

The Cambrian Pesher*

Christmas, 2020

Obedience to the House of Bethany

[Render] *obedience to Bethany and the house of Mary and Martha.*

- St. Bernard of Clairvaux,
(*In Praise of the New Knighthood: A Treatise on the Knights Templar
and the Holy Places of Jerusalem*)

*The elder unto the chosen Martha and her children whom I love . . .
The children of thy chosen sister greet thee. Amen.*

- 2 John 1:1 &13

Beloved Friends:

Much of the evidence for a married Jesus is "hidden in plain sight" in the Bible. It is not clear whether the obfuscations of translators are intentional or whether they represent a genuine ignorance caused by doctrinal bias.

A case in point is the text quoted above from the Second Epistle of John. We assume that it was written by the Apostle John, so why would he be writing a personal letter to Martha, the sister of Lazarus? That it was Martha is a rendering hidden in the Greek, assuming it was written in Greek. Regardless, the woman's name has been lost in the translation. All translations render it "lady." "Lady" is the feminine form of "kurios", i.e. "lord." But if 2nd John was written in

Aramaic (the *lingua franca* for Jews in the Holy Land at the time), it would have been Martha. "Mar" is the Aramaic word for "lord" and "Martha" is the Aramaic word for "lady."

Martha also had a sister. Her name was "Mary" (Gospel of John Chapters 11 & 12).

So, who is this "elder" who is writing a personal letter to Martha? It is someone who shares a teaching which they learned from Jesus "from the beginning" that is recorded in the Gospel of John (13:34) **and only in John:**

*And now I beseech thee, Martha, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which **we** had from the beginning, that we love one another. (v. 5)*

Who wrote the Gospel of John? Lazarus.

How do we know this? The author of the Fourth Gospel was written by the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20, 24). John 11:3 tells us who that person was: it was Lazarus.

In sending greetings to Martha, we learn from our introductory text above that the children of Mary are residing with their Uncle Lazarus and he is writing personal letters to Martha: 2nd & 3rd John. They were written with the hopes of a personal visit (v. 12). But that personal visit did not materialize. (In other studies, we have shown that the Bethany Family had estates in Jerusalem, Galilee, Caesarea, Cyprus, Corinth, and maybe Rome, representing vast travel distances). So, 1st John was written instead of a visit because the matter was urgent. Chronologically, *First* John should really be *Third* John.

Why did the name of the Apostle John become attached to these Epistles and to the Fourth Gospel? It might be for one of two reasons, or both. First, "John" is *Yonna* and means "dove." Since these women were the daughters of Zion, they were hierodules of the "dove" - the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Or, in the alternative,

perhaps, these writings were preserved by Mary's son, John Mark, and were labeled because of that provenance.

We know that Mark was Mary's son, because we are told in Acts 12:12,

And when he (Peter) had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

How do we know this was the Mary of Bethany and not some other Mary? Seriously? Do we know of any other "Mary" in the New Testament who was rich enough to own a house in the city of Jerusalem large enough to hold a prayer meeting for "the many" in attendance - and more importantly, who could be trusted to provide refuge to the Apostles?

The other "Marys" in the Gospels were identified by their sons: a couple of James' and Joses and a Cleophas, who might have been a husband or a father. Only Mary Magdalene, the anointer, is not identified with a son. So, this Mary, by process of elimination - if for no other reason - is our Mary of Bethany.

There is a "Marcus" which Simon Peter calls his son (1 Peter 5:13). This is possibly the same Mark. But it stretches credulity to believe that this Mark would be the son of the same Mary. Imagine the wealthy Bethany daughter of a Levitical family taking up with the rustic fisherman from Galilee. Perhaps in our modern times, women will think nothing of marrying across lines of status, but not in the ancient world. It is more believable that this might be a condition of fosterage for the young Mark to the aging apostle. More on this below.

If we know the name of at least one of Mary's children, can we ascribe any children to Martha? We think that Stephen of Acts Chapters 6-7 would be a good candidate. Martha's name means "lady lord" and Stephen means "the crown." The association is

suggestive. Martha also is given to a ministry of hospitality (Luke 10:38-42) and Stephen, following the matriarchal calling, is called to "serve tables" on behalf of the widows in Acts Chapter 6.

