

JESUS' STENOGRAPHERS

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The Story of the Red Letters

B.J.E. VAN NOORT

STAR PUBLISHING HOUSE
THE NETHERLANDS

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PREFACE

I want to express my gratitude to the members of the high school governing board where I taught. They allowed me to speak freely about writing in Jesus' ministry and to incorporate instruction of the documentation theory into the curriculum for the higher grades. Because of that I was able to develop this approach of the gospels into a full theoretical concept.

With similar thanks am I indebted to the thousands of students who have followed my classes in the course of the years. Their attention to the issue, their questions and their natural acceptance of the documentation theory were real joys to experience as a teacher. In particular it convinced me of the relevance of the subject.

The fellows of the SEON - Society of Evangelical Old- and Newtestamentici in the Netherlands and Belgium - deserve especial thanks. Their penetrating questions and remarks were extremely valuable to consider the subject thoroughly and to develop the documentation theory in all its aspects.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Dean Baerwald whose enthusiasm, expertise and wise advice were extremely helpful in the preparation of the English translation and revision for the American language area.

In preparing this work I had in mind not only those who in some way made Christian work their profession: theologians, theological students, teachers in Christian communities, pastors and youth workers. I am convinced that many other mature Christians also feel the need for sound knowledge regarding the gospels. To make the documentation theory accessible to many people, I have thus tried to present a text that is readable by everyone. I have tried to express

theological ideas and complicated grammatical issues in everyday language where possible. On those occasions where I may have not succeeded sufficiently in meeting that goal, I apologize in advance. With the wish that many may be strengthened in their faith in the reliability of the Biblical words of Jesus Christ, and in the reliability of the New Testament as a whole, I dedicate this book to the readers.

The author

INTRODUCTION

Once, as a child, I got a picture postcard showing the Eiffel Tower. With full attention I looked at the elegant lines of the construction and I was astonished that the entire building was set up with only metal elements. The photograph had been taken in a way that part of a tree was also visible in full flowering, pink blossoms. The entire picture, the tower, the blue sky and the pink tree made an unforgettable impression on me as a child. The splendid image on the postcard made me happy and it gave me the desire to go and see the Eiffel Tower myself at some time. Now, many years later I am thinking back to the experience I had as a child looking at the image on the postcard and all sorts of considerations are entering my mind.

Why did I believe that the Eiffel Tower really existed, just as represented on the picture postcard? On the back I saw a French postage stamp and a French postmark. It was clearly sent from Paris by my aunt; I recognized her handwriting. Why did I believe that the Eiffel Tower was real? I simply believed the people in my acquaintance who confirmed its existence. When I was grown-up, I could go to it. If I would make some effort, I could go and look for myself. That was sufficient. I believed it.

But imagine if, as an adult, I would arrive in Paris and not find the Eiffel Tower there. Yet nevertheless in shops all over the city I could see how postcards were sold with the picture of the tower to send to family and friends far away. What would be my reaction? In the beginning, I would be confused, but then I would become angry and shout: 'What a fake country, what a fake city and what a fake people! It's all fraud. They give their support to a myth concerning a

non-existing Eiffel Tower to make money and to deceive people young and old around the world. Bah! I hate this!

How would I react when a Parisian addressed me saying: ‘What is your problem? The Eiffel Tower doesn’t exist anymore. It is not necessary to have one for sending nice cards with pictures of it for people all around the world to enjoy, showing them the fine and elegant construction of it. In former days the tower did exist, but now it has passed. Why should it be necessary to have a really existing tower? Isn’t it a miracle that so many people enjoy the picture of it even though it is absent? It would be a mistake to not send those nice postcards all over the world and to withhold the beauty of it from the people, wouldn’t it? Isn’t it most interesting how human beings are able to enjoy such a beautiful construction that doesn’t any longer exist?’ I wonder how I would react to hearing a philosophy like that. Would I start to admire the Parisians as really creative people? Or would I, being furious, give him a slap in the face? Or would I shout desperately: ‘Are you mad, or am I?’

Fortunately my reverie is just a fairy tale. Normal people don’t act in that way ...; however, Christians do ...

Recently I bought a new English language Bible. It gave me a rich feeling to keep it in my hands: the soft leather cover, the gilt-edged pages and of course the red characters in the gospels, referring by their color to the sayings of Jesus Christ. A similar feeling came over me as when I, being a child, looked at the picture postcard of the Eiffel Tower and again many thoughts passed through my mind.

The Eiffel Tower does exist; you can go to it and look at it. But how is it with the red characters, the sayings of Jesus? Can I go somewhere to find the original sayings of Jesus? Okay, in my English Bible they have been translated into English from Greek. But when I open the Greek New Testament, am I then facing the original words of Jesus Christ? Can I find them by making some effort, as is possible with the Eiffel Tower for someone who wants to admire it? Everyone who visits Paris wants to see the tower and will not be disappointed, as the tower is there indeed.

But someone who makes the effort to enter theological science to come closer to the words of Jesus, will be very disappointed. Without a blush he/she will be told that the original words of Jesus don't exist anymore. That the gospel writers only wrote down what they thought he said; at best one will add to this that the Holy Spirit has ensured a correct *impression* of their description of Jesus and what he said. Strictly speaking, it is unacceptable in theology to quote sayings of Jesus as his own words. You are not allowed to think that Jesus' original words are still somewhere and can be found by making some effort. That goes too far.

But what about the red letter text, then? It refers to the words of Jesus, doesn't it? Okay, it is translated into English from the original Greek in the New Testament. The authors of the gospels constantly write: 'And Jesus said ...'. Didn't they quote him in all these instances? That is hardly understandable, isn't it? 'No', we hear theologians reply, 'there were no tape recorders or shorthand writers then'. And there the matter ends?

Usually one adds: 'When we are talking together we don't reproduce past dialogues exactly and still we don't accuse each other of lies, do we? E.g. somebody says: Yesterday I saw William and I said to him "Don't run on, William, you know that will bring misfortune." He doesn't pretend that he is reproducing exactly what he said to William yesterday and yet he is not lying, is he?' It sounds okay, but I get the funny feeling that something is wrong, but I don't know what. Why do they print those characters in red, if the real words of the Lord don't exist somewhere? I get the miserable feeling that something is happening as in the fairy tale of the Eiffel Tower: Thousands of picture postcards but no real Eiffel Tower.

In the year 1975 I started to work as a high school teacher in the field of Christian Religion, but at the end of the year I was disappointed and I wondered whether this should be my vocation. I had too little experience, I felt, to work with the youngsters. As a student I had worked hard, and right from behind the books I went in front of the classroom: a great change-over. In fact I had lack of everything. Materials were out-of-date and I lacked social skills. Moreover I had developed more questions concerning the Christian religion during my study time than an-

swers. What did I actually have that I could teach? Having reconsidered my situation, I nevertheless decided to make a fresh start in the year 1976 and I resolved to enter again into the books to seek for the answers I lacked. I had the feeling that my students were entitled to correct answers, especially concerning the authenticity of Jesus' words. In the same year (1976) that I had made up my mind, the book 'History, Criticism and Faith'¹ appeared from an evangelical point of view, with an article by R.T. France about the subject: *The Authenticity of the Sayings of Jesus*. Just recently I took note of the contents. The problems concerning the not existing words of Jesus Christ are exhaustively discussed in it. I quote:

'What were the evangelists trying to do? Too often the conservative student of the Gospels assumes that the answer is that they were trying to reproduce verbatim exactly what Jesus said, a correct transcription of the ipsissima verba [his own words], a sort of first-century Hansard.

It does not take much thought to see that this cannot be right. To begin with, our Gospels are in Greek, and most scholars agree that Jesus normally spoke Aramaic. What we have, therefore, is a translation, and no translation can be exact. This is perhaps too obvious to be mentioned, but it is not always remembered in discussions about authenticity. Whatever we have in the Gospels, it cannot be the ipsissima verba Jesu [Jesus' own words], unless Jesus spoke in Greek.

But this is only the beginning. Where one evangelist draws his material from another, he is clearly not aiming to reproduce it exactly. In the majority of cases the wording is altered, sometimes slightly, often quite considerably. The order and grouping of the sayings also undergoes quite large-scale modification. And if the evangelists were prepared to treat sayings derived from one another with this degree of freedom, presumably they were no more literalistic in their treatment of material derived from other sources, oral or written. In short, and again the point is old and obvious, there is every sign of a considerable fluidity in the order and wording of the sayings of Jesus

1. Brown C. (ed.), 1976, p. 126-27.

in the synoptic tradition. We seem further from the ipsissima verba [his own words] than the mere fact of translation demands.'

This view can still be seen as the main one in evangelical theology. Other quotations are possible, but I don't know any author in the evangelical world who has so properly and honestly exposed the problems concerning the subject. For the sake of completeness it should be mentioned that the author stood up bravely in the essay for the substantive authenticity of Jesus' sayings in the gospels. His position is that *the intentions* of Jesus' teachings have remained entirely.² The question must be of course: Is that sufficient? One who sees a picture postcard of the Eiffel Tower knows that he has the possibility of observing the building by making the necessary effort, but according to the quoted theory it is impossible for the Christian to observe the real words of the Lord, whatever efforts he makes. What he will find is only a look-a-like, nothing more.

The quotation suggests that it is already an old problem, i. e. that we do not possess the authentic sayings of Jesus Christ. When I decided in 1976 to continue to teach the Christian religion to adolescents, I determined to reconsider this old and central problem in theology. I started with the first verses of the Gospel of Luke (1:1-4) which contain the basic ideas about the oldest Christian transmission.

At that time I got a catalogue in which older theological books were offered. I did not have much money and therefore I satisfied myself with the purchase of old but qualitatively good theological works. In the list I found a grammar by professor De Zwaan (1906) who had taught in Leiden long ago. I had heard the

2. I.H. Marshall wrote in the same way about the work of the gospel writers: '... it must be recognized that the gospel writers told the story in such a way as to make clear its continuing relevance for their readers, and therefore they were not bound to reproduce what Jesus said absolutely word-by-word. It was the faithful reproduction of the meanings, not necessarily of the actual words, that mattered.' D.A. Carson a.o., 1994, p. 979.

anecdote that he had written the book when he was still a theology student; it was in fact a translation and revision of the English grammar *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* by E. De Witt Burton (1898). So my interest in the book of De Zwaan had been awakened. And indeed, by that I started to understand Greek verb forms for the first time in my life.

As my attention was focussed on the introduction of the Gospel of Luke, I applied my new grammatical knowledge on the verb forms of it, but the text became only more incomprehensible to me. How often I have turned the words of this Bible passage over in my mind, I don't know. To make it easier, I learned the Greek text by heart so that I could meditate on it at every moment. Slowly an entirely new reality started to unfold. This text spoke of writers, who followed Jesus. With the new insight into the meanings of the Greek verb forms the bits of the puzzle began to fall into the right places.

Having only one text with this content, and knowing: 'One witness is no witness,' I therefore went on searching for a second text with a similar message. That brought me to Hebrews 2:3-4. But two testimonies for an important theological subject are still insufficient. Finally I found a third text: 1 John 1:3-4. These three texts form together the scriptural basis for the documentation theory which says that writers followed Jesus to preserve his teachings in writing.

For my work with high school students, my discoveries had immediate impact. Instead of a weak and hesitating sound, conviction entered into my lessons. The words of the Lord do really exist. For human beings they form the point of contact with the higher (invisible) world as well as with the ordinary (visible) world. I could show my students what the Christian belief really is: Love God (invisible aspect) and your neighbour as yourself (visible aspect). This was no more information concerning Christian confessing or concerning spiritual thinking that asks for approval. With these tools the Christian is placed in society with the authority of Jesus himself. Moreover they can be practised and experienced immediately.

Gradually much research had to be done. My search required a deep breath

because of the mass of problems that arose. After some articles in Dutch theological periodicals, my first book about the subject appeared in 2004 (Dutch). The present book is a revised and enlarged version of it. Remarkably enough, the contents of it correspond very well to the essential subjects which are enumerated by R.T. France in the quotations:

1. '... a sort of first-century Hansard.' Was it usual in the Greco-Roman world to fix the spoken word? If so, how? (Chapter 1, 3 and 4)
2. '... unless Jesus spoke in Greek.' What was Jesus' language in which he taught the people? What are the facts about it? (Chapter 2)
3. '...the wording is altered, sometimes slightly, often quite considerably.' How is it to be explained that the gospel writers so often present differences in the spoken word in the same situations? (Chapter 5 and 7)
4. '...grouping of the sayings also undergoes quite large-scale modification.' How is it possible that so many sayings are scattered all over the gospels instead on corresponding places? (Chapter 8 and 9)
5. '...other sources, oral or written.' What were the sources of the gospel writers and how did they use them? (Chapter 5 and 6)
6. 'We seem further from the *ipsissima verba* [his own words] than the mere fact of translation demands.' It is impossible to reduce the questions concerning the gospels to only translation issues (to Greek - Chapter 7). The gospels form a central role in the entire New Testament, which can hardly be understood without a sound view on the gospels. (Chapter 10)

Many authors have written concerning the question of the transmission of Jesus' word. However valuable their contributions may be, in general they miss the essential aspect that Jesus' words still exist. For that reason I present the documentation theory, as described in this book, offering a proper place to every detail connected with this point of view. This theory makes clear that not only in faith, but also without intellectual concessions, the Biblical words of Jesus can be accepted without any hesitation.

May He who said: 'I am the Bread of Life,' connect his blessing unto it.

1

DARE TO READ YOUR BIBLE!

In the history of Christianity there has always been the need to go back to the sources of the faith: Jesus and his words. Already in the earliest centuries of the church the question arose concerning how reliable the books about Jesus, the gospels, really are. To answer this question another one must be answered first, i.e.: How did the gospels come into being? The resolution of this major question has appeared to be difficult in the past. At the moment several theories exist about the origins of these books. But how decisive are they? Since all theories give different answers, many scholars are not convinced of the trustworthiness of the gospels.

In a modern transparent society it is necessary that Christians develop a clear vision of their origin. It is no longer appropriate to come up with obscure theories concerning the center of the Christian faith: Jesus and his words. We not only want to believe in him and his sayings, we also want an adequate theology to fully justify that faith. That means a journey to find the right answers; an expedition through texts which sometimes don't want to yield up their secrets spontaneously and sometimes also through refractory traditions of opinion; but always an exciting journey.

JESUS' STENOGRAPHERS

1.1 Spectators of Jesus, the first generation

Luke informs us specifically how he wrote his book 'The gospel of Luke'. He speaks clearly about that in the first sentences of his gospel; not somewhere at the back or in some mysterious (cryptic) way:

1. Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us,
2. just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word,
3. it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,
4. that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.

RSV³ Luke 1:1-4

The explanation of the prologue is dominated by the term 'eyewitnesses and ministers of the word'. Since old times one has supposed that this referred to the apostles. Before Jesus' departure they were the eyewitnesses as his disciples and after Jesus' departure, as his apostles, they became the ministers of the word, preachers of the gospel. And so it is generally assumed that the prologue is in fact an introduction to two books: the history Luke–Acts. But this is less obvious than it seems.

A classical author writing a history in two books, would normally have used one title for the entire work, calling the two parts: Book 1 and Book 2 respectively. Moreover the books were always brought out together: Book 2 immediately followed Book 1. Comparing this with the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts,

3. All scripture quotations are from the RSV, unless mentioned differently. The reason for choosing this translation is the literalness especially with regard to the double introductions of direct speech. (See chapter 7.1.)

we immediately see the differences. It is clear that the Gospel and Acts have two different titles, 'According to Luke' and, 'The Acts of the Apostles' respectively. There is no indication in the well-documented history of the New Testament books, that they ever had different names. In addition, these books were never delivered together as one historical work. We have to do here with two different works.

It is true that Acts was written as a sequel to the Gospel, (Luke refers to it in the introduction of Acts 1:1-2), but in writing the Gospel Luke did not intend from the outset to bring out two books. Consequently the prologue of Luke is to be taken as referring to the Gospel and not additionally to Acts. This insight makes it possible to determine some specific expressions of the prologue.

Luke says that many made 'narratives about the things which have been accomplished among us' and further that he did the same: he followed the example of the many (it seemed good to me also). As Luke is giving an introduction to his gospel, a story about the life of Jesus Christ, the meaning of this expression 'the things which have been accomplished among us' is limited to 'the events concerning Jesus from birth to resurrection and appearances'. Consequently the meaning of the word 'us' in 'the things which have been accomplished among us' is strictly limited to the bystanders of the events, the spectators of Jesus, the first generation. And Luke was certainly among them.

The expression 'the things which have been accomplished among us' contains more secrets. The word 'things' is too colorless as the deeds of Jesus are involved. The Greek uses the normal word 'pragma' that is: (a) that which has been done, a deed, an accomplished fact, event; b) what is doing or being accomplished (and so business, matter, affair)⁴.

Even more important is that the Greek perfect is used: 'events which *have been*

4. J.H. Thayer, 1991. TDNT, 1993, VI p. 639 about pragma: 'Luke 1:1 calls the "events" that have taken place among us ...' And with references to Hebr.. 6:18 and 6:13,17 for: '... "things", more precisely "events", "happenings"...

accomplished. The Greek perfect refers to a so called 'resulting state'.⁵ The events were of great impact and they were followed by moments of 'being accomplished' (resulting state): often a gathering of people who were surprised about what they had seen and heard; often with people among them being healed. There was joy, and of course they took time to talk together about what happened. That is the picture we get from the gospels when we think about a resulting state after the events described in them.

When a perfect participle is used the rule is: 'The time of the resulting state is usually that of the principal verb.'⁶ The principal verb is here: 'have *undertaken to compile* a narrative'. So Luke states that in the situations after the events 'many had undertaken to compile (write) a narrative'.⁷ The use of this perfect shows that documents were made during Jesus' ministry and that is very special information. Certainly Luke didn't make a flippant remark in the first sentence of his gospel.

There are more examples of this use of the Greek perfect participle plural⁸: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you!' (Matthew 23:37, Luke 13:34) The perfect participle plural is: 'those who

5. B.M. Fanning, 1990, p. 291 (about the resulting state): 'This is the normal use and it is the most direct application of the threefold meaning of the perfect ...'. Quite late in history (from the third century onwards) the perfect tense suffered confusion with the aorist tense. 'But the question remains whether this aorist use of the perfect appears in the NT.' (p. 300) We think it is correct to take the 'normal use' of the perfect tense as starting point in our discussions.

6. E. De Witt Burton, 1955, p. 71.

7. 'To compile' is here 'to write' as can be seen from verse 3, where Luke says that with his writing activity he did, what the many had done before.

8. In most grammars the Greek perfect participle plural seems to be forgotten, but the rule seems to be that all members of the group (all components) have their own resulting state (distributive aspect). Whether it is about people or about things; each member or part of the group has the resulting state of being sent (Acts 11:11), sanctified (Acts 20:32), believing (Acts 21:20), each heaven (Acts 7:56) or door (Acts 16:27) is open.

are sent to you'. It is obvious that a series of prophets is not meant with a collective stoning of them all together at the end. No, everyone was stoned in his own state of being sent. That happened at several moments, one after another, because they had not been sent out at the same moment. In this case the verb 'to send' refers to several actions of sending and of course to several resulting states of being sent.⁹

1.2 Eyewitnesses and servants of the word

Some people did not write after the events, but *many* did. Many made narratives about the wonderful works of Jesus. Having an insatiable appetite for news and hungry to hear about the great things that God was doing among them, they were used to copying reports. During the events, sometimes only a few people were present, but sometimes crowds surrounded Jesus. Often they felt as if time had come to a standstill and in that situation they took time to add a new report to the narrative they already possessed. And in this manner, many could compile a continuous account of the occurrences. This is the picture Luke shows in the first sentence of his gospel. But there is more.

The second part of the sentence is even more astonishing: '...just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word ...' (RSV). Let us first put this into the active form as it is in the original: '...just as they delivered to us, those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word ...' The term 'eyewitnesses' means: eyewitnesses of the events.¹⁰ From the beginning of the events, eyewitnesses were present. It

9. This grammatical construction is also found in Matthew 5:10: 'Blessed are those who are persecuted [perfect] for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' There are several actions of persecuting, (not at the same time) with several resulting states in which the blessing of the kingdom of heaven will be experienced. 'The kingdom of heaven' does not mean a final transition to heaven as is clear from the verses 11-12. See also Acts 5:41.

is said that the eyewitnesses delivered something unto 'us'. This 'us' is of course the same as in verse 1: the spectators of Jesus. This *us* is not in general 'the Christians', as is often suggested, but clearly the real hearers of Jesus Christ: the first generation.¹¹ So the eyewitnesses delivered a certain transmission to the spectators and many of them made use of it in the accomplished state of the events. Now the question is: What sort of transmission did the eyewitnesses exactly deliver to the bystanders? Was it an oral or a written transmission, or even a mix of them? Of course it was a written transmission, as it is untenable to suppose that the eyewitnesses were in the habit of telling afterwards what had happened to those who were also present. The spectators had already seen and heard that, as they had come to Jesus with no other purpose than to experience that with their own eyes and ears. No, the eyewitnesses provided a written transmission for those who were present at the events. We may speak therefore of *public records* made by the eyewitnesses. Many people made use of the public records as many had undertaken to compile a narrative (verse 1). They made accurate copies 'just as the eyewitnesses delivered' (verse 2). Sometimes there were a few copyists, sometimes there were a lot of them, altogether Luke speaks of 'many' (verse 1).

Luke tells us more about the eyewitnesses. They were also 'ministers of the word', or more accurately: ministers of the spoken word.¹² That is they were also ministers (servants) of the spoken word during the events. The eyewitnesses not

10. It has been suggested often that Luke refers with 'ministers of the word' to the apostles who preached the word later on. However this 'ministry' of the apostles is not called *hupèretèma tou logou* (according to *hupèretès*, servant, Luke 1:2), but *diakonia tou logou* (according *diakonos*, servant, Acts 6:4).

11. We take for the beginning of the second generation the hearers of Peter, from Acts 2 and so on; for the beginning of the third generation the hearers of Paul, from Acts 13 and so on.

12. The Greek *logos* is in its first meaning 'spoken word' (*viva vox*): speech, saying, discourse etc. The second meaning in relation to 'mind': reason, ratio, cause etc. The first meaning is used in Luke 1:2.

only delivered what they had seen in their public records, *but also what they had heard*. That is the astonishing meaning of the first verses of Luke's gospel. The eyewitnesses were active as writers during the events in order to be able to deliver the spoken word. And after an event they had the task of composing a public record containing what they had seen and heard.

Later on Luke also made use of the public records in writing his gospel. He says in the third and fourth verse of his prologue that he followed the example of the many: 'it seemed good to me also ... to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus'. Luke dedicated his book to Theophilus and in doing so he followed accepted practice. Usually the person of dedication was a rich person who had financed the composing of the book. Theophilus and Luke had the same vision of collecting public records about Jesus and putting them together into a book. Of course Luke chose from the records that were appropriate for the purpose he had in mind, and copied them in his gospel 'just as' the eyewitnesses had delivered them. Luke's purpose was 'that you may know the truth of which you have been informed' (verse 4). The Greek is: *asphaleia*, that is: the trustworthiness, the firmness of which you have been informed.

The prologue of Luke tells us how documents were made during Jesus' ministry and that they were used later on as the materials for writing the gospels. Luke explains clearly that eyewitnesses not only recorded what happened but also what was said during the events. Many followers of Jesus already compiled narratives out of the public records that were also used by Luke later on. Let's give a question and answer summary.

Q. What things are meant in verse 1 of Luke's prologue?

A. The events concerning the public Life of Jesus Christ, from birth to resurrection.

Q. Who are meant by 'us' in 'the things which have been accomplished among us'?

A. The spectators of Jesus; the bystanders. This is the first generation.

Q. To whom did the eyewitnesses deliver public reports?

A. To 'us', the first generation.

JESUS' STENOGRAPHERS

Q. When did they deliver them?

A. During the first generation; after Jesus' departure they could not possibly distinguish between Christians from the first and the latter generations. So they worked during the first generation itself.

Q. How did they deliver the public reports?

A. After an event, when it was accomplished; and the transmission was in writing.

Q. What was the content of the public reports?

A. What they had seen, as they were eyewitnesses of the events; and what they had heard, as they were also ministers of the spoken word of the events.

Q. Why did they deliver them?

A. To enable many people of the first generation to write accurate stories about Jesus, the Rabbi of Nazareth, while they were following him.

Q. Why does Luke refer to this?

A. He also used the public reports of the first generation when writing his gospel.

A thorough investigation of Luke's prologue offers us a totally new picture of the work of Jesus and the apostles. It is really astonishing that the New Testament gives us this information and it is also astonishing that we have never seen this earlier. How is that possible?

1.3 On the wrong foot

It is strange that the first sentences of the gospel of Luke have been understood so poorly throughout history. Serious exegetical questions are raised by the traditional translation. The phrase 'things which have been accomplished among us' is traditionally explained as: there was a series of events with Jesus as the central person and after the events the apostles started to preach the gospel and even later they wrote down what they had preached for years.

The first problem related to this explanation is the question: What was the end of these events that was also the starting point for the many (Luke 1:1) to

begin their writing? The first possible answer may be: Many started to write after the last described event in the gospel of Luke: the resurrection of Christ. The problem that arises from this is that if true, then this writing had to be finished before Pentecost, because this was a major event in the history of the church, but it is absent in Luke's gospel. This view is of course impossible. There were not many people who wrote narratives about the life of Jesus in the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost. This was a silent period in which the apostles did not inform others about what had happened.

The quest for the end of the events can also take a different direction. Generally the gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are often considered as one history, because Luke wrote the Acts as a sequel to his gospel. (Acts 1:1) Many exegetes reckon the occurrences that are described in Acts to the 'things which have been accomplished among us'. But in this case we have to face the question: How is it then possible that many started to write narratives at the time that Paul in Rome had been released from prison? (Acts 28:39) Why at that moment did that passion for writing rise among the Christians? Why at that late time, about the year 63 A.D.? Why did they not start writing decades earlier? Thirty years had passed since Jesus' resurrection and Christianity had gone through an exceptional growth, and suddenly 'many' started to write narratives? It is obvious that this view cannot be taken seriously and again we cannot find the answer to the question: What was the end of the 'things which have been accomplished among us' according to the traditional view? In this view it is easy to speak generally about 'later on when the apostles threatened to die out' or in other vague terms. But the moment one asks concrete questions about the supposed ending of the events, we are confronted with the continued absence of any serious reply.

Another unanswered question related to the traditional view is: How is it possible that Luke started to write a narrative just as many others had done already? He says that he worked like the many and therefore he did not mean that his predecessors produced inferior works. Usually commentators say that just as the many had the right to make a book about the revelation of Jesus Christ,

Luke also used that right. But that is not the point. It is strange that an author such as Luke started his gospel with the rather impossible statement that he wanted to write down what others had written earlier. What then could be the reason for Luke writing a new book instead of copying one of the many? Again, the answer is lacking.

The third unanswered question is: Why haven't we found copies of the many that have been written long ago? Of course there are all sorts of apocryphal gospels and those who take note of them have to admit that these books differ enormously in style and contents from the canonical gospels. If in the first century there were many narratives like our gospels, at least some, maybe partially, should have been kept, and remain today. But that is not the case.

These three unanswered questions show that the traditional translation of the prologue of Luke is not as logical as it seems. The earlier proposed translation does not wrestle with these mysterious problems. We translate in a general sense the phrase 'the events while being in accomplished state among us'. A working method is meant: again and again it happened that in the accomplished state of an event a report had been made by using notes that had been made during the event. The focus is on the situation after an event and there is no suggestion of a series of events with writing activities only at the end. This also makes clear that Luke did not repeat the work of the many, he *referred to their working method* saying that he followed them. Luke introduced himself as one of the many without any attempt to make the impression that he was equal to the apostles, the authoritative eyewitnesses.

1.4 Clerical or grammatical

The traditional explanation of Luke 1:1 is based on a mistranslation of the verse that has stood for ages. What does one say about this? The Greek perfect not only refers to a completed action but also to an existing state after that. Well, of course the situation after the revelation of Jesus was the foundation of

the Church. In the Church many started to write and eventually Luke did the same. Ultimately a clerical translation became accepted. The ‘ministers of the word’ were, according to this clerical explanation, the apostles who preached about Jesus in the growing Church. What they told the people was written by ‘the many’, as one supposed and later on by Luke.¹³ The possibility that Luke made use of documents in writing his gospel, has always been kept open by the investigators. Nowadays the theory is widely accepted among them that Luke used the gospel of Mark and an unknown gospel called Q (German: Quelle is source), the so called two-source theory. The fact has always been stressed that Luke worked as a serious historian who accurately collected his information from eyewitnesses, who became preachers later on.¹⁴ And according to this view, one can not deny that Luke also made use of the so called oral tradition, the preaching of the apostles.¹⁵

How can it be that the clerical explanation could stand for so many ages? The first translation of the New Testament, in the first centuries of Christianity, was the Old Latin. And in this translation the Greek perfect had already been misunderstood, thus a wrong translation of Luke 1:1-4 entered into Latin, the dominant language of the Roman Empire. Later translations of the New Testament often became dependant on the Vulgate which was a revision of the Old Latin. The ancient Bible translators dealt with a serious problem. From the third century onwards the classical Greek perfect started to disappear; only a few fixed forms survived. From that time on there was not much chance that the first sentence of the gospel of Luke would be properly understood.

Origen (about 250 AD) tried to come to a better translation; he supposed the

13. It is forgotten in this view that Matthew and John were also gospel writers. They did not belong to the many. They were according to this view eyewitnesses themselves, who became preachers later on. A serious contradiction of the traditional explanation of Luke 1:1-4.

14. I.H. Marshall, 1989, p. 40-42.

15. L. Morris, 1988, p. 32-33, 73.

existing state to be a conviction in the hearts of the believers.¹⁶ William Tyndale followed Origen with: 'things which are surely known among us' and so did the King James Version: 'things which are most surely believed among us'. But this translation is too far from the simple word meaning 'accomplished events' and therefore Hieronymus (about 400 AD) in providing the Vulgate, had already rejected the solution of Origen.¹⁷ The Vulgate became the standard of the Church for many centuries. It was generally seen as the inspired word of God and nobody dared to cast doubt upon it. And so a wrong translation of Luke 1:1 stood fixed in the hearts and minds of the people for more than a thousand years during the middle ages. In the time of the Reformation the Greek New Testament was rediscovered, nevertheless explanation and translation of the texts remained often fixed on the concepts of the Vulgate. Only in the nineteenth century did new insights into the character of the Greek verb and especially in the use of the Greek perfect come up.¹⁸ And so a new interpretation of Luke 1:1 became possible.

There are other reasons that the clerical translation of Luke 1:1 had such an enduring history. The first sentence of Luke's gospel immediately starts with a very unusual perfect (peplèroforèménōn: while they were being in accomplished state) without any context. Certainly the first Christians did not have problems with the first sentence of Luke's gospel. As contemporaries of Luke, they were familiar with the living context of the first century in which Luke wrote. They knew how pupils learned to read and write in the Jewish land, and they knew about the writing activities of the apostles. Apostolic letters were often written down from their speech as we can learn from the content.¹⁹ Also, from the book

16. Origen, *Homilies* 1.

17. Vulgate: 'quae in nobis completae sunt rerum' (Luke 1:1)

18. J.H. Moulton, 1908, p. 140; speaking about the Greek perfect: '... the most important, exegetically, of all the Greek Tenses.'

19. Rom. 16:2 (Tertius); Paul remarks in some letters that he signed in his own handwriting: 1 Cor. 15:21, Gal. 6:11, Col. 4:18, 2 Thess. 3:17, 1 Peter 5:12 (Silvanus)

of Acts we may deduce that the apostles themselves made use of writers for their letters to spread their decisions.²⁰

Later on in history, everything changed in the Jewish land. After the destruction of the Jewish land by the Romans during the wars against the Jews, (first in the years 66-70 and later in 132-135), nothing remained the same; Judea even became a province of Syria. The living context in which Jesus and the apostles had worked, was gone. The church fathers in later centuries no longer had knowledge about the circumstances of that period in Judea. They could not even imagine the high standards of knowledge and culture of that period through the prosperity of the Jews at that time. In later centuries, Jews were often abused in the Roman Empire whereas they were held in great respect in the time before the wars. The absence of the living context in which Jesus had worked and the disappearing of the Greek perfect from the third century onwards were no doubt the causes of the first sentence of the gospel of Luke being misunderstood by the church fathers. They were no longer able to recognize the few instances in the New Testament documents that deal with the writing of the spoken word during the events. Maybe they did not even take account of this possibility in consequence of the general contempt of the Jews in which they took part not infrequently.

From the above, we conclude: The clerical interpretation of Luke 1:1-4 has to wrestle with serious unanswered questions, while the grammatical interpretation leads to a totally different concept of gospel interpretation and the question is whether or not we are able to cope with that new insight? Let's look at the first letter of the apostle John; he has also spoken about the subject.

20. E.g. Acts 15:23-29.

1.5 The Prologue of John's First Epistle

The gospel writers give little information about themselves and their working methods. Luke gives some information about the method he used in writing his gospel, namely in the prologue of the book. Of course this information alone is not sufficient to get a complete picture. Fortunately, John has also given us some information about the writing activities of the apostles in his first letter, also in its prologue. To get a clear insight into the working method of the gospel writers, it is therefore necessary to deal also with his testimony. First we will examine the prologue of John's first letter (1 John 1:1-4).

1. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life
2. the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us
3. that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.
4. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete.²¹

In the first verses of this prologue the apostle John describes briefly but impressively how the apostles had experienced the Lord Jesus Christ. In connection with it he tells his readers how the apostles - after this revelation - accepted their apostolic responsibility to preach the gospel. We will concentrate on verses 3 and 4. What is exactly the meaning of the words 'we proclaim'?

There are two aspects of the Greek verb used here that must be discussed.

21. RSV has the note: 'Other ancient authorities read *your*.' The argumentation of this paragraph is applicable to both variations.

The first aspect is that the verb ‘to proclaim’ is the translation of the Greek word *apaggelloo* (to proclaim, to send message, to preach). This verb implies more than only ‘to make known’ (*anaggelloo*)²². The verb *apaggelloo* implies ‘to make known from the source’. Let us look at two examples. King Herod said to the wise men: ‘Go and search diligently for the child and when you have found him bring me word, ...’²³ The wise men were charged by Herod to inform him after they had found the child. That is reporting of what one has experienced; to carry a message right from the source. Another example: ‘The herdsmen fled and going into the city they told everything, and what had happened to the demoniacs.’²⁴ In this case the herdsmen also brought their message right from the source, as they were eyewitnesses of the event on which they reported.

The second aspect of the verb *apaggelloo* is that there were two possible types of reporting: orally or written (or a combination, of course). In the last example of the herdsmen we have to assume oral reporting. In the case of written reporting directly from the source, a written document, e.g. a letter, contains the report. Such a document had either been written by the sender or it was dictated by him while a clerk, often a slave, was writing the document. Then the slave or someone else was sent to take the letter to the addressee.

Let us return to John’s prologue where he says in verse 4: ‘And we are writing this that our joy may be complete.’ This expression seems to refer to written reporting right from the source. This is important and deserves special inquiry, for in this case the personal words of the sender, of the Lord himself, are at stake. What is meant with ‘this’ in verse 4 (KJV: these things)? Some suppose that John is referring to the rest of his letter that follows. But that is not tenable.²⁵ He re-

22. This verb is used in 1 John 1:5 and has the meaning that John does not claim to speak right from the source in this verse nor in the following verses, but he merely expresses his interpretation as an apostle.

23. Matthew 2:8.

24. Matthew 8:33.

fers to the foregoing, to the work of the apostles as described in the prologue.²⁶ According to the grammatical rule the expression 'These things' (Greek: *tauta*) refers to what precedes²⁷, i.e. 'what we have seen and heard'!²⁸ We can read verse 4 as follows: 'What we have seen and heard (from the source Jesus Christ) we write, so that our joy may be made complete.'

Is there greater joy than the gospel? To come into 'fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ'? Of course not. The New Testament as a whole reveals that ultimate joy is in the gospel. According to verse 4 *written documents belonged to the full joy of the gospel!* The senders, who had already this joy, as well as the receivers of the gospel took part in this joy.²⁹ (And so the different variant readings of verse 4 are immaterial as regards this discussion.) John uses a perfect in verse 4: '...that our joy may be complete' (ASV: made full). The resulting state of this perfect means a *continuing* complete joy. It is not a joy only for a moment; the use of the perfect excludes this. That remaining joy is, of course, the joy of the fellowship with the Father and with his Son

25. Speaking about the apostles John uses the we-form (first person plural) in the prologue. As the sender of his letter he continues in the I-form (first person singular). 'My little children, I am writing ...' See further 1 John 2:1,7, 8,12,13,14,21,26 and 5:13. From 1 John 1:6 onwards he uses the we-form to identify himself closely with his hearers. (Compare Turner, 1978, p. 28.)

26. John R.W. Stott, 1988, p. 69-70. He pointed in the same direction: 'It is possible, therefore, and seems to me more natural, to take *we write this* (4) as referring not to the whole letter which follows but to the statements just made in the preface about the apostolic proclamation. In this case *we proclaim* (3) and *we write* (4) refer to the same message.'

27. John followed this rule also in 1 John 5:13. 'These things have I written unto you ...' (KJV). He refers with 'These things' to what he wrote in the foregoing of the letter.

28. Reference of a plural 'these things' (KJV is here in accordance with the Greek original) to a collective singular 'that which we have seen and heard' is not unusual. In John 8:2 'them' refers to 'the people'.

29. Luke 10:20.

Jesus Christ (v. 3): everlasting joy.

The disciples, and later the apostles, not only preached the gospel orally, but they *always* used documents from the source in their preaching activity. That is the inevitable message of verse 4 of the prologue of John's first Epistle. The prologue of the Gospel of Luke and the prologue of John's first Epistle give the *same remarkable message*: Jesus was followed by writers and they not only recorded what they saw, but also what they heard.

The conclusion must then be: with *apaggelloo* used in verse 3, not only an oral but also a written proclamation is at stake. Verse 3a and 4 are dealing with the same subject: the apostolic preaching of the gospel.³⁰ John says that in the proclamation of the gospel the apostles made use of written documents right from the source; not seldom, but always. And of course these documents represented the words of their sender - his very words. The apostles saw themselves as being similar to those humble servants and slaves who were sent out into the Roman Empire by their masters to deliver their letters where they wanted.

1.6 Some misinterpretations

However, the traditional explanation of John's prologue (1 John 1:1-4) usually concentrates on the following apparently logical steps.³¹ The first step is that in verse 1 the greatness of Jesus' appearance is meant and how his disciples experienced that; the second step of the explanation according to verse 2 is that the disciples from the beginning became witnesses, and later on they were messengers of the gospel. The third step is that the hearers of their message came to believe

30. Verse 3a and 4 together form a so-called parallelism; with 3a as an explaining insertion. A parallelism has the meaning that two sentences are very closely connected as regards content.

31. For instance an older exegete as: A. Clarke, 1824, p. 903. But also more recent: L. Morris in: A.D. Carson (a. o.), 1994, p. 1399.

(verse 3) and found a relationship with the Father and with the Son. And finally, step four, as most commentators suggest: later, the apostles also spread their message in written form before they died (verse 4).

This explanation seems logical as the sequence of John's statements is followed accurately. Nevertheless this exegesis is not valid. It is too easy to conclude from John's prologue that the apostles started to write their messages at a later stage, well after their first preaching activities. If we are to accept the traditional view that written documents came some or many years later - after the oral preaching - then such interpreters are asking us to accept that the first preaching of the gospel through the apostles did not give complete joy, but rather an incomplete joy. According to this view, that full joy only came later on when the hearers received written documents about the gospel. Of course this could never be meant by John. Fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ gives that complete joy immediately. So the traditional view described above is not tenable and it is clear that the interpretation presented earlier not only better fits the grammatical facts, but also makes more sense within the whole of New Testament theology.

The term 'full/complete joy' is an important expression in the gospel and the letters of John. Is the 'joy of the gospel' indeed meant in verse 4? In John 16:24 'full joy' is connected with answers to prayer; in 2 John 12 'complete joy' is related to good personal communication. In John 3:29 it is referring to the gladness at the marriage of a good friend. In all of these cases, the meaning is that of remaining feelings of joy, which are indelible. Separate from these examples are the cases where full/complete joy refers to the gospel, the words that Jesus spoke: 'These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.' Or: '... and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.' (John 15:11, 17:13). There can be no doubt that this joy is meant by John in 1 John 1:4 with regard to the apostles as well as to his addressees.

It is always the context which makes clear what the reason or cause is for

any form of permanent joy. The context of the passage in 1 John 1:1-4 is: the proclamation of what the apostles have seen and heard and by that eternal life and fellowship with God and with his son Jesus Christ. It is not appropriate to adopt a second context of another remaining joy, caused by written documents later on.

To support a second context, interpreters sometimes do the following. They claim that ‘And we are writing this that our joy may be complete,’ in verse 4, is not related to the joy of the apostles and the addressees, but only to the apostles. It must be said that this move has some splendor as it gives the apostles a very special status. However, considering this idea thoroughly we have to reject it. It is unacceptable to impute any form of narcissism to the apostles as if they wrote their letters to please themselves. It would be simply indecent if the apostles wrote their serious letters ‘for their own full joy’. Only the straight explanation of 1 John 1:4 is to be followed; that the complete joy is related not only to the apostles, but also to the addressees who accepted the gift of eternal life and the fellowship with the Father and his son Jesus Christ.³²

Indeed the proclamation of verse 3 and the writing of verse 4 are part of the same issue; the activity of writing formed an integral part of the proclamation of the gospel by the apostles from the beginning. And the writing started at the source when they ‘saw and heard’ the gospel; very early, and *during* Jesus’ ministry.

32. J.R.W. Stott, 1988, p. 71. ‘The fellowship and the joy are both to be a common possession between the apostle and his readers. This “seems to suit best the generous solicitude of the author, whose own joy would be incomplete unless his readers shared it” (Metzger, p. 708 - pres. auth.: B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 1975, ed.3).’ Also: ‘And NEB captures the sense well by translating “we write this in order that the joy of us all may be complete”.’

1.7 I send you ...

Jesus had called his disciples to proclaim the kingdom. From the beginning of his ministry he intended to send them out with his teachings: 'And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and *to be sent out* to preach ...'³³ The gospels describe Jesus as the Sender of the twelve disciples. They received the task to preach, the prologue of John reveals how: Jesus as the Sender wanted them to write down his teachings. Jesus desired that later on the people could hear his own 'voice' and thus his own words. He made his disciples record his teachings and in doing so he laid the foundation of the 'sending out' of them as messengers.

Let us return again to the prologue of John's first letter. John uses the present tense 'we proclaim'. In Greek this is normal use in the situation where an action started long ago and continues at the moment of speaking. Examples are: 'Lo, these three years I have come seeking (I seek) fruit on this fig tree, ...' (Luke 13:7); 'Lo, these many years I have served you (I serve you), ...' (Luke 15:29) The (Greek) present tense can indicate the continuation of an action from the past up through the moment of speaking.

In verse 4 we see the same use of the present tense: 'we are writing this'. Again the writing started long ago and is still in progress at the time of speaking. We have seen that the activity of writing started during the time they were hearing and seeing Jesus. The question that arises from this is: How is it possible that the activity of writing still continued at the time that John wrote his first letter? Surely the phrase 'we are writing' in verse 4 is used in a broad sense. The writing started during the ministry of Jesus, and later on the gospels were to be written from those first records. Subsequently the gospels had to be copied over and over again. Of course this work was often done by other enthusiastic Christians, but the apostles had the responsibility of making correct copies available, under their supervision. This was an on-going activity that was a part of their apostolic responsibility.

33. Mark 3:14.

John's prologue is characterized by two foundational pillars. The first: We proclaim, (orally), that which we have seen and heard. The second: We write these things (which we have seen and heard). The sequence of these pillars seems to say: it started with the oral proclamation of the gospel by the apostles and later on the writing began. But that is not to the point: the writing actually preceded the oral proclamation. In proclaiming the gospel the apostles always worked with written copies of Jesus' words and deeds (verse 4); they did so during Jesus' ministry and during their own apostolic ministry.

Looking back, we may say - from the general description of the apostolic responsibility as John describes it in the prologue of his first letter - that the disciples of Jesus had the custom of writing his teachings down in order to share them with the people. From the more specific description of Luke in his prologue of the gospel, we are informed how this all was worked out. We get the picture that eyewitnesses accurately recorded his spoken word and later on after an event, made public records for the people so that they could write longer narratives by copying the records.

1.8 Last but not least ...

Fortunately there is a third testimony in the New Testament about writers that followed Jesus to preserve his teachings for the future: Hebrews 2:3-4. We won't give the entire grammatical discussion here; for that the reader is referred to chapter 10.6. However, for reason of completeness in this first chapter, we will just mention this witness.

If one translates the basic Greek words of Hebrews 2:3-4 into basic English, without some conventional additions which are lacking in the Greek text, we get an inevitable testimony of speedy writing, (word-by-word-translation):

'... so great a salvation; which beginning to be spoken by the Lord, was confirmed (established) in behalf of us by those who were hearing; God also bearing witness,

both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, ...' (according to KJV).

The verb forms 'beginning to be spoken', 'were hearing', 'was confirmed (established)' and 'bearing witness' are all meant as simultaneous actions. They are to be taken instantly, nearly at the same time as *one occurrence*. Using this translation we once again meet the speedy writers of Jesus. They were the hearers to confirm Jesus' preaching in written form for our benefit. They were working while signs, wonders and miracles followed Jesus' word, as God's approval on his teaching.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews is saying that we need the words of the Lord just as they were written, as he spoke them: that is the great salvation. *By listening to his words we are listening to Him.*

Of course the insight that Jesus had speedy writers has a magnificent influence on our view of the composition of the gospels. All of these findings have also great value for allowing the right interpretation of the gospels. It will appear that records were made by the eyewitnesses according to fixed rules. In applying these rules back we will be able to get a better insight into Jesus' life and work. They will make the gospels more transparent, particularly the differences between them. This will enable us to obtain a deeper acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ. We will get a much more lively image of his humanity as well as his divine character. But we have not come to that point yet; we first must deal now with the question concerning what language Jesus used to communicate with the people. Did he speak in Aramaic or in Greek? And were the first records consequently written in Aramaic or respectively in Greek? We have Jesus' words in the Greek language and the question is therefore: Do we have them in the original language in which Jesus spoke or do we have them in translation out of Aramaic? So first of all this searching question must be answered: Do Christians today possess Jesus' authentic words or don't they?

2

JESUS SPOKE ARAMAIC: AN IMPOSSIBLE THEORY

In theology it is an almost common view that Jesus spoke Aramaic when he taught his disciples and the crowd that followed him. This idea has been widely accepted during the twentieth century within New Testament theology, whereas in former ages a wide diversity of opinions existed among scholars about this issue. In 1954 H. Birkeland wrote: 'As a matter of fact, no competent scholar any longer holds the view that Jesus spoke Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament. They all agree that this language was Aramaic.'³⁴ He was right; many eminent theologians took this position. F.F. Bruce declared in 1962: 'It [Aramaic] was thus the language commonly spoken in Palestine in New Testament times, the customary language of our Lord and His apostles and the early Palestinian church.'³⁵ The orthodox and learned D. Guthrie wrote in 1970: 'It may be assumed *a priori* that since our Lord taught in Aramaic some Aramaic background would be found behind the teaching of Jesus.'³⁶ In 1992 E. Linnemann stated: 'The linguistic fixing of the words, deeds and suffering of Jesus occurred primar-

34. H. Birkeland, 1954, p. 6.

35. F.F. Bruce, 1963, p. 56.

36. D. Guthrie, 1985, p. 47.

ily in the same language, colloquial Aramaic, that Jesus himself used.'³⁷ And A. Millard wrote in 2000: 'On this evidence we may assume that Jesus spoke Aramaic as a matter of course.'³⁸

There are two arguments for the view that Jesus spoke Aramaic. The first argument is that Aramaic was the common Semitic language in the Jewish land in Jesus' time – Judea and Galilee – and so Jesus also spoke Aramaic. The second argument is that the Semitic utterances of Jesus are Aramaic and so they are the clearest proof for the position that Jesus used Aramaic as his vehicle of speech. Unfortunately these arguments are always brought forward without any proper grammatical or historical proof.³⁹ They are repeated in New Testament theology rather unthinkingly and nobody seems to be interested in the question of how valid these arguments really are.

The assertion that Jesus spoke Aramaic seems scientifically correct because so many scholars have associated their names with it. On the other hand, this state of affairs may display the deplorable condition in which theology and even Christianity finds itself at this moment. We do possess the gospels in Greek, the language in which they have been delivered unto the world. That would mean that Jesus' words are handed down to us in translation and not in the original Aramaic. Let us be honest; we cannot escape the conclusion that we do not have the authentic words of Jesus if he taught in Aramaic.⁴⁰ In that case Christianity

37. E. Linnemann, 1992, p. 162.

38. A. Millard, 2000, p. 144.

39. In the second part of the twentieth century in scientific literature one has stopped giving references for proof in favor of the Aramaic position. Very rarely one refers to: G. Dalman, 1922, p. 10. Or: Th. Zahn, 1906, p. 1-24.

40. Sometimes one states that the gospels in the Peshitta (Syriac-Aramaic translation of the Bible) may preserve authentic Aramaic sayings of Jesus in contrast to the canonical gospels. But this position fails any evidence as the Syriac gospels are certainly translations of the Greek gospels and do not stand for themselves. That is already the case with the old Syriac rendering of the gospels in the Diatessaron, a compilation of the four gospels (second century).

would be the only world religion without the authentic words of its founder. And if this is so, it seems not too much to say that Christianity finds itself in a deplorable situation. But is it true that Jesus spoke to the people in Aramaic?

2.1 The languages in Israel at the beginning of the era

In the discussion about the languages used in the time of Jesus, the first substantial evidence is seen in the epigraph on the cross, that according to the gospel of John had been written in three languages: Hebrew, Latin and Greek. About the last two languages there exist little uncertainty. Latin was the language spoken in the Roman army.⁴¹ Greek was the normal vehicle of speech (Koinè) of which the Romans made use in the Eastern part of the Roman empire, to which also belonged Judea and Galilee. Many regions of this part of the empire were bilingual; apart from Greek there existed also native languages of the peoples within these regions.⁴² The Jewish land was no exception: one spoke Greek and Hebrew according to the epigraph at the cross.

The question is now: What is meant by 'Hebrew', the first language of the epigraph on the cross? What sort of 'Hebrew' do we think of? The original language of the Jews, the language of the Old Testament? Or was it Aramaic, the language of Syria and Babylon at that time. It is generally assumed that in Judea and especially in Galilee, the homeland of Jesus, an Aramaic dialect was spoken, closely related to Syrian Aramaic, because Galilee adjoined Syria.

Let us have a look at the theory that Aramaic was the vehicle of speech in the Jewish land in the first century in addition to Greek. This thesis is brought forward generally as a fact and it seems that nobody dares to cast doubt on it. Anyone who has the courage to ask how we know this, will get the reply: Aramaic

41. Flavius Josephus, *Bellum* III.5.4.

42. Many examples of native languages are given in Acts 2:9-11. In Acts 14:11 the hearers of Paul and Barnabas reacted in their native language, Lycaonian, to Paul's preaching in Greek.

was at that time the Semitic *lingua franca* of the Middle East and also of Judea. Or: Aramaic was spread over a wide language area and that included Judea and Galilee. But that is of course no answer to the question of how we know that. The problem is that it is very difficult to give sound proof for this thesis. Inscriptions are found of that period (especially epitaphs on ossuaries and tombstones) in Aramaic vernacular, but also in real Hebrew vernacular. It is often not possible to determine the distinction between the two languages of the inscriptions because epitaphs are often extremely short or of only fragmentary preservation.⁴³ The second problem in answering the question is that there are few Hebrew and Aramaic documents from the first century found in the Jewish land. Only in Qumran the Dead Sea scrolls were found and they contain Aramaic as well as Hebrew material. Most of the material is Hebrew and since the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls it is not tenable anymore to state that the Hebrew language had died out among the Jews in favor of Aramaic.⁴⁴

The extant sources give little to state with certainty that Aramaic was the Semitic vehicle of speech in the first century in the Jewish land. Jewish scholars have always maintained that in the first century Hebrew was still the language of the Jews.⁴⁵ They derived their argument for this view from the fact that the Mishnah, the compilation of all Jewish religious knowledge about the time of the second temple, had been written in (mishnaic) Hebrew. However the Mishnah was written at the end of the second century and strictly speaking does not represent the language of the first century. Nevertheless there is so much information about the period of the second temple in the Mishnah that it is nearly impossible to deny that the Mishnah represents the Hebrew language of this period. Finally one has pled the cause that a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic had been used in

43. G. Mussies, 1983, p. 356-369.

44. E.M. Cook, 1994, p. 154 'Perhaps the most surprising fact, at least to gentile scholars, was the prevalence of Hebrew in the scrolls.'

45. M.H. Segal, 1927.

the first century of the era.⁴⁶

The opinion that Aramaic was the language of Jesus, is not an invention of the last century. Only a few ages after the beginning of Christianity the idea had already arisen. After the Jewish wars in 70 and 135 A.D. the Romans decided to remove Israel from the map by incorporating the region into Syria, named Syria-Palestina. As Aramaic was the vehicle of speech in Syria, this language turned out to be the official language of Judea and Galilee. Moreover a growing stream of Jewish immigrants from Babylon settled there. Many of them felt it a holy duty to refill the depopulated country with descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And so from the third and fourth century onwards, Christian pilgrims heard Aramaic in the country where Jesus had lived and many thus supposed that Aramaic had been the vernacular of Jesus. Even among church fathers this opinion would obtain a foothold. The fact is that the flourishing Jewish state before 70 A.D. differed widely from the country that had been made of it by the Romans after that time.

Of course one has always seen that there are many Aramaic influences in the New Testament, like *abba* (my father), *rabboeni* (my great master), *pascha* (easter), *korban* (offering), *messiah*, etc.. In fact they are mostly Hebrew words with Aramaic modifications. The corresponding Hebrew words of the just mentioned are: *abbi* (my father), *rabbi* (my teacher), *pesach* (easter), *karban* (offering), and *massiah*. Only a few words are plain Aramaic, such as *Cephas* (rock), *Talitha* (girl), *sebach* (to leave) and others. There are a lot of names combined with the Aramaic word *Bar* (son): *Barabbas* (son of my father), *Bartholomeüs* (son of Tolmai), *Barjona* (son of Jona) etc. It is not difficult to understand where the Aramaic influence came from. After the exile in Aramaic-speaking Babylon, the Jews in Judea always remained in close touch with the Jews that had remained in Babylon. And the name Babylon is to be taken quite elastically, for it could cover the whole part of Mesopotamia on the other (north) side of the Euphrates.

46. A. Merx, 1911, p. 418.

Mingling of Hebrew, the classic Jewish language, with Aramaic could be a natural process because the languages are so closely related to one another. Finally it should not be forgotten that Aramaic had become the second holy language for the Jews, as substantial parts of the holy books had been written in Aramaic: Daniel 2:4-7:1, Ezra 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26. After the exile it became a religious duty to not neglect the Aramaic language. Certainly also for that reason many Aramaisms entered into classic Hebrew vernacular after the exile.

There are several examples that indicate that Hebrew was the main language in Judea before the year 70. In the Letter of Aristeas, (dated between ca. 250 B.C. – ca. 50 A.D.), we have a discussion between Demetrius and the Egyptian king Ptolemaeus: "... I am told that the laws of the Jews are worth transcribing and deserve a place in your library." "What is to prevent you from doing this?" replied the king. "Everything that is necessary has been placed at your disposal." "They need to be translated," answered Demetrius, "for in the country of the Jews they use a peculiar alphabet (just as the Egyptians, too, have a special form of letters) and speak a peculiar dialect. They are supposed to use the Syriac tongue, but this is not the case; their language is quite different." And the king, when he understood all the facts of the case, ordered a letter to be written to the Jewish High Priest so that his purpose (which has already been described) might be accomplished.⁴⁷ The issue was that one wanted to collect the five books of the Torah among the books of the royal library of Alexandria (ca. 275 B.C.), and a translation had to be made from the Hebrew, and that was also the language normally spoken at that moment in Judea. Although there is no common view as to exactly when the letter of Aristeas was written, it was cited by Flavius Josephus and stands as a witness of the general lingual situation in Judea during the second temple.

As a second example, Flavius Josephus tells that with the fall of Jerusalem in 70, a few sons of King Izates were captured by the Romans. These five princes

47. Aristeas, *Epistula ad Philocratem* 11; R.H. Charles, 1913.

were in Jerusalem ‘to learn accurately the language of our nation, together with our learning’⁴⁸. Of course king Izates of Adiabene did not send his sons to Jerusalem to educate them in the Aramaic language, because that was the language of Adiabene. They had come to Jerusalem to learn Hebrew.

The Greek term for ‘in Aramaic’ is *Suristi* or *Chaldaïsti*. If the apostle John had intended to make clear that Aramaic was one of the three languages of the epigraph on the cross, he surely would have used one of these words. But he used *Hebraïsti* the expression for ‘in Hebrew’. The NIV translates this as: ‘... and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek,’ but why don’t we simply translate the words of the text? The RSV translates this correctly as: ‘... and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek.’⁴⁹ Anyway, it is not proper to simply say that Aramaic was the general vehicle of speech of the Semitic speaking people in Judea and Galilee as many often do.

2.2 *The Semitic utterances of Jesus and the Aramaic theory*

The second argument for the position that Jesus spoke Aramaic is based on some Semitic utterances of Jesus that are delivered within the Greek text of the New Testament. The great German scholar G. Dalman defended the view that Jesus spoke Aramaic and he published many studies about this issue. He ‘believed that it was only in the Words of Jesus that we had the right to assume an ultimate Aramaic original.’⁵⁰ A contemporary of Dalman, Th. Zahn confirmed this view: ‘We possess scriptural witnesses about the language of Jesus. These are not parts of sermons, but important words spoken on significant instances’ And: ‘That proves that Jesus preached to the people in this language [Aramaic]

48. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates* XX.71; Whiston, 1996, 529.

49. John 19:20.

50. M. Black, 1946, p. 3. Black followed Dalman in this respect: (p. 14, n. 1) ‘Jesus may have spoken Greek, but He certainly did speak and teach in Aramaic.’

and also taught his disciples in it.⁵¹

The utterances under debate are: *Talitha cum(i)!* – Little girl, arise!; *Ephphatha!* – Be opened!; *Eloi (Eli), Eloi (Eli), lama (lema) sabachthani?* – My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?⁵² Three key words are Aramaic (Talitha – little girl; lema – why; sebach - forsake). Referring to these key words one finishes the argument about Jesus' language (Aramaic versus Hebrew) by claiming that these four utterances are Aramaic. The next step is: there is no other reason for them than that he spoke in Aramaic, the customary language of the people among which he lived. And so one argues that Aramaic was the Semitic *lingua franca* (vehicle of speech) in Judea in Jesus' time.

But are the three key words really proof of the Aramaic view? On the contrary, they are far from decisive. The Semitic utterances of Jesus are best explained by considering them as Hebrew sentences with 'borrowed' Aramaic words (loan-words). In the first place there are words that can be designated as plain Hebrew: *Eli, Eloi*. The verbs *cum* and *patach* are used in both languages. The word *sebach* occurs indeed in Mishnaic Hebrew as a borrowed Aramaic word. In Jesus' time it was probably more current than the old Hebrew word '*azab* (forsake)⁵³. *Lema* (Aramaic) and *lama* (Hebrew) are so similar that they were certainly interchangeable in daily speech. And it is very possible to consider *Talitha* as a borrowed Aramaic word in a Hebrew context. However, the solution cannot be based on loan-words only. For a definite conclusion, the inquiry must focus on the conjugations of the verbal forms. They are decisive because they are not interchangeable between languages as loan-words are.

51. Th. Zahn, 1906, p. 2.

52. Mark 5:41, 7:34, 15:34 (Matthew 27:46 *Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*). We may define Mark 15:34 (*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*) and Matthew 27:46 (*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*) as two exclamations of Jesus. The first being uttered 'at the ninth hour' (three o'clock p.m.) and the second a moment earlier or later 'about the ninth hour'. So we may speak about four Semitic sayings of Jesus.

53. Psalm 22:2.

The form *cum(i)* (arise) has equal conjugation in Aramaic and Hebrew and therefore this form cannot be decisive. The form *sabachthani* (you have forsaken me) has the Aramaic verb *sebach*; with regard to the conjugation in both languages Hebrew and Aramaic, the form *sebachthani* is to be expected. The sound change ‘e’ into ‘a’ however is typical Hebrew: *sabachtha* (you have forsaken) without the suffix *-ni* (me). While in Aramaic, without the suffix it remains: *sebachtha*. In other words the form *sabachthani* shows typical Hebrew influence and argues in favor of colloquial use of the Hebrew language.

Ephphatha (Be opened!) is a typical Hebrew conjugation. *Hiphphatha* is the Hebrew imperative form (niph'al): Be opened! The Hebrew sound ‘Hi’ is rendered in Greek with the letter ‘E’ according to the rule. For instance the word *Gehenna*⁵⁴ which in Greek transliteration is *Geënnā*, comes from Hebrew *Gehinna(-om)*. And so we see ‘hi’ becomes ‘e’ in Greek. The same is seen in the name of king Hezekiah; in Hebrew it is *Hizkia*, while in Greek transliteration it is *Ezekia*.⁵⁵ Again ‘Hi’ becomes ‘E’ in Greek. For comparison we present some examples of names out of the Septuagint (the old Greek translation of the Old Testament) with the same transliteration (‘Hi’ becoming ‘E’).

Hebrew Bible	Greek Bible (Septuagint)	References
Hinnom	Ennom	Jer. 7:31, 32
Hizkia (Hezekiah)	Ezekia (s)	Jes. 37:3
Hiddai	Eththi	2 Sam. 23:30
Hillel	Ellel	Judg. 12:13
Hiddekel (Euphrates)	Eddekel	Gen. 2:14, Dan. 10:4
Hiphphatha	Ephphatha (New Test.)	Mark 7:34

The Hebrew *Hiphphatha* has received the correct Greek transliteration *Ephphatha*. It is much more difficult, and even impossible, to recognise an Aramaic form

54. Matthew 5:22, 29, 30. etc.

55. Matthew 1:10.

in *Ephphatha*. G. Dalman, who promoted the Aramaic view strongly in the beginning of the twentieth century, got stuck on this form. According to him, *Ephphatha* (Be opened) was a plural form instead of the singular as is plain from Mark's Greek translation of it (7:34).⁵⁶ Dalman interpreted it as spoken to the ears of the deaf-mute man instead of to the man himself.⁵⁷ Jesus used a singular, as he wanted the man to be open; i.e. so sounds could enter and sounds could come out. Implicitly he spoke to the ears to hear and to the mouth to speak, but not explicitly; he spoke to the man to be open; that is the point here. Th. Zahn, the orthodox and learned contemporary of Dalman, immediately recognised that Dalman had taken the wrong (plural) Aramaic form *Ephphetha* for *Ephphatha*. Zahn chose a singular imperative. However, he did not explicitly say which form he objected to.⁵⁸ He had two possibilities: *Ephphetha* or *Ephphaththa*.⁵⁹ But these forms differ clearly from *Ephphatha* as used in Mark 7:34. If Zahn intended the first form of the two, he had the problem of an 'e' instead of an 'a'. On the other hand if he intended the second form, he had to do with the duplication of the 'th'. Zahn, pretending to arrive at the final solution of the case, in fact never did. Later on Dalman accepted the criticism of Zahn and accepted the form *Ephphaththa* as model for *Ephphatha* in Mark 7:34 without explanation of the duplication of the 'th'.⁶⁰ Many bible teachers followed this explanation for instance the great British scholar F.F. Bruce.⁶¹

56. Mark 7:34 ... 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.'

57. G. Dalman, 1905, p. 278, n. 1. Unfortunately he made a mistake in speaking about eyes (German: Augen) instead of ears.

58. Th. Zahn, 1906, p. 2, 9.

59. Ephphetha (Itp'e'el) or Ephphaththa (Itp'a'al). It is still a matter of debate that there is no convincing evidence from the sources that Itp'hetha and Itp'haththa indeed contract in Ephphetha and Ephphaththa. This is an assumption which is also weakening the Aramaic position; a problem that does not exist in the Hebrew explanation.

60. G. Dalman, 1922, p. 10.

61. F.F. Bruce, 1963, p. 56. He saw Ephphatha as the rendering of Ithpattach (Itp'a'al).

At the moment, both Aramaic variants as discussed above are in circulation. In the Vulgate, the Latin Bible, Hieronymus makes Jesus say *Ephphetha*. On the other hand in the ‘Hebrew translation of the New Testament’⁶² Jesus says *Ephphaththa*. We get the impression that from antiquity to modern times many have tried to make the case that Jesus spoke Aramaic, as these Bible translations show. They have tried to use Aramaic forms in these translations at the cost of the plain Hebrew expression Jesus used according to the Greek New Testament. This confusion⁶³ is in no way convincing proof that Jesus did indeed speak Aramaic. On the contrary it clearly shows that *Ephphatha* is not an Aramaic form (singular imperative) at all.⁶⁴

In short, the Semitic utterances of Jesus do not provide grammatical proof in favor of the view that they are Aramaic sayings, and therefore these sayings can-

62. *The New Testament in Hebrew*, Trinitarian Bible Society, London.

63. To make the confusion complete the NIV Study Bible gives the comment at Mark 7:34 ‘*Ephphatha!* An Aramaic word that Mark translates for his Gentile readers ...’ Zondervan NIV Study Bible (Fully Revised), Ed. 1985 (repr. 2002) p. 1540. The form *Ephphatha* does not occur in Aramaic at all.

