

The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ: A Reading

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The problem of historicization

The day Jesus Christ is supposed to have died on the Cross is now sanctified by the Christian Church as Good Friday. And three days later, when he is supposed to have risen from the dead is celebrated as Easter. Though these events are regarded in the Christian faith as inviolable evidences of Jesus's divinity, there is an increasing trend among recent scholars of Christology to re-read these events in the historical context of the Rome-occupied Judea in which Jesus was born, lived, preached, and died. This quest for a 'historical' Jesus, in fact, is not a modern preoccupation but dates from the 2nd century C.E., and often tends to problematise the position usually adopted by the Christian Church. The pagan Celsus (2nd century) or Porphyry (3rd century) were hesitant to accept the gospels as genuine eye-witness accounts; Hermann Samuel Reimarus (in the 18th century) rejected the Resurrection as a hoax; David Friedrich Strauss (in the 19th century) launched a historical probing of the Jesus-narrative, trying to locate the facts behind apostolic interpretations. Subsequently, too, several other projects have been attempted to extract evidences about a historical Jesus from under the monolith of the Christian faith. The 20th century discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi documents, which made known several

extra-canonical Jesus-texts, have provided fresh incentive to this field of investigation.

However, any current endeavour to reconstruct the history of Jesus remains fraught with several problems. For one, though the Jesus-story initially originated and was circulated orally, those early oral traditions have now been virtually erased beyond recovery. Second, archaeological evidence related to the period when Jesus is supposed to have lived is minimal and mostly unverifiable, and, as such, not beyond doubt; hardly any of this could be definitively cited in support of what we have in the canonical texts. So, any effort to locate a historical Jesus today must invariably depend on literary evidences alone. Such literary (written) evidences—whether marginal or extensive—are to be found in both Christian and non-Christian written sources. The more substantial accounts of Jesus's life and career are to be found in the Christian New Testament, but he is also mentioned in non-Christian sources like Tacitus's Roman history or Josephus's Jewish history. Further, the discovery of several extra-canonical Jesus-texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Nag Hammadi documents,¹ have extended the scope of this field of investigation. Among these extra-canonical texts are the 'Gnostic gospels' that had been rejected by the Christian Church as heretical. Though the discovery of these extra-canonical texts

has majorly impacted this field of study, scholars remain divided in their opinions about them. For instance, that the *Gospel of Thomas* (a Nag Hammadi text) has been structured loosely with a slack order and an incohesive rationale has been interpreted by some scholars as signs of its being an early eye-witness account, while the same features have been read by other scholars as evidences of its being an unreliable derivative. To resolve some of these problems, recent scholarship on Christology lays stress on the Jewish origin of Jesus, foregrounding the need to historicize Jesus within the social-political-religious-cultural matrix of contemporary Judea. This emphasis posits the life and career of Jesus—his birth, his childhood, his ministry, his death and the events that followed his death—within the specific context of the contemporary Jewish history. The larger framework of the Jewish struggle for freedom—from the control of Rome and of Rome-endorsed Herod kings and Temple administration—almost makes it imperative to read the role of Jesus not only as a religious preacher or social reformer but also perhaps as a political deliverer; the role of the promised Jewish Messiah (Saviour) was overlaid with political ramifications which Jesus was expected to fulfil.² As such, the Christian Church's later attempts at the 'de-Judaisation' of Jesus and his teachings may well be viewed as manoeuvres to dislodge Jesus from his original Jewish context for appropriation within the canonical history of Christianity, in particular of Pauline Christianity.³

Admittedly, any attempt to historicize the life and career of Jesus today is riddled with multifarious problems that disallow any simple reductive reading. Apart from the monolith of the Christian faith which has

constructed its own Jesus, several other issues also threaten to frustrate any conclusive inferences: the nature of the sources which often suffer from signs of incompatibility; the intervening time-span between the events and their accounts; the reliability/validity of the oral traditions; breaches in evidences; the authenticity of material remains (including relics); varying perceptions/beliefs of the narrators (hence, interpreters) of the Jesus-story; and finally, the 'politicking' in which the Christian Church has been suspected to have been involved.

