

# Foreword

*Do not say, "I am a child".  
Go now to those to whom I send you  
and say whatever I command you.*

***Jeremiah 1:7***

## I

**1.** There are two aspects to Christ or, better expressed, two roots from which to depart in a Christological investigation: the manifest, which studies Jesus in his double human and divine nature, made manifest in the world and made one in Christ Jesus, and the hidden, which seeks to apprehend the pre-existing, eternal Christ, in his quality as the Son of Man, *of whom all the scriptures speak*.<sup>1</sup>

*Manifest* Christology has been practiced and studied by many ever since the beginning of the Christian era, and it is thanks to this Christology that, to the extent that it has attained its exegetic objectives, Christians know and love Jesus of Nazareth, who was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea and, after proclaiming and teaching the Good News, was crucified on Golgotha and, after three days, rose from the dead and *ascended* to the Father.

However, the Christological research which is to be found in a purely introductory form in this book, and which corresponds to the aspect of Christ not immediately accessible, to the hidden, pre-existing Christ of whom the scriptures speak, has been practiced only marginally.

That is why this exploration of such vast and almost untrodden spaces claims to provide only the basic initial signposting that will be needed if investigation of what lies

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<sup>1</sup> John 5:39

concealed, which is so necessary if the whole Christ is to be revealed, is to make progress in times to come.

Certainly, a project like this cannot and never will be conclusive, and must remain open to the discoveries to be made by more thorough and more concrete future investigations.

What is now offered is a series of initial suggestions for this type of exegesis of the New Testament which, at the present stage, aims only to apply the methodology in its objective, i.e. its indirect sense, as will be seen.

The most convenient way of setting forth this method would have been to concentrate studies in the form of a series of short monographic papers, for subsequent development. The fact is, however, that the Christian kerygma consists of a concatenation of such inextricably interrelated passages that it is impossible to cast a new light on any one of these without automatically affecting our understanding of the others in a seemingly incongruent manner.

What turned out to be absolutely necessary was to effect a general, if oversimplified, survey of the entire Gospel teaching. As usually happens in such cases, the sheer extent of the terrain to be covered was in itself an obstacle, making it impossible to pause and pay due attention to the multiform features of the relief in every particular landscape.

**2.** It needs pointing out that application of the “hidden” method of biblical exegesis cannot be nor could it ever claim to be a discovery, since it is, in its approach to interpretation of the Bible, at least as old as the book itself.

The Gospel proclaimed and taught by Jesus was narrated, after the Savior’s *ascension* to the Father, by a few beings who, being transformed into pure *servants of the Word*<sup>2</sup> and *contemplators of his Glory*,<sup>3</sup> desired that Christ’s teachings should be made known to many.

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:2

<sup>3</sup> John 1:14; Luke 9:29-31

In order to explain the *whole* Christ, in his dual aspect, the New Testament hagiographers practiced a hermeneutic method in which both meanings, that of the manifest Christological sphere and that of the hidden one, were accorded equal value, without either of the two meanings losing its own genuine character.

The two types of exegesis practiced by these early Christians in order to come to their interpretations of the Old Testament served to configure in them the mentality necessary for the New Testament hagiographers to develop the hermeneutics they needed, interpretations whereby early Christianity was able to harmonize understanding of the biblical text with the revelations made by Jesus.

It is true that in the art of producing a text capable of expressing two meanings without any diminution of the authenticity of either, and without any risk of a clash between them, the early Christian scribes proved worthy successors to the Jewish *Sôfêrim*, the sages on whose heritage the Christian hagiographers drew.

As is well known, the inspired authors of the Bible were past masters at conferring a plural meaning on many scriptural passages, and an old rabbi put it well: *"Just as a hammer causes a mass of sparks to fly, so each scripture expresses a multitude of meanings"*.<sup>4</sup>

This mentality resulted in the application to texts of a dual hermeneutic, thanks to which the total meaning of the New Testament consists of readings endowed with a dual meaning, both manifest and hidden, and only by practicing this dual interpretation can the whole Christ be revealed: Christ manifest, whom current Christology knows and explains, and the hidden Christ concerning whom we wish to set forth a number of initial bases for exegesis.

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<sup>4</sup> Sanhedrin, 34a). Cfr. A. del Agua Pérez: *El método midrásico*, p. 54, Valencia, 1985.

3. It is not easy to prove whether the starting point of the early Christians' dual hermeneutic was the order of study said to have been practiced at Qumran.<sup>5</sup> The aim of that study was knowledge of those hidden things that were to be revealed only progressively to those who received the teachings of the sect. According to the Qumran texts, the scriptures are expressed in the form of commandments that may be classified as *manifest* and *hidden*, the manifest commandments being those that had already been revealed, while the hidden ones were to be the object of study and accessible only to the chosen ones who received the teaching.

It is not the intention of the study we now propose to go into the origins of the early Christian dual hermeneutic, because such a historical and cultural study would precisely be *manifest*, meaning that it would be a distraction, diverting attention towards secondary areas of knowledge, while neglecting the pure revelation of hidden knowledge which the text proposes.

The only thing we can fittingly affirm is that the doctrine of commandments developed at Qumran does to a large extent correspond to the dual hermeneutic which we hold to have been practiced by the first Christian hagiographers and which we are now studying.

In the New Testament texts, the manifest order consists of those expressions that are understood in a first, straightforward reading, since the value of their wise and moral content is self-evident, and the demands that arise from them call essentially for compliance. On the other hand, expressions that fall within the hidden order can be got at only through a by no means easy reinterpretation; one that enables the reader to discover therein knowledge of such density as to endow them with transformative power.