Although various circumstantial leads may be pursued to validate this assertion (and are developed in *The House of Bethany*, Stivers, 2007 and *Hierogamy & the Married Messiah*, Stivers, 2004), any direct doctrinal and narrative lead seems to dry up at this point . . . unless we interject yet another important piece of biographical information: the fact that Lazarus is known to us as "Barnabas" elsewhere in the New Testament record:

Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas . . . Colossians 4:10

So, now we know that Mary is the sister of Barnabas and we know of only Martha, Mary, and Lazarus "whom Jesus loved" (John 11:5). Remember that "Barnabas" was a surname ascribed to him by the Apostles in the Book of Acts. Acts introduces him to us as a "Joseph" (Acts 4:36) who is identified as a Levite of Cyprus (see Rabanus' accounts in our studies) and wealthy. Lazarus is "Eleazar" in the Hebrew; his full name would have been Joseph Eleazar, a nice Levitical name.

Barnabas is translated for us in Acts 4:36 as "the son of consolation," which curiously means something similar to Eleazar: "whom God aids." This is an important biographical clue. "Consolation" in the Greek here is the word "paracletus": a technical term in the Greek language to refer to someone who renders aid and assistance. It was also a legal term in the Roman courts to refer to an advocate or in our modern understanding - an attorney.

Standard Bible study helps agree:

*[P]rimarily a verbal adjective, and suggests the **capability** or adaptability for giving **aid**. It was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defense, and advocate:*

then, generally, one who pleads another's cause, an intercessor, advocate, as in 1 John 2:1 of the Lord Jesus.

- *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*,
p. 111 (Nelson, 1985)

It should not be forgotten the importance of the "paraclete" in the Johannine literary corpus. In three separate iterations in the Fourth Gospel Jesus refers to Himself as the *paraclete* who will send another one to take His place after He returns to the Father:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter (paraclete) will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

(Gospel of John 16:7-8 cf. 14:16; 14:26; 15:26)

The idea of "reproving the world" suggests a litigatory task and interestingly ties in with the Old Testament role of the "ga'al" (the kinsman-redeemer):

Plead my cause, and deliver [ga'al] me:
quicken me according to thy word.
- Psalm 119:154

For their redeemer [ga'al] is mighty;
he shall plead their cause with thee.
- Proverbs 23:11

While the Hebrew word *nacham* is the word equivalent in the Old Testament for "comforter" and is translated in the Septuagint - selectively, I might add - as *paraclete*, its Messianic application was not lost to the post-Exile rabbis to which Luke's Gospel refers to as "the consolation of Israel" (2:25).

Consequently, if it is true to say that the Messiah was the "Consolation of Israel," then of Lazarus, as a *Bar-nabas* - "son of

consolation" - the Apostles would be saying the equivalent of "the son of the Messiah."

It should not be forgotten that the post-Exile rabbis also began to call the altar of the sanctuary as "the paraclete," obviously because of its mediative and redemptive value as a place of encounter with God. When Jesus used the term in reference to the Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel, it would have been with that connotation in mind. He, too, it should not be forgotten, was a rabbi. Also, when Lazarus used the term in the First Epistle of John to speak of Jesus as "our Advocate (paraclete) with the Father" - after having introduced us to it in the Gospel accounts - and then considering that the Apostles surnamed him "the son of the *paraclete*," we cannot escape the impression that Lazarus possessed some unique status in the New Testament Church: something different from an apostle, prophet, elder or deacon.

In our sentimental age when every relationship and life experience is interpreted according to "how does that make you feel about it," we read into the Scriptures our own world view and think that when Lazarus was called "the son of consolation" it meant to describe him merely as a cheery personality. We fail to account that such words had exact legal implications in terms of status and covenant obligation in the Mosaic Law. And if anything, Jesus was a master and obedient servant of the Law.

We find it demonstrated at the foot of the Cross when Jesus gave His final charge to Lazarus: "**Behold thy mother; mother, behold thy son.**" This was no mere desperate plea of a dying man. While we can appreciate how emotionally charged the situation was, the legal implications of that command cannot be ignored: Jesus was making Lazarus the *paraclete* of the family, the kinsman-redeemer, *ga'al*, the levirate of succession:

And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

- John 19:27

The Daughters of Zion

*Rejoice greatly, **O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem:** behold, thy King cometh unto thee . . . riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the fowl of an ass.*

- Zechariah 9:9

*And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, **Daughters of Jerusalem,** weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.*

- Luke 23:28

Up to this point, we have not proven that Jesus was married to any particular woman or group of women. All we have done is establish that Mary and Martha had children and that John Mark and Stephen were likely their sons who were important leaders in the early Church.