The gospels and the historical narratives

The substantial 'story/history' of Jesus is, of course, narrated by the Christian New Testament in its 'Jesus-texts'; these seemingly authenticate the historicity of Jesus, of his life, his ministry, his crucifixion, and his resurrection. The Jesus-texts of the New Testament comprise the four canonized *Gospels*, the *Letters of Paul* and others, the *Acts of Apostles* (generally credited to the evangelist Luke) and the *Book of Revelations*. Of these, the *Letters of Paul*, pre-dating the Roman war in Judea (66-73 C.E.), became the first written texts to be included in the New Testament, though the *Gospels* (canonized or non-canonized) were believed to be already available in oral traditions about Jesus during first century. The writing of the Pauline letters before the writing of the *Gospels* (though in oral circulation, the reverse order presumably took place) and, hence, the *Letters of Paul* as written texts entering the New Testament before the *Gospels* had a far-reaching impact not only in the making of the 'history of Jesus' but also in the making of the New Testament.

Of the four canonized gospels, the earliest is believed to be the *Gospel of Mark* (c. 70 C.E.), written most likely by the evangelist Mark, the interpreter of Peter, in a bid to spread the ‘good news’ of Jesus. Scholars hold that the written text of *Mark* is a compilation of oral narratives about Jesus, already in circulation, and may have also depended on an earlier written source, now lost and usually designated by scholars as ‘Q’. *Matthew* and *Luke*, who base themselves on *Mark* and ‘Q’, are thought to have come after *Mark*. These early three gospels are considered the ‘synoptic’ gospels, sharing common sources and providing details of Jesus’s life and ministry. *The Gospel of John*, presumably written last among the canonized gospels, appears to have a somewhat different orientation.⁴ It may not be out of place to mention here that till the second century (as evinced by Justin Martyr), the Gospels were viewed more as memoirs of the various evangelists, and less as Holy Scriptures; however, this second century position was contested in later times.⁵

Again, as may be expected, the narratives in the different gospels are inscribed with the individual markers of the respective narrators, varying from evangelist to evangelist vis-à-vis the contexts of their production and reception: ‘each gospel is in certain and various ways tailored to its expected or intended audience... they do appear to address different concerns and concrete ecclesiastical contexts within the last decades of the first century.’⁶ In this regard, the interpretative dissimilarities between these four gospels and the *Letters of Paul* become so pronounced that it necessitates a probing into the extent to which Paul’s interpretation—with his letters pre-dating the gospels (as written texts)—might have rubbed on to that of the

evangelists in the written version of the Jesus-texts as they now stand in the New Testament; such probing, fascinating as it is, demands a separate study.

Apart from the Christian New Testament, information about Jesus may be sourced from other historical documents (non-Jewish/non-Christian) that date back to the first century. Unfortunately, no official records of Pilate’s period of governance over Judea seem to have survived. Philo of Alexandria, in his historical annals, also does not mention Jesus. But that may be ascribed to the possibility that the cult of Jesus reached Alexandria only after Philo’s death in 50 C.E. However, there are other sources that mention Jesus/Christ. The Roman historian Tacitus (55-120 C.E.), in his capacity as Roman governor of western Anatolia in Turkey, often cross-examined Christians at his court. Commenting on Nero’s persecution of Christians after the burning of Rome, he noted:

Nero fabricated scapegoats—and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius’s reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. But in spite of this temporary setback, the deadly superstition had broken out afresh, not only in Judea (where the mischief started) but even in Rome (*The Annals of Imperial Rome*, XV, 44).⁷

Tacitus’s friend, Pliny the Younger (61-114 C.E.), also had the opportunity to interrogate Christians; he reported back to Rome how these followers of the new faith sang of ‘Christus’ as though he were a god (*Epistles*, XCVI).⁸ Tertullian (160-225 C.E.), a Christian convert and an early church writer, who bitterly opposed heresy, observed: ‘Whatever happened with Christ,

Pilate—himself already a Christian as far as his conviction is concerned—wrote all that to the emperor at that time, Tiberius’ (*Apologeticus*, 21).⁹

The Jewish Josephus, in his Jewish ‘histories’—*Jewish War* (c. 75-79) and *Antiquities of the Jews* (written about fifteen years after the first work)—provides important information about the Rome-occupied Judea of Jesus’s time, though he mentions Jesus only cursorily. His earlier work, *Jewish War*, talks about the three sects among the Jews—the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes; the Pharisees emphasized conformation to Jewish tradition and the codes of law; the Sadducees maintained the Temple rituals; the Essenes, observed the Mosaic laws and lived as an esoteric community refusing to engage in public life. In his later work, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus includes a fourth sect—the Zealots. As Josephus himself was a Jewish Zealot, he would have been privy to much ‘inside’ information.

