

Christ squeezed in the wine-press distributing his blood to the faithful 15th century 15th cent German manuscript (Jones 7)

# Dhu Shara: Treading the Winepress

# Noah's Plight and Canaan's Doom

Noah is the Hebrew Dionysian ancestor of the great flood, who suffered the fate of castration at the hands of his son of Canaan: Gen 9:20 "And Noah began to be an husbandman and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him."

Jesus, who claimed to be the vine itself, suffered a similar fate at the hands of the Idumean Herod: John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." Luke 23:11 "And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate."

# **Duchares the Edomite Dionysus**

The desert in which John the Baptist preached and baptized lay on the border with Edom, the Nabatean kingdom, devoted husbandmen, whose god Duchares (p 618) "God of Gaia" (Negev 107) a form of Dionysus.



Nabatean tragic mask of Dhu Shara with dolphin (Glueck)

The territory of the desert round Machaerus where John baptized and was imprisoned is right on the border with Nabatea. Herod Antipas was of Idumean (Edomian) descent. John appears to have been sacrificed as a surrogate king for Herod at a feast after challenging his marriage to Herodias, because she had previously

been married to his brother Herod Philip. Antipas' cast-off previous wife was the daughter of King Aretas IV of Edom. This event led to the confrontation which required Antipas' generals to be at Machaerus.

# The Edomite Messiah of the Jews and Arabs

The Lexicon Talmudicum and Talmud babli Sanhedrin 106b, 43a, 51a and the Toldoth Jeshu states (Graves 1946 6, 1953 23, 288):

• Commentators refer to Jeshu-ha-Notzri [Jesus of Nazareth] by mention of the wicked kingdom of Edom, since that was his nation... he was hanged on a Passover eve... He was near to the kingdom [genealogically].

Balaam the lame was 33 years old when Pintias the Robber [Pontius Pilate] killed him... They say that his mother was descended from princes and rulers but consorted with carpenters.

• He was lamed while trying to fly [as were Jacob and Ba'alam].

Gravestone of Julius Abdes Pantera of Sidon Bingerbrück
Germany (Wilson I)

The Mishnah (Baraitha and Tosefta) note the following passages highlighting the tension between conventional Jews and Jesus' followers (Wilson I 62-4):

 "It has been taught: On the eve of the Passover they hanged Yeshu ... because he practised sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray ... Our Rabbis taught Yeshu had five disciples Mattai, Nakkai, Netzer, Buni, and Todah.

 Rabbi Elizah ben Damah is cited asking that Jacob came to heal him in the name of Yeshu[a] ben Pantera. He died being forbidden to do so.

• A disciple of Yeshu the Nazarene is cited in Sepphoris capital of Galilee saying "It is written in your Torah 'Thou shalt not bring the hire of a harlot ...' How about making it a privy for the high priest? Thus did Yeshu ... teach me 'For the hire of a harlot hath she gathered them, And unto the hire of a harlot shall they return', from the place of filth they come, and unto the place of filth they go"





Panthers are also associated with the rites of maenads (Otto W).

The Jewish citing of Jesus as son of a Roman 'Pantera' [panther] has been cited as another term of derision insinuating Dionysian heritage but a Roman gravestone has been found in Bingerbrück Germany for Julius Abdes Pantera an archer of Sidon, dating from the appropriate early Imperial period.

Another Sanhedrin entry 103a by Rabbi Hisda comments on Psalm 91:10 "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" that "Thou shalt have neither a son nor a disciple who will publicly let his food burn (forfeit his salvation in a public display)

like did Jesus the Nazarene". Rabbi Abbahu taught "If a man say unto thee 'I am God' he lieth; if he saith 'I am the Son of Man' he will live to rue his words; and if he saith 'I ascend into Heaven' he will not bring to pass that which he saith". These early entries portray an antagonism which in itself explains the attitude in the gospels is not merely anti-Jewish polemic but genuinely records a spiritual tension that arose from the Crucifixion.

In Jewish commentary, Mary was also described as the 'braider' who may have woven the temple veil and similarly in the Protoevangelium as a kadesha or temple hierodule. The fact that Jewish and early Christian accounts are concordant here suggests a smoking gun. Jesus' brothers all appear to have been Nazoreans with leanings to an Essene way of life. The holy ones were partial celibates who had transitory relations with women purely to beget offspring. This raises the interesting possibility that the mystery surrounding Mary's pregnancy may stem from her relations to the holy ones.

## The Edomite Messiah of the Our'an

Likewise the Qur'an refers to Jesus as Isa (p 644) after Esau the red man of Edom. It thus appears that both the Jews and the Arabs recognized the Edomite character of Jesus' mission in a way not understood by Christians themselves.

# The Edomite Dionysus of Revelation

This personage is clearly referred to in Isaiah 63:1 "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come".

We thus see immediately that the terrible Lord of the apocalypse, the Christ of the second coming is standing directly in this Dionysian tradition in Revelation 19:13: "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word

of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords".

Both of these references are exclusively Dionysian in character, both in the winepress and the blood of vengeance of the redeemer as we shall see. The reference to Edom also indicates a specific knowledge of the Nabatean Dionysus Dhu Shara.

This type of language was also central to the earliest aspects of Christianity even before the four gospels we use for our main picture of Jesus were ever written. The earliest and most ancient invocation to Jesus in Christianity is believed to be "Jesus is Lord", and more specifically "Come Lord Jesus." (Spong 1994 144). This is precisely the maranatha - "The Bridegroom cometh".

This same language has always been central to the rites of Dionysus. In Elis a dancing chorus of women invoked the god with the words: "Come, Lord Dionysus". He is described as "the god who comes, the god of epiphany, whose appearance is far more urgent, far more compelling than that of any other god". (Otto W).

# The Lord of Miraculous and Maddening Dread

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt 24:27)

Christians are used to perceiving Jesus as the blood of the lamb, the meek, forgiving, forsaken, accursed, and redeeming bridegroom of the Church. Yet they equally imbue the Christ of the apocalypse as the ultimate in the vengeful madness - a phase of complete cosmic rupture and strife in which even the heavens roll up as parchment and the stars fall from the sky. Yet to the Jews he was a necromancer who cast out devils with Ba'al Zebul, the Lord of Flies - a magician of ill repute.

Dionysus "most gentle and most terrible". Euripedes

"The inner force of this dual reality is so great that he appears among men like a storm. All tradition, all order must be shattered. Life becomes suddenly an ecstasy an ecstasy of blessedness, but an ecstasy, no less, of terror. His appearance is startling, disquieting, violent. It arouses opposition and agitation. Right at his birth gods arise as his enemies. Terrible disturbances are engendered in his vicinity. And in this way, even the revelation of the god who has become a man creates wild emotion, anger, and opposition among mankind. The god appeared with such wildness and demanded such unheard-of things, so much that mocked all human order, that he first had to over-power the hearts of men before they could do him homage." (Otto W).