64. I. Rabbinowitz, 1962, p. 229-238, has shown that *Ephphatha* is plain Hebrew (niph'al) and definitely not Aramaic. ‘Be Opened = Ephphatha (Mark 7:34). J. A. Emerton, 1967, p. 427-431 reacted to the article of Rabbinowitz and had to admit: ‘... that the word cannot be used as evidence that Jesus spoke Aramaic.’ He proposed to modify the Aramaic theory, i.e. that Aramaic was the language normally used by Jesus, by stating that ‘Jesus may occasionally have spoken it [Hebrew]’. S. Morag, 1972, p. 198-202, also reacted to Rabbinowitz. He claimed *Ephphatha* to be an Aramaic liturgical form of the Samaritans of ca. 1900. Of course it is not realistic to use a Samaritan form from about two millennia after Jesus as evidence for his language. Hebrew and Arabic have influenced Samaritan Aramaic during this long period and this Aramaic can not be seen in any way as a puristic usage of this language of 2.000 years ago. Strangely enough, A. Millard, 2000, p. 141, referred to these articles and still listed *Ephphatha* among his Aramaic examples, just as he has done with other plain Hebrew words as *Amen* (Ps. 106:48) and *Hosanna* (Ps. 118:25, defective 2 Sam. 14:4) as evidence of the Aramaic background of the gospels, p. 140, 142.

not be used as sound evidence for the opinion that Jesus' spoke Aramaic. In fact, analysis of these sayings makes clear that they are Hebrew with Aramaic loan-words. This means that Jesus did speak Hebrew and that *Hebraïis* is simply to be translated as 'Hebrew'. In the same way *Hebraïsti* on the epigraph at the cross is to be translated with 'in Hebrew' and not with 'in Aramaic' as for instance the NIV does (John 19:20).

2.3 An impossible theory

We have seen that it asks a great deal to maintain that Jesus spoke Aramaic in daily life. It is therefore really remarkable that so much labor has been done in the field of the Aramaic theory, since even at the first glance this view seems strange.

First we have seen that Greek (Koinè) was the vehicle of speech in the eastern part of the Roman empire: from Rome to Athens, from Athens to Antioch, from Antioch to Alexandria. The Jewish land from Caesarea to Jerusalem was no exception. Jesus did not speak to the people somewhere in a corner of the country, but he moved to the people in the centers of the Jewish provinces of Judea and Galilee.

Secondly the New Testament came to us in Greek, not in Aramaic. There is a stream of old Greek manuscripts behind the New Testament: papyri from the second century onwards and parchments from the fourth century onwards. In total we're speaking of about five thousand old documents: books, parts of books, loose pages and small fragments. Not the smallest piece, not a scrap, has ever been found with Aramaic text on it earlier than the Greek text. We only know the Syrian translation of the New Testament which is Aramaic. If the Greek gospels were translations of Aramaic originals – either completely or partly -, how is it than possible that not the smallest piece with Aramaic text from those early Aramaic documents has ever been found? On the contrary; in that case we would expect a stream of Aramaic texts beside and even before the Greek stream.

Thirdly, the content of the gospels is not compatible with the Aramaic theory. For instance the Pharisees were afraid that Jesus would visit the Greek Dispersion

of the Jews: ‘Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?’⁶⁵ They were afraid that he would visit the great Jewish communities all over the Greek speaking world, in Phoenicia (Lebanon), Asia (Turkey), Greece and Egypt in the south. If Jesus spoke Aramaic, they would not have been afraid that he would go to these regions but that he would go to the Aramaic Dispersion of the Jews in Mesopotamia. The coherence is missing completely in John 7:34-36, if Jesus spoke Aramaic in public and not Greek.

Fourthly, in Acts 2:9 (description of Pentecost) we read how Galileans spoke languages they never were expected to speak. The native language of the residents of Mesopotamia is also mentioned among these languages; that is Aramaic, which was certainly not the language of these Galileans.

Besides that, we should remember the grasp of the prologues of John’s first Letter and Luke’s Gospel. John says that the apostles delivered what they had heard as they had heard it, without translation. Luke says that he worked like the many and they did not translate, but they wrote down the traditions of the eye- and ear- witnesses in the accomplished state of the events. So in the same way, Luke did not translate, but he wrote his gospel in the language in which Jesus had taught the people.⁶⁶ The many did not translate, neither did Luke, neither did John.

Because of the great resemblances between the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke we may certainly assume that the other gospel writers worked just like Luke: they also did not translate. The Semitic utterances of Jesus underline this position. If the gospels of Mark and Matthew were translations from Aramaic or Hebrew into Greek, these Semitic sayings of Jesus also would have been translated into Greek. Because this did not happen the conclusion is inevitable that we possess the words of Jesus in the gospels just as he spoke them – almost everything in Greek – only four times in Hebrew.

65. John 7:35

66. See chapter 1

Jesus did not even speak sometimes in Aramaic. When Mary Magdalene said to Jesus 'Rabboni!'⁶⁷ she used a pure Aramaic expression. Yet the gospel writer John says that she spoke *Hebraïsti*, i.e. in Hebrew. If Jesus had the custom of sometimes speaking in Aramaic with his disciples or with others, then John certainly would have used *Suristi* (or *Chaldaïsti*) here instead of *Hebraïsti*. Again we are confronted with the existence of 'borrowed' Aramaic words and expressions within the Hebrew vernacular being used in Judea and Galilee in the time of Jesus.

When we cast a glance at the history of theology, we also see how strange the Aramaic theory is. This theory was brought forward in the time of the Enlightenment (ca. 1750). It was a quite revolutionary idea; during the time of Renaissance and Reformation, scholars had rediscovered Greek as the language of the New Testament and Hebrew as the original language of the Old Testament. These discoveries had made a deep impression on protestant theologians. And suddenly there was the suggestion that Jesus did not speak Greek, but Aramaic. Protestant theology has been burdened by it ever since and has not been able to shake off this misconception. The Aramaic theory hit protestant theology right in the heart. Protestant theology has two pillars: believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and in his very words (this implies the entire Word of God.) The threat that we do not really possess the authentic words of Jesus has brought a permanent weakening in Christian thinking. Protestant theologians appeared to not be able to safeguard the words of Jesus intellectually. In the twentieth century, the Aramaic theory has developed into a topic in theology. The NIV translates *Hebraïsti* (in Hebrew) as *in Aramaic*, making Jews, Jesus and his disciples into Aramaic-speaking people, which they never were. It is not strange that many Christians and non-Christians do not have much respect for the gospels and for the Holy Scriptures in general; this is partly due to the Aramaic theory.

67. John 20:16 'Rabboni!' (which means Teacher.) - RSV

2.4 Jesus communicated in Greek

Of course the question remains: Does it make any difference if Jesus spoke Hebrew instead of Aramaic? For in that case his sayings would seem to have been translated from Hebrew into Greek with the same result that we are not in the possession anymore of his authentic words. But this is not the case. In the Jewish land, and beyond, Hebrew was spoken primarily to maintain the knowledge of the Torah. Families which wanted to live according to the guidelines of the Torah spoke Hebrew to keep the Torah vivid amongst them. Even where Hebrew disappeared in public, these families kept the custom to keep the old Hebrew language vivid within family life. This was in fact the situation in Galilee and in many parts of Judea where colloquial language had become Greek.

When we read in Acts the history of the first Christian Church in Jerusalem, we are confronted with two social classes: a Greek-speaking and a Hebrew-speaking group of the population.⁶⁸ The Greek section was the poorer, and lower class. We may learn this from the information that welfare on behalf of the Greek-speaking aged people, the widows, was lacking. The Hebrew part of the community did not have to deal with this problem; it seemed to be the well-to-do part of the community. The existence of the two social groups within the Christian Community is to be taken as a reflection of the population that lived at that time in Jerusalem. Apparently the poor part of the population of Jerusalem, the crowd, was accustomed to speaking Greek. When Jesus visited the city, he spoke to the crowd, to the lost sheep of Israel. That means he taught the people in the Greek language and neither in Hebrew nor in Aramaic.

The epigraph on the cross shows the same picture. Hebrew is the first language mentioned on it and Greek the last. Hebrew speaking in Jerusalem was certainly the distinguishing mark of the Jewish upper class. That's why the Hebrew part of the epigraph stood first, a nice gesture of Pilate to the ruling priestly

68. Acts 6:1.

circles of the city.

With respect to the languages, the situation in Galilee - in the north - differed from Judea in the south. In Galilee the masses also spoke Greek. Hebrew speaking in public would have been unusual in Galilee in the first century. In Acts 2, in the description of Pentecost, we read how Galileans spoke languages they never were expected to speak. Hebrew is mentioned among these languages also, the language of Judea.⁶⁹ The hearers considered it a miracle that those backward Galileans spoke Hebrew. That was certainly not their public language. It was a language that was in use at home in pious families to safeguard the knowledge of the Torah, to keep it vivid within the family. That was the reason that Jesus spoke Hebrew at times, for example in the house of Jairus, supervisor of the synagogue, or at the cross where Jesus prayed to his Father in the language in which he had learned to pray at home in his childhood.

69. Acts 2:9.

3

SHORTHAND WRITING IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

In the first chapter we learned that the words of Jesus were noted down by eyewitnesses while they were listening to him. In the second chapter we saw that their work had not been subjected to translation from Aramaic or Hebrew. And so we possess Jesus' words in the vernacular in which he spoke: in Greek. To receive more insight into the trustworthiness of Jesus' sayings as they are delivered in the gospels, we will turn in this chapter to the question of how people in Jesus' time dealt with direct speech in written texts. After all, the gospels did not come into being in a vacuum, but in a certain historic cultural setting. We may therefore expect to find some echo of that in the gospels.

The subject of the scriptural rendering of the spoken word in classical texts has always been connected with the underlying question of how accurate these texts really are. It is a sensitive matter: Do we indeed possess the original words of Socrates (469 – 339 B.C.) in his dialogs as Plato has delivered them? Were the speeches and orations of emperors, kings and generals as they are handed down to us from antiquity really spoken as we possess them? The general assumption is: no, not precisely. At best they present the tenor of what was spoken, but they are not seen as verbatim records.

Many hold that the same view applies to the gospels and Acts, as they are also from the time of antiquity. This would imply that we do not, and will not, know

the precise words of the Lord, or those of his companions. Moreover the gospels are swarming with sayings of Jesus, which are seldom exactly the same - even when these sayings are from the same occasions as described in the gospels. This phenomenon has strengthened the conviction of many people that the spoken word has not been recorded accurately in the four gospels. For that reason it is necessary to have a short inquiry into the ability in antiquity of preserving spoken language; what were the actual methods in this field; to what extent were they exercised; and what about the instruments that were used? In the first place we will trace this within the context of historical writing and subsequently within the context of administration and jurisdiction. We will emphasize the period of the Roman Empire (27 B.C. – 395 A.D.) because the gospels were written in the beginning of this period.

3.1 Direct speech in historical writing

According to modern standards, direct speech should be recorded correctly in historic descriptions just as it was spoken. Historic presentations have to describe historic realities of the past: situations, persons, activities and so on. Of course this is a high standard and for the most part one only tries to approach this standard in historic descriptions. This was also the case in classical times. But what about the presentation of the spoken word in historical writing? In antiquity there existed some ambivalence about it. On the one hand the art of writing seemed to be the medium for preserving the spoken word; on the other hand it was impossible to collect quotes and speeches in all sort of situations that appeared to be of historical value later on. And so it became accepted custom in historical writing that an author who was not able to deliver what had been said, presented what was supposed to be said. And this resulted often in the habit that authors wrote according their view of history what should have been said in all sort of situations.

The father of Greek historian writing, Thucydides (ca. 470 – 396 B.C.), wrote

the history of the Peloponnesian War.⁷⁰ In the introduction of his work he explains how he dealt with the presentation of quotes and speeches. To be objective, through honest inquiry he did his very best to be knowledgeable of the events he described. And about the speeches, he said: 'As to the speeches that were made by different men, either when they were about to begin the war or when they were already engaged therein, it has been difficult to recall with strict accuracy the words actually spoken, both for me as regards that which I myself heard, and for those who from various other sources have brought me reports. Therefore the speeches are given in the language in which, as it seemed to me, the several speakers would express, on the subjects under consideration, the sentiments most befitting the occasion, though at the same time I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said.'⁷¹

From his definition of his working method it is obvious that Thucydides made room for himself to not present the speeches exactly as they had been spoken. He was concerned that he presented the tenor of the speeches at least. Not only modern researchers in classical history, but also contemporaries and historians who worked after Thucydides, have understood from his definition that he left some room to maneuver. The spoken word lay – so to speak – embedded in the march of events which formed the backbone of the story.

Thucydides' working method became the standard for classical Greek historical writing. The handicap of it is that it is not clear how much room a historian permitted himself in expressing his own imagination instead of the once spoken word. For instance Polybius (ca. 150 B.C.) drew the sword against authors who, according to him, trifled with the truth. He reproached the writer Timaeus for bringing forward extensive speeches on each occasion out of his rich imagination. He called it 'untrue, infantile and a waste of time' to dish up

70. The war between the Greek cities Athens and Sparta over a long period of time (431 – 404 B.C.)

71. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* I.XXII.

stories like that.⁷²

Polybius himself strictly followed the rule that had been set by Thucydides to describe many events and to be sober with speeches. Many hold that the speeches presented by Polybius are very truthful. But the rule of Thucydides makes plain that there exists no certainty about the question of whether we have to do with verbatim reports or not. This was and remained the weakness of Greek historical writing when once the premises had been accepted. In the long run it became customary practice for an author to use speeches to vent his own ideas about all sort of subjects; in general from (moral) education even to entertainment. In doing so, authors tried to make their books fascinating for the ordinary readers, or more correctly hearers, because there existed a wide-spread custom in antiquity - a world without radio and TV - to read to an audience (family, housemates, friends, neighbors) for entertainment.

The above-discussed ambivalence in the presentation of the spoken word in texts is to be seen in the work of two Jewish authors who lived in the first century in the culture of Hellenism. Both, Philo (ca. 20 B.C. – 50 A.D.) and Flavius Josephus (37 – ca. 100 A.D.), wrote a lot about the history of old Israel and both used the Old Testament as a primary source. Where Philo introduces speeches and discussions in his stories he is sober and closely follows the Old Testament text. It is true that he introduced long treatises about Hellenistic philosophical topics in his expositions in trying to show how progressive the biblical persons of old were and that they could compete with Greek philosophers of his time, but in doing so he did not change the spoken language of the Old-Testamentary persons he described.

The work of Flavius Josephus is quite different. The classical guideline of Thucydides is recognizable. Mostly he describes sequences of events and on a few occasions we hear people speak, but in these cases he often goes far beyond his sources. When he tells the story of Abraham who is about to sacrifice

72. Polybius, *Historiae* XII.25.5.

his son Isaac, we don't hear any dialogue between them, but when the altar is ready and the moment of sacrifice is near, we hear Abraham say⁷³: 'O my son! I poured out a vast number of prayers that I might have you as my son and when you had been born, I did everything that I could to bring you up and I believed that nothing could make me happier than to see you growing up to be a man and to see how you would be the successor to my dominion at the end of my life...' And so Abraham continues to speak and he finishes with the words: 'He [God] wants to receive your soul with prayers and holy ritual to place you near himself. And there you will be my patron and supporter in my old age. Certainly, for that reason I had to bring you up; and so you will make God to be my Comforter instead of yourself.' It is clear that Josephus gives - on the lips of Abraham - his own vision on the occasion. We don't read any of it in the Abraham story in the Old Testament. Josephus followed accepted Greek custom in writing history by inserting a speech at the culminating point of the occasion with his vision on the event.

The point of our subject is: The gospels are written, as we have seen in chapter two, in Greek. And so the question is: Did the gospel writers who were contemporaries of Philo and Flavius Josephus work in the same way as these Jewish historians, according to accepted Greek standards? If so, we cannot rely on the spoken words in the gospels in respect of their authenticity. Or did the gospel writers have other standards in presenting speeches and discussions?

3.2 Direct speech in texts of administration and jurisdiction

In antiquity the preservation of the spoken word was important not only in historical writing. In the fields of administration and jurisdiction the safeguarding of the spoken word was even more essential in relation to cases in jurisdiction: trials, judicial sentences; and in respect of politics, promulgation

73. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates* I.13.3; Whiston, 1996, 43.

of decrees, specific applications of laws, verbatim records of political discussions and negotiations. In Hellenistic time the Greeks were very well prepared for all of these aspects.

We are speaking about the Hellenistic culture that dominated the countries around the eastern part of the Mediterranean after the conquests of Alexander the Great (ca. 331 B.C.). He had founded Alexandria which was about to become a metropolis as big as Rome. Alexandria and great Greek-speaking centers such as Athens and Ephesus were involved in a continuing competition to be the most famous bearer of Hellenistic culture in the Roman Empire. Alexandria possessed a library with from time to time more volumes than in the public libraries of Athens and Ephesus. After the death of Alexander, the kings of Alexandria (the Macedonian dynasty of the Ptolemies) had done their very best right from the beginning of their reign to spread the Greek culture all over Egypt, particularly by introduction of Greek as the colloquial language.

Out of the Hellenistic culture of Alexandria of this period, we possess a striking witness about specific writing activities at the royal court in the so called Letter of Aristeas. From it we may learn how much importance one attached to accurate records of the spoken word: 'But it is unseemly to misrepresent facts which are recorded in the public archives. And it would not be right for me to transgress in such a matter as this. I tell the story just as it happened, conscientiously avoiding any error. I was so impressed by the force of their utterances, that I made an effort to consult those whose business it was to make a record of all that happened at the royal audiences and banquets. For it is the custom, as you know, from the moment the king begins to transact business until the time when he retires to rest, for a record to be taken of all his sayings and doings - a most excellent and useful arrangement. For on the following day the minutes of the doings and sayings of the previous day are read over before business commences, and if there has been any irregularity, the matter is at once set right. I obtained therefore, as has been said, accurate information from the public records, and I have set forth the facts in proper order since I know how

eager you are to obtain useful information.⁷⁴

Aristeas gave a description of how accurately secretaries worked at the royal court in Egypt in the Greek-speaking culture of the Ptolemies. They took the minutes of the conversations between the kings and their dignitaries; they recorded the smallest details as Aristeas remarked. They worked out their notes and the next day everything was confirmed by reading. We are confronted in this text of the Letter of Aristeas with the same working method as we have seen in the prologue of Luke. Aristeas is talking about a legation from Jerusalem at the court of Ptolemy II, and Aristeas who was present at the audience with Ptolemy tells everything about it in his Letter to his friend Philocrates. But before he did so, he was able to consult the archives to be well informed through records as he wished to exclude mistakes in his Letter about the audience. In the prologue of Luke, the many are informed by public records made by the eyewitnesses who even recorded the spoken words of the events. That seemed to be standard procedure in the Hellenistic environment of which both Egypt and the Jewish land were part.

For several reasons, many scholars consider the Letter of Aristeas not to be trustworthy in everything. There exists a scientific debate about the date of writing of the Letter of Aristeas, between ca. 270 B.C. – ca. 100 A.D: roughly the period from Ptolemy II Philadelphos up to Flavius Josephus who has cited from the Letter. How one may judge about these particular questions is not of much value for our concern, because we learn from the Letter the custom of recording accurately the sayings and doings of people. Josephus certainly held the Letter to be authentic as he made large quotes from it. This means that at Josephus' time the Letter had met general approval and acceptance. And so we have to deal with the reality that all over the Hellenistic world skilled writers were able to record events just as is described in the Letter of Aristeas; it is far from an anomaly that Luke referred to this custom in regard to Jesus' work.

The example from the Letter of Aristeas is certainly not an isolated instance.

74. *The Letter of Aristeas*, 297-300; R.H. Charles, 1913.

Philo of Alexandria (ca. 25 B.C. – ca. 45 A.D.) gives a most interesting description about a magistrate called Lampo, who enriched himself by manipulating legal documents: ‘For standing by the rulers when they gave judgment, he took notes of all that took place at the trial as if he were a clerk; and then he designedly passed over or omitted such and such points, and interpolated other things which were not said. And at times, too, he made alterations, changing and altering, and perverting matters, and turning things up-side down, aiming to get money by every syllable, or, I might rather say, by every letter, like a hunter after musty records, whom the whole people with one accord did often with great felicity and propriety of expression call a pen-murderer, as slaying numbers of persons by the things which he wrote ...’⁷⁵ From this example it is beyond question that in the Hellenistic culture of Egypt in the first century not only at a royal court but also in trial there were clerks’ records of the spoken word. A certain Lampo behaved like such a clerk in governmental practice, however in a terrible way by perverting what was said. The people called such a man a pen-murderer. Through the serious misconduct of Lampo we have here a perfect description from Philo of how one handled the spoken word in trials in the Hellenistic world of Egypt. As there was one rule for all in the Roman Empire we can be sure that important matters such as legal processes everywhere in the Greek speaking part of the empire, and also in the Jewish land, had been organized in the same way, with clerks to preserve the spoken word in behalf of fair trials.⁷⁶

It is of course of great value to know how secretaries were able to accurately record the spoken word in the Hellenistic period. From early times - as we will learn - they were acquainted with the art of speedy and shorthand writing.

75. Philo, *Flaccus* 131; C.D. Yonge, 1993, p. 736.

76. It is said in the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 4:3) that two scribes were writing during a process in the Jewish High Court (Sanhedrin). Rabbi Judah has remarked according to this passage that it used three writers.

3.3 Shorthand writing in antiquity

Our knowledge of shorthand writing in antiquity is based on several sources. In the first place we possess remarks of classical authors about the subject. Secondly we can rely on archaeological findings of real stenographical notes from the past.

Speaking about shorthand writing in antiquity we have to deal with two variants: the Greek and the Latin stenography. Both variants existed side by side within the period of the Roman Empire (27 B.C. – 395 A.D.). In the eastern Greek-speaking part of the empire, the Greek stenography was in use. That means in the regions of Greece, Turkey (Asia Minor), Syria (near the Mediterranean), Judea and Egypt. In the western part of the empire – Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Spain, France (Gallia) and even in other northern colonies – where Latin was the official language, the Latin variant of shorthand writing was used.

Unfortunately there do not exist examples of Latin steno signs from the period of the Roman Empire. However in spite of many changes during the centuries, the system was in use until the late middle ages. Signs preserved from the time of the middle ages do still show substantially how shorthand writing looked in antiquity. The Greek steno system as it was used in the Roman Empire, fell into disuse during the middle ages and for a long time nobody knew what the Greek steno signs looked like. However in the first part of the twentieth century, Greek stenography signs became known from wax tablets from the third or fourth century found in Egypt. In the wax of the tablets were found steno signs as they had to be learned by pupils who trained in the art. Two scholars, H.J.M. Milne and A. Mentz, have contributed a lot to the decipherment of the old Greek signs of these wax tablets.⁷⁷

For our knowledge of the origin and the history of shorthand writing, we depend on the testimonies of writers from the period of the Roman Empire. They inform us about the rise of shorthand writing in the first century B.C. In

77. H.J.M. Milne, 1934; A. Mentz, 1940.

spite of the fact that we do not hear very much about the art during this period, the sample remarks about it from this time speak volumes about its importance.

We are much better informed about shorthand writing during the second and third century A.D. There are many references to the practice, and words such as 'stenographer' (sèmeiographos) and 'stenography' (sèmeiographè) are quite current from that time onwards. In this period, stenographers were some of the various servants of the public authorities: imperial and royal courts, senate, local authorities and courts of justice. From this time onward the persecutions of Christians also increased in the Roman Empire. Many trials against martyrs were recorded by stenographers and often Christians could lay hands on the records later on to read them in memorial services. From the third and fourth centuries onwards we hear that stenographers served the church fathers, they recorded their public preaching, teaching, instructions, debates and particularly that stenographers took care of recording the acts of church conferences. It is well known that nearly all church fathers and church teachers had stenographers at their disposal. Greek-speaking: Origin (ca. 250), Eusebius (ca. 325), Basil the Great (ca. 350), Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 375). Latin-speaking: Jerome (ca. 375), Augustine of Hippo (ca. 400).⁷⁸ When one or more regular stenographers of Augustine were absent during a service, there were always enough volunteers among the people to fill the gap. The next quote is from Basil the Great who had been a steno teacher himself: 'Who has learned the art of stenography, not only has the signs and the meanings of them engraved on his soul, but also the octads and tetrads ... Who could strip off his body, would find on his inner self the text of the Commentary [the steno system].'⁷⁹

78. Chr. Johnen, 1911, p.120-21; A. Mentz, 1949, p. 24.

79. Basilius, *De Virginitate*.

3.4 *Origins of shorthand writing in the first century in Rome*

We possess an important testimony from Plutarch (ca. 46-120 A.D.) about the beginning of stenography in public life: ‘... and its preservation [of Cato’s oration] was due to Cicero the consul, who had previously given to those clerks who excelled in rapid writing instruction in the use of signs, which, in small and short figures, comprised the force of many letters; these clerks he had then distributed in various parts of the senate-house. For up to that time the Romans [better: *one* instead of *the Romans*] did not employ or even possess what are called shorthand writers, but then for the first time, we are told, the first steps toward the practice were taken. Be that as it may, Cato carried the day and changed the opinions of the senators, so that they condemned the men to death.’⁸⁰

This is the oldest documented case of shorthand writing: the verbatim fixation of the oration of Cato the Younger against Catilina and his conspirators. It was held on the 5th of December of the year 63 B.C. before the Roman senate. Plutarch remarks that the writers made use of special signs instead of ordinary letters and that these signs did not represent one consonant or vowel each, but several sounds or letters each. This was the first stage of shorthand writing that in its later development was characterized by one sign per syllable.

Plutarch tells us his story about an assembly of the Roman senate with one issue under debate: the conduct of life of Catilina, a high-born Roman citizen. He was the leader of a group of conspirators purposing to bring down the government. He wanted to get into power himself and for that purpose he had brought together an army of 10.000 men. There could be no doubt about his destructive intentions. It was clear to every citizen of Rome that Catilina and his conspirators were traitors and they deserved no other characterization than subversive, betrayers of the state. But what had to happen in this difficult time of the city of Rome? Catilina and his conspirators were Roman citizens; did they have the

80. Plutarch, *Cato Minor* 23.3. Translation Loeb Classical Library.

right to be punished as Romans according Roman law? If so they should be punished with a sentence of exile.

Or had they lost the privileges that were applicable to Roman citizens since they had the intention to oppose and stand against the Roman state and consequently against Roman law. In this case they had put themselves outside of the law and they could be sentenced to death without trial. The senate hesitated about what choice to make as Catilina and his conspirators were Romans by birth and possessed by law the right of a fair trial at a Roman court. On the other hand the city of Rome was in a state of tension, a hostile army wandered through the woods of Italy ready to attack the city and the eyes of the people of Rome were turned towards the senate. What would be the senate's decision in this dangerous situation?

The final session of the senate about the subject had come, and the senator who was ready to bring forward the final oration was Cato the Younger. The consul Cicero, who knew that Cato had a harsh point of view about the issue, (with which he agreed), brought some shorthand writers into the senate hall to record Cato's oration. When Cato finished, he had convinced the entire senate that a firm stand was to be taken in this matter. That day Catilina was sentenced in his absence to death and his Roman conspirators, who had already been brought into prison earlier, were also sentenced to death and that same day the sentence was executed. The use of shorthand writers had contributed in no small way to the outcome, it had proven to be a political tool. All the senators realized that their words were written down and everybody in Rome could hear about their individual positions within a few hours. There was no room for mistakes, no room for doubtful statements. Moreover it would not be possible to change positions later on as they were recorded by the shorthand writers: the moment was now.

This event has always remained a moment of significance within Roman history: the Republic had been saved, and so all the ins and outs of the affair could not fade away from memory, nor disappear from historic annals. It remained irrefutable forever that shorthand writing had been part of the scene and it had

appeared to be decisive in matters of public life. Certainly it was no coincidence that four years later the taking of minutes had been permanently implemented in the senate, connected with the regular publication of official reports of that body (*acta senatus*). At the same time a daily newspaper had been introduced in Rome (*acta diurna*).⁸¹ We are speaking of the time of about ca. 60 B.C. This can only be explained through the art of shorthand writing that had proven to be a political tool and within a few years it seems to have settled as an indispensable tool in public affairs. Just as Plutarch many years later characterized the picture ‘... but then for the first time, we are told, the first steps toward the practice⁸² were taken.’ A continuing progression of shorthand writing in the Roman culture was the result of Cicero’s introduction of the art in the senate: refinement of the system and intensification through acceptance of the art in various parts of society where it proved its usefulness. Testimonies from the first century B.C. and from the first century A.D. confirm this picture. From several orations from this period, we know through explicit mentioning that they had been recorded by shorthand writers: orations from Caesar, Cicero, Antonius, Tiberius, Claudius and Quintilianus.⁸³

According to Plutarch, the consul Cicero had given instruction in the use of steno signs to writers who already excelled in rapid writing.⁸⁴ These signs

81. S. Lauffer, 1969, p. 141.

82. Plutarch uses here the Greek for ‘track, trail’.

83. Chr. Johnen, 1911, p. 168. See further: H. Boge, 1973, p. 221.

84. It is a question whether Cicero was allowed to admit slaves who were skilled in shorthand writing to the senate meeting. In the fourth Catilinarian oration, Cicero says that on that day (5 dec. 63 B.C.) clerks of state were gathered at the Forum of Rome to assign by lot new quaestor secretaries who took charge of the public archives and the public treasury. They belonged to the *ordo honestus* and Cicero himself had been quaestor for some time. It is possible that he had the opportunity to instruct clerks of state in shorthand. It seems obvious that only clerks of state were allowed to be present at senate meetings for recording.

became known as Tironian notes. Tiro, a liberated slave of Cicero, was the designer of the Latin steno system and in antiquity his name has always been connected with the origin of shorthand writing in the Roman Empire. However, it is an unresolved question as to whether Tiro invented the signs, or whether he designed the signs by taking Greek examples and converting them to be usable in the Latin language.

3.5 Latin shorthand writing in the first century B.C. and the first century A.D.

After the introduction of shorthand writing by Cicero in the Roman senate, we only hear sporadic testimonies about the art in the first century B.C and the first century A.D. Consequently the origin of shorthand writing and the first developments of the system remained rather obscure in these two ages. Yet it is possible to get a global image of it from the few remarks in the available literature.

In the first place, shorthand writing was developed in this silent period (from 63 B.C. until ca. 65 A.D.) into a complete writing system. Bishop Isidorus has written about it as follows: 'At first Ennius used about eleven hundred customary signs [notae vulgares]. The use of these signs was to record the spoken word fully in cases of public meetings and legal proceedings. Several writers worked simultaneously, each doing his own part of the work, taking down in regular order as much of what was said as possible. In Rome Tullius Tiro, a liberated slave of Cicero, was the first to present signs [notas], but only for the first syllables. After him Vipsanius Filagrius and Aquila – a liberated slave of Maecenas – have given a variety of additions. Finally, it was Seneca who brought everything together; he arranged and completed a collection of five thousand notes.'⁸⁵

The so-called signs of Ennius consisted of common script letters and figures

85. Isidor of Sevilla, *Etymologiae* I.22. Isidor wrote this between 615-618. It is generally accepted that Isidor with his résumé about shorthand writing goes back to the author Suetonius (ca. 77-140 A.D.).

and were called for that reason *notae vulgares*: common signs (normal letters and abbreviations). Long before Tiro, the system of Ennius (239-169 B.C.) was used for recording sayings of political or legal value by omissions of vowels, contractions and regular abbreviations of standard expressions. Tiro presented new signs each representing more sounds (letters) at the same time and that remained the basic principle of shorthand writing forever. As Isidor said, many improvements were added to the system of Tiro later on by men such as Vipsanius Filagrius and Aquila. One assumes that this occurred in the period between 31 B.C and 14 A.D. Still later it was Seneca who brought the system to perfection halfway through the first century A.D. For that reason steno signs have often been called in antiquity signs of Seneca (*notae Senecae*) instead of signs of Tiro.⁸⁶

The number of five thousand (notes) in the testimony of Isidor is extremely large.⁸⁷ One takes into account that there existed many variants within the system of shorthand writing, or even several systems that had been developed side by side. One also reckons with the possibility of the existence of many signs that were not practised at all, but that were trained according the building of the system. But still the number of five thousand remains extremely high. Maybe the Latin and the Greek systems of *notae vulgares* (oksugraphy, section 3.6) and stenography are included in this number; that would give more realistic figures.

Seneca was extremely rich and has become known as an author and philosopher. He has given a remarkable statement about shorthand writing. What he has said is most important for us to now understand the development of shorthand writing during 'the dark period of the beginnings of shorthand writing', the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. He said: 'What to say about steno signs, by which it is possible to record the fastest spoken oration, to follow with the hand the fastest tongue? Isn't it the work of the humblest slaves. The wisdom

86. Chr. Johnen, 1911, p. 169. He gives 54-68 A.D. (the period of Nero).

87. Stenography in our time requires knowledge of about 750 to 1000 signs.

reigns higher, not by training the hands but the spirits.⁸⁸ Seneca speaks about the spirits, the human minds, which needed training as well as the hand of the shorthand writer. He continued: 'The noble Romans did not take the trouble to give their hand this skilfulness to follow a fast spoken oration; they left the entire matter to slaves who themselves created the (steno) signs.' Seneca's statement explains that in the beginning of stenography, the Romans did not have much interest in it, however they admired the skill of the slaves who experienced it. According to Seneca the Romans did not have the time for the training, as they needed all their time for training the minds and spirits of the people; certainly he meant 'to rule the immense Roman Empire'. The Romans were the organizers of the world, they had more to do than shorthand writing, no matter how important it may be in matters of jurisdiction and administration. Organizing the world required a greater skilfulness than stenography, seems to be Seneca's message.

The Romans indeed admired shorthand writing greatly as we may learn from a saying of Martiales, the poet who worked from 64 A.D. in the city of Rome. Speaking about shorthand writing, he said: 'Words run fast, but your hand is faster. Before the tongue comes to rest, your right hand has finished the job.'⁸⁹ Yet the earlier quoted remark of Seneca makes some things very clear. During the first centuries of the art, Romans admired stenography and they recognized the value of it, however they considered it as slaves work, not work for Romans. To learn all those signs, to write them and to read them back, that was good for intelligent slaves, but for the rest it was better to keep aloof from it. Seneca points out that the art of shorthand writing was a matter of slaves from the very beginning as were also the later developments. That explains why we know so little about the first ages of shorthand writing, the dark period; it was a part of slavery.

The differences between the life of a free Roman and that of a slave were many. The free and the slave did meet each other daily; yet, a broad gap existed between

88. Seneca, *Epistles* XIV.90.25.

89. Martiales, *Epigrams* XIV.208.

the two social groups. Daily life brought the necessity of contact between the two classes, nevertheless a *modus vivendi* existed with a minimum of contact. That was the best for both groups: no warm contacts or even friendships, that were only causes for disappointments and tensions. It is as if Seneca with his remark about shorthand writing wanted to make clear that, though he gave the command to his slaves to collect all the signs and to classify them, one should not suppose that he, as a free Roman, was personally involved in the project. That would be overstepping the mark.

After Seneca's remark we may draw several conclusions about the question of how it is possible that we know so little about the first two ages of shorthand writing. In the first place we have to deal with the reality that the signs were written on wax tablets which were cleaned after use, so that we do not possess steno signs from the first period. Secondly we have to realize that it belonged almost entirely to the world of slavery, the art belonged to the free world only in very small part. It would take many years before the Roman youth started to be educated in stenography. As slavery work, it was out of order, apart maybe from public clerks who had to be skilled in it and normally, one would most likely have used slaves as clerks. In the third place writers and orators were famous because of their fine and elegant use of language, but recording everything by shorthand writing was seen as a mechanical process, not worth mentioning.

Still there have been examples of warm contacts between slaves who were fluent in shorthand writing and their Roman masters and therefore they are worth mentioning. It started already with Tiro and Cicero. They grew up together and their relationship was so good that Cicero gave him his freedom (53 B.C.). Plinius Secundus (23-79 A.D.) who perished in the eruption of mount Vesuvius, had the habit of being joined on his journeys by shorthand writers.⁹⁰ Suetonius has related that Emperor Titus (79-81 A.D.) competed in shorthand writing with

90. Chr. Johnen, 1911, p. 170.

his clerks (amanuenses).⁹¹ These exceptions confirm the rule that stenography was - in the first place - the work of slaves and clerks.

We have learned that at the end of the first century stenography had penetrated into the higher social classes of Roman life. There is enough information from that time to establish this. Again the poet Martiales has given the testimony that the number of teachers in stenography was about the number of customary teachers with regard to the number of their pupils.⁹² From the second century onwards more messages appear in the available literature and we learn from them that shorthand writing had become a free profession and that young people (not only slaves) were educated in the art. At the end of the period of the Roman emperors, stenography had become one of the regular subjects of schooling as Fulgentius (ca. 480-550) has said: 'For the youth first the letters of the abc (abecetaria), then steno signs.'⁹³

Dr. Chr. Johnen has remarked about Latin stenography: 'The young art has taken a deep root in the old Roman culture and it grew up luxuriantly. In that brilliant building of the Roman flowering time until the death of Marcus Aurelius (180), in this 'newest time' of Roman history this small but remarkable characteristic of a high culture could not be missed in any way.'⁹⁴

3.6 Greek shorthand writing in the first century B.C. and the first century A.D.

About Greek shorthand writing in the first century B.C. and A.D. we are less informed than about the Latin variant, because there are no testimonies in the available literature of that period. Yet there have always been scholars who reckoned with early Greek stenography. There has been a long tradition among schol-

91. Suetonius, *Titus* 3.3.

92. Chr. Johnen, 1911, p. 171.

93. Fulgentius, *Mythologicon* III.10.

94. Chr. Johnen, 1911, p. 171.

ars in the past who held the view that the Greek were the inventors of it.⁹⁵ From ca. 1850 a change of opinion began among German scholars. Increasingly one defended the view that the Romans invented the art, that Tiro with his signs was the starting point. Nevertheless it remained a generally accepted view that the Greek and the Latin variants of shorthand writing developed simultaneously.⁹⁶ And one has adduced several arguments in support of this view.

First of all the Roman and Greek culture had been interwoven so closely that it seems impossible to suppose that an art as important as Latin stenography could exist in one of the two cultures while it was lacking in the other. About the necessity in antiquity of the coming together of the Latin and the Greek system, A. Mentz remarked: 'As we may observe in our modern culture, an invention which the world needs, is made nearly simultaneously in different places. At present nobody knows with certainty who was the original inventor.'⁹⁷

Soon after the invention, the Romans became dependent on stenography for administration and jurisdiction. This required an implementation of the art as quickly as possible in the Greek speaking eastern colonies of the empire. For Roman governors, being in charge, were obliged to work according to Roman standards especially in cases of jurisdiction and administration.

Secondly, the decipherers of the Greek system, Milne and Mentz, have pointed out that the Greek and the Latin steno system have been built according to

95. The learned Lipsius wrote in 1597 a letter with the title *De Notis* about shorthand writing in antiquity. He defended on brief information in classic literature the thesis that there existed a Greek system of shorthand writing that was older than the Latin variant. E.R. Richards, 1991, follows still this point of view that the Greek invented real shorthand (tachygraphy).

96. After World War II a new shift took place. H. Boge, 1973, a pupil of A. Mentz, stated that we can not speak about Greek shorthand before the second age A.D. as there is no information earlier than the second age. This point of view has been followed by A. Millard, 2000, p. 175-176. Compare section 3.7 Contra Boge – Millard.

97. A. Mentz, 1940, p. 55.

the same principles.⁹⁸ Similar adaptations seem to have taken place side by side. This is so striking that Mentz, on the basis of these similarities, has indicated the same development for the Greek as the Latin stenography: 'The genesis of the Greek stenography in three phases finds its accurate parallel in the development of the Latin system.'⁹⁹ As we saw earlier, the first step of the Latin system took place with the work of Tiro. New developments came with Vipsanius Filagrius and Aquila in the time of emperor Augustus, while the last important event was initiated by Seneca; collecting and arranging the existing signs.

What are the oldest reliable testimonies of Greek shorthand in the old literature? In the first place we possess a papyrus from 155 A.D. found in Egypt. This document is in fact a sort of contract between a rich Egyptian named Panechotes and a steno teacher named Appolonios. Their agreement is that the Greek slave Chaerammon of Panechotes will follow a course in stenography for two years. The fee of 120 drachmas will be paid in three parts. The first part at the start of the course, the second payment will follow later on when the pupil has learned the signs and the last payment will be when the pupil is able to record a simple dictation and to read it faultlessly. This message shows that in about 155 A.D. Greek stenography had been developed completely and had been rooted deeply in Egyptian culture. Also striking in this document are technical terms such as *sèmeia* (steno signs), *sèmeiography* (stenography) and *commentary* (steno lesson book). These Greek terms are all standard expressions in the Greek literature from the second century onwards.

Another old testimony about Greek shorthand is to be found in Plutarch's description (ca. 100 A.D.) of Cicero's introduction of Latin stenography in the Roman senate (see section 3.4). In it we find the expressions: *sèmeia graphein*

98. Milne has said: 'For the systems are without doubt closely related. Their basic principles are identical, and the formal coincidences are too frequent and too striking to be fortuitous.' H.J.M. Milne, 1934, p. 2.

99. A. Mentz, 1940, p. 54.

(writing steno) and *sèmeiographos* (stenographer). That means that in about 100 A.D. these technical terms already existed in the Greek language area. And so it is generally accepted that Greek shorthand existed and was widespread by about 100 A.D.

There is a much older testimony about Greek stenography which unfortunately most scholars tend to overlook. We are speaking about a letter of Cicero which he addressed to his friend Atticus in the year 45 B.C.¹⁰⁰ In this letter Cicero used the later Greek technical term *dia sèmeiōn* (through signs): ‘You don’t quite understand what I wrote to you about the ten Commissioners, no doubt because I wrote *dia sèmeiōn* (through signs).’ This early use of the expression *dia sèmeiōn* has exercised many minds in the first half of the twentieth century: Did Cicero mean with the expression *dia sèmeiōn* ‘through steno signs’, or didn’t he?

The first difficulty is that one has always felt that the term *dia sèmeiōn* was a technical term with the meaning: ‘through steno signs’ only 150 years later (than Cicero). So it seems inappropriate to apply this meaning to the expression as used 150 years earlier. A second difficulty that has brought much confusion about the passage is that scholars have used it to defend the thesis that Greek stenography existed earlier than the Latin. The use of the Greek term *dia sèmeiōn* in a Latin context would prove that. However it is far too much to state from Cicero’s use of this expression that Greek stenography would be earlier and more authentic than the Latin. When he used the expression *dia sèmeiōn*, 20 years had already passed since the introduction of the art in the Roman senate by Cicero. How is it possible that a rather flippant remark of Cicero could refer to an old Greek stenography of more than 20 years earlier? That is not very likely. The confusion in the past about this passage has resulted in this text having lost the interest of researchers nowadays. And that is a pity because we may indeed learn important aspects of the origins of Greek stenography from it.

100. To Atticus 305 (XIII.32.3); 29 May, 45 A.D.; D.R. Shackleton Bailey, 1966, 176-179.

What happens when a speaker or author uses an expression in a different language? That is the kernel of the matter. There may be several reasons for this change of language: the speaker or author likes to stress a thing or he wants to be to the point with a strange word that is more applicable or he wants to use a more eloquent style. Mostly these reasons together make a speaker use an expression of a different language. With these aspects in mind, the use of Cicero's expression *dia sèmeiōn* in his letter to Atticus is quite understandable.

The authoritative translation of Cicero by Shackleton Bailey has for *dia sèmeiōn* 'abbreviations'.¹⁰¹ And that is really to the point as Cicero gave in an earlier letter to Atticus the figure 'fourteen' not in letters but as a simple number: XIII. This was an abbreviation of written text.¹⁰² Cicero meant in his letter to Atticus that he had not correctly understood the number XIII: 'You don't quite understand what I wrote to you about the ten Commissioners, no doubt because I wrote *dia sèmeiōn* [through signs, through abbreviations].' The figure XIII which Atticus did not understand quite well, is indeed ambiguous in a former letter.¹⁰³ It can refer to an year-book and then we may read 'the fourteenth year-book' or 'year-book fourteen', but it can also refer to a period of time and then we may read 'fourteen

101. D.R. Shackleton Bailey, 1966, p. 179. The translation 'stenographically' or 'by stenographical signs' (Wattenbach, Preisigke, Von Gardthausen, Viereck) lacks proof. The translation 'by indications' (Weinberger, Mentz, Boge) is untenable. The meaning of 'sèmeion' is: a clear mark. If this last translation is correct, then Cicero has, in his letter, a contradiction: 'You don't quite understand what I wrote to you about the ten Commissioners, no doubt because I wrote *dia sèmeiōn* (in clear wording!)...' The translation 'by indications' or 'en demi-mots' (Tyrell, Purser) is an unjustified mitigation. A synopsis of the translations is to be found in: H. Boge, 1973, p. 43-45.

102. '... one has understood for long that with *vulgares notae* are meant abbreviations of normal writing, which are *litterae singulares*, therefore also the abbreviations of figures by the first letters of them.' *Paulus Real-Encyclopädie XI der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 1922, p. 2225/2226.

103. To Atticus 303 (XIII.30.2); 28 May, 45 A.D.; D.R. Shackleton Bailey, 1966, 176..

years'.¹⁰⁴ Cicero meant the last option, because in his later letter he explained: 'How could he have been a Commissioner XIII [fourteen] years before becoming Praetor?' Again in this later letter he used abbreviations: XIII, and he justified this use with the chic Greek expression, that he wrote *dia sèmeiōn* (through abbreviations/signs). Why didn't he use the standard Latin expression 'per notas'?

In Greek and Latin texts figures were usually written in letters and not in abbreviations as Cicero had done. However, it was not unusual to give the number of a book in abbreviations. Cicero, writing in Latin, switched into Greek with the term *dia sèmeiōn*. And so it is obvious that there existed an identical system in Greek and in Latin of abbreviating words. The Latin system of recording direct speech had been enriched with the steno signs of Tiro. When Cicero easily switched to the Greek expression twenty years later, it is difficult to maintain that the Greek system of abbreviations/signs was backward at that time. No, it is clear from Cicero's switch, that the Greek abbreviations/signs possessed equal possibilities as in Latin. Cicero's use of the Greek expression *dia sèmeiōn* shows that it was very popular among the Greek to learn the new art, if not to speak of 'the rage'.¹⁰⁵ The extensiveness of the great Greek communities in Rome and Italy will have contributed to this. Anyway the effectiveness of the Greek abbreviations was a match for that of the Latin signs at that moment. The question of whether there existed a Greek stenography in about 45 B.C. can be answered affirmatively.

Cicero referred with the expression *dia sèmeiōn* to five Roman signs (XIII),

104. It is possible to read: 'In Libo's year-book XIII (fourteen/fourteenth) Tuditanus is years later praetor than consul Mummius.' But also possible is: 'In Libo's year-book Tuditanus is XIII (fourteen) years later praetor than consul Mummius.'

105. Great Greek speaking communities in Rome and in other Italian cities lived together with the Latin speaking population. Many Romans were bilingual. Even in the first century the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Romans in Greek. The Romans admired the Greek culture and tried to duplicate it in many ways, which gave a positive interaction between the two populations in Italy. For that reason we still speak of the Greco-Roman culture of the Roman Empire.

which formed together the figure of fourteen. In fact, with the Greek expression he referred here to *Greek shorthand*. Normally the Greeks used characters to indicate figures, e.g.: $\alpha = 1$, $\beta = 2$ etc. But these characters were not appropriate any more in Greek stenography. Certainly Tiro, the inventor, continued to use the *Roman numeral signs* for Latin stenography and the Greeks adopted the signs of Tiro *together with the Roman numeral signs* for their stenography. And so it was self-evident for Cicero to switch to the fashionable Greek expression *dia sêmeiôn* referring to Greek stenography as well as to originally Roman signs.

Cicero's letter to Atticus shows that the presumption of Milne and Mentz - i.e. that there existed a Greek steno system shortly after the beginning of the Latin system - was right and also that both systems developed according to the same internal improvements.

Noteworthy is the Greek background that must have influenced the wording of stenography in the Roman world. Ennius, who started with the first notes (notae vulgares), had been born (239 B.C.) in the Greek speaking community of Rudiae in the neighbourhood of Tarente in Italy. He introduced many Greek elements into Latin literature and he taught Greek language in Rome. He introduced in Latin eleven hundred notes (notae vulgares). It is hard to believe that this was his own invention; he rather followed Greek practice. At that time there existed already in Greek *oksugraphy*, speedy writing by omitting letters, particularly vowels (Greek: *oksus*, fast; *graphy*, writing). We know that because in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint from the third/second century B.C., the word *oksugraphos* is used in Psalm 45:2. As the Hebrew writing system worked without vowels, it is very clear that the Greek word *oksugraphos* has the meaning in the Septuagint of a writer who wrote quickly by omitting letters. This one Greek word *oksugraphos* for two Hebrew words (sopheer mahir – ready scribe, speedy writer) makes it definitely clear that the Greek had a sophisticated system for quick writing in the third/second century B.C. already, however it was not yet real shorthand.

In the Letter of Aristeas we read about royal secretaries at the court in Al-

exandria (third/second century B.C.) who recorded everything that was done and said (see section 2.1); that was certainly the Greek fashion at that time by using *oksugraphy*. When Tiro brought improvements into the Latin system by new signs (stenography), it was a natural consequence that the Greek speaking community in Italy enthusiastically applied Tiro's invention to the Greek system of *oksugraphy*. This state of affairs explains fully the easy switch of Cicero to the Greek term *dia sèmeiōn*.¹⁰⁶ The Greek set the fashion for the Romans in Cicero's time, even in the art of shorthand writing of which Tiro was the inventor.

Finally the decipherers Milne and Mentz have pointed out that in both the Latin and the Greek stenographical systems, similar improvements had been applied. It's worth mentioning that bishop Isidor also had spoken about improvements, which had been made by two men: Vipsanius Filagrius and Aquila (see section 3.5). Mentz took the position that the improvements he had seen had been made by Vipsanius Filagrius and Aquila. Chr. Johnen has shown that both slaves lived in the environment of Caesar Augustus.¹⁰⁷ And so it looks very much like these men worked together in preparing and implementing their improvements. Vipsanius Filagrius was certainly of Greek origin as his name shows, while the name Aquila is linked to Latin.¹⁰⁸ It may be the case that Vipsanius worked out the additions for the Greek stenography, while Aquila did the same for the Latin system. If so it was a brilliant initiative and who could better take this initiative to organize government, jurisdiction and trading in the eastern Greek

106. Oksugraphy was compelled to disappear after the introduction of stenography by Tiro. In Latin however, many notae vulgares remained extant later on as fixed forms, e.g. abbreviations of figures (Roman numerals), PR (Populus Romanus: People of Rome), SPQR (Senatus PopulusQue Romanus: Senate and People of Rome).

107. Chr. Johnen, 1911, p. 169. Vipsanius Filagrius probably was a liberated slave of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, general and a nephew of Augustus. Aquila was a liberated slave of Maecenas, advisor and friend of Augustus for long time.

108. Vipsanius Filagrius: (Greek: Philargyros, who loves silver). Aquila: (Latin: eagle), the Greek variant is Akulos.

part, as well as in the western Latin part of the Roman Empire, than Caesar Augustus who ruled one of the most successful periods of the empire? If we are right in pointing to Vipsanius Filagrius for the Greek improvements and Aquila for the Latin improvements being brought forward in Italy, we have a realistic explanation for the approximately five thousand notes in the collection of Seneca (see section 3.5). Let us assume for the notae vulgares about eleven hundred abbreviations each for both the Greek and the Latin systems. That would leave about twenty eight hundred notes; or about fourteen hundred notes each for the two steno systems (Greek and Latin) including in each system old steno signs and the improvements by Vipsanius Filagrius and Aquila. Then we have to do with realistic figures which underline the theory that the Latin and Greek stenography originated in Italy and that the Romans promoted both systems as valuable tools in their society.

3.7 Contra Boge - Millard

Millard, who has shown that reading and writing were integral parts of the Jewish culture in which Jesus lived and worked, claims that the beginning of Greek stenography occurred in the second century A.D.¹⁰⁹ He relies on only one study for his opinion: 'The most extensive study of the topic concluded there was no true Greek shorthand until the second century A.D. when it was borrowed from the Latin.' (H. Boge, *Griechische Tachygraphie und Tironische noten: Ein Handbuch der antiken und mittelalterlichen Schnellschrift*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973). He does not say why this is such a trustworthy study, neither does he give any argument from the work supporting this view and so he keeps his readers in the dark concerning the evidence for his opinion. Why Millard attaches so much value to an author who lived 2000 years after the events (Boge) without taking accurately into consideration authors such as Plutarch and Cicero who lived

109. A. Millard, 2000, p. 175-76.

then, is a riddle.¹¹⁰ Before doing so we firstly have to make a remark concerning the quality of Boge's work.

Boge was a student of Arthur Mentz, who has contributed to the deciphering of the Greek stenography as no other in the 20th century. In his book, Boge brought together all evidence about stenography in classical times including discussions of older scholars. Among that was also the work of his teacher Arthur Mentz, who had emphasised continuously that the Romans were the inventors of stenography and not the Greeks with reference to Plutarch's testimony. Mentz' argument for the priority of the Latin system has found general recognition. Only one point remained weak in Mentz' position: when did Greek stenography appear in history? He believed that the Greeks started with stenography around the beginning of the era.¹¹¹ As an argument for the rather fast adoption he recalled the close interaction of the two cultures (of the Romans and the Greeks) where one of the two could not accept being behind. In this respect Boge followed a different path: he pointed to the second century A.D. for the beginning of Greek stenography. And that is also the position of Millard.

The argument that Greek stenography followed the Latin system rather quickly due to the connection of the two cultures, as Mentz had argued, has been ignored completely by Boge - Millard. As a result, their approach is not convincing. Not only do they refuse to give an explanation for the gap of about 150 years between the origins of the two systems, they also don't give any historical impetus for the beginning of Greek stenography in the second century. It is just a lost historical detail to them. Of course this is inadequate in the consideration of an art of writing which played such an important role in public life during the Roman Empire (tunnel vision).

The existing antithesis - whether the Greeks or the Romans were the inventors of stenography - is in fact a result of an outdated problem. Classical scholarship

110. A. Millard, 2000, p. 175.

111. A. Mentz, 1940, p. 55. H. Boge, 1973, p. 147.

had for ages held the view that the Greeks were the inventors in the fifth or fourth century B.C. due to the wish to hear the old Greek philosophers in their own words. These scholars assumed that the testimony of Plutarch¹¹² only related to the beginning of *Latin* stenography in 63 B.C. For centuries most had believed in the primacy of the Greek system, with the Latin system starting rather late.

In antiquity however *this antithesis never existed*, as is also clear from Plutarch's testimony. When Latin stenography started in Rome, the Greek system was developed shortly after it. The (steno) signs of Tiro could be used immediately for the Greek language area, apart from some exceptions (e.g. for sounds as: ksi, chi, thèta, psi) and some different sound combinations. For Plutarch, the Greek, it was no question when stenography had started: in 63 B.C. in the Roman senate. He writes in an almost natural way concerning the origin of stenography in general without any distinction between Latin and Greek. In the first sentence he says: 'For up to that time one did not employ or even possess what are called *sèmeiographoi* (Greek for: stenographers).' Mentz very properly observed that this didn't refer to the beginning of Roman stenography, but to the beginning of stenography in general without an earlier Greek form of it. Now then, 'in for a penny, in for a pound': the same applies to the second expression (literally translated): '... but one says that one took then for the first time the step towards a trail (towards the practice).' Here again Plutarch speaks - through the use of 'one', 'people' etc. - about stenography in general, i.e. including Latin and Greek. His earlier use of the Greek technical term *sèmeiographoi* (stenographers) emphasizes the inclusion of the Greek system.

Most interesting is that he uses the term *ichnos*: i.e. 'footprint', or 'trail'. TDNT (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament) gives the following definition about the word: "*Ichnos* means 'footprint,' and may be used either for an individual impression on the ground or for a continuous line of such impres-

112. Plutarch, *Cato Minor* 23.3. Compare the text in section 3.4 Origins of shorthand writing in the first century in Rome.

sions, i.e., a trail.”¹¹³ Plutarch used the expression as a metaphor for ‘a trail of stenography in history’.¹¹⁴ He is not speaking about two lines, a Greek trail and a Latin one. Usually a trail remains the same from beginning to the end. In other words the Latin and Greek stenography formed one trail from beginning unto his time. Plutarch says that *then* – with Cato’s oration – the first step¹¹⁵ had been made. Indeed the Romans received the honor for taking the initiative, but with the metaphor, Plutarch emphasised that the Greeks had contributed their part to the practice of stenography in the Greco-Roman culture. After Cicero’s introduction of stenographers in the Roman Senate, many in the Greek communities in Italy pounced upon the new art of writing. Indeed Mentz was right in supposing the Greek stenography to follow the Roman invention, but he couldn’t dream of it happening that quickly. The trail came everywhere in the Roman Empire. As Latin and Greek stenography happened to begin side by side in Rome, so it came to Naples, Syracuse, Corinth, Athena, Ephesus, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Caesarea, Tiberius and also in Capernaum. Where stenography was introduced in the empire, it came in two variants (Latin and Greek); that was the trail Plutarch spoke about, as a trail has usually a right and a left part.

Finally there is also the Greek term of Cicero: *dia sèmeiōn* in the year 45 B.C. Cicero, who introduced stenography in the Roman Senate, could not have used this Greek stenographical term mistakenly. In the Greek communities in Italy, the new writing art was seen as a progression in speedy writing and there it became the rage (see section 3.6).

Unfortunately Boge and Millard failed to see the consistency in the testimo-

113. TDNT III, p. 402.

114. In this sense the Loeb translation gives for *ichnos*: the practise. Mentz and Boge incorrectly translate with ‘the first trail’ and are missing the point of Plutarch’s intention. (die erste Spur: Mentz, 1940, p. 41 and Boge, 1973, p. 89).

115. The plural translation ‘steps’ (Loeb) is not to the point, as in Greek *ti* is used: neuter singular.

nies of Plutarch and Cicero.¹¹⁶ They claimed a historical critical judgement¹¹⁷ concerning the matter, but historical criticism which is only a reduction of evidence, is undesirable. Such a judgement is only legitimate if the minor details of a passage have also received a proper place. This is not the case in the Boge – Millard construction, how much they may have contributed to our knowledge of reading and writing in Jesus' time.

3.8 *The 'fullness of time'*

Now that we have painted the picture of Greek and Latin oksu- and stenography in the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. by putting together the historic essentials, it is time to turn to the implications of this picture for the New Testament. In Luke's prologue we do not find any technical term about stenography, nevertheless the description of what has been done by the eyewitnesses who also were servants of the spoken word was exactly the work of stenographers at that time. To deliver the spoken word of Jesus to the many during the events being in the fulfilled state, had been made possible at that time by stenography, especially in cases of long speeches and dialogues. It is not necessary to suppose that everything in the gospels has been handed down through stenography.

116. Already Mentz rejected the phrase *dia sêmeiōn* as referring to stenography as many predecessors had pointed out. Mentz and Boge came with a different suggestion for the term: in *Andeutungen* (by indications); Mentz, 1940, p. 44-45; Boge, 1973, p. 45. For evaluation compare section 3.6 (notes).

117. '... signs for syllables, endings, frequent terms and so forth, has not been found in Greek before the second century A.D.' (A. Millard, 2000, p. 175). This is for Boge – Millard the argument that Greek stenography started rather late: in the second century A.D. They seem to forget that this is not a fair consideration, as the Latin signs we possess are from a much later time (mediaeval), which is no reason for them to assume that Latin stenography started in the Middle Ages. For the Latin dating they refer to the testimony of Plutarch, but unfortunately it has no value to them for the Greek dating.

Of course there were other possibilities to preserve the spoken word in writing, namely in cases of short sayings. Luke did not need to explain this, as it was common knowledge for everybody who was involved in reading and writing at that time. Listening to the teachings in the gospel of Luke, the hearers were supposed to understand how it could be possible that they heard Jesus' own words. That was part of the reality of the message of the gospels.

Matthew followed the same method. The gospel of Matthew is distinguished from the other gospels by the presentation of large orations of Jesus. In three cases Matthew gives the important phrase at the end that shows the professionalism of the original writers. After the Sermon on the Mount (7:28), the Discourse on the Kingdom (19:1) and the Eschatological Discourse (26:1) we read: '... when Jesus (had) finished (all) these sayings (words) ...' This is not a theological reference to the foregoing, neither a literary ornamentation nor a transition formula, but a confirmation of the original writers that they had documented the words of the speaker precisely in their presentation of them. Matthew presupposed that his readers understood the professional background, i.e. stenography, necessary for correctly (verbatim) presenting an extensive oration.

Luke was an educated person. From the book of Acts we know that he was perfectly acquainted with the culture in Asia Minor and Greece where the apostle Paul had worked. The functions and titles of the Roman and autochthon authorities he mentions in Acts are accurate and correct as has appeared from archaeological findings.¹¹⁸ It was Luke who brought the public life of Jesus onto the map of the world: 'In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness; ...'¹¹⁹ About his

118. F.F. Bruce, 1977, p. 75.

119. Luke 3:1-2.

time and the Greek and Roman cultures Luke knew what was what. Without any doubt he was acquainted with the existence, the use, and the results of stenography in his time. And it was certainly such a widespread art that he could presuppose the same knowledge among his readers and listeners. About 90 years after the introduction of stenography in the Roman senate, with which Cicero saved the state, neither Luke nor his hearers could be ignorant about it. It was no question for Luke and his readers how it was possible that more than 600 times they met a formula such as: 'Jesus said ...', or 'He answered and said ...'. It was not only inconvenient to give an explanation about slaves' work as stenography, it was also not necessary. The prologue of Luke's gospel presupposes a general knowledge about the skill of stenography in the time of Jesus' appearance and in a quite natural way, Luke made use of that knowledge speaking about the eyewitnesses who were also ministers of the spoken word (of the events).¹²⁰

The Romans 'utilized' two armies to maintain their power. The first was formed by their soldiers armed with sword and spear, the second by their civil servants armed with pen and paper. The first army enabled them to conquer new areas and with their second army they remodelled new regions to Roman fashion. We read in the Christmas story about a decree from Caesar Augustus 'that all the world should be enrolled'.¹²¹ Certainly this was an immense writing operation: from the desert of Judea to the Atlantic Ocean. Only the 'second army' of writing officers made this operation possible for Caesar Augustus. Of course many people were not able to read or to write in the Roman Empire, nevertheless writing was such an important part of society that W.V. Harris has remarked: '... the Roman Empire depended on writing. The affairs of magistrates and later of the imperial court, the taxation of citizens and provinces, the affairs of innumer-

120. If one denies the existence of real Greek shorthand in Jesus' time (so A. Millard, 2000, p. 175-176) one has to admit that at that time the old Greek oksugraphy (Ps. 45:2) still had been exercised by the eyewitnesses who were also ministers of the word (Luke 1:2).

121. Luke 2:1.

able city governments, the maintenance of armed forces – for all these writing was indispensable. Many people were thus more or less deeply involved in the writing and, and also in the delivery, storing, and retrieving of the resulting texts - an aspect of Roman life which historians have greatly neglected.¹²²

Christianity came into being in the Jewish land that was part of that huge Roman Empire, in which stenography reached perfection. The Jewish country was not a backward area, but a rich and prosperous part of the empire. Stenography, the Latin as well as the Greek variant, was an indispensable skill in administration and in jurisdiction in this area. The gospels of Jesus Christ originated in a society where stenography enjoyed reputation and application. He came in 'the fullness of time'. Everything was ready to preserve his teaching and to make him known to the world.

122. W.V. Harris, 1989, p. 206.

4

FROM WRITING TABLETS TO THE GOSPELS

In the previous chapter we saw how in the Roman Empire one dealt with the rendering of the spoken word in historical writing, jurisdiction, government and administration. We have also seen that there existed an enormous amount of writing activity at that time in the Middle East and that the use of stenography had already increased in the century before our era. Everything we know about the origins of the gospels, from the prologue of the gospel of Luke and from that of the first letter of John, fits perfectly into the developments within the Roman Empire. An oral tradition preceding the gospels must be excluded. Indeed Jesus came in ‘the fullness of time’.¹²³

4.1 Direct speech in the gospels

The spoken word forms an important part of the contents of the gospels. No fewer than 604 times it is explicitly remarked that Jesus said something (He said; He answered and said, etc.). The main question must be therefore: Are the gospels written according to the principles of Greek historical writing, or according to the rules that one followed in recording the spoken word in jurisdiction and

123. Gal. 4:4.

administration? In other words: are the sayings in the gospels authentic or not?

Luke did not speak about the work of shorthand writers. He did not feel the need to define the work of Jesus' writers who ministered the spoken word. Maybe that seems strange to us, but in Luke's culture it was not the rule to speak about the work of stenographers. In Hellenistic literature, remembering the stenographic activity was not done. Authors and orators were held in great respect, but recording and shorthand writing was seen as a mere mechanical activity; it was important, but not worth mentioning in books or official documents. And so according to common practice Luke also remained silent about that, but in such a way that his hearers could directly link his words to the art of stenography. Speaking of 'eyewitnesses who were also ministers of the spoken word (of the events)', Luke made definitely clear to his readers that in most cases stenography was the proper way of recording for these eyewitnesses.¹²⁴

In the second half of the twentieth century, orthodox theologians have repeatedly maintained that the gospels and Acts were written according the rule of Thucydides.¹²⁵ In that case the presentations of the direct speeches would not be verbatim records at all, but they would, instead, represent the meaning of what had been said once, with the preservation of some expressions in a few cases. One supposed to justify the reliability of the gospels and Acts in this way, because these books would have then been written just like the finest specimens of classical Greek historical writing up to that time. However these theologians did not properly realize that this approach created more problems than solutions. Because in this case, it is obvious that we can no longer see where we are reading the words of the original speakers and where we are, instead, reading the words of the writers. Therefore this position is to be rejected.