The Zealots were regarded as a messianic community, who bitterly opposed the authority of Roman governance, of Herodian dynastic rule and of the Temple administration. They yearned for liberation from the control of these centres of power, and they believed that liberation would be achieved by the promised messiah, and for whose arrival, therefore, they waited eagerly. The Messiah, then, was expected to bring about not merely social and religious reformation, but also political liberation; only then would he fulfil his role as the Messiah or Deliverer (‘Christ’).¹⁰ The agitation against the administration was already on the rise by the time Herod the Great died in 4 C.E., when Jesus was only two years old. Next, when Judea was divided among Herod’s three sons, under Roman supervision, the movement gained further

momentum. In 6 C.E., under the leadership of Judas of Galilee, there was a revolt against the census and, more particularly, against the payment of Roman taxes, reminding the Jews that the only master they needed to serve was God and not the Roman emperor. The rise of this Judas is also corroborated in the New Testament: ‘After this man [Theudas]¹¹ rose up Judas the Galilean in the days of taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed’ (*Acts of the Apostles*, 5:37).¹² Josephus mentions that around this time, perhaps instigated by Judas of Galilee, a group of assassins arose within the Zealot community. They were called the *Sicarii*, or the dagger men, in deference to the small curved knife—*sica*—that they used for assassinations and secret killings; in fact, some of them have also been referred to as ‘Iscariots’. The Roman and/or Herodian administration, on their part, continued with their ruthless measures to extinguish these flames of Jewish revolt. In C.E. 30, John the Baptist was put to death because of his criticism of the marriage of Herod Antipas and Herodias (originally the wife of his brother Philip). Around C.E. 44, Jesus’s brother, James, was executed after his messianic mission failed, causing many Zealots and other Jews to flee from Judea. In between, probably in C.E. 33, Jesus himself was crucified. So, Jesus’s life, ministry and death were played out—and, therefore, need to be contextualized—within this politically volatile atmosphere of the then-Judea.

The flames of revolt

In the charged atmosphere of then-Judea, it is most probable that some form of an agitation, political or otherwise, was gaining momentum around Jesus and his

ministry, whether with his consent or not. The 2nd century writers like Lucian and Celsus have often depicted Jesus as a 'fomentor of rebellion'.¹³ And the 18th century Reimarus alleges that Jesus's ministry had ample potentials for fomenting public sentiment against the administration:

What was the meaning of the violence and interruption of order in the Temple? What was the meaning of the seditious speech to the people against the High Council? Why were they stimulated to recognize him alone as their master? Jesus here shows plainly enough what his intention was, but then this was the *actus criticus* and *decretorius*—the act which was to give the successful turn to the whole undertaking, and upon which everything depended. Had the people in Jerusalem followed him and joined in proclaiming him king as the apostles did, he would have had all Judea on his side, the High Court of Justice would have been overthrown, and Jesus, together with his seventy chosen disciples, would have been placed in the Synhedrion instead of the Pharisees and the learned Scribes.¹⁴

In the New Testament, there is at least one occasion when, after announcing how he would be 'reckoned among the transgressors' in tune with the scriptural prophecies, Jesus is found to instigate his disciples to take up arms:

...and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. / For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, *And he was reckoned among the transgressors*: for the things concerning me have an end. / And they said, Lord, behold here *are* two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough. (*Luke*, 22:36-38; emphasis added)

If he knows that he would be considered a 'transgressor', his provoking of his followers to take up the sword takes

on a political significance. Moreover, Jesus is shown to be fully aware of the special role that has been assigned to him as the promised Messiah. At one point, he deliberately asks his disciples what they thought of him:

And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? / And they answered, John the Baptist: but some *say*, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. / And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. / And he charged them that they should tell no man of him (*Mark*, 8:27-30; also in *Matt.*, 16:20 and *Luke*, 9:21-22).

