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## THE APOSTLE THOMAS IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION

In this study we deal with the place of the Apostle Thomas in Christian tradition and gather together all the chief references without attempting to draw a clear line of demarcation between legend and history. The Gospel of John must remain the only sure and reliable source for the life and character of our Apostle. However, we are able to show that Thomas figured more prominently in Christian tradition than has hitherto been supposed. We go on to give a brief account of the content of the Apocryphal "Acts of Thomas" where Thomas appears as the twin-brother of our Lord himself. Similar references to the physical likeness between Thomas and Jesus occur occasionally in Patristic writings but we are unable to draw a continuous line which would enable us to trace the inter-relatedness of these traditions. Attention is drawn to some references not brought out in standard works. Of these references the principal ones are found in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas, in the Book of Thomas, in a Pseudo-Cyprianic text edited by Reitzenstein and entitled "Eine frühchristliche Schrift von den dreierlei Früchten des christlichen Lebens", in a little known work of Stephanus Gobarus and in a commentary on the Song of Songs by Philo of Carpasia. Whether or not there is any truth in these traditions must be left as an open question which we have not attempted to answer for lack of indisputably trustworthy evidence.

### 1. The obvious references to Thomas

It may be thought impossible to do valid research work on Thomas owing to lack of information. In connection with Thomas, most scholars can only point to the few passages in the G. John (where his name is mentioned), to the Acts of Thomas, to the tradition about his journey to India, and finally, to the Gospel of Thomas which has recently been the object of so much interest.

Apart from the mention of Thomas in the lists of the Apostles the only allusions to him in the New Testament are to be found in the Gospel of John. In the fourth Gospel the name occurs seven times altogether, thrice with the addition of the phrase "who is called Didymus" (John 11,16; 20,24; 21,1; 14,5; 20,26ff.).

The name of Thomas occurs in the Syriac in a passage where it is not found in the original Greek, namely John 14,22. Instead of *Ioudas*, *ouch ho Iskariōtēs* Syr. Sin. gives "Thomas" and Syr. Cur. "Juda Thoma".

No incident is recorded of Thomas by the Synoptists and we must rely solely on the Fourth Gospel for information as to his character and his position among the Twelve.

There are only three incidents in which Thomas figures at all prominently, namely the Raising of Lazarus (John 11,16), the question put to the Lord in the last discourse (John 14,5) and finally the resurrection appearances which conclude with what is perhaps the greatest confession of faith recorded in the New Testament (John 20, 28).

His personal name is not given in the New Testament but in extra-canonical sources his full name is given as "Judas Thomas", for example in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas (prologue), in the Apocryphal Acta Thomae, in the Syriac Doctrina Apostolorum and in the Abgar legend (Eusebius, H. E. I, 13). "Judas" was apparently a common name and it may well have been his.

The Acts of Thomas are concerned chiefly with Thomas' arrival in India, his activities there, and what befalls him. An Indian King who wants to have a beautiful palace built sends a merchant called Abbanes to Syria with instructions to search out a capable carpenter. In the slave market in Jerusalem Abbanes meets Jesus who points to Thomas as a fit person for his purpose and sells the Apostle-carpenter for three pounds of uncoined silver. Accompanied by Abbanes, Thomas sails away to India landing at Andrapolis where he takes part in the marriage feast of the King's daughter. After making a miraculous prophecy and persuading the couple to renounce marriage, Thomas proceeds to the Kingdom of Gundaphorus, who, delighted to acquire so skillful a craftsman puts a large sum of money at his disposal. Thomas, however, shares it all out amongst the poor with the idea of building a palace in heaven for the King in this way. The King's brother Gad is so enraged by this trick played on the King that he dies but on entering the other world sees the palace. Gad therefore asks and obtains leave of the angels to go back to the world and buy the palace from his brother. On receiving baptism both Gundaphorus and Gad become followers of the Apostle, who, after preaching the Gospel in neighbouring towns and villages, moves on to the Kingdom of Misdaeus to which he has been invited by the King's captain, whose wife and daughter he heals. He converts first Mygdonia, the wife of the chief minister, who in obedience to the Apostle's instructions refuses to live any longer with Charisius her husband. Tertia the Queen becomes converted to the same doctrine and the King has Thomas thrown into prison and orders him to be taken outside the city and transfixed with spears. During the lifetime of the King the bones of the Apostle were brought by a disciple to Mesopotamia.

In these Acts, Thomas is repeatedly stated to be the twin-brother of Jesus. Most of the later legends associated with Thomas are derived from these Apocryphal Acts.

If we turn next to the Coptic Gospel of Thomas we find three references to Thomas, one in the prologue "These are the secret words which the Living Jesus spoke and Didymus Judas Thomas wrote", one at the end "The Gospel according to Thomas" and the other in logion 13 "Thomas said to Him: Master, my mouth will not at all be capable of saying whom Thou art like. Jesus said: I am not thy Master, because thou hast drunk, thou hast become drunk from the bubbling spring which I have measured out. And He took him, He withdrew, He spoke three words to him. Now when he came to his companions, they asked him: What did Jesus say to thee? Thomas said to them: If I tell you one of the words which He said to me, you will take up stones and throw at me; and fire will

come from the stones and burn you up.”

But this is not all, for "The Book of Thomas<sup>1</sup> and the "Dialogue of the Saviour"<sup>2</sup> have been unearthed from the Egyptian desert, and in both of these Thomas is important. We have in the Book of Thomas the same twin-tradition, according to which Thomas was the twin-brother of Christ himself. The Book consists of conversations between Jesus and Thomas. The latter says to Jesus: "You have persuaded us, Lord. We knew in our heart and it is obvious that this is so, and your word is sufficient. But these words that you speak to us are laughing-stocks to the world and are sneered at, since they are misunderstood. So how can we go preach to them, since they reckon us as worldly?" (142, 19-26; tr. by Turner).

In this study our task is to gather together all the more important references to Thomas. We shall not claim completeness in this, for two reasons. Firstly, no purpose is served by collecting the references that do not add to our information about Thomas, for instance the repetition of his unbelief or the information about the churches named after him;<sup>3</sup> or again, the comparison of Thomas with a beryl according to the commentary on the Apocalypse of Andrew of Caesarea in Cappadocia.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, it is impossible for one person alone to cover everything in this field. As the following pages will show, we can sometimes discover references to Thomas — and these the most important ones — in places where one would not expect to find them.<sup>5</sup> Even those references, which are not

<sup>1</sup> In the library of Nag Hammadi a document was found bearing the title "Book of Thomas the Athlete (*athlētēs*). It is the seventh and last tractate of Codex II (138,1 – 145,9) We cite the proem: "The secret words that the Saviour spoke, those that I recorded, even I, Matthias. I was walking, listening to them speak with one another (138,1-4). John D. Turner thinks that the Book takes a median position in the Thomas tradition between the Gospel and the Acts of Thomas (A New Link in the Syrian Judas Thomas tradition, N.H.S. III p. 109ff.). The 'athlete' is a title or term, which we find in both documents (for example ch. 39, p. 157, 10 Bonnet *ho alēthēs athlētēs hēmōn kai aētētōs*; ch. 85, p. 201, 18f. *athlētēs gar aētētōs estin*. However, 'athlete' applied to Thomas seems to be rather strange. It might be a wrongly transcribed abbreviation *IELETES ~ israēlītēs* and the meaning of this term could be the same as that of the one given to Nathanael (John 1,47). Later on *athlētēs* became a common title of a martyr (in Abyssinia, perhaps of every saint). A good translation of the Book of Thomas is to be found in ThLZ 1977, 797ff. The Saviour said: "(Mein) Bruder Thomas, solange du (noch) Gelegenheit (dazu) in der Welt hast, höre mir zu, auf dass ich dir Offenbarung hinsichtlich der Dinge, die du in deinem Herzen erwogen hast, erteile.

Weil du aber als mein Zwilling(sbruder) und wahrhaft Geliebter sein wirst. Da du ja mein Bruder heisst, darfst du nicht in Unwissenheit über dich selbst sein. Und ich weiss, dass du (bereits eine gewisse) Erkenntnis gewonnen hast." (138,4ff.)

Kirchner notes: "Das hiesige koptische *pasbr mmēe*, hinter dem etwa ein griechisches *ho filōs mou ho alēthinos* zu vermuten ist, bringt nur den Sachverhalt auf den Begriff, dass in der Thomas-Tradition Judas Thomas genau die hervorragende Position einnahm, wie sie dem Lieblingsjünger des 4. Evangeliums zuerkannt wird."

<sup>2</sup> Codex III (120,1 – 149,23). Translation by H. W. Attridge in NHLE 230-238.

<sup>3</sup> Migne, PG CX, 757, A–B; 773 B; 1089 B–C; PG XCII, 828 B; 816 A; Studi e testi 173 p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> Migne PG CVI, 436 D.

<sup>5</sup> Here and there we find references that allow us to suppose that there was more said about Thomas in the source itself. We will give here only one example. H. G. Gollancz, The Book of Protection – Being a Collection of Charms (1912) contains an usual reference to "the right hand of Mar Thomas, the Apostle, who touched the side of our Redeemer" (Codex B p. lxxv 5, The Anathema of Paradise, which avails for all sickness and diseases). Besides this we find on p. xxxii 12 The Anathema of Mar Thomas, which avails for the spirit of lunacy, but as Gollancz remarks "in the heading we have Mar Thomas, whilst in the body of the charm Mar George is named". There can be no doubt that in this collection of charms, where even

to be found in the usual lists, but which we shall discuss in detail later on, these alone prove that it is worth while to continue this work.