124. In the Dutch Parliament stenographers are not in the forefront, but after the discussions the members of the Parliament often take a run to the shorthand writers to receive copies of the reports.

125. S. Porter, 1990, p. 121-142.

Of course the gospels and Acts are not to be measured with the rule of Thucydides but with the rule of Luke, which he formulated at the beginning of his gospel. It is most interesting that Luke, just as Thucydides, only told how the material he used came into being and how he worked with that material. And so it is up to the readers and hearers to draw their own conclusions.¹²⁶ Many followers of the Lord used the completed state of an event to copy a story about what they had heard and seen. After an event, a new story could be added and for that they used a written transmission that was handed down to them by eyewitnesses of the events, who were also ministers of the spoken words of the events. That written transmission contained what they had heard and seen themselves. Just as 'the many' worked, so did Luke in writing his gospel. He also used the first apostolic transmission of the eyewitnesses. Without any doubt, the eyewitnesses made use of stenography to record all Jesus' words and certainly they were not aware that their work was to stand for centuries to come.

It is out of the question to measure the gospels and Acts according to the rules for Greek historical writing at that time. We know now that there existed an important layer of documentation as was usual in jurisdiction and administration. If juridical or governmental libraries are found some day in the Egyptian sand from Hellenistic time, we may expect that the material will show great resemblance to the gospels with regard to style and structure.

4.2 Three manners of recording the spoken word

Jesus preached in Galilee which had an important Jewish population. Still, Galilee had not been influenced only by the Jewish but also by the Greco-Roman culture. The Hellenistic or Greek culture dominated the Middle East from the time of Alexander the Great, (circa 300 B.C.), until the beginning of our era. The Hellenistic culture introduced into the eastern part of the Middle East not only the Greek

126. Luke 1:1-4.

vernacular as common (koinè) language, but also Greek philosophy and science; in short, the Greek way of life. The Romans who inherited this huge area made a very effective use of this Hellenistic culture by building their Roman culture on it, for instance the introduction of stenography in jurisdiction and administration. Therefore it is possible to define more properly the origins of the gospels.

Why did Luke not speak about stenographers in his prologue? Mainly because it was usually the work of slaves as we have seen earlier? There was another reason for Luke to define the first writers only as ‘ministers of the (spoken) word’: because that implies a greater group than just stenographers. There were several possibilities to record the spoken word.

It was possible that impressive statements were jotted down shortly afterwards. A condition in Christian instruction was that in order for one to rely on a word, it was necessary that there be at least two recorded notes of the statement that were uniformly worded. And so the spoken word could be established on two or three witnesses, just like the habit in the practise of stenography that several writers worked together to avoid mistakes. This was also the rule of Deuteronomy in Jewish jurisdiction in establishing a case.¹²⁷ But what about a situation like a storm on the Lake of Galilee? It was not possible to write during a storm. However such impressive things happened there that it would have been a great loss to not deliver what had happened. When the disciples went ashore, the writers among them could start collecting testimonies and make stories based on them.

It was also possible for those who were trained in writing quickly to jot down the words of the Lord in many situations; especially in cases of short sayings and teachings. Of course they may have used all sorts of abbreviations. Also, the rule of multiple writers working together and making the same notes was applicable to them. These writers are to be distinguished from those who worked as pure stenographers.

The last group that was covered by Luke’s expression ‘ministers of the (spoken)

127. Deut. 19:15.

word' were of course the stenographers. They were sufficiently skilled to write down the greater parts of Jesus' teaching: the speeches and the long dialogues. As earlier brought forward, they worked in the Roman Empire often in pairs or trios to guarantee the quality of the results. This had been already the case when Cicero introduced stenographers in the Roman senate in 63 B.C. Certainly the stenographers of Jesus would have worked in the same way.

It is self-evident that all these possibilities of recording the spoken word were used by the writers of Jesus, the one of whom it was said: 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and: 'God has visited his people!' And this report concerning him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.¹²⁸

4.3 Jesus' stenographers

The question is bound to arise as to who the stenographers of Jesus were. Although they are never mentioned explicitly in the gospels, it may be possible to trace some of them. A useful help is the fact that they worked in pairs or trios.

Of the twelve closest disciples of Jesus, we have to think of the two brothers James and John. The event of the transfiguration may be decisive in this regard.¹²⁹ On one certain occasion, Jesus went up on a mountain to pray and three of his disciples - Peter, James and John - went with him. Once there, the disciples immediately fell asleep as they were tired, but Jesus started to pray. Two persons appeared to him: Moses and Elijah. And they spoke of 'his departure which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem'. But suddenly, they were interrupted by Peter - who had become awake - suggesting to build three tents for them. With his words he brought the revelation to an abrupt ending. A cloud overshadowed them and a voice came out of it saying: 'This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him!' and the heavenly persons disappeared.

128. Luke 1:16-17.

129. Matthew 17:1-13 par.

Who were the writers who described this event? Peter can be excluded as he was one of the persons involved in the event. James and/or John remained to record what was said and done. Like Peter they were awake, but instead of trying to become partners in the talking, they took their wax tablets to record what Jesus and his heavenly visitors said. Unfortunately, Peter's interruption put an end to the attempt; only the words of the voice that sounded out of the cloud could be preserved. Later on, when they descended with Jesus, they had a short discussion about a certain opinion of the scribes that Elijah would appear before the coming of the Messiah. It was again James and John recording this discussion. Jesus charged them not to talk to others about what they had seen and heard on the mountain and so they kept their notes to reveal them later. It is not possible to determine whether James and John used true shorthand or if they only wrote fast. The sayings of these stories could have been preserved in either way. But there are other indications that point to both disciples as writers and even as stenographers.

During some other events it seems that James and John also had the task of writing. We read about special moments when Jesus invited them to accompany him for a special reason. In the first instance: the resurrection of Jäirus' daughter. They went into the room of the dead child together with Peter and her parents. Although only short descriptions of this event are given in the gospels, it was again James and John who were present. Secondly, they were present, together with Peter, at Jesus' prayer time in Gethsemane. It was night, but they could certainly write by the light of the full moon and the stars or by the light of lanterns. The role of Peter may be described as 'close friend' in all these cases. James and John belonged to Jesus' first disciples. That means that from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry they could fulfil their writing tasks. It seems that they wanted to establish their proven importance as clerks when they asked Jesus to sit in his kingdom at his right and left side, because it was the clerks who normally had standard positions nearest the leader of a discourse. One of Jesus' eschatological orations was spoken to Peter, James, John and Andrew. This longer speech, Mark 13:5-37, certainly required more than just speedy and accurate writing. We have

to reckon with real shorthand in this case. Also the long dialogues in the gospel of John are only understandable as having been recorded by John himself. Maybe Andrew belonged to the circle of Jesus' writers, as he too was a disciple from the very beginning. Zebedee, the father of James and John, was a well-to-do man with a well-patronized fisherman's trade in Capernaum with day laborers at his service. There were no doubt sufficient financial resources to permit James and John to become experienced stenographers.

We can see that there must have been some more shorthand writers among Jesus' disciples when we look at the results: the four gospels. Apart from James and John, Matthew also is to be considered one of them. As a tax official he was in direct touch with the Roman public authorities and therefore he had plenty of opportunities to meet stenographers and to see the effectiveness of their work. He had the opportunity to learn the art and by doing so he could make himself valuable for public service. So the circumstances were extant, but that is not enough. The existence of his name on the gospel of Matthew is decisive. This can only be explained by the fact that after the resurrection of Jesus and the Pentecost event, John and Matthew continued their scriptural work. John and Matthew were both involved in the recording of the events in Jesus' ministry and for that reason they automatically became the right persons to write gospel books. In Jesus' ministry the two had already proven their professionalism and trustworthiness for the job to be done. Within the inner circle of Jesus' followers we may conclusively point to James, John, Matthew, and maybe Andrew, as the eyewitnesses who were also the shorthand writers of the astonishing works and words of Jesus, the Rabbi of Nazareth. It remains possible that some other disciples of the twelve were also in charge of the writing task, but we simply have too little information to be conclusive in this respect.

Shorthand writers were also at work in the wider circle of Jesus' disciples. In the first place we may mention Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, members of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish Council. They must have played an important role in recording what happened during the trial of Jesus. The condemnation by the Jew-

ish Council after an inquiry during the night was unanimous.¹³⁰ However Joseph - who belonged to the Council - did not give his vote.¹³¹ Obviously he belonged to the clerks who recorded the ins and outs of the process and who therefore did not vote, in order to maintain their independence; Joseph must have been one of the stenographers of the Council. To hear the testimonies of common people against Jesus it was a necessity that important parts of the process were spoken in ordinary Greek. It seems that Nicodemus, who was also a member of the Council,¹³² was in the same position as Joseph, and so he also was one of Jesus' stenographers.¹³³

Last but not least we have to call to mind that there also must have been women who worked as stenographers. We are able to trace only one: Salome, who was also known by the name Joanna.¹³⁴ It has always been an insoluble riddle as to why Mark and Luke refer to three women near the tomb who saw the angels and the Lord, while Matthew refers only to two women who saw him and worshipped him.¹³⁵ Salome, who was also present, did not worship; as a reporter she took her writing tools and as usual wrote down what she saw and heard. She was the unknown but accurate worker who noted the words of the angels and of Jesus right after his resurrection.¹³⁶ Salome did not work in concert with other writers at that moment. She worked independently. She was not aware of it at that very moment, but later on her work would still be accepted as Holy Scripture as she shared in an extraordinary revelation in which she and her work were sanctified. In the same way Moses had spoken with God face to face as a friend and accordingly he brought to the people God's revelations that were collected later on into the Torah as Holy Scriptures.

130. Luke 22:66-23:1.

131. Luke 23:51.

132. John 7:50.

133. About their task of writing, see also Appendix: 1. Confrontation at night.

134. Mark 16:1, Luke 8:3, 24:10.

135. Luke 24:10, Mark 16:2. Matthew 28:1,9.

136. About her task of writing, see also Appendix: 4. Jesus' resurrection.

4.4 Revelation and writing

Is it possible that people wrote during special revelations from God? We should realize that writing was, for many people, a daily practice. Many had a wax tablet and stylus at hand, and therefore we can understand that writing could indeed be a matter of course in situations involving the highest spiritual experiences.

When after entering the temple house Zechariah received the message about the birth of a son named John, he only needed to open his wax tablet, which he could carry in his belt or in a pocket of his clothing. It is even possible that he had his prayers on a wax tablet or instructions he had to fulfil. Maybe he wrote the name of his son John on the same wax tablet later, when the neighbours wanted to know the name of the newborn child.¹³⁷

An angel spoke to Joseph in a dream, telling him to accept Mary as his wife and to give her baby the name Jesus.¹³⁸ After he awoke from the dream he only needed to take his writing tablet and - overwhelmed by the impact of the words - he could write down what he had heard. Through the power of the revelation, the words he had heard still echoed in his mind and heart. Later on when the shepherds came to the stable, again it must have been Joseph who recorded their testimonies. They also were certainly overwhelmed by the spirit of God and still had the echoes of the message and the song of the angels in their ears. Joseph could preserve their testimonies. When Peter had been set free from prison by an angel, he could in the same way remember the short instructions that were given to him by the angel, and when Peter told the brothers about the story, he asked them to bring the message of his liberation to James. Certainly there were enough writers to make a report for James containing all the things Peter had said to them.¹³⁹

When Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians there, it

137. Luke 1:63.

138. Matthew 1:20-21.

139. Acts 12:7-9,17.

happened that Jesus revealed himself to him. The time was about twelve o'clock noon¹⁴⁰; that was the time when Pharisees took a break to say their prayers.¹⁴¹ No doubt Saul was in prayer when Jesus revealed himself to him. He had probably separated himself - with some others who travelled with him - from the soldiers. One has always been in something of a dilemma concerning the information in Acts that some of Saul's companions did also hear the voice speaking to Saul (Acts 9:7), while others did not hear it, but only saw the light of the revelation (Acts 22:7 and 26:13). We must assume that one of those who had separated themselves for prayer was also a scribe; maybe he was Saul's personal secretary along to serve him on his mission. This seems to be obvious from the long direct speeches that have been preserved from this occurrence.¹⁴² It seems that the scribe had already done his praying and was waiting for instructions; anyway at the moment of the revelation he was ready to record the words spoken to Saul. Maybe this scribe was one of Saul's disciples later in Damascus.¹⁴³

Is it going too far to suppose that people in so many usual and also quite unusual situations recorded the spoken word? To answer this question we have to state that the number of unusual occasions we are dealing with is really rather small in relation to the period of time over which they occurred. But above all, we have to understand that the art of recording the spoken word was much more than just a sort of legalistic way of life. We should realize that it was very important to preserve personal remembrances by reporting the spoken word. Just as in modern times we like photographs as personal references of the past, in those times the recording of the spoken word fulfilled a similar function. When reports were read to the people, it certainly caused exclamations of recognition. For that reason we may assume that although shorthand started within circles of slavery,

140. Acts 22:6, 26:13.

141. Acts 3:1, 10:3,30.

142. Acts 9:4-6, 22:7-8,10 and 26:14-18.

143. Acts 9:25.

in many other circles of society the art of stenography was to break through after a limited period of time. Those who were able to record the spoken word possessed a unique skill of which many others could be envious and of course they managed their lives to get the most out of their skill. They only had to carry their writing materials with them in their pockets, handbags or luggage, ready for use.

4.5 The gospels, are they interdependent or independent?

Two paintings with nearly the same images will evoke the thought that at least one of them is a copy. Maybe both are copies of yet another painting, which is the original. When the name of a famous painter is on the canvas, we have to treat it as a very expensive painting, on the understanding that we indeed have the authentic work in front of us. On the contrary, if it can be proven that the painting is a copy, it is nearly worthless, no matter how famous the name on it may be. So in the case of two paintings that are nearly the same, the question is: which one is the copy and which one is the original? Experts start an investigation and they examine the paint. Maybe in some places the paint is not yet dry inside, that may indicate a recent artefact. They investigate the canvas. How old is it and does its age match with the time that the painter lived? How are the strokes of the brush? Does this correspond with what we know of the other works of the master? In most cases a copy will betray itself by the strokes of the brush which are nearly impossible to copy at all. By answering all these questions, the experts are able in most cases to determine the original and the copy.

We have a comparable case in the phenomenon of the gospels, especially in the synoptic gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke. There are so many similarities in regard to contents, structure, style and linguistics that the most plausible inference is that the gospels are interdependent. The main questions in New Testament research are therefore: Which gospel writer has copied, (with modifications), his book or parts of it from another one? And how are we able to find out?

A firmly established theory is the so-called *two-source theory*. This theory is the

idea that Mark was the first to write his gospel in about 65 A.D., and that thereafter Matthew in about 75 A.D. wrote his gospel by using the gospel of Mark and another unknown gospel indicated with the letter Q (German: Quelle, meaning: source). Later on, according to this theory, Luke worked in the same way in about 80 A.D. by using Mark and Q in writing his gospel. The common material in Matthew and Luke is attributed to Q, but both also have new specific material not in Mark. In this view there are two original main sources: Mark and Q.¹⁴⁴ It is obvious that if we want to accept this theory, we must deal with many unanswered questions. For instance: Why was it important for Matthew and Luke to repeat the same stories described in Mark? Wouldn't it be more convenient for Matthew and Luke to collect new stories, not in Mark, and bring them out in one or two new books? And when they redacted the work of Mark why did they also redact (read: change) the direct speeches, even those of Jesus himself. This is incomprehensible when we keep in mind that in Israel changing the words of the prophets in copies was simply not done.¹⁴⁵ On the contrary, they were always copied scrupulously. Following the two-source theory, we are also compelled to pose the question: Is the Gospel of Mark the most valuable of the three, because the others (Matthew and Luke) are only copies? Of course many theologians will reply: 'Oh no, Matthew and Luke have brought forward their own specific theologies and

144. The gospel of Mark has 661 verses and one has counted that 600 of them are also (nearly the same) to be found in the gospel of Matthew, while Luke's gospel has only 350 verses of Mark. The material of Q common in Matthew and Luke covers about 250/300 verses.

145. It was accepted practice to quote prophetic texts with all sort of variations on the condition that one spoke in the spirit of the prophet, or that one remained within the standards of Jewish religion of old. It is not difficult to show that Jesus also followed this custom. However we should not forget that on the other hand prophetic texts (of the Old Testament) that were to be read in the synagogues met the highest standards of accurate copying. In the same way the gospels were meant to function as holy texts from the beginning (Acts 2:42 shows the cultic ambiance of the teachings of the apostles) and were written to present the original words of the persons involved in the stories.

therefore they are as important as Mark and Q'. But these theologians are missing the point, because the question is whether the gospels present the original sayings of the Lord or not, leaving aside specific theologies of the authors.

The two-source theory has been widely accepted by most theologians, however many do so with great restrictions because of the penetrating questions that are connected with it. Generally it is impossible to deny the implication of the two-source theory that the gospel writers have manipulated the texts for their own purposes, that they have introduced alterations, 'corrections' and beautifications into the gospels, copying and redacting the work of former writers.

There is also another approach to the gospels that differs from the two-source theory. Many scholars who have defended the complete trustworthiness of the gospels, took the view that the four gospels are not interdependent as a starting point; that the authors did not make use of the work of another gospel writer and that they all have the same value and divine authority.¹⁴⁶ This '*theory of independence*', (instead of *interdependence*), is fully in contrast with the two-source theory. In this theory the similarities between the gospels in language and style are explained by the character of the described events which is expected to have brought forward in a natural way the same words, expressions and style. Of course it can not be denied that in some cases this may be so, but it is not plausible to suppose that this phenomenon has happened chapter after chapter. To give this theory more credibility some have combined it with the theory that the followers of Jesus trained themselves in memorizing the teachings of Jesus from a very early stage: *the memorization theory*.¹⁴⁷ According to this view, the sayings of the Lord would have been preserved in the gospels contrary to the two-source theory. A thesis of the memorization theory says that Jesus used all sorts of lin-

146. For instance: E. Linnemann, 1992.

147. Two scholars who standardised the memorization theory were H. Riesenfeld and B. Gerhardsson in the period after World War II. They supposed that rabbinical teaching in Jesus' time fundamentally was orally and not scripturally.

guistic techniques in word choice, rhythm and so on to activate the memories of his disciples. And of course examples of memorization are given by the defenders of this theory, that in the Jewish culture of the past memorization was already the standard method of education. The examples are supposed to be convincing evidence that memory was much better trained at that time than today, and that memorization was a common practise at that time. However the examples are insufficient to support the theory of memorization being the standard of Jewish learning. On the contrary, in the surrounding world of the Greeks and the Romans, higher education was practiced principally through conversation (*diatribè*), and it is still a matter of debate how in the classical world the words of the teachers became written records: during the teachings or afterwards or through a combination of both possibilities? Are the dialogues of Socrates as delivered by Plato accurate, verbatim reports or are they compositions made afterwards; or are they possibly written by the use of notes? We simply do not know enough to assume a stage of memorizing between the actual teaching of Socrates and the final scriptural presentation by Plato. This example may stand as a global model for what we know and do not know about education in classical times.¹⁴⁸

We must face the untenability of the memorization theory as a substantial part of the transmission of Jesus' teachings. This theory functions only as a philosophy to explain similarities in the gospels, but it does not result in a serious working method able to deal with the details and to explain the many dissimilarities. In fact, these dissimilarities contradict the memorization theory, being in complete contrast with it. Furthermore, we do not have any testimony that Jesus' disciples actually memorized his words. On the contrary, we have the information from Luke and John that the disciples, from the beginning as servants of the (spoken) word, wrote what the Master said. The idea that the disciples were learning the

148. About Hellenistic time J.W. Wenham (1991, p. 113) refers to L.C.A. Alexander: '... in connection with the training of professional men in the Greek-speaking world that note-taking was "necessary in academic life"'. (L.C.A. Alexander, 1977, p. 146)

sayings of Jesus by heart during his ministry is no more than a romantic picture that never existed. It is an untenable point of view that those who wanted to learn, and who were able to write, did not exploit their writing skills for this purpose. It is much more realistic to hold that those disciples who were trained in reading and writing were also involved in the scriptural recording of what Jesus said.¹⁴⁹ When he sent out the disciples, they had at their disposal accurate written copies of the sayings and doings of Jesus. That was the scriptural message they could read to their hearers about the revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven.¹⁵⁰

With the memorization theory, one has always defended the oral tradition as preceding the gospels. No matter how intelligent one may be, or how easy one may learn to repeat passages by heart, the law of the oral tradition rules with a rod of iron and is relentless: oral tradition does not operate without mistakes. The memorization theory is only a specific form of oral tradition and is therefore hostile to the classical view on the Holy Scripture saying that 'All scripture is inspired by God ...'¹⁵¹ and is therefore trustworthy in everything. Under the activity and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scripture came into being, but with the theory of memorization one has always embraced the oral tradition with inevitable accompanying changes: omissions and embellishments in the ultimate text.

Finally, there are a great number of scholars who reckon with the possibility of note-taking during Jesus' teachings. J.W. Wenham listed a number of them.¹⁵² He refers to E.J. Goodspeed¹⁵³ in agreeing that Matthew as a tax collector had a lifelong habit of noting things down and preserving what he had written, and also that the world of Jesus' day was highly literate and that it is

149. The description of Peter and John as 'uneducated common men' in Acts 4:13 has been recognized for a long time as signifying their lack of higher education and not that they were illiterate.

150. Matthew 10:5-7.

151. 2 Timothy 3:16.

152. J.W. Wenham, 1991, p. 112-114.

153. E.J. Goodspeed, 1959.

altogether likely that there were people who made notes of what Jesus said. Jesus made a tremendous impact on a wide variety of listeners and therefore it is unlikely that no one attempted to make a record of what he taught. This argument of literalness among Jesus' first disciples has been brought forward by earlier scholars such as W. M. Ramsay (1907) and G. Salmon (1907), but also by later ones such as H. Schürmann (1961), R. H. Grundry (1967), R. Riesner (1981), D. A. Carson (1983) and E.E. Ellis (1987). This is an appealing approach to the gospels, however it does not suffice. For from this point of view one always reckons with written transmissions as well as with oral traditions from Jesus' ministry onwards. That means that it would still not be possible to say 'The Lord has said', because it would not then be conclusive as to what parts of the gospels were transmitted scripturally and what parts orally. And as long as theology has not presented an approach resulting in the clear statement 'The Lord has said' in relation to the gospels, the job is not finished. No Christian needs to be content with less. The 'partly scriptural transmission theory' was never strong enough to present a self-supporting history about the origins of the gospels, as it always remained dependent upon the 'oral tradition theory'. In the subsequent chapters we will show that the documentation theory and a sound history of origins go together perfectly.

4.6 Grammatical criticism

Concerning the gospels we may say that in New Testament theology it has never been undertaken to establish the theory of oral transmission in a pure, grammatically critical way. One has only brought forward historical-critical philosophies as a foundation for it, with the shortcomings that they did not and do not result in sound working methods to explain the details. Traditionally one has read Luke 1:1-2 as proof for the theory of oral transmission, but the customary exegesis of this passage contains too much uncertainty to use it for a massive theory such as the oral tradition. This theory is in fact nothing more than an unproven preju-

dice and it is really disconcerting to say so. Isn't it time for a change? We should no longer hide the reality of the Christian faith within a defective theological concept. We do possess the words of Jesus; this truth is critical to the essence of the faith and no one can measure the spiritual damage both in the past and the present caused by the undermining theory of the oral tradition. How can theology be called 'Guide unto Life' anymore if it continues with the evident malpractice of the theory of the oral tradition. Gospel research should be liberated from the trap of oral tradition.

Of course some have done everything to make this theory acceptable. For instance the thesis that memorization was common practise in Judaism in Jesus' time and an oral tradition would have been the result of the teaching of the rabbis and the learning of their disciples. This is generally seen as the explanation of how the Mishnah came into being, i.e. the collection of sayings of the rabbis who lived in the period of the second temple.¹⁵⁴ The Mishnah is dated at about 200 A.D. and it contains the lessons of the rabbis which would have been transmitted orally by their students. However romantic it may sound and however often it has been stated, grammatically critical evidence from the sources is lacking. Moreover it is not probable. It is hard to understand how in a culture wherein the words of the prophets were preserved literally with painstaking care, the words of the rabbis remained orally during their deliverance. Of course the practice

154. The Mishnah is called 'Oral Law', not because it was delivered orally but to make clear that it will never be a competitor of the 'Written Law' of Israel given by Moses (Torah). Nevertheless one has always felt the necessity of having the discussion (oral law) about the written law to help understand and apply it in daily life. From this point of view it is customary in Judaism to say that the oral law was also given by Moses (on Sinai), the Mishnah is not meant in this proposition, but the principle of discussion. Jesus did not have a problem with this, in fact he made use of it when he spoke with the teachers as a boy in the temple and later on with the scribes and Pharisees. He was against putting on the people the harsh conclusions and duties one deduced from the law of Moses, which obscured the divine light of the Torah.

of memorizing sayings of the rabbis did exist among their disciples for practical application in ordinary life. However, this certainly did not happen for the purpose of preserving these sayings for the future. There existed better tools for that. Self-evidently the Mishnah contains the collected notes of the rabbis made by their disciples during their conversations. M. Lowe and D. Flusser wrote: ‘It was common practice for the disciples of rabbis to make notes of their sayings.’¹⁵⁵

If we want to explain the great similarities between the gospels, and the many dissimilarities, we have to turn to a different model of exegesis. The solution is much nearer than one generally assumes. It was the same writers – skilled in speedy and shorthand writing – who produced the reports which later constituted the gospels. And for that reason all of these reports are of equal quality and value. The most important aspect may be that they were written under and through the inspiring activity of the Holy Spirit who worked in the described events as well as in the hearts of the writers who were present. In the following chapters we will deal with a tidal wave of questions about the similarities and the dissimilarities in the gospels and how they are explicable from this point of view.

155. J.W. Wenham (1991, p. 113) citing: M. Lowe and D. Flusser, 1983, n. 88.

5

FOUR IN A ROW

In the previous chapter we saw how it is possible for the gospels to have so many agreements: they sprang from the same source. The question is now: Why four gospels? Why did the apostles give us four books instead of one single gospel with all the details together? The existence and the form of the four gospels have everything to do with Jesus' writers.

5.1 Why four gospels?

It has always been a riddle as to why the Christians use four gospels among their holy books. Nobody asks why, since one has accepted this state of affairs from antiquity onwards. Yet, when we start thinking about this issue, it is not possible to avoid questions as: Why are three gospels amazingly the same (Matthew, Mark and Luke)? And, consequently: why is one so different from the others (John)? Why did the apostles not leave one complete autobiography of Jesus? Wouldn't that be much more convenient? Instead, we have four gospels containing - in many cases - identical stories. Why all that waste of materials, time and energy? Moreover, didn't the apostles run a great risk in building the Church on these four books with so many undeniable differences between them?

Of course, many good reasons have been brought forward to answer these ques-

tions. E.g., each gospel writer gave a special picture or characteristic of Jesus. Matthew showed him as King (of the Kingdom of Heaven), Luke as the Savior and John as the Son of God, while Mark painted his human character as the Son of Man. Of course there is some logic in these definitions, but we should not forget that all of these characteristics are to be found in each gospel. His kingship, his humanity, his saving work and his relationship with the Father are part of each of these four books.

It is no secret that the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) contain many agreements, not only in style and wording but also in structure as we may see in the following outline of the chapters of these books:

	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Birth and childhood	1,2	-	1,2
John the Baptist	3	1	3
Jesus in Galilee	4-18	1-10	4-9
Journey to Jerusalem	-	-	10-19
Last days in Jerusalem	19-25	11-13	19-21
Passion, death and resurrection	26-28	14-16	22-24

The synoptic gospels each have three divisions with generally speaking the same contents. The first division gives a description of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, the second division describes the last days of Jesus in Jerusalem and the last division describes Jesus' death and resurrection. In each gospel a chapter about John the Baptist precedes the first division. Additions in Matthew and Luke are the introductory chapters about Jesus' birth and childhood. Only Luke has a rather long insertion containing Jesus' last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem.

The style of the synoptic gospels represents a remarkable consistency: the majesty of the events is in great contrast to the simplicity and brevity of the reports. Usually a few indications about the place and/or the time of the action are followed by an extremely short description of that action including the results.

Then the story continues with a new report having the same characteristics.

The gospel of John differs in structure and style from the synoptic gospels. This gospel says only a few things about Jesus' public ministry in Galilee. The book informs us about Jesus' visits to Judea and Jerusalem particularly. With respect to the style, we may say that instead of only short reports we are also confronted with rather long dialogues in it. The differences from the other gospels are so striking that we may get the feeling that we are dealing here with a different content. John's gospel seems more intimate, more spiritual than the synoptic gospels. And the question is, of course: How are the differences in structure and style between the gospel of John and the synoptic gospels to be explained? Is this gospel indeed more intimate, more spiritual?

5.2 The teaching records of Matthew

Let us turn to the gospel of Matthew first. The educational aspect of the book is striking indeed. In the first place it contains six lengthy discourses in which the disciples are instructed how to think and to act, in short, how to live as citizens of the Kingdom: Sermon on the Mount, Mission of the Twelve, Parabolic Discourse, Discourse on the Church, Against Scribes and Pharisees, Eschatological Discourse.¹⁵⁶ Secondly, scattered through the book we find a lot of educational aspects as compared to Mark and Luke. E.g. Matthew gives in his version of the 'Cure of the centurion's servant'; the information that many from all over the world will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only this teaching is lacking in the parallel passage of Luke's gospel.¹⁵⁷ Thirdly, there are a countless number of references to the Old Testament, and direct quotations from it. A standard formula in Matthew is: 'This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet ...'. In this way Matthew teaches that it had been prophesied already in the past: what Jesus did and who he was.

156. Matthew 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 23, 24-25.

157. Matthew 8:11-12 Luke 7:1-10.

Last but not least, Matthew's frequent use of the term 'Kingdom of Heaven' (instead of 'Kingdom of God' as in the other gospels), is also significant.¹⁵⁸ The summary below shows the differences in comparison with the other gospels.

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Kingdom of Heaven	34x	absent	absent	absent
Kingdom of God	4x	14x	32x	2x

Matthew's use of this term is an important observation, especially from a teaching point of view. Obviously Jesus wanted to teach his disciples that his kingdom was not an earthly kingdom. He forced them to put out of their heads the idea that his kingdom would work on the basis of all sorts of human trickery: jealousy, intimidation, manipulation, boasting, gossip and all the other things people usually do to appear better than another. All of that does not belong to the Kingdom of Heaven at all. Moreover this term was also teaching and warning against exaggerated expectations of an earthly Kingdom of God at that time. In connection with this latter term, many people had an unreal imagination about a restored throne of David in Jerusalem with a Messiah on it as a ruler of the world. Parts of this dream were at least the liberation of Judea by a well trained army and of course an exultant nation of Israel at the Messiah's feet.

Out of all these external characteristics, the conclusion must be: the gospel of Matthew is a specific teacher's book; and R.T. France rightly opens a review on Matthew as follows: 'Matthew has been called "the Teacher's Gospel" because its material is so presented that it is very suitable for use in teaching. It was probably for this reason that this gospel was the most widely used of the four in the early Church.'¹⁵⁹

158. In Matthew the term 'Kingdom of God' has been used one time to the disciples (19:24) and three times to Pharisees (12:28, 21:31,43).

159. D.A. Carson (a.o.), 1994, p. 904.

This teaching character of Matthew is not strange, considering the fact that Jesus had chosen twelve disciples specifically to teach them. The writers that followed Jesus not only produced public records (for public usage, see chapter 1), but they also made records with more specific teachings for the closer group of the twelve. After Jesus' departure, the twelve had the task of continuing the work and they had been equipped for the task by specific teachings, which came to be very important later on in the Church. We have to take seriously the idea that Jesus believed that his words were indeed spiritual food for the people. That was also what his disciples believed, as Peter said: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!'¹⁶⁰ The words of Jesus were important for the life hereafter, for eternity, as well as for the here and now: 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.' And: 'Why do you call me "Lord, Lord", and not do what I tell you?...' And finally: 'He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me, will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.'¹⁶¹ After Jesus departure the time came that the twelve had to teach others in turn: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe that I have commanded you; ...'¹⁶²

To preserve Jesus' special teachings to the inner circle of the twelve, the writers first of all produced teaching records for them. These reports contained information that had not been brought out for copying by the mass that followed Jesus. These records were kept in the inner circle that grew later on to number 70 and finally reached 120 in number.¹⁶³ After Jesus' departure, the teaching records would be used by Matthew to write his gospel.

160. John 6:68.

161. John 8:31-32, Luke 6:46, John 14:21.

162. Matthew 28:19-20.

163. Luke 10:1, Acts 1:15.

5.3 *The public records of Luke*

From the treatment of the prologue of the gospel of Luke in chapter one, we have seen already that there were several writing activities around Jesus. And, having discussed the character of the gospel of Matthew, we can say about all these reporting activities that there was first of all: writing by eyewitnesses of the spoken word and what happened during the events, secondly: after an event, teaching records were made for the inner circle, and public records for the wider circle of followers, and, thirdly: public records were copied by many people of the wider circle (Luke 1:1). Luke also used the public records for his gospel at a later point in time, for Luke says that he followed the working method of the many: ‘... it seemed good *to me also*, ... to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophiles, ...’¹⁶⁴

After an event, many copied a public record that was put to their disposal by the writing eyewitnesses. The public records informed the people about Jesus and his work, for a great prophet had arisen among them. His name became well known in the Jewish land as well as outside.¹⁶⁵ The apostles later on presumed that Jesus’ reputation was all over the country: (Peter to the Roman Cornelius) ‘You know the word which he (God) sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ, ...’; (Paul to King Agrippa referring to the suffering and resurrection of Jesus) ‘For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done [has not occurred] in a corner.’¹⁶⁶

In the past, scholars have always noticed that Luke in his gospel gives striking details that are lacking in the other synoptic gospels and which are most interesting for publication. In the story of the healing of the centurion’s slave,

164. Luke 1:3.

165. Luke 6:17, 7:16.

166. Acts 10:37, 26:26.

Luke remarks that firstly a delegation of Jewish elders came up to Jesus for help. They emphasized their message with the remark that the centurion had helped to build their synagogue. But there is more; after the elders, friends of the centurion were also sent to Jesus for help, with the message that Jesus did not need to enter the house of the centurion, as he felt himself unworthy to receive Jesus. These were remarkable details for the public in general: a Roman with good contacts with Jewish elders and with a heart for the Jewish religion, who humbled himself before a Jewish teacher. In the record of the parallel story in Matthew, the striking details of the elders and his friends are missing. Matthew's teaching record limits his message to the great faith of the centurion and his personal contact with Jesus. Luke continually presents background information about people and circumstances, to show the human side of Jesus; how he associated with sinners, poor, rich, women, and children. L. Morris put this together in his comment on the gospel of Luke as follows: 'An important part of God's concern for people is that it is manifested towards groups not highly esteemed in first-century society: women, children, the poor, the disreputable.'¹⁶⁷ His human character is also stressed by Luke's repeated remark that Jesus was praying. As a result of the public records, the gospel of Luke became a detailed account that shows Jesus' impressive warm and humane character.

5.4 The remnant records of Mark

Careful consideration shows that speedy and shorthand writers were also responsible for the structure and nature of the gospel of Mark. After the composing of a teaching and/or a public record unused material often remained - particularly notes of circumstances and of sayings. The writers did not throw away this material, but they brought it together in the right sequence, and in fact new records resulted from it: remnant records which were also preserved, because

167. L. Morris, 1988, p. 44-45.

every remnant, they felt, was important as containing words and works of the Master. Later on, these documents had also kept their value - as the writers who composed them rightly had seen - because these records found their place in the gospel of Mark.

It has been recognized for a long time that in the narrative parts of his descriptions, (not in the direct speeches), Mark excels in a direct style and vivid vernacular. The 'Markian' way of speaking may be defined as primary use of language and it is easy to explain this phenomenon, as he used the remnant records, the unornamented notes of the writers. The teaching and public records received some cultivation in the narrative parts, as they were written with specific purposes: teaching and information. But this had not been done with the remnant documents Mark used. Of course for us it is most interesting that Mark, in fact, presents the notes that were made during the events, not only with respect to the direct speeches but also with respect to the circumstances, and what happened. The result is that Mark, in some respect, seems more vivid than Matthew and Luke. Let us look at a few examples.

The resurrection of Jairus' daughter

Matthew 9:23

23 And when Jesus came to the ruler's house, and saw the flute players, and the crowd making tumult, he said: ...

Mark 5:38-39

38 When [And] they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, [And] he saw a tumult, and people weeping and wailing loudly.

39 And when he had entered, he said to them: ...

Luke 8:51-52

51 And when he came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child.

52 And all were weeping and bewailing her; but he said: ...

Mark often said the same things twice, sometimes in different ways:

- the ruler of the synagogue (38). In verse 22, 35 and 36 Mark had already mentioned that Jairus was a ruler 'of the synagogue'.
- tumult (38). This is repeated in the words 'people weeping and wailing loudly'. In Matthew only 'tumult' is used for the behaviour of the people, in Luke we read only weeping and bewailing, while 'tumult' is lacking.

Two times Mark gives repeated information in a small passage. It shows that he used a record which contained a summary of simple observations and Mark copied them as he found them. Matthew and Luke used records with nearly the same words painting the same picture, however without repeated information. They used records that had been professionally edited by the writers of Jesus.

Another striking detail is that Mark uses an 'And-sentence' three times. In the RSV-translation this phenomenon is not visible, but according to the KJV, the word 'And' has been placed in brackets [...] in the text. Matthew has an And-sentence only one time, Luke has an And-sentence twice. The simplest way for the writers was to put the remaining observations together in the remnant records by using And-sentences. The result is that Mark has much more of an And-sentence-style than Matthew or Luke. Mark copied everything as he found it in his sources; he did not change records that were compiled under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the completed state of the events. And that is impressive.¹⁶⁸

Before we look at the second example, let us first listen to an older exegete - B.H. Streeter - about the language and style of the gospel of Mark in contrast with Matthew and Luke: 'But the difference between the style of Mark and of the other two is not merely that they both write better Greek. It is the difference which always exists between the spoken and the written language. Mark reads like a shorthand account of a story by an impromptu speaker - with

168. Only a few additions have been made by the gospel writers. E.g.: 'Now it came to pass on a certain day ...' (Luke 8:22, RSV); 'who became a traitor.' (Luke 6:16) This information could be recognized as results from the past at the moment of writing of the gospels.

all the repetitions, redundancies, and digressions which are characteristic of living speech. And it seems to me most probable that his Gospel, like Paul's Epistles, was taken down from rapid dictation by word of mouth. The Mark to whom tradition ascribes the composition of the Gospel was a Jerusalem Jew, of the middle class; he could speak Greek fluently, but writing in an acquired language is another matter. Matthew and Luke use the more succinct and carefully chosen language of one who writes and then revises an article for publication. This partly explains the tendency to abbreviate already spoken of, which is especially noticeable in Matthew.¹⁶⁹ It is interesting that the author explains the style of Mark as spoken language reported by shorthand writing, and we can agree with that. The difference between Streeter's model and the present approach is that Streeter believed that Mark wrote his gospel from records based on shorthand notes of Peter's preaching instead of Jesus' preaching.¹⁷⁰ Further on, Streeter says that Matthew (and Luke) revised Mark and in the example above of Jairus' daughter we have seen a revision tendency by Matthew and Luke in the narrative parts (not the direct speech) of the story which we will discuss more fully later on in this chapter.

In the ministry of John the Baptist, we already see the style of Mark, firstly with the repeated information as compared to Matthew and Luke and secondly with more 'And-sentences' than Matthew or Luke.

169. B.H. Streeter, 1930 (ed. 4), p. 163.

170. Streeter and many other theologians believed the apostle Peter to be the source from which Mark composed his gospel. Their idea is that Peter, later on in Rome, worked with Mark as his servant and interpreter. At that time they had learned enough Greek that - as a result - Mark could write down his gospel from Peter's own lips. Streeter and his fellow theologians were not able to release themselves from the stranglehold of the Aramaic theory. They believed that Jesus spoke Aramaic, and therefore it was impossible for them to suppose that the gospels originated directly from the real source: Jesus Christ.

171. In John only four passages deal with the region Galilee: 2:1-12, 4:43-54, 6:1-7:9, 21:1-23.

John the Baptist

Matthew 3:1, 4

1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ...

4 Now John wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

Mark 1:4, 6

4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins...

6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey.

Luke 3:3

3 and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Reading the message of Mark, we see in the first place the repeated information 'baptizer' and 'baptism' in verse 4. Moreover we feel questions entering our minds as: Baptizing in the wilderness; how did that work? You need water for baptizing, don't you? And: How exactly did John dress himself? Did he wind camel's hair around his body? And what about those locusts, did he eat them alive or dead? The narrative part of Mark's message is not wrong, but simply unrefined. Later on he explains that the people were baptized in the river Jordan. For most people it was clear that the expression 'clothed with camel's hair' related with clothes made of camel's hair. And of course 'eating biscuits baked of ground up locusts' is in fact 'eating locusts'.

Reading Matthew's message, we see immediately that the unrefined diction of Mark is replaced with a more eloquent style. He 'preached' in the wilderness instead of 'baptized' in the wilderness. He says neatly that 'his garment' was of camel's hair. And the addition of 'food' shows that the locusts had been transformed properly into food before eating. These details in Matthew's description were important, as

they formed the substance of a teaching report about John the Baptist, to show that he was a true prophet, not only in words but also in behavior: he wore the mantle of a prophet, i.e. made of camel's hair, the cheapest material used for clothes; he also ate the cheapest possible food made of locust meal. In other words there was reason for the writers of this teaching report to give an instructive and proper description of John the Baptist.

Reading Luke's message we see that a styling took the place of Mark's diction. The writers of Luke's record had a broad public in mind, which is also clear from the description of John the Baptist. For those who didn't know the situation in the Judean desert with the river Jordan, they used the brief expression 'in the region about the Jordan' instead of 'in the wilderness'. Luke says 'preaching a baptism ...', that means of course a baptism in the river Jordan. The details of John's clothes and his food were not interesting enough to the broad public. In Luke, John is the messenger of the coming Messiah and therefore the typical details about a prophet's food and clothes are lacking in Luke's public record. Also, this record is a proper description without double information. However one who reads the record of Mark detects the simplicity of diction and also a vividness as a result of the lack of styling and of the use of double information.

The public records, teaching records and remnant records, of which Luke, Matthew and Mark respectively made use, all originate from the completed state of the events. Certainly it was the same writers who wrote these records and who worked under the guidance and inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, as it was the Lord himself whom they heard, and who spoke to them through the Spirit. Therefore the synoptic gospels, representing these records, have always been of equal value.

5.5 A shorthand diary of John

The gospel of John differs widely from the synoptic gospels. It seems more intimate and more spiritual. The gospel of John often has the level of a drama, a heavenly

tragedy. A great difference from the other gospels is that John particularly has Judea and Jerusalem as the scene of action, whereas the others have Galilee as the environment of Jesus' work.¹⁷¹ We will see that all these characteristics are interrelated with one another.

Sometimes Jesus forbade his disciples to pass on to others their experiences with him, e.g. when Peter confessed Jesus to be the Christ, or when Moses and Elijah appeared to him.¹⁷² After his resurrection they were allowed to speak about it.¹⁷³ In other words some public records remained hidden from the public during Jesus' ministry. Particularly the records that had been made in Judea and Jerusalem seem to have lain under the ban of publication in an early stage.¹⁷⁴ In that area it seems that neither public reports, nor teaching reports were made by Jesus' writers. There were too many conflicts, too many clashes during Jesus' visits to the southern region. There were too many dangerous quarrels with religious fanatics among Pharisees, Sadducees, elders, scribes and priests. The results were often hostile discourses, instead of moments of peaceful teaching; publication of these quarrels would create only confusion among the crowd and could even provoke bloody revolts against the leadership of the nation.

Ordinary life in Judea had been steeped in religion in all its forms; sometimes spiritually, but often rigidly through religious strictness - through laws and rules. Religious leaders saw themselves as the truthful keepers and teachers of the law of Moses, which they once received from Ezra. Through the possession of the authorized law of Ezra, the tribe of Judah could determine and dominate civil life in all its aspects: politically, spiritually, ethically, etc. The religious pressure in this region was so strong that Jesus had left Judea in an early

172. Matthew 16:20, 17:9.

173. Luke 9:28-36.

174. Exceptions: Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (Luke 10-19) and the last week of Jesus in Jerusalem as written in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

175. John 4:1-3, 43-44.

stage of his ministry to form his disciples in the northern region of Galilee.¹⁷⁵ In this part of the Jewish land, people felt much more free, not only because they lived far from Judea, the religious center of the nation, but also because they could not boast of the possession of a heritage that originated from Ezra. And therefore they did not feel that they were chosen as scrupulous bearers of the old traditions. Of course there were strict synagogues in Galilee following the Judean religious standards in all their details, but that could not remove the great freedom which the Galileans generally allowed themselves, in private as well as in public, and particularly in matters of religion. Jesus did not once deny that the Judeans indeed possessed God's revelation in the law and prophets, the holy books of Israel, safely stowed in the holy temple. He was ready to defend them literally, but he opposed an inhuman and rigid misapplication of the books by which the common man was kept ignorant of the deep wealth of the spiritual richness of the law and the prophets.¹⁷⁶ We recognize this gap when we hear a few fanatic Pharisees say: 'But this crowd, who do not know the law, are accursed.'¹⁷⁷

On his visits to Jerusalem Jesus met with religious intolerance again and again, and the clashes with his opponents were so serious that he was threatened with death repeatedly. These were not conditions conducive to peaceful teaching, nor for publicity; especially since the latter aspect would generate much chaos and danger. The dialogues were kept by the writers, without editorial elaboration in teaching and publication records (and remnant records). Only a few remarks were added at their beginnings and endings to describe some of the attendant circumstances.

176. John 4:22.

177. John 7:49. This blunt expression 'the crowd who don't know the law' is certainly related to the fact that the lower social class of the Jewish people did not speak Hebrew anymore, but Greek. The greater part of the Jewish nation had lost through that the true knowledge of the law, as a great part of them were unable to read the Torah in Hebrew. This was the painful grief of the religious leaders of Jerusalem; however as a result of a rigid application of the law, many of them in turn had lost sight of the spiritual intentions of the law.

Complete dialogues later on entered into the gospel of John, as we may conclude from the length of many of them. We have already mentioned the personal and spiritual style of the gospel of John. Certainly, this is also due to the long and complete dialogues of that book.

The gospel of John also has the character of a dramatic tragedy about the life of Jesus, however it has a more dramatic story about Jesus' victory over the power of death. The dramatic and tragic aspects of this story are not the final results of this gospel, as the central figure does not die in a desperate effort to work out his high ideals. He stands above this all, and across the events we hear the voice of him who shows his disciples a higher plan of God and directs them to have faith in Him. This voice prepared them for all of the following events so they would know that nothing had gone wrong. And in this way, no victory of death emerged, but a victory over death as the final work of God.

5.6 The distribution of the spoken word

When we compare parallel passages in the gospels, we often find sayings of Jesus, which are generally similar in wording and word order but very often there are small differences. Not only do the sayings of Jesus have these shortcomings, but also the utterances of other people have them as well. For instance, on Jesus' question to his disciples as to what their opinion is about him, we read the answer of Peter in Luke: 'The Christ of God.'; in Mark: 'You are the Christ.'; in Matthew: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Certainly these three answers agree in meaning, but not in the rendering of the words. The magnitude of this phenomenon becomes apparent as follows: Mark has 661 verses, of which about 600 are to be found in Matthew and about 350 in Luke. Apart from these verses Matthew and Luke together have also about 250 to 300 verses in common. The parallel passages of these verses swarm with sayings of Jesus with the same meanings, but differing in wording and/or word order. The number of sayings of Jesus in the gospels that are verbatim - exactly the

same - are about 10 (and with variants about 15).¹⁷⁸ What can the explanation of this phenomenon be? The answer to this question has to do with the way writers worked at that time and especially that Jesus' writers worked according to an established practice or concept.

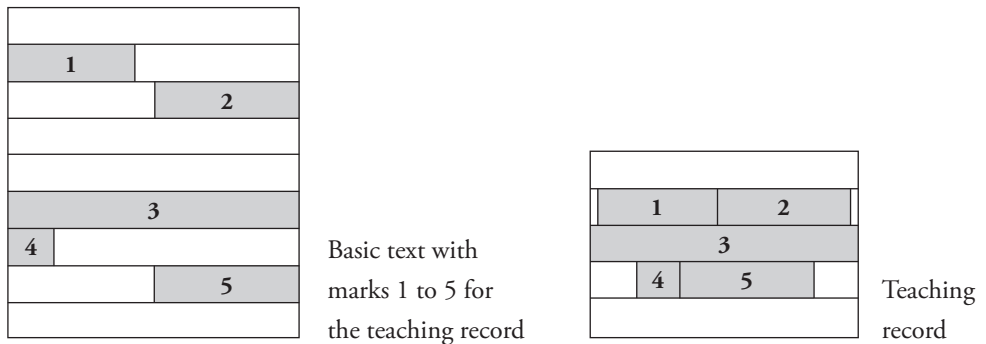
For recording direct speech, writers generally worked on a writing table or writing tablet covered with a thin layer of wax. It was possible to bind a few tablets together into a codex, a sort of booklet which could be closed with an iron clip. The speedy and shorthand writers wrote with a stylus (Latin: *stilus*) in the wax of the tablets. The stylus was constructed with one sharp end while the other end was flattened. With the flat side the writer could smooth the wax, if he wanted to correct something. By this means, a writer had the ability to write and to improve his style. The many words incorporating 'style, styling' (hair styling etc.) in modern languages are derived from this usage of the classic stylus.

We have very little information about the working methods of Jesus' writers, and therefore some framing of a theory is necessary to understand how they made their records. After an event, they came together and worked out their (shorthand) notes, they discussed their results and they could correct their work. They probably drew up a complete text of the discourses in wax. Then they were able to mark the sentences they needed first for the teaching record (for instance: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; see figure 1). Reiterations were avoided. Certainly this was a general rule in book writing in the Greco-Roman culture, in which many books were produced to amuse and educate the people. Nothing is more boring than repetitions in texts, especially those that are made to read in public. Repetition did not

178. Identical sayings are: Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22; Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34; Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27; Matthew 14:26, Mark 6:49; Matthew 14:27, Mark 6:50; Matthew 16:15, Mark 8:29a, Luke 9:20a; Matthew 22:20-21a, Mark 12:16b; Matthew 27:29, Mark 15:18; Mark 10:14-15 (var.), Luke 18:16-17; Mark 15:2a, Luke 23:3a. Possibly identical are: Mark 1:25, Luke 4:35 (var.); Matthew 8:2, Luke 5:12; Matthew 8:3, Mark 1:41, Luke 5:13; Mark 3:5 (var.), Luke 6:10; Matthew 11:3, Luke 7:19 (20 var.); Matthew 26:26b, Mark 14:22b (var.).

in any way add to the aim of teaching or information. Schematically, we see (left) a text with marked sentences together with (right) a teaching record, containing the same marked sentences but without the rest of the discourse.

Figure 1



The marked sentences were copied on a slice of papyrus with an introduction to the beginning of the story and an ending containing the results; (conclusion, teaching etc). Then the teaching record was ready.

For the next report, the writers marked a few parts of the basic text (a, b, c, d; see figure 2), that were suitable for a public record. Again, reiterations were avoided and with a proper beginning and ending these marked sentences together formed the public record. Usually this text was published immediately among those who attended, and many made use of it for copying. Because the people were able to make copies from each other, the public report could spread quickly among those who wanted to construct a shorter or longer story about the Rabbi of Nazareth. Schematically we see below the arrangement of the publication record from the basic text.

Figure 2

1	a
	2
b	
	c
3	
4	
d	5

Basic text with
marks 1 to 5 and
a to d for the
public record

	a	
b		c
d		

Public
record

While the many wrote their copies, the writers of Jesus did not sit still. If there existed more material (p, q, r, s; see figure 3) in the basic text that had not yet been used for the teaching and the public record, it was put together for a remnant record, so that nothing got lost. As the remnant record served no other purpose than preserving what was left, no trouble was taken to produce elegant stylistic descriptions of the beginning or ending of the story. Later on, these records were used by Mark in writing his gospel.

Figure 3

1	a
p	2
b	q
r	c
3	
4	s
d	5

Basic text with
marks 1 to 5,
and a to d. The
marks p to s for
the remnant
record

	p	q
	r	
	s	

Remnant
record

Of course the distinction between teaching, public and remnant records is to be seen as a basic concept, on which all sorts of variations were possible. Sometimes a teaching and a public record are completely missing (in Matthew and Luke), at another place, a teaching and a remnant record are lacking (in Matthew and Mark). All sort of variants are possible. In spite of these variations, the concept of three types of basic records remains a fruitful working method to evaluate the differences and the similarities in the parallel passages of the gospels. Another concept is inseparably connected to this concept.

The distribution of the spoken word to teaching, public and remnant records implies that the writers of Jesus followed a standard concept in respect of the division of the spoken word and the notes with circumstantial details. This guaranteed that little or no information got lost. On the other hand the distribution of the spoken word had a strange consequence for the gospels, which were later composed from these records. The parallel passages of the gospels do not contain precisely the same sayings of Jesus and his interlocutors; the same events, but not the same utterances.

In general, we see that Jesus does not give the same pronouncements in separate descriptions of the same events, and yet the descriptions constantly show the same expressions. For this phenomenon, Bible scholars usually follow the explanation that an oral tradition preceding the gospel stories was responsible for these discrepancies. In the best case, they think that these discrepancies do not contradict each other through the providence of the Holy Spirit. But many Bible scholars suppose that through mistakes resulting from the oral tradition, pious embellishments and even pure lies have penetrated into the gospels. As a result of the oral tradition, it is of course - according to most theologians - impossible to speak about Jesus' original sayings in the four gospels. Not only would the Aramaic theory prohibit this, but the so-called oral tradition preceding the four gospels also has this negative consequence. However, just as we have done with respect to the Aramaic theory, again we have to pose the question: But is it true? And again the answer must be: No, it is not true; not at all. The distribution of

the spoken word shows that we are confronted in the gospels with the original teachings of Jesus, with his very words. Through the painstaking and professional work of Jesus' writers, after 2000 years, we are still allowed to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the voices of those who surrounded him. All the utterances in the gospels can be accepted as authentic. This is the clear result of the documentation theory with the distribution concept of the spoken word which was practised by Jesus' writers. To my knowledge it is not possible to come to the same result via any other theological theory. In chapter seven and onwards we will face many consequences of the distribution concept of the spoken word, but first we now have to deal with the questions of where and when the gospels were written.

6

REDATING THE GOSPELS

At the moment, several theories about the origins of the gospels are available. For the most part, they attempt to answer the main questions, such as: Who wrote them? Why were they written? Where, when and to whom were they written? In all of the current theories, an oral transmission preceding the gospels is assumed, which results in a rather late date of edition of the four gospels; in general during the second part of the first century A.D.: the period between 65 and 95 A.D. (late dating). However there are a few scholars who have maintained - with strong evidence - that these figures are much too high and they maintain some earlier dating: between 40 and 65 A.D. (early dating). In the first case we have a gap of ca. 35 – 65 years and in the other case the gap is ca. 10 – 35 years from the time of Jesus' ministry onwards to the edition of the gospels. This gap between events and their written description of at least one decade is a result of the assumption of an oral tradition between events and gospels. In fact, the dating of the gospels and the theories about their origins affects the question of the reliability of the gospels. This is because according to the principle of oral tradition, the inevitable rule is applicable: the longer the oral tradition endured, the more untrustworthy the gospels are.

In our approach to the origins of the gospels, in which shorthand and speedy writing play an important role, the question of the dating of the gospels does not seem to be very important in relation to their reliability. The records of Jesus'

writers have simply been copied in the gospels and therefore they are just as reliable as first hand reports. If the first records were copied a shorter or longer time after the events doesn't matter with respect to their reliability. Yet, the question of the dating of the gospels is a little more complicated as we will see.

The late dating as well as the early dating has to do with our subject because an indispensable ingredient in dating theories is the factor of the 'oral tradition'. The dates resulting from these theories invariably confirm the assumption of the oral tradition. The dates as hard figures seem to prove these theories and particularly the oral tradition. Yet, now that we know that there never really was an oral tradition preceding the gospels, it seems possible and desirable to re-evaluate the current theories about the origins of the gospels.

6.1 Premises for gospel dating

To solve dating problems it is obvious that scholars search in the gospels themselves for arguments. As a clear statement about the subject is nowhere to be found in the gospels, however, all sort of analyses have been made by scholars to come to final conclusions. But the nature of these analyses is that scholars have been forced to involve personal or generally accepted judgements in their work. If these judgements are coherent - logically and clearly developed – then there is no problem, but with regard to gospel dating, serious questions arise. Let's look at those premises that are usually followed in gospel dating.

1. The inheritance theory. After a shorter or longer oral transmission of their message, the apostles decided, feeling that the end of their life was near, to put their remembrances on record. As earlier presented, this point of view will bring the dates of the gospels to the period of ca. 65 – 95 A.D.¹⁷⁹

179. A great deal of modern gospel research of Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars focuses on the supposed history of oral and written forms within Form Criticism and Redaction Criticism.

2. The two-source theory. The gospels of Matthew and Luke were based on two sources. These sources were the gospel of Mark and an unknown gospel Q and the contents of these two sources were then modelled according to the insights of Matthew and Luke when they wrote their gospels. Unfortunately, the document named Q has been lost. This point of view makes the gospel of Mark the oldest one.
3. Mix theory. It is general practise to use a mix theory built on the former premises. The philosophy is that an oral tradition started and later on brought forward a written tradition which finally resulted in a period of gospel writing. The possibility is kept open in some variants that a few documents may have originated directly from Jesus' ministry and were incorporated into the gospels. The problem of this well meant option is that nobody is able to define which part of the gospels may belong to this stock of early documents, with the result that nobody really reckons with them in scientific discussions.

Behind these premises lies the question of the reliability of the gospels. The later the gospels were written, the less their reliability is, because of the factor of the oral tradition. The later the gospels were written, the more uncertain we must be about them containing the authentic words of Jesus. The following summary presents three dating possibilities, in the first place the traditional and generally followed dates (late dating); and then two dating possibilities resulting from more recent research (early dating).

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Traditional	ca. 75	ca. 65	ca. 80	ca. 95
J.A.T. Robinson ¹	40-60	45-60	57-60	40-65
J. Wenman ²	ca. 40	ca. 45	ca. 54	-

1. J.A.T. Robinson, 1976, p. 352

2. J. Wenham, 1991, p. xxv

It is obvious that the approach to the gospels presented in this book opens new premises for dating the gospels. Let us remember what the apostle John said

in the prologue of his first Letter. The apostolic proclamation of the gospel has been based on 'that which we have seen and heard' and written documents were involved in their preaching from the very beginning. From the prologue of John's first Letter we arrive at two important conclusions:

1. The apostolic proclamation of the gospel contained an oral and a written announcement of the public life of Jesus, to make him known among the people. The written part of the proclamation therefore contained a complete picture of Jesus' public appearances, from his baptism to his death and resurrection. That means real gospel books.
2. As the proclamation of the gospel through the apostles started with the occurrence of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we may say that from that moment on this complete written picture of Jesus was needed. In other words immediately after this great event, the writing of the gospel books took place.

Several times Jesus had forbidden his disciples to make known everything they had experienced or what they had seen and heard. This ban was in force with respect to the confession of Jesus as the Messiah, or the occurrence of Jesus having spoken with Moses and Elijah.¹⁸⁰ Jesus had even prophesied about the moment to break this silence: 'until the Son of man is raised from the dead.'¹⁸¹ Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place; this became the starting point to make everything known to the world.

In theology, one thing has been terribly disregarded: after the Pentecost event an eruption of scriptural documents started: real gospel books started to flow throughout the world. Pentecost appeared to be a volcano which came to life to give peace and power and also true knowledge of the Lord. Immediately there was a great demand for the teaching of the apostles: 'And they devoted themselves to

180. Matthew 17:20, Mark 9:9.

181. Matthew 17:9.

the apostles' teaching ...'¹⁸² For their teaching, the apostles only needed to bring out the teaching records and public records which had been made by them during Jesus' ministry. This was precisely what Jesus had in mind when he had said to them before his departure: '... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.'¹⁸³ At last the moment had come to edit all the records into books: the gospels were to be born.

The four gospels appeared under apostolic supervision. It is quite easy to see that. The titles of the four gospels are rather strange, even by the standards of antiquity. Above the gospels we read: 'According to ...', followed by the name of the author, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.¹⁸⁴ They did not write these titles above their books, but the apostles did. In this way they gave their support and authority to the books. From the beginning these titles were in use, as we can see from the prologue of Luke's gospel. In verse three of the prologue. Luke introduces himself with 'me' without any explanation about 'me'.¹⁸⁵ Certainly, that was a very unusual move, as in books of that time an author normally gave an introduction about his own person and the reason for writing his book. With the use of 'me' in verse three, Luke linked himself with the title 'According to Luke'. The organic connection between title and prologue through the word 'me' shows convincingly that the words 'According to Luke' were part of this gospel from the moment of appearance. No doubt the other gospels also bore their titles from the moment of their appearance, in the same way. Of course the apostles understood immediately that they could not work for a period of years with all sorts of longer or shorter text units to serve the people, with chaos as the inevitable

182. Acts 2:42.

183. Matthew 28:20.

184. There are variants of the titles of the gospels: e.g. 'Gospel according ...' These variants does not influence the argument of this paragraph.

185. ... it seemed good to *me* also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ... Luke 1:3

result. The decision to produce authoritative gospels was the only logical step for the apostles to serve the thousands who had come to the faith after Pentecost. The question is rather: How did they divide the work among the several authors?

6.2 The Matthew-John Project

Two of the twelve apostles were appointed to produce books: Matthew and John. The gospel of Matthew describes the life of Jesus in Galilee, while the gospel of John describes Jesus' visits to Judea and Jerusalem. Either of these books alone would not give a complete picture of Jesus, but together they do. The conclusion drawn from this observation is that Matthew and John worked together, or at least there was a work-plan for them to follow. As John writes in his first Letter that a written image of Jesus was part of the apostolic proclamation, it is clear that John's gospel and that of Matthew are to be dated in the first year of the Christian Community in Jerusalem: ca. 30 A.D.¹⁸⁶ It is difficult to decide which of the two gospels appeared earlier: John or Matthew. However it does not seem to make much sense to attempt to resolve this question.

As we have seen earlier, (chapter 5), the gospel of Matthew is a real 'Teacher's Gospel'. Many direct speeches of Jesus with which we are confronted in it have a teaching content. After Jesus' departure, the apostles had the task of teaching the new Christians who had joined them. What did they teach? The teaching records that had been made formerly, when Jesus was with them, of course. Why would they wait to edit these records properly into a book, while a lot of public records cir-

186. For the chronology, we take as a starting point that Jesus began his work in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, (Luke 3:1,23), in the beginning of that year before Pesach. In John's gospel Pesach follows a short time after Jesus' baptism. The year 28 A.D. is generally accepted as the fifteenth year of Tiberius. We reckon two years for Jesus' public ministry according to the three feasts of Pesach of which John makes mention (2:32 start of Jesus' work, 6:24 halfway, 11:55 the end of Jesus' work). The Christian Church began with Pentecost in the year 30 A.D.

culated among the people as a heritage out of Jesus' ministry? On the contrary, there was good reason to bring out the teaching records as soon as possible in Jerusalem.

Matthew copied his material without adding embellishments. It is reasonable to come to this conclusion when we observe the so-called formula-quotations in his gospel. About ten times the formula: 'This was to fulfil (or 'then was fulfilled') what was spoken by the prophet saying ...', is to be found, followed by a quotation from an Old Testament prophet (or, in one case, the Psalms).¹⁸⁷ Even during Jesus ministry the disciples already understood that Jesus was the fulfiller of Old Testament prophecies; he was the long-expected Messiah. Among Messianic fulfilments, they sometimes saw direct fulfilments in what happened, but more often they saw fulfilments in occurrences which showed only great comparison with Old Testament events.¹⁸⁸ The first writers (of the records) had already added these fulfilment-quotations, thus it was not the work of Matthew when he wrote his gospel. This is clear from the passion history in which almost no fulfilment-quotations are to be found.¹⁸⁹ The explanation is that the disciples did not see any prophetic fulfilment in Jesus' suffering and death: 'But they understood none of these things; this saying was hid from them, and they did not grasp

187. Matthew 1:22-23, 2:15, 2:17-18, 2:23, 4:14-16, 8:17, 12:17-21, 21:4-5, 27:9-10. Only 2:5-6 has the formula: For so it is written by the prophet.

188. Example of the first type of fulfilment: In Matthew 8:17 Isaiah is referred to: 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.' Nobody in Old Testament history had ever healed the sick as Jesus did. Example of the second type of fulfilment: In Matthew 1:23 a word of Isaiah is referred to: '... and his name shall be called Emmanuel (God with us)'. Isaiah had prophesied about a prince in his own time who would be born and his name would be a sign that he (Isaiah) spoke the truth (Isaiah 7:14). With the birth of Jesus, a new Prince of Truth would come and he would show the meaning of Emmanuel (God with us) as no one had before.