When Peter directly calls him 'the Christ' (Saviour), he asks the apostles to keep this knowledge to themselves. Yet, in the final stages of his career, we find him knowingly enacting the designated role of the Messiah (as prophesied by the Prophets). Two events stand out in particular. The first is his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, riding a donkey, as a king (*John*, 12: 14-16; see also *Mark*, 11:1-10; *Matt.*, 21:1-11; *Luke*, 19: 29-40), fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah.¹⁵ The second is his cleansing of the Temple, by driving out traders and money-changers installed there by the Temple authorities, in particular the high-priest Caiaphas (*Mark*, 11:17; *Matt.*, 12:13; *Luke*, 19:45); during this event, Jesus consciously repeats words used by Isaiah and Jeremiah.¹⁶ Jesus's preaching of the 'Kingdom of God/heaven is at hand' is an echo of the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel' (*Mark*, 1:15; see *Matt.*, 4:17, *Luke*, 18:17; cf.2

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Thessalonians, 2:2: ‘...the day of Christ is at hand’). In one of the synoptic gospels, at least on one particular occasion, an interiorization of the kingdom of God has been suggested, almost in the manner of the Gnostics:

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: / Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the *kingdom of God is within you*. (*Luke*, 17: 20-21; emphasis added).

Such messianic rhetoric and/or action could mean sedition in Rome-occupied Judea, for these could be interpreted as anti-establishment, and therefore anti-Rome, anti-Herod, anti-high priest. The gospels show that not only was there strong opposition to Jesus’s ministry, but repeated attempts were also made to have him arrested, put out of the way, and even killed. The synoptic gospels show how his authority (as Messiah) is directly challenged:

And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, / And say unto him, *By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?* (*Mark*, 11:27-28, emphases added; cf. *Matt.*, 21: 23-27; *Luke*, 20: 1-8)

Jesus was even threatened with stoning to death for claiming to be God: ‘The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God’ (*John*, 10:33). The customary Jewish punishment for blasphemy was stoning to death. Interestingly, however, the death sentence passed on Jesus was the crucifixion, the Roman execution meant for rebels and insurgents, particularly those

who opposed the *pax romana*. Samuel Brandon points out that ‘the fatal sentence was pronounced by the Roman governor and its execution carried out by Roman officials’, and unhesitatingly concludes: ‘It is certain that the movement connected with [Jesus] had at least sufficient semblance of sedition to cause the Roman authorities to regard him as a possible revolutionary and, after trial, to execute him as guilty on such a charge.’¹⁷ According to the New Testament, Jesus was crucified alongside two thieves; the original Greek text reads *lestai* which can simply be translated as ‘brigands’ / ‘bandits’, but in a more particular Greek usage of the term it was the official name reserved for Zealots. These two ‘thieves’, then, may well have been Zealots / freedom fighters, whom Rome saw as terrorists deserving death. Under such circumstances, Jesus’s crucifixion in their company becomes loaded with further political implications. For that matter, Barabbas, who is set free in exchange for Jesus, in the Greek original is said to be a *lestos*; the Gospels describe him usually as a ‘robber’ (*John*, 18:40), but it is highly probable that he, too, was a Zealot. In fact, if *Matthew* refers to Barabbas as ‘a notable prisoner’ (*Matt.*, 27:16), *Luke* mentions that he had been charged with sedition (‘Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison’: *Luke*, 23:19; emphasis added). In fact, Zealots were known to have been among Jesus’s followers as well: one is Simon Zelotos/ *xeloten* (‘Simon, called the Zealotes’: *Luke*, 6:15); another is Judas Iscariot.

The crucifixion

The crucifixion, the Roman death sentence for a Jewish insurgent, seems to

have been applied to Jesus in much the same manner. Jesus's ministry and his deliberate playing out of the role of the 'King of the Jews' (in accordance with Old Testament prophecies) were possibly construed as espousing the cause of the colonized Jews against Roman occupation. By preaching about a Jewish kingdom of heaven, by entering Jerusalem as the 'king', and by challenging the prevailing customs of the Temple, Jesus seemed to be making a political statement and posing a public threat to the authority of Rome, of Herod and of the Temple (when both the Herodian dynastic rule and the Temple administration had the support of Rome). Though Pilate is shown in the Gospels to be washing his hands of the matter related to the crucifixion,¹⁸ the inscription which he ordered to be placed on Jesus's cross read 'INRI' ('Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum' or 'King of the Jews'). This was Rome's deliberate mockery of one who was hailed by many as the promised Messiah (and hence, the 'King of the Jews'); and this mockery was perpetrated by none other than Pilate himself. If the evangelists' Gospels remain somewhat non-committal on this matter, recent scholarship takes a more unequivocal stand: 'his [Pilate's] insistence that the sign KING OF THE JEWS remain on the cross reveals that he *had* not washed his hands of Roman law, which was very specific. By its provisions, Pilate's task was clear: he had to crucify Jesus.'¹⁹ Jesus's crucifixion, then, was Rome's retaliation to clamp down the rebellious urges of the Jews, and erase all Jewish publicity about the coming of the Messiah.