## 2. The traditions linking Thomas with Parthia and Edessa

A great number of references to Thomas were collected by R. A. Lipsius in his "Die Apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden" (1883-1890). In regard to the mission-fields with which Thomas is connected in the legends, Lipsius gathered together everything of importance and we need only refer to his work.<sup>6</sup> The more important and oldest sources are: Origen, In Genesim PG XII, 92A; Eusebius H. E. III, 1 PG XX, 214 A; Clementine Recognitiones IX, 29; Rufinus H. E. I, 9 PL XXI, 478 B-C; Socrates H. E. I, 19 PG LXVII, 125 A-B. According to all the passages, which are dependent on one another, Thomas went to Parthia. In Lipsius' opinion this connecting of Thomas with Parthia is the oldest tradition,<sup>7</sup> but it is Edessa that claims the honour and right to preserve the bones of this apostle and "this claim seemed to be so deeply founded that even after the legend about the Indian activities of the disciple and his martyr-death arose, the tradition about his burial in Edessa was kept up".<sup>8</sup> The local tradition of Edessa connected Thomas also with the legend of Abgar.<sup>9</sup> Thomas send Thaddaeus to Edessa after the death of Jesus (Eusebius H. E. I, 13; II, 1). Moses of Chorene states that Thomas wrote Jesus' answer to Abgar's letter.<sup>10</sup> Lipsius further refers to the tradition according to which Thomas is the twin-brother of Jesus,<sup>11</sup> but he thinks that this legendary information arose out of the identification of Thomas with Judas Jacob, which, in his view, would be to assume again that the tradition of Edessa is primary.<sup>12</sup> In the older tradition nothing is supposed to be known about the martyr-death of Thomas. Lipsius mentions the Gnostic Heracleon according to whose words Thomas died a natural death.<sup>13</sup> Only in the middle of the 4th century do we find among the works of the Catholic Church Fathers the later legend about the activities of the disciple in India<sup>14</sup> and his martyr-death there.<sup>15</sup> It

now the importance of "the ambassador Mar John the Baptist" strikes one, Thomas also was important and that once he also stood in the body of the charm.

<sup>6</sup> See Ergänzungsheft p. 224.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit. Vol. I p. 225. This was already the opinion of Thilo, Acta S. Thomae Apostoli p. 108.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit. Vol. I p. 225.

<sup>9</sup> See Doresse, L'Évangile selon Thomas, ou Les paroles de Jésus p. 41 and p. 80 note 22.

<sup>10</sup> W. Whiston, Mosis Chorenensis, Historia Armenica (Londoni MDCCXXXVI), Liber II Cap. XXIX p. 134: Responsum Epistolae Abgari, quod scripsit Thomas Apostolus, iussu Servatoris. Lib. II Cap. XXX p. 135: Itaque post ascensum Servatoris nostri, Thomas unus ex duodecim Apostolis, Thaddaeum, qui erat unus de septuaginta discipulis, ad oppidum Edessam allegavit, qui Abgarum curaret, atque ut Dominus promiserat, evangelium praedicaret.

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit. p. 227. In Th. Zahn's opinion the tradition about Thomas being the twin of Jesus was invented by the author of the A. Th. (Forschungen VI, 346ff. and Das Evangelium des Johannes 1912, p. 481 note 74).

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit. p. 227.

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit. p. 227.

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit. p. 227f. The Syriac Doctrina apostolorum (Cureton p. 33), Ephraim and many of the Greek and Latin Fathers, like Ambrosius (Enarr. in Ps. 45 num. 21, Migne PL XIV, 1198); Hieronymus (ep. 59/148) ad Marcellam Opp. I, 330 Vallars; Gregorius Nazianzus (orat. 35/25) ad. Arian. Opp. ed. Paris 1840 T. I, 610f.); Paulinus Nolanus (carm. 26 in Natali S. Felicis XI opp. ed. Antverp. 1622 p. 627;

is to some extent surprising<sup>16</sup> that the Church Fathers who write of those Acts being in circulation in Gnostic circles (Encratites, Apostolics, Manichaeans, Priscillianists),<sup>17</sup> assume nevertheless an attitude of great trust toward this "product of a Gnostic" and assume that the Apostle Thomas was active in India. We intend to discuss the Acts of Thomas in later articles. At this juncture however we can ask whether the fact that the Church Fathers trusted the A. Th. (if the Acts really are their only source; one has at least to reckon with widespread oral tradition) indicates that they were not originally Gnostic? Lipsius compares the manuscripts and mentions for example as a discrepancy the absence of the prayer about the four elements (*tessares eisin hoi kataballontes* etc. ch. 165 p. 279, 15 ed. Bonnet) in *Parisiacum graecum* 1613 (saec. XV).<sup>18</sup> This chapter may be partly, at least, a later Gnostic addition,<sup>19</sup> although on the other hand in the Gospel of the Nazarenes four soldiers appear.<sup>20</sup>

Lipsius trusts Heracleon's information according to which Matthew, Philip and

Gregorius Magnus in *Evang. hom.* 17 opp. Paris 1586 T. II c. 349). Gutschmid is right in saying: "Allein aus älterer Zeit ist überhaupt nur das eine Zeugnis der Clementinischen Recognitionen da, die allerdings IX, 29 Parthien nennen; erst im vierten Jahrhundert werden die Angaben sehr häufig, und die Reihe der Zeugen beginnt mit Eusebios von Käsareia, die der Zeugen für Indien mit Gregorius von Nazianzos, die doch nur durch einen geringen Zwischenraum getrennt sind" (*Kleine Schriften* II, 1890, p. 334). He goes on to say: "Der ganze Streit läuft auf einem Streit um des Kaisers Bart hinaus: wir können nicht länger zweifeln, dass es sich auf beiden Seiten um eine und dieselbe Localität handelt, seitdem wir wissen, dass eine parthische Dynastie in indischen Gebieten geherrscht hat, und das laut Münzen der Beschützer der Thomas eben dieser Dynastie angehört hat" (*ibid.* p. 334). L. W. Brown seems to be in agreement. He says: "The difficulty is more apparent than real, because Edessa was under Parthian rule until the end of the century, and so was northern India. Orosius in the fifth century said that generally the country (from the Indus to the Tigris) was called Parthia (Orosius, *Historia* I, 2 Migne PL XXXI, cols. 676-7)" (*The Indian Christians of the St. Thomas, Cambridge* 1956 p. 45). "According to Abdias (c. 600 A.D.) there were three Indias, the first bordering Abyssinia, the second in Persia and the third 'which extends to the edge of the world' (*ibid.* p. 46).

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit. p. 228 Gaudentius of Brescia (*hom.* XVII Opp. ed. Patav. 1720 p. 19); Theodoret (in *Graec. Affect. Curat. disput.* T. VIII p. 923 ed. Schulze); Nilus (ap. Photium cod. 276); Gregorius Turon. (*de gloria marty.* I, 23).

<sup>16</sup> Lipsius solves the question in saying after the enumeration of the Latin sources: "All this information does surely not come directly from the Gnostic Acts of the Apostles, but from the nameless ecclesiastical tradition, which itself is only partly dependent on the Catholic periodoi" (*Op. cit.* p. 209).

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit. p. 229. According to Epiphanius *haer.* 47, 1. 61, 1 the A. Th. were used by the Encratites and the Apostolics, according to Augustine (c. *Faustum* XXII, 79 Opp. T. VIII col. 290f., compare c. *Adimant.* c. 17 T. VII col. 99; de *sermone domini in monte* I, 20 T. III P. II col. 139) by the Manichaeans; according to Turibus *Asturicensis* (in *Leonis opp. ed. Ballerini* I, 711f.) by the Manichaeans and the Priscillianists. Photius ascribes them to Leucius Charinus (*Bibl. cod.* 114). He says: "One reads the book called the Travels of the Apostles with certain Acts of Peter, John, Andrew, Thomas and Paul, but, as the book itself makes clear, Leucius Charinus wrote them" (P. M. Peterson, *Andrew, Brother of Simon Peter*, Leiden 1958, p. 4).

<sup>18</sup> Op. cit. p. 236.

<sup>19</sup> From the stylistic point of view "O hidden mysteries" etc. is an intruder among the invocations of Thomas. He begins to explain to God the meaning of this mystery. Even worse is the next sentence "And this I now understand" because Thomas knew long ago that he was made of four elements and God knew it before him.

<sup>20</sup> Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* Vol. I p. 100 fragment No. 34: "Man liest im Evangelium der Nazaraer, dass die Juden vier Soldaten bestochen haben, sie sollten den Herrn so hart geißeln, bis das Blut von seinem ganzen Körper flösse. Sie hatten dieselben Soldaten auch dazu bestochen, dass sie ihn kreuzigten, wie es Joh. 19 heisst..."



Thomas did not die a martyr-death ("Not all those who are saved have made a verbal confession before they have passed away. They include Matthew, Philip, Thomas, Levi and many others").<sup>21</sup> We must not forget that Matthew, Philip and Thomas are a trio particularly liked by the Gnostics (Heracleon mentions Levi also, but this disciple has been identified with Matthew very early in the tradition).<sup>22</sup> For instance, in *Pistis Sophia* we meet the tradition according to which this trio wrote down all the discourses of the risen Jesus after his death.<sup>23</sup> For Heracleon, then, those three have not made a verbal, but a written confession.<sup>24</sup> It is, of course, possible that this record in *Pistis Sophia* reflects also the fact that the Gospels named after those three disciples (instead of Matthew it may have been, perhaps, Matthias?)<sup>25</sup> were popular in Gnostic circles.<sup>26</sup> Chrysostom says that "the tombs of Peter, Paul, John and Thomas are known, but the tombs of the others, who are equal to them, are not known anywhere".<sup>27</sup> According to Nilus, Thomas was martyred later than Peter and Paul.<sup>28</sup> One could even think that this record by Heracleon arose out of the misunderstanding of the G. John 21,21ff. It is possible that in the circles where the tradition that Thomas was the twin-brother of Jesus was known, it was thought that the beloved disciple of Jesus mentioned in the G. John was none other than Thomas himself. The G. John 21,21 could have been understood in many different ways. This passage may have been written after the martyr-death of some disciple (John, or Thomas?), but it is also possible that it was taken to mean that the beloved disciple does not await the same fate as has been prophesied to Peter in verses 18f. We shall not go into those questions presented by the G. John 21,21, about which scholars disagree. The above is intended only as a suggestion as to how the tradition found in Clement of Alexandria could have arisen.<sup>29</sup>

In this connection we are not so much interested in the references to the journey of Thomas to India which can be taken to have originated from the same source,<sup>30</sup> as in the references in general which throw a new light on the disciple we are accustomed to think of generally only as an unbelieving apostle.