189. There is one quotation of Jesus himself (Matthew 26:54,56) and one from recognisable later time: Matthew 27:8-9. It is obvious that this passage did not belong to the first record. It is an addition after Pentecost which is made clear by the words: '... to this day.' (Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.)

what was said.¹⁹⁰ Only after Jesus' resurrection did they begin to understand the meaning of Jesus' passion: '... for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.'¹⁹¹ This state of affairs is the explanation of the absence of fulfilment-quotations in the passion history and the point is that Matthew, writing his gospel, did not add any reference to the Old Testament in this part of his book. It is possible to deduce from Isaiah 53 about twenty prophecies with respect to the passion and resurrection of Jesus. Not one of them was used by Matthew as a fulfilment-quotation to make clear to the reader that this was all according to a divine plan. This reserve of Matthew makes it possible for us to speak of an indicator of authenticity on behalf of the gospels. For certainly the other gospel writers worked just as Matthew did. They copied the original records of Jesus' writers; only in a few cases did they add something from the completed state in which they worked, and which is still recognizable as an addition from later time: e.g. '... who betrayed him.'¹⁹²

During the same period that Matthew worked on his gospel, the apostle John was working on his book also. As remarked earlier, they worked out a clear-cut plan. John described Jesus' visits to Judea and Jerusalem, while Matthew left out these parts of Jesus' public life apart from his last visit to Jerusalem. Matthew's gospel dealt with presenting Jesus' teaching with regard to discipleship and the normal Christian life. John's gospel provided the knowledge of Jesus as the Messiah, and his divine descent, because during his visits to Jerusalem his religious opponents put his person and origin in the center of their confrontations with Jesus.

The gospel of John also served historical and practical purposes. To understand the historical impact of John's gospel, it is necessary to describe the historical relationship between the regions of Judea and Galilee. In Galilee the old tribe

190. Luke 19:34.

191. John 20:9. The moving story of the Emmaus men (Luke 24:13-35) is also a striking example. Jesus himself had to explain to them that his suffering was all part of God's plan.

192. Matthew 10:4, Mark 3:19, Luke 6:16.

unities as they had functioned in ages past, had disappeared. In this region a mixed population of Israelites lived, while in Judea, the tribe of Judah still dominated public life. In Galilee, the old Hebrew language of Israel had disappeared; only in the synagogues and among pious families was it still in vogue. That was the reason why Judeans considered the Galileans as backwards and looked down on them. We meet this negative feeling about Galilee in the gospel of John: 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?', 'Is the Christ to come from Galilee?', 'Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee.'¹⁹³ These statements taken from the gospel of John show how the Judeans disregarded the region of Galilee and its inhabitants.

Judeans called the tune in the Jewish land in social and religious respect. Even in Galilee they exercised their influence, often to the displeasure of the Galileans. From indirect remarks in the gospel of John, we may learn also that the differences in daily behavior and religious traditions were great.¹⁹⁴ Sometimes John creates the impression that he is rather negative about 'the Jews'. But this is not the case. In the first place where John uses the word 'Jews' we should simply read 'Judeans' - as distinct from Galileans. He is certainly not speaking about 'all the Jews' including the Galileans, as we might suppose had we no knowledge of the circumstances at the time of his writing. This insinuation might be correct, if we could accept that the edition of John's gospel dates from about 95 A.D. as the majority of scholars do. In that case the meaning of 'Jews' cannot be understood in any other way than as all the Jews, because the political situation of the Jews in the Roman Empire at that time had changed completely after the Jewish war of 70 A.D. The difference between Judeans and Galileans had ceased to exist; they were all 'Jews' then. On

193. John 1:46, 7:41, 7:52.

194. John 2:6 speaks of 'the Jewish (i.e. Judean) rites of purification'; John 2:13, 6:4, 11:55 speaks about 'the Passover of the Jews (i.e. the Judeans)'. A great difference was that in Galilee the meal was held without the flesh of a lamb, as only in the temple of Jerusalem were lambs to be slaughtered for Passover.

the contrary, John admired the Judeans and accepted their religious leadership, but on the other hand he was surprised that the sharpest criticism of Jesus came from the part of the nation that seemed to be most blessed. How was it possible that those who seemed to be more chosen than the other Israelites, so often rejected the signs that Jesus did? This perplexity is found often throughout the entire book.

In the prologue of his gospel John says: 'He came to his own home, and his own people received him not.'¹⁹⁵ His home was Judea, with Jerusalem and the temple and of course his tribesmen, the Judeans (as Jesus was also from the tribe of Judah). John does not generalize; immediately after this statement he says: 'But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.' John had also seen how a majority of Judeans followed Jesus, often in secret.¹⁹⁶ In the gospel of John there is no total rejection of the Jews, as is often argued, although it is undeniable that the widespread theological misconception of a late date of John's gospel has given rise in history to serious anti-Semitic feelings.¹⁹⁷ The mere thought of this should give theologians motivation to re-evaluate the traditional late dates of the gospels.

195. John 1:11.

196. John 11:45, 12:19,42.

197. We have to reckon with two meanings of the word 'Ioudaios'. Outside the Jewish land it certainly had the meaning of: (1) 'Jew', a member of the Jewish nation and of the Jewish religion. Inside the Jewish land it had often the meaning of: (2) 'Judean', 'member of the tribe Judah', 'inhabitant of the region of Judea' in contrast with 'Galilean', 'inhabitant of Galilee'. In the second meaning there is no exclusive religious aspect involved as both Judeans and Galileans belonged to the same religion. After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. the second meaning disappeared and consequently the Christians began to read the gospel of John with the first wrong meaning. For instance (5:18): 'This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, ...' The meaning is definitely different when we read: 'This was why the(se) Judeans sought all the more to kill him, ...' If John wrote his gospel in ca. 95 A.D. he colored the Jews in a very negative sense as a result of the first religious meaning of 'Ioudaios'. Certainly he loved his people too much to ever have done that.

John also speaks about Galileans in his prologue: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, ...'¹⁹⁸ Jesus had lived among the disdained Galileans, they had seen him, they had heard him and they did not have problems with him, as did many of their fellow citizens in Judea. They had seen his glory. The words 'us' and 'we' in his prologue are certainly referring to the Galileans and it makes clear that this gospel was not only written for the Christian Community in Jerusalem, but also for the Galileans who had believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and still lived in Galilee with many urgent questions. After Jesus unexpected death, a new historical situation existed in Galilee. After Jesus' sudden death, it is not difficult to understand that questions arose among the Galileans: Why had Jesus been crucified? Why had their religious leaders played a central role in this event? What was the Roman part of the story? What was the meaning of Pentecost for them while a new community of Messianic believers was growing in the city of Jerusalem? And most of all: Was Jesus indeed the Messiah in which they had believed or should they expect another one to come? Who was he? All of these questions cried out for answers, not only for the Christian Community in Jerusalem but also for the thousands in Galilee who had believed in Jesus. The gospel of John answered all of these questions and for that reason it was as important as Matthew's gospel. Both books were needed at the start of the Christian Church.

The content of John's gospel made clear to the people that the relationship between Jesus and the religious leaders and teachers of the nation did not collapse due to a sudden clash. Chapter after chapter reveals a deep rooted and nagging conflict between Jesus and a rather small but influential elite of rigid fellow-Judeans. The last felt it their duty to defend the traditional religion which was centered around the belief in one God (strict monotheism). From the beginning, they felt that Jesus did not act and did not speak as a normal person. He was different. He forgave people whom he had never seen before; others fell on

198. John 1:14.

their knees in front of him and he never interrupted them by saying, (as Peter once did¹⁹⁹): ‘Stand up; I too am a man.’ Moreover he spoke with an authority which was completely unusual; in fact they were not able to overcome him in their confrontations with him. Their conclusion was: ‘It is not for a good work that we [want to] stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God.’²⁰⁰ They could not grasp that Jesus was truly divine and truly human (truly God and truly Man): the Messiah.

John starts his gospel with a description of Jesus’ peculiar Messianic position: ‘The Word was God.’ And: ‘The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.’ Before Jesus’ coming on earth he was the speaking and working Word of God, and as such he was part of God (being God). In the same way Paul would say about this Word: ‘... and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was the Christ (the Messiah).’²⁰¹ In Old Testament times the people of Israel had already experienced the Messiah, but at that time he had not yet become man, he was still ‘the Word’. John and the twelve had the privilege of beholding this new revelation of the Word, as God and man. Of course it was also difficult for these simple men from Galilee to understand this. They had also grown up with a deep respect for the one single God of Israel. And certainly John did not write his prologue as a result of his own theological reflection. That being the case, he would not have dared to write the first sentence of his gospel: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ Only by revelation was he able to write this. In the forty days after his resurrection, during which Jesus revealed himself at his disciples speaking with them about the Kingdom of God, this certainly must have been one of the issues. Jesus must have patiently spoken about it, because after Thomas’ exclamation to Jesus: ‘My Lord and my God!’,

199. Acts 10:26.

200. John 11:33.

201. 1 Corinthians 10:4.

there was a lot to explain.²⁰²

The Matthew–John project resulted in two books. The gospel of Matthew answered the questions about how to live the Christian life. The gospel of John answered the questions about how to think about Jesus and also how to experience him, i.e. to believe in him.²⁰³ This last important aspect of John's gospel has to do with the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Of course in the first Christian Community in Jerusalem, the work of the Holy Spirit was part of daily life and there was no urgent reason for Matthew to say much about it in his gospel. However, John also had the people of Galilee in mind. How could they continue with their faith in Jesus after his abrupt departure? That was the second great question of the Galileans who believed in Jesus. John was also concerned with this question and he has reckoned with it by the choice of his material. And the Holy Spirit, writing through John, included information that we, many years later, needed to have also!

During his ministry Jesus had spoken about a new revelation that was near: the coming of the Holy Spirit. In John 7:37-39 we read: 'On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said: Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water." Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.' The person and work of the Holy Spirit was of vital importance not only for the first Christian Community in Jerusalem, but the same was applicable for the countless followers of Jesus who had remained in Galilee. The believers in Galilee had come to the same point to

202. John 20:28. In the New Testament the two aspects of Jesus' personality, his human and his divine nature, are not always equally discussed. Sometimes his divine nature is stressed, sometimes his human nature. But mostly neither of them is hidden as a result of his titles and names: Son (human) of God (divine), Jesus (human) Christ (divine), etc.
203. John 20:31.

which the apostles had come, when Jesus had said to them: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit ...’²⁰⁴ Saying this Jesus had breathed on his disciples, which certainly was a sign of what he meant with this word. They had already received the Holy Spirit in them, but not over (on) them. Just as also Jesus had been born out of the Spirit (and the Spirit lived in him), still he received the Spirit over (on) him at once immediately after his baptism by John the Baptist. And now Jesus had promised that all who believed in him would, by drinking from him, experience a new working of the Holy Spirit as flowing rivers of living water. With this message of John’s gospel, the great center of Messiah believers in Galilee could continue. They again had to concentrate on Jesus’ words in this new situation just as they had heard them before and the Holy Spirit was to confirm them.

John’s gospel has two ‘endings’. The first (20:30-31) was written by John himself: ‘Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.’ John’s gospel had come to this point organically by Jesus’ revelation to Thomas to whom he had said: ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.’²⁰⁵ Believe what? That Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (God and man) according to verse 31. This first ‘ending’ of John’s gospel sets the objectives of the book (belief in Jesus and new life through this belief), the second ‘ending’ contains in fact an authorisation of this gospel: ‘This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; *and we know that his testimony is true.* But there are also many other things which Jesus did; ...’. Who wrote this parenthetical clause (italics)? Who are the ‘we’ who know that this gospel is true? Several suggestions have been offered in the past and they need not be repeated here. For our subject it is sufficient to concentrate on the matter of concern. That is: who were able and qualified to pass the judgement: ‘... and we

204. John 20:22.

205. John 20:29.

know that his testimony is true.' This judgement includes the reliability of the described events and sayings in John's gospel. Of course only the other apostles were able and qualified to give this judgement. The 'we' are, by the nature of the case, the other apostles and one of them wrote this phrase to authorize the book in their name.²⁰⁶ John was the author of this gospel, he wrote on behalf of the apostles of the first Christian Community in Jerusalem who were the publishers of the book. Certainly they had been the principals for the Matthew-John project. The gospels of Matthew and of John are to be dated in the first year of the Christian Church in Jerusalem as the books were necessary for the proclamation of the gospel from its beginning; that sets the date at about 30 A.D.

6.3 The Gospel of Luke

After the Pentecost event, a great demand for public records remained. It was time to bring them together, to arrange and to collect them into one volume. From the point of view of the apostles it was important to bring structure to the mass of public records that went around. Just as they did with the Matthew-John project, which resulted in authorized books, they must have felt the need for authorized public records. It was Luke who accepted the task to do the job. Luke certainly belonged to the larger circle of Jesus' disciples, for which the public records originally had been made. He definitely followed the example of the many who had already - during Jesus' ministry - arranged longer stories by copying records one after another.

Luke had the opportunity to make use of original public records that were the property of the apostles. So he was able to add stories that had been kept secret according to Jesus' wishes, e.g. the resurrection of Jairus' daughter and Jesus' glo-

206. It was accepted custom for the gospel writers to make an insertion in their narratives if they made clear in the context that the insertion did not belong to the original they copied. The insertion of the apostles in John 21:24 is to be taken in the same way.

rification on the mount. In Luke's gospel they also received a proper place now.

Luke could simply follow the order of the gospel of Matthew, as most public records had been produced parallel to the teaching records. Luke has also given information about Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem, in about ten chapters which are completely absent in Matthew. Matthew considered Jesus' teaching to be ended when he decided to leave Galilee and to travel to Jerusalem. Matthew did not say anything until the moment that Jesus entered into Judea, crossing the river Jordan in the south. According to Matthew, the passion story began from that moment on.²⁰⁷

Luke ends his book with the messages of Jesus' resurrection and appearances just as the other evangelists John and Matthew did. This is the first indication that Luke wrote his gospel in Jerusalem not long after these events had occurred; it seems that they lay fresh in the memory of the hearts and minds of the people. He did not need to write about the work and experiences of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem. Not only because he felt it to be outside his purpose, as his goal was to present the life and work of Jesus, but also because his readers lived in a context in which the Holy Spirit was experienced daily. His readers knew everything about that: '... you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching ...' as the council members reproached the apostles.²⁰⁸

A second indication that supports this early publication of the gospel of Luke may be seen in the first chapters of the announcement, birth and youth of Jesus. True enough, Matthew had also given some information about this period of Jesus' life, however the specific information of Luke about this period could not wait for years.

It is possible to demonstrate that the gospel of Luke was written almost simultaneously with the gospels of Matthew and John. It seems possible to establish this view according to the following argument. Luke says that he had followed

207. Matthew 19:1.

208. Acts 5:28.

all things closely before writing '... that you may know the truth concerning the things [Greek: spoken words] of which you have been informed.'²⁰⁹ Undoubtedly, Luke referred in this phrase to the public records that were already going around before Pentecost. Theophilus had already heard a lot through the public records, but through the work of Luke he got structure and order in all these records which resulted for him in 'that you may know the truth ... of which you have been informed.' In Greek the word 'asphaleia' has been used for 'the truth', that is; firmness, stability, certainty. If Theophilus had already known the gospels of Matthew and John for a period of time, it would seem as if Luke wanted to give certainty about those gospels. In that case Luke would have been giving his gospel a superior place, above the other gospels. And of course that could never have been his intention. This leads us to the conclusion that Luke's gospel was brought out at about the same time as the gospels of Matthew and John, in the year 30 A.D.

Some have put forward the thesis that Luke was a gentile and not an Israelite, because the apostle Paul does not reckon him among his Jewish co-workers in Col. 4:10-13. Moreover tradition connects him with Antioch. This would be a serious obstacle to the idea that the gospel of Luke was written in the year 30. For at that time the Christian Community of Jerusalem consisted of Jews. Peter, after he had baptized the Roman Cornelius, had a serious problem convincing the Community in Jerusalem that the gospel was also for the gentiles.²¹⁰ So if Luke wrote his gospel in the year 30, he probably was an Israelite. On the other hand, while it is true that Luke had connections with the apostle Paul, it goes too far to suppose that Luke was always a regular co-worker with Paul as he was when Paul wrote his letter to Philemon (verse 24). Often he was only a travelling-companion of Paul and so we are not able to give an exact description of Luke's relationship with Paul, simply because we don't know all the details. Therefore

209. Luke 1:4.

210. Acts 11:1-18.

we cannot say that Luke could not have been part of the first Christian Community in Jerusalem. On the contrary, we have good reason to conclude that Luke was the gospel writer who wrote his gospel in the year 30 in Jerusalem, and that he had a strong relationship at that time with Matthew and John.

6.4 *The Gospel of Mark*

One generally holds the position that Mark's gospel was the first and Matthew made use of it writing his gospel. The arguments for this position are no more than exegetic interpretations and they are in no way supported by hard evidence. For instance one argues as follows: Mark has 662 verses and about 600 verses are very close (parallel) to Matthew and so it is not logical to suppose that Mark chose these verses from Matthew's gospel. On the contrary it is logical that Matthew took these 600 verses from Mark's gospel and connected other materials with it to complete his gospel.²¹¹ The only convincing aspect of this argument is that it sounds right. It is in no way enough to build a theory on. All the arguments in favor of this position have this same character and even taken together they cannot be decisive. Augustine, the church father, held the inverse position, namely Mark took the 600 verses from Matthew's gospel to compile a sort of abstract.²¹² However Augustine's position is the opposite of the previous position, it sounded convincing and it became the generally accepted opinion for many centuries to come from the middle ages onward. In the last 150 years, a change of opinion has taken place. Whatever church fathers or theologians may say, it cannot and will not be sufficient for the seeking Christian heart, as too many doctrines are involved with each view. Only those authorities appointed through Christ, the apostles, can be decisive in this matter and fortunately we have the word of John that the apostles wrote their

211. So: Stott, J.R.W., Motyer, S., 1997, p. 29.

212. Augustine brought his vision forward in his *De Consensu Evangelistarum*.

documents about the life of Jesus from the beginning, to make him known. 'And we are writing this that our (or: your) joy may be complete.' Those who accepted the gospel in the early Church, after Pentecost, received complete joy through the gospel and as part of this joy they also received apostolic documents with descriptions of the life of Jesus: gospels. And so Mark's gospel was certainly not written before the gospel of the apostle Matthew. Then the question remains: why did Mark need to write a new gospel?

The gospels of Matthew, John and Luke have been arranged inside the context of the first Christian Community of Jerusalem. At the end of the gospel of Mark the scene has changed completely. We read that the apostles had left Jerusalem: 'And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it.' There is a clear indication that many Christians left the community of Jerusalem. When Saul started to persecute the Christians in that town after the murder of Stephen, they left the city in great numbers. They fled in all directions and everywhere they went they started to preach the gospel and to plant new Churches. The apostles regarded Jerusalem as their home base and began to make travels to the churches that grew everywhere in the country. Mark was certainly the last to bring out his gospel, as he describes the development of the Apostolic Christian Church in Israel in a later stage than Matthew, John or Luke. In fact, each gospel ends with a sketch of the historical situation of the Church at the time of that gospel.

The gospel of Mark was intended to be an evangelizing document. Outside the city of Jerusalem the Christians had no opportunity to show a flourishing Christian Community in their environment, where everything they believed was visible. In the gospel of Mark they received a powerful document by which the Gospel could become a living context by reading and hearing it. Therefore it starts with the words: 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.' This opening sentence makes directly clear that this is the book of the Messiah, the one who is God and man. The ending of the book also refers to that living context: institutions of the community and even apostolic miracles are

laid down in the hands of common believers (16:16-18).²¹³ The beginning and ending sentences of this gospel make it clear that this book was never intended to only write history; the book is part of the described history.

Through the persecution that broke out after Stephen's death, a new historic situation came to life with the following characteristics:

- Christians on the run spread the gospel in two stages (Acts 8:1): (1) inside the Jewish land (Acts 8:4); (2) in Samaria (Acts 8:14).
- The apostles had to teach the new churches and they travelled outside Jerusalem through the Jewish land and Samaria to preach the gospel (Acts 8:25, 9:31-32).
- All the apostles were still alive, including James as Mark 16:14, 20 speaks about 'the eleven' and 'they went forth and preached everywhere'.²¹⁴

Later when the persecution by Saul had ended, a new historic situation came to life again with new characteristics:

- In Caesarea the first Roman came to the faith and from that moment onwards, gentiles also started to belong to the Church (Acts 10).
- Outside the Jewish land in Antioch a great Community of non-Jewish people came into being (Acts 11:20-21).
- The apostles were still alive, including James.

The features of the gospel of Mark seem to fit the characteristics of the first period best. The book presupposes knowledge of the Jewish land. No details of the Jewish land are explained by Mark, moreover geographic details are assumed to be well known among the readers. Speaking about the desert (1:4,12), we

213. The expressions in it as 'pick up serpents' and 'drink any deadly thing' have symbolic meanings which refer to false teachers who would try to diminish the power of the gospel and spread their own destructive teachings. John the Baptist called some Pharisees who came to him 'serpents, brood of vipers'. (Matthew 3:7, Luke 3:7)

214. James was killed between 41-44 A.D., when Herod Agrippa was king of Judea. Generally the year of James' death has been set at 43 or 44 A.D. (Acts 12:1-2)

may ask: What part of it? And speaking about mountains, (3:13, 6:46, 9:2), no specific identification has been given. On the other hand, striking explanations about Jewish words and customs are given by Mark within the text. Where Matthew only has three 'that is' explanations, Mark has ten.²¹⁵ Words that Mark explains are, for instance: Corban: that is, 'given to God' (7:11); the day of Preparation: that is, 'the day before the sabbath' (15:42). So Mark had in mind readers who were less acquainted with typical Judean practices and expressions.²¹⁶ Did he have Galileans in mind, Samaritans, (stage 1), or even gentiles, Syrians and Greeks (stage 2)? That's the question and this can be answered decisively by the passage of Mark 7:1-8, which runs as follows:

'1 Now when the Pharisees gathered together to him, with some of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, 2 they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands defiled, that is, unwashed. 3 (For the Pharisees, and *all the Jews*, do not eat unless they wash their hands, observing the tradition of the elders; 4 and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they purify themselves; and there are many other traditions which they observe, the washing of cups and pots and vessels of bronze.)²¹⁷ 5 And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do

215. Matthew 27:33 (Golgotha, that is, the place of a skull), 27:46 ('Eli, Eli ... etc.', that is, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'), 27:62 (Next day, that is, after the day of Preparation). Mark 3:17 (Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder), 5:41 ('Talitha cumi,' that is, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise.') 7:2 (hands defiled, that is, unwashed.), 7:11 (Corban, that is, given to God), 7:43 ('Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.'). 12:42 (two copper coins, that is a penny.), 15:16 (the palace, that is the praetorium), 15:22 (Golgotha, that is the place of a skull), 15:34 (Eloi, Eloi, ...etc., that is 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'), 15:42 (Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath)

216. If we are right in supposing that Mark used remnant records, it seems self-evident that the first writers did not give the 'that is' explanations in Mark's gospel, as they did in Matthew's gospel (27:33, 27:46, 27:62). We may accept the 'that is' explanations as from Mark.

217. The verses 7:3-4 seem to be from Mark's hand. Also: 14:51-52, 16:9-13, 19-20.

your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with hands defiled?” 6 And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; 7 in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ 8 You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men.”

The phrase ‘For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, ...’, is a strange enumeration, because ‘Pharisees’ are part of ‘the Jews’. It would be correct if it was: ‘For the Pharisees, and as a matter of fact all the Jews, ...’. On the other hand if this were the meaning, then Mark is immediately contradicting himself saying that some disciples of Jesus did not eat with clean hands and that Jesus defended them against the Pharisees and scribes who had come from Judea. For these reasons we must translate this as: ‘For the Pharisees, and all the Judeans, ...’. The exegesis of this passage underlines this. Mark does not refer to a custom of *all the Jews* of cleansing their hands before eating, because the Galileans did not generally follow that custom, as is clear from (7:5): ‘And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their hands defiled?”’ As Galileans, Jesus’ disciples simply did not follow that custom.

Again we are confronted with the wrong translation of ‘Jew’ in most Bible translations. Among the Jewish people the word ‘Ioudaios’ did not mean ‘Jew’, but ‘Judean’ as we have seen earlier in this chapter. Outside the Jewish people, e.g. among Romans and Greeks, the translation of the word ‘Ioudaios’ as ‘Jew’ is right. But it is obvious that cannot be the meaning here. Therefore Mark did not have Roman or Greek hearers in mind but Galileans and Samaritans. For them, Mark gave the insertion²¹⁸ of 7:3-4 about the cleansing rule of the Judean

218. Matthew 15:1-3 does not have the insertion about the custom of cleaning the hands before eating, so it is the most natural explanation that Mark inserted 7:3-4 in the remnant record he copied. He made it recognizable because he broke the sentence of the main story with a very long interruption.

Jews as they, Samaritans and Galileans did not follow that rule. Mark's parlance is decisive evidence to support the conclusion that his gospel was meant for the Christians spread over the country of Judea, Samaria and Galilee during the persecution by Saul. That brings us to the conclusion that the date of the gospel of Mark is the year ca. 34 A.D.²¹⁹ And it had been edited in Jerusalem, as Mark lived in Jerusalem at that time and the Apostles still considered Jerusalem as their home base during this persecution.

The gospel of Mark was a resolute answer of the apostles on the new situation of laymen churches all over the country. These churches could flourish under their own power and that was the message of Mark's short gospel. It is indeed a short and powerful gospel and involves the record of Jesus' visit with his disciples after his resurrection, in which he prophesied to his disciples about the powers that would become manifest among those who would believe in him. That was the message that the self-supporting churches needed in the Jewish and Samaritan cities. The remnant records that lay still unused contained enough material to satisfy the needs of these churches. The unelaborated style of the remnant records made it possible for the gospel of Mark to become a dynamic report of Jesus' public life.

When we take the start of the first Christian Church in Jerusalem as the year 30 A.D., we can define the dates of edition of the gospels as follows:

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Year	30	34	30	30
Place	Jerusalem	Jerusalem	Jerusalem	Jerusalem

219. The year 34 A.D. is, of course, an estimate; one year before the conversion of Saul in about 35 A.D.

In traditional gospel research, one assumes as a starting point that the gospels were written between 65 and 95 A.D, as a result of an oral tradition. Unfortunately, this does not take into account the enormous influence of reading and writing in the first century among Romans, Greeks and Jews. In this traditional imaging, it seems as if Jesus worked in a sort of prehistoric time in which people were not supposed to write. One likes to deal then with the gospels as ‘history’ after the prehistoric era, because it is undeniable that the gospels are documents. Anyway we don’t need to be content with this totally unsatisfactory picture. Speedy writers and stenographers followed Jesus to pick up and document his sayings accurately. The records which they produced, under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, were able to provide an explosion of gospel books which started to flow over the world as an inheritance of the first Christian Church of Jerusalem as Isaiah foretold:²²⁰

‘Listen to me, my people,
and give ear to me, my nation;
for a law will go forth from me,
and my justice for a light to the peoples.
My deliverance draws near speedily,
my salvation has gone forth,
and my arms will rule the peoples,
the coastlands wait for me,
and for my arm they hope.’

6.5 The longer Mark Ending

(Addition 1)

In our evaluation of the gospel of Mark we took our starting point in the authenticity of the ending of this gospel (16:9-20). We call it the longer Mark ending

220. Isaiah 51:4-5.

as there also exists a shorter ending which generally is seen as of later date.²²¹ However many respectable scholars have decided that the longer ending is also not original.²²² The arguments are, in short: (1) (external evidence) it is missing in the oldest and best Greek documents (fourth century), (2) (internal evidence) the wording and style of the passage is not Markian (3) it seems to be a composition from other gospels (Luke and John). Before dealing with these arguments, we have to notice that the longer ending of Mark occurs in an overwhelming majority of Greek documents from the fifth century onwards. Moreover it is old and certainly not of a late date because Irenaeus already cited it (ca. 180 A.D.).

(1) 'It is missing in the oldest and best manuscripts,' is the formula that is generally felt as an impressive argument against the longer Mark ending. The older a document, the higher its value, because the risk of copy errors is the least. But it can not be denied that the above mentioned formula is a misleading one. Why? Because the omission of the longer Mark ending is not a copy error at all. The omission of the longer Mark ending in only two important manuscripts, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, was a knowingly choice. Before the canon acceptance of the 27 books of the New Testament at the end of the fourth century, churches could decide to exclude books or portions of them.²²³ That is the back-

221. The so called shorter ending: 'But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that had been told. And after this, Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.' This shorter ending is clearly an attempt to solve the problem of verse 8 as an improper ending of Mark ('... for they were afraid.'). the problem that is created by the rejection of the longer ending. Therefore it seems rather extravagant to attach to this shorter ending a status of authenticity.

222. Th. Zahn, D. Guthry, A.F.J. Klijn, R.A. Cole, J.R.W. Stott, S. Motyer, H. Baarlink, I. Broer etc.

223. In the first half of the fourth century Eusebius produced fifty manuscripts of the New Testament for the churches in Asia Minor by order of Caesar Constantin the Great. Eusebius omitted Revelation; personally he could not accept that book as apostolic. The churches of course accepted the beautiful documents.

ground that old witnesses as Sinaiticus and Vaticanus omit the longer Markian ending. It has nothing to do with scribal errors. After the canon decisions of the fourth century, the practise of omitting portions from scripture ended soon. During the canon discussions in the fourth century, the longer Mark ending was no serious issue of debate, conclusive evidence that the omission of it was only a marginal usage in the church before the canon acceptance.

(2) If the longer ending is not authentic, then the end of this gospel is Mark 16:8, where we read: ‘... for they were afraid.’ It is a serious problem in that exegetes don’t have a realistic explanation for the ‘last and least verse’ of the Mark gospel: ‘... for they were afraid.’ Is that how a gospel, a joyful message, should end? Of course not; all exegetes who support the rejection of Mark 16:9-20 are tongue-tied when they have to explain this strange ending. In fact they all admit that it is strange. The idea that the last page of this gospel has disappeared by accident, has been rejected as a realistic argument for a long time. This is an untenable position; the gospels were spread in a short period, they were written for that purpose. A missing last page in one or a few books could in no way influence the complete stream of delivering the entire gospel of Mark. We may finish this point with a saying of the apostle Paul in our mind: The gospels have not been written ‘in a corner.’ (Acts 26:26) This argument is even more weighty with regard of the early dating of Mark. It is impossible that during decades, while the apostles still were alive, the last page of this book could disappear, without anyone discovering that.

(3) There are enough positive arguments for the unusual style of the longer ending. Within the documentation theory the different style is not an obstacle, because Mark wrote remnant records that had been made by different writers. Variations in wording and style belong to the concept of gospel writing in general. Besides, after Jesus’ resurrection the whole scene had changed, as well as the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. A shift within the discourses between Jesus and his disciples seems inevitable with regard to contents and wording. After the resurrection, Jesus spoke during forty days spent with them.

He certainly had things to discuss with them that were new and in a totally new perspective for them. Before Jesus' death he had said to them: 'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth; ...'²²⁴ Jesus put off a lot of things he had to tell them and he left it to the Holy Spirit later on to teach them. However when he met them after his resurrection, he immediately started speaking to them, where he had left off; speaking about the Kingdom of God. There were many things they had to be prepared for. So we should not be surprised to meet new issues and new words in the longer ending of Mark. We should be surprised if the opposite were the case.

Some scholars have drawn attention to the fact that several aspects of the longer ending are seemingly not in accordance with the other resurrection stories. Before dealing with these problems, we will first present the text under discussion: '9 Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10 She went out and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. 12 After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. 13 And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them. 14 Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they sat at table; and he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. 15 And he said to them, "Go into all the world ...etc."

Problem 1: The two men (12) seem to be the men from Emmaus (Luke 24:13), but when they returned to Jerusalem and said that they had seen the Lord the reaction seems, in contrast with verse 13, positive: 'The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon.'

224. John 16:12-13.

Problem 2: The moment of Jesus' appearance to his disciples seems to be the evening that followed on the first day. However the first time that Jesus appeared to his disciples - we know from John's gospel - Thomas was not with them. Still in Mark we read 'he appeared to the eleven' (14). This seems contradictory.

The solution to these problems lies in a good understanding of what Mark has done in these verses. He possessed a short remnant record with the verses 14 – 19. This record contained a short description of the situation, (14), followed by Jesus' sayings to go out into the world. To make the disciples' negative behaviour of unbelief understandable for his readers, Mark had to write about the details of that unbelief first. From the other gospels, i.e. John and Luke, which already existed, he could take verses 9-11 about Mary Magdalene and 12-13 about the two men of Emmaus respectively. But through the two examples of unbelief on the first day of Jesus' resurrection, it gives the impression that the record (14-19) also deals with the evening following on that first day. However that is not the case. It is of a much later date, at least eight days later, because the eleven disciples were present, including Thomas, who had been absent the first time that Jesus met the disciples (John 20:24). We tend to suppose that this occurrence took place at the evening after resurrection day because Jesus exhorted them about their unbelief on that day.²²⁵ However we should not forget also that Peter had not been confronted with his threefold denial at his first meeting with Jesus, after his resurrection. Jesus confronted him later (John 21:15-17). With this in mind we are able to solve the two problems.

(1) When the two men of Emmaus had returned to Jerusalem, we read: '... and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them, who said, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"' It is obvious that 'those who were with them' believed in Jesus' resurrection. They said

225. The translation 'Afterward' vs. 14 may indicate 'After these events ...', but the Greek is the word 'Husteron': Later (in the future).

'The Lord has risen ...'; the disciples did not say that. The gospel of Mark underlines the fact that the eleven disciples could not believe in his resurrection; even the appearance of Jesus to Peter that first day had not changed the hearts of the others.

(2) From the available evidence we get the following:

a. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene on resurrection morning. (John 20:14-17)

b. Jesus appeared to the Emmaus men late in the afternoon toward evening. (Luke 24:13-31)

c. Jesus appeared to Peter before the Emmaus men entered Jerusalem. (Luke 24:34)

d. Late in the evening after resurrection day, Jesus appeared to the disciples without Thomas. (John 20:19-23, Luke 24:36-48)

e. Jesus appeared eight days later to the disciples with Thomas. (John 20:26-29)

It is reasonable to take Mark 16:14-18 as part of this appearance. By now Thomas had come to believe, and Jesus could indeed exhort them all.

Conclusions are:

1. The longer ending of Mark is in accordance with all the ins and outs of Jesus' first appearances, as we know from the other gospels.
2. The longer ending differs in style and wording with regard to the discourse. The discourse contains elements of new things as a result of the resurrection.
3. The longer ending differs in style and wording with regard to the narrative part, because two passages are in Mark's hand: 9-12 and 19-20. The bulk of this gospel represents the wording and style of Jesus' writers.
4. There is no serious reason to deny the authentic character of the longer ending of the gospel of Mark. The larger end is a hundred times more convincing than Mark 16:8 as closing formula.
5. The longer ending of Mark shows in an impressive way the purpose of the gospel of Mark: the transference of the gospel and all its implications to common believers and common churches.

6.6 *And what about Papias?*

(Addition 2)

The view - as herein proposed - that the gospels originate from the early Christian Church in Jerusalem, is not a common one. The centuries-old lack of comprehension about intensive writing in Jesus ministry has - of course - given a totally inadequate view of the origins and dates of the gospels. From as far back as the beginning of the second century, we possess a few testimonies of bishop Papias in which he expresses what he believed about this subject. And because of the lack of other early material, one has often accepted Papias' vision on the gospels even in our time. Papias lived between ca. 70 and 130 A.D. and he worked as a bishop in Hierapolis (Asia Minor).

Eusebius, the church historian, has delivered Papias' statements about the gospels. About Mark he said: 'And the Elder said this also: "Mark was the interpreter of Peter; he wrote accurately, but not in order, the things either said or done by the Lord as much as he (Peter) remembered. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterwards, as I have said, (heard and followed) Peter, who fitted his discourses to the needs (of his hearers) but not as if making a narrative of the Lord's sayings; ..."' .²²⁶ By 'Elder', Papias refers to an apostle or a follower of an apostle. According to Papias, Mark wrote in his gospel what he had heard from Peter, when they were in Rome, many years after Jesus' public appearance. Therefore according to Papias' view, Mark's gospel is basically Peter's gospel. It is obvious that Papias presupposes an oral tradition: the preaching activity of Peter. It is also obvious that Papias did not build his opinion on scripture itself, but on what he had heard about it. Certainly he did not have a proper understanding of the prologue of John's first letter, nor that of Luke's gospel. Christianity at that time did not cope with specific exegetical details, as one had to face the persecutions by the Romans and the associated

226. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III,39,3

dangers thereof. Judea had ceased to exist; in Papias' time it was called Syria-Palestine by the Romans. The flourishing nation of the Jews had turned out to be in a desolate region. A few decades after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Christians in the other parts of the Roman Empire could not imagine how refined and prosperous the old Jewish culture had been. With both biblical and historical lack in his knowledge about this subject, it is understandable that Papias reverted to rumors in this matter. Unfortunately, many after him have followed Papias' view even until today, because he was an early witness of the post-apostolic Church and moreover he was a bishop.²²⁷ The Reformation however, has made clear enough that clerical traditions do not guarantee truth. On the other hand, the Reformers followed the authority of the scriptures as being decisive in the central matters of theology.

The problem with Papias' statements is that it is extremely difficult to evaluate them. With regard to the previous one: for some time Mark was indeed a servant of Peter (1 Peter 5:13), but was he also his interpreter? Was Papias' informant about this in attendance when Mark interpreted Peter? Or was this knowledge just hearsay? From another statement we know that Papias wrote by quoting his informants and combining that with his own explanations.²²⁸ Now the question is: Exactly what part is the quote and what part is Papias' explanation? Maybe the quote is: 'Mark was the interpreter of Peter.'²²⁹ In that case Papias' explanation

227. Many commentators e.g.: Th. Zahn, B.H. Streeter, D. Guthrie, R.A. Cole, J.R.W. Stott, E. Linnemann, J.W. Wenham, etc.

228. 'Without delay I will present you everything that I have learned from the elders and which I have stored in my mind. I will add to this the explanations to confirm the truth.' Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III,39,3

229. In old texts, and also in the time of Papias, punctuation marks did not even exist. The beginning of a sentence was not recognizable by a capital. All letters were capitals. Experienced authors at that time reckoned with the problems connected with this usage in writing, and marked their quotes by the meanings of the words that followed, so that it became intrinsically clear what was meant.

is: ‘He (Mark) wrote accurately, but not in order, the things either said or done by the Lord as much as he (Peter) remembered. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterwards, as I have said, (heard and followed) Peter, who fitted his discourses to the needs (of his hearers) but not as if making a narrative of the Lord’s sayings; ...’ If this is the right interpretation of Papias’ words, he has connected his personal view of the origin of Mark’s gospel with the single idea that Mark once had been Peter’s interpreter.

Papias claimed almost apostolic or even divine authority for his explanations with his assertion that his informants were hearers of the apostles. However sometimes we have to doubt his objectivity. According to him, the Lord Jesus had said: ‘The days will come when vines will grow with ten thousand tendrils each and each tendril with ten thousand twigs and each twig with ten thousand shoots and each shoot with ten thousand bunches of grapes and each bunch with ten thousand grapes and each grape squeezed will bring forth a thousand litres of wine.’²³⁰ We get the feeling that he claims divine authority for his own invention or for a current fable within the church.

A statement by Papias about the apostle Matthew also exists. ‘With regard to Matthew he (Papias) has said: “Matthew collected the oracles in the Hebrew language and each [Mark, Luke and John] interpreted them as best he could.”’²³¹ It is not said in this quote, who the informant of Papias was, nevertheless the shortness of the quote makes clear that we face certainly Papias’ view about the origin of the gospels. There would have been a Hebrew source - nowadays mostly interpreted as Aramaic²³² - with sayings of the Lord. One assumes that Matthew had collected these sayings from the oral tradition and maybe from older documents for this source. According to Papias, the other gospel writers would have used this source in writing their gospels. They all made translations of the sayings

230. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* V,33,3-4.

231. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III,39,16.

232. Or even in ‘Semitic style’ instead of ‘Hebrew language’ or ‘Aramaic language’.

into Greek. For Papias and his contemporaries, this must have been an attractive theory. The similarities in the gospels could be explained as originating from the common source, the dissimilarities between the gospels could be explained as differences of translation. Moreover the authority of the source could be traced back to the apostle Matthew, and one took it for granted that Matthew was the first to translate and to write his gospel. This statement of Papias contained, in fact, an overall theory of how the gospels were compiled, and this theory has stood for centuries as a confirmation of the oral tradition preceding the gospels. At the moment this theory has lost its attractiveness, as most scholars now accept Mark as the oldest gospel, instead of Matthew. However, the general opinion of the oral tradition preceding the gospels seems also now to be confirmed by this old-fashioned quote of Papias.

The statements of Papias about the compilation of the gospels are of little or no value. The supposition that Matthew translated his gospel or at least important parts of it, from Hebrew, is not tenable. The style of Matthew does not give the impression of a translation; the style is smooth and does not represent translation language. D. Guthrie has remarked: 'Almost all scholars are agreed that Matthew's gospel was written in Greek, not in Hebrew or Aramaic (as Papias probably meant).'²³³ The model of Papias seems to be a speculation of his own, instead of a theory soundly based on facts and arguments. It seems that we may consider Papias as representing the mode of his time, mixing fact and speculations in his writings, as historical writers of inferior quality used to do. The only thing that counts is this: We don't need post-apostolic traditions; we know from biblical sources, the prologue of Luke and the first letter of John, that we possess the sayings of Jesus in Greek, the language in which he spoke to the people. There was no reason at all for the gospel writers to translate. Neither translation, nor an oral tradition played a role in the compilation of the gospels.

233. D. Guthrie, 1985, p. 37.

6.7 *The imaginary gospel Q*

(Addition 3)

Finally, a few remarks are needed about the so called ‘gospel Q’. We are talking about a set of sayings in the gospel of Matthew and Luke, which are nearly identical, at least in meaning. In New Testament theology it is widely accepted that there once existed an unknown gospel and many call it the ‘lost gospel Q’. Together with the gospel of Mark, this gospel Q was supposedly used by Matthew and Luke to compose their gospels. The idea is that common parts in Matthew and Luke are evidence of a common source, and that hypothetical source has received the name Q (German: Quelle = source). For many theologians, it is an attractive idea that apart from Mark there also existed an older (read: better) gospel than the great gospels of Matthew and Luke. And therefore one supposes that Mark and Q are more reliable than the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Of course this is not very impressive from the documentation point of view, as one has to admit that Q would also be the result of the oral tradition. That means that Q would be burdened with all the negative consequences of the oral tradition which need not to be repeated here as they are fully described elsewhere in this book.

A more interesting point of debate is the question: Did Q really exist? The answer must be negative. In the history of the early church, there is no mention of it. Up to the nineteenth century nobody had ever heard about Q. Historical evidence does not exist for Q. But in theology it is not unusual to work with the great word ‘faith’ and so one asks us to have faith in Q. And as faith is one of the most important spiritual gifts in Christianity, it seems that believing in Q is no less than a divine calling according to many theologians: to believe in the invisible gospel Q.

To the contents of Q one reckons generally:

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Sayings in Matthew from:

John the Baptist, baptism of Jesus (3:7 etc.)
Temptation (4:11 etc.)
Sermon on the mount (5:1 etc.)
Centurion's servant (8:5 etc.)
Teachings after Mission of the Twelve (11:1 etc.) and some scattered sayings
Second coming (24:3 etc.)
Parable of the talents (25:14 etc.)

Sayings in Luke from:

Idem (3:1 etc.)
Idem (4:1 etc.)
Sermon in the field (6:20 etc.)
Idem (7:1 etc.)
Teachings during Journey to Jerusalem (9:51 etc.)
Idem (17:20 etc.)
Parable of the pounds (19:12 etc.)

The order one has determined for the sayings in Q, corresponds with the order of the sayings in Luke. About 65 % of the teachings in Q are to be found in Luke's 'Journey to Jerusalem'. The teachings in Matthew that correspond with them are roughly after the 'Mission of the Twelve'. When the twelve had left him, Jesus started to teach the crowds and Matthew here also has reports with public teachings. Many sayings of these reports are parallel with sayings of the last Journey to Jerusalem, which contain public records according to the working method of Luke, who based his gospel on them. This makes clear why Matthew had no compelling reason to incorporate the story of Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem. Matthew had already presented a lot of Jesus' teachings to the public of the same character.

According to many modern exegetes, the gospel Q belongs to the most authentic information of Jesus. One supposes that without passion and resurrection, we find in Q a picture of Jesus in its most early and pure form. However, as earlier stated, one must admit also that this picture of Jesus in Q would not be without deficiencies, caused by the oral tradition. All in all, we must conclude that Q cannot play a significant role in the documentation theory of the gospels. Therefore it is now time to turn in more detail to the contents of the gospels according to the premises of the documentation theory. In the subsequent chapters we will see how fruitful this approach is for exegesis and a correct understanding of the gospels.

READING THE GOSPELS ANALYTICALLY

In the previous chapters, facts and arguments have been presented to confirm the authenticity of the gospels, especially the spoken word of the gospels. The questions of when and how the books came into being have also been discussed. Now the moment has come to look more specifically at their contents. The documentation theory, thus far developed, is also important for interpretation and exegesis. The first records form the constituting elements of the gospels. Luke, as well as the other gospel writers, worked as the many and copied authentic records, as we have learned from Luke's prologue. The gospel writers wrote their stories 'just as' the eyewitnesses and ministers of the spoken word transmitted them. (Luke 1:2) We have seen that the records originated from the events they describe, and therefore it is possible to look at the contents of the gospels afresh, and to read them in a new way.

7.1 Rules concerning the interpretation of discourses

The writers of Jesus worked systematically of course. We already have a foretaste of their work in chapter 5, how they worked with a concept of distribution. In this section the purpose is to recognize the rules underlying the reporting work of the direct speech portions by reading analytically. Thereafter in the

next section, we will do the same for the narrative parts of the gospels.

There are only a few parallel occasions in the gospels where the same sayings are repeated verbatim. The few we possess however, are sufficient to permit us to formulate rules by which we may analytically read the direct speech portions. Firstly we will present these rules, followed by examples.

- Rule 1. Simple introduction. If direct speech is preceded by an introduction with a single 'speaking' verb, the direct speech has been presented completely. For instance: 'he said, ...'; 'he answered, ...'; 'he cried, ...'; etc. After any of these forms, what follows is the complete direct speech.
- Rule 2. Twofold introduction. If direct speech is preceded by an introduction with two 'speaking' verbs, the direct speech has been presented in part. For instance: 'he answered and said, ...'; 'he answered them saying, ...'; etc.²³⁴ After this form of introduction, not all of what was said has been rendered, but only an important part of it. Unfortunately in most English translations of the New Testament, twofold expressions of speaking have been exchanged for simple ones. In all of these cases we will present the missing forms of the Greek in square brackets [...] in the text of the RSV. If a word given in the RSV is lacking in the Greek text, we will use curly brackets { ... }.
- Rule 3. Plural introduction. If an introduction has the subject in plural, several direct speeches were made, but only one of them has been presented. For instance: 'they answered him, ...'; 'they cried out saying, ...'; etc.

234. A twofold introduction is not a Greek or Semitic literary figure of speech as has often been supposed. That appears from the fact that one is not able to explain the specific literary result of it. The fact that in many modern translations only one speaking verb has been translated, instead of the two, shows adequately that a literary effect is lacking. For the writers, who were not acquainted with all sorts of punctuation marks, the use of the simple or twofold introduction was a means to indicate features of their quotations.

Example 1 (Rule 1 and 2).

Matthew 16:15-16

15 He said to them,
 “But who do you say
 that I am?”
 16 Simon Peter replied
[answered and said],
 “You are the Christ, the
 Son of the Living God.”

Mark 8:29

29 And he asked them,
 “But who do you say that
 I am?”
 Peter answered [an-
swered and said to] him,
 “You are the Christ.”

Luke 9:20

20 And he said to them, “But
 who do you say that I am?”
 {And} Peter answered [an-
swering said], “The Christ of
 God.”

This example is taken from the well-known story in which Jesus asks his disciples for their opinion about him. When we read the question, we see that in all three cases it is exactly the same: ‘But who do you say that I am?’ This is easily explainable because of the simple introduction used in all three cases: ‘said’ (Matthew), ‘asked’ (Mark), and ‘said’ (Luke). Three times the question is presented completely (Rule 1).

On the contrary, when we look at Peter’s reaction we see that in all three cases different answers have been presented. To understand this, it is necessary to apply rule 2. The introductions are twofold: ‘answered and said’, (Matthew), ‘answered and said’, (Mark), and ‘answering said’, (Luke). In other words, Peter’s answer has been presented in part all three times. The meaning of the expression ‘answered and said’ or ‘answering said’ is that while he was answering, the direct speech that is presented was *among* the things he said. The three answers are part of the same reaction. Peter must have said something such as: ‘The Christ of God. You are the Christ. You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!’ What we have here is a figure of speech: an enumeration with increasing force. The threefold repetition of Peter’s answer is not strange, or unusual. At last he was allowed to give his opinion about Jesus. It was not daily custom among the disciples at that time to talk about Jesus as the Messiah. When Jesus had sent them out to preach

the Kingdom, (Matthew 10), he instructed them to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven, not to proclaim him as the Messiah. Later on we read in John's gospel that it was dangerous for the people to confess Jesus as the Messiah, because they could be punished by being put out of the synagogue.²³⁵ That may be the reason Jesus had taken his disciples to the district of Caesarea Philippi, if it was forbidden by the Pharisees to call him Messiah in the Jewish land. In Caesarea Philippi they did not transgress a law by that confession. Anyway, it is understandable that Peter did not give a short and formal reaction of one single phrase. On the contrary, he expressed a deep rooted conviction with the emotions that go with it, and that is the cause for the repetitions in his answer.

This example shows also that the rules about direct speech are related to the way the records that constitute the gospels came into being. The expression: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God', is suitable for a teaching record. The aspect of being the Son of God is mentioned in it explicitly. And Matthew, as we have discussed earlier, incorporated teaching records in his gospel. For a public record the expression: 'The Christ of God', is appropriate (Luke). Without a verb this answer gives a direct and vivid touch, which makes public reading more interesting. And indeed it was Luke who used public records for his gospel. The phrase 'You are the Christ', had been left for the remnant record, and Mark used that record.

Example 2 (Rule 1 and 2).

Mark 1:23-26

23 And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit;
24: and he cried out [saying], "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you

Luke 4:33-35

33 And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice,
34 "Ah! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I

235. John 9:22, 12:42.

are, the Holy One of God.”

25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”

26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

know who you are, the Holy One of God.”

35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, ...

The direct speech of the man who cried out in the synagogue is in both cases recorded verbatim, with one exception. Luke has the exclamation ‘Ah’ which is lacking in Mark. Luke gives the direct speech completely and thus uses a simple introduction (Rule 1): ‘... he *cried out* with a loud voice ...’. As Mark does not give a complete direct speech, he uses a twofold introduction (Rule 2): ‘... he *cried out [saying]* ...’

It is possible to consider ‘rebuked’ as a ‘speaking’ verb, as Jesus rebuked the spirit with his words, (i.e. by speaking). In that case, it seems that Jesus actually said a little bit more than: ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’²³⁶

In most cases the twofold introduction is related with the subsequent direct speech, but sometimes it covers a certain part of a discourse. For instance when the verb ‘to question’ (to examine) is used in a twofold introduction (Luke 23:3); here the introduction refers to a part of the conversation. But when the verb ‘to ask’ (asking a question, posing a question) is used in combination with another verb of speaking (Matthew 27:11), only a part of the first direct speech is meant.²³⁷

236. Luke has an important variant which can be translated as: ‘Be silent, and come *away from* him!’ The twofold introduction gives room for this variant. In this case Jesus had rebuked the spirit two times.

237. See: Appendix. Highlights of the Passion and Resurrection Story, 2, Table 3, 4.

Example 3 (Rule 2 and 3).

Matthew 16:14

14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremia or one of the prophets.”

Mark 8:28

28 And they told [spoke saying to] him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others one of the prophets.”

Luke 9:19

19 And they answered [answering said], “John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has arisen.”

The third rule has to do with plural introductions. It is not difficult to see that if an introduction has the subject in plural, several direct speeches had occurred, but only one of them has been presented. The example shows us the time that Jesus asked his disciples what public opinion was about him. Several answers came: ‘they said’, ‘they told’, etc. We see three reactions to this question and all of these reactions are similar in meaning, but there are differences in rendering. This is quite natural in life that reactions differ and it would be strange if they were exactly the same. However in matters of biblical exegesis, many cannot cope with these differences, and they get the feeling that the gospels are not in agreement; (in some way contradicting each other). The explanation is then often given that: the oral tradition caused these differences to creep into the text. From the documentation point of view, we see – on the contrary – a completely normal situation: many reactions to a topic under debate. That was the way of higher education at that time: a teacher, by putting forth a question, opened a discussion. The purpose was to consider a matter from all angles and the students were supposed to come back with remarks and new questions, as starting points for the master to reveal his knowledge (diatribè style). Many examples of plural introductions are to be found in the gospels that show how Jesus taught his disciples according to this diatribè style. Mark 8:28 has an important variant with a twofold introduction (‘spoke saying to’). Luke also has a twofold introduction. This means that in these cases the answer has been presented in part (Rule 2).

Rule three is also applicable when someone speaks in the name of a group or reads a message from a document for representing all. In Matthew 22:16-17 we read: ‘And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; ... Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”’ Certainly this message was spoken by one person as part of a group that was listening. The speaker probably read the message from paper or a wax tablet as the vernacular suggests (‘they sent ... saying’; that is: ‘they sent ... to say’, etc.). In Luke 7:6 we read: ‘... the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ...”’ It is clear from the first person (I am not worthy) that the friends possessed a letter containing the words of the centurion. Of course it was only one of the centurion’s friends who read the letter.

So far we may say that the rules for interpretation of discourses show a refined system for reporting direct speech in Jesus’ time. This system in turn gives us the tools for exegesis to understand the many nuances concerning the spoken word in the gospels and acts; nuances which are in no way changes, embellishments and so on due to the so-called oral tradition.

7.2 Rules concerning the interpretation of narratives

A second set of rules deals with the course of events: succession and interruption of events or actions. To discover the rules about the course of events, there is much more material for comparison than for the rules of the spoken language in the discourses. In the synoptic gospels there are many texts about the same events. The use of specific conjunctions at the beginning of a sentence tells us a lot about the course of the event that is described in that sentence.

- Rule 4. Succession. There are several ways to express succession. In the first place: without any conjunction at the beginning of the sentence (asyndetic connection). In the second place: when a sentence starts with ‘Immediately’ (or ‘And immediately’). In the gospel of Mark this construction is frequently

used. In the third place: a principal sentence starting with 'Then'. The gospel of Matthew very often uses this construction instead of 'Immediately'.²³⁸

- Rule 5. Interruption. There is one significant way to refer to an interruption in the course of events. When a sentence or main clause starts with 'And/and' (Greek: Kai).²³⁹

Let us give an example to show these rules.

Matthew 14:26-33

26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.

27 But immediately he spoke to them, saying, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear."

28 {And} Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water."

Mark 6:49-51

49 but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out;

50 for they all saw him, and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear."

John 6:19-21

19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat.

[And] They were frightened, 20 but he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

238. Matthew has an extreme predilection for 'Then' (Greek: Tote), while Mark very often uses 'Immediately' (Greek: Euthus) instead of 'Then'. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament ca. 200 B.C., is much more acquainted with 'Tote' and seldom has 'Euthus'. That may be a possible explanation for Matthew's predilection.

239. Sometimes the Greek particle 'de' in the second position of the sentence has been translated as 'And'. In this case only a sort of contrast with something in the previous sentence is expressed and not 'interruption'; however although the context more often means succession, interruption cannot always be excluded. The gospel of John has often the word 'then' in the second or third position in the phrase to create interruption (Greek: 'oun' in the second or third position). The translation 'then' is often lacking, as the meaning of 'oun' is usually clear from the context.

29 He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus;

30 but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.”

31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “O man of little faith, why did you doubt?”

32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

33 {And} those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

51 And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded,

21 {Then} they then were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

The conjunctions and asyndetic connections are underlined and they tell us a lot about the course of the events. But first a few remarks about the spoken words. In the three messages in the example. It is said that the disciples began to be terrified, or frightened. In each description we read that Jesus began to speak to them. In Matthew and Mark we read twofold introductions (‘spoke ... saying’; ‘spoke and said’). The Greek verb for spoke (laleo) has several meanings, but in all of them it means ‘to talk for longer time’. So the twofold introductions relate to a discourse and the saying ‘Take heart, it is I; have no fear,’ is one of several things that Jesus said. The conjunctions ‘immediately’ and ‘but’ are used by the writers to stress an uninterrupted course of events.

A separate part of this occurrence. Matthew (verse 28), directly following Jesus’ encouragement, starts with Peter’s request to be asked to also come onto the

water. From verses 28 - 32 Matthew gives an uninterrupted discourse (verse 30 is asyndetic, verse 31 has 'immediately').

Mark uses an interruption, before Jesus enters into the boat, and he makes it clear with the word 'And'. That is his signal that Peter's walk on the sea is lacking. But Matthew also has 'And' here (32), and that is because he does not give a description of the return of Jesus and Peter to the boat. So he also indicates an interruption in the course of the event here.

John uses a typical way of reporting. He starts with Jesus' reassurance to not be afraid. Then interruption follows as John uses 'then' in the second position. He creates a contrast between the fear in the beginning and gladness at the end of the event; and in his company they arrived at the precise spot for which they were making.

At last Matthew and Mark say something about the reactions of the disciples. Matthew: that they worshipped. Mark: that they were astounded. Last but not least, John uses the expression 'and immediately' (21) to express that the ship set course for the coast as soon as Jesus and Peter were on board.

7.3 The 'And-style' of Mark

Mark has much more 'And-sentences' than the other gospel writers. Mark used remnant records and it is understandable that the writers of Jesus - after preparing a teaching record and a public record - finished their work with rather uncomplicated records. With 'And-sentences' they could sum up a lot of observations, without taking pains to produce eloquent editorial products. And that is indeed what we see in the remnant records. To give an example of Mark's 'And/and'-style, we will sum up the 27 'Ands' and 'ands' in the first 20 verses of Mark 11 (KJV - Jesus enters Jerusalem; Barren fig tree; Expulsion of the dealers from the Temple): 1: And when they came nigh to Jerusalem ... 2: and saith unto them, ... 4: And they went ..., and found ..., and they loose him. 5: And certain of them ... 6: and they let him ... 7: And they brought ..., and cast ..., and he

sat upon him. 8: And many spread ..., {and} others cut ..., and strawed ... 9: And they ..., and they that followed ... 11: And Jesus entered ..., and when he had looked ..., {and} now the eventide ... 12: And on the morrow ... 13: And seeing a fig tree ..., and when he ... 14: And Jesus answered ..., And his disciples heard it. 15: And they came ..., and Jesus ..., {and} began ..., and overthrew ... 16: And would not ... 17: And he taught [and said] ... 18: And the scribes ..., and sought ... 19: And when even ... 20: And in the morning ... While Mark uses the word 'And/and' 30 times, Matthew and Luke use the word 'And/and' 20, and 12 times, respectively, in the parallel passages.

When a pupil in modern schooling shows his teacher a paper with this 'And-style', there is a great chance that he will hear: 'You have written a lot, but now I want you to make a real story of it.' In the gospels this And-style is a permanent part of the narratives, especially in Mark. It is not wrong; it only looks a little bit loose. The gospel writers did not change the records they copied; unmistakably their respect for them was too great to do that. They refused to change them, as these records were written during Jesus' activity, under his responsibility and through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Reading the gospels analytically has important benefits. In the first place, in matters of exegesis it always gives relevant answers, where otherwise only a somewhat vague reference can be given to 'changes within the oral tradition'. In the second place we have at our disposal a set of tools for explanation, which makes exegesis less arbitrary. The explanation becomes transparent and verifiable for the common reader. And last but not least, we get the feeling that we are coming nearer to the source, nearer to the events and nearer to the central person of the gospels, Jesus Christ. Let's have a look to some well-known examples.

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7.4 Cure of the centurion's servant

The story the centurion who wanted his servant to be healed through Jesus, has been preserved in two records: a teaching record in the gospel of Matthew and a public record in the gospel of Luke.

Matthew 8:5-13

11

5 As he entered Caper'na-um, a centurion came forward to him, beseeching him
6 and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress."
7 And he said to him, "I will come and heal him."

8 But the centurion answered him [answering him said], "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.

9 For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go', and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it."

10 When Jesus heard him, he marvelled, and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.

11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac,

Luke 7:2-10

1

2 Now a centurion had a slave who was dear to him, who was sick and at the point of death.

3 When he heard of Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his slave.

4 {And} when they came to Jesus, they besought him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him,
5 for he loves our nation, and he built us oursynagogue."

6 {And} Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof;
7 therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed.

8 For I am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another,

and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,
12 while the sons of the kingdom will be
thrown into the outer darkness; there men
will weep and gnash their teeth.”

13 And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; be
it done for you as you have believed.” And
the servant was healed at that very mo-
ment.

‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my slave,
‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

9 When Jesus heard this he marvelled at
him, and turned and said to the multitude
that followed him, “I tell you, not even in
Israel have I found such faith.”

III

10 And when those who had been sent re-
turned to the house, they found the slave
well.

When the writers of Jesus had collected their notes and had to decide how to compose their reports, they made it quite easy for themselves. They divided the information on their wax tablets into roughly two parts.

The first part, (number I in the columns²⁴⁰), was particularly applicable to a public record. It contains many interesting details necessary for such a report: Jewish leaders with good connections with a Roman officer; they are willing to do something for him and his critically ill servant; formerly the officer had helped to build their synagogue; the second group sent out by the officer has the message for Jesus to stay outside his house; obviously the officer is acquainted with Jewish feelings about the house of a Roman as a heathen place with all sorts of forbidden symbols and idols, which is forbidden for a Jew to enter. Also very interesting is the letter which had been written by the officer and which was read by the friends, as is clear from the ‘I-style’ in their words: ‘I am not worthy ...’, etc. How could a proud Roman centurion speak in that way to a Jew? And in the

240. The Roman numbers in the columns refer to the order of succession of events and activities, not to the course of the writing activities. In general we take as a starting point that the teaching records were made first and thereafter the public records.

third place we see how astonished Jesus is after hearing the letter. It seems definitely superfluous to make mention of Jesus' healing command (between verse 9 and 10 of Luke 7 such command is lacking); the public understood instantly that the healing did not fail to occur.

In Luke's report, the RSV gives three 'And-sentences': verses 4, 6 and 10. However only verse 10 is a real one, as the word 'And' (kai) does not occur in verses 4 and 6 of the Greek text. So only before verse 10 is there an interruption in the course of the event. That is the place, then, where we may insert the other column, the report of Matthew.

The second part of the entire event lent itself admirably to use in a teaching report. It contained the meeting of Jesus and the officer. Obviously the centurion had followed the second group with the letter for Jesus, to see its outcome. When Jesus praised the faith of the centurion after hearing the letter, he could certainly not remain hidden. Maybe bystanders - recognizing him - shouted that the centurion was present. Not only was the presence of the centurion important for the teaching record, but some other features were also. (a) Jesus' words about the heathens who would enter the Kingdom from east and west. Certainly this was a rather strange idea for Judaism in Jesus' days. The first Christians, who were all Jews, also had problems when Peter had baptized the first Romans. (Acts 11:1-18²⁴¹) (b) His painful words about people who would weep in the darkness outside the Kingdom; it is most important that Jesus spoke about this issue to the inner circle of his disciples and not to the crowd who followed him (Luke 7:9). He clearly had as his objective to motivate the multitude not by fear but by encouragement; however to his close disciples, who were supposed to live in the Kingdom, he showed the boundaries of the Kingdom. (c) And last but not least the healing command. Again and again we are confronted in the teaching

241. We may learn from Acts 11:1-18 that no heathens had been baptized within Jesus' ministry. This seems to cope with the fact that Jesus' calling was to bring his message only to the lost sheep of Israel.

records with Jesus' ultimate power. And the teaching aspect of that was/is: Jesus is more, he is the Messiah.

Thus far the exegesis is in complete order, only one 'And-sentence' in the public record (Luke 7:10) and exactly that is the place for the teaching record (Matthew 8:5-13) to be incorporated when we combine the occurrences in Luke and Matthew. The words of the centurion to Jesus (Matthew) are nearly the same as those of the friends (Luke), which were part of a letter written by the centurion a few moments earlier. He just repeated, with slight differences, what he had dictated earlier. So far, so good. But what would the defender of the oral tradition preceding the gospels, say about these two messages? He must try to score in a quite different manner. He would surely put forth the supposition that we don't know whether the centurion actually came to Jesus or not, because the gospels are not clear about that. He would say that one gospel says that the centurion met Jesus, but the other says that only elders and friends came up to Jesus instead of the officer himself, so it remains uncertain whether he was there or not. Moreover (the oral tradition defender would argue), since the differences between the words of the centurion in Matthew and the words of the friends in Luke are small, we must conclude that they are dependent; i.e., within the oral tradition they had been changed. Otherwise the two, Matthew and Luke, used the written source Q and made changes according to their own theology. And, the defender of the oral tradition would continue, 'we don't know who really met Jesus, what was said to Jesus, or what he said. And if we cannot be sure about that, we also cannot be sure whether or not the servant was healed, ... if he was actually ill.