However, Jesus's crucifixion did not mean an end of insurgency in Judea. Several subsequent Jewish movements with messianic orientation were launched, with

more explicit political agenda. As indicated above, the Zealot movement had been active since C.E. 6, was raging during Jesus's lifetime, and within thirty years of his crucifixion the Jewish War in Judea broke out. This war (66-73 C.E.)—primarily led by Zealots and anti-Roman priests—became so hostile that the Roman emperor Nero was compelled to send an army under Vespasian (who himself later became emperor) to quash the rebels, take control of Jerusalem, and destroy the Temple. Another revolt surged in Alexandria in 115 C.E. led by Lucias, who titled himself the 'King of the Jew', but his defeat resulted in the eviction of the Jewish community from Egypt. Yet another uprising erupted between 131 and 135 C.E. under the leadership of Simon Bar Kochba ('Son of the Star', an epithet for the king of the Jews). This last movement, in fact, was able to oust the Roman governance from Jerusalem, and even install a Jewish civilian administration—though temporarily—for about two years. Eventually, the movement was mercilessly crushed by the Roman army of Emperor Hadrian in 135 C.E. Simon Bar Kochba and his followers were killed, and Hadrian renamed Judea as Palestina (now Palestine).

The resurrection

As was stated at the very start of this paper, if Jesus was crucified and killed on a Friday (Good Friday), he is believed to have risen from the dead three days after. This event of the Resurrection is now celebrated on Easter Sunday, that is the Sunday following Good Friday. The Resurrection may well be considered the corner-stone of the Christian faith, as it appears to prove beyond doubt Jesus's status as the Son of God, who was able to resurrect himself, three days after his death on the Cross.

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However, apart from those who followed Jesus and believed his teachings, the rest of the Jewish community of Jerusalem mistrusted the possibility of Jesus raising/resurrecting himself from the dead. The German Enlightenment philosopher Reimarus, who dismissed the Resurrection as a hoax, records:

...the saying, which had become current among the Jews, namely, ‘that the disciples had come by night and stolen the body, and afterwards said he was risen,’ remains not only quite possible, but highly probable.²⁰

This suspicion of the Jews has found its way even into one of the synoptic gospels where the chief priest and the Pharisees are shown to be requesting Pilate: ‘Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead...’ (*Matt.*, 27:64; emphasis added).

The problem is compounded by the fact that while the Crucifixion is recorded in public documents, no such public record is to be found for the Resurrection. Even in the New Testament—the only source that mentions the Resurrection—the resurrected Jesus appears only to a select few (among his followers): ‘Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God ...’: (*Acts*, 10:41; emphasis added). In subsequent periods, when the apostles tried to preach to non-Christians, their Resurrection discourses were often met with disbelief, even outright derision: ‘And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter’ (*Acts*, 17:32). Noting the telling fact that even ‘(t)he canonical authors make no claim to be eyewitnesses’, scholars go on to add their own observation: ‘indeed it remains unclear if there could have been any’.²¹

For that matter, if we consider the canonical gospels in their accepted chronological order (*Mark*, *Matthew*, *Luke*, *John*), even in them the physicality of the resurrected Jesus is established only by degrees. There is a slow movement from empty tombs (in *Mark*) to tombless sightings (in *Matthew* or *Luke*) to a more tangible presence in the flesh (in *John*). Biblical scholars believe that the original *Mark*-text ended at 16:8. That version mentioned the women finding the tomb empty where they met ‘a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted’ (16:5);²² they are assured by the young man that ‘he (Jesus) is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him’ (16:6) and are asked to report this to Peter and the other disciples (16:7); the frightened women ‘went out quickly, ... for they were afraid’ (16:8).²³ The present version of *Mark* has some additional verses (16:9-20), which scholars believe to have been interpolated later.²⁴ These extra verses depict Jesus appearing three times,²⁵ but the sense of physicality remains muted on each occasion. By contrast, not only do *Matthew* and *Luke* have descriptions of (tombless) appearances to the women and the male apostles but the impression of fleshly presence is also heightened: ‘...behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him’ (*Matt.*, 28:9); ‘Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.’ (*Luke*, 24:39). And, the *Gospel of John* records several instances of the physical appearance of the resurrected Jesus; while he forbids Mary Magdalen to touch him (‘Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father’: *John*, 20:17), he invites the

doubting Thomas to feel the wounds in his flesh: 'Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust [it] into my side: and be not faithless, but believing' (John, 20:27). The question of *touching* or *not touching* presumes the tangible presence of a fleshly body.