<sup>21</sup> Migne PG VIII col. 1281.

<sup>22</sup> Lipsius, 'Acts of the Apostles, Apocryphal' in the Dictionary of Christian Biography Vol. I p. 26; F. L. Cross, The Dictionary of the Christian Church, 'Levi' p. 804. A. E. Brooke says in a note to our passage (Strom. IV, 9, p. 595 ed. Potter): "For the early distinction of Levi from Matthew, cf. Origen c. Celsum i, 62, unless indeed the reading mentioned there by Origen is a variant for Thaddaion (Mc. iii. 18)" (The Fragments of Heracleon, p. 102).

<sup>23</sup> Chh. 42 and 43 p. 44, 33-36 and p. 45, 12-19 (ed. Schmidt-Till).

<sup>24</sup> "Durch zwei oder drei Zeugen soll jede Sache festgestellt werden; die drei Zeugen sind Philippus und Thomas und Matthäus" (*Pistis Sophia* p. 45, 17-19).

<sup>25</sup> See Hennecke-Schneemelcher, Neutestamentliche Apokryphen I, p. 224-228. Doresse, *Les Livres secrets des gnostiques d'Égypte* (Paris 1958), p. 243.

<sup>26</sup> See Hennecke-Schneemelcher, N.T. Apokryphen, pp. 194, 199.

<sup>27</sup> Migne PG LXIII (12) col. 179, In Epist. ad Hebr., Homilia XXVI, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Photius, *Bibl. codex* 276.

<sup>29</sup> *Stromatum* IV, 9, Migne PG VIII, col. 1281 B.

<sup>30</sup> L. W. Brown says: "Those Fathers who mention St. Thomas all rely on the Acts for their information; no independent tradition remains" (*The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, Cambridge 1956, p. 45). Some authors state clearly from where they have taken their information, for instance, Georgios Hamartolos in *Chronicon* (PG CX, 512 B) mentions Eusebius.

### 3. Some references to Thomas in Patristic writings

In order to get some additional information about the tradition relating to Thomas, we have taken the trouble to look through the Greek and Latin series of Patristic texts edited by Migne. The result has been disappointment to some extent, for although we found numerous references to Thomas, unfortunately most of them turned out to be paraphrases of the relevant passages in the G. John. The ancient commentaries on the G. John are of little interest as far as Thomas is concerned. But there are few exceptions.<sup>31</sup> Among these is the Paraphrase of the G. John by Nonnus. Like other writers Nonnus speaks of Thomas' unbelief, in his Paraphrase of chapter 20 of the G. John,<sup>32</sup> where Thomas "in opening his insolent mouth spoke a word of unbelief", but in the same work Nonnus mentions the double name of Thomas in a passage of some poetical beauty: "In hearing this the double named Thomas (whom his parents had called the Twin ever since the course of his eighth dawn which yearned for the lad's circumcision) called: 'Not yet, o King, do we know whither you will direct your steps; whence should we know the unmeasurable length of the journey?' But Jesus spoke and taught this man who was so eager to hear: 'I am life, truth and the straight way. I am life and the path of life. The man of earth cannot come to God the Creator unless he (lit. 'a man') directs his steps, drawn by God, through me, walking the straight path to the Father through the Son".<sup>33</sup> Or again — "But hearing this, Thomas, known by two names and (also) called the Twin, spoke and uttered a sad word which brought a tear (to the eye): 'Let us go where this dear man is going in order to share a common death with him in love'.<sup>34</sup> Nonnus thought that at the time of circumcision Thomas was already called a twin, probably for the simple reason that he was a twin.<sup>35</sup>

### 4. Thomas called "The Twin"

A twofold interpretation of the name Thomas frequently appears — sometimes he is called Abyssus and sometimes Didymus.<sup>36</sup> For instance, according to Paschasius Radbertus

<sup>31</sup> M. F. Wiles refers to Cyril of Alexandria who says that Mary was forbidden to touch the risen Christ because she had not yet received the Holy Spirit; Thomas was allowed because he had, even in his absence, received the Spirit as given to the Twelve (Cyril in John XX.17; III, 6-30; in John XX.27; III, 145, 21 – 146, 6). Wiles goes on to say that "this at least seems preferable to Origen's curious suggestion that it was due to Mary's being a woman or to Christ's needing the cleansing of the Father after the passion" (The Spiritual Gospel, p. 31 note 3).

<sup>32</sup> Migne PG XLIII, 912 C – 913 B.

<sup>33</sup> Migne PG XLIII, col. 868 A-B.

<sup>34</sup> Migne PG XLIII, col. 841 A-B.

<sup>35</sup> According to Nicetas (Paphlago, Oratio VII – in laudem S. Thomae apostoli, Migne PG CV, col. 132) Thomas did not come into the world alone but together with another he came from the same womb.

<sup>36</sup> This twofold interpretation of Thomas' name appears already in the A. Th. ch. 31 Syr. "I know that the ocean-flood of the Messiah will destroy our nature" (James, The Apocryphal N.T. p. 379) and by later authors, as Godefridus Admontensis (Homiliae Dominicales XLVI, Migne PL CLXXIV, 311 A-D): Thomas abyssus interpretatur, quo nomine perfectus homo et in Deo confortatus, qui tali, ut jam dictum est, ordine in vita sua processit, figuratur. Abyssus invocatur abyssum, cum perfectus homo oculis mentis suae abyssum misericordiae et iudicii Dei praeponit etc. R. Harris says: "Twin in Syriac, as is well known, is Tauma, and the similarity of this to the word Abyss or Ocean (Tehoma) led earlier compilers of Onomastica to derive the name Thomas (or twin) from Abyssus. In the same way when pious persons attempted to get rid of the statement in the Syriac Acts of Thomas that Judas Thomas was the Twin of

(c. 785 — c. 860) Thomas is interpreted as abyssus. How was it possible for Thomas not to believe unless his spirit was a dreadful abyss upon which the Holy Spirit brooded, warming and feeding it to life? From here it comes that having carefully examined the wounds he soon called out 'My Lord and My God'.

Paschasius Radbertus finds that Thomas who arrives from such abomination to the depth of such mystery is rightly called an abyss, but he adds that "this same man is called Didymus in Greek which means 'similar' or 'twin', for the reason that (we are told) his face was so similar to that of the Saviour — just as a pair of twins usually express with either of two faces a single pattern of characteristics and appearance" (*Expositio in Matthaëum*, Lib. VI, cap. X).<sup>37</sup> Here it is clearly said that Jesus and Thomas were confusingly similar. It is only left for us to ask the source of Paschasius Radbertus' information. "Ut aiunt" — "as it is said" is not a deprecatory expression, it does not signify common gossip, as the English "people say" but indicates a reliable source of information. It could be used for what the doctors of the Church say. One can, of course, in connection of this testimony simply state that it relies upon the Acts of Thomas, but it is questionable whether Paschasius had ever heard of them. It is also doubtful whether in his lifetime the tradition was still alive according to which Jesus and Thomas were "like one face" to look upon. One has therefore to assume that there existed a written source, for instance, one of the Latin glosses to the passages in the G. John referring to Thomas (20,24; 21,2), glosses which we shall discuss later on. Alternatively he relied presumably on Isidore.

Every thoughtful Bible reader will certainly have been led to ask why it was necessary for Judas to distinguish Jesus by a kiss when he betrayed him. Surely not because Jesus was unknown. Isidore of Seville (c. 560 — 636) answers this question thus. He says:<sup>38</sup> "Thomas whose name is interpreted as abyss and alternatively Didymus; that means similar to Christ, for he was very like the Saviour in his facial expression. Therefore Judas said to the Jews in betraying his teacher: 'The one whom I kiss is he, seize him!'"<sup>39</sup>

Lipsius already mentions traditions according to which Thomas is not the twin brother of Jesus, but of Eliezer (or Eleazar); one of the oldest of these is found in Clem. Hom. II, 1.<sup>40</sup> How did the Gnostic-Judæo-Christian circles, from which the Ps. Clementines originate, come to connect Thomas with Eliezer, which in the abbreviated

Messiah, they did it by substituting the Abyss, or (as Wright translates it) the Ocean-flood of the Messiah". He goes on to note that among the priests of Jupiter Dolichenus one is called Oceanus Socratis (On the name "Son of God" in Northern Syria, ZNW 15, 1914, p. 107).

<sup>37</sup> Migne PL CXX, 406 B — 407 A.

<sup>38</sup> But it should be noted that E. Honigmann maintains that this is "a later enlarged revision of Isidorus' text" (*Studi e testi* 173, 1953, p. 118).

<sup>39</sup> Migne PL LXXXIII (7), col. 1289, Appendix XX, *Liber de ortu et obitu Patrum*. J. C. Thilo says in the footnote to page 95, *Acta S. Thomae Apostoli* — unde Ordericus Vitalis in *hist. eccles. lib. II*, p. 410 sua habet: Thomas abyssus, et Didymus interpretatur geminus, quia Salvatori similis est redimitus multimodis virtutum charismatibus... Alio modo hallucinatur Abdias *hist. Apost. IX*, 1. *Beatum Thomam cum reliquis discipulis ad officium Apostolatus electum, ipsumque a Domino Didymum, quod interpretatur geminus, vocatum fides Evangelica narrat.*

<sup>40</sup> Migne PG II, 77 B.



form is Lazarus?<sup>41</sup> It may be that the writer has relied upon the G. John 11,16, or at least a similar text. This passage is known to present difficulties to the critics. Most probably "with him" does not apply to Jesus but to Lazarus (although the paraphrase of Nonnus conveys a different impression). But then this sentence must have a symbolic meaning.<sup>42</sup> It is also possible that in the light of this passage Thomas and Lazarus were taken as twins, for why else should Thomas want to die together with him. All this, of course, remains purely in the conjectural sphere.