This line of reasoning sounds like a joke, however this sort of argument is not infrequent and we see that the idea of the oral tradition essentially destroys the power of the gospels and even that of Jesus. One then continues as follows. According to the oral tradition we must take this story as a pious confession of Jesus' power, but not as reliable historical writing. The Christians only wanted to express their faith as to how powerful they believed Jesus was, but not that he ac-

tually did this healing miracle. This jargon is not infrequent among modern exegetes, who base their suppositions on the theory of the oral tradition. Of course not every advocate of the oral tradition will go this far in explaining the Bible, but on the other hand we must not close our eyes to the faculty of the oral tradition to totally disintegrate the biblical records. As water flows into every hole, the theory of the oral tradition is able to fill any ignorance in Christian thinking in the same manner. For that reason we have the right to ask of modern theology, that it present conclusive evidence in favor of the so called oral tradition preceding the gospels. But it does not exist. The oral transmission preceding the gospels is a collective misunderstanding, and thus each theological result based on it is condemned to disappear.²⁴²

7.5 The Gerasene demoniacs

A storm on the sea of Galilee brought Jesus and his disciples to a place at which they had not planned to arrive. Once ashore, they were confronted with frightful screaming.

The unclean spirits want to reign over people, and they don't like intruders in their area of influence, who want to thwart their plans. However God wants people to be free, to be masters of their own lives, and he likes to help them to be. These ill people were torn apart when Jesus entered their region: there were

242 There exists a mass of exegetical notions in favor of the so called oral transmission preceding the gospels, but conclusive argumentation is something else and is lacking. Libraries have been filled during the last century with studies about, or based on, the so called Form Criticism and Redaction Criticism, respected fields of scientific research into the oral transmission preceding the gospels. However nobody can deny that apart from Luke 1:1-2 there is no critical proof that favors Form History and Redaction History with regard to the gospels; and in this book we have shown that neither can Luke 1:1-2 be seen as conclusive evidence for it anymore.

Matthew 8:28-30

1a

28 And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way.

29 And behold, they cried out [saying], “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?”
30 Now a herd of many swine was feeding at some distance from them.

Mark 5:6-11

1b

6 And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped him;
7 and crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.”
8 For he had said to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”

11b

9 And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”
He replied, “My name is Legion; for we are many.”
10 And he begged him eagerly not to send them out of the country.
11 Now a great herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside;

Luke 8:28-32

1c

28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me.”
29 For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.)

11a

30 Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion”; for many demons had entered him.
31 And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.
32 Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside;

the strange powers, who wanted them to stand their ground; on the other hand there was Jesus who offered liberation from the harmful powers which they could neither understand nor master. By a struggle, the liberation came; these men could win only as Jesus interfered, and became their helper.

It is an old question as to whether one or two demoniacs were healed. Matthew's description makes mention of two, while Mark's and Luke's gospels have only one. It is not difficult to guess what the explanation of the oral tradition is here. One started to honor Jesus' power more and more, and the result of it in the oral transmission was, of course, 'exaggeration'. After a period of time the one demoniac had grown to two demoniacs, which doubled Jesus' power. From our point of view we have to deal with *speaker reduction*. That means that the only person mentioned is one whose words are reported and who clearly speaks for himself, which is to be seen in the singular form (instead of the plural). How many people may accompany him does not matter; only he is in the picture. E.g. Mark 5:7 'What have you to do with me ...' One of the demoniacs ran to Jesus and reached him before the other one. From that moment on, he is speaking for himself, while at the beginning of the story two demoniacs came out of the tombs while they were screaming together: 'What have you to do with us, ...' (Matthew 8:29). There are many more examples of this phenomenon in the gospels and it is clear that 'exaggeration' can be ruled out in all these cases according to the documentation theory.

It is striking that the teaching reports of Matthew often show the same structure. They start with a short description of the beginning of the event, followed as quickly as possible by Jesus' word of power that changes the whole situation. What happened in between seems to be irrelevant, and outside the scope of interest. It was certainly the primary teaching aspect of Matthew's records to show Jesus' Messiah-ship and his majesty by relating his power above all other powers. We recognize the same method of reporting in the story of 'The cure of the centurion's servant' as we have discussed, and in 'The resurrection of Jairus daughter' (see further).

When Jesus and his disciples came ashore, they faced two screaming demons. One of them ran in front the other one and arrived at Jesus first. He fell on the ground and we have two of his sayings. The introductions are twofold in Mark (crying out ..., he said ...), as well as in Luke (cried out ... and said ...). Which of them was first, is not clear, but it does not seem to be important to answer this question.

Then Jesus asked the name of the man. He asked it twice; the first time as reported in Luke, the second one as in Mark, because of the 'And-sentence' of Mark (And Jesus asked him ...) which shows an interval of time during which the first question was dealt with. That the question was asked twice is also seen through the various answers the man gave. After Jesus' first question (Luke: What is your name?) an 'And-sentence' follows (And he said: 'Legion'.); it seems that the man did not immediately want to answer. Jesus was probably surprised, as he asked him a second time: 'What is your name?' The Greek in the second question has a different word order, which may show surprise: 'What is the name of you?' or: 'What name do you have?' The man also gave an explanation of this name: '... for we are many'. He is speaking as a representative of the spirits and he considered himself one of them. For that reason we read in Mark: 'And *he* begged him eagerly not to send them out of the country', while in Luke: 'And *they* begged him ...' (Rule 3).

The man felt that the demons were anxious and speaking for them he started to beg Jesus in favor of them. The words he spoke, we find in Matthew: 'If you cast us out, ...'; and Mark: 'Send us to the swine, ...!' The Greek has two-fold introductions in both cases (begged ... saying ...), as two different phrases were used. The expression in Matthew: 'If you cast ...', gives the impression that this was the first saying of the two (IIIa). In Mark the 'If ...', has disappeared completely (IIIb). Then the Lord permitted them to enter into the swine. Strangely enough, it looks very much like Jesus communicated with the evil spirits, (through the man), and that he accepted their request to enter into the swine. Better, in my opinion, is to assume that Jesus communicated with

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the man, who spoke for the spirits (Rule 3).

Matthew 8:31-32

IIIa

31 {And} the demons begged him [saying], "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine."

32 And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and perished in the waters.

Mark 5:12-13

IIIb

12 and they begged him [saying], "Send us to the swine, let us enter them."

13 [And] So he gave them leave. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea.

Luke 8:32-33

III

32 ... and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave.

33 Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

After the healing of the two demoniacs and the dying of the swine, the drama became complete. The evil spirits submitted to Jesus, but the people did not. The local population forbade Jesus to enter the region. Jesus drove off the spirits; the people drove off Jesus, and he obeyed them. And that was it? No, Mark and Luke go on telling that the man who had spoken for the spirits, started to speak for God all over the country, what He had done for him in His grace. Mark 5:20 'And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decap'olis how much Jesus had done for him; and all men marvelled.' The apostle Paul says: 'But the word of God is not fettered.'²⁴³ Fortunately, this is still the case.

243. 2 Tim. 2:9.

7.6 *Jairus' daughter raised to life*

The well-known story of Jairus who came to Jesus for the healing of his daughter is told in the three synoptic gospels. Jairus was the ruler of the synagogue of Capernaum. He had probably seen how Jesus had healed a possessed man in his synagogue on a Sabbath much earlier.²⁴⁴ The screaming man had been forced by Jesus to be silent and the evil spirit had left the man. Even if Jairus had not attended that synagogical service, he had certainly been informed in full about this occurrence. Never had anything like that happened in his synagogue. And of course he must have heard that Jesus healed many people that same Sabbath, after sunset. It seems reasonable that he was also acquainted with the cure of the slave of the centurion who had helped to build his synagogue.

However, Jairus' also knew about the mixed reactions to Jesus' deeds. Division of opinion had resulted from Jesus' appearance in Capernaum. Before he cured a lame man, Jesus had forgiven his sins; to the great scandal of the party of the Pharisees.²⁴⁵ And of course as a ruler of the synagogue, Jairus had surely noticed that a delegation from Jerusalem had come to the city to inquire as to Jesus' teachings, and it had resulted in a negative judgement.²⁴⁶ Jairus knew the ins and outs of all these things. But none of that could change Jairus' positive first experience with Jesus, which was put into words by the people in the synagogue: 'What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him!'

Maybe because of the bad publicity around Jesus, Jairus did not have the courage to go to Jesus for healing earlier. But when he saw the death mask²⁴⁷

244. Mark 1:23-25, Luke 4:33-35.

245. Mark 2:1-12.

246. Mark 3:22.

247. The death mask is a deathly expression on the face of someone who is terminal ill. The message of it is, that the end is about to come.

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on the face of his child, he understood that her illness was really serious. His child was about to die. At that moment he knew that there was no time to lose. His love for his child was stronger than his fear of the disapproval of his fellow citizens. He arose and went to Jesus. Once he made his decision, nobody could stop him.

Matthew 9:18-19

18 While he was thus speaking to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."
19 And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples.

Mark 5:22-24

22 [And] Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and seeing him, he fell at his feet,
23 and besought him, saying, point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live."
24 And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him.

Luke 8:41-42

41 And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue; and falling at Jesus' feet he besought him to come to his house,
42 for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As he went, the people pressed round him.

Most translations say that according to Matthew the girl had already died when Jairus met Jesus, but strangely enough, the same translations (in Mark and Luke) also say that the girl was not already dead at that point. That is quite strange. However it is easy to understand when we realize that we are reading the record of that very moment.

Jairus' first words are to be found in Matthew, because he knelt at that moment (9:18). The Greek here has a so-called Aorist which only gives the action of the verb (to die) without saying anything about the result of it. And so this implies that only the beginning of the action is meant, and that should be the translation

here. When we translate: ‘she died’, we can only think of the result: she is dead. But in Greek it is also a reasonable possibility to translate it as: she was/is dying (*ingressivus*). Jairus speaks about the last picture, the death mask of his daughter, that he had in his mind. After Jairus’ request, Matthew has an ‘And-sentence’, which means that something more happened before Jesus rose and followed Jairus. Indeed, more was said and some of it has been preserved in Mark; but not all (5:23, twofold introduction: ‘and besought him, saying’: ...). Luke makes the picture complete, mentioning that Jairus also told Jesus that the girl was about twelve years old (8:42).

After Jairus’ request, as described in Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus followed Jairus to his house. However a fateful message reached them.

Mark 5:35-36

35 While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler’s house some who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?”

36 But ignoring what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.”

Luke 8:49-50

49 While he was still speaking, a man from the ruler’s house came and said, “Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more.”

50 But Jesus on hearing this answered him, “Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well.”

It was not only one messenger that came up to Jairus to tell him that his daughter had died; there were at least two messengers, as we may learn from Mark 5:35 (some who said). Luke uses speaker reduction, as he has ‘a man ... came and said’. Maybe both had spoken to Jairus, as we have two differing sayings: (Mark) ‘Why trouble the Teacher any further?’, and: ‘... do not trouble the Teacher any more.’ The answers of Jesus also differ a little bit. The explanation is that Jesus reacted to each saying of the messengers, one after the other. Jesus encouraged Jairus to keep faith and certainly he was as in a dream as he went to his house.

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Matthew 9:25-26

25 But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.

26 And the report of this went through all that district.

Mark 5:37-43

37 And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James.

38 [And] When they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, he saw a tumult, and people weeping and wailing loudly.

39 And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping."

40 And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was.

41 [And] Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi"; which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."

42 And immediately the girl got up and walked (she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.

43 And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, ...

Luke 8:51-55

51 {And} when he came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child.

52 {And} all were weeping and bewailing her; but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping."

53 And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

54 But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise."

55 And her spirit returned, and she got up at once; ...

When Jairus and Jesus arrived at the house, firstly the weepers had to be driven away. Their reaction of laughing and unbelief was not completely wrong, as they had not had the experiences of Jairus, who had been brought into his position of faith step by step, by Jesus' words: 'Do not fear, only believe!' Faith sees reality from a different point of view, which is sometimes strange to bystanders. At any rate, the disparaging reaction of the weepers made clear later on, that there could not be any mistake about the fact that the girl was indeed dead. Their reaction may also serve as an illustration for the instruction of Jesus to the elders after the resurrection of the child to not speak to others about the event; they would certainly have met unbelief and it seems that Jesus wanted to protect the elders from it. When Jesus, who had performed so many miracles, was treated with total lack of comprehension by the weepers, how much more lack of understanding would they have met as ordinary people. A miracle is not primarily meant to teach others, but to bring praise to God and to be preserved in our heart. Jesus gave his resurrection command two times: (Mark) by speaking with authority (in Hebrew) the words 'Talitha cum(i)' and (Luke) by calling 'Child arise ...'. In the last case something more was said.

The only purpose of Matthew's record was to teach of Jesus as the Messiah: '... he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.' Can it be any more concise? It sounds like Julius Caesar: I came, I saw, I conquered! (Veni, vidi, vici!) Maybe the writer of Matthew's record kept Jesus' instruction to be silent about the event in mind, and avoided details, even in the teaching record, for that reason.

Mark has a more extensive record than Luke, and it has the typical Markian style. Mark and Luke give the same information, but Mark has 11 'And-sentences' versus Luke's 5. Mark has repetitions throughout the entire story (in contrast with Luke): 'ruler of the synagogue', 'tumult', 'James'. Mark has expressions with added emphasis: besought him (Greek, urgently), great crowd, wailing loudly, strictly charged. These features suggest that we are confronted in Mark with the first impressions of the writers. The public record of Luke is shorter; however it

doesn't leave out relevant information in accordance with Mark. The public record was not permitted to bring out, because of Jesus word: 'that no one should know this, ...' Of course everyone spoke about the occurrence, as Matthew remarked (26), however nobody came to know exactly what had happened in the house.

7.7 James' and John's request

While Jesus prepared himself for his passion in Jerusalem, he was confronted with the career ambitions of his disciples. And career is also important for the family. So when James and John came up to Jesus to speak with him about their personal future desires, their mother was there to take care that everything went as she desired. The question was: Who were the ones to be sitting at the immediate right and left of Jesus in his kingdom? Those were nice places for her sons James and John, she thought.

Matthew 20:20-24

I

20 Then the mother of the sons of Zeb'edee came up to him, with her sons, ...

III

... and kneeling before him she asked him for something.

21 {And} he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."

Mark 10:35-41

II

35 And James and John, the sons of Zeb'edee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."

36 {And} he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?"

37 {And} they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."

38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the

22 But Jesus answered [answering said],
 “You do not know what you are asking.
 Are you able to drink the cup that I am to
 drink?” They said to him, “We are able.”
 23 He said to them, “You will drink my
 cup, but to sit at my right hand and at
 my left is not mine to grant, but it is for
 those for whom it has been prepared by
 my Father.”

IVb

24 And when the ten heard it, they were
 indignant at the two brothers.

baptism with which I am baptized?”
 39 {And} they said to him, “We are able.”
 {And} Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink
 you will drink; and with the baptism with
 which I am baptized, you will be baptized;
 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is
 not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom
 it has been prepared.”

IVa

41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be
 indignant at James and John.

In Mark’s record, the attendance of the mother is not mentioned, as she has no speaking role (speaker reduction), while in Matthew the mother is dominantly attendant. The brothers start posing the question and later on their mother repeats it. We can conclude this from the prudent opening by the two brothers (Mark 10:35): ‘Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.’ This is very much in contrast with the opening of the mother (Matthew 20:21): ‘Command that ...’

Mark has several sentences starting with ‘And’ in the RSV, however in the Greek there is only one real ‘And-sentence’ (41) and there the story - as Matthew reports - continues with the question of the mother: ‘... and kneeling before him she asked him for something.’ The behaviour of the mother is really strange. She had already heard the reply to her sons and now she is trying to force Jesus in her own direction. She had seen how often people in great despair came to the Lord and how they knelt before him. She seemed to not have understood that kneeling before Jesus was an expression of faith and obedience, and not a tool of pressure as she used it while she posed her question. But it didn’t help. In the first

place, God is not interested in our knees, but in our heart. And He is certainly willing to react to it mercifully and abundantly, but in his sovereignty.

The other disciples blamed James and John for their selfishness, and implicitly they also blamed their mother. The attitude of the other disciples shows remarkably enough that they also had aspirations to the high places left and right of Jesus in the Kingdom. Strangely enough, Jesus was without reproach; he did not blame the two, the mother, nor the other disciples. Obviously he is not against people who think about their future. On the other hand he took the opportunity to teach them a principle of the Kingdom: He who wants to climb, has to descend.²⁴⁸ Again, such an interesting - and at the same time confronting - rule in Christianity, of which there are so many.

The writers of Jesus, who had to distribute the materials to various reports, followed nearly the same method as in the reporting of 'Cure of the centurion's servant'. After collecting their material they made a sober division into two parts. Firstly they prepared a teaching record and for that they chose Jesus' final answer to the mother for the outcome. It is not without reason that no public record is available in Luke's gospel. The subject was certainly not an issue for the public, but for the inner circle of the twelve. Therefore only a teaching record (Matthew) and a remnant record (Mark) have been made by Jesus' writers.

7.8 Eschatological discourses

During Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem he taught his disciples about the future to come. He had in mind his own departure from this world, of which they were unaware. In fact, we possess three discourses of Jesus about eschatological things. The supposition (oral tradition) that we are dealing with three versions of one single discourse, does not contribute to the transparency of the message. Also the suggestion that the three discourses are compilations made by the gospel writers

248. Matthew 20:27, Mark 10:44.

out of scattered sayings of Jesus about the subject, obscures their clear message. We will see that much clarity can be brought to eschatological doctrines by reading these discourses analytically and in the following discussion we will give an impetus for that.

Matthew 24:1-4

III

1 [And] Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.

2 But he answered [answering said to] them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down.”

3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?”

4 And Jesus answered [answering said to] them, “Take heed that no one leads you astray...”

Mark 13:1-5

II

1 And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!”

2 And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down.”

3 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

4 “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are all to be accomplished?”

5 {And} Jesus began to say to them, “Take heed that no one leads you astray...”

Luke 21:5-8

I

5 And as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said,

6 “As for these things which you see, the days will come when there shall not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

7 {And} they asked [asking said to] him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign when this is about to take place?”

8 {And} he said, “Take heed that you are not led astray;...”

The first of the three discourses was that reported by Luke. Jesus and his disciples were in the temple and previous to this teaching they had discussed the value of the gifts which people put into the treasury, in particular the high value according to Jesus of two copper coins of a poor widow. (21:1-4) It is quite logical that the disciples looked at the rich ornaments of the temple in a different way from that moment on, and Jesus himself started a new discussion when he heard them speaking about it: 'As for these things which you see, the days will come when there shall not be left here one stone upon another ...'. At the end of Luke's discourse he remarks that Jesus was teaching in the temple every day, and that the people came to him in the temple to hear him. (21: 37-38) So we certainly have a public report in the gospel of Luke about the issue of 'the end of the world'.

Many Jews supposed that the temple would stand for ages until the end of the world.²⁴⁹ From this concept of history, his disciples asked him (Luke 21:6): 'Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign ...?' They meant: 'Teacher, when will be the end of the world, and what will be the sign ...?' So Jesus started his oration as given by Luke with an overview of history up until the end of the world (8-19); then he turned back to the issue 'the destruction of the temple', which would come much earlier than the end of the world. With this tragic occurrence, he connects an overview of history of the Jewish people from that moment on until the end (20-24). '... and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.' (21:24) With this point of view he thwarted all the expectations of his listeners about the future; certainly many hearers were flabbergasted and no doubt his disciples would ask him more about this, when they were alone with him without the crowd (see: Matthew

249. As many Jews believed that the temple would stand until the end of the world, Jesus could say without protest among his hearers: 'For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.' (Matthew 5:18) Everyone believed that the holy scrolls of Israel would remain safe in the temple until the very end of human history.

and Mark). At the last, he combines the two lines of history with a description of the circumstances connected with his Great Return (25-28), and the discourse is closed with a few parables and warnings (29-36): 'But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of man.'

After Luke's eschatological discourse of Jesus, he left the temple. On the way to the Mount of Olives, his disciples wanted to return to the subject and one of them said (see Mark): 'Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!' He did not refer to the ornaments as one of them had in the temple, with the result being a shocking oration. No, as a pious Jew nobody might blame him drawing Jesus' attention to the imposing building of the temple, the house of the Lord. (Mark 13:1) Jesus' answer to him was like the former one in the temple, however: '...There will not be left here one stone upon another, ...' In Matthew we see that others also started pointing to the temple, and Jesus had to repeat his answer to them (Matthew 24:2). Matthew has here a twofold introduction that means that Jesus' reply has been presented partly. Again the disciples don't understand or don't dare to ask further.

Having crossed the river Kedron, the four close disciples, Peter, James, John and Andrew, dared to ask again: '... when will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are all to be accomplished?' (Mark 13:3-4) At this point, Jesus gives them his teaching in private. This oration of Mark has the same structure as that of Luke and it is of the same length: first, an overview of the future of those who follow Jesus, the Christians (5-13); then he goes again to the future destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans, followed by the history of tribulation of the Jewish people. Now Jesus warns his four intimate disciples, and he gives them strict guidelines how to conduct themselves at that time of destruction (14-23). He even speaks through the writers James and John to his future followers, who will read this oration with the words: Let the reader understand!: '...But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be - *let the reader understand* - then let those who are in Judea flee to the

mountains; ...' (Mark 13:14) And finally, the third part of this oration deals with the Return of Jesus, (13:24-27), connected with parables and warnings just like those found in Luke.

When Jesus had ended this discourse to his closest disciples, the others arrived and they had decided to also ask the question of the When and What (will be the sign). Then for the third time Jesus taught the same things, but to the twelve as they were all present now. In Matthew Jesus also spoke directly to his future readers: Let the reader understand!²⁵⁰ This oration is much longer than those of Mark and Luke, as many parables and examples are connected at the end in chapter 25: the wise and the foolish virgins, the parable of the talents, and the Last Judgement.

It is obvious that the writers took the longest discourse for the teaching record which was used by Matthew in his gospel. We have already seen that the writers used the discourse to the crowd in the temple for the public record. So the remnant record that was left was the oration to the intimate disciples Peter, James, John and Andrew.

250. In our concept of accurate reporting of somebody's words it is not acceptable to suppose that at a later stage a gospel writer incorporated his own ideas and words into the direct speech he had to present. E.g. Matthew 24:15 'Let the reader understand!' is part of Jesus' own words. (See also Mark 13:14.) Only in the narrative parts we sometimes find a remark from the gospel writer which he makes clear as his work, e.g. '... who became a traitor'. (Luke 6:16) Of course this remark was not part of the record Luke copied. Other 'reader indications' are: Mark 7:2 that is unwashed; Mark 7:3-4 For the Pharisees ... of bronze.; Matthew 27:46 that is 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' etc.

7.9 Conclusions

When we look back to the method of analytical reading (a.r.), we may conclude that the benefits of this method are relevant enough:

- 1) With the use of the introductions it is possible to study the course of direct speech in the gospels carefully.
- 2) Conjunctions at the beginning of a sentence often give signals which help define the course of events.
- 3) Comparison of identical gospel stories makes it possible to give all sayings a proper place in their context.
- 4) Details in the narrative parts, as well as in the spoken word portions, are never accidents of the oral tradition, but specific observations of the original writers.
- 5) Analytical reading (a.r.) certainly does increase the transparency/understanding of the texts and the dynamics of the contents, and by that the impact of the gospels.

8

DOCUMENTATION EXEGESIS

‘...it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,...’
Luke 1:3

In this chapter we will present a new way of exegesis of the gospels based on the documentation theory and the analytical principles as presented in the previous chapter. We have seen that it is often necessary in analytical reading to compare gospel texts. In the given examples it was always clear that the compared passages related to the same event. The two messages of the ‘Healing of the centurion’s servant’ certainly described the same event. This is also true of the three stories of the ‘Resurrection of Jairus’ daughter’. However, in some cases it is not so easy to establish the fact that similar stories relate to the same event.

8.1 Orderly! But what order?

There are many stories in the gospels that are similar with regard to contents, style and language, but which may certainly be shown to be related to different events for several reasons, especially the aspect of time. Early in the beginning of

Jesus' ministry we read about his 'Cleansing of the temple'²⁵¹. Much later, shortly before his Passion, he again cleansed the market of the temple.²⁵² Many commentators take it as a starting point for their explanation that the same event is at issue and that the evangelists just put their descriptions of it at different places in their books. According to them, John would put it in the beginning of his book to instantly show Jesus' attitude toward the temple and the priesthood. The other evangelists, putting this episode before the Passion of Jesus, would underline the growing conflict between Jesus and the priests, according to these exegetes. Nevertheless there are also many scholars who hold that not one but several similar events were described in these cases; that would mean that Jesus cleansed the temple market more than once. The position of these stories in the gospels, and the meaning of this placement, will be discussed in this chapter. Moving forward we will see the relevance of this subject to our goal: documentation exegesis.

Four times we are confronted in the gospels with the accusation that Jesus was able to cast out demons through Be'elzebul, the prince of demons. Three times Jesus parried the accusation with the remark that a kingdom or house divided against itself cannot stand. Matthew puts it shortly after the 'Mission of the twelve', while Mark has it much earlier; before the Mission. Luke has it much later than Matthew; where Jesus is then on his last journey to Jerusalem.²⁵³ Again, many suppose that only one event lies at the root of the descriptions and that the oral tradition caused the different placements in the gospels. However, the differences in the direct speeches drives us to the conclusion that Jesus had to defend himself against this accusation many times. The same discussion is possible regarding the 'Parable of the sower'. We possess three versions of this parable with Jesus' explanation. In Matthew it is after the 'Storm on the sea', and in Luke and Mark it is before the storm. Did the oral tradition cause these dif-

251. John 2:14-22.

252. Matthew 21:12-13, Luke 19:45-46 and Mark 11:15-17.

253. Matthew 12:22-30, Mark 3:22-27 and Luke 11:14-23.

ferent positions in the gospels or did Jesus tell this parable several times? Indeed with regard to the analysis rules we have to decide that Jesus told this parable at least three times.²⁵⁴

In Bible exegesis which has oral tradition as a starting point, it is standard procedure to take a single event as the basis for similar stories and assume that the evangelists gave the stories a placement that they liked (or: that would be in accordance with their theology). It must be said that the opinion of this working method seems to be generally accepted in theology. However, there are two weighty objections against it. In the first place there are often details in similar stories that are not in accord with one another. That would mean that these details are contradicting each other frequently, and because of that, many theologians take that as an argument that the gospels (the Bible) are liable to have error. The second objection against the habit of deducing similar gospel stories consequently from one and the same event, is that the gospels create the impression of presenting a continuous story of what happened: i.e., that the temporal sequence of the events was the same as the order in which they are described. It is rather brutish to brush aside this general impression unblushingly with the remark that the evangelists arranged their materials according subject or theme. This argument has such a scientific sound that it appears it must be true in advance, without any verification. However, the lack of any sound basis defines this opinion as no more than a pretentious supposition.²⁵⁵

Employing the rules of analytical reading (a.r.), in most cases it is possible to establish whether stories are derived from one and the same event, or from different events. With the rules for analytical reading it is always possible to examine accurately the direct speeches and the course of an event. Details in a description are in fact the observations of the speedy writers and stenographers which are de-

254. Matthew 13:1-9, Mark 4:1-9 and Luke 8:4-8.

255. In some cases there are indications that within the historical order the evangelists combined stories with related subjects by skipping elements and using an 'And-sentence'.

cisive for the uniqueness of an occurrence. It is realistic to accept a lot of similar events in Jesus' ministry. According to the documentation theory there are many sound and practical explanations for this phenomenon.

According to the RSV Bible, Luke says in his prologue that he wrote 'an orderly account' (Luke 1:3). The Greek for 'orderly' is *kat'hexès* with the standard meaning being: in sequence, in order.²⁵⁶ Older versions, such as the KJV and the ASV translate it as: 'to write unto thee in order ...'. Most modern translations have 'to write an orderly account for you ...' (RSV, AMP, ESV, NIV). Neither in the older versions, nor in the modern ones is it clear what is meant by 'order' or 'orderly'. Does it mean: an arrangement according sequence, or: an arrangement according theme or subject? The vague translation of *kat'hexès* (sequence) as 'orderly' is the result of the general theological feeling that a real sequence of occurrences is demonstrably missing in the gospels. But yet, Luke uses the term which means 'to write unto you in sequence ...'. The term *kat'hexès* is certainly not capable of misinterpretation.

Luke says in his prologue that he followed 'the many' in writing his gospel. That means again that he followed the sequence of the occurrences, as the many worked in that manner. They added new stories to former ones and in that way they compiled their narratives. Of course sometimes they may have missed a story, but with an 'And-sentence' they were able to continue their narratives. Luke wrote his gospel in the same way, and so did the other evangelists. In the gospels we are dealing with the temporal sequence of events, unless, of course, a different approach is mentioned, as is true occasionally.

256. Already in the oldest Greek texts of Homeros *hexès* means: in a row. In the time of the New Testament this meaning still remained: *kat'hexès* (W. Bauer, 1971): der Reihe nach [consecutively], eins nach dem anderen [one after another], nacheinander [after each other], in richtiger Reihenfolge [in right sequence]; (Thayers, 1991): one after another, successively, in order. In modern Greek, the term *kai houtoo kat'hexès* does exist, meaning: etcetera, and so on.

8.2 The blind men of Jericho

All three of the synoptic gospels have a narrative telling us that Jesus cured a blind man, or two blind men, in the neighbourhood of Jericho, when he passed through the city on his journey to Jerusalem. It is an interesting example of the question of how many events were involved. Was it one, or were there two or even three occurrences? And did it happen before Jesus entered Jericho, or when he left the city?

Matthew 20:29-34

29 And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him.
30 And behold, two blind men sitting by the roadside, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out [saying], "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"
31 The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent; but they cried out the more [saying], "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"
32 And Jesus stopped and called them, saying, "What do you want me to do for you?"
33 They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened."
34 {And} Jesus in pity

Mark 10:46-52

46 And they came to Jericho; and as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside.
47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"
48 And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"
49 And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; rise,

Luke 18:35-43

35 As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging;
36 {and} hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant.
37 They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."
38 And he cried [saying], "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"
39 And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"
40 [And] Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to him; {and} when he came near, he asked him,

touched their eyes, and immediately they received their sight and followed him.

he is calling you.”
 50 {And} throwing off his mantle he sprang up and came to Jesus.
 51 And Jesus [answering] said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?”
 {And} the blind man said to him, “Master, let me receive my sight.”
 52 And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

41 “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me receive my sight.”
 42 And Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.”
 43 And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

The similarities are so numerous that most exegetes suppose that it was one event. In all three records the following words are used: Jericho, blind, sitting by the roadside, crowd/multitude, heard/hearing, have mercy, son of David, rebuked him/them, to be silent, cried out (all) the more, repeated: son of David, have mercy, Jesus stopped, What do you want me to do for you?, immediately, and received (their) his sight. There are also similarities in wording between two records; e.g. ‘Your faith has made you well.’ (Mark, Luke).

Anyway there are so many similarities, (which are also in the same sequence), that coincidence must be excluded. Exegetes generally conclude that what we have here are three descriptions of one event. There are a few dissimilarities: Matthew has two blind men and the place of action is after Jesus’ visit in Jericho; while Mark and Luke have one blind man, Mark after Jericho and Luke before the city. In spite of the dissimilarities in these stories, orthodox theologians have always felt that the overwhelming majority of similarities

witness in favor of one and the same event.²⁵⁷ In their commentaries none of them explains why just one event is at issue. It either seems self-evident or it is a common prejudice of which nobody knows exactly the origin and of which nobody takes great pains to show the reasonableness of this point of view. Even among orthodox Bible teachers this unsupported reductionism in gospel exegesis always crops up where stories about similar events are under discussion: miracles, healings, teachings, meetings, etcetera.

This misconception is so deeply rooted that the superscription above the Luke passage not infrequently is: Cure of Bartimaeus. That of course does not fit in with the information of Mark, that Bartimaeus was healed after Jericho and who was certainly not the same man mentioned in Luke, who received healing one day earlier, when Jesus entered the city.

Not only in orthodox but also in liberal gospel exegesis, this reductionism of similar stories with details that are not in line with each other is standard procedure. In liberal exegesis one has a clear cut answer to the question: 'Why?' The answer is of course: the oral tradition. By that process many changes entered into the text and details that are not harmonious seem to prove this point of view.

257. M. Henry, 1960, p. 1390: one event, Mark and Luke are focussing on one of the two blind men. A. Clarke, 1824, p. 200: idem. Th. Zahn, 1922, p. 617, n. 1: one event in front of Jericho. A. Schlatter, 1947, p. 353: one event, says nothing about the place of action. S. Greijdanus, 1955, p. 132: one event. W.H. Gispen, 1963, p. 846: one event. F. Rienecker, 1966, p. 435: two events each with one blind man. (The problem is now that Matthew has two blind men who were together.) I.H. Marshall, 1989, p. 691, seems to take one event. G.L. Archer, 1982, p. 332, one healing. D.A. Carson (a.o.), 1994, p. 931, one event (R.T. France).

In the older orthodox exegesis²⁵⁸ one tried to bring these details into accord with one another. For instance the Dutch S. Greijdanus supposed that there was an old Jericho and a new part of the city also named Jericho, so that it was possible to speak of a place in between as 'before Jericho' which could also be indicated as 'after Jericho'. And so he could maintain that only one place was involved.²⁵⁹ G.L. Archer supposed that the blind man started to cry for mercy when Jesus entered Jericho and that Jesus did not listen immediately, but that he cured the man when he left the city one day later.²⁶⁰ Nowadays many orthodox theologians have abandoned these positions as one feels that they are too artificial to be true, with the result that they have now a taboo of contradicting details of which nobody speaks openly. In their commentaries they often stress the similarities and remain silent about the dissimilarities. The more they stress the similarities, the more the irreconcilable details come to the fore. And in doing so, they not infrequently seem to agree with liberal colleagues who hold that many adaptations entered into the gospels in the course of the oral tradition. As a consequence, liberal - and many orthodox - theologians hold that the oral tradition and the gospel writers were responsible for changes in the utterances of Jesus

258. Reductionism is an old usage in orthodox theology, e.g. A. Kuyper said: 'No notarial precision.' And (1909, p. 505): 'When in the four Gospels Jesus, on the same occasion, is made to say words that are different in form and expression, it is impossible that He should have used these four forms at once. The Holy Spirit, however, merely intends to make an impression on the Church which wholly corresponds to what Jesus said.' Many others in the past held this point of view, maybe in different wording. N.B. Stonehouse 1963, p. 110 gives in n. 17: J. Murray, A.A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield, H. Bavinck, L. Berkhof.

259. S. Greijdanus, 1955, p. 132.

260. G.L. Archer, 1982, p. 332.

and his interlocutors in the four gospels.²⁶¹ Liberal theologians like to say that the gospel writers made these changes 'according to their own theologies'; orthodox theologians like to say that changes does not mean changes in meaning, because the Holy Spirit watched over the work of the gospel writers.

The question is: Are orthodox (evangelical) theologians aware of their foundations? How accurate is orthodox gospel exegesis in fact? Also, an orthodox house that is divided, cannot stand. If orthodoxy wants to hold to the infallibility of the Scriptures, one has the obligation to explain that. Is the confession of orthodox theology that the Holy Spirit watched over *the meaning* of the words or that He watched over *the words*? It is not difficult to answer this question with Matthew 25:35 in mind, where Jesus says: 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.' Certainly the Holy Spirit watched over the words. And so a lot of work is still to be done. We have to go back to the basics and to leave reductionism out of gospel exegesis. (Of course 'speaker reduction', as discussed in chapter 7 is not involved here.)

8.3 The blind men of Jericho analytically read

What picture do we receive about 'the blind men of Jericho' when we read the texts analytically? Before we do so, I want to state clearly that none of the ten exegetes earlier mentioned (see previous note) has given an analysis such as the following one.

261. Six of the ten orthodox exegetes (M. Henry, A. Clarke, Th. Zahn, A. Schlatter, S. Greijdanus, W.H. Gispen, F. Rienecker, I.H. Marshall, G.L. Archer, R.T. France) hold that the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-7:29) is a redaction of the Sermon in the Field (Luke 6:20-49). So Matthew enlarged the Sermon in the Field and also he changed it because the wording and expressions of the Sermon of the Mount are in no way copied verbatim from the Sermon in the Field. Two of these exegetes say nothing about the relationship between the two sermons. Two of them correctly state that we have to deal with two different sermons of Jesus (M. Henry, G.L. Archer).

One blind man was cured by Jesus before he entered Jericho. That is clear from the use of the singular in Luke: And *he* cried [saying], ...; *he* cried out all the more; What do *you* (singular) want me to do for *you*? The course of direct speech in Matthew shows that it was indeed two men who wanted to be healed: 'Have mercy on *us* ... (two times); *they* cried out ...; What do *you* (plural) want me to do for *you*?; ... let *our* eyes be opened'. Finally, there is the blind man in Mark, named Bartimaeus, who was cured after Jesus' visit to Jericho and who did not belong to the group of two in Matthew, which we can deduce from the singular forms within the course of direct speech: '*he* began to cry out ...; ... have mercy on *me*! (two times); *he* cried out ...; Call *him*!; What do *you* (singular) want me to do for *you*?; let *me* receive *my* sight.; Go *your* (singular) way; *your* faith has made *you* well'.

The conclusion must be: there were four cured men and three events of healing. We don't need to be frightened of the number of healings. Didn't John say at the end of his gospel that Jesus did many other things and that the world could not contain the books if they all had been written down?²⁶² Of course John is using a figure of speech here of rhetorical exaggeration. He has the intention to say that Jesus did very much more than the gospels contain about him. Four healings in Jericho were not too much for him who was a specialist in healing. Before Jericho there was one event of healing according the report of Luke. After Jericho there were two events; Bartimaeus was healed after Jericho according to Mark and two men were healed together after Jericho according to Matthew.

Jericho was situated at the caravan route through the valley of the river Jordan into the direction of Jerusalem. Jesus followed that route, as did many others, to be in time for the celebration of the yearly Pasha in Jerusalem. He knew that it was to be his last Pasha. Several times he had spoken to his disciples about his passion, his crucifixion and resurrection. However they could not grasp the reality of it. To them it seemed to be talk from a different planet.

262. John 21:25.

Jericho belonged to the southern region of Judaea. Many people who were very serious about their religion lived in this area. Many of them expected the Messiah and many of them were baptized by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:5-6). However there also existed a rigid religious leadership which, in an early stage of Jesus' ministry, had decided that he could not be the promised one. According to them it was an impossibility that the Messiah would come from Galilee. Moreover with his healings on the Sabbath, he continually transgressed the divine law. And last but not least, by forgiving people which he had never seen before, he acted as more than man; as God. This was unacceptable for the religious leadership, which had an excessively strong influence on societal life.

The followers of Jesus in Judaea were oppressed. It was not permitted for them to speak openly of him as the Messiah. Offence of this rule meant that one was to be put out of the synagogue.²⁶³ In a practical sense, that meant that one had lost Jewish status even in public life. An unreal and impossible situation was the result: nobody dared to speak up about Jesus, as there was no freedom of speech. And in the meantime, there was an unstoppable stream of people from Galilee who came to the temple to bring their thank offerings for the healings they had received through Jesus.

It is not difficult to guess where the blind man, sitting by the roadside in front of Jericho, had received his information about Jesus and his healing potential. The lively stories he had heard from the people from Galilee who passed him had given him the clear image that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel. He had the time to think and rethink about everything that reached his ears. And when Jesus approached the city and the blind man heard that it was Jesus, he started to cry for help: 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' with the result that everybody was shocked. 'Jesus, Son of David'? That was 'Jesus, Messiah'! Immediately the people tried to make him silent - of course for his own good. If he with his handicap were to be banned from the synagogue, his life wouldn't be worth living, without

263. John 9:22, 12:42.

any possibility of help from the community. And so with the best of intentions, they fell upon him to impose silence on him. The blind man however hated the meddlesomeness of the people. He had learned to look after his own interests and he had also learned to ask for attention from the people on the road. His eyes were blind, but there was nothing wrong with his vocal cords. He cried louder; Jesus heard him and a miracle happened.

That night while Jesus stayed with Zacchaeus, the healed man walked through the streets of Jericho. He had no problem finding his way; he knew every stone on the road by heart. He could not sleep; he had no time to close his eyes now. Even in the darkness he enjoyed the use of his eyes. Everything looked splendid even at night: the dark sky with stars and clouds, the dark shadows of the trees, the shining lights in the houses. No, he did not want to sleep now. And so he arrived at his friends, his blind friends, and he started to tell them circumstantially what had happened a few hours ago. And then they made a plan. The next day when Jesus left the city, they would sit by the roadside to do the same thing. None of the men could probably sleep that night due to excitement.

The blind friends had listened very well. The next day they used almost precisely the same words as their informant had used the day before. And when the people compassionately tried to make them silent, they cried louder and louder, determined as they were to be heard through Jesus. He felt the pressure that the people put on the men. What a comfort for them, when he prepared them for their healing, by posing the same question as the day before: 'What do you want me to do for you?' It is too easy to say that he 'played the game'. The situation was too threatening. Jesus revealed himself to these men first as their comforter and then as their healer.

In this approach to the blind men of Jericho story, all the details have their proper places. There exists a natural explanation for the more than seventeen similarities in the three gospel records. When the stories are taken as reports of one event, then many interesting details are underexposed because they are contradictory to this view; the result is an intellectual but unconvincing ex-

position which ultimately does not explain anything. But when we accept the details as true observations, and the stories as reports of different events, then the dynamic of the occurrences spring forth. We might speak of the documentation dynamic, because of the consequent view that gospel exegesis relies on copied documents, (copied by the gospel writers). Again and again when the rules for analytical reading are taken seriously, we will discover different, multiple events instead of one single event. Often the details of the events are interrelated, as in the case of the blind men of Jericho: the details belong to a living pattern: the living context. It is the task of the exegete to give a proper explanation for these details, to expose that living context. The rules for analytical reading make this task doable.

8.4 Look-alikes in the gospels

There is an inconceivable number of parallel stories in the gospels. In many cases they are similar descriptions of one event. But we have to realize that also in many cases they are look-alikes, as in the case of the blind men of Jericho. Documentation exegesis is applicable in all cases, as the rules for analytical reading are always necessary. In the following overview we will present the most important cases of look-alikes in the gospels; from Jesus' baptism onward until the conspiracy to put Jesus to death.

The overview of look-alikes is based on anchor points (bold). When the features of similar descriptions have only points of contact and we can be reasonably sure that a single event is meant, we have to deal with an anchor point. This working method makes it possible to define many events as dissimilar when they stand before or after an anchor point which functions as an arbiter. Of course the rules for analytical reading are helpful to indicate anchors. Through the accurate observations of the speedy and steno writers, it is possible to evaluate almost all occurrences and direct speeches in the gospels as either look-alikes or anchor points.

DOCUMENTATION EXEGESIS

Numberings, Titles	Parallels	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Baptism of Jesus		3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-22	
Temptations* 1. Cleansing of the Temple I	72, 74	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	2:14-22
Calling first disciples		4:18-22	1:16-20		
Demoniac in synagogue 2. Simon's mother-in-law I 3. Cures in the evening I 4. Cure of a leper I* 5. Cure of a paralytic I 6. Cure of a paralytic II	21 22 9 6, 24 5, 24		1:21-28 1:29-31 1:32-34 1:40-45 2:1-12	4:33-37 4:38-39 4:40-41 5:12-16 5:17-26	
Call of Levi I 7. Picking corn on sabbath I 8. Cure of a withered hand I* 9. Cure of a leper II	25 30 31 4		2:13-17 2:23-28 3:1-6	5:27-32 6:1-5 6:6-11	
The centurion's servant 10. The Baptist's question I 11. About John the Baptist I 12. Jesus and Beelzebul I 13. Blasphemy against the Spirit I 14. Parable the sower I 15. Why parables? I 16. Explanation parable sower I	27 28 26, 32, 57 33, 62 17, 36 18, 37 19, 38	8:5-13	3:22-27 3:28-38	7:1-10 7:18-23 7:24-35 8:4-8 8:9-10 8:11-15	
Mother and brothers I* 17. Parable the sower II 18. Why parables? II 19. Explanation parable sower II 20. Parable mustard seed I 21. Simon's mother-in-law II 22. Cures in the evening II 23. Foxes have holes I	35 14, 36 15, 37 16, 38 39, 61 2 3 55		3:31-35 4:1-9 4:10-12 4:13-20 4:30-32 8:14-15 8:16-17 8:18-22	8:19-21	
Calming a storm 24. Cure of a paralytic III 25. Call of Levi II	5, 6 after 6	8:23-27 9:1-8 9:9-13	4:35-41	8:22-25	

JESUS' STENOGRAPHERS

Numberings, Titles	Parallels	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jairus' daughter 26. Jesus and Beelzebul II	12, 32, 57	9:18-26 9:32-34	5:21-43	8:40-56	
Mission of the twelve 27. The Baptist's question II 28. About John the Baptist II 29. Lamenting the lake-towns I 30. Picking corn on sabbath II 31. Cure of a withered hand II 32. Jesus and Beelzebul III 33. Blasphemy against the Spirit II 34. Sign of Jonah I 35. Mother and brothers II 36. Parable the sower III 37. Why parables? III 38. Explanation parable sower III 39. Parable mustard seed II 40. Parable of the yeast I	10 11 56 7 8 12, 26, 57 13, 60 43, 58 na 16 14, 17 15, 18 16, 19 20, 61 62	10:1-42 11:2-6 11:7-19 11:20-24 12:1-8 12:9-14 12:22-30 12:31-37 12:38-42 12:46-50 13:1-9 13:10-17 13:18-23 13:31-32 13:33	6:7-13	9:1-6	
Death of John the Baptist		14:3-12	6:17-29		
Return apostles			6:30-31	9:10	
Loaves for 5000		14:13-21	6:32-44	9:10-17	6:1-15
Walking on water 41. Mother and child (Syrophoen.) I 42. Mother and child (Canaan.) II	42 41	14:22-33 15:21-28	6:45-52 7:24-30		6:16-21
Loaves for 4000 43. Sign of Jonah II 44. Yeast of Pharisees I	34, 58 59	15:32-39 16:1-4 16:5-12	8:1-10 8:11-12 8:13-21		
Peter's confession 45. Passion prophecy I* 46. Following Christ I	51, 68 47, 48	16:13-20 16:21	8:27-30 8:31-32	9:18-21 9:22 9:23-27	
Peter rebuked 47. Following Christ II 48. Following Christ III	46, 48 46, 47	16:22-23 16:24-28	8:32-33 8:34-9:1		

DOCUMENTATION EXEGESIS

Numberings, Titles	Parallels	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Transfiguration 49. Return of Elijah I 50. Return of Elijah II	50 49	17:1-4 17:10-13	9:2-10 9:11-13	9:28-36	
Lunatic cured 51. Passion prophecy II*	45, 68	17:14-21 17:22-23	9:14-29 9:30-32	9:37-43 9:43-45	
The first place*		18:1-5	9:33-37	9:46-48	
The name of Jesus 52. Warning to tempt I 53. Warning to tempt II 54. The lost sheep I	53 52 64	18:6-9 18:10-14	9:38-41 9:42-50	9:49-50	
Journey to Judaea 55. Foxes have holes II 56. Lamenting the lake-towns II 57. Jesus and Beelzebul IV 58. Sign of Jonah III 59. Yeast of Pharisees II 60. Blasphemy against the Spirit III 61. Parable mustard seed III 62. Parable of the yeast II 63. Jerusalem admonished I 64. The lost sheep II	23 29 12, 26, 32 34, 43 44 13, 33 20, 39 40 87 54	19:1-2	10:1	9:51 9:57-62 10:13-16 11:14-23 11:29-32 12:1 12:10 13:18-19 13:20-21 13:34-35 15:1-7	
Blessing the children* 65. The rich man I* 66. The rich man II* 67. The rich man III* 68. Passion prophecy III*	66, 67 65, 67 65, 66 45, 51	19:13-15 19:16-30 20:17-19	10:13-16 10:17-31 10:32-34	18:15-17 18:18-30 18:31-34	
John and James 69. The blind man of Jericho I 70. The blind man of Jericho II* 71. The blind men of Jericho III*	70, 71 69, 71 69, 70	20:20-24 20:29-43	10:35-41 10:46-52	18:35-43	
Entrance into Jerusalem 72. Cleansing of the Temple II	1, 74	21:1-11 21:12-13	11:1-11	19:28-44 19:45-46	12:12-19

JESUS' STENOGRAPHERS

Numberings, Titles	Parallels	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Barren fig tree		21:18-19	11:12-14		
73. About barren fig tree I	77	21:20-22			
74. Cleansing of the Temple III	1, 72		11:15-17		
75. Jesus' authority questioned I	78	21:23-27			
76. The wicked tenants I	79, 80	21:33-46			
77. About barren fig tree II	73		11:20-26		
78. Jesus' authority questioned II	75		11:27-33	20:1-8	
79. The wicked tenants II	76, 80			20:9-19	
80. The wicked tenants III	76, 79		12:1-12		
Tribute to Caesar*		22:15-22	12:13-17	20:20-26	
81. About resurrection I	83, 88			20:27-40	
82. Son of David I	85, 90			20:41-44	
83. About resurrection II	81, 88	22:23-33			
84. The greatest commandment I	89	22:34-40			
85. Son of David II	82, 90	22:41-46			
86. Against scribes (and Phar.) I	91	23:1-36			
87. Jerusalem admonished II	63	23:37-39			
88. About resurrection III*	81, 83		12:18-27		
89. The greatest commandment II*	84		12:28-34		
90. Son of David III	82, 85		12:35-37		
91. Against scribes II*	86		12:37-40	20:45-47	
The widow's mite			12:41-44	21:1-4	
92. Destruction of the temple I	After 93			21:5-6	
93. Eschatological discourse I	94, 95			21:7-36	
Destruction of the temple II	92	24:1-2	13:1-2		
94. Eschatological discourse II	93, 95		13:3-37		
95. Eschatological discourse III	93, 94	24:3-25:13			
Plans to arrest Jesus		26:1-5	14:1-2	22:1-2	

*) Mutual location, (or sequence of direct speech), uncertain.

The overview shows that the gospels contain not few but many similar stories about different occurrences. How is it possible that there are so many of them? Or better: How is it possible that there were so many similar events in Jesus' ministry?

What are the causes for all of these look-alikes?

In the first place, many who were ill spontaneously followed the example of someone who had received healing. Striking examples are to be given of this phenomenon. Lepers in a certain area approached Jesus in the same way (see numbers 4, 9). The latter must have heard about the cure of the former, as he used nearly the same words. When Luke tells us that much later ten lepers came for healing (Luke 17:12), only one conclusion is possible. Such a great a group meant that they had heard, (and/or seen), real, convincing testimonies about Jesus' power which motivated them to take action together. In other words, examples of healing were the strongest motivation for people to act in the same way. We have already seen the blind men of Jericho; the first one who became healed motivated the others to do the same; whether unintentionally or purposefully. Many other examples of this are to be found in the gospels.

Secondly, Jesus' way of teaching was by repetition - for several reasons. It has been shown historically that pupils need to hear again and again, the same ideas, rules or principles. It has nothing to do with indoctrination, but rather that education and training are based on repetition. It was certainly also the rabbinic way of teaching disciples and, in that respect, Jesus acted like the rabbis: he regularly made use of the same parables and metaphors. When he had sent the twelve out on their mission, he started to teach new disciples and of course he used the same teachings he had taught to the twelve earlier: the parable of the sower (14, 17, 36), with explanation (16, 19, 38); the parable of the mustard seed (20, 39, 61). And of course when the question was repeated: Why parables? (15, 18 37), Jesus replied with the same answers as earlier. There is every reason to suppose that it was a rule in rabbinic teaching to standardize lessons.

Thirdly, as a teacher Jesus was regularly confronted by his hearers with identical questions. It was the classical practice of higher education that the teacher and his pupils followed the so called *diatribè* style of learning: in a relaxed way, teacher and disciples conversed with each other about all sorts of subjects. The teacher would put forth questions and listen to the reactions of his disciples, and they in their turn

had the same option. The meaning of this for the gospels is that the same subjects often came up for debate, e.g. as they needed more explanation. When John once said to Jesus that they had forbidden a man to cure demoniacs in Jesus' name, as he did not follow with the other disciples, Jesus answered: 'Do not forbid him; for he that is not against you, is for you.' (Luke 9:50) This was a rather confusing answer for John. It was certainly too short to understand and it needed explanation. So he had to repeat his point. The first time John had addressed Jesus with the rather neutral 'Epistata' (overseer), we would translate: 'Sir' or 'Master'. The second time he opened with 'Didaskale', that is 'Teacher'. By using this title he made known that he needed more insight in the subject. Now Jesus gave a longer answer about the issue; more than ten verses (Mark 9:39-50). In the overview of look-alikes, the discourse: 'The name of Jesus' is marked as an anchor point (bold). Mark and Luke deliver a part of the discourse. As it was one person (John) who came with it, we can be sure that it was one occasion. It is not realistic to suppose that John had later on again forbidden someone to work in Jesus' name after an earlier reprimand about it, and again posed his point. Not only disciples, but outsiders also could approach Jesus with their questions on moral, spiritual or practical matters. Identical questions existed among the people and therefore Jesus was confronted by outsiders with similar questions also; not once but several times.

Fourthly, repeatedly Jesus had to do with the same accusations against him and his work. More than once he was accused of being a co-worker with the devil (12, 26, 32, 57), and that he violated the law of the Sabbath (7, 30). More than once he was challenged to do a miracle as evidence of his prophetic status (34, 43, 58). More than once he had to defend the existence of eternal life against the Sadducees (81, 83, 88). He countered nearly every time with the same arguments, parables or metaphors. This is so striking that we can say with a high degree of certainty that it was rabbinic custom to repeat identical answers, which were applicable to standard questions and problems. The benefits were twofold: Nobody could mistake a rabbi's view on a matter and, particularly in Jesus' case, this was of great importance: 'Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me, what I said to them;

they know what I said.’²⁶⁴ Another advantage was that everybody could return to the subject in future discussions. The rabbi could show further implications of his point of view in all sorts of aspects: theologically and practically.

Fifthly, Jesus did not alter his way of acting with respect to unchanged abuses. E.g. several times Jesus cleansed the temple square from merchants. It is a real strange position of liberals, who suppose that Jesus did so only one time, and that the four reports in the gospels about it go back to that single event; that John gave his report at the beginning of his gospel while Matthew, Mark and Luke put theirs at the end of their gospels.²⁶⁵ This is a result of oral tradition thinking. One has forgotten one factor: the Jesus factor. If Jesus did not accept the habit of merchandising in the open places around the temple, wouldn't it be strange had he cleansed the temple only once, though he was in Jerusalem so many times? Jesus would be rather inconsistent, had he only once shown his horror by driving off the traders around the temple. No, when Jesus went to Jerusalem, his disciples could count on what was to occur again in the temple square.

Finally, in Matthew two multiplications of loaves are mentioned (5000 and 4000 fed), this is also the case in Mark. In each of the synoptic gospels there are three prophecies about the Passion. When even the gospels show these repetitions we should not be surprised that there were many look-alikes in Jesus' ministry and that it is artificial to dogmatically reduce similar gospel stories to reports of one event due to a so called oral tradition that never existed. Both orthodox and liberal theology have created and preserved a restricted image of Jesus for centuries by their common preoccupation with the so called oral tradition. One forgets that the gospels paint a picture which is really overwhelming with respect to the mass of Jesus' teachings and works.

264. John 18:21.

265. John 2:13-17, Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46.

8.5 Documentation dynamics and documentation exegesis

It is obvious that the first result of the documentation theory is that the common bible reader is enabled to read the gospels with good conscience. It is possible to read any gospel story with the knowledge that each direct speech is authentic and that every detail is an observation of the writers who followed the Lord. The common reader is given a concept by which he is able to understand what he reads: understanding about the reliability of the gospels at an intellectual level. It is not necessary anymore for laymen to escape with the argument: 'I know that theologians have problems with these texts, but I am not a theologian, I just need to believe.' Now he can say: 'I believe and I understand what I believe.' The second result of the documentation theory is that it preserves a complete facility for professional gospel interpretation: documentation exegesis. In this section we will summarize the aspects of this method.

A theologian who wants to explore documentation exegesis in gospel interpretation needs a possibility to control the results, otherwise the door is opened for all kinds of aberrations. The following critical issues, which are to be considered at the same time as benchmarks, are important for documentation exegesis:

1. The dynamic of the document. The information was so important that the writers made a document of it and preserved it. The question is therefore: What was the dynamic importance of this document for everyday life?
2. The dynamic of the spoken word. We possess the real spoken word in the documents as if it was said yesterday. We listen, so to speak, together with the writers who were operative in the past. The so called 'theology of the gospel writer' does not matter anymore; only what was said in real life matters.
3. The dynamic of activity. There are often concise references which show the connections between the actions, but by analytical reading it is possible to define each action within the framework of the occurrence.
4. The dynamic of reinforcing records. When it is possible to establish that reports in the gospels refer to the same event, the dynamic force of these records

becomes much greater by mutual reinforcement.

5. The dynamic of repetition. Similar reports that do not refer to the same event have a special impact. As repetition is never a result of the oral tradition, there is always a *living pattern*, a living context, underlying the repetition. As this pattern is rooted in everyday life, it is always a dynamic pattern.

6. The dynamic of details. Details nearly always represent specific nuances. Therefore they need a proper estimation instead of neglect. It always has to do with the first observations of the writers who followed Jesus. This is always exciting.

We have summed up six central points in relation to documentation exegesis. Often only five are active because numbers four and five are alternatives. When four and five are not relevant, because there are not similar reports at issue, only four remain. Usually this is enough to come to a proper understanding of the dynamic of the described occurrence.

The above mentioned critical issues go hand in hand with specific exegetical examinations:

1. The dynamic of the document. It is always necessary to understand that a gospel text originally was a document that the gospel writer used for the composition of his gospel book. Therefore it is necessary to describe the original document as far as possible by answering questions as: Where does it begin and where does it end? What type of document is it? What was the purpose of the document? What was the importance of the central message? Answers may be deduced from the contents of the text, the gospel to which it belongs (teaching record, public record or remnant record), and sometimes from its position in a gospel. Let's look at the following example.

The New Testament starts with the descent of Joseph, Mary's husband.²⁶⁶ Within the line of King David up to Joseph a few names are lacking: Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah (v. 8). Matthew writes that it was fourteen generations from David to the exile, and again fourteen generations from the exile to Jesus. It is generally

266. Matthew 1:1-7.

accepted among exegetes that Matthew construed periods of fourteen generations by omitting a few names, as it must be excluded that Matthew with his knowledge of the Old Testament, accidentally missed these names. It is generally supposed that Matthew had a theological purpose with these omissions. He would have thought that fourteen was a super holy number: two times seven. Three series of fourteen (from Abraham to David, from David to the deportation, from the deportation to Jesus) would confirm the divine plan of the time of Jesus' birth. But is this true? Did Matthew indeed construct these genealogies with his knowledge of the Old Testament? Of course not; Matthew knew too much of the Old Testament to make these errors, he also had too much respect for the Old Testament to manipulate Old Testament information in this way. No, he used an existing document that once belonged to Joseph as evidence that he was a descendant of David: his birth certificate. In the archives of the temple, original genealogies were kept²⁶⁷; when a new son was born, the father went to the archives, showed his birth certificate and a new certificate was brought out for the newborn son. In Jesus' case this did not happen, as he was not actually the son of Joseph. It is clear from this view that in the past some kings did not always visit the temple archives to register their sons.²⁶⁸

267. Ezra 2:59-63. (1) Israelites who were not able to prove that they belonged to the Jewish people; it seems that they did not have proper birth certificates. (2) Families about which was doubt, whether they belonged to the priestly family; the official archives of the priestly families seemed to be not completely in order after the exile (v. 62).

268. The ungodly king Joram (2 Kings 8:18) started a tradition of neglecting, which was continued by his son Ahaziah (2 Kings 8:27) and later on by his grandson Joas (2 Chron. 24:17,18). Joram did not register Ahaziah; Ahaziah did not register Joas; Joas did not register Amaziah; Amaziah (2 Kings 14:3) however, continued the old tradition of registering his sons in the temple archives. Names such as Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim (Eliakim), Zedekiah (2 Chron. 36:1-11) are missing in Matthew's register; as sons of king Josiah; they all reigned for some time in Jerusalem, but Jechoniah (Matthew 1:11) who was also a son of Josiah was the real ancestor of Joseph. Jechoniah is to be counted among the fourteen before the deportation, as well as among the fourteen after the deportation, because he belonged to both periods.

The dynamic of this part of the gospel of Matthew is a look into the family tradition of Joseph, in which these documents existed. When Joseph went to Bethlehem to be enrolled (Luke 2:4), he certainly needed a document as evidence that he was an ancestor of King David. With Matthew's mention of the three series of fourteen generations he did not refer to a divine plan of the birth of Jesus, but he prevented the insertion of lacking names by later copyists. If they did so the number fourteen would not fit anymore. Of course the expression 'the father of' in Matthew's register has a broad sense also, as the rabbi's hold in relation to genealogical registers: 'Sons of sons are sons.'²⁶⁹

To complete the discussion concerning Jesus' lineage, we will have a look at another document of Jesus' forefathers as presented in the gospel of Luke (3:23-38). Some take this list as contradicting the list of Matthew, because they take the two genealogies as referring to Joseph's lineage and then there are many dissimilarities between the lists. However in Luke we read: 'Jesus ... being the son as supposed of Joseph, the son of Heli, etc.' Many interpreters have read this as: 'Jesus ... being the son (as supposed of Joseph), of Heli, etc.' Punctuation marks are missing in the Greek text, so there is no grammatical obstacle to reading the passage in this way. They reason that it doesn't make sense that Luke gives a long genealogy of Joseph who has been marked as the 'supposed father'. They feel that this expression automatically excludes Joseph as forming part of Luke's list and that consequently Mary's genealogy is meant here.²⁷⁰ That would mean that in Luke 3:23-31 we are facing the documentation of Mary's lineage from King David. Maybe she possessed a copy of it, or Luke had access to an official register or family register with this information concerning Mary's lineage.

269. The Greek for 'the father of' is 'egennèsev' (he brought forth) and this particularly makes a wider sense than the possibility of it meaning only 'his own son'.

270. The view that Mary's lineage is presented in Luke was held by M. Luther, J.A. Bengel, J.B. Lightfoot, C. Wieseler, F. Godet, B. Weiss, A.T. Robertson, N. Geldenhuys, J. Wenham and many others (so J. Wenham, 1991, p. 216). Also J. McDowell, 1972, p. 377.

2. The dynamic of the spoken word. What are the direct speeches? What do the rules for analytical reading teach us about spoken words and their place in the narrative of the description? These questions require serious investigation.
3. The dynamic of the activity. Signal words and rules for analytical reading reveal the course of actions within an occurrence: connections between them and interruptions. Accurate investigation is needed in this field to establish the proper interrelations between the described activities of a story. By that, the course of events becomes clear.
4. The dynamic of reinforcing records. Are there similar records? And if so, what are the similarities and what the differences? Do they hold similar positions in the gospels or do they differ widely in that respect? In the final analysis, the possibility of different events must be accepted. Part of this investigation is the question of how the direct speeches relate to one another. Do they exclude or include the possibility of belonging to the same event?
5. The dynamic of repetition. In the case of similar records of different historical events, it is necessary to look into the living pattern of this repetition. In short: What is the living context that this repetition took place several times? The correct interpretation of this phenomenon is necessary because the explanation model of the oral tradition has its answer ready: This so called repetition is no more than the same story delivered in different ways due to the oral tradition.
6. The dynamic of the details. Last but not least, attention must be focussed on the details in the descriptions. As they are the observations of the writers, they are of great value. Each detail, even the smallest one, can be of decisive importance. The details have a great bearing on the vividness of the described event or subject. Often, only a few details are needed to show that different events are at issue.

8.6 A greater picture of Jesus Christ

Reductionism in orthodox and liberal theology has resulted in a reduced image of Jesus. Due to the oral tradition, the dynamic of the many events seems to have dis-

appeared, evaporated, and only a scanty measure of that dynamic remained. However, all the reports about these events are still available. All the reports in the gospels are still witnessing to the Messianic dynamics: healing was a natural example for others to experience in the same way; Jesus' training and teaching followed the natural custom of repetition; theological questions went around among the people; the manipulating mentality of his opponents required a continuous defense.

Documentation exegesis and the rules for analytical reading are tools which make it possible to reveal the dynamic context of Jesus' public life in a special way. Factors such as documentation exegesis and analytical reading reveal the living context in which the reports came into being. This was a dynamic context: the speedy and shorthand writers wrote what they saw and heard; an immense stream of details - even for them, with an overwhelming impact, was constantly confronting them. Is it strange that the gospels represent this stream of details? Until now, this aspect of gospel exegesis has remained under the bushel with 'explanations' such as: insertions of the oral tradition (liberal), or: the same miracle (orthodox). We may wonder whether the future will bring a change in this respect; will documentation exegesis receive a chance, a forum from which to give light to all in the house?

He who follows the model of stenography and documentation activity as a theory of how the gospels came into being, receives a more realistic and greater picture of Jesus Christ. Documentation exegesis makes it clear that the Lord did many more miracles than usually thought. With our understanding of this, his divine status increases and also the picture of his human character changes, because a dynamic Jesus takes the place of a static one. He becomes a man of flesh and blood with the limitations that are connected with that; nevertheless he is the one who realistically and dynamically fulfils his God-given commission. It seems as if a veil is taken away: through documentation exegesis, everyday life stands out clearly, and within this life Jesus' divine majesty is displayed. The examples of documentation exegesis in the next chapter will unquestionably show the effectiveness of this explanation method.

9

LIVING PATTERNS

In the previous chapters we have seen that documentation exegesis has to do with two types of stories. One of these types is those which are to be determined as referring to one single occasion. The rules for analytical reading are the particular tools needed to understand the relationships between the stories. The dynamic of analytical reading is that the combination of the stories gives more transparency about the occurrence and the characters of the persons involved.