It is precisely these utterly compelling features of Jesus which have led orthodox Christians to say he was more than just an historical prophet, more than a Jewish flesh and blood messiah - the very only-begotten Son of God - just as Dionysus was the son of an equally authoritarian father Zeus. The son of a virgin birth to a mortal mother Mary by divine intervention just as mortal Semele (although a demi-Goddess like Mary is today) was impregnated by Zeus. The Dialogue of the Saviour conveys an image of the destruction of woman suggestively echoing the birth of Dionysus in the destruction of Semele by Zeus' bolt of lightning, revealing himself to her as he did to Hera: "Matthew said: "Destroy the works of womanhood". The Lord said. "Now a true word is coming forth from the Father [to the abyss] in silence with a [flash of lightning] giving birth" (Robinson 254).

In all his most miraculous and fearsome aspects Jesus is manifesting exactly as the Dionysian chaos bridegroom of fertility has done before him, for Dionysus although described as a new and alien God was the primal sacrificed heroic consort of the ancient goddess, first born in Zeus' rape of Persephone, reincarnated to Semele in a second coming to become Dionysus 'twice-born' the unspeakable manifestation of all that is awesome and terrifying in the patriarchal Godhead. Otto W describes his advent as 'the epiphany of miraculous dread' ruler of the fifth age.

Everywhere Jesus went he raised controversy to an intensity that brought everyone to the brink of violence. Many times in John they sought to stone them. His messianic reading at Nazareth in Luke was so offensive to Jewish ethnic sentiments they sought to throw him of a cliff. All these tensions are characteristic of the madness stirred up by Dionysus. Jesus was the winebibber who didn't keep the cultural norms, just as Dionysus rampaged in the forest glens to the consternation of conventional society. It is Jesus who makes outlandish blasphemous claims to be the very the Son of God standing before mankind, soon to be destroyed again:

The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber ... but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast (Luke).

Dionysus is the 'liberator', the God of advent. Despite being older than history, an Adam 'before Abraham was' the ancient consort of the Goddess, he is newly transformative and urgent. His mission is a cultural collision. Jesus' crucifixion is the great passion drama of history played out on the 'cosmic stage'. But it is to Dionysus that we owe the tradition of the passion in the birth of Greek tragedy.

Despite the heritage of Jesus' band of twelve apostles, these followers are by no means fully aware of his mission and all are scattered, deny him or are induced by his own maddening passing of the sop to betray him. Just as all betrayers of Dionysus were torn apart, Judas spilled his guts in the field of blood. It was however the maenads of Jesus who really knew the inner truth. It was the women of Galilee who ministered to him of their substance, who, unlike the scattered sheep of his disciples, were present at his Crucifixion, the three Marys who gathered him and spirited him, and Magdalen who pronounced his exaltation.

There are many, many aspects of the enigma of Jesus, from his epiphany on the day of the festival of Dionysus, through the "true vine", the eucharist, his virgin birth from a mortal mother and a transcendental father, his sudden coming and the violence of his death in a tragic passion drama, just as Dionysus was torn to pieces and was the progenitor of Greek tragedy, his magical nature, his band of supporting women, his destiny to be the ruler of the world as the son of the father God, and last but not least the presence of Dhu Shara a form of Dionysus as the God of Edom,

which attest to a secret tradition or inner mythology of Dionysus in Jesus.

## The Bread of Heaven and the True Vine: Tammuz and Dionysus

The winnowing fan is characteristic of both Tammuz and Dionysus the dying gods of bread and wine who are combined in the two substances of the eucharist.

"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable" (Luke 3:16).

John 6:53 takes things even further. He has Jesus quote the most outlandish carnivorous, blasphemous statement in which the flesh the blood and the bread of heaven are all intermingled in one sacrificial metaphor: "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever".

The breaking of the bread for the five thousand "men, not counting women and children" (Matt 14:13, Mark 6:44, Luke 9:14, John 6:10) is a ritual episode, the first great communion service, rather than a miracle, with the numbers of people and baskets having ritual significance. It is recorded in all four gospels, so it is a pivotal episode, like the crucifixion. However it is clearly a Dionysian or Tammuz-like manifestation as John's bread of heaven is the flesh of the redeemer. It also has precedents in the Old Testament (2 Kings 4:42, Psalm 78:20, Psalm 105:40). The bread of heaven is the word of god, manifest in the communion wafer for which a loaf or two could easily feed 5000.

It is significant that the disciples themselves did not see the episode of the feeding of the 5000 as a miracle. When Jesus is purported to walk on the water, theystill did not belive the loaves: Mark 6:51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened. Even when the second bread-breaking occurred, the disciples still had so little belief in Jesus actual powers of feeding the hungry that they mistake the bread of the Pharisees for a comment about their lack of bread on the boat.

# Water into Wine and the Epiphany

One of the central themes of Dionysus is water into wine the other is his advent or epiphany. Not only did Jesus perform both, but he did them on the day of Dionysus. John 2:1 "there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: ... And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. ... Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. ... When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was.

"The Epiphany is a feast of the Christian calendar celebrated on January 6. The word comes from the Greek and means 'advent' - 'manifestation,' 'appearance,' or 'revelation.' The observance originated in the Eastern church, and at first celebrated

the total revelation of God in Christ. Later it focused upon two events of Jesus' ministry, his baptism and the changing of the water into wine at Cana of Galilee. Interestingly, a similar festival of Dionysus, the wine god, was kept on this day in the Aegean Islands and Anatolia. When the observance of January 6 spread to the West, it became associated with the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus' (Grollier).



The Marriage at Cana (Wilson I)

"The Epiphany was the very day of the feast of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine: In fact the motif of the story, the transformation of water into wine, is a typical motif of the Dionysus legend, in which this miracle serves to highlight the god's epiphany. "Plainly put, in the legend of the marriage at Cana Jesus reveals his divine power in the same way that stories had told of the Greek god Dionysus. ... On his feast day, Dionysus made empty jars fill up with wine in his temple in Elis; and on the island of Andros, wine flowed instead of water from a spring or in his temple. Accordingly, the true miracle of the marriage feast at Cana would not be the

transformation by Jesus of water into wine, but the transformation of Jesus into a sort of Christian wine god" (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 81). The 'water into wine' is stated to be one of the first of the many bizarre miracles of Dionysus (Briffault 3 130). It was also Jesus' first miracle entry in John from an even older list of Jesus miracles, the second of which is the cure of the son of the official in Capernaum.

This leaves the question wide open as to whether the entire episode is invented by later gospel writers. However it does apparently come from a previous miracle list and the involvement of Jesus' mother is more than interesting: John 2:4 "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." This miracle comes at the very beginning of Jesus' mission, in fact three years before his crucifixion according to John and two years before his baptism according to synoptic reckoning. Mary is a figure, who outside the birth sequence, and the odd unsuccessful visit by 'thy mother and brethren' is virtually absent elsewhere. Yet here we find the mother commanding the messiah to perform a Dionysian miracle as if it is she who is assigning him to his destiny.

#### The Parables of Vine and the Blood

And new wine is not put into old wineskins, lest they burst; nor is old wine put into a new wineskin, lest it spoil it. (Thomas 47)

This parable of Jesus, despite his claim "I have not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them" spelled the schism between the old tradition and the new. The changing of the guard at the core of Christianity is located in a wineskin.

"I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated

from the bubbling spring which I have measured out" (Thomas)

Jesus sayings are liberally interspersed with a variety of metaphors of the vine and the husbandman:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman (John 15:1).