According to the list of the homes and parents of the Twelve Apostles in the Appendix to the Paschal Chronicle<sup>43</sup> Thomas was by birth an Antiochene, his parents being Diophanes and Rhoa. His name was Didymus, because he was a twin and the name of the sister was Lysia. It is possible that this making of Thomas an Antiochene was intended to suppress the tradition of Thomas being the twin of Jesus. The linking of Thomas with Antioch may well originate from his close connection with the circle of the Hellenists from which in O. Cullmann's opinion the G. John stems.<sup>44</sup>

So we can only guess why and how there arose those strange traditions, such as the connecting of Thomas with Antioch and although that information can on no account be accepted as trustworthy, the tradition of Thomas being the twin of Jesus must be a very old one.<sup>45</sup>

### 5. The unbelief of Thomas in Patristic writings

In the Patristic writings Thomas is repeatedly described as the unbelieving disciple, and those passages we shall not attempt to enumerate. The passages in which an attempt has

<sup>41</sup> W. F. Albright notes that "the ossuaries have demonstrated that the personal names of the Gospels, including again particularly those of John, were characteristic of the period from Herod the Great to A.D. 70. For example the name Eleazar is quite common in the ossuary inscriptions in the same abbreviated form La'zar, 'Lazarus', that we find in John", Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St. John (Light on the New Testament: Studies in its Background and Eschatology, in honour of C. H. Dodd, London 1955) p. 158. See also G. Vermes, Jesus the Jew, A Historian's Reading of the Gospels, London 1973, pp. 53, 190f.

<sup>42</sup> In a fragment of the Coptic Apocryphal Gospels translated by F. Robinson (Texts and Studies, Vol. IV No. 2) Thomas says: "My Lord, behold Thou hast shewn all favours unto us in Thy goodness. There is one thing in which we wish that Thou shouldst assure us. We wish, O my Lord, to see dead men sleeping in the tombs raised by Thee, for a sign of Thy resurrection which shall take place... We wish to see how bones in the tomb which have been dissolved are jointed together and they speak here" (p. 169f.). Jesus replies in a long address repeatedly saying: "Come with me Didymus" ("to the tomb of Lazarus"). At this juncture we must notice some further words of Thomas: "If Thou hast suffered this trouble, and hast come to the tomb of the dead, because of my unbelief, let Thy will be done unto me, let this tomb receive me unto the day of Thy resurrection" (p. 172). It seems that this quotation is based on the G. John 11,16. This passage raises several questions. How can Thomas presume that everyone will be killed in Bethany when the aim of Jesus is to raise Lazarus? And the sisters ask Jesus without any signs of fear that he might be killed there. "With him" must refer to Lazarus (in verse 15 we read *pros auton*) and it seems that the whole story is of a symbolic nature. Instead of John 11,41 stands something like John 17,1. The mount turns round like a wheel and besides Lazarus other dead come forth, who are not mentioned again. Two interesting points remain; Lazarus tells of Adam's sending greetings to Jesus. Secondly, we must note that the miracle took place on the Sabbath.

<sup>43</sup> Append. ad Chron. Pasch., Corpus scriptorum hist. Byzant. 1832, T. II, p. 142 (ed. Bonn).

<sup>44</sup> Exp. T. October, 1959, Vol. LXXI No. 1 p. 8ff. and No. 2 p. 39ff.

<sup>45</sup> See also Thilo, pp. 92-97.

been made to explain the nature of Thomas' unbelief offer a greater interest. Ambrose finds that Thomas does not seem to have doubted the resurrection of the Lord itself but the quality of the resurrection.<sup>46</sup> Gregory Nazianzene says: "Let us be cleansed in touch, taste<sup>47</sup> and throat not touching gently nor taking pleasure in smooth things but by grasping at the word which has become flesh for our salvation as is proper and imitating Thomas in this".<sup>48</sup> Augustine already said that "Thomas had the disposition not of a doubter but of an enquirer. His enquiry became a source of teaching to the whole world".<sup>49</sup> Augustine, commenting on Thomas' words *Nisi videro* etc. says: "This is the word of an investigator not that of a denier. When he said this he wanted to be taught, he desired confirmation" (De Tempore CLXI).<sup>50</sup> "Thomas' excitement strengthened everybody's belief. Thomas when he did believe, did not waver. Your holiness, brethren, remembers the previous treatment, when we wrote that Thomas the Apostle in order to strengthen the faith of all people after the resurrection of our Lord touched the members of (His) body, and to rid the whole world of doubts wished to examine the marks of His wounds".<sup>51</sup> Theophanes Cerameus thinks in the same way that Thomas does not seem to doubt the resurrection but seems to want to investigate whether it was exactly the same body which had arisen. He had doubts about the identity of the body. The other disciples had the same experience when they thought that they had seen a ghost.<sup>52</sup> Of all these explanations it can, of course, be said that they are only the meditations of different authors ignorant of the original meaning of this narrative about Thomas. And to the Fathers who interpret the words of Thomas in this way,<sup>53</sup> it can always be answered that the fact remains that he was simply unbelieving, as Christ's words of correction show him "Do not be faithless, but believing".<sup>54</sup>

As one would expect, the touching of the Lord by Thomas is in Patristic literature proof that the Lord had arisen in the flesh (one could even think that the anti-docetic motive behind this incident forms the basis of this narrative). Here we will only introduce some less well-known references: as Eckbert, Abbot of Schönau, who secured in 1163 a wholesale burning of Cathari at Cologne,<sup>55</sup> says: "The fact that he rose in the same flesh in which he was born and in which he suffered, becomes clear in the words, which I have mentioned before, that he said after his resurrection, while showing his hands and feet to the disciples and in what he said to the doubting Thomas".<sup>56</sup> Theodoret of Cyrros (d. c. 466) says that the Lord, who raises both the crippled and the healthy bodies of men (because in the resurrection there are neither crippled nor blind) left in his own body the

<sup>46</sup> *Expositio evang. sec. Luc. Lib. X, 168, Migne PL XIV, 1845 D – 1846 A.*

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Col. 2,21.

<sup>48</sup> PG XXXVI, 413 B, Oratio XL, 37 — *In sanctum baptisma.*

<sup>49</sup> PL XXXVIII, col. 2063, De Tempore CLXI, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Migne PL XXXVIII, col. 2063.

<sup>51</sup> Migne PL XXXVIII, col. 2064, De Tempore CLXII, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Migne PG CXXXII, col. 688 A, Homiliae in Evangelia Dominicalia XXXV — *In nonum matutinum.*

<sup>53</sup> Another justification for Thomas' attitude is set out by Origen who reminds us that Christ had warned the Apostles against those who would come and say "I am He", Comm. in Joan., G.C.S. IV, 561.

<sup>54</sup> See Migne PG CXXXII, 687 note 54.

<sup>55</sup> S. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, Cambridge 1955, p. 122.

<sup>56</sup> *Sermones contra Catharos*, PL CXCIV, col. 96 B.

marks by the nails and the wounds in his side. Both the Lord himself and the hand of Thomas witness to this.<sup>57</sup>

Philo of Carpasia, or Carpasium, or Carpathus (an island between Crete and Rhodes)<sup>58</sup> says in his *Enarratio in Canticum Canticorum* (circa 400) "that the unbelief of Thomas showed the certainty of the resurrection to everyone — that it was not a phantasy — but that it was really the crucified body which arose and shewed the resurrection of all flesh".<sup>59</sup> It is possible that this commentary, the Greek version of which seems to have been drastically abbreviated, contained many more traditions about Thomas, but even this Greek version is interesting enough. In explaining the 5th chapter of the Song of Songs, Philo applies the words of verse 2 "Open to me, my sister, my near one" to Thomas. "(The Lord) calls Thomas and his unbelieving soul and says to him 'Open to me, my near one' in order that his soul might open his own heart and make room for the belief of the resurrection."<sup>60</sup> The words in the same verse "My dove, my perfect one" also refer to Thomas. He is "a dove because of his guilelessness, perfect because of his confession of faith, when he says 'My Lord and My God'".<sup>61</sup> The following words appear in the same verse: "I have washed my feet; how can I defile them?" Philo explains: "He who has died is free from sin. I tremblingly fear lest I rise again and live and the relapse into the same sins and 'defile my feet'. But here, too, the word is for Thomas. For though the narrative is repeated for the benefit of the hearers, nevertheless the flow of the context shows that the rest refers to Thomas."<sup>62</sup>

What is more, the connecting of the Song of Songs with the Passion and Resurrection stories is not peculiar to Philo, but is found also in Cyril of Jerusalem in his *Catecheses*. He finds that the Holy Scripture, the Song of Songs, has been fulfilled in the Resurrection narratives. Thanks to Cyril we know now why "honeycomb" occurs in Luke 24,22 — this has been taken from the Song of Songs 5,1 in which there is an account of a meal and of an "honeycomb".<sup>63</sup> Cyril also mentions Thomas in this connection.<sup>64</sup> Of course, the "honeycomb" may have been added to Luke's text later on, but even in this case the narratives of the Resurrection were widely connected, at an early date, precisely with the Song of Songs (honey would have been superfluous, as fish was mentioned). We can ask why did the women in Matthew 28,9 hold Jesus by the feet?

<sup>57</sup> PG LXXXIII, 161 A, *Eranistes seu Polymorphus, Dialogus II — Inconfusus*.

<sup>58</sup> Bardenhewer, *Patrologie* (1894), p. 298f.

<sup>59</sup> PG XL, 104 B.

<sup>60</sup> PG XL, 100 C – 101 A.

<sup>61</sup> PG XL, 101 A.

<sup>62</sup> PG XL, 101 B-C.

<sup>63</sup> Migne PG XXXIII, 840 A, *Catechesis XIV, 11, De Christi resurrectione*.

<sup>64</sup> PG XXXIII, 837 B – 840 A. Philo of Carpasia and Cyril of Jerusalem may well have preserved the ancient and original understanding of John 20. In this tradition Thomas was taken to be the beloved disciple. In *The Preaching of Thomas* we read: "Lord says to Thomas: 'Let thy heart rejoice, O my beloved Thomas! And be strong; for thou art victorious over thine enemy... and My reception of thee, and My seating of thee of My right hand in My Kingdom. For thou art called 'The Twin'. Thou art beloved by me.'" (*Horae Semiticae*, No. IV, *The Mythological Acts of the Apostles* by A. Smith Lewis, London 1904, p. 88).