As we have seen, there are also stories that certainly do not refer to one single occasion, but are 'look-alikes'. To understand these stories, documentation exegesis goes further than simply the rules for analytical reading. Most interesting in this case is the answering of questions such as: How is it possible that these stories have so much in common? How is it possible that these stories also have such peculiar details, which are, however, irreconcilable? To answer these questions we will always see a living pattern, which makes these stories look-alikes. That pattern is part of the living context of the events. In the stories of the blind men of Jericho, the pattern was that the men contacted each other. This notion cannot be deduced directly from the texts. In terms of exegetes: There exists no literary feature as evidence for this pattern. In other words: it is not clearly stated in the texts that these men informed one another. However, all the features together in the texts compel us to conclude this pattern of contact between the men. So the

pattern of the living context is to be seen as a result of documentation exegesis; moreover, this living context reveals the relationship between the events, and the relationship between the documents. So documentation exegesis not only allows more transparency of the texts, but also - in many cases – shows hidden patterns underlying the stories. And last but not least, documentation exegesis is also concerned with the insight that we have to deal with immediate reports of the speedy and shorthand writers of the Lord. As readers, we become bystanders through their eyes, ears and hands. In this chapter we will analyze more look-alike stories to understand what sort of dynamic living patterns made them so similar.

9.1 In the desert

The stories of Jesus' temptation in the desert are well known. The gospels of Matthew and Luke each have a lengthy record of it, while Mark has only a reference to the occasion.²⁷¹ The records of Matthew and Luke raise a difficult question, which is not so easy to solve at first glance. Why don't they have the same sequence of Jesus' temptations?

It is an unsolved exegetical riddle that the sequence of the temptations and

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)		
Features	Matthew 4:1-11	Luke 4:1-13
Sequence:	Making bread, leap from the temple, world power	Making bread, world power, leap from the temple
Internal connections:	2 breaks, And-sentences (5b, 8b)	2 breaks, And-sentences (5, 9 variant reading)
Direct speech:	Word order and wording unlike Luke	Word order and wording unlike Matthew

271. Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13. Compare the overview of look-alikes (section 8.4).

the direct speeches in the temptations differ, when we compare Matthew and Luke. This seems to give credence to the oral tradition, in which sequence and wording could have been changed by the nature of oral transmission. However, in documentation exegesis these questions are easily solved in a different fashion.

Temptation works through repetition; that is usually its power. And that is the living pattern underlying these reports. Not only once did the devil tempt Jesus, but again and again; repeatedly the temptations intruded upon Jesus' mind.²⁷² That is the living context of how temptations function. When a temptation seems to have been overcome, the same temptation comes back with renewed force; even after temptations of a different kind. Jesus in turn used the same verse from scripture to conquer the repeated temptation, sometimes in different wording.²⁷³ Looking to the course of events, we have to reckon with the following sequence.

- Luke 4:3-4 Making bread
- Matthew 4:3-4 Making loaves of bread
- Luke 4:5-8 World power
- Luke 4:9-12 Leap from the temple
- Matthew 4:5-7 Leap from the temple
- Matthew 4:8-10 World power

272. We may wonder why the devil tempted Jesus. Maybe, he only tried, or he did not believe that Jesus could resist temptations, or maybe he has no other possibility of expression at his disposal than temptation. We may also wonder, what temptations meant to Jesus. It is difficult to imagine Jesus as constantly fighting against sin. In my opinion: Jesus being the Word of God (John 1:1-5,14) could not sin and still remained the unblemished lamb by using the Word of God. Probably the devil could not believe or understand this. Hebrew 2:18 says that Jesus suffered being tempted ... and therefore 'he is able to help those who are tempted.' The sufferings of Jesus were not that he failed in temptation, but that he was confronted in his feelings, how mankind suffers through temptations.

273. In Judaism it was accepted to cite the scriptures with slight differences, if one spoke in the Spirit of a verse. Already Moses did so, when he looked back on the law giving on Sinai. (Deut. 5:6-22).

Firstly, the temptation to make bread out of stone (Luke). Later on a repetition came, but more intense (Matthew): to make loaves (plural) of bread out of stones. Through the use of the plural (loaves) the thought is near that Jesus was challenged the second time to make bread not only for himself, but also for others. Was it to solve the world food problem, which already existed at that time? Was he challenged to become a Bread Messiah? In both cases Jesus resisted with: ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, ...’ Matthew continues (Then-sentence, vs. 5) that the devil took Jesus to the Holy City, after which Matthew gives a break with an ‘and-sentence’ (vs. 5b).²⁷⁴

In Luke’s report (vs. 5): Jesus got a vision of the kingdoms of the inhabited world (Greek: *oikoumenè*; meaning at least the Roman Empire). The devil offered him the power over the kingdoms of the inhabited world, but Jesus in turn had to kneel before, and to submit to the devil. Jesus refused; he wanted to submit, but to God, not to the devil. Did the evil one suggest to Jesus that he could end suffering in the Roman Empire, once he had power over all armies? A sort of ‘No War’ Messiah?

Luke also tells that Jesus was led to ‘a pinnacle of the temple’. (vs. 9) We have to think of a high place on one of the outbuildings of the temple, or upon one of the galleries surrounding the buildings of the temple. For the whole complex could be referred to as ‘the temple’. The devil proposed ‘Throw yourself down, ...’ with the motivation of a verse from the Scriptures: ‘... angels will take charge of you ... they will bear you up!’ This was a nice proposition: A Messiah making miracles in the temple and maybe repeatedly at fixed times: wouldn’t that be the proof of the existence of God? Wouldn’t it raise the masses of the Roman Empire? This was a serious spiritual temptation: the religious environment of the temple and a Bible quote to eliminate the mind; while the Bible, on the con-

274. Matthew 4:5b -11 gives an uninterrupted course of events up to the moment that the devil leaves Jesus. That implies that Luke 4:5-12 is to be inserted between Matthew 4:5a and Matthew 4:5b (‘and-sentence’).

trary, is meant to mobilize the mind. And yes, isn't it the greatest temptation of spiritual leaders to be borne by angels? However, Jesus did not come to be borne, but to bear the lost.

How would Jesus respond? Two times this temptation came up to him, one after the other. (Luke 4:9-12, Matthew 4:5-7) Two times he rejected it with the same verse from the Torah: 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' Jesus was not to be led astray with a single verse of the Holy Scripture. It was his secret and his joy to fulfil the Scriptures entirely: '... I come; in the roll of the Book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart.'²⁷⁵

Finally once more the temptation came to kneel before Satan and to receive in turn dominion over all the kingdoms of the world. (Matthew 4:8) This last temptation was the heaviest one. The earlier proposition was the offer of power over the kingdoms of the 'oikoumenè', the inhabited world of the Roman Empire; now the whole world was at issue. The devil did not have any more to offer; the heavens did not belong to him. Wasn't this Jesus' opportunity to bring world peace? Yes, Jesus wanted world peace, but not with the devil as boss; that would be the greatest possible lie. And so Jesus ended the temptations with: 'Go away Satan ...!'

How is it possible that we possess the story of this struggle between Jesus and the devil? We know that the speedy and shorthand writers of Jesus fulfilled the prophetic task to preserve Jesus' words for the future, but in the desert Jesus did not have followers who wrote present. The extraordinary nature of this state of affairs is that - reading the direct speeches of the temptations - we face Jesus' own annotations, which he made during his spiritual struggle; when all these thoughts entered his mind. We know that Jesus could read and write²⁷⁶, and so there is no reason to be upset by the fact that we indeed possess writings right from him. That is part of the living context of the temptation stories. Just as Moses accurately annotated what happened in the desert about one and a half

275. Psalm 40:7-8.

276. John 8:6.

millennia earlier, so did Jesus during the short time he was in the desert. Finally this also implies that Jesus must have used written documents in his teaching, which also could have been a cause of repetitions.

It is not known when the records of these stories were made. It seems that Matthew's record is a product of the first choice. He took the extremes: stones and loaves (plural) instead of stone and bread (singular, Luke); the whole world instead of the inhabited world (*oikoumenè*). Matthew also has a proper use of Then-sentences (1, 5, 11), while Luke has the rather loose structure of 'And-sentences' (2, 5, 9 and 13 in majority variant), which seems to refer to a second choice. It looks as if Luke used a remnant record instead of an original public record.

Why did Jesus teach his disciples later about temptations with his own experiences in this area as a reference point? Practically to show how they could triumph over temptations by quoting Scriptures, but certainly also to show that temptation should never be a forgotten issue among them, as he himself wrestled with it in the beginning of his ministry, and last but not least that it should bring us back to him, who is the Word that never fails in a world in which curiosity and serious temptation often occur side by side.

9.2 Three paralytics cured

The synoptic gospels each have a record of a 'Healing of a paralytic'.²⁷⁷ Two of them are nearly identical stories about a man laying on a bed or pallet, who was let down by some others through the roof of the house where Jesus was teaching the people. Matthew also has a record about the 'Healing of a paralytic', however without the roof story. The question is: Are we dealing with descriptions of one, two, or three events of healing.

There are striking similarities. Firstly, in each case Jesus 'saw their faith'. Sec-

²⁷⁷. See 8.4, the overview of look-alikes: 5, 6, 24.

JESUS' STENOGRAPHERS

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)			
Features	Matthew 9:1-8	Mark 2:3-12	Luke 5:17-26
On:	Bed (klinè)	Pallet (krabbatos)	Bed (klinè)
Carriers:	-	Four men	Four men
Jesus said:	My son (teknon)	My son (teknon)	Man (anthropos)
Arrival:	No specifications	Via the roof	Via the roof
Detail:	-	Roof is removed	Roof is open
Direct speech:	Healing command dissimilar Mark, Luke	Healing command dissimilar Matthew, Luke	Healing command dissimilar Mark, Matthew

only, rightly after the seeing of their faith Jesus said: ‘... your sins are forgiven’. Thirdly, in all cases the scribes started immediately to protest in terms of ‘blasphemy’. Fourthly, Jesus used the healing as proof that he had the right to forgive. Fifthly, the man leaves bearing his bed/pallet. Finally, the people ‘feared (Matthew, Luke) and glorified God’.

In spite of the many similarities we have to decide in favor of three separate healings. The dissimilarities are not to harmonize. The direct speeches are so dissimilar in the way of addressing, in word order, and in their use of expressions, that it is not possible to suppose that the descriptions refer to one single occasion; not even to only two occasions.

The remaining question is how the similarities may be explained. A closer inspection makes clear that in all cases, two aspects are the same. In the first place the paralytic is brought to Jesus by carriers. In the second place, in all cases Jesus’ words of forgiveness brought an identical process into action: the scribes rejected Jesus’ authority to forgive; Jesus’ claim that he was able to forgive; his address to the paralytic with the healing command; the order to take his bed with him as the convincing evidence for all that Jesus indeed had the authority to forgive. So we are dealing with three events with the same pattern, and the question is now: how is this possible? What is the living context of this pattern? Unless we have

understood that we have here a fixed pattern, we are unable to understand that we are confronted with three stories of three happenings.

There is a connection between 'being carried' and 'forgiveness'. Many sick people came to Jesus without help of others, but in fact these lame men came together with their carriers. Common faith is stronger than individual faith and it is more visible. In all these cases it is said that Jesus 'saw their faith'. The communion of the saints; that was what Jesus saw and what had immediate impact on him. He, being the bringer of faith, immediately took part in this communion; that meant acceptance. The lame men who came to Jesus' feet, saw the joy on his face and that made them joyful: they knew that they were accepted by him. And Jesus seeing their relief about the acceptance, started to verbalize what happened: this relief and refreshing of the presence of the Lord (Acts 2:19) was the experience of forgiveness. And therefore in all cases Jesus explained their experience saying: '... your sins are forgiven'.

The scribes had a different idea about forgiveness, and of course the joy of the lame men remained unseen by them and so they rejected Jesus' forgiveness. It was a theological issue for them, and in each case they raised theological objections. But Jesus did not allow them to frustrate the lame men, who had just experienced forgiveness and in all these cases the same discourse between them and Jesus developed. In Mark and Luke the men walked out straight through the people as through the Red Sea. Before their healing they could not pass through to enter, but when they left, there was room enough.

The cure of the first paralytic is described by Mark. He tells us that carriers opened the roof by uncovering it, before they let down the mat with the man. Luke's record tells that the paralytic was let down 'through the tiles'. This is a strange formulation as tiles on a roof are not able to let something pass and particularly not a man on a bed. This is only possible if an opening in the tiles already exists. In other words it seems that the roof had not been repaired by the first carriers and probably they ran downstairs to welcome their healed friend outside the house; the opening in the roof was a minor problem at that

moment. That made it possible for the second paralytic (in Luke) to be let down before Jesus.

There are more features in Luke's record that point to a second healing of a paralytic. We read:

(a) '... and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.' (vs. 17) Without the knowledge of the first healing, this is rather strange information. Of course, in Jesus there was always power to heal, but just a moment earlier a mighty healing had happened and the people glorified God. The common faith of the first carriers had increased the faith of the people. That must be the meaning of the unusual remark in Luke. When the people saw a paralytic coming through the opening in the roof for the second time, they held their breath, because they knew what was going to happen.

(b) 'Who is this that speaks blasphemies?' (vs. 21) During the first occasion (Mark) the scribes spoke: '... it is blasphemy' (singular), but here in Luke it is 'blasphemies' (plural). Indeed, they heard Jesus for the second time saying: '... your sins are forgiven'.

(c) 'We have seen strange things today.' (vs. 26) After the first healing the reaction of the people was: 'We never saw anything like this!' (singular). After the second healing they spoke in plural that they had seen 'strange things today'. Both healings had taken place in the same extraordinary way.

The third cure of a paralytic man (the record of Matthew) occurred much later.²⁷⁸ Also the situation was different; they brought the man before Jesus' feet quite normally, as there is no mention of a roof act. But yes, there was Jesus' declaration of forgiveness and of course the reaction of the scribes in doubting about that, followed by the living pattern of Jesus' defence of the experience of forgiveness, as in Mark and Luke.

Matthew has the shortest record. It seems that his main interest is the teaching that Jesus is the Messiah. For Matthew that is Jesus' mighty word against vain

278. See 8.4, the overview of look-alikes, number 24. (previous chapter)

human knowledge. Luke chose to describe the second healing through the roof. When the public plays a significant and positive role, we see often a public record of it in Luke's gospel. And that is the case here: the people spoke in plural about Jesus' works (vs. 26). The first healing remained as a remnant record and found its place in Mark's gospel.

9.3 *Sabbatical perils*

In three gospels we read the story of Peter's mother-in-law who was healed by Jesus from a fever, and connected with it we read about many healings in front of the house.²⁷⁹ Certainly the same Peter and the same mother-in-law are involved, so one has always supposed that we are dealing with three stories of the same single occasion. However one question has never been answered. Why does this passage occur so much later in the gospel of Matthew?

It is worth looking at the similarities. Are we dealing with coincidence, or do

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)			
Features	Matthew 8:14-17	Mark 1:29-34	Luke 4:38-41
Previous:	Sermon on the Mount, Centurion	Demoniac in synagogue	Demoniac in synagogue
Day:	Not a Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
Healing:	Peter's mother-in-law, fever	Peter's mother-in-law, fever	Peter's mother-in-law, fever
Location:	Peter's house	Peter's house	Peter's house
Later on:	That evening	That evening	At sunset
Healings:	A lot	A lot	A lot
Fulfilment-quotation:	Isaiah 53:4	-	-

279. See 8.4, the overview of look-alikes, numbers 2-3, 21-22.

all of the stories refer to one and the same event?

In two cases, the records of Mark and Luke, indeed the same event is at issue. This can be established as earlier that day a demoniac was cured in the synagogue. During the day Peter's mother-in-law was also cured inside the house, as she had a serious fever. Remarkably enough, nobody approached Jesus that day before sunset. Of course according to the rule of the Sabbath, it was not permitted to work as long as the sun was shining. The evening after the Sabbath was counted as part of the next day, and at sunset people with their diseases started to move in the direction of Peter's house. Very quickly it became dark with people before Peter's door. By seeing the incident in the synagogue that morning, the people probably understood that Jesus was willing to heal them in the daytime, but they chose the safe way, to comply with the Sabbath rule and not to go to Jesus by day with the sick. It seems that Jesus performed the most healings outside the synagogue. Maybe it was inconvenient to visit the synagogue in case of illness and the strict laws of the Torah forbade folks to enter holy places when suffering diseases causing loss of blood .

Matthew's record is related to another healing of Peter's mother-in-law, which happened during the week and not on a Sabbath. On this day Jesus had given the Sermon on the Mount, instead of being in the synagogue as was his custom on the Sabbath day.²⁸⁰ Also on that day a leper was healed, and entering into Capernaum he cured the centurion's servant. After a long period of absence from Capernaum, they arrived that day at the house of Peter in the evening. Again, Peter's mother-in-law had a fever and was healed. Because of the late time that they arrived at Peter's house, the people came for healing in the evening.

The records of Mark and Luke on the one hand, and that of Matthew on the other hand, have three striking parallels: Firstly, the location is Peter's house in all cases. Secondly, many people with diseases are cured at sunset, and thirdly Peter's mother-in-law had a fever and was healed of it. The living context of the

280. Luke 4:16.

first two circumstances is explained above. We cannot see a serious difficulty in the fact that Jesus went to Peter's house, nor that he healed so many people there. The first event was in the evening after the Sabbath; the people did not dare to approach Jesus for healing because of the sabbatical rule not to work. The second event was in the evening during the week, because of Jesus' rather late arrival in town.

The repeated cure of Peter's mother-in-law seems remarkable, but is it? Fever is a symptom which accompanies many diseases and in these cases it was the dominant symptom. It is certainly not an impossibility to get a fever several times. So we have here a conjunction of circumstances: two times Jesus entered into the house of Peter and found his mother-in-law suffering from a fever. Indeed a conjunction of circumstances is a part of daily life; that also belonged to the living context in which Jesus worked.

The reports of Mark and Luke paint a picture of Jesus first mass healing ceremonies. As Luke gives a public record, in which he tells how Jesus associated with the people: '... he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.' That he touched every one shows his compassion and care for each. Luke tells how he handled a disease in the description of the cure of Peter's mother-in-law: '... he rebuked the fever ...'. This shows that Jesus did not acquiesce to illness, it was not only compassion for the sick, that led him into healing. These features were part of a vivid story for a large public. Mark used a remnant record: e.g. it has no direct speech (Luke has one). Mark shows observations which are really impressive: '... who were sick or possessed by demons ...' (omitted by Luke); '... the whole city was gathered together ...' (Luke doesn't make mention of this); '... sick with various diseases ...' (Luke has the same); '... and cast out many demons ...' (Luke: demons came also out of many). Mark had the remnant record and it presents the impact of the first observations of the writers.

Matthew opted for a teaching record of a later period. We don't know why he didn't want to use the teaching record of the earlier event. Was it because it lacked the fulfilment-quotation of Isaiah 53:4? Anyway he found it in the record

of the later occasion and maybe that was the reason why he took the teaching record of that event as a paradigm and explanation of Jesus' mass healings. Isaiah 53:4 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.' This was a Messianic promise and with that Matthew referred to Jesus as the Messiah, which is often the main point of his teaching.

9.4 Picking corn on the Sabbath; Cure of a man with a withered hand

The Torah gives several rules in favor of the poor concerning the harvest. It was forbidden to go through the field twice to gather the ears or fruit after the first gathering. What was left belonged to the poor. It was permitted to eat grapes while going through a vineyard or to eat ears going through a field with standing grain.²⁸¹ And it was strictly forbidden to reap a field to its very border; that part of the harvest was to be left for the poor and the sojourner.²⁸² Ordinary people must have felt that these rules were special blessings of God for them. And no doubt as the people were not allowed to work on the Sabbath, many of them spent their time walking through the fields and enjoying the free nature. It was certainly common practice to pluck and eat ears of grain when the time of harvest was near. And so did Jesus' disciples, when they walked through the fields with Jesus on the Sabbath. The Pharisees however, who were real perfectionists in matters of the law, had great problems with that. Plucking and eating ears on the Sabbath was harvesting on the Sabbath and that was forbidden by the law.

For Jesus' contemporaries, this was a serious matter of debate and for that reason, Matthew, Mark and Luke present discussions about the subject in their gospels. In fact this is not so strange; what is really remarkable is that in each case a description follows about the cure of a man with a withered hand.

The first important question to be answered is: How many events are in-

281. Deuteronomy 23:24-25.

282. Leviticus 19:9.

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)			
Features	Matthew 12:1-14	Mark 2:23-3:6	Luke 6:1-11
Place:	After Mission of the twelve	Calling of the first disciples; after Levi's first calling	Calling of the first disciples; after Levi's first calling
Day:	Sabbath	Sabbath	Sabbath
Subject:	Plucking heads of grain and eating them	Plucking heads of grain and eating them	Plucking heads of grain and eating them
Criticism:	Pharisees	Pharisees	Some Pharisees
Defence:	Example of David, Priests work on the Sabbath	Example of David	Example of David
Later:	-	-	Another Sabbath
Healing:	A withered hand	A withered hand	A withered hand
Place:	In their synagogue	A synagogue	A synagogue
Immediate cause:	Pharisees questioned whether it is permitted to heal	Jesus questioned whether it is permitted to heal	Jesus questioned whether it is permitted to heal

volved? The records of Mark and Luke of 'Picking corn on the Sabbath' seem to refer to the same occurrence, when we see the occurrence of both records in the beginning of Jesus' ministry. According to the rules for analytical reading, there is no impediment to accepting a single event, or to reckon with two parts (the Markian and the Lukan part) of one event. Also the Mark and the Luke report of the cure of the withered hand seem to refer to one and the same event, immediately following the occurrence of 'Picking corn on the Sabbath'. Wording of the two reports is very similar and the direct speeches of both reports also combine perfectly according to the rules for analytical reading. All aspects point to the same conclusion: that we are dealing with the same event. The features of

the report of Matthew differ dramatically.

The record of Matthew does not refer to the same event as the records of Mark and Luke; the occurrence being after the Mission of the twelve of Matthew's record makes that very clear. The details also lead to the same conclusion. However, one question remains: Isn't the repetition strange that after 'Picking corn on the Sabbath' again the 'Cure of a withered hand' occurs in a synagogue and on a Sabbath? It seems coincidental, but it is not, as Luke clearly states that the healing was 'On another Sabbath'. So there was a longer interval of time between the two occurrences of 'Picking corn' and the 'Cure of a withered hand' (in Mark and Luke). And that is not the case in Matthew's description. It seems that in Matthew the two events took place on the same Sabbath, as we read: 'And he went on from there, and entered their synagogue.' There is no question that the expression 'their synagogue' refers to the synagogue of Jesus' opponents who earlier that day struggled with him about the question of picking corn on the Sabbath. No, a strange similarity is that twice a man with a withered hand is cured in a synagogue on a Sabbath after the question whether it is permitted to heal on the Sabbath. How is that possible, and that is the point we have to discuss.

In Luke we read (also in Mark with different words) that they '... watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him.' But in Matthew: 'And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" so that they might accuse him.' In Mark and Luke, Jesus' opponents are passive, awaiting their opportunity, and Jesus confronts them with the question whether it is permitted to heal on the Sabbath or not. But in Matthew they take the initiative to confront Jesus with the question. That makes the difference.

After the healing according to Mark, the Pharisees went to the Herodians and held counsel with them to destroy him. And of course this was to occur in a legal way; there was no talk of engaging an assassin. No, they had to collect as many examples of Jesus' transgressions as they could, and then they would be able to arrest Jesus and to take him to court. For this trial against Jesus a lot of material

had to be collected. They could not work with a few incidents. They could achieve a condemnation only if there was evidence that Jesus continually and structurally transgressed the law. It was impossible to condemn someone to death, if there was no evidence of criminal intent.²⁸³ Therefore one had to collect, or *create*, incriminating evidence. Generally one attaches much too little weight to the fact that Jesus was continuously followed by writing antagonists who tried to make him slip. That is the *living pattern* behind Matthew 12:9-14. When we combine this with the rule that a rabbi was supposed to maintain his standpoint, it was easy for some Pharisees to confront Jesus with his own point of view: that it was acceptable to heal on the Sabbath. The venom of their action is that if Jesus would escape their questions, he would disqualify himself as a reliable teacher, as he did not maintain his position. If he would heal the man, they were able to increase their incriminating evidence. To be sure of their success they chose of course a man with a withered hand. As Jesus had healed someone like him earlier in a synagogue, Jesus couldn't reasonably avoid healing the man. This was the way representatives of the Pharisees followed Jesus and created their material to ruin him.

And the healed man, did he have any notion of the game they played with him? Maybe he was grateful to the Pharisees that they brought him to Jesus. Maybe he interpreted their question to Jesus as a token of their humanity. Of course there must have been many humane persons (doves) among the Pharisees, but because of that, it was easy for the hawks among them to work without being disturbed. They mingled among the many who followed Jesus and who tried to make notes, they looked like studious disciples and only a few were able to discover their true identity, while they prepared Jesus' fall.

Matthew has the last report of 'Picking corn on the Sabbath', maybe because

283. In Jewish jurisprudence it was a task for the judges to determine the intention of a transgressor. Deuteronomy 19:9 '... the man (manslayer) did not deserve to die, since he was not at enmity with his neighbour in time past.' In case of accidental transgression the accused could get off after bringing an offering. (Leviticus 4-5)

it contains Jesus' longer teaching about the subject. Maybe by that he chose the 'Cure of a withered hand' automatically for the later report. The reports of Luke received some editorial improvements in comparison with Mark. Luke's report lacks the statement about Abiathar, which supposed more knowledge about Israel's history among the readers and as a result Luke's report was more suitable as a public record. The omission of the 'hardness of heart' among the Pharisees in Luke's report, (in contrast to Mark), made it less threatening and as a result it was more proper for a public record.

9.5 From Levi to Matthew

One of Jesus' first disciples was Levi, the tax collector. In the apostle lists the name Levi is not mentioned but rather Matthew, the tax collector. It is generally accepted that Levi and Matthew are the same person and also that he was the author of the gospel in that name.²⁸⁴ In the synoptic gospels we read three stories of his calling. Most interpreters hold that these stories refer to one calling. It is one of the middle-aged misrepresentations that pursue Christianity, i.e. that disciples needed only one calling and, obedient as they were, they immediately followed Jesus. Of course that is completely beside the truth and the stories of Levi's callings are conclusive proof of that.

The similarities of the stories are many. Jesus passes the customs house, Levi/Matthew was sitting there. Jesus noticed him and called: 'Follow me!'. He rose, left everything and followed. In all cases we read about a reception in Levi's/Matthew's house with many colleagues, sinners, Jesus and his disciples. This state of affairs was a horrible thing for the Pharisees and they posed the question why Jesus ate with sinners. Thereafter the question is posed: why they don't have their fasting like the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist. In all cases Jesus answers with the same metaphors.

284. Matthew 10:3.

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)			
Features	Matthew 9:9-13(-17)	Mark 2:13-17(-22)	Luke 5:27-32(-39)
Place:	Later, shortly before the Mission of twelve	At the beginning of Jesus' ministry	At the beginning of Jesus' ministry
Order:	Cure of a paralytic Call, Eating Discussion on fasting Bridegroom Old cloak, old skins	Cure of a paralytic Call, Eating Discussion on fasting Bridegroom Old cloak, old skins	Cure of a paralytic Call, Eating Discussion on fasting Bridegroom Old cloak, old skins
The call:	Follow me	Follow me	Follow me
Place of call:	By the customs house	By the customs house	By the customs house
Name:	Matthew	Levi	Levi
Reaction:	Got up and followed	Got up and followed	Got up and followed

When we look at the many similarities, it is easy to conclude that the same occurrence is being related in three different versions. Only one detail is not in line: the positioning of the reports in the gospels. In the gospel of Matthew, the report is much later than in Mark's and Luke's gospels, after the common descriptions: Cure of the centurion's servant, Calming of the storm, The Gerasene demoniac(s). The placements in Mark and Luke support an identical occurrence. If so, a second call took place later on, of which Matthew's gospel reports.

Is it possible that we are dealing with two calls? Theologically there is no obstacle for that. Peter and John apparently did not give up their boats and their profession after their first call, as we read that later on Jesus made use of their boats regularly.²⁸⁵ It is a real possibility that Levi, after his first call, did not immediately leave his profession as tax collector, so that Jesus could repeat his call

285. Matthew 4:19, Mark 1:17, Luke 5:10.

by the customs house at a later stage.

In each report it is said that Levi (Matthew) arose and followed the Lord. However he did not immediately, as in all cases an 'And-sentence' followed after the call. Before Levi left the tax office he had done something, which becomes clear from the course of the events thereafter. Before he followed Jesus, he gave orders to his servants to prepare a banquet at his house. What his motives were for that, we don't know. The gospels describe these banquets as meetings of tax collectors, sinners and Jesus with his disciples. It is in line to suppose that these tax collectors belonged to his subordinates and maybe Levi wanted to show his sense of solidarity with them as they had to continue the work while he himself left the work. A meal with Jesus was the obvious way to pay them back. That night all of his servants received an excellent meal for free. However Levi, being a tax collector, was not so strict in his religious duties or maybe more accurately, he neglected them. He did not realize that - in both cases - it was a day of fasting for Pharisees.

The days of fasting for the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist were on Monday and Thursday.²⁸⁶ Usually one skipped the dinner meal, though it was not a prescribed duty of the Torah. Only in a week with a wedding, was one released from the obligation of fasting.

As earlier stated, the placement of the reports of Mark and Luke make clear that these reports refer to one occasion in the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In Mark 2:18 it is said explicitly, that it was a day of fasting: 'Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; ...'. It is not clear whether it was a Monday or a Thursday. The banquet was in the courtyard - houses were for sleeping at night; daily life occurred outside the houses - and of course the sound of revelry could be heard in the neighbourhood of that silent fasting evening. The whole situation cried out for problems and the reaction was bound to come: 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?' Who are meant by these 'sinners'? The report doesn't give clues to determine this, but in the opinion of the Pharisees, certainly everyone who was eating at the

286. TDNT IV,929.

banquet at that moment was a sinner. They made an exception for Jesus ‘Why does he eat ... with sinners?’ Not only was the custom of fasting being trodden under foot, on the other hand it was not appropriate for a rabbi to eat together with bad people, sinners, at all. The grief of the Pharisees was twofold: on a day of fasting and with sinners. The fact that they did not reckon Jesus himself among the sinners made it possible for Jesus to answer somewhat later ‘Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?’ Jesus indeed clarified his deviant behaviour by comparing it with new garments and new wine. To repair old garments with new and to preserve new wine in old wineskins is not done.

The second call of Levi, who had received the name Matthew in the meanwhile, also took place on a day of fasting. That is clear from the words ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast, ...?’²⁸⁷ Nobody at the banquet was to blame, if it was a normal day without a religious duty to fast. This second event happened shortly before the Mission of the twelve. And of course the same tension developed outside the court-yard of Levi’s house, where the people heard the sound of a lively meal, with the result of the same reactions of the people outside. The *living pattern* of these similar occurrences is of course the habit of fasting in the Jewish context, which Jesus put aside rigorously in combination with the other *living pattern*: that a rabbi was supposed to answer consistently in similar situations.

For his gospel, Matthew preferred the report of the second call. In this report he is named Matthew instead of Levi. A lot had happened after the first call; he had gotten a new name, with the meaning ‘Present of God’. Instead of the disdained tax collector, he had become a special gift of God to the people. This name expressed the change which Levi had undergone and maybe for that reason he preferred to use the report with that new name in his gospel. Maybe he wanted his readers to look at him - as he had learned to see himself - as a new creation in Christ.

Another interesting detail of documentation dynamic is the information about John the Baptist and the movement which arose through him. The weekly

287. Matthew 9:14.

fasting periods were held by the Pharisees and the followers of John the Baptist. It seems that the influence of John the Baptist must have been very important; his followers formed a clearly distinguished grouping. No doubt, the largest part moved to the Messianic movement of Jesus. But before this occurred, they operated next to the Pharisees as a holiness movement, as is clear from the calling histories of Levi/Matthew.

The records of Mark and Luke are nearly parallel. Luke's public record has more stylistic reinforcements: a *great* feast, a *large* company of tax collectors and others, the Pharisees ... *murmured* ... saying, fast *often*. Mark includes aspects like these by repetitions: *many* tax collectors and sinners ...; for there were *many* who followed him; Mark has three times 'collectors and sinners' in two verses (15-16); not the Pharisees, but ordinary people ask him about fasting (without *murmured*, and without *often*).

9.6 Question of John the Baptist

John was imprisoned in Herod's fortress Macherus in the desert east of the Dead Sea.²⁸⁸ This location was not far from the place where the people had listened to him and where he baptized them in the river Jordan. During his imprisonment, he had time enough to think about himself, Jesus and their relationship. Luke says:

288. F. Josephus remarks about John the Baptist in *Antiquitates* XVIII,5,2: 'Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of his army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure against him.' (Transl. W. Whiston, Hendrickson Publishers) The Arab king Aretas was the father of Herod's first wife. When Herod Antipas had sent her away to marry Herodias, Aretas mobilized his army against his former son-in-law to humiliate him. He destroyed all Herod's army. And according to Josephus many Jews saw in this catastrophe 'the hand of God', a punishment for his actions against John the Baptist.

‘The disciples of John told him of all these things.’²⁸⁹ Maybe they read to him some public records about Jesus. ‘All these things’ refers to the stories prior to Luke 7:18, viz.: Young man of Nain restored to life, Cure of the centurion’s servant, Sermon in the Field, Choice of the Twelve, and maybe more stories of public records which are unknown to us. In these circumstances, John sent some disciples to Jesus with the question: ‘Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?’

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)		
Features	Matthew 11:2-19	Luke 7:18-35
Place:	In advance: Jairus’ daughter, Mission of the Twelve	In advance: young man of Nain Afterwards: Mission of the Twelve
What follows:	Lament over lake-towns	Meal of Simon the Pharisee
Question of John:	Shall we look for another? (Greek: heteros, the other from two, a different one) ³	Shall we look for another? (Greek: allos, another)
Reaction of Jesus:	Tell John what you hear and see:	Tell John what you have seen and heard:
Speech to the people:	Description of John the Baptist	Description of John the Baptist
Generally:	Direct speeches: not verbatim identical with Luke	Direct speeches: not verbatim identical with Matthew

We concluded earlier that occurrences in the gospels are presented in chronological order. How then is it possible that the question of John about Jesus as the Messiah, is posed before the ‘Storm on the lake’ (Luke) and much later in Matthew, after the ‘Mission of the twelve’?²⁹⁰

289. Luke 7:18.

290. In 8.4, the overview of look-alikes: see 10, 11 and 27, 28.

291 Matthew 11:2-3.

Luke has as a starting point of his description, the moment of the departure of the two disciples of John from the fortress Macherus, and he links their arrival at Jesus in Galilee to that directly. But between departure and arrival at least one week of travelling (and normally two weeks) must be accounted for. Matthew has the question much later: he chose the moment of the arrival of John's messengers. Matthew writes (word for word translation): 'John *having heard* in prison about the deeds of the Christ, *having sent* his disciples, said to him "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for *a different one?*"'²⁹¹

Comparing the answers of Jesus in Luke and Matthew we see that the line of reasoning is equal, only the choice of words and the word order differ in some respects. This indicates that John sent at least two groups of messengers, with nearly the same question.²⁹² The first question (Luke) is 'Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?' In this question it is not clear why John expects another Messiah? But in the second question (Matthew): 'Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for *a different one?*', he reveals his deeper feeling that he had another type of Messiah in mind. According to the general conception of the Messiah, he probably had a spiritual and political leader in mind, but Jesus had no political aspirations at all. The adjustment in the second question of John shows his agonizing problem. Of course the second question was also more painful for Jesus to hear; maybe for that reason John did not dare to give the first group this message. But later on he decided that he had to know and that the second question was really important to him.

As earlier remarked, the answers of Jesus are equal in reasoning: he refers to

292. Matthew 11:7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak ...; Luke 7:24 When the messengers of John had gone, he began to speak ... There are slight differences of expressions between the speeches of Matthew and Luke that follow. But in both cases, direct connection between the visit of the messengers and the speech about John is supposed (rule 4, a.r.); that forces one to decide for the fact of two speeches and two groups of messengers. In the story of the 'Cure of the centurion's servant' we have also seen that a second group of messengers was sent with an adjusted message.

the miracles that happen and to the gospel preached to the poor. And he gives the command to the messengers to tell John what they see and hear themselves. The similarity of the two answers shows perfectly that Jesus understood John's problem from the beginning, already when he heard the first question. Most important also of course is the fact that Jesus did not refer to himself (Yes I am ...) in his answers, but to his deeds. In doing so he referred in fact to the promise of the character of the Messiah through Isaiah: '... the deaf shall hear the words of a book, ... the eyes of the blind shall see, ... and the poor among men shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.'²⁹³ The books of the Old Testament with the criteria of the Messiah were Jesus' identification papers. All of John's problems were by no means solved with Jesus' answer. Didn't Isaiah also prophesy concerning 'liberty for captives' and 'opening of the prison' in the era of the Messiah?²⁹⁴ However, of one thing he could be sure: his work was not in vain and the rest was in God's hands.

Summarizing, we may say that two couples of disciples were sent by John to Jesus. The couples left shortly after one another, and also they arrived at Jesus shortly after each other: after the resurrection of Jairus' daughter. For in both answers Jesus refers to the plural 'the dead are raised up': i.e. the young man from Nain and Jairus' daughter. The expressions of Jesus to the messengers are nearly the same, which may indicate that they were spoken shortly after one another. The same is applicable to the speeches to the people after the departure of the messengers of John. In these, Jesus started to express his respect and appreciation for John.

The teaching record in Matthew is based on the adapted question about the *different one*. Obviously this more searching question was really of interest in a teaching record. And so the first question came in a public record of which Luke could make use of in his gospel.

293. Isaiah 29:18-19 (35:5-6).

294. Isaiah 61:1.

9.7 *Two women standing alone*

There are two moving stories in the gospels about mothers who had daughters with mental illness. When these women arrived at Jesus seeking healing of their children, their husbands were painfully lacking. To all appearance, they left their wives and consequently these women were compelled to care for their disordered children by themselves. Undoubtedly this was extremely difficult for them in a culture without any social care at all. And to add to the misfortune, Jesus refused to heal their children in a real brutish way according to our standards of good behavior. It happened outside the Jewish country north of Galilee. Jesus went there

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)		
Features	Matthew 15:21-28	Mark 7:24-30
Place:	Between 'Walking on water' and 'Loaves for 4000'	Between 'Walking on water' and 'Loaves for 4000'
Place of action:	The district of Tyre and Sidon	The region of Tyre and Sidon
The mother:	A Canaanite woman from that region	A Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth
Illness of the daughter:	Possessed by a demon	Possessed by an unclean spirit
The reason:	-	She had heard of him
Way of contact:	She cried, refusal, she approached and knelt and persisted	She approached and fell down and persisted
Motive for refusal:	Bread is for the children and not for the dogs	Bread is for the children and not for the dogs
Reaction:	The dogs eat under the table the crumbs	The dogs eat under the table the crumbs
Answer:	Great is your faith!	For this saying you may go

to be alone for some time, but he could not remain unnoticed. As Mark remarks: 'Yet he could not be hid.' Strangely enough, these women did not become discouraged; on the contrary, their faith flamed up in their hearts. How could that be?

The chronology makes it possible to decide on two reports of one occasion. They are very near in time. Both records deal with a girl with mental illness, the cry for help of the mother, her persistence, the seemingly unfeeling refusal of Jesus, the motivation that it is not right to take the bread of the children and throw it to the dogs. In both stories the women said that they only wanted to eat the crumbs under the table of the children. In both cases Jesus sent them away with a command for healing. There are small differences: (1) Matthew speaks about a Canaanite woman, while Mark about a Greek, a Syrophenician by birth. The woman in Matthew is of Canaanite ancestors, while the woman of Mark is of Greek ancestors.²⁹⁵ (2) Another difference is that in Matthew Jesus honors the woman for her faith, while in Mark he honors the woman for her word. Nevertheless, in spite of the dissimilarities almost all the commentators hold that the same event is presented in these stories. According to our presuppositions, it is impossible to accept that point of view.

The culminating answer of the woman in Matthew (15:27) is introduced with a simple introduction (rule 1, a.r.): 'She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."' She did not say more at that very moment. The answer in Mark is definitely not the same and an insertion of it into Matthew is impossible. Moreover it is clearly stated that the woman in Matthew is of Canaanite descent, while in Mark she is of Greek descent. Therefore the docudynamic aspects form sufficient evidence that we are dealing with

295. It is often supposed that 'Greek' here has the meaning of 'Greek speaking', instead of 'Greek descent'. However, this is so far from the normal meaning, that it doesn't need discussion. It is a good example of how interpreters deal with their embarrassment in their zeal for harmonizing. 'Greek descent' (Mark 7:26) does not harmonize with 'Canaanite descent' (Matthew 15:22), that's the point.

two separate healings.

The question remains however: how could it be that these events occurred precisely according to the same pattern? What is/are the *living pattern(s)* of these stories? In the first place, as in so many similar healing stories the first occasion established the precedent and the model for action. In these cases one quickly sees that the second woman immediately fell down - without crying for help at a distance. That action had remained without result in the first case, and therefore the second woman omitted doing so. She understood perfectly that making personal contact with Jesus, in combination with perseverance, did not fail. Jesus, in turn, did not honor her for her faith, but for the word she spoke. It contained the meaning of what her predecessor had said, and Jesus impressed upon her that this word would be the gate of mercy for her in the future. She had to stick with that word as we will see. The second reason that these healings have so much in common is that Jesus made a severe reprimand in both cases, which was in fact the bridge to indispensable teaching. With his opinion that the bread is for the children and not for the dogs, he forced the women to accept that the Jewish people are the chosen people of God to bear his salvation to the world. 'The salvation is from the Jews,' (John 4:22), and their table of salvation is only for those who wholeheartedly accept that. These women did accept that and even contented themselves with a place under the table of salvation. For remaining health they needed their hearts to be filled with the Word of God (*living pattern*). Didn't Jesus teach his disciples: 'When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest, but he finds none. Then he says, "I will return to my house from which I came." And when he comes he finds it empty, swept and put in order. Then he goes and brings with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.'²⁹⁶ Jesus prepared the women and their children for a lasting healing; when they filled

296. Matthew 12:43-45.

their hearts with God's Word, they became immune to spiritual disorder in the future, as evil spirits intensely dislike the Word of God. When Jesus saw that the women took it seriously that 'salvation is from the Jews', there was room for their children to be healed.

Matthew has the teaching report; he has the remark that Jesus 'was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'²⁹⁷ In Mark this remark is missing. Mark has the typical 'And-sentences' (five times versus two in Matthew). It is possible that the writers did not make a teaching report of the second occurrence, as they already possessed the one of the first event, which had more teaching elements. There is no public record in the gospel of Luke of one of these healings. This is in accordance with the remarks of Matthew that 'Jesus withdrew', and Mark that he 'would not have any one know it'. This visit outside the borders of the Jewish country was certainly meant as a silent trip without publicity.

9.8 People with money

Within nearly the same period some rich men approached Jesus with substantially the same question: 'Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?'²⁹⁸ Strangely enough, the conversation between each man and Jesus has the same character. First, Jesus refers to God as the one who is good. Secondly, Jesus' answer is: Do the (ten) commandments and you will live. Thirdly, the answer of the man is that he observed the commandments always, from his youth (Mark and Luke). Fourth, the word of Jesus: '... go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.'²⁹⁹ Fifth, the man went away sorrowful as he had great possessions. Sixth, a closing conversation follows between Jesus and his disciples about riches. Seventh, Peter takes

297. Matthew 15:24.

298. Matthew 19:16.

299. Matthew 19:21.

the lead in this conversation with the suggestion that they have left everything to follow Jesus and what will be their reward?³⁰⁰

When we look at the stories of the rich men we cannot escape seeing the great similarities: in expressions, in contents (line of reasoning), and the enclosures are strikingly identical in the same way. How is that possible?

The classical view is that we are dealing with three reports of one occasion. The famous and devout commentary on the gospels of John Calvin, (*Harmony of the Gospels*), took this position, and he has been followed until today by an army of commentators. The inescapable consequence of this position is that the sayings of Jesus have been altered when we compare the conversations in Matthew, Mark and Luke. I suppose that in the time of the Reformation, nobody saw this as a serious problem, as one had to deal with wars and persecutions. But now, in our time, Christianity is blamed again and again for the inconsistencies in their scriptures. And that these inconsistencies are serious will be painfully seen from the next discussion.

The story of 'The rich young ruler' has always been a *corner stone of the theory of the oral tradition* preceding the gospels, for it is undeniable that the parallel conversations are not exactly the same. Furthermore, it is even impossible to explain the dissimilarities by invoking the theory of translation from Aramaic into Greek somewhere in the process of the oral tradition. When we count the small differences in Greek between the three conversations in Matthew, Mark and Luke of 'The rich young ruler', we find at least 30 small dissimilarities; in the closing conversations about richness, we find around 40 slight differences; altogether about 70 dissimilarities. In three rather short passages, is that not a large number? But what is the ultimate conclusion of that phenomenon? A conclusion that is seldom expressed nowadays by orthodox scholars, but N.B. Stonehouse did some decades earlier: 'It is obvious therefore that the evangelists are not concerned, at least not at all times, to report the ipsissima verba [Latin:

300. Overview of look-alikes: 65, 66, 67.

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)			
Features	Matthew 19:16-30	Mark 10:17-31	Luke 18:18-30
In advance:	Blessing of the children	Blessing of the children	Blessing of the children
Who:	A young man	A man	A ruler
What:	He had great possessions	He had great possessions	He was very rich
Position:	-	Fell on his knees	-
Addressing with:	Teacher	Good Teacher	Good Teacher
Main question:	What good deed must I do, to have eternal life?	What must I do to inherit eternal life?	What shall I do to inherit eternal life?
Reaction:	All these things I have observed, ...	All these things I have observed from my youth, ...	All these I have observed from my youth.
Expressions:	Many similarities with Mark and Luke	Many similarities with Matthew and Luke	Many similarities with Mark and Matthew
Enclosure Jesus:	Slight differences It is hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom	Slight differences It is hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom	Slight differences It is hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom
Enclosure Peter:	We have left everything ... What then shall we have?	We have left everything ...	We have left our homes ...
Afterwards:	Parable and third prophecy of the Passion	Third prophecy of the Passion	Third prophecy of the Passion

the very own words] of Jesus.' And he continued: 'Inasmuch as this point seems constantly to be overlooked or disregarded in the modern situation it may be well to stress again that orthodox expositors and defenders of the infallibility of Scripture have consistently made the point that infallibility is not properly understood if it is supposed that it carries with it the implication that the words of Jesus as reported in the gospels are necessarily the *ipsissima verba* [Latin: the very own words]. What is involved rather is that the Holy Spirit guided the human authors in such a way as to insure that their records give an accurate and trustworthy impression of the Lord's teachings.'³⁰¹ It is no coincidence that Stonehouse wrote these words in his commentary on 'The rich young ruler'. But what must the conclusion of a young student in Theology be, when he reads this? Or of any non-professionally-educated Christian? I'm sorry to say it, but the inevitable conclusion is that we don't possess the actual words of the Lord in the gospels. And that is simply unacceptable: psychologically, theologically, historically and grammatically.

Psychologically. Reading the above quotes of Stonehouse, doesn't one get the desperate feeling of Mary Magdalene who cried out: '... they have taken away my Lord, and *I do not know where they have laid him.*'?

Theologically. What can be the significance of the gospels anymore, when what Jesus said is questionable? 'Every one then who hear *these words of mine* and does them, will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; ...' Are there words to build upon then? Maybe Jesus' ideas are left, but we cannot be certain of that either. Maybe it was only the enthusiastic ideas of the apostles who put these ideas into Jesus' mouth years later. And what about that guidance of the Holy Spirit, about which N.B. Stonehouse spoke? In commentaries, the work of the Holy Spirit is not stressed. Rather, the differences are stressed, and they are explained as products of the oral tradition without any reference to the Holy Spirit at all, even in orthodox works.

301. N.B. Stonehouse, 1964, p. 108 – 110.

Historically. Isn't the church based on a monomania? If the apostles could lay their own words on Jesus' lips, they could also invent the resurrection as 'a happy ending'. It is impossible to base one's faith on historical facts only (Lessing), and it is much more impossible to base one's faith on a set of 'possible ideas'. It is only possible to base one's faith on a relationship, and a relationship is based on true sayings, viz. of Jesus. Therefore the apostles have given us the gospels in which more than 600 times it is clearly stated 'Jesus said ...', or 'Jesus answered and said ...'. They knew perfectly well the value of Jesus' own sayings.

Grammatically. In the first chapter of this book we have given the proper grammatical evidence for the right understanding of the prologues of the Gospel of Luke and of the first Letter of John. We have clearly demonstrated that the traditional grammatical analyses of these texts are definitely incorrect and better are needed. These passages underline the riches of the gospels: we possess indeed, the very own words of Jesus Christ, the *ipsissima verba*.

It is not my purpose to blame scholars with different views. That wouldn't make sense at all. We have to be grateful for every theological advantage that has been brought forward in the past; however we cannot continue with a theological inheritance which is in conflict with our true Christian inheritance: the New Testament, and particularly the gospels. Let's now look at the stories of the rich men and see how they form *together a corner stone for documentation exegesis*.

It is impossible to explain the three stories as descriptions of one occasion. In each instance (Matthew, Mark and Luke) the discourse between Jesus and the rich man is closed: i.e. direct sequence of question and answer (rule 4, a.r.). That makes it impossible to combine the discourses into one great conversation. The details also force us to accept three different events. Matthew speaks about 'a young man', and in Mark and Luke the man says that he has observed the commandments from his youth onwards (Greek: *neotès*: youth). In these two cases it is supposed that the speaker is not a young man anymore, but an older man. Moreover the rich man of Luke is 'a ruler', that means: a person in authority. In Jewish culture it was impossible to inherit authority; one could only acquire authority - especially in

Jewish society - by experience of life. At the age of about forty, one could become a ruler. Therefore the ruler in Luke was certainly not the young man of Matthew. The ruler in Luke did not kneel in front of Jesus, he could not do that due to his social position. Therefore the ruler in Luke is not the rich man of Mark either, who was an older man and knelt before Jesus. Undoubtedly we are dealing with three rich men. 'The rich young ruler' never existed; he is a composed character which has been arranged out of three different rich men!

The Imperative form 'sell ..., and give (distribute) to the poor!', is an *Aorist* form; a principle of acting is meant and not an immediate and complete application. In the course of time the rich men could sell their property of which they did not make use. That was the part of their possession they were supposed to use for the benefit of the poor. Jesus asked them to go home and make a start. Very often it has been interpreted wrongly as if they had to go home and immediately sell all of their belongings. If this were the case, an Imperative *Present* would have been used. Jesus taught his disciples the same principle: 'Sell your possessions and give alms; ...'³⁰² None of the listeners arose to carry out this command immediately. By 'Sell your possessions', 'all that one owns' is not meant here, but: 'everything with which one does nothing'. John the Baptist had followed the same ethics: 'He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.'³⁰³ Expressions such as 'Sell all that you have ...' (Luke) and 'Sell what you have ...' (Mark) mean: Sell what you *hold* and with which you do nothing.³⁰⁴ For the rich men of these stories, that was a considerable amount, as, hearing this command, they were very disappointed in Jesus.

The men did not recognize this word of Jesus as 'gospel', ('good news'), but as 'bad news'. The life of a rich person at that time was not simple: no Insurance, no police with modern criminal investigation departments. The rich had to organize

302. Luke 12:33.

303. Luke 3:11.

304. The Greek verb *echoo* has two basic meanings: to have, to hold.

nearly the complete protection of their properties against unreliable slaves, corrupt servants, money-grubbing tax collectors and plundering gangs. Nobody would lift a finger when a rich man was robbed. They had to organize a small army of 'faithful' followers, who were reliable as long as they were paid. The relationships of the rich were nearly all monetary relationships. Jesus offered a personal relationship with them and so he gave them the commandment to give up their properties for the poor. If they would do so, their monetary relationships would come to an end. Only care for their daily needs would remain; that was Jesus' liberation for them. They could take for their daily needs as much as they wanted to count, as Peter said to Ananias: 'And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?'³⁰⁵

The fact that the rich men came to Jesus at nearly the same time, and at nearly the same place indicates that they had had contact with each other (*living pattern*). Living in the same region and belonging to the same social circle, they had met each other and they had discussed the Rabbi of Nazareth and his teaching about eternal life. That was an interesting point. Of course they knew that being a Jew did not guarantee eternal life. They knew enough co-nationals who were definitely unreliable. But what would be the condition for receiving eternal life? It couldn't be money, if so they all possessed the life already. No, there had to be something else, but what ...? It was not difficult for them to agree on this point, and there they finished ..., they did not dare to admit that it was a serious problem for each of them. If they had done so, they would have come to Jesus *together*. Their contact was not that open that they dared to share their deepest secrets; it was certainly part of their problem that they were unable to handle true personal relationships. However, their discussion revealed their basic question and each one decided to arrange a meeting with Jesus to ask him. He, as a Rabbi, could certainly solve the riddle. By questioning him, it was impossible to become socially incorrect. But the answers they got were very disappointing to them, to give up their wealth on behalf of the poor. Maybe – after mature consideration –

305. Acts 5:4.

they followed Jesus' word and experienced the blessing of it.

After each meeting with a rich man, Jesus started to teach about wealth and faith in God. These conversations are interesting examples of the classical way of teaching: the diatribè-form of discussion in which each aspect of a case could be repeated to make the teaching complete. It is only one time that Peter asks 'Lo, we have left everything and followed you. *What then shall we have?*' (Matthew 19:27) What follows, is that Jesus starts to talk about their rewards. In Mark and Luke, Peter only states 'We have left everything and followed you.' Peter already knew the answer, it was not necessary to question about that again. He could confine himself to the statement only, to make it possible for Jesus to accomplish his teaching about the rewards of the gospel. Maybe Peter liked to hear that again, or he was concerned that others, who were not present during the other occasion(s), should hear that.

Matthew has the largest report. The teaching report of Matthew with the issue 'riches and belief in God' had the specific prophecy about the twelve thrones the twelve disciples were to inherit. Luke's public record is the smallest one. It doesn't speak about the twelve thrones, or about the astonishment of the disciples³⁰⁶; these things were not appropriate for the public at the time of the first reports being written. It was probably not only the twelve who were listening in Luke's story as Jesus speaks to 'those who heard it' (Luke 18:26) and not specifically to the twelve as in Matthew (19:23) and in Mark (10:23). The report of Mark became the remnant record, as the remark of the twelve thrones for the twelve disciples is lacking in it.

Those disciples who heard Jesus speak about this subject for the first time - that it is difficult for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom - were astonished (Matthew 19:25, Mark 10:26). It is therefore realistic to suppose that not all of the twelve disciples were present during the stories of Matthew and Mark, because of the repetition of the astonishment in Matthew and Mark.

306. Matthew 19:25, Mark 10:24-25.

9.9 Parable of the wicked tenants

In the last week before his Passion, Jesus remained in the open places around the temple regularly to teach the people. This was the environment and meeting place of the intelligentsia of Israel, and here all the knowledge of the Torah was concentrated. The temple was the religious and political center of Israel and also of the Diaspora of the Jews outside Israel. Offerings were the daily rituals of the priests and study in the Torah was the daily practice of the rabbis and their students. The books of the Old Testament were preserved, studied and copied, and the Jerusalem copies found their way to the synagogues all over the Roman Empire and beyond. The rabbis held their conversations with their students in the shady colonnades around the temple squares. Everything was focussed on the God-given revelation to Israel in the books and the traditions of Israel.

It was risky for Jesus, who had never received rabbinic teaching, to teach his disciples and the people in public right in this place. His teaching was aimed at the common man who hungered for spiritual and practical knowledge to serve the Lord God of Israel. Jesus was not interested in the elite of intelligent students who were busy with acute interpretations of the Law, irrespective of how important these might be in themselves. Jesus' presence in the temple squares was aimed differently and critical reactions were bound to come.

In this setting, Jesus told the well-known parable of the wicked tenants three times.³⁰⁷ Some tenants of a vineyard refused to pay tax to the landowner. They assaulted the servants who were sent by the landowner to receive the payment. At last the son of the landowner came to receive the tax, but the tenants killed him. In doing so, they supposed that they could inherit the vineyard, but that was a misconception: What would the landowner do after the murder of his son? The parable ended with this question. In the beginning, the listen-

307. Overview of look-alikes: 76, 79, 80.

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ers didn't understand the meaning of the story. It seemed to be a labor dispute getting out of control, but through the repetitions of the narrative, the people came to understand the real significance. This was not simply an interesting story, but harsh reality.

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)			
Features	Matthew 21:33-41	Mark 12:1-9	Luke 20:9-16
Addressed to:	Chief priests, Elders, (Pharisees), 21:23,45	Chief priests, Scribes, Elders 11:27, 12:1	Chief priests, Scribes, Elders 20:1
In advance:	Authority of Jesus questioned and parable of two sons (uninterrupted with parable tenants, rule 4 a.r.)	Authority of Jesus questioned (interrupted with parable tenants, rule 5 a.r.)	Authority of Jesus questioned (uninterrupted with parable tenants, rule 4 a.r.)
Afterwards:	Parable Wedding Banquet	Question about paying taxes	Question about paying taxes
When:	In the morning, after entering the temple	At noon, after return in the temple	-
Details:	Hedge, wine press, tower, two groups of servants	Hedge, wine press, tower, many servants one after another	- , three servants
Question:	... what will he do to those tenants?	What will the owner of the vineyard do?	What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?
Answered by:	Listeners	Jesus himself	Jesus himself
Reaction:	Tried to arrest him	Tried to arrest him	Tried to arrest him

In most modern interpretations, the point of view is that the three variations of this parable are results of the oral tradition in combination with redaction activities of the gospel writers about 30 - 50 years after the occurrence.³⁰⁸ During the oral tradition, step by step embellishments would have entered into the parable, which would show the course of history. That would have caused the existence of three variants of the parable. This supposition has brought far-reaching conclusions. Firstly, these parables would not have been uttered by Jesus in the forms in which we possess them. Secondly, the parables would cover the period in which the Romans conquered the Jews and recaptured Jerusalem. (What then would the owner of the vineyard do?) Thirdly, - as an inevitable consequence - the parables got their final form in about 65 – 85 A.D., the period of war and oppression by the Romans. Finally, the gospels in which these parables are related must have been written in about this period (65 – 85 A.D.).

These conclusions, and of course their underlying suppositions, are dramatically wrong. If these parables had reflected the Roman war and the oppression thereafter by the Romans, the vineyard would have been destroyed in the parable or at least some part of the vineyard, which is not the case. The parables, on the contrary, suggest continuance of the entire vineyard instead of destruction. In the same way, threatening war is not implied in the parables. The conclusion must be: the dating of the gospels within 65 – 85 A.D. is a mere fabrication.

The parables show a future perspective of a limited group: 'When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables they perceived that he was speaking about them.'³⁰⁹ Jesus prophesied punishment of the religious leaders of his own

308. For a short survey of possibilities: I.H. Marshall, 1978 (repr. 1989), p. 726-727. Marshall assumes that Luke followed Mark [by making alterations]. 'It seems possible, therefore, indeed probable, that we have here an authentic parable of Jesus which had obvious allegorical possibilities; *these were developed in the tradition* [italics mine], but in such a way that the genuine latent thrust of the parable was expressed more clearly for a Christian audience.'

309. Matthew 21:45.

generation: 'Therefore I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.'³¹⁰ The parable clearly says that these severe words were addressed to the men with whom Jesus stood face to face at that very moment, no more and no less. That 'other nation', of course, never meant the Romans. Those pagans were certainly not 'the God pleasing nation that brought spiritual fruits for the Lord'. This underlines the earlier drawn conclusion that the dating of these parables can't be in about 65 – 85 A.D., as the nation which is spoken of here is not the Roman people who conquered the Jews in 70 A.D.

The parables of the wicked tenants fit perfectly into the period of the Jewish Christian Church in Jerusalem under the guidance of the twelve apostles, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus spoke about another nation producing the fruits of the Kingdom, he certainly followed the Old Testament metaphor of a hidden righteous 'rest' of the people of Israel³¹¹; not only the visible group of Jews who had recognized Jesus as the Messiah and who were baptized in the Jerusalem Church, but all those of Israel, who longed to do Gods will. 'And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high honor. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both of men and women, ...'³¹² After Pentecost, the temple had become the central meeting point of the Christians of Jerusalem and the religious leaders recognized: '... you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching ...'³¹³ This was the rest of the people building on the rock Jesus Christ, 'rejected by the builders' but still being 'the head of the corner'.³¹⁴ With the parable of the wicked tenants, Jesus had in mind the offspring of the Jewish Church in Jerusalem a short time later, after the Passion and Pentecost.

310. Matthew 21:43.

311. Isaiah 10:20-21, Jeremiah 23:1-4 etc.

312. Acts 5:12,14.

313. Acts 5:28.

314. Matthew 21:42.

Let's look now at the relationship between the three parables.

After Jesus' triumphal entry in Jerusalem, he caused a great commotion on the temple square. Jesus expelled the dealers from the open place before the temple: market vendors as well as money-changers (Matthew).³¹⁵ That night Jesus left the city, to return the next day. This new day is fully described in the gospels. Matthew says about the end of that day: 'And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did any one dare to ask him any more questions.'³¹⁶ From Matthew 21:18 – 22:46 we possess a description of one single day³¹⁷, with all sorts of discussions, parables and riddles. But there is enough room for discussions in Mark and Luke on the same day, as there are several short interruptions in Matthew's description. As Matthew says that nobody dared to ask him any more questions from that day onwards, we can be certain that all the questions of Pharisees, priests and elders in Mark (11:27-12:37) and Luke (20:1-21:4) belong to that same day.

When Jesus entered the temple, for the second time he expelled the dealers from the temple square, who had again settled there early in the morning, as Mark tells us.³¹⁸ Time for the authorities - the chief priests and the elders - to establish a provisional inquiry and to approach Jesus with the question of why he acted in this way and from where his power of attorney came: 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?'³¹⁹ Standing face to face with the representatives of the authorities, Jesus did not

315. Matthew 21:12-13.

316. Matthew 22:46.

317. Interruption and succession in Matthew 21:18 – 22:46; interruption 21:23 'And-sentence'; succession 22:28, 33, 42 rule 4 a.r.; interruption 22:1, however short as the same listeners are at issue 'spoke to them'; succession 22:15 Then-sentence (rule 4 AR); interruption 22:23 but with the remark 'The same day'; succession 22:34, 41 meanings in the content.

318. Mark 11:15-18.

319. Matthew 21:23.

act slavishly at all, on the contrary he proposed a deal: 'I also will ask you a question; and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?' Under the eyes of the public the chief priests and the elders could not escape answering, and when they said that they did not know the answer, Jesus started to teach them with parables as his custom was. It looked as if he had forgotten the opening question of the priests and the elders, but certainly he had not. He had turned the situation into his profit and he started to influence his listeners.

The priests and the elders were offered the possibility of recovering from their ignorance before the public. He told them so-called riddle parables, to which they were supposed to reply after a final question. The last parable was that of the wicked tenants, (the Matthew variant of the parable), and the question was: 'When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do with those tenants [who had killed his son]?' That was easy and the priests and the elders answered: 'He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their season.' A few moments later they discovered that they had judged themselves and they became angry. They wanted to arrest Jesus instantly, but the multitude was too large to do so and therefore they decided to return to Jesus later on that day with a much stronger delegation. At the end of the last parable Jesus had blamed them as bad builders, they who were lawfully chosen as defenders of the temple and the traditions of Israel. Wasn't that blasphemy? And blasphemy meant the death penalty. To challenge the owners of the temple and to question their authority might be enough to arrest Jesus. Later on that day they would return, well prepared with scribes, and if Jesus would repeat his accusation for the second time, they had a point: they could take action for his arrest.

From the gospel of Mark we get the information that Jesus and his disciples 'went out of the city when it was late.' Mostly one supposes that 'late' is 'in the late afternoon' and so translates it as: 'When the evening came they went out

...³²⁰ But according to the context the translation, 'late in the morning' would be better, because they passed the fig tree which was cursed that morning by Jesus going to the city. And now leaving the city, still in the morning, before noon, they saw the tree 'withered away to its roots'.³²¹ (Mark 12:20) During the heat of the hours around twelve o'clock the people left the temple for the afternoon rest. Later in the afternoon they returned to the temple. It seems that Jesus - for the afternoon rest - went to the Mount of Olives at the east side of the city, where he also remained at night. (Luke 21:37)

After the period of rest, Jesus and his disciples returned to the temple to teach the people.³²² The delegation of chief priests and elders also returned, but now complete, as they were accompanied by a group of scribes, (Mark and Luke). The dignity of the scribes of the temple was of great importance as Jesus spoke with regard to them about a 'greater condemnation'.³²³ As earlier mentioned, rabbinic discussions followed vast structures. Statements of a rabbi once made were binding, in contrast to the words of a disciple. A Rabbi could not allow himself to give answers which contradicted former ones. It was quite

320. Matthew 22:46 shows convincingly that all the questions of Mark 11:27-12:37 belong to the day after the Triumphal Entry. The translations Mark 11:19 (And when evening came they went out) and 11:20 (passed by in the morning) suggest a night in between. However in 11:19 the Greek for 'evening' is certainly missing, the translation is: 'And late they went out.' As the phrase 'passed by in the morning' directly follows, it is clear that 'late in the morning' is meant. The first meaning of the Greek 'opse' is: late (in all possibilities). The second meaning is: late in the day.