In its context, knowledge of a hidden order lies under the manifest layer of meaning, and must be discovered by means of a direct investigation, that is to say, a study in which the

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<sup>5</sup> Cfr. D. Patte: *Early Jewish hermeneutic in Palestine*, 1975 (see 1QS 8:15-16).

investigator identifies with the thing investigated so intensively, becoming so much at *one* with it, that knower and known lose separate meaning and become unified in pure knowing.

When this method of direct revelation is applied to investigation of the hidden Christ, indwelling, eternal, it becomes possible to trace the investigation back to the essence of the object under study. Like the seed in Saint Mark's Gospel, which grows without the sower knowing how, this essence simply reveals itself.<sup>6</sup>

All this is set forth in an important text in the Enoch cycle: "*From the beginning that Son of Man was hidden, and the Most High kept him in the presence of his power, and revealed him only to the chosen.*"<sup>7</sup>

## II

**1.** The "hidden" method can be applied only once the searcher has taken due account of the fact that the Christian hagiographers practiced a dual hermeneutic in which the two aspects, the manifest and the hidden, were set forth simultaneously in the same text.

This prior *knowledge* makes for the arising of an awareness which, once present, enables the searcher to discover in every text already familiar in terms of the manifest order, a new, hitherto unsuspected reading, one that opens up a new interpretation in keeping with the hidden order.

At this point, it must be made clear that, just as *manifest* Christology is not limited only to the study of Christ's being and his person, but covers his work of salvation, that is to say, soteriological Christology, so it is possible, for analytical purposes, to distinguish in the hidden Christology two methodological stages without this in any way affecting Christ's indivisible unity.

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<sup>6</sup> Mark 4:27

<sup>7</sup> 1 Enoch 62:7

By putting into practice the first of these two stages, which we could entitle *indirect reinterpretation*, it should be possible for the scholar to effect by spontaneous natural selection a *reinterpretation* of each text. This will be a fresh reading, unconditioned by the interpretations produced by manifest exegesis over the course of many centuries, which come between the text and the true knowledge expressed in its hidden aspect.

As one progresses with this indirect reinterpretation, it becomes possible to acquire the formal habit required to discover the hidden expression lying behind the superficial manifest layer of the text. Studying these expressions endowed with hidden meaning, one comes to acquire indirect knowledge of the *whole* Christ; and this in turn, although indirect, has the effect of considerably enriching *knowledge* of the dual aspect of the scriptures. It thus becomes possible gradually to contemplate an image of Christ more complete than that provided by manifest Christology.

What we are saying about Christology applies to all the methods of New Testament exegesis following the manifest approach: to the philological method, to the history of forms, to the history of scriptural composition and to the Midrashic-Derashic method (*Tr. complex Jewish systems of scriptural study*) the ultimate approach to exegesis.

As every researcher well knows, a method is no more than a technical working tool, and its application will remain void and useless for as long as its content is not informed with meaning by material grounded in knowledge. There can be no doubt, then, that neither the history of a term, nor formal classification, nor the compositional process followed by the text, nor knowledge of *Derashic* procedures, nor the history of the relation of rabbinic sources with the New Testament, will on its own suffice when it comes to deciphering the complete meaning of a text, but only for confirming or disproving prior hypotheses.

That is why one not infrequently comes across works of exegesis that are beautifully and brilliantly worked out according to a given method or series of methods, yet whose meaning

amounts to the no more than a fish biting its tail, because the method in question and the technical means it employs produce no interpretations, only procedures for confirming the previously existing state of knowledge or ignorance.

That said, prior knowledge that the New Testament texts were composed in accordance with a dual hermeneutic is necessarily useful when it comes to deciphering their whole meaning. All these texts speak in parallel in a manifest way and in another hidden one, and once one has discovered this, the first of these two ways is perfected, since both must complete one another when it comes to the absolute meaning, in an ultimate synthesis intended by the hagiographer.

**2.** As an example of the general direction of the thesis we mean to outline in this work, and bearing in mind that this comes only under the first stage, that of indirect reinterpretation, we can attempt to decipher the simultaneously revealed double Christology, manifest and hidden, by means of the dual hermeneutic employed by the evangelist in a significant phrase from the fourth Gospel: *The Word was made flesh. He lived among us.*<sup>8</sup>

According to the manifest order, this text must be interpreted to mean that the *invisible* only Son was revealed to the world as Jesus of Nazareth, the *visible* Christ. That would be the traditional exegesis in terms of manifest Christology.

If, however, the text is *further* interpreted following the hidden order, which considers the aspect of the eternal Christ, it must be understood that the Word, as the *invisible* Son of Man, was from the beginning revealed at different times and in different places to the chosen ones anointed by the Spirit of God.

The Word was, in effect, sown in every man at birth,<sup>9</sup> and that is what the text means in the hidden order when it affirms that it dwelt among us. The sown Word is the Son of Man, hidden, not known to most men's consciousness, until one day revealed to

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<sup>8</sup> John 1:14

<sup>9</sup> Mark 4:14; Jam.1:18, 21; John 1:9

the chosen one, thus accomplishing the evangelical sentence that *there is nothing hidden but it must be disclosed*.<sup>10</sup>

That is the exegesis of the Gospel text that lies hidden within the manifest layer of meaning, both coexisting in parallel, without any friction, because there is no intersection or contradiction between the two exegetic lines.