Cyril answers us — in order that the words of Song of Songs 3,4 "I held him, and would not let him go" should be fulfilled.<sup>65</sup> This compels us to pay more attention also to Philo.

We have now reached the most interesting passage in his exegesis. The Song of Songs 5,4 reads thus: "My kinsman put his hand by the hole and my bowels were moved for him." Philo continues: "Jesus said to Thomas 'Now thrust your hand into my side and your fingers into the holes of the nails.' But when this took place Thomas also achieved full belief in the resurrection, the he said that his bowels were thrilled by the miracle of resurrection."<sup>66</sup> It is impossible to ascertain whether this link with the Song of Songs originated with Philo or went back to an earlier exegetical tradition. The manuscripts read for instance in 5,2 *adelphos* (Codex Vaticanus) and in 5,8 *adelphon* (Codex Sinaiticus) (instead of *adelphidos*<sup>67</sup>). Applying the same reading to verse 4 it would follow that according to an exegesis which would seem strange to us, Thomas as a twin brother of Jesus *had* to place his hand in His side, in order to fulfil the Scripture. The stress is laid not on doubt, but on nearness. He who puts his fingers into the marks of the nails of Jesus is his "near one". This could explain why the other Apostles are also represented doing the same actions as Thomas.<sup>68</sup> It would be unjust to accuse only Thomas with

<sup>65</sup> PG XXXIII, 840 C, Catechesis XIV, 12, De Christi resurrectione.

<sup>66</sup> Migne PG XL, 101 C – 104 A.

<sup>67</sup> See also Origen's Hexapla in Canticum Canticorum 5,1.

<sup>68</sup> It is noteworthy that in the Epistula Apostolorum 11 (Hennecke (3) p. 131; James, p. 488) Peter and Andrew are placed at the side of Thomas. "Then said he unto us: Wherefore doubt ye still, and are unbelieving? I am he that spake unto you of my flesh and my death and my resurrection. But that ye may know that I am he, do thou, Peter, put thy finger into the print of the nails in my hands, and thou also, Thomas, put thy finger into the wound of the spear in my side; but thou, Andrew, look on my feet and see whether they press the earth; for it is written in the prophet: A phantom of a devil maketh no foot-print on the earth." P. M. Peterson sees in this passage only the antidocetic tendency (Andrew, Brother of Simon Peter, Leiden 1958, p. 7). He goes on to say: "As for the prophet above quoted, no one knows. Harnack suggests Wisdom of Solomon 18:17 while Guerrier suggests Daniel 14:18ff. Commodian of Gaza (c. 250?) quotes the passage as "Vestigium umbra non facit" (Shades leave no traces) (ibid. p. 7). Compare the Acts of John chapter 93. Loewenich finds: "Es ist höchst charakteristisch, dass nicht nur Thomas, sondern auch von Petrus und Andreas eine Berührung des Auferstandenen erzählt wird" (Das Johannes-Verständnis im zweiten Jahrhundert, Giessen 1932, p. 59) and still "Von den Elfen wird mehrmals betont, dass sie den Herrn berührt haben" (ibid.). The same feature appears already in I John 1,1 — the Apostles have not only seen with their eyes, but they have also touched him with their hands. Theophanes Cerameus says that one must not pay attention to the unbelief of Thomas only, but also to his strength of mind and to his eagerness to enquire, as he was ready to proclaim openly the resurrection of the Lord and to call out together with John "Which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands" (Migne PG CXXXIII, col. 688 B). In the touching of Jesus with hands one needs not see so much the antidocetic tendency, as an act of favouritism, for the one who has touched our Lord is raised above the others through this very fact.

See further "The Book of the Resurrection" (Budge, Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt, 1913): "Then Thomas put forth his finger and took out /some/ of His blood which flowed down from the side of the Son of God, and he signed himself therewith. And the Saviour answered and said to all the Apostles, "Behold, My blood of God hath joined to your bodies and ye yourselves have become divine, even as I. Behold, I am with you until the end of the world". Through Thomas' touching Jesus all the apostles have now become divine and immortal like Jesus himself. Compare Augustine (de Tempore CLXIII, PL XXXVIII, col. 2066): Infer manum tuam, Thoma, lateri Salvatoris: tange vulnera, quae nostra peccata fecerunt: scrutare unde sanguis effluxit, ut nobis sanitatis poculum propinaret. Intuere, Thoma, pretium nostrum, signa clavorum diligenter attende; et in ipsis vulneribus medicamentum vel thesaurum humani generis recognosce.

unbelief, as it is clear from the Gospels that the other disciples did not believe before they saw the risen Lord. In the longer ending to Mark's Gospel it is stated that the disciples did not believe in spite of the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus. Theophanes Ceraeus thinks in the same way, saying: "If also Thomas is spoken of as having been unbelieving, the remaining disciples too were shaken by this vision. Matthew says namely 'But some doubted'; Luke on the other hand 'They suppose that they had seen a ghost'."<sup>69</sup>

## 6. A reference to Thomas in the *Opus Imperfectum*

An interesting reference to Thomas is to be found in the Pseudo-Chrysostomic *Opus Imperfectum*,<sup>70</sup> which should probably be dated about 550.<sup>71</sup> The author speaks about an apocryphal book entitled "Seth". He is himself unsure of the reliability of the book. The people who treasure the book of Seth live at the border of the East. They may have chosen from among their nation twelve magicians who praise God in silence, and every year, after the harvest and threshing, ascend the mountain of Victory, as it is called in their language, to wait for the star. Thus they act from generation to generation until at last there appears above the mountain the star in which is the figure of a small boy. He speaks to them, teaches them, and sends them to Judaea. For two years the star goes before them and there is never a lack of food and drink in their knapsacks. The author continues: "The other things which it is said they accomplished have been summed up in the Gospels. But after their return they went on praising God and glorified him more ardently than before and proclaimed to all their generation and taught many. Finally, when after Christ's resurrection, the Apostle Thomas went to that province, they joined themselves to him and were baptized by him and became his assistants in this teaching."<sup>72</sup>

## 7. Thomas as the chief apostle in Indian Christian tradition

In "The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries Attributed to Abû Şâlih, the Armenian" (ed. by B. T. A. Evetts, Oxford 1895) (early thirteenth century) Thomas is described as the chief Apostle among the Twelve. The passage runs as follows:

India. In this country there is neither heat nor cold, because it is on the equator. It is the land of Abyssinia, which is called Al-Hindah.<sup>73</sup> All its inhabitants worship the Buddhas and the sun and the fire.

<sup>69</sup> Migne PG CXXXII, 688 C Homiliae in Evangelia Dominicalia XXXV — in nonum matutinum.

<sup>70</sup> PG LVI (6), 637 – 638.

<sup>71</sup> Altaner refers to G. Morin who dates it circa 550 (Patrology, 1960, p. 437).

<sup>72</sup> For further information on this story in the *Opus Imperfectum* see the following three works: E. E. Herzfeld, *Archaeological History of Iran* (The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, London 1935), p. 60ff.; Hyde's *Historia Religionis Veterum Persarum* (Oxonii MDCC), p. 377f.; Gutschmid, *Kleine Schriften II*, p. 335.

<sup>73</sup> The confusion of Ethiopia with India is as old as the beginning of Greek literature and remained till its latest days. See Homer, *Od.* i.23,24; Herod. iii.94 and vii.70; Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 1.808f.; Tibullus, *Eleg.* Bk. ii.3,55; Virgil, *Georg.* ii.116 and iv.293; Strabo i and xv; Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* ii.16.4.; Cosmas Indicopleustes, ap. Migne, Tom. 88, p. 115; Epiphanius, in *Ancorat*, ii, p. 60 E; Philostorgius iii.10; Procopius, *Bell. Pers.* i.19, p. 58 C-D and *De Aedificiis* v.i, p. 109 B; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* xvii. 394ff. Cf. Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries*, p. 296 note 1, where these passages are referred to. A. J. Butler mentions Thos. Wright who in his "Early Chris-



It is the land of India, and its shores are far from Egypt; it is very extensive, and contains a multitude of inhabitants; it is surrounded by the seas and the expanse of waters, over which ships pass from the coasts from Egypt; and, on land, India lies next to the frontiers of Persia. India lay in ancient times in the darkness of idolatry; and Thomas, the greatest of the twelve, who was sent thither, announced to the people the message of salvation. This glorious apostle converted them from the worship of idols to the knowledge of the truth and the way of salvation; and he baptized them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.

There follows a description of Thomas' activities in India. The story continues: Thus when the minds and hearts of these people were enlightened, they set themselves to build a church to great Thomas, who had been their guide; and in this church, which they erected to the great apostle Thomas, from whom they had received the orthodox faith, God manifested a great sign unto them; for, when the building of the church was completed, God sent the sea which covered the road leading to the church. And when this apostle was martyred, and had finished his fight, and obtained the crown of martyrdom, his body was carried to this church; and they placed it in a chest of skilful workmanship, and overlaid it with gold. And when they saw this other wonder after his martyrdom, namely that his right hand was not changed from its former appearance during life, they marvelled and their faith was strengthened; so they made an opening in the chest through which his holy hand came out, as a manifest sign to all who saw it. Now the sea which had covered the road to the church went back from it every year; for God sent a wind which drove back from the road, which was thus laid open for the assembling of the congregation at the festival of Thomas. For men came thither from all parts and walked along the road to the church, as the children of Israel walked, when the Red Sea was derived from them, under the guidance of the prophet Moses who prayed for them before the Lord. So God showed a similar sign in our own time, through the prayers of this great apostle and his great dignity in the sight of the Lord, who confirmed his teaching by so mighty a miracle, which has never ceased. Thus the people who assemble at this great festival, celebrate it and receive blessings; and the priests celebrate the liturgy and take the holy mysteries, and dip the holy body in the pure blood, and place it in that pure hand. Then all the people receive the holy mysteries out of the palm of that pure hand, and they continue to communicate in this manner, one after another until the hand grasps one of the congregation: then they all glorify God, and the priests communicate the rest of the people. Afterwards the priests carry that chest in their hands with chanting and with great rejoicing, and set it again in its place, after the people have kissed it and been blessed by it. When this religious service is over, and as the people are about to disperse, they are blessed by that man, whom God has chosen out of the people to remain for a year in the service of that pure body, to keep the candles lighted before it night and day. The people also leave with him all that he can need, and all depart to their own homes. And

tianity in Arabia" has a learned note in which he shows plainly the extension of the term India to cover Ethiopia and Arabia Felix as well as the great peninsula to which the word is properly applied. See also A. Mingana, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, JRLB 10 (1926), p. 443-446. In a MS of the Acts of Thomas (Paris gr. 1613) India has been identified with Ethiopia. Because of this confusion of Ethiopia with India, scholars have sometimes thought that Thomas went in fact to Ethiopia instead of the real India. The latest scholar who holds this view is Irmgard Bidder.