The parable of God's response to Jesus' death is also the parable of the husbandman of the vineyard and his heir, just as Dionysus was the heir of the vineyard:

"But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be our's. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others." (Thomas)

He elaborates the relationship of the vine into a central motif: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches".

, "A grapevine has been planted outside of the father, but being unsound, it will be pulled up by its roots and destroyed." (Thomas 40)

Eucharist 2nd century fresco Priscilla catacomb (Wilson I)

### The Body and Blood of the Eucharist

The Eucharist is the central substance of Christian communion. The eucharist is almost the common denominator of all Christian worship. It is regarded as the body and blood of Christ in a very carnivorous way. The



synoptic gospels have the last supper portrayed as a blood atonement:

Mark 14:22 "And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many".

This blood fest goes back earlier to Pauline origins: 1 Corinthians 11:23 "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body (soma), which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." The apocalyptic purpose of the eucharist is then revealed "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

There is however a deep continuity with the Jewish Kiddush. The Jewish and Christian liturgies remain very similar to this day.

The Jewish Kiddush blessing [1] at the Sabbath, or eve of a major festival, has

close correspondence to the Christian blessing of the Eucharist [2] although it is, by contrast, not conceived as a blood atonement of a human sacrifice:

1. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, through your goodness we have this
wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. Blessed are you,
Lord God of all creation, through your goodness we have this bread to offer,
which earth has given and human hands have made.

Damascus Rule also states a bread and wine sacred repast with very specific protocols involving the 'messiahs' as officiants: "Whenever as many as ten shall gather together for a banquet, they shall take their seats in order of precedence, nd the priest and the messiah shall preside. The company may not touch the bread and the wine till the priest has blessed them and taken some - after which the Messiah first takes some, then the others in order of rank".

These rankings suggest that when the disciples disputed over dinner and Jesus said the first shall be last, it was a reaction to this traditional Essene protocol and that Jesus was breaking these norms as well as challenging the Pharisee and particularly Sadducee norms.



The Last Supper - Church of the Nativity Bethlehem (Phaidon)

The Didache from first half of the 2nd century, an early Christian text, reflects strongly the Manual of Discipline. "We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the Holy Vine of David thy child and concerning the broken bread: We give thee thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy child". The Christian atonement is missing here and although attributed to Jesus may thus have arisen later. The Didache makes no reference to the death of Jesus and has no

notion of a divine, sacramental food.

The Ebionites (deserving poor) an ancient Jewish Christian sect associated with Jesus' brother James, the first bishop of Jerusalem illustrate the Jewish Christian perspective well. They interpreted the Eucharist as a memorial of Jesus, substituting a chalice of water for the chalice of blood. They did not view Jesus' death as a bloody act of atonement. The Ebionites followed the Elchasaite vision of the Christ as the recurrent 'secret Adam' (p 747) a supernatural figure which imbued Jesus at his baptism (adoptionist) and left him at the crucifixion. They also believed the spirit entered Jesus at his baptism and left him at the Crucifixion.

Some people thus see the Pauline interpretation of the eucharistic communion as a

Hellenistic transformation of the Jewish tradition into a more Greek (and hence Dionysian) style. Some early Church fathers specifically compared the communion to the *epoptea*, the inner sacred repast of the mysteries, in which Dionysus is supposed to have participated at Eleusis. However one has to be careful assuming the Pauline interpretation is an amended tradition. Paul himself derived his most intimate experiences although he was a 'born again' who never met Jesus, by travelling to Arabia. He is thus likely to have come into contact with the Arabian aspect of the tradition as well as the Essenes of the Damascus covenant. The divergence between the Jewish Christian following and the Pauline tradition may be thus primary and run all the way back to Jesus own controversial and socially transcending teachings.



The Supper at Emmaus - Caravaggio (Hendy 127)

# Dining with the Risen Christ

Luke conveys the sacred meal as a central motif in the coming Kingdom: 22:28 "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom".

John Spong (1994 198-209) notes that the sacred meal is not just a ritual instituted by the living Jesus but is also the central motif in the manifestation of the resurrected Christ in which "their eyes were opened" just as did Adam and Eve when they ate the forbidden fruit: Luke 24:30 "And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

"And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight".

Spong comments as follows (1994 205): "Luke was saying, it seems to me that eating and drinking at the Lord's table was part of what it meant to be in the Kingdom of God. That in turn seems to suggest that in the act of eating and drinking in the name of the Lord, here and now, we are sharing a foretaste of that kingdom. Perhaps in such a setting our eyes might well "be opened" to behold the one."

Likewise in John 21:4 it is the dining which reveals the Christ: "But when the

morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. ... And he said, 'Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes'. ... As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. ... Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, 'Who art thou?' knowing that it was the Lord."

In Acts again, the link between the sacrifice of the accursed and experiencing the resurrected Christ through eating and drinking the sacred substance with the redeemer is the central key: 10:39 "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."

# The Acts of Euripedes

In Acts 9:5 we find a remark that Jesus is supposed to have made to Paul as he lay on the ground: "It hurts you to kick against the pricks". This is a quotation from The Bacchae by Euripedes (d. 406 B.C.). It's no surprise to find a quotation from ancient literature; the only peculiar thing is that Jesus should quote a Greek proverb to Paul while speaking Aramaic ("in the Hebrew language"). But the really strange thing is that with both Jesus and Euripedes we have the same "familiar quotation" and the same situation. In both cases we have a conversation between a persecuted god and his persecutor. In Euripedes, the persecuted god is Dionysus, and his persecutor is Pentheus, king of Thebes. Just like Jesus, Dionysus calls his persecutor to account: "You disregard my words of warning. and kick against necessity [literally 'against the goads'] a man defying god". Jesus even uses the same plural form of the noun (kentra) that Euripedes needs for the meter of his line (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 163).

The Acts of the apostles were mighty, when they prayed, there was an earthquake (4:31). When necessary, it could quake again, so as to free them from their chains and open their prison doors: "But around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's fetters were unfastened" (16:25-26). The scene continues as in The Bacchae (which Jesus had already quoted on the occasion of Paul's conversion). Euripedes writes of the maenads who were being kept in the city's prison: "The chains on their legs snapped apart / by themselves. Untouched by any human hand, / the doors swung wide, opening of their own accord" (Euripedes, The Bacchae, Ranke-Heinmann 1992 169).

### The Lord of the Sabbath

And he took him and withdrew and told him three things.
When Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him,
"What did Jesus say to you?" Thomas said to them,
"If I tell you one of the things which he told me,
you will pick up stones and throw them at me;
a fire will come out of the stones and burn you up (Thomas)

Jesus adopted his charismatic mission of controversy as an atonement for the confusion of the people's own vision - to represent himself as the Life and the Light

who ends the rule of Belial or Satan, while promoting chaos and discord in the style of Zechariah's 'foolish' or 'worthless' shepherd. While it might seem inconsistent to act as the Lord of Chaos while pretending to the Divine Order, this is the paradox of the Suffering Servant who must draw upon himself the sins of the people to die 'that the whole nation perish not.' (John 11:49).

Jesus admits as much in the Gospel of Thomas 28 "I took my place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in flesh. I found all of them intoxicated; found none of them thirsty. And my soul became afflicted for the sons of men, because they are blind in their hearts and do not have sight; for empty they came into the world, and empty too they seek to leave the world. But for the moment they are intoxicated. When they shake off their wine, then they will repent."