A very different position regarding the Resurrection is adopted in some of the so-called Gnostic gospels. Attention may be especially directed to the *Gospel of Thomas*. In this text, seminal importance is given to *gnosis* (experiential knowledge), which remains hidden in the human heart and has to be unravelled: 'Jesus said, Those who seek should not stop seeking until they find. When they find, they will be disturbed. When they are disturbed, they will marvel, and will rule over all.' (Thomas, 2). The knowledge must be incessantly sought, and once revealed, it will both disturb and arouse a sense of marvel. This knowledge necessitates a deep self-probing; the emphasis is on knowing oneself:

Jesus said, If your leaders say to you, 'Look, the (Father's) imperial rule is in the sky,' then the birds will precede you. If

they say to you, 'It is in the sea', then the fish will precede you. Rather, the (Father's) imperial rule is inside you and outside you. *When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty* (Thomas, 3; emphases added).²⁶

Instead of the physical revival, the Resurrection of Christ seems to be conceived here in a more spiritual sense. Jesus is to be resurrected *within* the person through the revelation of the hidden knowledge:

Whoever drinks from my mouth will become as I am; I myself shall become that person, and the hidden things will be revealed to him. (Thomas, 108; emphases added).

The Oneness with God would be made possible through the revelation of this *gnosis*, and Jesus would be resurrected within that faithful devotee who has gained access to the secret knowledge. Obviously, this was a radically different interpretation of the Resurrection from the one found in the canonized gospels. ■

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 These were written in the Coptic language.
- 2 Reimarus holds that Jesus was trying to live up to the expectations of his Jewish followers who regarded him primarily as a 'worldly deliverer of Israel, who was to release them from bondage and build up a glorious worldly kingdom for them' (*Fragments from Reimarus consisting of Brief Critical Remarks on the Object of Jesus and his Disciples as seen in the New Testament*, trans. G.E. Lessing, London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1879; p. 10).
- 3 See, for instance, N.T. Wright, 'The quest for the historical Jesus', *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 3, 1992, pp. 796-802; see also Peter J. Tomson, 'Jesus and his Judaism' and Marianne M. Thompson, 'Jesus and his God', in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Marcus Bockmehl (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), pp. 25-40 and 41-55.
- 4 More than the other three, it insists on the role of Jesus as a 'divine exegete' as the