Written records have been published of a young German pilgrim, A. von Harff (The Pilgrimage of the Knight A. v. Harff, London 1946, Hakluyt Society, p. 127 and 164), who in 1496 went to Jerusalem. After arriving in Egypt — which had become Mohammedan — he as a Christian, secretly visited the famous balsam garden, then called Matara-Heliopolis. He is told there that formerly the Egyptian Sultans used to make gifts of these incense bushes to the four great lords of the earth: to the Emperor of Turkey, the Lord of the Tartars, Usay Khassan, and to the great Lord "Loblin", the ruler of India, "whom", continues von Harff, "we call Prester John". In Cairo, von Harff met an Ethiopian delegate who had just come from Jerusalem and who, after carefully questioning him to find out whether he was a true and honest Christian, invited him to travel home with him by way of the monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai. Their journey is then described, unfortunately with an incorrect commentary by the editor due to the erroneous use of the term "India". Von Harff did not journey by way of Madagascar and Ceylon "to India" but came via the Somali harbours of Mogadiscio and Zeila to the Ethiopian "India" on the coast of the Red Sea. He gives a very accurate description of the earlier conversion of this land by St. Thomas' martyrdom at a spot which he was shown. Besides this, he once again on his journey heard from local Christians that some four hundred years ago "the great ruler of India" who was called "the Loblin", or as von Harff again adds "as we would say, Prester John", lived in enmity with the king of the smaller India. (Loblin is in Bidder's opinion Lalibela, see *The Monolithic Churches of Ethiopia*, London 1959, p. 29.)

when they reach the shore, and not one of them is left behind, then the sea returns as it was before, and covers the road to the church. This custom has continued without interruption for ages. When the people return the following year, they find that the man, who was left to serve the body of St. Thomas, has died at the very hour and is still warm. Praise to God, who is great and glorious in his saints, and works miracles for their sakes. To him be the glory (pp. 296-299)."

From the end of this story, it seems that a man was chosen to act as the dead body of Thomas, whose hand lived forever.<sup>74</sup> Or do we meet here a reminiscence of a custom of sacrificing the King for the sins of the people (something like Zimmern–Liungman's theory)? In that case, our story reflects the most peculiar communion custom in the world.<sup>75</sup> "This story of the communion of St. Thomas is to be found related by an oriental prelate who visited Pope Calixtus I at Rome in A.D. 1122, and who is called in the accounts John, the patriarch of India. Two independent narratives of this visit exist; one is the *Chronicon Alberici Monachi* published in Leibniz, *Accessiones Historicae*, ad ann. 1122; and the other in Mabillon's *Vetera Analecta* in a letter written by Abbot Oddo of St. Rémy to a count Thomas. Oddo says he was present at the "patriarch's" interview with the Pope. He states, according to the testimony of the Indian prelate, that the church of St. Thomas was surrounded by a river, but that eight days before and eight days after the festival of the apostle the water retreated so that the church could be reached on foot over dry land; the body of the saint was seated upon the bishop's chair, and received in its open hand the offerings that were made, unless a heretic approached, when the hand at once closed. Albericus, whose account varies somewhat from Oddo's, adds that the host was handed to the apostle during the mass, and that the people received the communion from his open hand, which, however, closed on the approach of a misbeliever.

"Another account of this communion-scene is to be found in the *Itinerary* of John of Hesse, who appears to have travelled in the fifteenth century, but who places the relics in the city of Hulna, four days of Edessa. Ulna is also the name given by Albericus to the episcopal city of John of India. The 'Itinerary' states that Prester John dwelt at Edessa. The body of St. Thomas was placed in the episcopal throne, and the communion is thus described:

*'Missa igitur finita Presbyter Joannes, archiepiscopi et ceteri praelati religiosi cum aliis hominibus devote genuculando, et humillime se inclinando accipiunt sacramentum de manu apostoli. Patriarcha vero ministrat seu porrigit apostolo sacramentum ad digitos qui dignis tribuit et retrahit indignis. Apostoli autem manus stat aliquantulum elevata et semiclausa, et ob reverentiam duo archiepiscopi apponunt manus suas ad brachium apostoli, non tamen regendo manus ejus. Corpus autem apostoli est integrum et illesum cum crinibus et barba vestimentisque suis quibus vivus utebatur. Est itaque pannis pretiosissimis coopertum. Etiam ad praedicatam ministracionem corporis domini serviunt alii archiepiscopi tenentes patenas sub manu apostoli.'*<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> See F. Haase, *Apostel und Evangelisten*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen, IX. Bd. 1 — 3 Heft, p. 219f.

<sup>75</sup> See H. Hosten, *St. Thomas and San Thome, Mylapore* (*Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, New Series, Vol. XIX, 1923, Calcutta*), p. 155ff.; see *Analecta Bollandiana*, Vol. 6, p. 403-404; see further, *TS Vol. II. No. 3*, p. 93, M. R. James refers to Malan, *Conflicts of the Apostles*, p. 44.

This reference is important so far as it suggests an early connection between the Christians in India and those in Egypt, where their customs and traditions were known. The author of this book does not tell us whence he derived his accounts of the Indian Christians. It is possible that "Those Indian priests who at the end of the seventh century came to Egypt, to beg the Coptic patriarch to send out a bishop to their fellow-countrymen, may have left behind some account of the state of Christianity in India".<sup>77</sup> A similar allusion to the contact between Indians and Egyptians is made by Vardan, whose story about Thomas' mission to India will be given in a footnote.<sup>78</sup>

### 8. Thomas in the "Passing of Mary"

Thomas also has an important role in the Apocryphal "Passing of Mary". What Tischendorf calls the Latin A form is attributed to Joseph of Arimathea. The text is printed from three late manuscripts, all Italian (dated 13th century). The most relevant passage is as follows:<sup>79</sup>

Then the most blessed Thomas was suddenly brought to the Mount of Olivet, and saw the most blessed body going up to heaven, and began to cry out and say: O holy mother, blessed mother, spotless mother, if I have now found grace because I see thee, make thy servant joyful through thy compassion, because thou art going to heaven. Then the girdle with which the apostles had encircled the most holy body was thrown down from heaven to the blessed Thomas. And taking it, and kissing it, and giving thanks to God, he came again into the Valley of Jehoshaphat. He found all the apostles and another great crowd there beating their breasts on account of the brightness which they had seen. And seeing and kissing each other, the blessed Peter said to him: Truly thou hast always been obdurate and unbelieving, because for thine unbelief it was not pleasing to God that thou shouldst be along with us at the burial of the mother of the Saviour. And he, beating his breast, said: I know and firmly believe that I have always been a bad and unbelieving man; therefore I ask pardon of all of you for my obduracy and unbelief. And they all prayed for him. Then the blessed Thomas said: Where have you laid her body? And they pointed out the sepulchre with their finger. And he said: The body which is called most holy is not there. Then the blessed Peter said to him: Already on another occasion thou wouldst not believe the resurrection of our Master and Lord at our word, unless thou went to touch Him with thy fingers, and see Him; now wilt thou believe us that the holy body is still there? Still he persists saying: It is not here. Then, as it were in a rage, they went to the sepulchre, which was a new one hollowed out in the rock, and took up the stone; but they did not find the body, not knowing what to say, because they had been convicted by the words of Thomas. Then the blessed Thomas told them how he was singing mass in India — he still had on his sacerdotal robes. He, not knowing the word of God, had been brought to the Mount of Olivet, and saw the most holy body of the blessed Mary going up into heaven, and prayed to her to give him a blessing. She

<sup>76</sup> Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries Attributed to Abû Şâliḥ, the Armenian*, p. 298 note 1.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* p. xvii. In the words of the author, he has here collected information which is not to be found in the work of any other writer (p. xviii). His book resembles a note-book which has not yet been put into order (p. xviii).

<sup>78</sup> Cinquante-deux jours après sa naissance Jesus se rendit en Egypte, dans la ville d'Hermopolis, et les divinités des Egyptiens furent renversées et détruites suivant la prophétie d'Isaie. On dit que deux lions, male et femelle, montèrent sur la porte, poussèrent un rugissement et tombèrent. Or, il y avait en ce moment en Egypte des ambassadeurs de l'Inde; Lorsqu'ils s'en retournèrent, ils racontèrent ce qui s'était passé, et, quand Thomas alla dans ce pays, les Indiens crurent facilement (M. Evariste Prud'homme, *Extraits du livre intitulé: Solutions de passages de l'Ecriture Sainte, écrites à la demande de Héthoum I, roi d'Arménie, par le verdapet Vardan; traduits de l'arménien vulgaire sur le texte original, Journal Asiatique, VI, ser. 9, 1867, p. 161*).

<sup>79</sup> *Anti-Nicene Christian Library, Vol. XVI, Apocryphal Gospels, Acts and Revelations*. This is Tischendorf's A text tr. by A. Walker. See James, *The Apocryphal N.T.*, p. 194 and pp. 216-218. He notes that there is no critical edition of the very numerous forms of this legend.

heard his prayer, and threw him her girdle which she had about her. And the apostles seeing the belt which they had put about her, glorifying God, all asked pardon on the blessed Thomas, on account of the benediction which the blessed Mary had given him, and because he had seen the most holy body going up into heaven. And the blessed Thomas gave them his benediction, and said: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

This narrative is in itself of course, very fabulous. It assumes that the journey of Thomas to India is well known. Thomas is the unbelieving Apostle, as in several other references to him. The great irony of the author, which shows itself in the way he ends this story, allowing all the apostles to apologise to the blessed Thomas and allowing him to bless them, is surprising. A consummation to all this the verse from Scripture is added which has no connection whatever with the rest of the narrative apart from turning it into a bitter travesty of the apostolic unity.