This is not the mere act of a parochial insurrectionist of the 'historical Jesus' mold but a great visionary. Galilee was the centre of the Jewish independence movement. Judas was Iscariot, the sicarii were dagger-wielding zealots. "Had he been a mere guerilla leader, as some contend, he could have seized upon the wave of popular support, and then drawn up plans for a rebellion. But whatever John's baptism had instilled in him, it was not of this order" (Wilson I 88-9).

His statements about violence lead to immediate paradox. When he does say Matt 10:34 "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." it is not to overthrow the Romans but to announce he is going to wreak social chaos "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." cf. Luke 12:51 (p 579).

Chaos is strongly hinted at by Luke's 11:23 "He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." Yet in Thomas 61 he states "I am he who exists from the undivided. ... Therefore I say, if he is destroyed he will be filled with light, but if he is divided, he will be filled with darkness." Paradox.

In Luke 12:49 "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" However when this 'fire' is viewed in Thomas 10 it means future illumination, rather than present immolation. "I have cast fire upon the world, and see, I am guarding it until it blazes." Paradox again.

A singular indication of Jesus' abrogation of the existing order is his assuming the personal power to forgive sins. This is in Jewish terms assuming the power which God alone has and short-circuiting the justice of destiny: Mark 2:5 "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee' But there was certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?"

It is one thing to challenge the Sabbath by staging a spectacle of gleaning in the fields with his disciples (Mark 2:23), or healing 'in anger' right in the synagogue (Mark 3:1) to provoke his own undoing "And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him", but it is the indulgent way Jesus is represented as describing his personal transcendence which is the greatest challenge to Jewish morality Mark 2:27 "And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." Who is the 'Lord of the Sab-

bath' but the Prince of Chaos?

He was provoking such controversy, his friends tried to rescue him as one possessed, from the insanity he was bringing down upon himself: Mark 3:20 "And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, 'He is beside himself'. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, 'He hath Ba'al Zebul [The Lord of Flies] and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils'. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand." This comment of Jesus is captivating. It is Jesus who is promoting the division. The Pharisees with some justification claim he is possessed for playing the Shepherd of Belial to the hilt, and he tells them that the very division he is causing is really their own evil, driving right into the eye, while whipping up the hurricane.

When Jesus spends his time in disreputable company with a great many publicans (reviled tax-gatherers) and sinners, the scribes and Pharisees protest (Mark 2:16). Even John's disciples comment about his failure to fast. His response is to demure like a Syrian Adonis "Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?" When John's disciples come to question him, he again acts like a performer in a sacred drama. He portrays the people as demanding the performance of the weeping and dying hero: Luke 7:32; Matt 11:17 "They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." This reference to wisdom and the diversity of her children is utterly telling in terms of the narrow interpretation of historical Jesus as Essene.

It is important to understand that the desposyni 'belonging to the Lord', particularly James the Just were very conservative Ebionites in the Essene mold: "He did not anoint himself with oil, nor did he go to the baths. He alone was allowed to enter into the Place of Holiness, for he did not wear wool, but linen, and he used to enter the Temple alone, and was often found upon his bended knees, interceding for the forgiveness of the people, so that his knees became as callused as a camel's, because of the constant importuning he did and kneeling before God and asking forgiveness for the people." (Eisenman 311). Later when he is asked to 'stand on a pinnacle of the temple to restrain the people, who are going astray after Jesus as though he were the Christ' on the Passover he says "Why do you ask me concerning the Son of Man? He is now sitting in Heaven at the right hand of the Great Power and is about to come on the clouds of Heaven." Cast down, his legs broken, but still half alive, raising his hands to heaven, he said, "Lord forgive them for they know not what they do" then struck on the head by the club of a fuller, such a club as fullers are accustomed to wring out wet garments with, he died in 62 CE in some awful prophecy of the events to come in 66 CE.

But Jesus in his lifetime had to say the least a strained relationship with his family. Mark 3:31 [Thomas 99] "And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, 'Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee'. And he answered them, saying, 'Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on

them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!"

John 7:2 likewise exposes this divergence of attitude 'Now the Jew's feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, 'Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.' For neither did his brethren believe in him. Then Jesus said unto them, 'My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready'." This follows his disclaimer to Mary at Cana "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come."

Just after the 'bridechamber' episode in Matthew 11:20 that Jesus rebukes the very cities of his home region of Galilee, for not heeding him, despite his hysterical following: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

The gospels show Jesus received with scepticism in his home town of Nazareth. Mark 6:5 "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief." Matt 13:58 "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

In Luke 4:17 Jesus first rea<mark>d</mark>s out Isaiah 61's anointing reading... "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach... the acceptable year of the Lord" pronouncing himself messiah in no uncertain terms... "This day the scripture is fulfilled in your ears"... when they wonder at his gracious words he says "Ye will surely say unto me Physician, heal thyself [possibly referring to his laming] whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country" and continues "No prophet is accepted in his own country." But then he leads directly into enraging the most sensitive of the Pharisees sentiments, claiming both that the previous prophets worked only a few miracles and even then only for gentiles "many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, ... when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way."

In John 6:52 at the synagogue at Capernaum, he saddles them with eating himself as a Dionysian god in Arabian style. "The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. ... These things said he in the

synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum." This episode was such an offensive and hard saying that many of his disciples left him and the twelve only remained because they had no other to turn to.

When Jesus goes down to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, it is clear there is division: John 7:11 "Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people." His message is that he is the personal conduit for a God they know not: "Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come."

When he speaks as the source, Judaeans question his Galilean origins: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. ... Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him"

He then intimates his own destruction as the Worthless Shepherd "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come." But it is when he claims to predate the Jewish nation that the stones are picked up: "Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

And all should cry beware, beware
his flashing eyes, his floating hair
and weave a circle round him thrice
and close your eyes in mortal dread
for he on honey dew hath fed
and drunk the milk of paradise
Kubla Khan - Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Hayward 255)

#### Miraculous Dread

"Rocks split open, and streams of water gush forth. Everything that has been locked up is released. The alien and the hostile unite in miraculous harmony. Age-old laws have suddenly lost their power, and even the dimensions of time and space are no longer valid."

(Otto W)

Jesus' miracles are perhaps the most controversial aspects of his controversial stature. While for some they are the very signature of the supernatural Christ, for others they represent the fairy tales invented after Jesus death by imaginative gospel authors (Ranke-Heinmann 1992).

Nevertheless Jesus' healing miracles are central to his entire mission. This could

not be summed up more accurately than in his conversation with John's disciples:

"the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." (Luke 7:22)

In this he was following a tradition of the nabi, the mouthpieces of god among whom the prophets were numbered, and the hasidim or 'devout ones'. This reputation was a necessary manifestation for a person emulating the tradition of Moses and Elisha. However despite their miracles with serpents and flaming offerings for the rain, their cures were only a leper or two (Numbers 12:13, 2 Kings 5:1-4) (Wilson I 99). However Elisha did raise the dead (2 Kings 4:34) and also made the sighted blind (2 Kings 6:18) and cursed to death by a she-bear small boys who mocked his baldness (2 Kings 2:14). Jesus by comparison was a white thaumaturge. One should note that Bar Kochba was later also anointed messiah but there is no evidence he pretended to any miracle apart for the vain one of winning against Rome.