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- ‘Son’ (1:18), with frequent ‘I am’ statements interspersed; not only does it re-present the divine act of creation (described in the *Genesis*) in terms of the *logos* in the opening section (‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’: 1:1), but goes on to claim that ‘the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth’: 1:14).
- 5 See Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990).
 - 6 Margaret M. Mitchell, ‘Emergence of the Written Record’, in *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume I: Origins to Constantine*, ed. Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 187.
 - 7 Cited in Michael Baigent, *The Jesus Papers* (London: Harper Element, 2006) p. 75.
 - 8 Also cited in Michael Baigent, *The Jesus Papers*, p. 75.
 - 9 Cited in Adolf Martin Ritter, ‘Church and State up to c. 300 C.E.’, in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Origins to Constantine*, Vol. I, pp. 524–537; here quoted from p. 532.
 - 10 *Christ* is derived from the Greek *Christos*, used for the Aramaic *meshiha* (messiah) meaning the ‘anointed one’; in Jewish tradition, any revered person (a rabbi, for instance) would be anointed with holy oil.
 - 11 Theudas, then, preceded Judas of Galilee as an insurgent; the verse, therefore, indicates that there were several uprisings against Rome, and all these were brutally put down.
 - 12 All quotations from the Bible, unless otherwise specified, are from the *Authorized King James Version*, Oxford World’s Classics series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008; originally 1997).
 - 13 As noted in Michael Baigent, *The Jesus Papers*, p. 75.
 - 14 *Fragments from Reimarus consisting of Brief Critical Remarks on the Object of Jesus and his Disciples as seen in the New Testament*, trans. G.E. Lessing (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1879) p. 24.
 - 15 ‘Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey’ (*Zechariah*, 9:9).
 - 16 The Temple is the ‘house of prayer’ (*Isaiah*, 56:7); and ‘Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight?’ (*Jeremiah*, 7:11).
 - 17 *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (London, 1974; originally 1951) p. 102; cited in Baigent, pp. 24-25.
 - 18 ‘So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, ...’ (*Matthew*, 27:24).
 - 19 Michael Baigent, *The Jesus Papers*, pp. 26-27.
 - 20 *Fragments from Reimarus*, pp. 46-47.
 - 21 Markus Bockmuehl, ‘Resurrection’, in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl, pp. 102-118; here quoted from p. 110.
 - 22 In the other gospels, the ‘young man’ of Mark becomes a celestial being(s): ‘the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it’ (*Matt.*, 28:2); ‘two men stood by them in shining garments’ (*Luke*: 24:4); ‘two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet’ (*John*, 20:12).
 - 23 The ending is rather abrupt, breaking off in the middle of the sentence with ‘for’ (Greek ‘*gar*’); see Markus Bockmuehl, ‘Resurrection’, in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl, p. 105.
 - 24 The appended section (16:9-20) is believed to be an ‘early second century’ interpolation: Markus Bockmuehl, ‘Resurrection’, in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl, p. 105.
 - 25 First to Mary Magdalen, then to two disciples, and finally to the eleven apostles.

26 There is a belief among scholarly circles that the emphasis on *gnosis*, and hence on knowing oneself, is a derivative from the Hellenic culture with which the early Christian communities—and the proponents of *gnosis* among them—had close rapport. See, for instance, D. K. Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the rhetoric of legitimacy* (Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 1999); D. Dawson, *Allegorical readers and cultural revision in ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); A. B. Logan, *Gnostic truth and Christian heresy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); R. Lyman, 'Hellenism and heresy', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003), pp. 209–22.

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| <p>1 Sankariprasad Basu, <i>Sahasya Vivekananda</i> (Nababharat Publishers, Kolkata, 2014), pp. 72-78.</p> <p>2 <i>Complete Works</i>, vol. 6, p. 297.</p> <p>3 <i>Ibid.</i>, vol. 2, p. 137.</p> <p>4 <i>Ibid.</i>, vol. 9, p. 24.</p> <p>5 <i>Ibid.</i>, p. 37.</p> <p>6 <i>Ibid.</i>, vol. 6, p. 260.</p> <p>7 <i>Ibid.</i>, vol. 8, p. 305.</p> <p>8 <i>Ibid.</i>, vol. 9, p. 13.</p> | <p>9 <i>Ibid.</i>, vol. 9, p. 28.</p> <p>10 <i>Ibid.</i>, vol. 5, pp. 76-77.</p> <p>11 <i>Ibid.</i>, p. 159.</p> <p>12 <i>Ibid.</i>, vol. 6, pp. 313-314.</p> <p>13 <i>Ibid.</i>, vol. 5, p. 76.</p> <p>14 <i>Ibid.</i>, vol. 9, p. 188.</p> <p>15 <i>Ibid.</i>, vol. 6, p. 337.</p> <p>16 Asim Chaudhuri, 'Swamijir Bangla Chithi—Bhāv, Bhāshā, o Rachanāshailī' <i>Udbodhan</i>, Aug 2019, p. 580.</p> |
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After a four-day stay in Goa, on the day of our departure from there, I was fortunate to meet the Master of the entire spectacular show and Alvares family's illustrious present heir Maendra Jocelino Araujo Alvares. A Bachelor of Fine Arts of the University of Bombay, he is a lover of music, art and gardening. Sant Mirabai on laterite stone—India's longest laterite sculpture—is a great masterpiece among his creative artistic works. He is untiring in his campaign against excessive use of plastic, environmental

pollution and all that ails our world.

When I asked him what message he would like to leave to generations to come, he, a man in his mid-sixties, said, significantly, 'Look after your past.' Truly, Past is our guide—we learn from our Past to shape our Future.

Our tour to Goa would, indeed, have been incomplete, had we not visited the 'Ancestral Goa' and the 'Casa Araujo Alvares'. They greatly helped us understand what the culture of Goa is all about. ■

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