It must be pointed out that acceptance of the two exegetic aspects calls for the same degree of faith, although the nature of each will be distinct: the Word, eternal and indivisible, is the absolute essence of Christ, and can also be revealed as the essence of every man, the Son of Man, *invisible* and eternal.

**3.** The Gospel provides abundant testimony to the hidden Christological interpretation, and it may be helpful at this stage to call on a number of these passages as primary witnesses to this.

Saint Luke's Gospel tells that Jesus the Nazarene, the risen and thus purely eternal, preexisting Christ, met with two disciples who were going to Emmaus and, *starting with Moses... he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself*.<sup>11</sup>

Unquestionably, Jesus was on that occasion referring to the hidden Christ, made manifest in Moses and in various prophets who followed. According to the hidden exegesis, Jesus Christ claimed that revelation for himself on all those occasions, not without first calling two unbelieving disciples *foolish*, and *slow of heart*.<sup>12</sup>

The Gospel affirmation that *Abraham rejoiced to see my day* [the Day of the Son of Man]; *he saw it and was glad* is to be interpreted according to the same hidden order.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mark 4:22

<sup>11</sup> Luke 24:27

<sup>12</sup> Luke 24:25

<sup>13</sup> John 8:56



What this meant in Saint John's Gospel is not that Abraham foresaw the Messianic birth of Christ Jesus who was many years later to proclaim the Good News in the land of Judaea—this being the manifest interpretation, which is somewhat weak here—but that from the Day when the Lord announced to Abraham the birth of the promised *son*, the hidden Christ who is born in the purified soul as a revelation *from above*, the Patriarch lived in the presence of God. That Day was for him, and would remain so thenceforth and forever, the Day of the Son of Man, the Christ, hidden until then and now revealed to him.<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, the *son* of the promise made to David, the fruit of his loins, was in effect, by manifest descent through his lineage, Jesus, the Christ, at once manifest and hidden; but Jesus takes care to ensure that the Good News he brings places on record that the one born from above, the hidden Christ, the eternal, pre-existing Son of Man, seated on the right hand of the Father, is called by David, not *son*, but *Lord*.<sup>15</sup>

By means of this clarification, Jesus confirms his presence in David, his essential identity with the anointed one, as he had confirmed his presence in Abraham and before the time of Abraham: *Before Abraham was, I Am*.<sup>16</sup>

Doubtless, both before Abraham and at the time of David, the Word had already been made flesh and had dwelt among us.

The Gospel also states that Isaiah *saw his [Christ's] glory and his words referred to him*.<sup>17</sup> For manifest exegesis, this affirmation means that Isaiah anticipated the Messiah prophetically, clairvoyantly foreseeing the future birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, together with many other contemporaneous events. Hidden exegesis sees in this prophetic *son* described by Isaiah, not only a prefiguration of the Messiah manifest in Jesus, but the reality of the hidden Christ, the Eternal, the Son of Man, ever one and

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<sup>14</sup> Gen. 17:1-2; 16-17

<sup>15</sup> Ps. 110:1; Matt. 22:41-45

<sup>16</sup> John 8:58

<sup>17</sup> John 12:41; Isai. 7:14

the same, who reveals himself to the chosen as one born again *in the spirit*.

What Isaiah describes through the birth of the *son* is the *sign* from God<sup>18</sup> born to a young virgin, the son whom the prophet calls Immanuel, *God with us*. With him is announced the great experience, the higher religious revelation in the life of the chosen one. Nevertheless, from the manifest viewpoint, Isaiah's Immanuel serves in Saint Matthew's Gospel as a Christological *derash* when the evangelist refers back to Isaiah.<sup>19</sup>

As a manifest sign, Matthew's *derash* is to be understood as a model promise fulfillment concerning a sacred event announced in the Old Testament, but from the hidden angle, it serves as a justification for the New Testament scribe. The birth of the promised Christ the Lord, *God with us*, which was so difficult for many to believe, found its well documented antecedent and accomplishment in the words of the prophet.

Using very precise wording, the fourth evangelist says, not that Isaiah *saw the Son*, but that he *saw his glory*. However, whenever the evangelists speak of the coming of the Son of Man, they describe his arrival *with great power and glory*. Mark even adds that he *will gather [unite in one] his chosen*.<sup>20</sup>

And how could the Son of Man be seen except as glory? In the theophany of the Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah appear *in glory* with Jesus, that Glory is described by the evangelists as *brilliant as lightning* by Luke, *dazzlingly white* by Mark and Matthew, in an attempt to distinguish the Being from his clothing, the light from his splendor: *His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light*.<sup>21</sup>

The presence of Moses and Elijah in *the high mountain*, inseparable in glory from Jesus, in glory that can admit of no separation into differentiated, individual tabernacles<sup>22</sup> bears

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<sup>18</sup> Isai. 7:11

<sup>19</sup> Matt. 1:23 (Tr. *Derash* here: a scriptural reference designed by the Matthew scribe to confer legitimacy on the account for the Jewish reader.)