The anticipation of healing miracle is heralded in the prophecy of Isaiah 35:5 "The eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf man unstopped." One can thus expect the Messiah to adopt the practice of the theraputae.

Josephus refers to Jesus' miracles as 'paradoxical deeds'. This perhaps gets to the core of the issue miracles represent. Both the Christian Acts and the Jewish commentray acknowledges Jesus in terms of his miracles, but for very different reasons: Acts 2:22 "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." The Mishnath "On the Eve of the Passover they hanged Yeshu[a] - because he practised sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray" (Wilson I 62). Crossan (304) points out that the distinction between sorcery and miracle is purely one of social and religious status.

However the evidence for Jesus' miracles is by no means as secure as his sayings in terms of consistent attestation and idiom. There is no reference to them in the Pauline letters. Paul seems even to deny that Jesus worked any miracles (Wilson I 51). It is also clear that the miraculous deeds border on the mythical and that there are obvious motives for gospel writers to attest the divinity of Christ by elevating his miracles to a significance which makes his claims equal to those of other mythical miracle workers.

Crossan (311) has suggested that the miracle stories have become elaborated from a simple five-fold set corresponding to a water miracle, bread breaking and healings including exorcism and raising.

Jesus' miracles also fall into a tradition which was followed by other hasidim. Onias, or Honi the 'circle drawer' was said to have brought torrential rains after being called on to pray during a drought and closing himself in a circle until God obliged. He was later stoned at the Temple in 65 BC for not cursing Aristobalus, when John Hyrcanus beseiged him. A generation after Jesus, Hanina ben Dosa was similarly renowned with a variety of healing miracles, including curing from a distance and mastering the daughter of the queen of demons. "When Hanima ben Dosa died, men of good deeds ceased" Mishnath (Crossan 142-152, Wilson I 83, 108).

The miracles fall into several distinct types. The first are the miracles associated with his birth. The second are the acts of healing and exorcism of demons. These two are both central to Jesus' popularity and credibility as one of the theraputae. They stand as a central aspect of Jesus' style and character. We then have prophetic or ritual 'miracles' such as feeding the five thousand, which look more like an allegorical way of talking about a great teaching, which was in fact, one of the first communion services. They are expounded in symbolic manner, indicating ritual significance for example in the number of baskets. The fouth category consist of nature miracles - apparent acts of shamanic power, some of which defy explanation, such as walking on water. Most of the miracles in this category, including Cana, as well as some of the major healing ones such as Lazarus and the woman with the issue of blood appear to be statements of Jesus' powers designed to emulate other known figures in the surrounding cultural landscape.

Command of the ocean's chaos was a characteristic both of Ba'al and of Yahweh as gods of order, Cana is the central mystery of Dionysus, and the woman with the issue of blood is a statement of healing to rival Aesculapius.

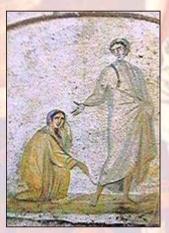


Fig 10.1: Woman with the issue of blood touching Chist's hem 3rd Cent Cemetry SS Peter and Marccellinus (Wilson I 100).

Long before Jesus, Aesculapius was a healer hero who may have lived around 1200 BC, but became deified as the God of medicine, carrying Hermes' caduceus which is still the symbol of the medical profession today. Hippocrates (d c 370 BC), father of the Hipocratic oath of medical ethics, and of careful medical practice, came from an Asclepiad family on Kos, one of 500 cultic and healing centres of the god. The account of the woman with an issue of blood (Mark 5:25, Matt 9:20, Luke 8:43) is an echo of Aesculapius. A statue presumably of this hero was in Caesaria-Philippi, complete with a woman kneeling before him with an herb growing to the hem of his cloak. Eusebius Bishop of Caesarea (d339) attached the woman also to Ceasarea

and claimed she had erected the statue in Jesus' honour (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 86, Wilson I 100).

The miracles surrounding Jesus' immaculate birth such as the immaculate conception, the annunciation, the star, the three wise men, arrival in Bethlehem and so on are paralleled by many other heros and emperors. Suetonius tells us that in a book by Aesclepius of Mendes, Augustus' mother Atia attended a midnight service of Apollo when a serpent glided up, entered her and glided away again, leaving a serpentine mark which made her ashamed to visit the public baths. She dreamed her intestines were carried up to heaven and overhung the lands and sea. Her husband dreamed the sun rose from between her thighs. The inauguration of Augustus was likewise marked by the passage of a comet (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 24-25). The rumour of a son of god becoming emperor had caused a previous Senate to pass an edict against such a possibility. Augustus was later deified as Son of God (Divi Filius) by the Senate. A 7 BC inscription hails him as "Caesar who reigns over the

seas and continents, Jupiter, who holds from Jupiter his father the title of Liberator, Master of Europe and Asia, Star of all Greece, who lifts himself up with the glory of great Jupiter, Saviour.' (Schonfield 199).

Tacitus notes that Vespasian, when entreatied to cure a blind man with his spittle and a man with a withered hand by stepping upon his hand, in honour of Serapis at Alexandria did so after some prevarication, was assured that the event might presage the divine will and that if he succeeded it would bring glory but if he failed, the ridicule would be upon the supplicants. The hand was instantly restored to use and the day shone again for the blind man.

Later, the kings of France would similarly touch the sick, particularly of scrofula (tuberculosis of the lymph glands, or the 'king's evil'), with the cry "May God heal you, the King touches you". Louis XIV touched 2400 in a single day.

Faith healing has been a global practice of virutally every society from the earliest beginnings of human culture. It is by no means unique to Jesus and the theraputae. One aspect of Shamanic healing should be mentioned. Often it does not seek to find the logical cause of the illness, but rather why this person happened to become ill at this particular time. It thus always remains complementary to conventional medicine, looking for the synchronicity rather than the causality, is a world-wide practice of shamanistic healers. Often the sources are found in bewitchment or the casting of evil spells, just as Jesus' cures were generally associated with exorcising demons. Vespasian was likewise attributed miraculous cures, as were the kings of France. Apollonius of Tyana was renowned for raising the dead (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 91). "Let them that bear the bier lay it down, for behold I will stay the tears that are shed for the maiden". He touched her and said some words in secret, so that at once she awakened from what had seemed death, and returned to her father's house. Apollonius is also recorded curing demons, a blind man and a man with a withered hand. Hierocles had remarked that Apollonius compared favourably with Jesus because his miraculous accounts were from first-hand intelligent and reliable observers (Graves and Podro 40-1). Apollonius also ascended to heaven in front of witnesses (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 144).

Faith healing has it's own strange logic: "Crowds didn't stream towards Jesus because he healed many people; rather, because crowds streamed towards him, he healed many people" (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 84-5). Tacitus observes, a failed cure is not blamed on the thaumaturge; the cause is in all cases sought in the sick person (ibid). In the case of Jesus, it is peoples' lack of faith (Mark 9:17).