### 9. Thomas and the episode in the garden concerning the High Priest's slave

Stephanus Gobarus in Photius' Bibliotheca, codex CCXXXII (PG CIII/3/, 1101 A-B) deals with the different and even contradictory standpoints to be found on orthodox writers<sup>80</sup> — e. g. "That our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified 'when he was 30 years

<sup>80</sup> G. Bardy points out that Stephanus Gobarus seems anxious to accentuate the contrary opinions of orthodox teachers rather than support his arguments by showing unanimity amongst orthodox writers. Is he trying to further some heretical teaching by this method? Everything about this work is shrouded in mystery, even the person of the author. Historians hesitate between Syria and Egypt as the country of his origin. As the latest author quoted by him is Severus of Antioch he most probably lived in the 6th century, not later.

Photius, contrary to his rule, does not supply the title of the work but some ancient glosses on Saint Basil give the title as *Theognōsta*. Bardy discusses the growth of a body of authoritative writings and the habit of turning to ancient sources for a string of quotations with which to bolster one's thesis. Many writers, far from being original, were content to assume the role of compiler.

The work of Stephanus Gobarus is peculiar in having no definite conclusion. The author contents himself with presenting conflicting opinions, two irreconcilable solutions both based on acknowledged authorities. Occasionally the compiler finds himself obliged to help his quotations along a little in the right direction. Photius gives clear expression to this point — "The conflicting opinions are not based on reasoning or on words of scripture but solely on extracts from different Fathers: Of these, some confirm orthodox doctrine, others heretical. But the evidence from ancient sources, even when it comes from authors, who have not pursued their research with the greatest possible accuracy, does not always express the heretical teaching which the compiler thinks he finds there. As for the orthodox doctrine, it is supported by the evidence of those amongst the saints who sought the truth with utmost care."

Bardy finishes by saying that Photius, whilst praising the knowledge and effort shown in the compilation nevertheless does not rate it very highly. Perhaps he does not go far enough in this direction, failing to indicate clearly the apparent aim of Stephanus Gobarus which was to attack orthodoxy. Ever since the time of Photius tritheism had ceased to be a danger and so the collection could be viewed in a different light. Today we can only regret the loss of this work and our attempt to restore this compilation to its original form has only served to make us more sensible of our misfortune. *Les Florilège d'Etienne Gobar*, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 5, 1947, p. 5-30.

It is interesting to notice that Stephanus Gobarus quotes the logion known to us from the Gospel of Thomas and from other ancient sources. Codex 232, I, 13: "The good things (*ta agatha*) prepared for the just (*tois dikaios*), eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man — Hegesippus, however, an ancient and apostolic man (?), says in the fifth book of his *Hypomnemata* / I do not know how he arrived at this / that this is an idle saying, and that those who say it speak falsely, since the Scriptures and the Lord say "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear" etc. (Harnack's translation). Hence we see that some Fathers looked upon this logion as an heretical saying in spite of its occurrence in Paul (I Cor. 2,9). Stephanus Gobarus's aim seems to have been to ridicule the tradition. The saying differs in its form from that found in the Gospel of Thomas. The first part of it has a

old', and 'not 30 but 33 years of age', and 'not in the 33rd but 40th year of his life', and 'not in the 40th, but not far from being 50 years of age'<sup>81</sup> — "'That at that time the Lord gave his disciples the mystery of the New Testament and ate the Passover according to the law', and that 'he did not eat the lawful Passover at that timw'<sup>82</sup> — "'That 'the brazen serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness was a type of the Lord', and 'that it was not a type, but an anti-type.'<sup>83</sup> And the follows the surprising statement "'That the one who struck off the slave of the Hugh Priest's ear was Thomas", and again "'that it was not Thomas but Peter". We can place this writing of Stephanus Gobarus in the 6th century. But the question becomes even more fascinating when we read what Photius has written about Stephanus Gobarus. In the beginning of the Codex, Photius says that Gobarus has collected twofold and contradictory opinions. This book seems to have given Gobarus much trouble, but the gain according to Photius is not equal to the great effort. It is clear that one man of great erudition criticizes the other. Likewise it is clear that Gobarus was widely read, both in the writings of antiquity<sup>84</sup> and in his contemporary literature and it remains a matter of conjecture where he derived this tradition associating Thomas with Malchus. Harnack says: "So far as I know, the tradition that it was Thomas who struck off Malchus's ear is not found elsewhere. The statement perhaps stood as a gloss in a synoptic gospel (John alone mentions Peter); and presumably in Greater Syria, for in this patriarchate Thomas played the chief rôle."<sup>85</sup> It is unlikely that

Jewish-Christian ring.

<sup>81</sup> In favour of thirty years we can quote those authors attacked by Irenaeus, *Advers. Haeres.* II, 11; PG VII, 781 D; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromat.* I, xxi; PG VIII, 884; Origen, *In Matth.*, *Comment. ser.* 78; PG XIII, 1727; in Lucam, *homil.* 32, PG XIII, 1883. In favour of thirty three or thirty four years Hippolytus, *In Daniel.* 4; PG X, 640; Origen, *In Matth.*, *Comm. ser.* 40; PG XIII, 1656; Eusebius, *Chronicon*, *ad. ann.* 33; Epiphanius, *Haeres.* I, I, 20; II, I, 51; PG XLI, 273 et 930; in favour of forty years John Chrysostom, *In Ioan. homil.* LV (LVI); PG LIX, 304; and in favour of fifty years Irenaeus, *Advers. Haeres.* II, 22; PG VII, 781 (G. Bardy in *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 5, 1947, p. 18).

<sup>82</sup> The interpretation according to which the Saviour did not eat the paschal lamb with his disciples, is that of Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus and Apollinarius of Hierapolis of *Chronicon Paschale* PG XCII, 08 — 01 (Bardy *op. cit.* p. 18). Harnack says: "Gobarus seems to agree in many cases with Johannes Philoponus who tried to prove, for instance, on the basis of St. John's Gospel that the mystical supper was not the passover supper, but that it took place on the 13th day of the month and that Jesus was crucified on the 14th", *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. XVI No. 3, p. 218.

<sup>83</sup> Compare, first of all, Cyril of Alexandria PG LXIX, 641. Further compare G. John 3,14; Sap. Salom. 15,6; 16,7; Philon, *Leg. allegor.* II, 76f.; *De agrult.* 95; Barnabas, *Epist.* XII, 5-7; Justin, *Dialog.* XCI, XCIV: I *Apol.*, LX; Cyril of Alexandria, *In Ioan. ad loc.*, PG LXXIII, 252. (Bardy, *op. cit.* p. 18). J. Daniélou discusses the brazen serpent as a type of Christ lifted up on the Cross: "This type will be found over and over again as a symbol of Christ crucified. Tertullian for instance says: 'Why was it that when all images had been forbidden Moses should provide as an object of salvation this brazen serpent lifted up like a man on a cross. Surely it was because he saw in it the power of the Lord's cross which revealed the Devil as a mere serpent to all those who had been bitten by spiritual serpents, and at the very same time proclaimed the cure of these wounds of salvation to all those who looked upon it.'" (*Adv. Marc.* III, 18; 37). From *Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* (London 1959), p. 167. Daniélou refers to the passages in the early writings in which Moses typifies Christ by the outstretching of his arms (p. 168f.).

<sup>84</sup> The only pre-Constantian fathers quoted by Gobarus are: Hegeppus, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Alexander of Jerusalem, Hippolytus, and Dionysus of Alexandria.

<sup>85</sup> The "Sic et Non" of Stephanus Gobarus, *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. XVI No. 3 (1923), p. 229.



Harnack supposed this gloss to embody any historical fact. Such a gloss or the source it reflects may go back to early times for we know at least that the tradition that Jesus was crucified round about the 50th year, was spread among the Presbyters of Asia Minor. Papias has preserved their opinions and Irenaeus has taken them over from him.<sup>86</sup> From Irenaeus' words "a quadagesimo autem et quinquagesimo anno declinat iam in aetatem senioem, qua habens dominus noster docebat" one could have formed both opinions mentioned by Gobarus — Jesus was crucified when He was about 40 or on the other hand in His 50th year.

### 10. A reference to Thomas found in a Synoptic-like quotation

In a Pseudo-Cyprianic writing edited by Reitzenstein "Eine frühchristliche Schrift von den dreierlei Früchten des christlichen Lebens (ZNW 1914, p. 86, line 328) we read: "When Thomas was pestered with the law of Moses by the Jews, and put the question (to the Lord), the Lord said thus to those, who denied future resurrection: (there follow Lk. 20,34ff.)." Here Prof. Masing (Tartu) has drawn my attention to two things. First, Thomas' presence would seem quite superfluous but at least this Synoptic-like quotation follows the primitive method of transmission which stated before each logion or speech, where this was said and to whom. This form of transmission corresponds exactly with the usual Oriental style of presentation. Secondly, Reitzenstein's text, which is very old and can be dated in the time of Trajan, must be Judaeo-Christian rather than Gnostic, as Gnostic would hardly put so much emphasis on the Decalogue. We discover in this text some very strange terms, for example "maxima conversatio" (p. 79, line 141) as a euphemistic title for God. This term must have resulted from a misunderstanding of the LXX or some other Greek translation.<sup>87</sup> The title "unitatis magister" (p. 75, line 22, applied to Christ, who says words similar to Mt. 10,37; G. Th. 55) is even more peculiar. It could be Moreh Hayyahad in Hebrew and the Qumran community apparently called itself Yahad. But it is even more probable that this "unitatis magister" means Moreh Hayyahad, a term found in Dam. B 20, 1.14 (which Riessler translates "der einzige Lehrer", Burrows "the unique teacher", Meyer "Lehrer des Einzigen", but G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* in English, 1976, p. 106f. reads in B II "the Teacher of the Community" too). It follows from these investigations that the original of Reitzenstein's text was written by an Essene convert (maybe in Antioch?) who had not forgotten the terms current in the community from which he came. Some might be tempted to think that Thomas was only important to

<sup>86</sup> Harnack has taken *aetas senior* to mean literally 'old age' and he supposes that Irenaeus is trying to minimize this testimony (Chronol. I, 335 Note): "The Presbyters of Asia Minor had witnessed that Jesus had arrived at old age, as a tradition received from John: Irenaeus believes, on the ground of the Gospel of John, that He arrived at an age of 40-50 years, and seeks to harmonize the two traditions." J. Chapman thinks that Irenaeus is not minimizing the witness of the Presbyters, but strains it to the uttermost. JTS Vol. IX, p. 55, note 2. He holds that Irenaeus has misinterpreted Papias (ibid. pp. 42-61, Papias on the Age of our Lord).