We have established that Lazarus was Barnabas and that he was called Barnabas because he performed an important function as the levirate to the Queen Mother of the Messianic family and as a benefactor of the covenant community.

The problem we have in the idea of a married Jesus is the taboo of polygamy. The evidence of a married Jesus proves too much. It proves that not only was He married, but that He had a harem. And the proof is in every Gospel. The records tell us that Jesus was followed by *many* "women." In the Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew languages, there is no separate words for "wife" and "woman," unless it might be technical terms such as virgin, widow, maidservant, mistress, and so forth. Consequently, for the translator, when he comes upon the word for woman/wife - which is *gune* in the Greek - he must rely upon the context to decide whether to translate it as wife or woman.

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul spoke directly to this distinction in 1 Corinthians 7:34 *et al* in his defense of celibacy because "the virgin" cares only for the things pertaining to the Lord, while the "gune" cares for the things of her husband. Thus, in Pauline doctrine, we must consider "wife" as the default translation of *gune*, and only as "woman" if the context demands a general reference to the female sex (such as his specific reference to "unmarried women"). In Old Testament nomenclature a "married" *gune* would be a wife by modern standards, but an "unmarried" *gune* would be a concubine (cf. *Hierogamy & the Married Messiah*).

So, then, what should we think of the following texts were they corrected to read as we have explained above,

And many **wives** were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

- Matthew 27:55-56

There were also **wives** looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other **wives** which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

- Mark 15:40-41

And certain **wives**, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the **wife** of Chuza Herod's **steward**, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

- Luke 8:2-3

And all his acquaintance, and the **wives** that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

- Luke 23:49

From the 2nd Century on, when the Christian Church became predominantly Gentile and Greek in orientation, the advocates of

celibacy portrayed this relationship Jesus Christ had with these women as one of a teacher/pupil relationship after the pattern of the philosophical school of Athens. Jesus was a new Socrates, a celibate and dispassionate intellectual. As tempting as that characterization might have been, it is not accurate. Jesus was a devout follower of the Mosaic Law and that Law required a covenantal standard before men and women could share close private space together. These women could not lawfully "follow" him or attend to his daily ministrations unless they were His maidservants (deaconesses) who "ministered" unto Him on their journeys. The Mosaic Law had specific rules on how maidservants were to be treated and can be found in places like Exodus 21:1-11, and was formalized in the early Church:

For these reasons, we assert that the ministry of female deacons is especially required and urgent. For our Lord and Savior was himself served by deaconesses, such as Mary Magdalene . . . along with still other women.

- Didascalia of the Apostles

"Deaconess" was originally a Greek term for a household servant which would be known in the Hebrew language as a "maidservant." The researcher will find that later churchmen would deny footwashing to the role of the deaconess because it was considered a part of conjugal relations.

The other women mentioned by name in these texts would have been widows and acquired through the custom of the levirate or would have been discarded maidservants, as was the case with Joanna.

In revisiting the texts which refer to these women who followed Jesus, consider that Acts 1:14 also distinguishes them as a separate group from the apostles, the Lord's brethren and even from the mother of Jesus. In other words, the mother of Jesus was in the Upper Room with the disciples, but so also were "the wives."

Lest the reader mistakenly assume that we are arguing here for a Messiah who had sex with these women, that is not the case. Biblical law requires that a "master" among the landed gentry who acquires the maidservant is required to do one of three things with her: either marry her himself, or assign her to one of his sons, or cuckold her to one of his manservants. Thus, we can envision Jesus as the great matchmaker who took these women - who were by operation of law His maidservants - and then awarded them to His disciples as spouses as the need arose. Any underage children who would have been born to these relationships would have been assigned fosterage to an older mentor in the covenant community, as Stephen was to James and Mark was, first to Paul, then Barnabas, and finally Peter, as noted above.

Returning to our discussion about Joseph Eleazar, by becoming the paraclete, he became Christ's successor in terms of the family of Jesus, especially the women and children who may have been under His care. By assuming responsibility for Mary, the Queen Mother, he also assumed the care of the entire Messianic harem which became, by Acts Chapter 6, the Order of Widows.