The Pool at Bethsaida (Wilson I)

The curing of a paralytic at the pool of Bethzatha in John 5:1-4, illustrates a miracle which appears to be supported by archaeological evidence. The five porticos have been excavated this century under the church of St. Anne with some of the stonework dating from Herod the Great (Wilson I 100). But we should stop for a second and consider. John says that by itself, the breath of a wind on the water was also accepted as an effective cure, and that the reason the cripple hadn't been cured before was simply that he was unable to take advantage of the



'angel' of the troubled water. The early Bordeaux pilgrim notes the phenomenon (WilsonI 100) "Further in the city are twin pools having five porticoes, which are called Bethsaida. There those who have been sick for many years are cured. The pools contain water which is red when it is disturbed".

Jesus cured a variety of physical ailments including the blind, dumb, gout, dropsy, leprosy, palsy, fever, dystrophy or paralysis, and menorrea. All these were regarded as possession. Ian Wilson (102) notes that some paralyses are hysterical in origin, and can be induced by stress of wartime conditions which were endemic to the times. There are a variety of conditions, both hysterical and of a wider variety from viral conditions such as warts through the disabling skin condition ichthyosis, to cancer, in which remission can occur from hypnosis or from a major experience of emotional renewal, particularly that associated with fervent expectation of a group. Many ancient cases of 'leprosy' are believed to have been other transient skin conditions as noted by Miriam's quick recovery in a week.



Fig 10.4: Curing ichthyosis by hypnosis (Wilson I).

It is typical of Jewish popular religion and in Galilee particularly to attribute disorders to unclean spirits. Powers of exorcism were common to several known hasidim and appear to represent a traditional skill. Jesus had a characteristic sharp style and command with exorcism "Be quiet! Come out of him!" (Mark 1:26) "Be opened!" (Mark 7:34) "Little girl, I get you up!" (Mark 5:41). Two attributes of

Jesus appear to have accentuated his powers. The first was his conviction that God was acting and speaking through him in amanner unparalleled since thdays of Moses - 'the finger of God' (Luke 11:20). The other was the urgency of the dread "last Times". (Wilson I 108-9).

Of course, exorcizing demons came with the stigma of being regarded as a practitioner of sorcery. Exod 22:18 "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Jesus answers the charge by saying "How can Satan cast himself?" Mark 3:22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub (Ba'al Zebul), and by the prince

of the devils casteth he out devils. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. At the time his friends tried to restrain him: 3:21 And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

Jesus had already established a divergence with his family by Mark 3:31 [Thomas 99] "There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of the Father, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

John 7:2 likewise exposes a divergence of attitude between Jesus and his family: "Now the Jew's feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, 'Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.' For neither did his brethren believe in him. Then Jesus said unto them, 'My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready.'" This follows on from his disclaimer to his mother at Cana "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come."

The desposyni or line 'belonging to the Lord' became the progenitors of the Jewish Christian church, beginning with Jesus' brother James the Just. The strong Essene view of these family members contrasts not only with the synoptic gospels but with the diversity of teachings Jesus expressed across the gnostic and canonical accounts. James is characterized as elect to enter the holy of holies.

At Nazareth Jesus fails to perform. The honesty of the accounts is supported by the failure of the disciples (Mark 9:17) or even Jesus (Mark 6:4) to perform miracles. "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them." Wilson (109) notes that it is just under these circumstances that a hypnotic or trance cure would be most likely to fail, because the awe and mystery is replaced by frank familiarity.

In Luke is a passage in which his physical deformity is hinted at and speaks to their incredulity at his messianic claim: 4:22 "And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?' And he said unto them, 'Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, "Physician, heal thyself". The Talmud called him Balaam the lame.

The water into wine at Cana is another miracle which could be attribtued easily to hypnosis, as it is almost a cliche of the hypnotists art to have a group of people believe thay are becoming very drunk on mere glasses of water. Moreover, drunk people would be even more suggestible. This is at least a more fleshy interpretation than the idea that 'the good wine' is Jesus' message of love.

However Jesus used such powers as evidence of the Kingdom Matt 12:28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Jesus refused to perform a miracle sign for any sceptics: John 4:48 "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." When they ask for a sign at John 6:30 he

offers them only the bread of life. At Mark 8:11 "There shall no sign be given unto this generation". Matt 12:38 "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas". When the Pharisees and Saducees ask for a sign from heaven he says: "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

Significantly, the Apostolic letters say nothing of miracles by Jesus (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 80). This in itself suggests that the raising of the miracles was partly a response to the failure of the big miracle, the Kingdom of God to arrive within one generation, as stated by Jesus.

In John, the major miracles appear to have been derived from an older miracle list. Cana (2:11) is the first and the Nobleman's son (4:54) is the second.

The miracle of the man with the legion of spirits (Mark 5:1, Matt 8:28, Luke 8:26) has an amusing and in Josephus' redacted words 'paradoxical' result. If the legion is a case of multiple personality disorder, his case is legend for he had no less than 6,120 personalities on Roman convention. Jesus calls out the legion and consents for it to go into a herd of swine grazing nearby. Then the herd, numbering about 2,000 rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned. Uta Ranke-Heinmann (1992 89) has a charming commentary on this situation. Given a demonic army of thousands, they neither resist, nor hide despite causing such grevious possession, but rush to capitulate. Why do they address Jesus as the Son of the most high and adjure Jesus in the name of God, when this is what Jesus should be doing to them? Why did they willingly agree to enter pigs at all, and "why did the demons instantly rob themselves of the very biotype they had requested?" Was this really the end of them? "Another disturbing thought is that, with the permission amiably granted to the demons, Jesus did serious damage to the owners of the herd." Mark 5:17 notes that "they began to beg Jesus to depart from their neighbourhood". At best this would promulgate a reputation for sorcery not messiahship, although it does function as a folk-tale of deceiving the devil into a poor bargain.

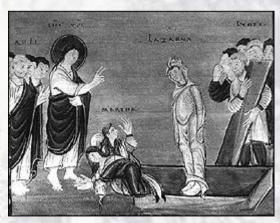


Fig 10.7: The raising of Lazarus and the anointing of the feet of Jesus by Mary of Bethany (Haskins 22).

The three descriptions of raising the dead, the daughter of Jairus, the young man from Nain and Lazarus form a spectrum in which the miraculous becomes successively heightened suggestive of later myth-making by the gospel writers. In the first, we see a healing act in which the girls may just be comatose. Jesus even says "the child is not dead, but sleeping'. There are many conditions from diabetic shock to low blood pressure

which can induce unconsciousness.

The young man from Nain is apparently dead, but the report occurs only in Luke. 7:15. Furthermore, this miracle is clearly cast in the scriptural shadow of Elija's miracle. The bier also closely resembles the sory of Apollonius. One could hardly avoid suggesting that Luke generated his passage directly from Elijah's work in 1 Kings 17:23.

The Lazarus episode in John, like the loaves and fishes has an intense symbolic significance in relation to Jesus own death. It is performed with his intimate associates and co-conspirators, Mary who chose 'that good part' and Martha. Jesus waits theatrically two days until Lazarus is 'stinking' and then performs an act of necromancy fit for accusations of sorcery which dooms him.

