, an interpolation which may be ascribed to over-zealous piety, or, as it has been suggested, to the misplaced desire to distinguish the word from *'spirits'* used in another sense in the previous verse.

The extraordinary text given in Matthew xxi. 31 by Lach., Treg. and W. & H. on the authority, and that only partially, of B, with which they make the priests and elders

answer 'The last', instead of 'The first', has been commented on by Scrivener and Burgon. Tregelles attempts an explanation in his *Account of the Printed Text*, p. 107.

In Luke vi. 1 the Revisers leave out the important word 'second-first', misled perhaps by Treg. and W. & H. on the precarious authority of {aleph} B L 1 33 69 and some versions. The word was evidently omitted by scribes who did not understand it. Tischendorf rightly inserts it. For another instance of this kind of modification of the text, see 1 John ii. 13 and the note, and Rev. xxii. 14.

The omission in 1 Cor. ix. 20 of 'not being myself under law' in K and a few cursive MSS and versions, probably arose from the same cause. But here the Editors and the Revisers insert the words, following the great mass of MS authority.

In John i. 18, {aleph} B C L, almost unsupported except by a few versions, and, as to be expected, by many ecclesiastical writers, have the astonishing reading of 'God' for 'Son' after 'only begotten'. It is scarcely conceivable that Treg. and W. & H. should have followed so manifest a corruption, and the Revisers have given it a place in their margin. Tisch. rejects it. But he has not been equally firm in John ix. 35; for he has introduced into his 8th edition 'Son of man,' instead of 'Son of God,' on the testimony of {aleph} B D. So have W. & H. and the Revisers in their margin.

The addition of 'yet' in John vii. 8, found in B and many others, is evidently an intentional change of *οὐκ* into *οὐπω*, from the desire to explain a text not understood.

Treg. and W. & H. agree with Tisch. in putting the imperative in I Cor. xv. 49; though the latter had it right in his 7th edition, he now reads 'let us bear'. See the note at this passage. The Revisers have it right in text, but have given the false reading a place in their margin.

But the list might be almost indefinitely prolonged; so numerous and often extraordinary are the corruptions found in these venerable documents: witness the substitution of 'found' or 'discovered' (cf. 1 Sam. xx. 15 (16) in the LXX, *Cod. Vatic.*), for 'burned up' in 2 Pet. iii. 10, by {aleph} B K P, acquiesced in by Treg. and by W. & H.

The omissions in these old MSS are constant, often doubtless mere errors of the scribe, whose eye unconsciously passed from one line to the second or third below it, especially if he was betrayed by similarity of ending or beginning in two or more consecutive lines, a constant source of error called *homoeoteleuton*. It was no easy matter to avoid it in copying MSS that have no division of words: it requires considerable practice even to read them, and the eye gets no rest in its fatiguing task.

The two oldest MSS, {aleph} and B, omit the end of Mark xvi., against all other authority whatsoever, as Burgon has shown with great pains; but in B, the fact that the scribe has here left a column blank -- the only one in the whole New Testament -- is strong presumptive evidence that if he did not find the passage in the MS he was copying from, he was aware of an omission. Such defects as these tend to throw discredit on these ancient MSS, as witnesses to the primitive integrity of the text. On the other hand, they are free from the bold interpolations of D (Codex Beza), and are constantly additional and valuable evidence against these. But none of the oldest MSS, not even several together, can be of themselves conclusive testimony as to the absolute correctness of a reading, although many facts tend to show that, as a general rule, the so-called Alexandrian readings come nearest to the primitive text. They need to be controlled however by other evidence, as that of the Cursive MSS, versions, and, in many cases, by patristic citations. Every passage has to be examined apart on its own merits, in presence of the whole array of witnesses, and in dependence upon God's gracious guidance, special regard being paid to the context and the general teaching of scripture, which ecclesiastical corruption impaired. #