321. Immediately after the curse they saw features of desiccation. (Matthew 21:20) It would be strange if Peter saw the complete withering of the fig tree - to its roots - the next day and not on the day of the curse when they came back from Jerusalem. That would mean that he did not see a great change when they passed the tree later, coming from Jerusalem. It is therefore more realistic that Peter would draw Jesus' attention to the tree later that same morning of the curse. (Mark 11:20)

322. Mark 11:27, Luke 20:1.

323. Luke 20:47, Mark 12:40.

easy for the weighty delegation to repeat the discussion of that morning and there was no other choice as the full delegation had to hear what had happened early in the morning, (*living pattern*: repetition in rabbinic teaching). So they started immediately questioning Jesus' authority³²⁴. From there they came to Jesus counter-question about John the Baptist³²⁵; of course the priests could not find a better answer than 'We don't know.'³²⁶ And Jesus had therefore refused to answer their question. Would Jesus now put their authority up for debate, or attack their authority? Yes he did, but not in the way they had expected.

Instead of telling them the parable of the wicked tenants, Jesus turned to the people and started to loudly tell them the story, over the heads of the authorities, the short variation of Luke.³²⁷ And arriving at the quote from scripture he finished with the harsh statement that this stone will 'crush any one' on whom it falls. This was a relentless warning that all authority is from God and therefore that nobody will automatically keep a once-received authority. With this absolute statement, Jesus imposed silence on the delegation; any discussion had become impossible between them. Because of the silence Jesus started to tell the parable in the variation of Mark (*living pattern*: repeated teaching), with a lot of additions: *the hedge around the vineyard* was of course the strong wall around Jerusalem; *the wine press* was certainly the central point in Jerusalem, the altar

324. Mark 11:28 and Luke 20:2 have both a plural introduction (rule 3 a.r.); this question has been mentioned several times, and Mark, as well as Luke, has one of them.

325. Mark 11:29 and Luke 20:3 have a twofold introduction. Mark 11:29 Jesus said to them {answering} (majority text) ...; Luke 20:3 {Answering he said} to them ... Jesus put the two questions in this order as Luke continues with direct succession, 20:5: '{And} they discussed it with one another, ...' Mark has an interruption (verse 11:31): 'And they argued with one another ...'

326. The sayings in the conversation within the delegation are introduced with plural introductions (rule 3 a.r.).

327. Luke 20:9 succession (rule 4 a.r.). '[And] he began to tell the people this parable: ...'

where the offerings were pledged; *the tower* to look over the vineyard was the white temple with golden roof on mount Sion and visible from every spot in town. All these features were missing in Luke's variation which Jesus spoke to the people, but when he turned to the delegation of the temple representatives, he added these aspects (in Mark's variation) and they could not miss the point that the parable meant them and no one else. These details could have brought to the men feelings of acknowledgement and contrition, but that did not happen, only the confrontation remained.

It is understandable that the shorthand writers used the first parable for a teaching report (the Matthew variation). During the narration, an open opportunity for teaching existed. The conflict between Jesus and the delegates only developed openly at the end.³²⁸ The writers used the parable spoken to the people for a public record, which Luke later used in his gospel. It was standard procedure for the writers to follow that method. Mark used the remnant record; that means it contained the parable which was left over.

9.10 Doves and hawks

In the previous chapter we summed up the most frequent causes for repetitions in Jesus' ministry: healing as a precedent to be followed, (Rabbinic) teaching by repetition, similar questions among the people, repeated accusations, and repeated manifestations, (positive and negative). These were in fact *living patterns* which the gospel writers did not take great pains to explain, as they belonged most normally to every day life. A lot of examples are given in this chapter to show the relevance of this state of affairs, only the manipulating activities of Jesus' opponents - some of which we have seen - are still to be demonstrated.

From the beginning of Jesus' ministry he stood under control of the religious

328. Matthew 21:45.

power that worked from Jerusalem all over the country.³²⁹ Many times the hawks among the Pharisees had tried to collect evidence against him or even created that evidence. However, much material was arbitrary. What about healings on the Sabbath? For them it was working on the day of rest, a trespass. But Jesus defended himself with the objection: when your donkey is thirsty on the Sabbath, you also unbind it to lead it to the well, and you blame me as I unbind this man or woman from his or her illness on the Sabbath? Then there were his claims of his divine origin; however he himself did not use that in his teaching, he always spoke about himself as 'The Son of Man'. It was usually others who called him the Messiah; even his nearest disciples did not use that title for him. It would be difficult therefore to accuse him of teaching the people wrongly, against Jewish theology. Nevertheless Jesus did not fit into Jewish life. His forgiving of all sorts of people he had never met before was completely out of order. Wasn't it up to God to forgive people? And Jesus' attacks on the Jewish religious traditions hit hard. Now in Jerusalem he did not submit to the highest religious authorities of the temple. No, there could be but one conclusion for those who were in power: Jesus was strange and dangerous; something should be done. But what?

In a conflict, opposing parties try to find the weak spots in the defense of the other side. Communication and conflict are then the lines of action. However in this case we might better speak of manipulation and conflict. We can discuss several examples of this sort of interaction between Jesus and his oppressors. The larger religious parties that worked in and around the temple were Priests, Pharisees and Sadducees. Each group had its own scribes. Dominant personalities as well as moderate-minded persons belonged to each group: hawks and doves. Jesus did not blame every Pharisee. Sometimes he would accept invitations to eat with them. It is therefore historically unjust to speak curtly about the bad Pharisees and Sadducees. It was the Pharisees who saved Judaism after the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. Because of their peaceable mentality, they received from the

329. Mark 3:22. After the death of John the Baptist: Mark 7:1, Matthew 15:1.

Romans permission to study the law in Jamnia and to give guidance to the Jewish people. They were the preservers of the Temple Text of the Old Testament.³³⁰ In many things, Jesus must have felt congeniality toward the Pharisees, because of the many common visions they shared about the faith and common practices in daily life. But yet, Jesus had to blame them as a group repeatedly, because of severe wrong presuppositions they cherished in matters of tradition, which were man-made instead of God-given, and which - in life and religion - formed real obstacles to serving God wholeheartedly. It was the hawks that gave direction to each party; we would call them fundamentalists, as they were ready to impose their traditions and opinions unconditionally on everyone else and they did not shrink away from harsh measures. Jesus came in contact with the hawks as well as with the doves of Pharisees and Sadducees already in Galilee, but also later in Jerusalem.

A. The sign of Jonah

Jesus repeatedly compared himself with the prophet Jonah.³³¹ We have to deal with four descriptions and the occasions of Matthew 16 and Mark 18 may be identical.

330. The term 'Temple Text' is used for the text of the Old Testament books that was preserved in the temple from Ezra onwards. In theology it is accepted custom to constitute a 'history of the text' of the Old Testament based on text variants in Septuagint, Samaritan Pentateuch, Dead Sea Scrolls, Targums and quotes in the Talmud with as the ultimate result the Masoretic text. However, all these supposed constituting texts represent vulgar text forms outside the second temple. It is historically undeniable that in the second temple a 'Temple Text' existed and there are enough signs that the Pharisees had that text form at their disposal, which at last has been preserved in the Masoretic text form (St. Petersburg Codex and Aleppo Codex) on which nearly all translations of the Old Testament rely.

331. Matthew 12:38-42, 16:1-4, Mark 8:11-12, Luke 11:29-30. Overview look-alikes, section 8.4: 34, 43, 58.

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)				
Features	Matt. 12:38-42	Matt. 16:1-4	Mark 8:11-12	Luke 11:29-30
Place:	During mission of the twelve	After Loaves 4000	After Loaves 4000	Journey to Jerusalem
Who:	Scribes and Pharisees	Pharisees and Sadducees	Pharisees	-
Addressed to:	This generation	This generation	This generation	This generation
Prophet:	Jonah	Jonah	Jonah	Jonah
Extensive:	Yes	No	No	Yes
Afterwards:	-	Leaven of Phar. and Sad.	Leaven of Phar. and Sad.	-

What might be the importance of the repeated question to Jesus to show a sign from heaven, a miracle? And what was the importance of Jesus referring constantly to the prophet Jonah? The Pharisees argued as follows: Moses had shown himself as a prophet before pharaoh by two signs. His stick could change into a snake, and his hand could get the illness of leprosy. And – as they argued – Jesus had to also show signs to convince them, as evidence that he was a real prophet. No signs, no prophet! A religious court in a rigid religious environment could use this as an argument to punish Jesus; maybe with the death penalty, as this was the punishment for false prophecy. Only a less severe but negative judgement would be enough to bring Jesus’ reputation into discredit. But there was more; if Jesus would do a sign in response to their challenge, he affirmed himself to be a prophet. And wasn’t that blasphemy? To put yourself on the level of an Old Testament prophet? In other words there were several dangerous traps for Jesus within this question.

Jesus’ answer demonstrated that his opponents were using a false superficial trick. Indeed, Moses had used the two signs before the people.³³² But in the later

332. Exodus 4:30.

tradition of prophecy in Israel, the word of a prophet could be enough without a sign. As the word was spoken from God, it possessed a strong spiritual and moral power, and it was in accordance with God's revelation in the past. In his answer, Jesus referred to the prophet Jonah, as - in spite of the great signs ascribed to this prophet - the people of Nineveh did repent due to his message, without seeing any miracle. That was the evidence that the word of a prophet without a sign was enough. Jesus simply proved that their question was wrong and so he bypassed the underlying threats. Jesus' repeated reference to Jonah was also a repeated stigmatizing of people who thought they had the right to demand miracles from a prophet. The Pharisees tried to collect incriminating material against Jesus again and again (*living pattern*), while Jesus, with the same frequency, disproved their unscriptural arguments.

Matthew has two longer reports; one a teaching report with references to several signs of Jonah and with a prophecy that Jesus will be three days in a sepulchre as Jonah was three days in a sea monster (12:38-42); the other report with the teaching of signs in the sky which are recognizable (16:1-4), but why then can't they recognize the time in which they live? It is clear that Matthew, with his gospel for teaching, focuses on Jesus as the Messiah, the era of the Messiah and the resurrection of the Messiah. Luke has a shorter report, but his material also shows that the public was informed by Jesus about his conflict with the Pharisees concerning signs. Remarkably, Jesus finished it with a reference to himself: '... and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.' Mark's variation shows that the example of Jonah could be used briefly as a one-liner.

B. Paying taxes

Why was Jesus approached three times with the question whether it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Wasn't it enough to hear his answer only one time?

There existed two parties in Israel who had many convictions in common, but they differed in one point of view: paying taxes to Caesar. The Pharisees and the Zealots were at 'daggers drawn' over the tax question. In the year 6 A.D., Judas the

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)			
Features	Matthew 22:15-22	Mark 12:13-17	Luke 20:20-26
Who:	Pharisees	Chief priests, Scribes, Elders	Scribes, chief priests
They sent:	Their disciples and Herodians	Some of the Pharisees, some of the Herodians	Spies
Title:	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher
In Advance:	Parable wicked tenants	Parable wicked tenants	Parable wicked tenants
Afterwards:	Sadducees about resurrection	Sadducees about resurrection	Sadducees about resurrection
Conversation:	Uninterrupted	Uninterrupted	Uninterrupted

Galilean mobilized many people who refused to pay tax to the Romans.³³³ These zealots argued on religious grounds that it was forbidden to pay taxes to the Romans, for in that case they were not free Jews anymore, but slaves. And slavery was not their calling, according to their view. The Pharisees did not agree with them and accepted the Roman taxes. Many zealots had been crucified, but the movement was still alive in Jesus' time. The ordinary people often sympathized with the zealots as they gave them arguments with which to dodge legal taxes.

The Pharisees of Jerusalem, who were confronted with a multitude of Galileans in Jerusalem because Easter was near, probably felt unhappy with so many suspicious persons from Galilee around, and supposed that Jesus - as a Galilean - would teach the people to refuse to pay taxes. Maybe they had heard that there were zealots among his disciples (Simon the Zealot, Matthew 10:4³³⁴). They decided to trap Jesus using this issue '... as to deliver him up to the authority and

333. Acts 5:37.

334. In older translations: Simon the Cananaean.

jurisdiction of the governor.³³⁵ If he had the zealot point of view, they had the possibility of arresting him as a rebel. If he rejected this standpoint they had discredited him with the people. He might lose support among those people that saw tax collectors as collaborators with the Romans.

According to Matthew, the Pharisees sent their disciples to Jesus to question him.³³⁶ In Mark they are simply called ‘Pharisees’ and in Luke: ‘spies’. They looked very much like innocent young people who wanted to debate with Jesus about an issue which they were discussing with their teachers. These young students were the doves, but behind them were the hawks waiting for their booty. In the synoptic gospels we have three different conversations about the subject. The rules for analytical reading demonstrate that the conversations are without interruptions and it is not possible to combine the sayings into one discourse. In other words the Pharisees had chosen to take an offensive and sent several different groups of disciples to Jesus with the same question. If Jesus gave a negative answer three times, legally there couldn’t be a misunderstanding about his teaching.³³⁷ If he taught that it was permitted to not pay taxes, he was certainly subject to arrest as a revolutionist. With the three groups of disciples they sent out, the hawks among the Pharisees were creating incriminating evidence (*living pattern*).

Jesus understood that it was arranged; that it was theater. However the gospels do not inform us how he knew. It seems that the questioners read their question from a paper as they are very much the same in style. So there couldn’t be legal doubt later about the questions. The well-known answer of Jesus was a counter question: ‘Show me a coin. Whose likeness and inscription has it?’ When they said ‘Caesar’s’, he replied: ‘Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ The intention of the Pharisees with this attack

335. Luke 20:20.

336. Matthew 22:16.

337. ‘... only on the evidence of two witnesses, or of three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained.’ Deuteronomy 19:15. Also for death penalty, 17:6.

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- to bring Jesus before a Roman court - failed. The most simple-minded person could understand that he underlined the law to pay taxes, and he didn't lose, but won the goodwill of the people, as simplicity is the hallmark of truth. Of course many have understood the deeper message of Jesus which is still applicable: his encouragement to give ourselves to God as we are bearing the image of God, as the coin bears the image of Caesar. Our surrendering to God is our tax to God that is not one percent, or ten percent, but one hundred percent. That is our payment to God. And the gospel is that he gives it back to us, cleansed, purified and blessed, ready to work with it to glorify him.

C. Resurrection

There are three reports in which the Sadducees put a question to Jesus about the issue of Resurrection. According to the rules for analytical reading it is impossible to combine these conversations into one long discourse. And so we have to consider three different conversations between Jesus and Sadducees. The theology of the Sadducees differed greatly from that of the Pharisees, as they did not accept the existence of eternal life; life after death.

Docudynamic aspects (course of direct speech, course of events, details)			
Features	Matthew 22:23-33	Mark 12:18-27	Luke 20:27-40
Place of action:	Temple square	Temple square	Temple square
In advance:	Paying taxes to Caesar	Paying taxes to Caesar	Paying taxes to Caesar
Afterwards:	Greatest Commandment? Negative question	Greatest Commandment? Positive question	David's son and Lord
Title:	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher
Direct speech:	Slight differences	Slight differences	Slight differences
Reference to:	Moses	Moses	Moses

At the very start of Jesus' ministry, Pharisees and Sadducees had already worked together to undermine Jesus' work.³³⁸ Their unanimity was striking, as the differences between them were many and important. The Sadducees belonged to the upper class of society, while the Pharisees were held in great respect in the lower classes of society. The Sadducees accepted only the books of Moses as authoritative; in spiritual matters and in practical matters of daily life. The Pharisees accepted all the books: the Law and the Prophets. The Sadducees rejected eternal life in contrast to the Pharisees who believed in it strongly. Paul once cleverly made use of their disagreement on this point. In a meeting with Pharisees and Sadducees he arose and declared loudly that he was being accused because of his belief in eternal life.³³⁹ The result was a violent brawl between the two parties, and the Pharisees even started to defend him. However in their rejection of Jesus, the two groups were surprisingly unanimous.

After the offence of the Pharisees about taxes for Caesar, the Sadducees also tried to trap Jesus. They came with a theological question and indeed they could not use it as a threat for a death penalty, but they considered it to be an efficient means to discredit Jesus as a religious leader. A central point in his teaching was eternal life. They must have supposed that if they could weaken his teaching in this respect, Jesus' popularity was bound to come to an end. In their case, they also needed several answers from Jesus to establish his view, and so several delegations approached him with the same riddle parable (*living pattern*). The Sadducees had a standard example by which it was proven beyond doubt - according to them - that resurrection did not exist. There were seven brothers; the oldest married but he died; according to the law of Moses, the second married the widow, but he also died; and so all the brothers had her as their wife, each after the death of an older brother. None of them had a child with her. And the question the Sadducees posed was: 'In the resurrection, whose wife will she be?'

338. Matthew 16:1, 6.

339. Acts 23:6-9.

It seemed an insoluble problem and therefore the Sadducees claimed resurrection to be impossible. What would the Lord answer on this tricky question?

Jesus made short work of it. In the first place there are no weddings in heaven, no marriages. People do not marry there and they are as angels in heaven. Secondly, according to the scriptures the Israelites believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As God is not a God of the dead but of the living, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are living in God's presence. So there is resurrection. Jesus' refutation was short and powerful. Three times this riddle came up to him and three times he replied in the same way. Certainly the Sadducees felt that they were disproved as the Pharisees earlier had experienced.

Matthew, Mark and Luke remark that shortly thereafter nobody dared to pose questions anymore to Jesus. He had demonstrated painfully that he mastered both Pharisees and Sadducees.³⁴⁰ For Matthew, who preserved the teaching records, this was also an important moment: 'And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.'³⁴¹ In Matthew's concept, Jesus' teaching was not intended only for the closest disciples, but also for the crowd. Matthew has the same sentence in the beginning of his gospel after the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:28). Jesus' teaching was not a secret teaching for adepts, but of a public nature. The teaching records which Matthew used contained lessons not only for the closest disciples, but also universally for the crowds. In these cases we see hardly any difference between the reports of Matthew and Luke.

9.11 Documentation exegesis

The many passages of the synoptic gospels we have discussed in this and the previous chapters show that documentation exegesis is a viable means of gospel interpretation. We have presented the tools that are to be used in this field of work

340. Matthew 22:46, Mark 12:34, Luke 20:40.

341. Matthew 23:33.

and how these tools are useful in every instance: rules for analytical reading, similar descriptions referring to one and the same event or to several events (look-alikes), and living patterns as explanations for repetitions. Enough material has been brought forward to show that we have an alternative to exegesis with oral tradition as a starting point. Details and dissimilarities are much better explained as real observations of the speedy and shorthand writers of Jesus than as embellishments and transformations from a so-called oral tradition. Documentation exegesis directly reflects the work of Jesus' writers. The redaction into teaching and public records occurred during the completed state of the events in Jesus' ministry. We do not need a so called 'form criticism' nor 'redaction criticism' to 'search for the authentic sayings of Jesus'. We simply possess them already, from ages of old. The dynamic aspect of this approach is not only the theological message of the gospels in the person of Jesus Christ, but also the forgotten factor of his writers who preserved his teaching and started a scriptural delivery of his teaching continuing until today. We can trust in Jesus' words without any hesitation, just as it has been delivered to us throughout all ages.

THE GOSPELS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

After a thorough study of the origins of the gospels in the previous chapters, we will now focus on the relationship between the four gospels and the canon of the New Testament. The twenty seven books of the New Testament form together the canon and since the beginning the four gospels have always been the first of these books; a very special place in the canon. At the end of the second century A.D. the gospels were unquestioned as being scripture and accepted as the undeniable gift of the apostles, while there existed uncertainty about the letters in many parts of the Church. In a scholarly Introduction of the New Testament, the rise of the canon is always an important subject and the last chapter is usually dedicated to it. A presentation of the 'history of the canon' is usually incorporated, answering the question of how the canon came into being. The question is important, as the way one considers the rise of the canon determines the way one thinks about the gospels. A theory about the origins of the gospels and a consideration about the canon will always go hand in hand.

Generally, one considers the letters of Paul to be the first writings of the New Testament. And consequently all the other books were added, as one supposes, 'til the list of twenty seven books had been completed. But as we have seen, the four gospels were the first books of the Christians, not the letters of Paul. The

stock of the four gospels was the first material to which the later books were added. This is really meaningful with regard to a discussion about the canon of the New Testament.

10.1 Ellipse or straight line?

To solve the problem of the origin of the canon, one often starts with the following question: ‘How can we be sure that the twenty seven books of the New Testament were really written by those who are usually named as the authors?’ Or differently: ‘Are the names mentioned above the books really those of the authors?’ These questions are serious canon problems. The issue of the canon is very penetrating as we may learn from a saying of J. Wenham: ‘There is, then, no absolute proof that our canon is precisely the true canon, and no absolute proof that any one word of the text is precisely as God gave it.’³⁴² This is not a statement of a cynical theologian, but of a concerned evangelical theologian who draws his conclusions according to present orthodox theological knowledge. Therefore this statement is not negative, but rather significant about the nature and magnitude of the problem we are now dealing with.

The canon problem as it is posed nowadays looks like an ellipse. This geometric figure of a regular oval has two centers (foci) on the diameter and these centers (foci) determine the form of the ellipse.³⁴³ The resemblance is that the canon problem is focussed on, and moving around, two main questions which are insoluble. As the ellipse never reaches its centers, the canon problem in its current form turns around two main questions, without ever reaching the answers.

The first main question is: How did these books come into being? In current

342. J. Wenham, 1993, p. 192. In matters of faith we don’t need to speak in terms of absolute proof, but rather in terms of unshakable trust and of an unshakable canon.

343. The definition is that the sum of the distances of each point (on the oval) to the centers (foci) is a constant.

liberal theology, one supposes that the gospels were written when the apostles came to the end of their lives and the people started to write down the apostolic remembrances in the gospels. In the churches, they put names of apostles or of other authoritative persons such as Luke and Mark above the books and started to use the books in the churches. According to this view, some letters of the New Testament would also have been written in the same way, not by the persons by whose names they are known. Of course this model of origins is based on the theory of the oral tradition. In *orthodox theology*, one takes it that the apostles John and Matthew, and also their helpers Mark and Luke, wrote their books after a lifetime of preaching. The idea is that the transmission got forms of which it is certain that the original words and expressions had been changed during the years. Also in this view, the oral tradition determined the final fixed text which doesn't represent the authentic sayings of the people.

The second main question is: How did these books receive authority in the Church after the disappearance of the apostles? The usual answer is that after a long canon history, which started with Marcion in about 150, the authority of the New Testament books was established in the fourth century after a series of decisions in the Church. In the third and the fourth centuries the Church would have come to the final decision after a long search. Liberal as well as orthodox theology follow the same path of reasoning and the problem is that nobody knows how the churches could know after so many years that they made right decisions. Is the canon man made or God made? According to the orthodox and the liberal view, the answer to this second question seems to be: man made.³⁴⁴ That means: it is possible - or better, probable - that sometimes wrong decisions

344. Roman Catholic theology solves this problem with the idea that the Holy Spirit has always led the Church and so the Church of Rome cannot be misled in accepting the right canon. We can agree with the first statement that the Holy Spirit has always led the Church, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the Church of Rome did not make mistakes in the past. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is of such clarity that we are certainly able to understand how that guidance worked in relation to the canon for the whole Church.

were made. If so, it is not correct any more to present the canon as the word of God. And so we arrive at the former quote of J. Wenham: 'There is, then, no absolute proof that our canon is precisely the true canon, and no absolute proof that any one word of the text is precisely as God gave it.'

The answers to the two main questions are simply impossible for the constitution of an authoritative canon. It is completely unsatisfactory that the first Christians would be so naïve that they (or the apostles themselves) began to write when the apostles were dying out. In the same way it is not conceivable that they in that case mentioned repeatedly in the gospels 'and he said ...', instead of 'approximately he said ...' Adepts of the oral tradition theory sometimes suppose that the faith of the first Christians was so great that they thought he could have said so and their great belief in Jesus would be the justification to write in this way ('and he said ...'). Or one refers to the phenomenon of pseudepigraphic books in classical times and therefore it would not be a great disadvantage that the gospels were written quite late and that the names of apostles were used to give these books apostolic authority. All this reasoning does not take into account that faith in God is of a different kind. Faith requires that things are as it says. The books of the New Testament are necessarily of a totally different quality, as they are books of faith.

In the same way, the supposition that the gospels and some other books of the New Testament didn't have authority right from the beginning, but received that authority after a long canon history is completely unsatisfactory. Can these books have any value for us, if we know that only after many centuries were great value and authority attached to them? If we are already convinced in advance that the authority of these books is not authentic, then it is only interesting for historians to study these books. In that case they can't serve a divine purpose anymore. We may conclude: the two popular scientific starting points in matters of canonicity are senseless. The ellipse of the standard canon discussion will never reach its own centers (foci) and the debate will be circling around the questions forever without reaching the final answer as to how the canon of the New Testa-

ment is God's gift to mankind.

Fortunately there are better presuppositions for the study of the canon. *Firstly* the books had their value and authority right at their appearance. Speedy and shorthand writers who followed Jesus were responsible for the reports in the gospels. The apostles John and Matthew were the writers of their gospels, while Luke and Mark worked under their supervision. The letters of the New Testament bear the names of the persons by which they were written. *Secondly* the churches never produced books, but received the apostolic books to build their faith. With these two presuppositions we leave the geometric figure of the ellipse to enter into the figure of a straight line. A clear-cut consideration on the canonicity of the New Testament is possible through these anchor points as a straight line is defined by two fixed points.

10.2 The canon formula of the New Testament

Shortly after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the first Church was led in Jerusalem by Peter. And already at this very beginning the apostles started to teach the people as Jesus had taught them. They immediately used the reports of the speedy and shorthand writers, who had followed Jesus. Moreover, they decided to compile gospel books out of these reports. An explosion of gospel writing was the result as the books were copied again and again for the growing Christendom. As John states in the prologue of his First Letter: 'And we are writing this that our/your joy may be complete.' As we have earlier explained, the complete joy which John mentions is the joy of the hearers who became new creations in Christ ('your joy'). That is the same joy of the apostles ('our joy'). John speaks about the rule of their apostolic preaching; the apostles always brought their message of new life with accompanying reports out of Jesus' ministry. 'We are writing ...', the distribution of correct texts was a constant part of their apostolic task. The gospels contain the best possible description of Jesus and his message.

Not only was writing gospels part of their responsibility, conservation of

the correct teaching in the churches also belonged to their task. The churches that were founded by them and their co-workers used to read their books apart from the scriptures of the Old Testament. And so a process of conservation came into being. Each time when the Christians came together they read the books of the apostles. Books from other sources were excluded; non-apostolic books, no matter how spiritual they might be, were set aside. There was a strong conviction among the first Christians that they had to rely on God and on his revelation. They needed the books in which God himself spoke: through Jesus (the books of the gospels), or through the Holy Spirit (the apostolic letters).³⁴⁵ The process of conservation that came into being may be put in a formula as follows:

$$S \rightarrow C$$

Selection gives conservation. The apostles gave the new churches their gospel texts to read in the church. By doing so, the people conserved these texts, which were the authentic and normative books. In apostolic time pseudonymous books were already appearing, with the name of an apostle but not written by him. Paul said: ‘... we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by *letter purporting to be from us*, ...’³⁴⁶ The formula shows that these pseudonymous books and letters were rejected as long as the

345. A question is: Why didn't the apostles in their letters quote from the gospels, if these books existed already? And why did they quote so much from the Old Testament? This is also a serious question within the theory of the oral tradition. The answer may be that the apostles didn't use gospel material to support their own teachings, as they didn't want to subordinate Jesus' sayings to their words. They spoke through the Holy Spirit their own words and used the Old Testament as teaching material in their letters, because the prophets of old had spoken in the same way. Moreover in the Jewish culture in which they operated, they underlined with their references how important the Jewish Bible (Old Testament) remained to them.

346. 2 Thessalonians 2:2.

apostles lived to supervise the churches. The apostles formed the limiting condition in relation to the formula. Pseudo-apostolic books did not obtain a foothold in the churches as long as they lived.

When an apostle or a co-worker had left the newly-founded church, the formula also received the form:

$$C \rightarrow S$$

When the Christians came together they read the books they had received from the apostles and their co-workers. And so the two forms of the formula can be represented as:

$$S \leftrightarrow C$$

The formula shows that the reading of the books in the churches formed a closed circuit. No book could enter into the system and no book could disappear from it. A vast stock of apostolic books remained in each church.

Reading books and letters from apostles meant of course that the letters of the apostles to other churches were also important to read.³⁴⁷ That gave the final formula :

$$S(\text{total}) \leftrightarrow C(\text{total})$$

At an early stage, churches started to accept books from each other, S(total). In all the churches that were founded by apostles, books and letters were ready to

347. 2 Peter 3:15-16. '... Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.' It is generally accepted that the letters of Paul existed in almost complete collections when Peter wrote this. In our concept that the gospels were the first written books of the canon, we have to reckon in this passage of 2 Peter that a canon of four gospels and collections of letters of Paul were generally known among the Christians.

be added. At least a hidden canon of the New Testament existed in the apostolic church, C(total).

Were the apostles blind to the final formula? These men, who were so concerned with the preaching of the gospel, who were so adequate in their transmission of Jesus' teaching in script. Were they blind to the final form of the formula? Of course not. They understood perfectly the value and importance of it. Who were the twelve appointed by the Lord to be his witnesses? Who were the men who were designated to supervise? All the answers to these questions point to the apostles as *those who established the canon of the New Testament* during their lifetime. They could not allow the churches to change the stock of books after their departure. In the next section we will show that this is indeed the historical reality.

10.3 The lost link in the chain of canon history

The apostles were considered to be the authorities of the church as long as they lived. They were the reliable witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, of what he had done and said. Their scriptural teachings and those of their co-workers were held in the same authority. After their departure, the question occurred as to what exactly the right books were for the church. Strangely enough, it was a long time before one found the answer. It is generally accepted that the end of a long canon history came with a letter from bishop Athanasius in the year 367 A.D. Each year at Easter he sent a letter to all his co-workers in his diocese to encourage them in the faith and in their service. After giving the list of the 27 books of the New Testament he finished with the words: 'These are the fountains of salvation, that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take aught from these.'³⁴⁸

348. Greek text in Th. Zahn, 1890, p. 210-212.

It is remarkable that Athanasius, about 300 years after the apostles, worked exactly according to the canon formula (italics mine): 'But since we have made mention of heretics as dead, but of ourselves as *possessing the Divine Scriptures for salvation*; and since I fear lest, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, some few of the simple should be beguiled from their simplicity and purity, by the subtlety of certain men, and should henceforth read *other books — those called apocryphal* — led astray by the similarity of their names with *the true books*; I beseech you to bear patiently, if I also write, by way of remembrance, of matters with which you are acquainted, influenced by the need and advantage of the Church.' It is clear that Athanasius distinguished between the true books, the Divine Scriptures, and the other books, the apocryphal books. These qualifications are particularly remarkable in combination with the accurate list of 27 books. How did he know? That's the question. From where did Athanasius obtain his list? His bishop's town Alexandria was as important as Rome according to an ecclesiastical decision.³⁴⁹ He could not permit himself to make a stupid move. The eyes of the whole world were turned towards him.

For hundreds of years discussions had blazed in the church concerning the question of the right books of the church. Of course Athanasius knew of those discussions. He knew how in the second century Marcion had established a canon of one gospel (Luke) and some letters of Paul, and how it was rejected. He knew about Irenaeus and Tertullianus, who used nearly all the books of the New Testament in the second century. And of course he knew the views of Christian scholars such as Novatianus, Cyprianus, Origenes and Eusebius, who worked in the third and fourth centuries. He knew the classifications used by these teachers to determine the books that should be read in the church. In the council of Nicea of 325 it had been a point of discussion, but no decision had been taken. Athanasius had experienced that council as a young servant of Alexander who was at that time bishop of Alexandria. From where did Athanasius obtain the list of 27 books?

349. Canon 6 of the Council of Nicea.

The answer to this question is not so difficult, if one wants to look in the right direction. Scholars are usually focussed on the history of the canon and generally the letter of Athanasius in the year 367 is seen as the end of that history. And so one supposes that the key for his canon decision is to be found sometime earlier, i.e. before the year 367. That is hard to deny. However, the key for us to understand Athanasius' decision doesn't lie before, but after the year 367.

Athanasius' decision on the 27 books had a great impact on the history of the Church thereafter. In the year 382, pope Damasus (Italy, France and Spain) presented a list with the same books as canonical for the Church (the books however were not in the same order as Athanasius'). In 397, bishop Augustine accepted the canon in Carthago (North-Africa). And around 500 the canon of 27 was also accepted in Syria, together with the Jewish country which was at that time a province of Syria.³⁵⁰

After Athanasius' decision for the canon, substantially the same canon was accepted in all regions everywhere around the Mediterranean Sea, with one exception: the old apostolic region of Paul: Turkey-Greece. In that area, no ecclesiastical decision is known concerning the canon in the history of the Church. According to our concept of the canon formula, this is completely reasonable. Under the guidance and authority of the apostles, a canon had already been established there in apostolic time, as it is impossible to hold the view that a canon could have been accepted in this area at a later time without an ecclesiastical discussion. And that is the answer to the question from where Athanasius obtained his canon. He had seen for many years how - in Greece

350. In Syria, a slow process of acceptance of the canon started. In the first place it took years before the four gospels were accepted, as the Diatessaron of Tatianus (an anthology of gospel stories) was very popular in the churches. The Peshitta, Syriac version from about 400 A.D., contained only 22 books; without: 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude and Revelation (A. Wikenhauser, 1963, p. 86-87). The completion of this process came when Philoxenus translated the general epistles and Revelation in the year 508. Th. Zahn, 1901, p. 62.

and Turkey, across the Mediterranean sea - those 27 books existed and functioned within the Church.³⁵¹

Of course there is a lot to say about an apostolic canon of the New Testament in the old working area of Paul. In the first place, this canon could not be erased in this region. About 30 years before Athanasius' Easter letter of 367, Ceasar Constantine had charged Eusebius to copy 50 codices of the New Testament for the churches around Constantinople (Istanbul, ca. 330). It must be said that Eusebius did not like the book Revelation for personal reasons and so he omitted that book in the scrolls he produced. Eusebius' canon of 26 was supported by many theologians after him, up to: Cyrillus of Jerusalem (350), Gregorius of Nazianz (ca. 380), Amphilochius of Ikonium (ca. 380). Therefore Eusebius' canon is also called the 'scholars canon' (Gelehrtenkanon).

Strangely enough, Eusebius' move is still a striking witness for the existence of the unwritten³⁵² canon of 27 in the apostolic region where Paul once worked, when we take into account three points. (1) Eusebius' canon makes obvious that the New Testament was almost generally accepted, apart maybe from Revelation. (2) In his Church History, Eusebius gives an extensive explanation why the Revelation would have been written by a John other than the apostle, according to him. He didn't give such a detailed declaration about any other book, which means that no book in the Church needed a discussion to be excluded from the canon of 27 other than the Revelation. These two arguments already point out that long before Athanasius' decision the unwritten canon of 27 already had a strong position in the churches of Turkey and Greece. (3) In his Church History, Eusebius gives many descriptions and witnesses of former Church teachers who

351. The importance of the region of Paul's missionary activity is also visible in the five ecumenical councils held in Asia Minor: Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), and Constantinople (553).

352. If there existed a general ecclesiastical decision about the canon at that time, Eusebius could not have acted unopposed in this way.

used to cite Revelation as normative scripture.³⁵³ The conclusion about Revelation must be - as Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis (Cyprus), stated - that it was 'accepted by the majority and by the pious people.'³⁵⁴ He worked between 340 and 403, travelled a lot, and is above suspicion because of his pious and learned life. According to the formula $S \leftrightarrow C$ it must be said that Revelation could have its strong position only because it was conserved in the churches from apostolic time onwards. Even Eusebius was not able to excise the book from the vast stock of books that were to be read in the churches.

In the area of Paul's missionary activity, the unwritten canon must have been established under the authority of the apostle John. Paul and Peter had died early; during the persecution under Nero in Rome.³⁵⁵ Paul wrote most of his letters to the churches in this region. Peter also wrote the two general letters to this region.³⁵⁶ From the New Testament we know that the apostle John remained on the island of Patmos some time later, about 90 kilometres from the city Ephesus.³⁵⁷ There he wrote the Revelation for seven churches in Asia Minor. And so nearly all the books of the New Testament had been written and were known in Paul's missionary region. Under John's apostolic supervision, the canon of the New Testament (apart from the letter of Jude) must have gotten a fixed form around the Aegean Sea.

As there is a lack of any ecclesiastical decision in Turkey-Greece for the canon of 27 after Athanasius' decision in 367, no other conclusion is possible: Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, simply presented the canon which was already in

353. Church History IV,18:8 Justinus Martyr (second century), IV,24:1 Theophilus of Antioch (second century), IV,26:2 Melito of Sardes (second century), V,8:5 Irenaeus (second century), V,18:14 Apollonius (second century), VI,25:9 Origenes (third century).

354. Epiphanius, *Haereses* 77:36. Th. Zahn, 1901, p. 58.

355. It is generally accepted that Peter and Paul had died due to the persecution of Nero in about 64 A.D. according to the letter of Clemens Romanus V.

356. 1 Peter 1:1 and 2 Peter 3:1.

357. Revelation 1:9.

use for centuries on the other side of the Mediterranean sea. At the council of Nicea (325), which Athanasius attended as a young man, no decision had been taken concerning the question of the canon. The 27 books were known in Egypt for a long time. Athanasius had only to draw the line where it should be. With his decision he challenged the bishop of Rome to take a stand, because it had been determined at the council of Nicea that the bishop of Alexandria controlled a diocese as important as the bishop of Rome. Fifteen years later (382), pope Damasus confirmed Athanasius' decision with the acceptance of the canon of 27.

Augustine had great influence on the decision for the canon in the northwest part of Africa. An ecclesiastical canon decision took place in Carthago in 397. In his book 'De Doctrina Christiana' he answered the question of how to find out what books are to be considered as canonical in the Church. From that it is clear that Augustine also worked accurately according to the canon formula of the New Testament. He wrote: 'Now, in regard to the canonical Scriptures [S(total)], he must follow the judgment of the greater number of catholic churches; and among these, of course, a high place must be given to such as have been thought worthy to be the seat of an apostle and to receive epistles. Accordingly, among the canonical Scriptures he will judge according to the following standard: to prefer those that are received by all the catholic churches [C(total)] over those which some do not receive.'³⁵⁸

In Augustine's time it was still possible to visit the cities mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles which had been seats of an apostle; that means cities in which apostles had founded a Church. In the Jewish land, the apostolic churches had disappeared after the wars in the years 66-70 and 132-135, or they had a severely interrupted history. So generally the cities where Paul had founded churches remained according to Augustine's rule for finding the right canon. Those cities are mentioned in chapters 13-28 of the book of Acts. Augustine's rule refers, in fact, to the region where Paul had preached the gospel: the region Turkey-Greece. And so Augustine's

358. De Doctrina Christiana II, 12.

testimony confirms the thesis that Athanasius accepted the canon of 27 from the other side of the Mediterranean Sea. The canon question existed particularly outside of the original work area of Paul. From the regions around the Mediterranean Sea, where for a long time obscurity existed concerning the canon (Syria, Egypt, North-Africa, Spain and Italy), pressure rose to reach a solid solution.

Before and after Athanasius' decision of 367, there have been Church teachers who rejected some books of the New Testament canon. As long as there did not exist a rule, or the rule did not meet general acceptance already, they followed their own insights. Thus the Revelation of John remained suspicious in the eyes of many scholars and was rejected by them: by Eusebius as we have seen, Gregorius of Nazianze (died 389), Amphilocius of Iconium (died after 394). And also Chrysostomus (died 407) and Theodorus of Mopsuestia (died 428) rejected Revelation; it is certainly no coincidence that the two flourished in Constantinople, the center where Eusebius produced the 50 copies of the New testament without Revelation. Teachers with derogatory opinions concerning the canon of 27 usually received their theological training in cities where Paul had not founded a Church: Antioch (Syria), Caesarea and in Alexandria. These cities outside Paul's missionary activities had theological schools where one was unfamiliar with the canon of 27 and the teachers remained loyal to their Antiochan, Caesarean or Alexandrian school.

Today the canon formula also has great importance. Authors claim triumphantly that there never existed a canon in the apostolic period, or that the decision of Athanasius had the simple aim of protecting the authority of a Church establishment. Moreover nowadays many prefer to quote old pseudepigraphic books with 'the secret words of Jesus'. These books have been found in the Gnostic library of Nag Hammadi (Egypt) in the twentieth century. The Dead Sea scrolls from Quran are also sometimes used for this purpose. And so it all has an appearance of academic knowledge and truth. But in spite of this, it is no more than 'pseudology'. For that reason it is very important to understand the authority of the Christian canon as the authority of the Word of God.

10.4 The completion of the New Testament Canon

The establishing of the canon is considered generally as the end of a long canon history up to the year 367. In our approach however the thesis has been proposed that the canon had already reached its definitive form in the first century, still under apostolic authority. This is a rather revolutionary idea and deserves some explanation. The data in the books of the New Testament: do they conform with this proposition or not? It is worthwhile to go further into the matter. We need a biblical representation of the start of the canon and of the completion of it.

It has been brought forward frequently in this study that there was a great writing activity in the Roman Empire and especially among the Jewish people in the first century. Therefore the question is: How is it possible that the number of apostolic letters in the New Testament is so small? Most of the letters originate from the apostle Paul: thirteen are in his name. The letter to the Hebrews is also often ascribed to him. When we disregard the gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Revelation of John, only seven real letters of the apostles and their co-workers remain. And if we don't count the letters of James and Jude, the brothers of the Lord, we only have five letters of two apostles (Peter and John). The remaining ten apostles, didn't they ever write a letter within their preaching practice? How is that possible?

Undoubtedly the apostles must have written much more than has been preserved in the New Testament; it was part of their job. Certainly much written material of the apostles has been lost. Many words of Jesus himself must have been lost in the same way. Paul reminded the elders of Ephesus of the phrase of Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'³⁵⁹ This phrase is not to be found in the gospels and the source from which Paul borrowed this phrase is unknown to us.

Only one conclusion can be drawn: the twelve apostles did not consider it as

359. Acts 20:35.

their task to educate the churches with their own words, rather than what Jesus had taught himself. They saw it as their apostolic duty to spread the gospels and no more. That the apostle Paul worked differently and wrote letters to the churches which he founded, they could accept, as he had not been an eyewitness of the Lord as they had. But also the thirteen letters of Paul are in fact a sparing harvest of an operative life. He also will certainly have written more than the thirteen letters we possess from him.

It is easily conceivable that the twelve apostles wrote ordinary letters without bringing their apostolic authority into account and without reference to their apostolic calling. Undoubtedly they were overwhelmed by the authority of Jesus Christ and did not have the desire to put forward their authority instead of his. Everything had already been taught by Jesus. If someone didn't want to submit to the words of Jesus, how could they suppose that he would submit to their words? Just around the sixties of the first century they saw the need to determine some matters for the future. They followed the example of Paul, who had sent already several apostolic letters to the churches or to individuals with his directives for the future.

Paul initially would not have had the intention to fill half of the New Testament with his letters. It can best be presented that Paul at some critical moment felt it necessary to write something to a Church from the idea: you must know this and bring it into practice; otherwise the gospel I preached to you has lost its meaning. In such a case he brought his apostolic authority explicitly forward; either in the opening of his letter³⁶⁰ or by stressing the importance of his words and the necessity of bringing them into practice.³⁶¹ Not trained in Jesus' footsteps, but as a Pharisee in the ancestral Jewish traditions, writing a letter was the appropriate manner for Paul to teach the churches he had founded. At critical moments - touched by the Holy Spirit - he wrote his letters for the good of the faithful. His letters were writ-

360. Ephesians 1:1, Romans 1:1.

361. 1 Thessalonians 5:27, 2 Thessalonians 3:14.

ten approximately in the fifties of the first century until about the year 63. Because of the importance of his letters, he required that the addressees should read them to all the saints and that they had to stick to the traditions as he had delivered them.³⁶² These directives presupposed the regular reading of his letters. And by that the canon grew slowly.³⁶³

The gospels having been produced quickly after the outpouring of the Spirit with Pentecost, the rest of the canon slowly got its form, in the first place with the letters of Paul in his missionary region. Some apostles followed Paul's example by sending letters to churches and prepared the finishing of the canon in a relatively short time. In his two letters, Peter clearly followed the example of Paul. In the opening of the first letter he says: 'Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ'. And in the opening of the second letter he says: 'Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ'. Paul could have written this. We know that these two letters of Peter are connected and that they were written shortly after each other, because in the second Peter says: 'This is now the second letter that I have written to you, beloved, and in both of them I have aroused your sincere mind by way of reminder; that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.'³⁶⁴ The canon that Peter is teaching is roughly the Old Testament (the holy prophets) and the gospels (the commandments of the Lord and Savior). He also included the letters

362. 1 Corinthians 11:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 3:6.

363. Paul did not invent the great theological issues in his letters, he merely found them in the gospels and developed them, e.g. Christ in creation: Col. 1:16 and John 1:3; dwelling of Christ in the believer: 2 Cor. 13:5 and John 17:11,22, 26 etc.; necessity to accept Christ: Col. 2:6 and John 1:12; living in Christ: Rom. 6:11 etc. and John 15:4,7 etc.; law and grace: Rom. 6:14 etc. and John 1:17; remaining significance of Israël: Rom. 3:1-2, 11:1 and Matthew 23:3, John 4:22; prophecies about the Messiah: Rom. 1:2-4 and John 5:39, Luke 24:27; divine nature of Christ Phil. 2:9, Rom. 9:5 and John 1:1, 20:28; human nature of Christ 1 Tim. 2:5 and John 1:14 and many others.

364. 2 Peter 3:1-2. For the authenticity of 2 Peter, see: D. Guthrie, 1985, p. 847-848.

of Paul, that were known at the time of writing his second letter, as he equated them with ‘the scriptures’ a little bit further in his letter (2 Peter 3:16): ‘There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.’

In the second letter, Peter seriously took into account probability of a quick death: ‘Since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.’³⁶⁵ That means that these letters of Peter must be dated between the years 60 and 64, because the death of Peter is placed commonly during the prosecution by Emperor Nero in 64.³⁶⁶ The first letter had been written during a tour of Peter to the Christian churches in the northeast of Syria on the east side of the river Euphrates, because he speaks concerning these churches as ‘She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, send you greetings;’.³⁶⁷ Babylon is to be taken in a broad sense: the region of Mesopotamia.

Peter didn’t aim to enumerate an exact list of books (2 Peter 3:1-2,16), but he referred in general terms to the books which were already being read, and he reminded his readers to continue in that way. It is of great importance that Peter sent the two letters to the west coast of Asia Minor: the old working field of Paul.

365. 2 Peter 1:14.

366. This happened as a result of the disastrous fire of Rome (64), of which Nero accused the Christians. Two thirds of the city had been destroyed in the flames. The letter of Clemens Romanus (V) communicates that Peter and Paul had perished through the persecution. ‘Through envy and jealousy the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the church] have been persecuted and put to death.’ The death of Peter and Paul must have been at the beginning of this persecution as Clemens says that many were tortured after them (VI).

367. 1 Peter 5:13. One frequently supposes that the city of Rome is mentioned with ‘Babylon’. However this is not obvious. The letters of Peter excel in clarity of thought and language. Metaphors as in the Revelation of John are practically absent. Therefore there is no need to see ‘Babylon’ as a metaphor for ‘Rome’. Babylon was the area where a large Jewish community lived since the Babylonian exile. It is not strange that early Christian churches already existed there at the time of writing of 1 Peter. (Acts 2:9)

Also churches in other areas of Turkey are mentioned: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia and Bithynia. These churches must have been started by missionaries and co-workers of Paul, because Peter calls Silvanus, an employee of Paul, as a name that was well-known among them.³⁶⁸

It seems that Peter, who didn't previously write apostolic letters to churches, temporarily took over the work of Paul. Why didn't Peter send general letters to all Christian churches, but only to those in the missionary region of Paul? Paul was a prisoner for almost five years: at least two years in the Jewish country followed by two years in Rome. During these years the churches he had founded were without apostolic supervision. It seems that Peter filled that gap. The second letter appears especially dominated by the warning against false teachers. Apparently they started to become manifest in that particular period.³⁶⁹

The apostle John, in his first general letter, also warned against false teachers and pseudo-prophets³⁷⁰, just as Peter had done in his second letter. However John didn't write only to the old working area of Paul, he wrote to all existing churches. In the opening words of his first letter John refers immediately to the gospels which all the churches had received already (... which we have heard, what we have with seen with our eyes..., and we are writing this that your/our joy may be complete.). Afterwards he turns quickly to the antichrists and pseudo-prophets that had gone out among the Christians. This letter may have been written also at the beginning of the sixties of the first century, the same time of Peter's second letter.

However the apostle John also wrote to the old working area of Paul. He wrote the Revelation to seven churches in the center of this region: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.³⁷¹ The Rev-

368. 1 Peter 5:12.

369. 2 Peter 1:2.

370. 1 John 2:18-24, 4:1-6.

371. Revelation 1:4,11.

elation must also have been brought out within the sixties of the first century, in the period of the completion of the canon.³⁷² The temple still existed when John wrote Revelation. He got the task: ‘Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months.’³⁷³ It is clear that the temple in Jerusalem was still there. But John had to measure the temple; that means that the period of the second temple came to an end (compare 2 Kings 21:13, Isaiah 34:11). This metaphor wouldn’t be useful after the devastation of the temple. It speaks of a threat that is to be executed; as a matter of fact the Revelation breathes the spirit of a turbulent time to come: ‘... for the time is near.’ (1:3); ‘Now write what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter.’ (1:19); ‘... and I will show you what must take place after this.’ (4:1). The fall of Jerusalem indeed brought an enormous change for Jewry as well as for Christianity. From that time onwards, the Christians were persecuted and the Jews were abused in the Roman Empire.

The canon received its form under the apostleship of John. Differently from his gospel and letters, in the opening of the Revelation John calls his name and he defines his apostolic calling with appeal to his position as a reliable eyewitness of Jesus Christ: ‘... his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.’³⁷⁴ This is striking, because

372. Revelation is traditionally dated ca. 95 A.D., but that is not necessarily right. J.A.T. Robinson, 1976, p. 252, dated the book in the period 68-70 A.D. (albeit on different grounds than in our approach).

373. Revelation 11:1-2. Those who date Revelation in 95, after the fall of Jerusalem in 70, take these verses as referring to the Church as the new temple of God: 3:12, 7:15. However the context (mentioning the altar) is plain enough that the Church can’t be meant here, but rather the temple of Jerusalem. That means that Revelation must be dated before 70 A.D.

374. Revelation 1:2.

in his other writings he didn't make himself known under his name within the text. His name is only mentioned in the authorizations above his gospel and his letters. It seems that a change took place; in the Revelation, John gives his name explicitly in the text. It seems that there were no longer any other apostles to authorize his work. In another way we may also learn that John exercised apostolic authority as the last apostle. In the second and third letter he calls himself 'the Elder'. The anonymous and absolute use of this term³⁷⁵ in these letters makes it clear that he exercised apostolic authority as the last apostle at the moment of writing. That is perhaps the most important significance of these small letters. For this reason, under John's responsibility as apostle, the canon of the New Testament came to its form, apart from the letter of Jude, which as an appendix became the last addition to it.³⁷⁶

Historically, the last book of the New Testament, which was also written by the year 70, is the letter of Jude. He introduces himself as the brother of James. It is generally accepted that the two brothers of Jesus are meant here: Jude and James.³⁷⁷ In his letter, Jude speaks of 'the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.'(3), and '... remember beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our

375. This terminology is from J.R.W. Stott, 1988, p. 44. '... the use of the title tends to confirm the unique position of the person who held it.' He concludes that this term indeed refers to John, the apostle. We go a step further with the supposition that the term seems to implicate that John was at the time of writing the last living apostle. It is difficult to imagine that John used this title '*the Elder*' as being an apostle, if there were still other apostles alive.

376. The letter of Jude compares with the last chapter of the Torah (Deuteronomy 34), which is in fact an appendix. It was certainly written by one of Moses' prophetic writers who worked under his supervision to write the Torah. But after the death of Moses these writers continued their work under the supervision of Joshua.

377. Mark 6:3 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?'

Lord Jesus Christ; they said to you, ...'(17)³⁷⁸ These expressions make clear that the apostolic era had come to an end at the time of its writing. Jude, the brother of the Lord, wrote a general letter which he addressed to all Christians: 'To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: ...'(1) He warned in the letter of false teachers who troubled the churches. If there had been apostles alive, it would have undoubtedly been the duty of an apostle to write such a letter. But yet in a very special way Jude submitted himself to apostolic authority, as nearly all the ideas in his letter are borrowed from the second letter of Peter. The false teachers, of whom Peter had warned, were everywhere now in the churches, when Jude wrote, as is clear from his letter. Jude did not therefore write specifically for the old working area of the apostle Paul, as Peter had done in his letters.

It is reasonable to take the letter of Jude as having been written still before the year 70 A.D. The many agreements with the second Letter of Peter, of course, make that plausible, but there is more. Jude uses two quotations the authoritative sources of which must have been lost with the devastation of the temple. The quotations are ascribed to Enoch and Michael, the archangel.³⁷⁹ From the early Church history onwards one has understood that Jude cited the apocryphal book of Enoch and unknown Jewish tradition about Michael, the archangel. From Origen (ca. 250) to Augustine (ca. 400) this is the unchallenged explanation. But is it correct?

Did Jude really quote an apocryphal book? Wouldn't he be setting a very bad example if he summoned all the saints worldwide to stick to the words of the apostles (3, 17), and he was the first to not do so? The apostles had repeatedly

378. The letter of Jude has many similarities with 2 Peter. It has always been a problem whether Peter used the letter of Jude or vice versa, did Jude use the letter of Peter. We follow the latter view. Because of the many similarities it is correct to take the same meaning in the expressions 'remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles ...' (Jude 17) and 'remember the predictions of the holy prophets ...'(2 Peter 3:2). In other words just as the prophets did not live anymore (2 Peter), also the apostles were not alive anymore (Jude).

379. Jude 9, 14-15.

warned the faithful to keep the words of the prophets, the words of Jesus Christ and the words of themselves. Undoubtedly Jude was also fully aware of that and it cannot be seriously thought that he quoted apocryphal traditions to teach the churches. Of course the question remains: What exactly did Jude quote?

Apart from the Law of Moses and the Prophets, many songs were preserved in the temple from antiquity onwards. Many of these songs did not belong to the book of the Psalms. This tradition of hymns in the temple ran parallel with the holy books from times of old. David ordered to write a hymn in the 'Book of Jashar' (2 Samuel 1:18) to teach the people. This hymn book descended from the time of Joshua (Joshua 10:13). The famous Prayer of Moses (Psalm 90), which entered later in the Book of Psalms, may have also belonged to the Book of Jashar. The Lament of Jeremiah for King Josia was very popular among the people of Israel and it was written in another book of songs, named the 'Book of Laments' (2 Chronicles 35:25). In spite of the fact that the singers in the temple made it a tradition to sing this song, it is missing in the biblical book Lamentations. After the exile, the singers resumed their work as from the time of David onwards (Nehemiah 12:45,46). That means an uninterrupted tradition of songs was kept alive in the second temple from the time of Moses. What is more logical than that Jude took quotations out of this prophetic tradition, which were well known among the people and which were appropriate for his subject? Maybe Jesus himself also quoted from this tradition of songs with reference to the 'Wisdom of God' (Luke 11:49).³⁸⁰ Apparently that stream of classical songs was also used by the author of the apocryphal book Enoch. That doesn't mean of course that Jude cited that apocryphal book. The old song tradition, which was centered in the second temple, must have been lost with the devastation of the temple.

380. In Luke 24:44 Jesus uses the triplet 'Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms'. The fact that he makes reference especially to the Psalms is remarkable as the book of the Psalms already belonged to the 'Prophets'. It seems that Jesus referred to a much wider meaning of the Psalms: the tradition of hymns together with the biblical book of the Psalms.

That means that soon after the fall of Jerusalem this prophetic tradition of hymns lost its authority. The Pharisees, who were responsible for the safeguarding of the Jewish traditions and institutions after 70, concentrated mainly on the pure text of the Torah and the Prophets, and on the education of the teachers (Mishnah), as they used to do before the devastation of the temple. They certainly are not to blame that they didn't consider the tradition of hymns part of their responsibility and so the tradition of hymns was compelled to disappear in the end. Concluding, then, we may say that Jude quoted hymns with prophetic authority before the year 70, and so he wrote his letter before that year.

The conclusion of the canon of the New Testament took place before the year 70 A.D. After a quick start with the compilation of the gospels, a period followed in which mainly Paul wrote letters with apostolic authority. Generally speaking, we may say that the other apostles followed this example when they felt that directives were necessary during the time that they couldn't lead the churches anymore. John marked the end of this period with the writing of the Revelation. Finally, the canon was brought to completion with the letter of Jude. Within forty years the New Testament received a fixed form under apostolic supervision. Jesus said: '... and you shall be my witness in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.'³⁸¹ With the canon of the New Testament, the apostles modelled a structure which made the fulfilment of this prophecy possible. And the fulfilling of it is still ongoing.

10.5 The position in the canon of Acts, James and the Pastoral Letters

The New Testament is a collection of books from the period of the thirties 'til the year 70 of the first century. The foundation of the canon was formed by the gospels; the other apostolic writings were added slowly. The term 'apostolic' is to be taken in a broad sense, not only 'written by apostles' (the twelve), but also 'un-

381. Acts 1:8.

der their approval'.³⁸² In addition to the books which have been discussed in the previous section, other books also have a particular place in the canon. However, some of them are considered to be not authentic. In short, it is desirable to spend time to discuss some other books concerning their place in the canon. We will deal successively with the Acts of the Apostles, the letter of James and with some controversial letters of Paul (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Hebrews).³⁸³

The importance of the Acts of the Apostles with regard to the canon is that the book functions as the link between the gospels and the letters of Paul. With the knowledge of the Acts we are able to understand the historical setting of the life of Paul and we can understand his letters in that historical context. The letters of Peter, which he wrote to Asia Minor during the long period of Paul's captivity, also get a logical place in that historical context through Acts. The book of Acts connects two periods, two missionary fields, two important apostles and two types of Christians.

The beginning of Acts describes the first period of the Church in Jerusalem and the Jewish country, where the inspiring character of Peter steps forward. The second part of Acts describes the period of Christianity in Turkey and Greece, and even in Rome, with the thirteenth apostle Paul in the center of interest. In Acts, Christianity starts as a Jewish movement, which develops further in the book into a movement which is also for gentiles. Approximately halfway through the book the directives are formulated for the lifestyle of the non-Jewish Christians.³⁸⁴ The book was written around the year 62, at the end of Paul's captivity

382. The term 'apostle' in New Testament times was not limited to the circle of twelve. There were more apostles, but the twelve had the special task to be the reliable witnesses of Jesus' life as they had seen it.

383. The so-called letter of Paul to Laodicea (Colossians 4:16) will remain outside of consideration. The letter of Philemon may be meant by it. If so 'yourselves' (Colossians 4:9) is to be taken in a broad sense in that case.

384. Acts 15:19-20, 21:25.

in Rome, because this is the last that we read in the book about Paul.³⁸⁵

The book of Acts is an indispensable supplement to the gospels and it was never a disputed book in early Church history. The author was Luke; although he doesn't mention his name in Acts, in the introduction he shows clearly that he dovetails the Acts with the gospel which he had written earlier. Luke dedicated the gospel as well as the Acts to Theophilus. The working method of collecting documents and copying them in sequence, as Luke did in his gospel, was certainly the method he followed in Acts. The Acts of the Apostles is a witness, that after Jesus' departure the apostles (including Paul) documented the occurrences of the Church in the same way as they documented the deeds and teachings of Jesus.

In the letter of James, the name of Jesus Christ occurs only two times. The letter seems to deal mainly with a Christian lifestyle. The letter of James has gotten sharp criticism from Martin Luther as he called it 'a letter of straw', a letter of inferior quality and without evangelical character. In this letter Luther missed the doctrine of Justification through Faith. D.J. Moo has rightly stated that '... his criticism should not be overdrawn.' And: 'He did not exclude James from the canon and, it has been estimated, cites over half the verses of James as authoritative in his writings.'³⁸⁶ However, Luther's opinion has given grounds to reject the authenticity of the letter and it should not be part of the canon according to many theologians. But yet there is no serious reason for that decision. Even the argument that we don't know which James is meant in this letter is powerless.³⁸⁷ Because this letter belongs to the canon, the name belongs to the man who was known in the apostolic circle as James without any further addition. In Paul's letter to the Galatians

385. Acts 28:30-31. If Paul had already died when Acts was written, certainly it would have been made known by the author at the end of the book.

386. D.J. Moo, 1986, p. 18. For the quotations of James by Luther, Moo refers to: D. Stoutenberg, *Martin Luther's Exegetical Use of the Epistle of St. James* (M.A. thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, 1982), p. 51.

we meet him as: 'the brother of the Lord' and simply as 'James'.³⁸⁸

Little account is usually given to what it means that this letter was written by the brother of the Lord. A man is speaking who experienced Jesus as a brother during many years. Initially Jesus' brothers did not believe in him.³⁸⁹ But later a change took place and they also believed in him as the Messiah.³⁹⁰ So James was a person who could describe as no one else the perfect example of Jesus' way of acting in daily life. When James wrote his letter, he undoubtedly had this delicious example in mind. And when we read this letter transparently it is as if we see Jesus himself, how he acted in all sorts of everyday situations. It is moving how simplicity, humility and releasing covetousness go together with a true knowledge of God. If anyone was equipped to present what it meant to follow Jesus in his footsteps, it was James. This consideration may also be the explanation for this letter and why it was written as we will see.

The date of James' letter is not certain; probably between 50 and 62 A.D.³⁹¹ In that period Paul wrote his letters. As James wrote to 'the twelve tribes of the Dispersion', he certainly wrote for the ears of Jewish Christians which is also to be seen in 4:11 where he challenges his hearers to act as 'doers of the law'. That was the ideal of a pious Jewish lifestyle. Earlier James uses the expression 'doer of the word'. (1:22) Which word does he mean? The word of truth as the word of

387. There are about 5 possibilities for James. Apostle and brother of John (Mark 1:19); apostle and son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18); the brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3); James the younger (Mark 15:40); father of Judas, the apostle Thaddaeus (Luke 6:16, Mark 3:18). James, the brother of John, was martyred in the year 44 (Acts 12:2) and the letter of James seems to be written much later. James, the brother of the Lord, was martyred in the year 62 (Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates* XX.9.1).

388. Galatians 1:19 and 2:9. The position of James before Peter and John in verse 2:9 suggests that the apostle James, the son of Alphaeus, is to be excluded.

389. John 7:5.

390. Acts 1:14.

391. See: D. Guthrie, 1985, p. 764.

the gospel that brought new life (1:18,21). A doer of the word is someone who surrenders himself to that word of the gospel to act according to it. In fact, just as Paul could apply 'Word' to the Old Testament as a personal word of God, so did James. 'Law' has an impersonal connotation and therefore can't bring faith, or trust. James' point is that only by doing the word is it possible to be called a doer of the Law. And so he is not far from Paul's use of these terms.³⁹²

As we may learn from the life of Paul himself, the law kept its value, especially for Jewish Christians. (Colossians 4:10-11) James met the Jewish ideal of being a doer of the law by giving the example of Jesus' humble and practical way of acting in everyday life; that was how Jesus fulfilled the law in relationship with his heavenly father. That was the answer the Jewish Christians needed: to understand the importance of the law, seen through the life of Jesus.

The Pastoral letters – 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus – are in Paul's name. Moreover in each of them the author starts with his name: 'Paul'. Nevertheless it is an often heard assumption in theology that he was not the author of the letters. That would imply a serious canon problem. If these letters were not written by the apostle they are said to be, then they do not deserve a place in the canon. Of course many will reject that also, saying that in pseudepigraphic letters God can speak to us, but that is not the point. The question is: 'Will God do so?' The answer must be negative, as God is the well-spring of truth and not of equivocations. And so with the Pastoral letters we face a canon question. Especially during the last two centuries, serious arguments have been brought forward against the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral letters: the use of words and style differ from the other letters of Paul, the historical context does not seem to be correct, the theology seems rather moralistic, and also the tight church organisation would not be appropriate in the apostolic time.³⁹³ In our approach to the canon, these judgements are of course not at all appropriate. Because how was

392. Compare Paul's use of the terms 'law' and 'word' in Romans 13:8-9.

393. For a complete discussion about the subject, see: D. Guthrie, 1985, p. 584-620.

it possible that pseudepigraphic letters could penetrate into the canon under the supervision of the apostles, while they already warned the churches against that phenomenon?³⁹⁴ How could it happen that while under the apostolic authority of Peter, John and Jude, the canon was concluded in the sixties of the first century? In the following paragraph we will present a number of considerations which confirms the authenticity of these letters.

J. van Bruggen has convincingly shown that the Pastoral letters fit perfectly into the life of Paul.³⁹⁵ The first letter to Timothy and the letter to Titus are written at the end of Paul's third missionary journey. The second letter to Timothy was written in Rome, during Paul's imprisonment. This is meaningful for the contents of the letters, as Paul had worked daily as a teacher for two years in Ephesus in the hall of Tyrannus.³⁹⁶ Moreover he had been faced with all kinds of church problems, e.g. in Corinth. During this time, Paul had developed into a teacher and church builder as his use of words and style show. And of course his style in the Pastoral letters is much more personal in comparison with that of his churchly letters. Therefore the earlier mentioned issues (use of words, style, historical context, church organization) are not serious problems, as they fit into the developments of the Church at the time of writing. In antiquity nobody had problems with the differences in speech and style between the Pastoral and other letters of Paul. They have been always accepted as true Pauline letters and also today this is completely acceptable. Only through a complete misunderstanding of the concept of the New Testament canon could this strange opinion about the Pastoral letters arise in theology for hundreds of years.

394. 2 Thessalonians 2:2.