<sup>20</sup> Mark 13:26-27

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 17:2

<sup>22</sup> Luke 9:33

witness to the oneness of the Son of Man in the pure nakedness of *being* Glory, *being* the garment of light covering the Father.<sup>23</sup>

Likewise the prophets Ezekiel and Daniel revealed the Son of Man, on the Day of their theophany; revealed their true being, the naked essence of the mortal human condition. On that Day, both saw the Glory they describe in their respective writings as looking *like fire*<sup>24</sup> and *a stream of fire*.<sup>25</sup>

It must be understood that the only Son, the garment of light covering the Father, is the Son of Man, the Word sown in every man who comes into this world, and dwells hidden within us.<sup>26</sup> When revealed to a chosen one, to a purified virginal soul, he is discovered as the eternal, preexisting Christ, he to whom all scriptures bear witness, for Christ is always, from the beginning, one and the same. And this is the mystery that must be revealed, the work that each must fulfill, for man's consummation consists of being *completely one*.<sup>27</sup>

When the Gospel says that *the Word became flesh and lived among us*, we shall have found the doorway to eternal bliss, if we are ready to hear this in the hidden order. According to the text, we are all holders of the Son of Man, although many are not even aware of having received him; but he is very close to us, as the eternal guest in our mortal temple of clay.

That is what the Psalter says, using other words than the Gospel to bear witness of the Son of Man, for the psalmist also spoke of him: *For those who fear him, his saving help is near, and the glory will then live in our country*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ps. 104:2

<sup>24</sup> Ezek. 1:27

<sup>25</sup> Dan. 7:10

<sup>26</sup> Mark 4:14

<sup>27</sup> John 17:23

<sup>28</sup> Ps.85:10

III

1. The purpose of this work is to awaken in some men awareness that the canonical New Testament texts express a dual hermeneutic, and exegesis makes it possible, once one has assimilated a first reading, which we shall call manifest, to undertake a second reading, one that will be more difficult to apprehend, in order to find through it a new meaning which the Christian hagiographers called *hidden*, or *secret*.

The practice of the dual hermeneutic demanded of the early Christian scribes previous interpretation of the Old Testament, that is, knowledge of the procedures and scriptures traditionally practiced by the Jewish *Sôfêrim*. Their purpose was to apply to the great revelations made by Jesus the plural structures of the Bible. It thus appears probable that, as some present-day researchers have pointed out, there should have formed several different schools of early Christian scribes.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, it is sometimes possible to distinguish between New Testament texts the expressive forms peculiar to the Palestinian school of Matthew, which closely resemble the methods used by the Qumran community; the Talmudic-Midrashic school of John, in Ephesus; the peculiar composition of Luke, influenced by Paul's *modus operandi*, and above all, the general hermeneutic provided with surprising agility by Mark's composition.

The hidden line of Christian hermeneutic refers essentially to Christ, not only because it explains how the preexisting hidden Christ underlies Christ manifest, but how Christ, the only Son, is the reality, the hidden treasure, One with the Father, whom everyone who loves God and seeks after him will need to manifest as their means to salvation.

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<sup>29</sup> We intend to remain faithful to our intention not to provide footnotes that do not apply specifically to the Bible, but with regard to the purely historical issue of early Christian schools, it will be correct to cite a number of researchers who have studied the matter with some success: R.le Déaut, K.Stendahl, Ch. Perrot, A. del Agua, W. Heit Müller, W. Bousset, A. Frididsen, C.H. Dodd, L. Alonso Schokel, M. Resé and H.J. Schoeps.

When Matthew compiles the teachings of Jesus about the works of compassion that make a man just, alms, prayer and fasting, he never fails to point out in every single case that the Father, *who is in that secret place...sees all that is done in secret.*<sup>30</sup> When Matthew says *is in that secret place*, he may mean more than what everyday awareness might suggest, that our Father is present in man's essence, in his true Being, somewhere not even recognized by consciousness, and thus hidden, unknown.

The Epistle to the Colossians states that the mystery of God is the living, eternal Christ, for Christ himself is the First Mystery, *in whom all the jewels of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.*<sup>31</sup>

This is endorsed by Enoch when he expects that *The Son of Man...will reveal all the treasures of that which is concealed.*<sup>32</sup> In truth, the treasures, the pearl, the stone that the builders rejected, all these are simply metaphors for that eternal Christ who is our true Being, of which we are all so unaware and who must be made manifest, as explained in the hidden aspect of the scriptures.

Mark, in what sounds like a cry bringing hope to all men searching after God, reminds us that *there is nothing hidden but it must be disclosed; nothing kept secret, but to be brought to light.*<sup>33</sup>

In the fourth Gospel, it is possible to study that incisive question put by Judas, the brother of James, overcome by humility and unable to recognize the merits that disciples might possess, that the hidden Christ should become manifest in them: *Lord, what is this all about? Do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Matt. 6:2-6

<sup>31</sup> Col.2:3 These are the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge

<sup>32</sup> 1 Enoch 46:2-3

<sup>33</sup> Mark 4:22

<sup>34</sup> John 14:22

In all these texts, produced by different schools, there is, as explained by the early Christians' dual hermeneutic, a perfectly clear superposition of Christ manifest and hidden, and the latter manifests only to those who love and seek the eternal Christ. The pattern that emerges from all this is that the hidden Christ will in the end become manifest, for this is the sum of Jesus' teachings which it is now up to every man to realize in himself.

This is explained very clearly in John's first Epistle: *My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is.*<sup>35</sup>

**2.** The first stage that spells out the methodology for drawing closer to the hidden Christ sets out from recognition and moves on to searching in accordance with the dual hermeneutic that reveals what lies hidden. This stage, we have entitled *indirect reinterpretation*. The intention is to show up the existence of an underlying seam in the scriptures, one which reveals that the canonical texts mention and to a large extent throw light on the Christ, preexisting, eternal.