A passage found by Morton Smith at the Mar Saba monastery twelve miles from Jerusalem sheds a whole new complexion on this episode, suggesting it is part of a baptismal initiation with potential homosexual implications echoing Mark 14:51 (Wilson I 26): "And they came into Bethany, and a certain woman, whose brother had died, was there. And, coming, she prostrated herself before Jesus and says to him, 'Son of David, have mercy on me'. But the disciples rebuked her. And Jesus, being angered, went off with her into the garden where the tomb was, and straightway a great cry was heard from the tomb. And going near, Jesus rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb. And straightway, going in where the youth was, he stretched forth his hand and raised him, seizing his hand. But the youth, looking upon him, loved him and began to beseech him that he might be with him. And going out of the tomb they came into the house of the youth, for he was rich. And after six days Jesus told him what to do and in the evening the youth comes to him. wearing a linen cloth over [his] naked [body]. And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God. And thence, arising, he returned to the other side of the Jordan."

Clement follows up the quotation with a reassurance that 'Theodore' the recipient of the letter had obviously heard, that Jesus and the rich young man were not naked together during the initiation (Wilson I 27). Some people have suggested a homosexual liaison is implied by Mark 14:51 "And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked."

A second insert is believed to complete another passage in Mark 10:46 "And they came to Jericho: ... and the sister of the youth whom Jesus loved and his mother and Salome were there and Jesus did not receive them; ... and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging."

This episode raises a paradoxical question. Was this the 'beloved disciple' of John's gospel, who was described as a well to do young Jerusalem priest, whom many people have identified with John himself? If so, what light does it cast on Lazarus? 13:23 "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." 19:26 "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!" 20:2 "Then [Magdalen] runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him."

The baptism has also been described with a heavy sexual innuendo by Morton Smith and Bishop Montefiore has suggested that Jesus might have been a homosexual (Wilson I 96-7). Although he is associated with Magdalen, he is unmarried. However the emphasis of innocent nudity in trampling Eden's garments of shame is also associated in Thomas and other gnostic sayings with returning the two to the one - the sexual to the innocent genderless androgyny (Crossan 329).

Morton Smith also suggests that Lazarus may have been put into a death-like trance by hypnotic techniques, which could even be done from a distance by pot-hypnotic suggestion (Wilson I 113). This heavy emphasis on hypnosis however counts as much against Jesus' intentions even more than a straight ritual enactment, because in both cases he is well-aware that Lazarus is far from dead, but in the hypnosis scenario he is a lone deceiver. In the enactment, it is a spiritual mystery play performed by an inner gnostic circle. Lazarus has made the baptism of descent in advance of Jesus.

The sombre aspect of Jesus' miracles is that, despite their purported God-given power, they appear to have been of no avail to him in his hour of greatest need. His own life, by contrast, appears to have been subject to the prophecy of others divined by the second Isaiah, Zechariah and inadvertently by David and other Psalm writers and the inexorable physical reality of imprisonment and execution. Neither in his arrest nor his trial does he display any of his miraculous powers, although these would clearly be of even more significance than one more crucified Jewish insurrectionist. "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."

### The Lord of the Sea

Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. (Ps. 89:9)

Dionysus is specifically a god of the sea, who miraculously turned pirates into dolphins. Jesus was an 'ichthys' - 'a fisher of men' whose disciples were fishermen and who performed some of his most bizarre miracles on the shore or at sea.

"As a prisoner of the Tyrrhenian pirates, Dionysus' knots kept untying of their own accord. When they still refused to release him, Dionysus suddenly transforms the mast and the oars into snakes. Wine suddenly streams forth on the ship of the pirates who take Dionysus along with them. Flute music fills the ship. Vines with swelling grapes wind themselves around the sails, ivy grows around the mast, and wreaths hang down from the tholepins. Delicious wine flows around the ship. Finally he turns himself into a fierce lion and the pirates jump into the sea in terror to become dolphins" (Otto W).

Jesus was a fisher of men whose disciples were fishers on the Sea of Galilee. Many of his parables involve fish and pearls from his first meeting with the disciples to his last resurrected appearance in John.



Dionysus turning pirates into Dolphins (Willis).

With Jesus' mariner miracles we are likewise in the territory of Dionysus. The case of calming the troubled waters (Mark 4:37) is also a universal feature of gods of order, common to Ba'al and Yahweh (p 478) and also the subject of Jewish myth in the Talmud concerning a Jewish boy who prays to Yahweh when the idols fail the mariners (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 95):

#### Psalm 65:6

Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power: Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.

#### Psalm 77:16

The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad.

The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world:the earth trembled and shook.

Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

#### Psalm 89:9

Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

Walking on the water is one of the most conceptually 'paradoxical' of the nature miracles. Jesus is purported to have walked out from his mountain sojourn over Galilee where the disciples were struggling with the weather. He then enters the boat, which miraculously arrives at once at the other shore, where people marvel because they know Jesus didn't get into the boat back on the other side. Matthew again ornaments this tale mythically by including Peter having a try for himself and almost making it, but losing confidence, part way out to Jesus. Although some writers see the mariner tales as fantastic concoctions, calming the waters is a mere matter of psychic synchronicity or if you like 'astute luck'. Walking on the water is a classic tale of nature shamanism, like the Huichol waterfall-jumping (p 149).

"The man is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of small fish. Among them the wise fisherman found a fine large fish. He threw all the small fish back into the sea and chose the large fish without difficulty. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear." (Thomas 8 cf Matt 13:47)

Psalm 69 descends further into troubled waters, intimating Jesus own tribulation:

#### Psalm 69

Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing:

I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried:
mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.
They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head:
they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: ...



Jesus on the ass Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus 3rd cent Rome Vatican (Wilson I 115).

# The Shepherd of Belial

All of these situations are carefully planned by Jesus with one aim in mind to stir up exactly the degree of controversy required to precipitate a combined reaction from all the forces he is challenging, the followers who would seize him to make him king, the high priests of Jerusalem citing blasphemy, the Herodians encouraged by irritated Pharisees and finally the Romans for insurrection, walking intentionally to his doom as a shaman would walk straight into the eye of a gathering tornado that he himself had whipped up..

We can see many features of Zechariah's foolish or worthless shepherd (p 320) now unfolding in what appears to have been a carefully pre-planned act of Dionysian sacred theatre.

Mark 11:1 records Jesus' careful planning: "he sendeth forth two of his disciples and saith unto them, 'Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him and if any man say unto you, 'Why do ye this?' say ye that the Lord hath need of him'." When they go they are challenged in precisely this way and are given leave after their 'password'. Schonfield (270) comments that this, along with Jesus' identifying the carrier of the water pot as a key to the house where the Last Supper was to be celebrated indicates very careful forward planning by Jesus, which the disciples clearly were not party to.

The summer king of the palm fronds is an echo of Zechariah:

• Zech 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

• John 12:13 "[They] took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt."

This suggests that Jesus had not only studied the scriptural prophecies very carefully, but also worked very carefully throughout his ministry to bring the final events to their focal conclusion in a Dionysian sacred tragedy. One can include within this orbit the involvement of Judas as betrayer, which Jesus appears to have very carefully instigated, particularly at the Last Supper - a central point in the recently translated Gospel of Judas.

### Matthew 21:2 makes the mistake of thinking there are two animals:

"Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them ... All this was done, that it might be fulfilled "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

## Luke 19:37 has his supporters publically announcing his sacred kingship

"And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; Saying, 'Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest'."