395. J. van Bruggen, 1981, p. 31-40, 48-58.

396. Acts 19:9.

10.6 The significance of the Letter to the Hebrews for the documentation theory

Finally, we have to discuss the Letter to the Hebrews. Its position in the canon and its significance for the documentation theory are really important. In chapter one of this book, we offered three passages in the New Testament that undeniably refer to documentation of Jesus' words and works. In the Letter to the Hebrews we face the third biblical passage which impressively bears witness about documentation in Jesus' ministry (Hebrew 2:3-4). Because of the fact that this passage is not directly linked with the gospels as are those of Luke 1:1-4 and 1 John 1:1-4, we have chosen to discuss the passage in relation to the complete canon of the New Testament.

Whereas questions about the authorship of the Pastoral Letters arose just in the last two centuries, the question of the authorship of the Letter to the Hebrews has a long history. Already in the first centuries of the Church, theologians doubted the Pauline authorship of the Letter. This of course speaks for itself, because the author did not put his name on the work, nor did he mention his name in it. Consequently many possible authors have been proposed from the past until now: Paul, Barnabas, Luke, Apollos, Silvanus, Philip, Priscilla and Clement. The reason for doubt about the Pauline authorship is the argument of speech and style differences in comparison with the other letters of Paul. Still famous about this subject is Origin's statement: 'But who wrote the Epistle God only knows.' In the eastern part of the Church there didn't exist a doubt about the canonicity of the letter, nor about its Pauline authorship. In the western Church the letter was quite unknown in the first centuries.

In the time of the Reformation a new argument against the Pauline authorship arose. In Hebrews 2:3 we read (the KJV): '... so great a salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and

with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, ...'³⁹⁷ Luther supposed that this passage clearly showed that Paul could not have written this letter. He reasoned as follows: Paul did not receive salvation through those who heard the Lord ('by them that heard him'), on the contrary Paul got salvation through the revelation of Jesus himself, on his way to Damascus. The gospel was not proclaimed to Paul, but revealed directly by divine mediation. And so, according to Luther, Hebrews 2:3-4 could not have been written by Paul. Men such as Erasmus and Calvin followed his rejection of Pauline authorship. Luther decided that Apollos was the best to designate as the possible writer of the Letter to the Hebrews.

Nowadays, Luther's argument has met general agreement in the Protestant interpretation of the New Testament. As the name of a writer is lacking in the letter, no serious dogmatic objection seems to exist against this point of view. However, there is a serious exegetical objection against it, as the usual translation of Hebrews 2:3-4 is very weak, not to say incorrect. In the first place the phrase 'and was confirmed unto' split the entire statement into two sentences, which is wrong as the word 'and' (Greek: *kai*) is missing. In Greek we have to do with one lengthy phrase and not with two coordinative sentences. By splitting the phrase into two distinct sentences, the grammatical meaning of one occurrence is also split into two occurrences and that is a serious intervention as we will see. Secondly, the keyword 'confirm' has always been interpreted as: to attest, proclaim; instead of the original meaning. The Greek expression *bebaio-oo eis hēmas*, 'confirmed unto us', does not express a direction as the simple meaning is: to make firm, establish, confirm, make sure.³⁹⁸ Therefore

397. It doesn't make sense to quote different translations as they deviate in many ways from the most literal translation of the KJV. It is enough for us to concentrate therefore on the KJV version of Hebrews. 2:3-4 in our discussion.

398. The verb *bebaio-oo* has very often a legal meaning, concerning a word that is legally established for the future. A *bebaiosis* is a legal confirmation. This legal context is also in Hebrews. 2:3 visible in the use of: God also bearing witness ... TDNT I, p. 603.

the preposition (Greek: eis; unto) is to be taken as: ‘in behalf of’, ‘in favour of’. When we take these aspects into consideration in the translation of the KJV we get: ‘... so great a salvation; *which beginning to be spoken by the Lord, was confirmed (established) in behalf of us by those who were hearing; God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, ...*’ Within recent analysis of the Greek verb it is clear to everyone that the Aorist forms used as ‘beginning to be spoken’ and ‘who were hearing’ imply coincident or antecedent action with the main verb ‘was confirmed (established)’.³⁹⁹ To speak, to hear and to confirm are to be taken instantly, nearly at the same time as *one occurrence*. In this translation we meet again the speedy and shorthand writers of Jesus. They were the hearers to confirm Jesus’ preaching in written form ‘unto us, in behalf of us’. They were working while signs, wonders and miracles followed on Jesus’ word as God’s approval on his teaching.⁴⁰⁰

This translation of Hebrews 2:3-4 differs in many ways from the usual one.

399. About: ‘beginning to be spoken’ and ‘those who were hearing’. Older exegetes would call these forms as Aorist participles of antecedent action, e.g. E. De Witt Burton, 1955, p. 63-64; Turner would speak of Aorist participles of coincident action (1963, p. 79-81); B.M. Fanning (1990, p. 97-98) would speak of ‘an occurrence in summary, viewed as a whole from the outside, ...’ In some respect this is useful as the phrase ‘God also bearing witness ... etc.’ (gen. absol.) covers the entire phrase ‘which ... hearing’. So the signs and wonders are covering three aspects as belonging to one occurrence: speaking by the Lord, hearing and confirming.

400. In Hebrews 2:2 we read: ‘For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;’ It is generally accepted that the Ten Commandments are meant here, which were given to Moses by angels Acts 7:38,53, Galatians 3:19. So ‘steadfast’ is ‘in written form’: the ten words written in stone. As steadfast has the same basic word in Greek *bebaios* with the connotation ‘in written form’, it is undeniable that the same connotation in this sentence for ‘bebaio-oo eis hēmas’ is: to confirm unto us in written form (in writing). Moreover, is there another way than writing for a human being to ‘confirm’ the word of the Lord?

And by that the whole scene is changed. We get a totally new perspective. It is not that preachers, who heard Jesus, and who preached the gospel 'to us' in the period thereafter, are involved. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews is saying that we need the words of the Lord just as they were written, as he spoke them: that is the 'great salvation'. And of course Paul also needed these words, even after the self-revelation of the Lord to him. Hebrews 2:3-4 is completely applicable to Paul's life as to that of every other Christian, and so this passage is in no way an obstacle to taking Paul as the author of the letter to the Hebrews. With this insight we may make a fresh start to look anew at the possibility of Paul's authorship of the Letter to the Hebrews.

The Letter to the Hebrews has no opening in which the writer expresses who he is, or in which he is greeting his addressees. This is significantly strange with regard to the other letters of the New Testament. Given the inclusion of this letter in the canon, it seems that it was an appendix or an accompanying letter with another apostolic letter, in which the writer had already made himself known. What letter could that be?

In the New Testament we have letters of Peter, John, James, Jude and Paul. Peter and John must be excluded as possible authors of the Letter to the Hebrews; not only because of the total different character of their letters which we possess, but especially because of the passage in Hebrews 2:3-4. It couldn't be formulated by them in this way: they were themselves hearers of the Lord. If one of them was the author this verse would have been written without 'in behalf of us' and 'those'; and with 'us': '... so great a salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, *being confirmed (established) [in behalf of us] by us [those] who were hearing; God also bearing witness, ...*' James and Jude are also to be excluded as possible authors of Hebrews. James had already written his letter to the twelve tribes in the dispersal (Christians with Jewish origin) and it seems strange that he would have provided a separate letter to them (Hebrews) attached to it. Jude must also be ruled out, as he referred in his letter only to the words of the prophets and apostles; from his letter we learn that he didn't

want to present new teachings. There is only one possible author of the Letter to the Hebrews: Paul. This letter could only be received by the churches if connected to one of Paul's letters.

The Letter to the Hebrews indeed has many Pauline features.

1. The letter ends with the standard greeting of Paul: 'Grace be with you all. Amen.' In nearly all his letters he refers at the end to the need of 'Grace' (except in Romans, where he says: 'The God of peace be with you all. Amen' 15:33; and a doxology in 16:27). No other letter of the New Testament has this greeting. Only at the end of the Revelation John pronounces the blessing of Grace. Maybe he did so as he wrote to the region where Paul had worked and where this greeting was so familiar.
2. Another Pauline feature of the Letter to the Hebrews is the impressive authority of the author. It is almost inconceivable that someone outside the apostolic circle of thirteen could exercise such authority.
3. The addressees had a warm relationship with the author and with Timothy, and this relates to the cooperation of Paul and Timothy.
4. Although there are differences in approach and new theological developments in Hebrews, there are also many specific well-known Pauline themes: Christ's previous glory and part in creation, his self-humbling, his obedience, his self-offering, the new covenant, Abraham's faith as example, gifts of the Spirit, use of similar Old Testament passages, and the athletic metaphor of the Christian life.⁴⁰¹

Having established the apostle Paul as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, we now have to decide with which Pauline letter Hebrews was connected. There

401. (a) Hebr. 1:2-6/1 Cor. 8:6, 2 Cor. 4:4, Col. 1:15-17. (b) Hebr. 2:14-17/Rom. 8:3, Gal. 4:4, Phil. 2:7. (c) Hebr. 5:8/Rom. 5:19, Phil. 2:8. (d) Hebr. 8:6/2 Cor.3:9 etc. (e) Hebr. 11:11-12, 17-19/Rom. 4:17-20. (f) Hebr. 2:4/1 Cor. 12:11. (g) Psalm 8 in Hebr.2:6-9/1 Cor. 15:27; Deut. 32:35 in Hebr. 10:30/Rom. 12:19; Hab. 2:4 in Hebr. 10:38/Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11. (h) Hebr. 12:1/1 Cor. 9:24. In: D. Guthrie, 1985, p. 722.

is only one possibility: the Letter to the Galatians.⁴⁰² And for the place where Paul wrote Galatians and Hebrews, the best possibility is Ephesus, where Paul remained for a long time during his third missionary journey.⁴⁰³ He was still in contact with the Churches of Galatia⁴⁰⁴, which were founded by him on his first missionary journey in the southern region of Turkey.⁴⁰⁵ There were Churches with Christians of Jewish and non-Jewish background and Timothy originated from this region.⁴⁰⁶

It is clear that the Letter to the Galatians and the Letter to the Hebrews strongly differ in style, speech and content. A lot of Pauline expressions occur in Hebrews of which only a few occur in Galatians. How is that possible? Isn't it expected that two letters written at nearly the same time, would contain the same subjects and expressions? Galatians was written to the Churches of Galatia and the dominating subject is the warning to the Christians of non-Jewish background to not be circumcised and to not let themselves be brought under the law.⁴⁰⁷ It is Paul's only letter to a group of Churches in a large area instead of a city letter. Jewish non-Christian teachings penetrated with power into the Chris-

402. In Hebrews Paul and Timothy are not together (13:23). In many letters of Paul they are together: Romans (16:21), 2 Corinthians (1:1), Philippians (1:1), Colossians (1:1), 1,2 Thessalonians (1:1), Philemon (1). 1 Corinthians is no option as Timothy is free and on his way to Corinth (14:7, 16:10), which is in conflict with Hebrews 13:23. Ephesians is not an option as Paul is imprisoned (6:20) which is not the case in Hebrews (13:23). The pastoral letters are no options as they are personal letters, not sent to a group of Christians as Hebrews certainly is. Only Galatians remains as a letter of which Hebrews could be an attachment.

403. An objection against Ephesus might be Hebrews. 13:24 'Those who come from Italy send you greetings.' Isn't Italy the place/area from which the Letter to the Hebrews was written? No, Paul is speaking about the Jews who were pressed to leave Rome (and Italy) under Emperor Claudius and who settled around the Aegean Sea, also in Ephesus. (Acts 18:2)

404. 1 Corinthians 16:1.

405. Acts 13:14-28.

406. Acts 16:1-3.

407. Galatians 5:3-10, 6:12-16.

tian Churches of Galatia. It wouldn't be satisfying if Paul didn't also send a message to the Christians of Jewish origin. Not only could they easily be ignored by the non-Jewish Christians as a consequence of the strong doctrines of Paul in the Letter to the Galatians, but also a Letter to the Hebrews of the region of Galatia was a necessity for the Church. In it he explained the Christological meaning of the law and the prophets.⁴⁰⁸ He challenged the Hebrews to teach their fellow Christians, saying that they ought to be teachers already.⁴⁰⁹ It seems that he urged them to teach their non-Jewish fellow Christians in order to make them strong against the seduction of legalism. The Letter to the Hebrews of Galatia had and has an enormous impact on the Christian vision of the Jewish Bible (the Old Testament) then and later in the history of the Church.

Of course many non-Jewish Christians in Galatia were sensitive to the argument that circumcision was a commandment of God to Abraham and his posterity. Weren't they also descendants of Abraham through the faith? Commandments were given by God to fulfil and if they didn't obey, what then? They came into serious inward conflict. They needed a new meaning of the Old Testament: a Christological meaning of the law and the prophets. And indeed that is exactly what the Letter to the Hebrews gives. In this letter Paul showed that he was a Jew to the Jews – though not under the law. And in the Letter to the Galatians he showed that he was as one outside the law – though not without the law.⁴¹⁰ There is no other combination of two Pauline letters which complete each other in such a remarkable way.

408. Chapters: 1. Christ, son of God, superior to angels. 2. Necessity of the Word of God. 3. Christ superior to Moses. 4. Christ superior to Joshua. 5. Christ the high priest. 6. God's promise to Abraham and his descendants. 7. Priesthood of Christ (according to Melchizedek) and higher than Aaron. 8. Christ high priest of the New Covenant. 9. Christ high priest of a heavenly tabernacle. 10. Christ and his superior offering. 11. The ancestors lived by Faith. 12. The new Zion in Christ. 13. Encouragements to be united in Christ.

409. Hebrews 5:12, 6:9-12, 12:12-15, 13:15.

410. 1 Corinthians 9:19 etc.

Our discussion has shown that a right understanding of the canon has an enormous impact on a thorough understanding of the individual books of the New Testament. The history of exegesis of the New Testament shows again and again that when the canon has lost its meaning, the separate books lose their meaning also. And where the books lose their meaning, they lose their gospel power. But on the other hand, history has also learned that where the gospel comes, interest in the canon and its structure grows. The secret of the canon is the gospel, and vice versa the secret of the gospel is the canon.

10.7 The deliverance into the hands of men

It is generally accepted from antiquity onwards that those who deal with the Greek text of the New Testament have to face the phenomenon of the variant readings. The canon formula ($S \leftrightarrow C$) shows how it is possible that the 27 books of the New Testament are all authentic, but the formula is not related to the purity of the deliverance of the text of the canon.⁴¹¹ Copyists of the New Testament books made copy errors. These errors occurred by later generations and as a result text families came into being. There are four great text families with a vast stock of copy errors.⁴¹² Not only are unintentional errors

411. It's legitimate to give often priority to the Byzantine text form (generally: the Majority text; German: Mehrheitstext) as we have to consider that this text form, originating from Paul's mission area, represented best the early apostolic canon of the books of the New Testament. There was certainly much more freedom in the use of text variants by copyists outside this region as long as there didn't exist a generally accepted canon.

412. The families are signed with capitals: A. Byzantine text, Koine, represented in Codex Alexandrinus (fifth century); B. Egyptian text, Alexandrian or Neutral, represented in Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century) and in Codex Vaticanus (fourth century); C. Caesarean text, represented in Codex Washingtonianus (fifth century); D. Western text, represented in Codex Bezae (fifth century). A mixed text is represented in Codex Ephraemi (fifth century). See: E.J. Epp, G.D. Fee, 1993.

found, but also intentional changes are found in the texts.⁴¹³ After centuries, it happened that copyists who were confronted with old and unusual forms or words, chose more eloquent or well known expressions at that time. And to paint the picture completely, from the third century onwards by comparing texts from different origins, people tried to restore variant readings with the result of mixed texts.

The variant readings are a result of the wealth of copies of the New Testament we possess from the first century to roughly the twelfth century: more than 5000 documents (small pieces, pages, chapters, books and even complete New Testaments). The wealth of copies is in fact, a testimony to the overwhelming tradition of the New Testament writings in history. Fortunately the variant readings don't have influence on Christian doctrines of faith or ethics as they are estimated to be only 2% of the entire text.⁴¹⁴ That implies that about 98% of the text is intact. The study of the variants is very useful, not only for the study of the meaning of the text, but they also make it possible to speak of a history of the text which is visible among other things by the copied variant readings.

The great amount of variant readings doesn't need to surprise or to disturb

413. Out of consideration are the large passages: Mark 16:9-20, John 7:53-8:11. There are no decisive arguments to reject these parts as not authentic.

414. For this estimation the main stream documents are to be used without popular texts with relatively many aberrations. Dr. Schaff, the author of the *Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge* (nineteenth century) calculated that from the 150,000 variants, only 400 have any importance for the meaning of the text. Only 50 are really important, but none of them has any relation to a doctrinal or moral implication of the Christian faith. R. Pache, 1977, p. 180; J. McDowell, 1972, p. 44. N.L. Geisler and W.E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1968: '... only about one-eighth of all the variants had any weight, as most of them are merely mechanical matters such as spelling or style. Of the whole, then, only about one-sixtieth rise above "trivialities," or can in any sense be called "substantial variations". Mathematically this would compute to a text that is 98.33 percent pure.' p. 365. (As quoted in J. McDowell, 1972, p. 45.)

any Christian as they are the natural consequence of the wealth of documentary sources of the Christian faith. Nevertheless any Christian can get in serious straits confronted with the idea that the Word of God doesn't seem to be as perfect as is always taught. And this is indeed a major objection of Islam against Christianity. How to deal with that fundamental question? When the words of Jesus were fixed by speedy and shorthand writers and preserved in the gospels, aren't we back to the drawing board if faults slipped into the text later on? Aren't we in that case finished at the start? How is it possible that the Word of God seems to be imperfect? Indeed it is not possible to use the word 'perfect' in this respect with the meaning 'smooth and clean'. 'Perfect' is to be understood here in another way. There are 'holes' in the text - so to speak - where it is uncertain what the original reading is, in the case of two (or even more) good possibilities of variant readings. There is something positive about the existence of these holes, however.

The New Testament did not slide through history smoothly and clean, but it was delivered into the hands of men. Jesus also did not slide through life smoothly and clean. At the end he was delivered into the hands of men and he got holes in his body through the tortures of flagellation and crucifixion. But yet, he remained the same speaking Word of God. The New Testament is in its transmission a type of Jesus Christ in his deliverance. In spite of the holes in the text, caused by its deliverance into the hands of men, the New Testament speaks God's message unambiguously. When we speak about the truth of God's Word, it is only possible in relation to Jesus Christ, who himself is the truth. The Word of God is not a philosophical truth, but it is personal. And so it is no loss that the text of the New Testament contains a relatively small number of holes in spite of the accurate work of the speedy and shorthand writers of Jesus. Can we say in honesty that we possess the words of Jesus? The answer is 'Yes!'. Jesus on the cross with holes in his body through flagellation, thorny crown and nails, wasn't he the same any more? The answer is 'Yes!' His wounds emphasized what he had done during his life on earth. The holes in the transmitted text of the New Testament refer in a very special way to the Lord. The same state in which Jesus was, is now

the state in which the Word of God is. In that despised state of Jesus, salvation was revealed, in the same state the Word reveals God's salvation to the world. The cross is foolishness to the world, as also the Word seems to be to many people. Nevertheless, the Word is still the bright shining light of God's revelation of his salvation.

APPENDIX

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION STORY

In this appendix, four examples of Analytical Reading are treated to show the most important applications of it. The most frequent questions are:

1. What has happened exactly? Is there a Living Pattern?
2. What was said exactly?
3. How do the different reports in the gospels contribute to a more complete picture of what happened?
4. How can we explain seeming contradictions?

1. Confrontation at night

*Question 1. What happened exactly when Jesus came before the Jewish Council?
Is there a Living Pattern?*

Connected with Jesus' condemnation to death there are several remarkable aspects. Firstly there were two condemnations strictly spoken: one at night after his arrest, (Matthew and Mark), and one on the morning thereafter for the second time (Luke). Secondly there are four confessions of Jesus about his identity. That is quite a lot. The best way to discuss these aspects is to follow the course of the events.

After his arrest, Jesus was brought before the high priests in the dead of

night. They had the assistance of the complete priestly council.⁴¹⁵ In this council a preliminary examination took place, as it was only a priestly council. We may suppose that Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus were clerks who reported the process and the results of it. We may deduce that from the following considerations.

The morning after Jesus' arrest, at dawn, the complete Sanhedrin was gathered to judge Jesus. This council consisted of a priestly party augmented with representatives of the people. (Matthew 27:1, Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66) We have to notice that Joseph was 'a respected member of the council' (Mark 15:43) and Nicodemus was 'a ruler of the Jews' (John 3:1), which certainly meant that he also was a member of the great Sanhedrin.⁴¹⁶ Later on, these men were responsible for Jesus' funeral (John 19:38-42) and by that it is certain that they did not agree with the judgement of the Sanhedrin to which they belonged. About Joseph it is explicitly remarked: 'He was a member of the council [the great Sanhedrin is meant, Luke 22:66], a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their purpose and deed, and he was looking for the kingdom of God.'⁴¹⁷ That means that Joseph and Nicodemus were writers, clerks who recorded what was said in the great Sanhe-

415. In Greek the word *sunedrion* has a broad meaning: any assembly (esp. of magistrates, judges, ambassadors), whether convened to deliberate or to pass judgement (Thayer Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament). It is possible to suppose that there was only one sunedrion in Israel called Sanhedrin. In that case the Council which examined Jesus at night took a final decision in the morning thereafter. Maybe according to a custom that a judgement of death penalty was to be given by day and not by night, it is also possible to take two councils. At night a complete priestly council (Matthew 26:59, Mark 14:55) examined Jesus, and the morning thereafter the final judgement was given by the so called Sanhedrin, which was the highest council of Priests, scribes and elders (representatives) of the people (Matthew 27:1, Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66).

416. About Nicodemus' position as member of the Sanhedrin, see also: John 7:26,48, Luke 23:13,35, 24:20. And: H.L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, 1974, p. 412-413.

417. Luke 23:50-51.

drin.⁴¹⁸ To maintain their independence in their work, they were not entitled to vote in the case of a death penalty. Joseph and Nicodemus certainly attended the latter meeting. It was possible for them to disagree with the final decision taken by the Sanhedrin that morning (Luke 22:66-71). We read about the moment of that decision: 'And they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." And they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."' Analytical reading shows that Luke intends with 'they all' and 'they' to say that they all agreed with the condemnation of Jesus. It was only possible for Joseph and Nicodemus to attend this council without giving their approval if they belonged to the clerks of the court.

The question of why there were two condemnations can be answered now. The first condemnation was only preliminary, and the second was the definitive judgement of the complete Sanhedrin. Subsequently we have to look at the question, why there were four confessions of Jesus about his identity.

The course of the first confrontation at night is not quite clear. Witnesses testified against Jesus, but Matthew says: '... they sought false testimony against Jesus, that they might put him to death.' The witnesses were brought into the hall one by one to testify and then they were taken out, as they were supposed to be. The 'false aspect' of the process was probably the lack of a correct interrogation of the witnesses; that was the task of the judges.⁴¹⁹ An intense interrogation was necessary as according to the law for death penalty two or three testimonies had to be convincing. And therefore it was a strict ritual that the judges had to verify the testimonies by searching questioning of the witnesses. If this remained undone, the testimonies were automatically assumed to be the truth. After the witnesses, the moment came for Jesus to defend himself, as defence lawyers were not usual in court. And the high priest Caiaphas arose to invite Jesus to speak:

418. There were at least two clerks, as one was to record votes of acquittal and the other votes of condemnation. Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4,3.

419. Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4 and 5,

‘Have you no answer to speak? What is it that these men testify against you?’

Caiaphas upheld a semblance of truth. Superficially it seemed as if honest people were discussing a serious matter, but in the meantime Caiaphas used a centuries-old trick; put the accused under the pressure of the common will of the group and everything he says will be used against him; even the slightest nervousness will be taken as a sign of guilt. However, Jesus did not play the game: he remained silent, painfully enough for everyone present. In that moment of silence everyone felt the lack of examination of the witnesses as was the norm. And therefore after Jesus’ confession the general relief consequently followed ‘Why do we still need witnesses?’

Table 1

Matthew 26:62-68

I.
62 And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”
63 But Jesus was silent.

IV.
And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”
64 Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the

Mark 14:60-65

II.
60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”
61 But he was silent and made no answer.

III.
Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”
62 {And} Jesus said, “I am; and you will see the Son of

Luke 22:66-71

V.
66 [And] When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes; and they led him away to their council, and they said,
67 “If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe; 68 {and} if I ask you, you will not answer.
69 But from now on the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power

JESUS' STENOGRAPHERS

<p>Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”</p> <p>65 Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. 66 What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.”</p> <p>67 <u>Then</u> they spat in his face, and struck him; and some slapped him,</p> <p>68 saying, “Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?”</p>	<p>man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”</p> <p>63 {And} the high priest tore his garments, and said, “Why do we still need witnesses?</p> <p>64 You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?”</p> <p>And they all condemned him as deserving death.</p> <p>65 <u>And</u> some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to strike him, [and] saying to him, “Prophecy!” And the guards received him with blows.</p>	<p>of God.”</p> <p>70 {And} they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?”</p> <p>{And} he said to them, “You say that I am.”</p> <p>71 {And} they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”</p>
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(See Table 1.) The records of Matthew and Mark are parallel (at night). The underlined signal words (And, And) show that the passages I and II give almost the same information. However there are some differences in the Greek expressions of the direct speeches. So it was said twice. In Matthew the high priest is only standing, but in Mark he had also moved into the center of the court. And so Mark gives the second utterance of the high priest.

The signal words of the passages III and IV show that the description of Mark is first (Again: asyndetically connected; and so uninterrupted). Matthew with ‘And’ gives interruption and follows later. This is also to be seen from ‘Then’ (Matthew 26:67, uninterrupted) in contrast with Mark 14:65 ‘And’ (interrupted).

As Jesus kept silence, (I and II), Caiaphas did not succeed in finding a point of

contact with Jesus. Going into the center he asked again why he did not react to the charges. But Jesus continued being silent. It seems that Caiaphas saw that his intimidation trick was starting to turn against himself. What now? There was no progression in the case. Certainly, everyone in the council felt the lack of a proper interrogation of the witnesses. The silence became painful. But then Caiaphas grabbed at a straw, as the witnesses were worthless. He decided to put forth a straight question about Jesus' identity: 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' (III)

And now Jesus' reply was unambiguous: 'I am; ...' And immediately he linked to a prophecy concerning his return to the Father and a later come-back to earth: '... and you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.' According to these records the high priest rent his clothes (III). Firstly he tore his *chitonous*, his under-garments, usually worn next to the skin (not his garments as the RSV says).⁴²⁰ With both hands he took it and tore it apart as if to get fresh air. This was a dramatic moment, because a high priest was not allowed to tear his garment, at least not when he was functioning in the temple.⁴²¹ That was not the case now, but undoubtedly his action shocked the people as much as Jesus' pronouncement.

Caiaphas could be glad, as Jesus' reply was unambiguous. 'Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?' The process took a new direction, without witnesses. A condemnation could follow quickly from this moment onwards. For that to happen, a second confession of

420. The translation of the RSV 'his garments' (plural) may be inspired by the parallel of Matthew 26:65 'his robes' (plural). In that case the translators supposed that Matthew and Mark gave different descriptions of the same moment of Jesus' interrogation. However we have to deal with two confessions of Jesus and with two moments of rending clothes of the high priest. At first he tore apart his undergarments which was worn next to the skin and partly hidden under the beard. Over this he wore his outer garment. The second time he rent 'his garments', *ta himatia*, i.e.: his undergarments, which had already a rip from top down, together with his outer garment.

421. Leviticus 21:10.

Jesus was necessary to exclude mistakes. This was the general custom in jurisprudence, also by that of the Romans (*living pattern*).⁴²² Section IV begins with an 'And-sentence', which shows an interruption between Matthew 26: 63a and 63b. Again Caiaphas puts forth the question of Jesus' identity, but stronger now with the addition: 'I adjure you by the living God, ...' and by a different choice of words '... are you the Christ, the Son of God (instead of the Blessed)?' Now he used the - in his eyes - blasphemous expression 'the Son of God'.⁴²³ The repeated question was answered by Jesus with a repeated positive answer and that was enough evidence for his condemnation by the council. The clerks did their job and the record of the process was enough legal evidence later on in combination with the testimonies of the members of the council. After Jesus' second confession the high priest took his garments, his under garments and the outer garment, and completely ruined them both, now in one go.

Jesus had checkmated himself. It didn't take much time now to finish the matter and he was taken out. The next morning an extra meeting was inserted for the complete Sanhedrin: priestly representatives, scribes and elders, rulers of the people. That is described in Luke's record. Of course no mention is made by

422. Plinius Minor in a letter to Emperor Trajanus wrote about the Christians: 'I interrogated them whether they were Christians; if they confessed it I repeated the question twice again, adding the threat of capital punishment; if they still persevered, I ordered them to be executed.' (111-113 A.D. *Epistulae ad Trajanum*). Polycarp (156 A.D.), who was examined by the proconsul, before he died as a martyr, was asked three times to give up his faith (In: *The martyrdom of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna*, chapters IX-XI). Pilate asked two times whether Jesus was the 'King of the Jews', as this was a serious accusation with regard to the Roman government in the Jewish land.

423. In Isaiah 9:6 the Christ is called 'Eel Gibboor' (Hebr.): Mighty God. There cannot be a doubt about this meaning as in Isaiah 10:21 the same expression with this meaning is formulated: 'A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the *mighty God*.' The Sanhedrin didn't reckon with the fact that the prophets of old spoke in this sense about the Messiah to come as 'Son of God'.

Luke of the fact that Caiaphas gave a summary of what had happened the night before. All the members understood that the records of the night before would be enough evidence for Jesus' rejection. Denials could not help him anymore. The members of the highest court in Israel had the right and the duty to hear Jesus and he was brought in. In Luke's record we again meet the twofold question of Jesus' identity (living pattern): firstly, the question of being the Messiah: 'If you are the Christ, tell us.' (verse 67); secondly, the question of being the Son of God: 'Are you the Son of God, then?' (verse 70). Jesus confirmed the two questions, and again the matter was done.

The Sanhedrin decided to transfer him to Pilate. It was a Jewish festival day and a trial was not only uncommon now, but even forbidden. However the Sanhedrin could hold that they did not have a trial, as they didn't have the right to condemn someone to death. They had only made up their minds. On the other hand, the Romans - as pagans - were not prevented from having a trial. Legally they had only organized Jesus' extradition to the Romans and the latter would put him to death. The Romans would then be responsible and the members of the Sanhedrin could keep their hands clean.⁴²⁴

Finally we may have a look at the records we have discussed now. Later on the records of that night and morning, which were made by the clerks, reached the disciples of Jesus. The first report, the teaching record of Matthew, was made out of the second confession of Jesus, because it was conclusive. The second report, the public record of Luke, contained the description of the full Sanhedrin of that morning. That was really important for the public, as Jesus' case became a public matter in that council. The remnant record of Mark was built up around that

424. The idea that there could never have been a legal Jewish trial on Easter is important, as someone as D. Flusser has deduced from that, that there was no condemnation at all of Jesus by the Sanhedrin. D. Flusser (red.), 1980, chapter 6: From the point of jurisdiction he may be right, but that doesn't mean that the reports of the synoptics are wrong. The Sanhedrin couldn't condemn anybody to death under the Roman government, so one could simply maintain that the meetings of the councils were not against Jewish tradition or law.

stirring moment of Jesus' first confession.

There are two different types of problems in relation to the confrontation between Jesus and the priestly council: general problems and those which are related to the so-called oral tradition. A more general question is e.g.: Was the priestly council allowed to judge Jesus after drinking wine some hours earlier during the meal of Passover? These types of problems are rather easy to solve. About the drinking of wine: we know generally that in Judaism there are two evenings for the celebration of Passover. We learn the same thing from the gospels. The gospel of John especially remarks that the members of the Sanhedrin didn't want to enter the Praetorium of Pilate as they wanted to eat the Passover that evening.⁴²⁵ Jesus and his disciples had already celebrated the feast the evening before. The custom of two Seider evenings was certainly a benefit for the priests as they had one day more to slaughter the lambs for the people in Jerusalem. And that is of course the answer: the priests ate the Passover the second day to be sure that they could work in the temple without having drunk alcoholic liquids. And so they were also ready to examine Jesus, not having used wine the evening before.

The questions connected with the theory of the oral tradition are much more problematic with regard to this moment in Jesus' story. They are many. Firstly the Sanhedrin - according to Matthew and Mark - gathered at night and, according to Luke, in the morning. That's a real difficulty, or better, a contradiction. Secondly is the question of whether there ever was a condemnation by the Sanhedrin, as the gospel of John doesn't say anything about it. Thirdly, the testimonies of witnesses in Mark differ completely from those in Matthew. The 'explanation' is that Matthew - by copying the gospel of Mark - edited his material

425. John 18:28. Maybe the custom of two evenings for Passover could develop from Exodus 12:6. The fourteenth day of the month is mentioned here and in the evening the lamb should be eaten. Is that the evening after daylight of the fourteenth? That evening belongs by Jewish custom to the fifteenth. Or is the evening of the fourteenth strictly meant? In that case the evening before the daytime of the fourteenth is meant; i. e. the evening following the daytime of the thirteenth.

so freely with embellishments that Mark's gospel is hardly able to be recognized anymore in Matthew's gospel. Fourth, the two questions of Caiaphas and the two confessions of Jesus are very different in wording, when we compare Matthew and Mark. One supposes again that these changes did not actually happen, but were results of the oral tradition. Or maybe Matthew transferred the report of Mark according to his own insights writing his gospel. Anyway, within the exegesis of the oral tradition it is improper to assume that Caiaphas asked Jesus twice concerning his identity. The fact that this was the general custom in jurisprudence is not referred to in commentaries, as the two confessions are seen as such 'a fine illustration' of how things were changed by the oral tradition. Fifth, the high priest – according to Mark - ruined his under-garments, whereas – according to Matthew - he tore his garments. Which of the gospels is right, and which is wrong? What really happened? Defenders of the oral tradition have said that he probably didn't tear his clothes at all, for it is difficult to suppose that such an action of the high priest would be forgotten and get changed within the oral tradition. Surely it was an invention of the gospel writers to dramatize their stories. All these scholarly problems which are connected with the theory of the so called oral tradition are in fact denials of the reliability of the Word of God. And within the explanation of the documentation theory all of these problems disappear like snow under a hot sun, as we have seen.

In the former paragraph we collected the problems one has to deal with in the exegesis of the oral tradition. It is clear that the oral tradition has logical explanations based in all cases on two mottos: '... changed in the course of time,' or: '... changed by a gospel writer when he composed his gospel'. The advocates of the oral tradition should ask themselves whether they are making their listeners wise, or keeping them ignorant. However, what are considered as contradictions and embellishments in the oral tradition are, in fact, specific observations of the eyewitnesses within the documentation theory. There is no need to speak of deformation of the texts in it. On the contrary, they contain a mass of sound information worth knowing and which brings us nearer to the Lord. As we have

seen, with this theory an impressive reconstruction of the course of events and the course of direct speeches is possible. In other words, it is impressive to see *the constant mutual consistency of the gospel texts, when we read them analytically.*

2. The Trial before Pilate (first session)

Question 2. Exactly what was said between Jesus and Pilate?

The Jewish Council sent Jesus to Pilate, the governor. From there he was sent by Pilate to Herod who in turn sent Jesus back to Pilate. And so there were two sessions in which Pilate examined Jesus. However, after the first meeting he was already convinced of Jesus' innocence.

Table 2

John 18:28-32

28 Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was early. They themselves did not enter the praetorium, so that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover.

29 So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"

30 They answered him, "If this man were not an evildoer, we would not have handed him over."

31 Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

32 This was to fulfil the word which Jesus had spoken to show by what death he was to die.

(See Table 2.) The first public confrontation between Pilate and the leaders of Jerusalem is recorded by John. Pilate immediately took the initiative and asked what accusation they had against Jesus. They failed to reply with any accusation which would have resulted in their objective of having Jesus put 'to death'. Then the trial really started with the first accusations (Luke).

Table 3

Matthew 27:11-14

IIa.

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him [the question saying], “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.”

IVa.

12 [And] But when he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he made no answer.

13 Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?”

14 [And] But he gave him no answer, not even a single charge; so that the governor wondered greatly.

Mark 15:2-5

IIb.

2 And Pilate asked him [the question], “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him [answering said], “You have said so.”

IVb.

3 And the chief priests accused him of many things.

4 {And} Pilate again asked him [the question saying], “Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.”

5 But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate wondered.

Luke 23:2-5

I.

2 {And} they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ a king.”

IIb.

3 {And} Pilate asked him [saying], “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him [answering said], “You have said so.”

III.

4 {And} Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes, “I find no crime in this man.”

IV.

5 But they were urgent, saying,

IVc.

“He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.”

(See Table 3.) In the passages cited, a numbering has again been introduced to fix the order of the occurrences. The report of Luke gives an uninterrupted description, as it is not composed with 'And-sentences', in contrast with Matthew and Mark which have several 'And-sentences'. The fact that Luke has a continuous succession makes it easy to analyze these passages. It is possible to establish four steps: (1) first accusations, (2) examination by Pilate⁴²⁶, (3) new accusations, (4) Jesus' silence and his Galilean origin.

The interrogation started. Luke has 'asked him saying' (verse 3), which refers to the examination in general; all the direct speeches are not given in it as Luke uses a twofold introduction. And the twofold introduction 'asked him saying' does not introduce the direct speech that follows, but rather the entire examination. The direct speech thereafter is introduced by the simple introduction 'saying'.

Ila. Matthew gives the question about Jesus' kingship. Jesus' answer has been presented completely as a simple introduction precedes it: 'You have said so!' I Ib. Pilate has asked the question twice, as is clear from the answer of Jesus in Mark and Luke: 'You have said so!' This answer is substantially the same as in Matthew, but now a twofold introduction is used by Mark and Luke (answering said). And that means that something more was said by Jesus at that moment.

In public, Pilate twice asked Jesus about his kingship. Why? Didn't he hear it well the first time? Was there so much noise? Or was he so astonished that Jesus reacted so directly to his question that he wanted to check again? We may put forth all sorts of answers, but it is decisive that he had understood fully that the

426. There are two different verbs for 'to ask': (1) *erota-oo*, to ask, examine; is able to cover the complete confrontation of Pilate and Jesus; in Luke 3:3 (minority text, preferable as in the parallel passages *eperota-oo* is dominant; *praestat lectio difficilior*). (2) *eperota-oo*: to put a question; refers to one single question and not to the whole examination in Matthew 27:11, Mark 15:2,4.

main accusation was this kingship of Jesus. And according to Roman justice, he had to verify a confession by repetition of it (living pattern).

III. Pilate immediately considered the fact that anybody is permitted to say anything about himself that he wants to, as long as he is not a criminal or a rebel against the nation. All the other accusations he had heard didn't seem to point in that direction and so he concluded: 'I find no guilt in this man.'

IV. Then the second phase of accusations followed. In Matthew and Mark, (IVa and IVb); Pilate asked twice why Jesus didn't react to the new accusations, but he remained silent. At last Pilate heard that his origin was Galilee, and so he decided that it was Herod's task to judge Jesus. Herod governed Galilee and so he was the right person for the job; the accusation that Jesus had stirred up the people should be taken seriously (IVc).

The writers, whether members of the Sanhedrin, (Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus), or disciples of Jesus, following the trial were poised between hope and fear. They did not comprehend what was happening. They must have done their work only mechanically. The teaching report of Matthew contains only the beginning and the end of the first examination. It has the simplest composition: three 'And-sentences'. As a result of their confusion, the writers probably simply followed the Markian style of 'And-sentences'. The public record (Luke) looks better. Sentences that are connected asyndetically, (without specific conjunctions), ensure that the occurrences were described continuously. The remnant record of Mark is as short as that of Matthew and has been composed in the same way.

Table 4

John 18:33-38a

33 Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

34 Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you

about me?"

35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me; what have you done?"

36 Jesus answered, "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world."

37 Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."

38 Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" [And] After he had said this, he went out to the Jews [Judeans] again, ...

(See Table 4.) After the first public trial, Pilate had a short personal conversation with Jesus. He asked him again about his kingship, but it was difficult for Pilate to understand Jesus being the King of Truth. And by that the conversation ended. John continues his story in verse 38b with the second part of Jesus' public trial before Pilate, in which Barabbas was chosen to be set free, to the disadvantage of Jesus. John uses an 'And-sentence' in verse 38b to make clear that something happened in between: Jesus' visit to Herod. 'And after he had said this, he went out ...'; the words that are spoken thereafter are the first words of the second part of Jesus' public trial.

3. Jesus' death

Question 3. How do the reports in the gospels contribute to a complete picture of Jesus' last moments?

In the gospels we possess four reports about Jesus' death. These reports form a good illustration of the working method of Jesus' writers. The parallel reports which were made during Jesus' work were a teaching record, a public record and a remnant record. These reports were preserved in the gospels of Matthew, Luke

and Mark, respectively. Messianic reports came in the gospel of John.⁴²⁷ As we examine and discuss the records concerning Jesus' death, it is notable that each was built on one of Jesus' last sayings. Each pronouncement tells us something about the intention and color of the report to which it belongs.

Why hast thou forsaken me? (1)

Table 5

Matthew 27:46-50

46 {And} about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice [saying], "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

47 {And} some of the bystanders hearing it said, "This man is calling Elijah."

48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink.

49 But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."

50 {And} Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

(See Table 5.) One has chosen for the central saying in the teaching report of Matthew: 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' That is: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' With the twofold introduction in verse 46 (cried ... saying) Matthew indicates that something more was said. Maybe the words omitted in Matthew are: 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' as Mark gives them and which were 'at the sixth hour'. It is not possible to decide whether the exclamation in Mark

427. Sometimes John makes references to the scriptures, which demonstrates that his reports got their final form after the event of the resurrection. This occurrence gave John a complete view of Jesus' Messianic calling. And so his references to the scriptures made his reports about the Passion and Resurrection into Messianic reports. The prologue of the Gospel of John already shows the Messianic character of his gospel.

was first or Matthew's, as he gives as time 'about the ninth hour'. That means Matthew's shout could be before or after the ninth hour.⁴²⁸

Matthew frequently puts God's activity in the center in his teaching report. That's also the case here. People wondered whether God would intervene at the last moment by a saving action of Elijah. Maybe Jesus' disciples also had an expectation like that: a high hope that could be the reason for the writers to continue their work. But a rescuing act from God's side didn't occur. However God acquitted himself well when Jesus died: the curtain of the temple was torn in two, the earth shook and rocks were split and tombs were opened ... (verse 51). That was God's work, of which Matthew gives the most complete information. Most striking therefore is that he chose to relate Jesus' pronouncement that God had forsaken him in this teaching report. The disciples must have also had a feeling of desolation, in spite of the signs of God. After the resurrection, Matthew had to admit by these signs: Yes, the Father was there also, at Golgotha.

Why has thou forsaken me? (2)

Table 6

Mark 15:34-38

34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

35 And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah."

428. An important point here is that Mark 15:34 has a simple introduction in contrast with Matthew 27:46 which has a twofold introduction. Mark can deviate from the rule as he gives the specific moment of that part of the direct speech he presents. However, K. Aland, 1973 (Synopsis) gives for Mark 15:34 a variant of a twofold introduction 'cried ... saying' according to an important group of witnesses: C, Koine, A etc. That would mean that Mark and Matthew are parallel here in not giving the complete saying.

36 {And} one ran and, filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."

37 {And} Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last.

38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

(See Table 6.) In Mark's report, the exact time is unique 'at the ninth hour Jesus cried ...' There must have been a clear time indicator in Jerusalem; maybe for the hours for offering and prayer. The ninth was an hour of prayer (Acts 3:1). Mark presents a remnant record and it has nearly the same atmosphere of desolation as that of Matthew with the same issues: Jesus' desolation, the feeling of the people that God might intervene by an act of Elijah and the tearing of the curtain of the temple. The same writers worked on these reports. Generally one assumes that 'the curtain' means that which was inside the temple, between the Holy and the Holiest places. However this is not certain. It is more probable that the curtain outside the entrance of the temple house is meant. When the large doors of the temple house were open by day, a magnificent curtain filled the opening. (Strack-Billerbeck I, p. 1045 'With regard to the question whether in Matthew 27:51 [or Mark 15:38] the first or the last curtain is meant, only theological considerations can turn the scale ...') Billerbeck himself chose the last (inside) curtain, as is usually done because of the idea that the way to the Holiest was opened when Jesus died.

In the documentation interpretation, the first (outside) curtain is more probable, as the tearing of it is described in the synoptic gospels as a part of the occurrence on Golgotha; that means some impression about it was accessible for the people near the cross, when it happened. The eyewitnesses of Jesus wrote what they saw and heard at the moment of writing. Maybe they could later on more precisely put into words what had happened, as the distance between the cross and the temple was considerable. Certainly the open place before the temple was filled with people for the ninth hour to pray together in the temple on this day of Preparation, and on that very moment the curtain

split from top to bottom. Calling and shouting must have filled the air. The two high temple doors were then closed and maybe the people were sent away from before the temple. Something of the shouts must have reached the people who were on Golgotha.

Jesus gives the spirit.

Table 7

Luke 23:44-46

44 [And] It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour,

45 while the sun's light failed; {and} the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

46 [And] {Then} Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" {And} having said this he breathed his last.

(See Table 7.) The public report of Luke starts with the tearing of the curtain. That indicates the public character of this event, which was seen by many. By that Luke's report also gives the impression that the first (outside) curtain was torn. In his reports a word of the Lord is also mentioned: 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!' That was Jesus' last word, as he gave up his spirit. In Luke's report the work of God is not central, but just as often Jesus' work as a human being is. Luke is extremely short; nothing about his desolation, nothing about the desolation of the surrounding people. He simply says with this last utterance of Jesus that he died in harmony with the Father. That is completely different from Mathew and Mark. Certainly Luke expressed a pious Jewish ideal: to die at peace with God; that was important for the public to hear.

It is finished!

Table 8

John 19:28-30

28 After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), “I thirst.”

29 A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth.

30 When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, “It is finished”; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

(See Table 8.) The report of John shows the Messianic calling of Jesus. That becomes clear from his saying: ‘It is finished!’ Maybe better: ‘accomplished!’ or ‘fulfilled!’. He had completed his Messianic vocation. After the Sabbath he arose from the dead, the eyes of the disciples were opened and they saw Jesus in glory. Then they started to see that Jesus had fulfilled his Messianic calling as the suffering servant of God. The gospel of John is soaked in this divine paradox. The Messianic vocation is also visible in the word: ‘I thirst!’ and the drinking of the vinegar. In Psalm 69:21 David (and therefore also the Son of David) says: ‘... and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.’ In this Psalm vinegar stands for the deadly humiliation of God’s servant. But this Psalm also speaks concerning salvation: ‘I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving.’ (31)

It is difficult to decide when the reports about Jesus’ death were made from the first notes. The synoptic records are professionally made up, concentrating only on the essentials of the story. It is very possible therefore that they worked out their notes that evening, as usual, shortly after the occurrences of that noon. John’s report gives the impression of victory and fulfilment of the Scriptures (28), which

implies a last compilation after the resurrection.⁴²⁹ In any event, the professional working method of the writers guaranteed the lasting quality of these reports.

Now we have to answer the question raised at the start: Do the reports in the gospels contribute to a complete picture? Not always, but often it will be possible to paint a complete picture with complementary gospel records. This is indeed the case with the story of Jesus' death.

Four reports concerning Jesus' death show the same event from different perspectives. Matthew and Mark describe the feeling of desolation while God seemed to be absent in life. Jesus undoubtedly had the insight that God was present, but all the more painful, then, was his perception of being separated from his heavenly Father by the charge of sin. Luke, however, shows how Jesus died reconciled with God. John shows how the Lord accomplished his Messianic calling through suffering. These are indeed three different but relevant perceptions connected with the death of Jesus. These perceptions are important for us also. Frequently we also often do not recognize God's presence, whereas he is near (Matthew, Mark). We may experience God's caring presence, even in our last moments (Luke). Finally, the faithful also have a Messianic calling in life: victory, though not without a measure of suffering (John).

4. Jesus' resurrection

Question 4. How do we explain the many seeming contradictions in the resurrection story?
In many instances the resurrection story makes a rather chaotic impression. There are numerous details which at first glance seem to contradict each other. The method of explanation is generally that these so-called contradictions are products of the oral tradition. However most of them turn out better than expected. One who puts the messages together accurately receives a superb picture of the occurrences of that morning.

429. After Jesus' resurrection the disciples came to understand that what had happened was according to the Scriptures. (John 20:9, Luke 24:25-27)

*The women on their way to the tomb***Table 9**

Matthew 28:1	Mark 16:1-2	Luke 23:56-24:1	John 20:1
II.	1 And when the	56 then they	I.
1 Now after the	sabbath was past,	returned, and	1 Now on the first
sabbath, toward	Mary Magdalene,	prepared spices	day of the week
the dawn of the first	and Mary the	and ointments.	Mary Magdalene
day of the week,	mother of James,	[And] On the	{came} [went] to
Mary Magdalene	and Salo'me,	sabbath they rested	the tomb early,
and the other Mary	bought spices, so	according to the	while it was still
went to see the	that they might go	commandment.	dark, ...
sepulchre.	and anoint him.		
2 And behold,		IIIb.	
there was a great	IIIa	1 But on the first day	
earthquake; ...	2 And very early on	of the week, at early	
	the first day of the	dawn, they went to	
	week they went to	the tomb, taking	
	the tomb when the	the spices which	
	sun had risen.	they had prepared.	

(See Table 9.) How many women in fact went to the tomb? Were there three (Mark 16:1-2), two (Matthew 28:1), or only one (John 20:1)? Were there two angels (John 20:12, Luke 24:4), or one (Matthew 28:5, Mark. 16:5)? Did the women go to the tomb before dawn (Matthew 28:1, John 20:1), at sunrise (Luke 24:1), or after sunrise (Mark 16:2)? These questions include eight problems. How to come to the right answers?

The first of the women on the road that morning was Mary Magdalene. It was still dark, before dawn (I). She firstly picked up 'the other Mary'; it was still be-

fore dawn (II). The other Mary is also called: Mary, mother of James and Joses.⁴³⁰ Then on the road to the tomb they picked up Salome (IIIa, IIIb). But before they came to Salome, there was a violent earthquake (Matthew). They did not know that an angel at that very moment rolled the stone away... When they were all three underway, the sun had risen (Mark).

A question which is also frequently stated is: How is it possible that the women went to the tomb bearing ointments when they knew that the tomb was closed with a heavy stone? And isn't it a contradiction that they knew that Jesus had been anointed already at his burial by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus?⁴³¹ For a person of distinction many ointments at his burial were an honor. It was also possible to put them around the body or to scatter or sprinkle them over the body later on.⁴³²

But nevertheless, they knew that there was a heavy stone in front of the tomb. Indeed, that was a subject of discussion, while they were going to the tomb garden. Who would be able to roll the stone away?⁴³³ They probably supposed that they had time enough to solve this problem; firstly they wanted to inspect the sepulchre. After that, one of them could go to Joseph of Arimathea for approval and help to enter. Apparently none of them was informed about the Roman guards watching the tomb; it seems that the installation of the guards had taken place extremely inconspicuously.⁴³⁴

From where did the women get the spices and ointments? One has frequently pointed to a so called contradiction between Luke and Mark with regard to this

430. Mark 15:40, 15:47, 16:1.

431. Nicodemus used a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pounds weight. John 19:39.

432. At the burial of king Herodes there were five hundred servants with perfumery behind the bier to leave it in the sepulchre. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates* 17, 199.

433. Mark 16:3.

434. Matthew 27:62-66.

matter. Did the women prepare spices on the day Jesus died, before night set in, as Luke remarks? Or did they buy spices on the first day of the week, as Mark says? The answer must be quite simple: the spices were prepared partly on the afternoon after the burial (Luke), but it was not sufficient, as time was short and so they bought more after the Sabbath. That was the evening after the second Sabbath⁴³⁵ and preceding the resurrection.

Six of the eight problems we have mentioned earlier in this section have been solved now; only the question of the number of angels is still unanswered. We will return to this later. The report concerning the angel who descends then follows. The beginning of the resurrection ...

The tomb is opened ...

Table 10

Matthew 28:2-4

2 ... ; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it.

3 His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.

4 {And} for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

(See Table 10.) The first angel in the story descended from heaven. He had no time for the guards, as he rolled the stone away without asking permission. The soldiers felt assaulted and thought they were going to die. How interesting is that behavior of the angel. Isn't he a little bit like a grown up boy? Rolling

435. Exodus 12:16, Leviticus 23:6 show that there was a Sabbath following on Passover. This Sabbath and the weekly Sabbath formed that year a couple of two Sabbaths (compare Matthew 28:1 - The translation of Ferrar Fenton has here correctly: 'After the Sabbaths...'). Jesus was three days in the grave: the day of Preparation and the two Sabbaths that followed.

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that stone away was absolutely forbidden; then he took a seat on that stone; it looks as if he made it himself comfortable. He didn't behave like a watcher who stands beside the door, or who is pacing forth and back regularly. The soldiers of the guard looked at the tomb to do their job, while the angel looked in the opposite direction to do his job. And how effective was the behavior of the angel relative to that of the soldiers: they 'trembled and became like dead men'. Those who look at the faith to criticize it, have no life in themselves; the soldiers gathered their last strength to escape.

Meanwhile the women, ignorant of what had happened, were on their way to the tomb. There was a short period of time in which no human being was present at the sepulchre; within that short interval, the resurrection occurred. Jesus arose and left the tomb. Everything seemed quiet when the women arrived. The only strange thing they saw was the stone rolled away; even the angel in front of the tomb had disappeared. It has been supposed that Jesus went out into the garden to say his morning prayers while the angels followed him as his servants. (More about the second angel in the following paragraphs.)

First reaction of the women

Table II

Mark 16:3-4

I.

3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?"

IIa.

4 And looking up, they saw

Luke 24:2

IIb.

2 {And} they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,

John 20:1-2

IIc.

1 ... and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

III.

2 So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other

that the stone was rolled
back; -- it was very large.

disciple, the one whom
Jesus loved, and said to
them, "They have taken the
Lord out of the tomb, and
we do not know where they
have laid him."

(See Table 11.) The women did not enter the sepulchre. Mary Magdalene ran to the disciples (III), while the others stayed behind. Mary told the disciples her premature conclusion that Jesus' body had been stolen out of the tomb. Remarkably she said: '... and we do not know ...', which makes clear that in the gospel of John, in which however only Mary Magdalene is mentioned, other women are also included in the story. Hereafter follows the moving story of Peter and John, who inspected the tomb.

Peter and John inspect the tomb

Table 12

John 20:3-10

- 3 Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb.
4 They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first;
5 and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.
6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying,
7 and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself.
8 Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;
9 for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.
10 Then the disciples went back to their homes.

(See Table 12.) Peter and John saw the linen cloths, in which the body of Jesus had been wrapped.⁴³⁶ They lay there in the same state as during the burial, but now without the body of Jesus. The napkin was in the same state, still wrapped, but in another place.⁴³⁷ This was a staggering experience for Peter and John. Jesus could not have been taken out of the cloths, for then the complete form would have been disturbed and the cloths would not lie in that case in the proper position where Jesus had lain. But what, then? Unrolled and again wrapped wasn't an option either, what with all the hard crusts of dried blood and old ointments. It surpassed their comprehension, but only one conclusion was possible: Jesus stood straight up through the cloths. In the same way as walls and doors couldn't stop him, when he appeared to his disciples as John immediately tells after this passage of the tomb inspection. (John 20:19) John started to believe that a miracle had happened and they returned. One thing was clear: it was impossible that the body had been stolen. In that case the cloths would have also been gone. To get a complete picture, we may suppose that a second angel had entered the tomb with heavenly clothes, he had shoved away the napkin and left the tomb to wait outside for Jesus' coming out.

436. Luke 23:53.

437. John uses the perfect *entetuligmenon*, for the napkin. This is the Greek perfect that means: wrapped; and not: rolled up (RSV). The notion of the Greek word is that it is rolled around something else. It is the same verb (*entulissoo*) as used in Luke 23:53 for the entire body of Jesus: wrapped in a linen shroud.

*The women and the angels***Table 13**

Matthew 28:5-7	Mark 16:5-7	Luke 24:3-8	John 20:11-14
III.	V.	I.	VI.
5 But the angel [answering] said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.	5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed.	3 but when they went in they did not find the body.	11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, {and} as she [then] wept she stooped to look into the tomb;
6 He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.	6 {And} he said to them, “Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him.	4 [And] While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel; ...	12 and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.
7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you.”	7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.”	IV. 5 ... {and} as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise.” 8 And they remembered his words,	VII. 13 [And] They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” 14 Saying this, she turned round ...

(See Table 13.) The speeches of the angels to the women are basically problematic in the resurrection story. There are three, with considerable mutual differences. Is there better evidence that the oral tradition has struck also at the core message of the Christian belief? The oral tradition has ensured that the event at the sepulchre, whatever it might have been, developed into a happening with angels and an empty sepulchre, in which some women played a central role. The gospel of Mark and John let the angel(s) speak to the women in the tomb, while Matthew and Luke paint the picture that the angels spoke with them outside the tomb. Moreover the deviations of the speeches reflect changes which could only grow due to the oral tradition, as the defenders of it claim. And so it seems that the gospels deliver a real chaotic picture of what happened at the tomb. Many hold that the gospels together offer a completely unbelievable report about Jesus' resurrection from historical point of view. So let's have a closer look at all the ins and outs.

Shortly after Peter and John had left the sepulchre, Mary Magdalene arrived again at the garden of the tomb. There she met the other women, who had been waiting at the entrance of the garden. Now they also entered the sepulchre and they also did not find the body of Jesus (I). They went out and, being uncertain what to do now, found themselves in the presence of two angels (II).⁴³⁸ One of the angels started to speak and offered to enter with them to 'see the place where he lay' (III).⁴³⁹ This angel had said more, as becomes clear from the two-fold introduction: 'answering said'. Of course he tried to put them at ease and announced that he had an important message for them and for Jesus' disciples. That was the sign for one of the women to take out her writing tablet to note the message (III). A 'sjaliach' was a messenger, who delivered a message literally as it

438. Important is the 'And-sentence' of Luke 24:4 which shows that there was an interval of time between verse 3 and 4, during which the women could go outside of the tomb.

439. The repeated encouragement of the angels to see the place where Jesus had laid, underlines that there was the evidence they needed.

was spoken. Salome was the shorthand writer, as we will see.⁴⁴⁰

When the angels saw how the women looked at the ground (Luke 24:5) and that their words didn't seem to have any impact, one of them repeated the message, but now with the remark that it was Jesus himself who had foretold his crucifixion and resurrection (IV). And the remembrance of Jesus' words had more effect. Then the women followed the angels, entering the tomb to see the place where Jesus had laid (V). Inside, the angels took a seat near that place to indicate the spot. John says: 'one at the head and one at the feet.'

When one of the angels saw that the women were again filled with fear, he started to speak to them, trying to comfort them, and for the third time the women heard the message about Jesus' resurrection, but now while they were looking at the empty cloths. Mechanically, Salome also noted these words of the angel (V).

By analytical reading it is easy - seeing the previous three paragraphs - to meet the criticism. It is clear that each speech of the angels brought new elements: firstly the resurrection, secondly Jesus own predictions about it, thirdly in the tomb looking at the cloths, the encouragement to not be amazed and to see the place where he had lain. This was the living pattern of diatribe style of teaching to which the angels adapted themselves. New elements made it possible to repeat what was already said and that's what is happening here, and so there is little or no reason for criticism. Then the outcome of the story follows.

Mary Magdalene could not remain there in the sepulchre and she went outside. What is the use of an empty shroud? The angels could say what they wished, but she didn't see Jesus. The words of the angels remained secret language to her. She didn't want to remain inside that dark tomb and so she went out. Outside she turned, bent down and looked, weeping, into the sepulchre, maybe to see whether the other women had followed her (VI). But then her eyes were caught by the bright angels and one of them asked why she was so sad: 'Woman, why

440. See 4.3: Jesus' stenographers.

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are you weeping?’ And in spite of all the good words of the angels, she said that she was missing the body; she turned, determined to seek it (VII).

Jesus meets the women

Table 14

Matthew 28:8-10	Mark 16:8-11	Luke 24:9-11	John 20:14-18
Ib.	Ia.	VI.	III.
8 [And] So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.	8 And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; ...	9 and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.	14 ... and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.
II.	Vb.	10 Now it was Mary Magdalene and Jo-anna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles;	15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?”
9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Hail!” and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.	Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles;	Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”
IVa.	9 Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.	11 [kai] but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.	16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means
IVc.	VI.	VII.	
and worshiped him.	10 She went and told those who had been	But Peter rose and ran to the tomb;	
10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there			

they will see me.”	with him, as they mourned and wept.	stooping and looking in, he saw	Teacher).
11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.	11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.	the linen cloth by themselves; and he went home wondering at what had happened. words,	IVb. 17 Jesus said to her, “Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”
			Va. 18 Mary Magdalene went and ...
			VI. ... said to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

(See Table 14.) The reports concerning the women leaving the tomb seem to give rather complex information. It is therefore important to bring some order by determining the sequence of the activities.

The first messages (Ia and Ib) show that the other women also left the tomb with Mary Magdalene. They were trembling, (probably Mary Magdalene), and astonished, (the others), as Mark states. Matthew has the words ‘with fear’, (probably Mary Magdalene), and ‘great joy’, (the others). The clause ‘and ran to

tell his disciples' is to be taken as connected with 'great joy' and with Salome and Mary the mother of James; certainly not with Mary Magdalene, who was still in fear and despair.

In II, the women met Jesus who greeted them in a friendly manner. Mary Magdalene was the first of them and Jesus asked her, while she was still weeping: 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?' (III) These friendly words made her forget her previous suspicion about a theft and she asked him to show her the body, if he maybe had laid it elsewhere; and that she was ready to take it with her. She supposed that she was speaking with the gardener. Jesus didn't leave her in uncertainty any longer and said: 'Mary'. And then the veil was removed; Mary recognized Jesus. She knelt, holding his feet as did also the other Mary (IVa). Jesus wanted them not to hold him (IVb), but to go to his disciples to bring them the message of his resurrection (IVc).

The information makes clear why Matthew speaks concerning two women from the beginning of his story. From the first moment that the women met the angels, Salome was the writer and as such she followed the activities. Matthew describes these activities as having been done by Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James. From the moment that the angel started to speak and announced that he had a message for the disciples, she understood that she was the person to make notes, certainly as she regularly did. Jesus' writers were accustomed to strange occurrences when they took the minutes. And so we have a detailed description of all the ins and outs of the resurrection story.

It is not difficult to imagine what happened when the soldiers came into Jerusalem with their information about the angel and the opening of the tomb. Of course the priests didn't know what to think about it. They had firstly to inform the high priest about it. They gathered and decided that they needed first hand information and so new guards were sent to the sepulchre. Nobody was allowed to enter anymore. Of course it took some time, but in that short period of time everything as described in the gospels took place. Peter and John inspected the tomb; the women had a meeting with angels and at last with Jesus; they went

to the disciples to bring their message and we are told that Peter for a second time went to the tomb (VII). And from then it was over. New guards closed the garden; nobody was permitted to enter anymore. And of course, when the garden later on was opened for the public, the tomb was cleared and nothing of the linen cloths was left. The features of the resurrection were erased. Thanks to the adequate actions of three women, Christianity possesses the everlasting reports of Jesus' resurrection. In our analysis each of the reports gets a logical and accurate place in the entire picture.

It has been often taken as an absurdity that Jesus was not recognised by Mary Magdalene. She had followed and served him for some years. Without pronouncing a definite statement about it, it goes too far to call it an absurdity or contradiction. She left the dark tomb and looked into the daylight and so she saw only a dark silhouette in front of her. Because of her tears it was certainly impossible to see sharply and recognize Jesus.

One has often felt a contradiction in the reporting of the women to the disciples. According to Mark, (16:8) the women told nothing to the disciples concerning the resurrection after their experience with the angel. But Matthew shares that they left the sepulchre to tell the disciples (28:8), just like Luke (24:10) and John (20:18). The meaning of Mark 16:8 must be that they didn't speak to any person on the road. They didn't greet anybody. In Mark 16:10 we read clearly that they indeed went to the disciples to tell them what they had seen and heard. The three women didn't go directly to the disciples. They went first to the other women, as according to Luke 24:10 the three were accompanied by other women on their visit to the disciples. But they didn't believe them; the disciples remained in unbelief, while the women had been transformed by joy.

When Jesus appeared that evening to his sad disciples, he first comforted them.⁴⁴¹ But later on, when Thomas was with them, he blamed them for their unbelief, that they didn't accept the message of the women about his resurrec-

441. John 20:19-23.

tion. He blamed them for their unbelief and hardness of heart.⁴⁴²

There were a lot of good reasons for them to start believing prudently. In the first place there was an open and empty tomb. Maybe they were not aware of the guards who had been installed and who had fled away later on, but secondly, there was a shroud, which in the form of an empty cocoon witnessed to an unexplainable, staggering miracle. Thirdly, there were the reports transmitted by the women, about the words of the angels and of Jesus himself. Fourthly, in the reports was the reference to Jesus' prediction about the crucifixion and the resurrection. That was undeniable and even the women remembered that, when the angels spoke about it. Fifthly, they were dealing with adult, intelligent women who transmitted written reports. Their behaviour could not be taken as exaggerated and oversensitive. Finally, there was the personal testimony of Mary Magdalene. She had come to them at first in complete panic, but later a strange metamorphosis had taken place: she was radiant with happiness. All this should have given them a new insight and room in their hearts for a divine intervention.

How was it possible that these men, who could not believe in Jesus' resurrection, were sent out by the Lord to preach the message of his resurrection to the world? It was only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the accurate reports that were prepared and collected by Jesus' speedy and shorthand writers, as Jesus had predicted (John 14:26): 'But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.'

442. Mark 16:14.

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