Once one has undertaken an indirect, *external*, intellectual study of the hidden way, it becomes necessary to move on resolutely to the second methodological stage, which we have called that of *direct revelation*.

When we speak of *direct revelation*, we would like to explain that in this analysis to which we have accorded so much attention in our writing, and of which we are in this Foreword providing only an outline for purposes of orientation, the object of the search seems to be within us, so that, as we approach it, subject and object, knower and known, begin to blur in our consciousness, becoming only vaguely distinct from one another, until they crystallize in the reality of being one and the same.

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<sup>35</sup> 1 John 3:2

Perhaps the clearest explanation for this is to be found in the text of Paul's speech to the Athenians on the Areopagus, as told by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul claimed on that occasion to speak of the *Unknown God* mentioned by the Athenians in the inscription on an altar. He argued that this God, unknown because hidden, was revealed in the living Christ, preexisting, eternal, in the true Lord *who does not make his home in shrines made by human hands*.<sup>36</sup>

The *temple* in which the true, the living God dwells in every man is the body (the psycho-physical *flesh*), as it was written.<sup>37</sup> That temple was not made with men's hands and its unknown sacred guest is the living God, both immanent and transcendent, who is to be sought after and may be encountered, following the path of direct revelation.

Completing his important speech about the *unknown God*, Paul adds that God, when he made the world, delimited very clearly where he might be sought so that men might *seek the deity, and by feeling their way towards him, succeed in finding him. Yet in fact he is not far from any of us, since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist*.

This text of Paul's, selected by Luke, is the most concrete statement, not only concerning the inner presence of the living Christ, hidden, unknown, in man; but also, concerning the existence of a way to search for his direct revelation.

When Paul says that God "is not far", this accords with the purest hidden orthodoxy and the kerygma of Jesus, in which he affirms that the Kingdom of God *is near*. Paul is not expressing this in terms of nearness in time, as has been understood by many who, following only the manifest exegesis, hoped, as some indeed still hope, for the immediate coming of the Kingdom. Paul is without question speaking of proximity *in space*, or even better, as we understand it, of cognitive intimacy, according to the hidden interpretation.

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<sup>36</sup> For all this passage, see Acts 17:22-28.

<sup>37</sup> John 1:9 This is the Word, the true light that enlightens everyone coming into the world. As regards the body being this temple, see John 2:19-21. This could be not only the body but the whole man.

When, moreover, he proclaims that *it is in him that we live, and move, and exist*, two different levels of knowledge of Being remain implicit: a current of manifest superficial consciousness, what *we think we are*, and a true Being, still and profound, hidden by the waters when they rush turbulently over it. This current is like consciousness sliding through time and engendering existence and movement that cover the mystery of God and Christ preexisting, the Son of Man, *in whom are hidden all the treasures*.

The essential and disregarded ground of consciousness is the unknown God who can only be revealed *directly*, that is, through an act of inner searching that must involve the whole man. This is a great search that represents the main part of the Gospel; or better expressed, *it is the Gospel*. Jesus describes the disposition needed for this search as a *metanoia*, a conversion in which the mind turns in upon itself.

This *conversion* or *luminous reflexion* is necessary, as is, starting from there, a broad purification, a complete inner cleansing, so that the waters (of thought) calm their turbulence, revealing in pure transparency the changeless ground that is the living God.

Lastly, to obtain the full manifestation of what lies hidden, which will be qualified as resurrection, the Gospel proposes insistently a patient, unbroken vigilance, a state of ceaseless watchfulness, so that the *presence*, once discovered, may become stabilized in the renewed consciousness, universal, *one*, born of the spirit.

The first step, the fundamental one, in this inner search, is to perceive the *presence* of the spirit of God, the *Shechinah* described by the Jewish *Sôfêrim*. This presence, whose birth or bursting into our consciousness usually makes its first appearance as a vague intuition—a wind of which Jesus says *you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going*—will spring up on its own if only it is contemplated with love and diligent devotion.

Little by little, this mysterious flowering, born not of a woman's womb but of the spirit, will come to show itself as the Glory of the Presence (the *Iqar Shechinah*) which many ancient prophets beheld, even *became*; and Jesus claims that their testimony in the Scriptures bears witness to himself, as the Son of Man.



Clearly, the first precondition for such a revelation to take place must be faith, a faith that, once born, grows gradually stronger all on its own. Faith, that faith, grows and becomes established thanks to the watchful, attentive eye of knowledge, which is far more reliable and effective than our physical eyes.

Of this faith, which is firm *conviction of Being*, Jesus spoke when he said: *If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.*<sup>38</sup>

## IV

1. The Gospel according to Judas-Thomas,<sup>39</sup> whose words the anonymous scribe qualifies as *hidden*, is the text taken as the organizing principle and guide for this work.

Our purpose is, as we have already explained, to show that all the texts that make up the present canon of the New Testament express a dual hermeneutic, in which the manifest meaning and the hidden one appear in a delicate but exemplary balance, rarely broken.

The first of these two meanings is, of course, that to which manifest theology has hitherto given preference in its own studies and explanations, without this meaning that there have not during all this time been a fair number of isolated attempts—never organic or systematized and never taken into proper account—to teach certain aspects of hidden early Christian thought.

Our claim here is to have attempted to open up a pathway to this aspect of Christian thought, and this path must, although still rough and rudimentary in regard to external, indirect research, be broadly comprehensive; it must be like the unfolding of a general map which future generations of researchers will have to complete, deepening knowledge of many of the problems raised therein.