In adding this new surname in recognition of his official role, Joseph Barnabas became the kinsman-redeemer and levirate of the Daughter of Zion.

As a side note, it is strange that this "Advocate" has no voice otherwise in the Biblical record. No where does he have a single word ascribed to him in the New Testament. In the Gospel of John as Lazarus, his sisters speak for him. As Barnabas in Acts and the Epistles, it is Paul who does all of the talking. But somehow, Barnabas is recognized as the leader; for when the pagans of Lystra assigned to these two apostles the names of their deities, Paul was called "Mercury" but Barnabas was called "Jupiter" (Acts 14:12). Mercury is the messenger of the gods, but Jupiter (Zeus) is the head of the pantheon.

Nevertheless, as the author of the Fourth Gospel and the three Johannine Epistles, he might be the colossus which overshadows all. Even Paul is overshadowed by him in doctrinal understanding if, as some scholars believe, it is Barnabas, and not Paul, who was the author of the most refined sample of "Pauline" theology in the New Testament: the Book of Hebrews.

Consequently, while the occasion for Barnabas' introduction in Acts 4 is his substantial financial contribution to the newly formed congregation of Jesus Christ to meet the needs of the people, the notion of a "son of consolation" points to his unique status as a benefactor, advocate and more.

The House of Martha and Mary

The Knights Templar of the Middle Ages were also known as "the poor knights" and represented a monastic order. Up until the 11th Century, knighthood meant a license to kill, rape and plunder. War offered an opportunity for personal advancement and debauchery which could not otherwise be had. The Templars were a departure from this Old World custom in calling upon warriors to forego these allurements and serve Christ, instead. This was the dawning of the age of chivalry and of the Holy Crusades.

Bernard of Clairvaux was the founder of the Cistercian monastic order and was perhaps the most connected European figure of his day. Historians see him as a duplicitous leader, sometimes even Machiavellian.

Regardless, he was called upon to compose the original rule for the Templar Order and to establish its legitimacy. It is not known entirely what he meant by the admonition to obey "Bethany and the house of Martha and Mary." He didn't say.

We think that he might have been elaborating on the word "Bethany," which means "house of affliction." This fits nicely with the humble aspirations for these "poor" knights.

But what he meant by "the house of Martha and Mary" is a bit more problematic. Of course, there were sisterhoods at that time which embraced Martha and Mary as their matron saints. Catholic legends had elevated these women as worthy of emulation for their personal sacrifice and piety. At the time, the sacred places of Palestine were being reclaimed for Christian pilgrimage and places like Bethany were becoming the sites for new chapels and shrines built to their honor.

That might be all that Bernard meant, except . . .

This was also the age of the Grail legends and emerging heresies which believed in a sacred lineage stemming from the House of David, if not the House of Jesus itself. There is suspicion that this all was a cover for the Templars to excavate the old Temple site in Jerusalem and recover a lost esoteric tradition. We don't know for sure.

The Templars certainly adopted a life work which followed that of the paraclete of Lazarus and of his sisters. If the biographical information gleaned from the texts of Scripture is true, then there was a house of Martha and Mary which survived in their "children" referenced in the Johannine Epistles and which can be traced, perhaps, in the life of the Church in succeeding generations.

And sacramentally, the Ordinance of Footwashing was instituted in John 13, while the Eucharist is absent in this Gospel. Thus, on the view of the sacramental life of the Church, the author of the Fourth Gospel wants us to know that the ritual observance of Footwashing is more important than Communion. While Communion requires an ordained priesthood, at least in the historic tradition, the Footwashing only requires a brotherhood. And that was what the Templars were, if nothing else.

Christmas, 2020

Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, the Fourth Gospel does not recount a Birth Story of Jesus. Rather, it begins with a doctrinal dissertation, in which, at a much higher level, the pre-existence and the true incarnation of the "Word made flesh" became the foundation of saving faith.

If anyone of our species is to survive the Conflagration to come, it is imperative for us to learn the "way of the paraclete" as taught by the House of Bethany.

A servant of Jesus,

James

Collect for the Day

O God, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Cambrian Peshier is the pastoral epistle of the Cambrian Episcopal Church of the Grail, a fellowship and abbey adhering to a spiritual tradition from ancient Wales. We use the Authorized Version of the Bible (King James Version) as our default translation and the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopalian Church for liturgical guidance. We are not an affiliate of any denomination.*

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