However much one tries to say that the gospel writers have made midrash salad out of the acts of Jesus, it would appear that these three entries come from a common tradition and are not, as John Spong has ventured to suggest, merely a midrash for a hypothetical later entry of Peter in triumph into Jerusalem during Tabernacles (Spong 1994 258).

Overturning the tables of the money lenders in the temple can be seen as an act of justice against corruption, but it was as much a calculated act of provocation of the Holy of Holies into which no Roman coinage was allowed. The penalty for entering the inner sanctum was death as evidenced in stone. Such an act is sheer Dionysian chaos staged in the spirit of tragic passion drama.



Christ driving the traders from the temple - El Greco (Hendy)

These themes of the passion play continue in the betrayal. The Foolish Shepherd offers himself to the Temple "At what price do you value me?" They answered scornfully that because he is a worthless shepherd who has chattered as idly as a woman they will only give him 30 shekels under Lev 27:8. Zechariah is enraged! He throws the thirty shekels at the Canaanite potter's feet for him to tread into the clay and runs out of the temple still a free man and still a prophet. This passage is echoed in Matt

27:3 concerning Judas and his accursed end: "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter".

Jesus will only reveal the 'whole truth' in the denouement of the passion drama when the Last Days moment comes with his death as prophesied in Zechariah - the new age in which he sits at the right hand of power. And indeed this episode also comes straight out of Jesus' next sayings: Mark 13:3 "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple ... he said "And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

## **Putting Away Childish Things**

Once Acts begins we have passed irreversibly through a subtle doorway, from the existential dilemma of the living messiah to the fantasies of mythology. Jesus is no longer a real character of history, but like the many Gods before him, has become a puppet creature of myth-making in the human imagination. The passive spokesperson for a church which by degrees will commandeer the wild free Holy Spirit for whom he stood in saying apparently through the mouth of the same author "wisdom is justified of all her children."

This raises again and again the tangled questions tied in the bundle of life of Yeshuathe culture shock of the transformative visionary and the inevitable reaction from the dominant order of the day to capture this chaotic source vision of the nabi prophet and encage its message of liberation within the shackles of religion - 'binding together' the fabric into a pagan morass of illusion once more. In this bondage it is not only women who have suffered a travail of two millennia but the Holy Spirit herself, right from the first chapter of Acts.

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven".

Uta Ranke-Heinmann (1992 142) notes: "Though he considers Jesus' role as announcer important, Luke wants to dispatch him quickly to heaven, so as to turn to the coming Holy Spirit and events on earth and in the Church. Jesus' history is over; the Church's history is just now beginning. But in any case, in the middle of dinner Jesus has gone up into heaven. He really ought to have at least finished the meal. We who stand down on the earth and gaze after him are slightly perplexed at such a daring ascent. That sort of trip is tiresome, even if Jesus did have a little something before, and time consuming. We don't know how fast Jesus traveled or flew, and whether he accelerated as he went along. But even if he zoomed at the speed of light, the next heaven is at least a billion light years away. ... Luke's account leads us to conclude that the last meal that Jesus had before taking off for heaven took place out of

doors. Not that Jesus couldn't have flown out of the room up through the roof, but then it would have been harder for the disciples to train their eyes on their ascending master. Commenting on the whole account of the Ascension, David Friedrich Strauss notes with biting accuracy:

"We know that anyone who wants to go to God and the precincts of the Blessed is taking a needless detour, if he thinks this means he has to soar into the upper levels of the air, Surely Jesus ... would not have taken such a superfluous journey, nor would God have made him take it. Thus one would have to assume something like a divine accommodation to the world-picture people had back then, and say: In order to convince the disciples of Jesus' return to the higher world, even though in fact this world was by no means to be sought in the upper atmosphere, God nevertheless staged the spectacle of this sort of elevation." (Strauss 1837 678).

David Friedrich Strauß (1808-74) Dismissed as lecturer at Tübingen University for rejecting as spurious all supernatural elements in the gospel stories (Strauß 1837) one of the first to take Jesus down from the cross, in this case the stratosphere.

take Jesus down from the cross, in this case the stratosphere.
The loss of the academic positions of Srauß, and after him
Renan and in theology of Ranke-Heinmann herself for speaking out in the name of truth speaks for itself.

"The Ascension, like Pentecost, was a wholly male affair. There were no women on hand. Even the angels, who appear on Jesus' launching pad, are expressly described as "men." Discrimination against women in the Church was in full swing: Women may have been witnesses to the Resurrection, but not to the Ascension. Meanwhile, a "sabbath day's journey"



(which was a little over half a mile) away from Olivet, the mother of Jesus sat "with the women" in a room on the ground floor of a house in Jerusalem (Acts 1:12-14). After the Ascension the men returned to this house. Perhaps Mary would have liked to share her son's last meal and to wave good-bye for the very last time, but she never got to. Fortunately, the women were so coldly ignored only by the reporters of the event, not by Jesus himself. That is because the account of Christ's Ascension after forty days is a mere legend" (Ranke-Heinmann (1992 143).

### The Blood of the Redeemer

Without blood there is no remission of sin.

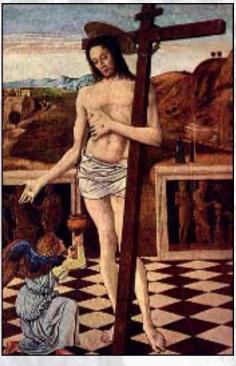
We now enter the full Dionysian messianic pangs a self-inflicted *auto da fe* of religion in the name of blood sacrifice. God is supposed to have given his only begotten son as a sacrifice so that all believe in him should have everlasting life (p 620). This gruesome myth either pits God as the vengeful father wasting Jesus as an instrument of paternal will that death should prevail until redeemed by blood, or God is somehow tolerating this carnage because it manifests the fatal flaw of evil in his own creation. The consequences have been far more horrific that the worst aspects of Dionysian frenzy of dismemberment in the forests and they have spread themselves out in an epoch of demented messianic pangs that have seen more blood flow than ever Dionysus shed. Martyrdoms (p 626), Crusade (p 633), and Inquisition (p 638), witch-burnings (p 643), genocidal wars, the genocide of many pre-Colombian peoples, the Jewish holocaust (p 205) in Christ's name and finally Trinity (p 186), Wormwood and bio-apocalypse (p 10). In this frenzy of the epiph-

any of miraculous dread for which Dionysus was feared in his most horrible aspect the litany of blood has continued unabated in the church - a fetish which the Aztecs (p 119) found disturbingly similar to their own blood cults.

The Blood of the Redeemer Giovanni Belinni (Hendy 55).

The Stabat Mater hymn to Mary says: "Make me drunk with the cross and blood of your son" The Bishop of Aachen comments: "Upon meeting the first person in the morning, I see the Blood of the Redeemer flowing down on him, and I'll know then that we are the redeemed" (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 274).

Saint Catherine of Siena (d.1380) often had visions of blood when the priest raised the chalice during mass. She would see Christ's blood spilling over the altar. Of all drinks she preferred red vinegar, because it reminded her "of the blissful suffering of Jesus. When the host was broken before her eyes, she saw it turn blood red. Upon taking communion she tasted blood in her mouth and had the sense "of receiving Christ, very small and bloody." For her, the wine of the eucharist was more important than the bread, because it expressed better the sacrificing of a victim. For this reason



she always wanted to drink from the chalice at mass.