The Gospel of Thomas has been used for the purpose of this general unfolding, since it is a blueprint providentially well-suited

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<sup>38</sup> John 8:24

<sup>39</sup> *The Gospel of Thomas* (hereinafter GT)

to the task. As is well known, this gospel is one of the fifty-three treatises found in 1946 in the Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi, some hundred kilometers to the north of Luxor, near to the ancient hermitage of Chenoboskion. Not without a certain undue hastiness, the entire library of Nag Hammadi was initially classified as Gnostic; subsequently, however, with the gradual publication of a number of works from the collection, it proved impossible to ascribe the entire diverse body of writings to any single current of Christian thought.

In regard to the Gospel of Thomas, the Coptic text of the manuscript, conserved today in the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo, was established by a group of five researchers, known today as the Brill Group, after the publisher of the translation made by these professors in 1959.<sup>40</sup>

The translators only explained that the treatise—a collection of *logia* or sayings of Jesus, which they themselves differentiated and numbered 1 to 114—are a translation or adaptation into Sahidic Coptic of a work the original text of which must have been written in Greek around the year 140, on the basis of even older sources.<sup>41</sup>

Professor Philippe de Suarez, a Frenchman, presented in 1975 a direct translation from the Coptic texts, together with a parallel arrangement of the text into numbered verses, which permits of a scrupulous textual verification.<sup>42</sup>

De Suarez draws attention to the attraction exercised on him by the archaic character of the examples to be found in the Gospel of Thomas. The sayings of Jesus appear in this text

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<sup>40</sup> The names of these five professors are: A. Guillaumont, H. Ch. Puech, G. Gispel, W. Till and Yassah Abd Al Massih

<sup>41</sup> In the course of our study and commentary, we found a number of errors in this differentiation, which in some instances did not prove faithful to the text. This could affect the numbering. Despite this, we have respected that established by the translators.

<sup>42</sup> *L'Évangile selon Thomas*, Philippe de Suarez. Editions Métanoia, Marsanne, 26200 Montélimar. To this French translation must be added the eighty logia of GT included in the *Synopse des quatre évangiles*, with parallels to extra-canonical texts, 2 vol., edited by P. Benoît and M.E. Boismard, Les Editions du Cerf, 1965/1972.

stripped of certain ornamental forms and seem to be even older than the composition generally present in the synoptic texts.

**2.** Is the Gospel of Thomas Gnostic? According to the classification proposed by those attending the International Colloquium on the Origins of Gnosticism, held in Messina in 1966, for the purpose of differentiating the terms *gnosis* and *Gnosticism*, it should be pointed out that not even one of the sayings of Jesus to be found in the Gospel of Thomas provides any serious reason for affirming that this treatise should be classified as being Gnostic.

Characteristic of the Christian or Judeo-Christian sects that flourished, especially in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and are usually known as Gnostic are formulations in which the universe is explained in terms of a complex mythical symbology full of *Aeons*, *Ranks*, *Proboloi*, *Archons*, *Leiturgoi* and many other major personifications that have been sparsely studied and whose real meaning is difficult to establish.

Although the Gnostic mythifications are not too far removed from the manifest Christian myth, the latter has other forms of expression, which are correspondingly manifest, since we hear of angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, etc... Christian-Gnostic correlations frequently make an appearance when they are elucidated and demythified, but call for a certain study of doctrine, a lengthy and by no means easy work of exegesis.

On the contrary, *gnosis*, to the content of which the Gospel of Thomas must decidedly be assigned, does not imply heretical thinking in relation to Christianity when it is explained according to the dual hermeneutic. Gnosis presupposes structurally the formulation of a science whereby it is possible to attain knowledge of God, of the absolute immanent-transcendent Being. In an even more restrictive sense, it could be said that "gnosis is pure knowledge, knowledge of God".<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> In this sense the Messina proposal to define the term *gnosis* is erroneous, as though formulated by a group of intellectuals unfamiliar with the true gnosis. They describe it as knowledge of the divine mysteries reserved for an elite, and

**3.** The most important thing about the *sayings* in the Gospel of Thomas is that openly, decidedly, they set out to explain the Christian kerygma solely in terms of its hidden aspect, as though unaware of the manifest aspect, that is to say, without presupposing the dual hermeneutic which with such a delicate balance sustains the New Testament texts of the Canon.

This does not mean that the Gospel of Thomas does not make use of a metaphoric level of meaning; on the contrary, metaphor as the usual mode of expression enables it to express its precepts by means of improbable, even absurd assertions, since the figures of speech used are almost invariably contradictory.

As will be seen, paradox is the specific form of expression of the Gospel of Thomas, and it is this surprisingly suggestive logic that compels one to meditate until one finds the reality that lies behind each metaphorical image.

That is why, in the sayings of Jesus, as presented by the Gospel of Thomas, one is frequently confronted with the *figure* and the *reality*; yet there is never a dual reality, as in the canonical New Testament scriptures, but a purely linear exposition, while remaining always in the body of hidden interpretation.

It is not for nothing that the Gospel of Thomas proclaims from its very first words in the Incipit that the text consists of the *hidden* words spoken by Jesus. The title, the *Living One*, applied to him later in the text, clearly reveals that the central personage, *the author* of these sayings, is Christ, the eternal, preexisting, ever living, in his human temple, not made with men's hands, or outside it, but always the hidden universal Christ, whose testimony appears throughout the scriptures.

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try to describe it in terms of the myth they see in it. They fail to realize that anyone who attains knowledge of God is *ipso facto* a chosen one, a knower.

4. A few last words. Every work of biblical exegesis, and this is one, is normally a work of *applied exegesis*. This is to be understood in the old, traditional sense that every researcher sets out to add the *grain* of his own research to the cumulative study process built up by his predecessors, in which, in a way, he dresses up and seeks protection. Pursuant to this, every work of research and study finds to a large extent a module for evaluation in the intellectual baggage that each and everyone subscribes to, and is assessed directly on the basis of the bibliographical notes adduced.

This is the usual technical procedure to which we are accustomed; however, in the present work the situation is obviously different for a number of reasons, the first being the sparseness of the material that can be adduced for the purposes of this text from ancient texts posterior to the Bible and the rare discoveries of researchers who have preceded us.

It is not difficult to understand that it will be difficult to protect a work like this one by means of a weight of bibliographical sources. Once one has discarded as inadequate the Gnostic bibliography that has become suggestive ever since the appearance of the Nag Hammadi library, very little material remains available for the purpose of studying paths of knowledge other than those provided by the Bible itself. Moreover, the Gnostic texts use modes of expression entailing a complex symbology, interpretation of which would call for an effort perhaps greater than our present intention to enter into the hidden aspect of the canonical texts of the New Testament.

The purpose of these pages is, moreover, not so much the indirect reinterpretation of the hidden aspect, for which the references applying to our study can provide *crutches*, as sharing with the readers of this book the means for attaining a *direct revelation* of the hidden Christ. It goes without saying that, in order to arrive at that deep, transformational meditation, no one has any serious need of bibliographical support or of anything other than their own knowledge and practice.

Consequently, the only method we have felt free to follow has been *pure exegesis*, meaning, that which consists of direct confrontation with the Bible, without any travelling companion

other than one's own copy to clarify and explain it. With this method, validity is conferred—however involuntarily—on the old Rabbinic affirmation that the Bible is self-explanatory. Nevertheless, the logical approach of the method may nowadays be regarded as *old* or *antiquated*.

Another reason for almost systematically sidelining all testimony that does not come directly from the Bible is grounded in practical considerations. This work is in a sense written *for the few* (who may be *many*) and this, we are well aware, raises a serious difficulty. What we mean is that it was written for those, we know not how few or how many, who seek no more wisdom than that which consists in coming to know God, and this can sometimes clash with *the wisdom of the wise*, where the latter are not seeking such knowledge of God above all else. What is more, in approaching this knowledge of God, cultural accumulation typically proves to be a hindrance, while weighing oneself down with unnecessary bibliographical material proves quite unnecessary.<sup>44</sup>

Our one and only *real* purpose in writing this work has been to awaken love for the whole Christ, and when we speak of the *whole* Christ, we are referring both to the Christ who died for mankind in Jerusalem more than two thousand years ago, love for whom has been encouraged by manifest exegesis since the beginning of the Christian era, and at the same time, to the Christ preexisting and eternal. Although both are one and the same being, if we speak of the whole Christ, we cannot disregard the inseparable Christ who, from the beginning, has lain forgotten, unknown, *crucified* within every man, and who is only waiting to reveal his immortal, divine presence, invoked by love and faith.

Then the true beatitude of his resurrection will arise in every man.

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<sup>44</sup> What would satisfy the author of this book would be if readers were to tackle it without any immediate support other than the Bible, kept close at hand for checking the many citations. (N.B The biblical texts and citations used correspond to the Jerusalem Bible in almost all cases.)

MAN,  
TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD

*I have been telling you all this  
in metaphors. The hour is coming  
when I shall no longer speak  
to you in metaphors, but  
tell you about the Father  
in plain words.*

**John 16:25**

*When you make the two One, you will become the Son of Man.*

**GT log. 106**





# Incipit

*These are the hidden words which the Living Jesus spoke  
and Didymos Judas-Thomas recorded.*

## **Explanation by parable<sup>1</sup>.**

When he says “the Living Jesus”, the anonymous scribe indicates that these words were spoken by Jesus, drawing on his higher consciousness, his mind transcending the habitual consciousness expressed through the Sanctuary of the body.<sup>2</sup>

This leads us to suppose that the *words* spoken by the Living Jesus were not words in human language, but *ideas* indivisible and undivided.

These *words* uttered by the Living Jesus needed to be interpreted in parable if men were to have a thread that would enable them to *apprehend* their meaning, it was not enough simply to write them down. According to the words of the logion, the apostle Thomas undertook this special transcription, revealing his *hidden* condition of *didymos* (the twin) by showing the other name of his duality, Judas.

It is said in the fourth Gospel that for a while Thomas did not attain the blessing of believing without seeing,<sup>3</sup> and this is attributed to his dense consciousness, still not free from the one who *ate bread with me* and *raised his heel against me*.<sup>4</sup> This means that Thomas had not yet banished the *Adversary*, identified with Judas, as Jesus had done when he said: *What you are going to do, do quickly*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The words *by parable* are used because they are indicative only of the problems raised by the Incipit.

<sup>2</sup> It is to this bodily temple that he was referring when he prophesied that he would raise it in three days (John 2:19-21)

<sup>3</sup> John 20:29

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 41:10; John 13:18

<sup>5</sup> John 13:27

This is one of the great mysteries revealed by the teaching of Jesus, to which it will be necessary to return in order to clarify it in these commentaries. [Editor's note: See in particular the commentary on logion 71.]

For the time being, it will suffice to call to witness a hymn which an early Christian author claims that the apostle Thomas sang in prison (in the prison of his own duality).

*On a sudden, when I received it,  
the garment [of light] seemed to me to become a mirror of myself.  
I saw it all in all,  
And I too received all in it,  
for we were two in distinction and yet gain one in one likeness.<sup>6</sup>*

## Commentary

**1.** If the text states that its words are "hidden", it is because the true interpretation does not offer itself to our understanding or allow itself to be readily seen or felt. The words which Judas Thomas recorded refer to God's mystery, that of the living Christ "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge".<sup>7</sup> That is why the words spoken therein are said to be hidden. But the keys of knowledge were purloined many centuries ago<sup>8</sup> and neither those who took them nor their heirs have ever returned them. This considerably increases the difficulties of correctly understanding the words transcribed.

Nevertheless, regardless of the historical responsibility of those who took them, what is now needed is an attempt to restore to the doors of knowledge keys that could enable this generation of mankind to enter into the true mystery of God, Christ, who is ultimately the mystery of every man.

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<sup>6</sup> From the Hymn of the Pearl, which the Apostle Thomas sang in prison.

<sup>7</sup> Col. 2:3

<sup>8</sup> Luke 11:52

This purpose is a culmination of hope, the project of a lifetime, in itself valid for fulfilling man's sense of his own existence, for our entire life, our entire consciousness, has to be and to remain committed to it, in order to be engendered anew through the imperishable seed<sup>9</sup> of pure consciousness.

We are called upon by the hidden words which Judas Thomas transcribed in those early Christian days, to undertake this mystery quest, one that means entering inquisitively into the Inner Sanctum, a pilgrimage that Christ Jesus himself opened for us in paradigm, as a new and living way.<sup>10</sup> And if we speak of "hidden words", this has here a double meaning. The first act of hiding the Word arises from our own consciousness, buried under the *dead works*<sup>11</sup> of conditioning, time and decay, misinterpretations and ignorance, all of which hinder free, straightforward contemplation of the Living God of whom every man is the Temple, and in whom we live and have our being, for he is Life itself, of whom it is written: *I will live in them and walk among them.*<sup>12</sup>

As for the second act of hiding, that comes of the difficulties peculiar to the way of searching one's innermost being that must be taken if one is to discover the mystery of God; in other words, to realize or be resurrected to consciousness of the Light and Life that we in essence are, and so to be called children of the Living God,<sup>13</sup> sparks from the same hearth.

**2.** The way that consists of awakening what lies hidden was clearly acknowledged by Jesus himself when he raised the question of whether the Messiah was the son of David or his Lord.<sup>14</sup> The manifest way was surely that of the son whom God swore an oath that he would give David: *One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.*<sup>15</sup> However, Jesus Christ did not

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Peter 1:23

<sup>10</sup> Heb. 10:20

<sup>11</sup> Heb. 9:14

<sup>12</sup> Ezek. 37:27; 2 Cor. 6:16; Lev. 26:11

<sup>13</sup> Rom. 9:26

<sup>14</sup> Matt 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44

<sup>15</sup> Ps. 132:11

draw on his Messianic claim as son, since it was already plain that he was for the purposes of history the son of the lineage according to the flesh<sup>16</sup>; but as David's Lord, of whom the Psalm proclaims: *The Lord [God] says to my lord.*<sup>17</sup> The son from David's body that God swore he would give was not, as the people hoped, a son of the flesh who would sit on a worldly throne, but one *born from above*, the fruit of a spiritual regeneration, as a precondition for entry into the Kingdom of God.<sup>18</sup> Such a one, born of the Spirit—not born of woman<sup>19</sup>—is, in the words of Jesus, the Son of God in man. The Son of Man, meaning, the Lord, the Christ, the Son, whom God seats at his right hand.

That the Son of God, born of the Spirit, should *also* be the heir, the son of the lineage of David, is merely a fact that can be identified as the fulfillment of the promise made to David, a fulfillment hoped for by the Jewish people in Jesus' day, in accordance with their tradition.

Nevertheless, for many later Christians, descent from David is an irrelevant detail, a mere historical fact. That is why, when Jesus claims, after a fashion, that he is *the Lord* to whom the psalm alludes, he is aiming far higher. He admits that the blood of David's line is his earthly body; but what counts for him is to place on record that he is the Lord, the Christ, fully assumed and made manifest by his consciousness of being Jesus Christ. At the same time, it is for him important to explain that he, the Lord, is the son of God, the *hidden* Christ, preexisting and one with the Father from the beginning.

Subsequently, in his teachings, what Jesus set out to show is that the *hidden* way consists in this: in reviving in ourselves the Living God who has been waiting since all eternity. And he warns us that he is not far from us, for *in him we live, and move, and exist.*<sup>20</sup> If we do not know this, it is because he is the *hidden* Christ, yet it is written: *We are all his children.*

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<sup>16</sup> Matt. 1:16

<sup>17</sup> Ps. 110:1; Matt.22:42-45

<sup>18</sup> John 3:3-5

<sup>19</sup> Matt.11:11

<sup>20</sup> Acts 17:27-28

## Incipit

Only after this resurrection in the Spirit, which is within everyone's reach, shall we cease to be *whited sepulchers*,<sup>21</sup> the dead who bury their dead.

Birth from on high, the coming within us of the hidden Son of Man, will then be manifest fact.

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<sup>21</sup> Matt. 23:27