<sup>87</sup> In Gobarus' text we read that the trees of the Paradise are endowed with mind and have intelligence and logos (*kai synesin echousi kai logon*), Migne PG CIII, col. 1096 A. A Roman who did not know Greek well could translate such terms as *synesis kai logos* into "conversatio + sermo (verbum)". From this the origin of the term "conversatio" is more understandable. Compare also the Od. Sol. 11,4, Papyrus Bodmer X-XII, ed. Testuz, p. 60.

Gnostics but here we have a valuable indication that it was in fact quite otherwise and that in some Judaeo-Christian circles he was recognized from the beginning as the leading figure among the disciples. In line 328 we can by no means assume that the writer here intends to discredit Thomas or present him as an unbeliever.<sup>88</sup>

We have discussed some of the chief references to Thomas in Christian literature and it can be clearly seen in what high esteem Thomas was held by the early Christians in the East. The same can be said of Indian Christians who considered Thomas to be the chief amongst the Twelve.

#### APPENDIX I

We have stated at the beginning of this study that we do not attempt to draw a clear line of demarcation between legend and history. However, the tradition of Thomas as a twin-brother of Christ seems to be very ancient.

<sup>88</sup> It has to be noted what the scholars have thought of this text. R. Reitzenstein says: "Dem Einwand, ein altes Thomas-Evangelium habe nur die Kindheit erwähnen können, weil das uns bekannte junge Stück, dem man seltsamerweise auch das Fragment in des Nassenerpredigt hinzufügt, nicht weiter reicht, hatte ich freilich bei White nicht mehr zu begegnen erwartet. Dass Thomas tatsächlich in einem alten und ganz den Synoptikern entsprechenden Evangelium stark hervorgetreten ist, wissen wir doch durch die mit Justin übereinstimmende Evangelienzitate in dem alten Teil der Schrift von den dreierlei Früchten des christlichen Lebens ZNW 1914, 60ff" (*Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* 183, Jahrgang 1921, pp. 165-174). No attention has been paid to this criticism of White's thesis. Moreover the fact that in a Synoptic-like Gospel, Thomas appears to be prominent, has been simply ignored. Scholars have not paid any attention either to Timotheus of Constantinople (*De recept. haeret.*, PG LXXXVI (1), 21) who makes a clear distinction between the Infancy Gospels and the Gospel of Thomas. Timotheus mentions the G. Th. in the 9th place and in the 13th place the Infancy Gospels.

M. Heer says: "Neben den apokryphen und den sicher kanonischen Zitaten steht eine Gruppe freier Evangelienzitate, die sich im Wortlaut ziemlich von allen kanonischen Evangelien entfernen. Inhaltlich decken sie sich zwar der Hauptsache nach mit den Synoptikern, doch auch hierin nicht vollständig. So ist Paragraph 40 2.328 in der Scene mit den Sadduacern im Gegensatz zu den drei Synoptikern Thomas als derjenige eingeführt, der die Streitfrage wegen der Ehe der Auferstandenen vor den Herrn bringt. Solche Züge können nur aus der ausserkanonischen Überlieferung stammen, und es stellt sich das Problem, ob diese Stellen nur freie Zitaten aus den Synoptikern mit Einflechtung solcher apokrypher Züge sind, oder ob sie mehr oder weniger wortgetreu aus einer ausserkanonischen Evangelienhandschrift stammen, und in welchem Verhältnis dieses fragliche Evangelium zu den kanonischen stand" (Ps.-Cyprian vom Lohn der Frommen und das Evangelium Justins, *Römische Quartalschrift* 28, 1914, pp. 151-152). Heer finds that "Die Stelle ist für die Frage nach dem Verhältnis der neuen Schrift zu Justin die ausschlaggebendste, weshalb sie oben (S. 154f.) schon eingehend besprochen wurde. Sie erweitert das Bild, das man sich nach der führenden Perikope (Beilage I) von der fraglichen Evangelienhandschrift machen muss, durch den apokryphen Zug (21), den Thomas, den die drei Synoptiker in diesem Zusammenhang nicht erwähnen, einzuführen. In Übrigen ist alles durch die Synoptiker gedeckt. Der Text geht so durchaus mit Lukas, dass er, abgesehen von der Erwähnung des Thomas, als verkürzte Wiedergabe des lukanischen Berichtes verstanden werden kann. Nur gegen Ende erscheint die lukanische Logik (Z. 19 gar) nach Mt. Mk. geändert (alla), dass das Verbum gegen die Synoptiker bei Justin und dem Lateiner im Futurum steht (erunt), ist sachlich richtiger und deshalb sekundär erkennbar" (*ibid.* p. 177). For Heer the question is simple. As Thomas does not occur in the Synoptic Gospels, it follows that we meet here only an apocryphal tendency. But one has to account for the mention of Thomas in a text which agrees fully with the Synoptics. Now we have to speak about an apocryphal text, in which there is nothing apocryphal! Finally, the question, which form of this saying is "sachlich richtiger" is not easily to be answered. We meet here the problem of "future" and of "realized" eschatology. A passage in the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* of Clement of Alexandria is worth quoting here: "The woman is said to be changed into man, and the Church here on earth into angels" (*Studies and Documents* edited by K. Lake and S. Lake, 1934, p. 57 Exc. 21). It is possible that the Greek original of Reitzenstein's text agreed at this point with the Synoptics.

R. Harris,<sup>89</sup> S. A. Cook<sup>90</sup> and others never tire of connecting the twin-cult at the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus with the gods Mitra and Varuna worshipped by the Aryans who had been at Commagene circa 1400 B.C. This hypothesis is nothing but a preposterous pan-aryan exaggeration. One could just as easily explain certain customs in Eastern Persia by referring back to the Greek influence at some time in the past or look for traces of Phoenician rites dating from circa 1500 B.C. in Cornwall. Scholars forget that Adiabene was almost certainly Jewish, 10-20 per cent of the inhabitants of Commagene being Jews, and their influence can be detected wherever they settled in relatively large numbers. It must be remembered that both Phoenicians and Syrians had a weakness for having things in pairs (Atargatis, Jarhibol, Aglobol etc.). To think of gods in pairs does not seem to be only an Indo-Germanic trait (the heroes in most popular native American stories in North America are twins).<sup>91</sup>

If we follow the usual method of argumentation the it would be concluded that Christianity is nothing but a Judaized and historicized version of some Syrian cult but of Aryan origin.

It would be more reasonable to suppose that those cults came under Judaizing influences (this Judaism need not have been Talmudic Judaism). It is hardly possible therefore that somewhere in Syria Thomas would have been made into the human twin of the heavenly Jesus. Why indeed should Thomas have been chosen to take this role (for the Gospels do not present him as Jesus' brother) rather than James?

If it is really a question of fabrication then this must have been taken place in Galilee or Transjordan. As the two sons of Zebedee and Peter and Andrew are also brothers, how did they escape having features of the twin-cult transferred to them? It is probable that in Syria a hero-god had to be a twin and so the first suitable candidate was taken.

Can we say that other religions in Syria underwent similar changes? Were Moses and Aaron presented as twins? Apparently not.

Two Jewish wars spread outside Palestine itself and therefore the decline of Jewish influence and the rise of Christian influence can be dated after these wars c. 135. The fact that Herod Agrippa and no one else convened a conference of kings shows who had the initiative before the first Jewish war.

Next we must turn to H. Leisegang's article "Der Bruder des Erlösers"<sup>92</sup> in which this learned author detects the same idea of an elder and younger son of God in the Hymn of the Soul, Pistis Sophia, the System of Basilides, the writings of Philo and in Platonic thought. It must be noted however that the Christology of the Thomas literature differs radically from Gnostic, Platonic or Philonic speculations where the kosmos is identical with the younger son of God and not, as in the Thomas literature, synonymous with evil

<sup>89</sup> On the name "Son of God" in Northern Syria, ZNW 15 (1914), pp. 98-113.

<sup>90</sup> The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the light of Archaeology (Schweich Lectures 1925), London 1930, pp. 170, 222ff.

<sup>91</sup> See the excellent study by J. Gonda, The Dual Deities in the Religion of the Veda (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel 81, Amsterdam 1974), p. 33ff.

<sup>92</sup> ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Archiv für neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte und Kulturkunde Herausgegeben von J. Leipoldt, 1925, I Bd., pp. 24-33.

and death. Leisegang says: "In Jesus, first and foremost the kosmos as *kosmos aisthētos* and God's younger son is crucified. What there is of spirit in him, ascends to his elder brother and is united with him. Now the process of redemption must continue. The elder brother, the *kosmos noētos*, the "Holy Ghost" as it is called in Pistis Sophia, must now come and continue Jesus' work and mankind awaits this coming of the Holy Ghost after Jesus' death."<sup>93</sup> Such cosmic speculations on Christ are completely out of tune with the Jesus presented in the Thomas literature.

A. Marmorstein in referring to the article by Leisegang,<sup>94</sup> draws our attention to a Rabbinic sermon which is probably older than the Pistis Sophia. Both, however, expound Ps. 85,11f. and the author of the Midrash also sees in this text a reference to two brothers (Aaron and Moses) as the saviours of Israel. Marmorstein shows that the story in Pistis Sophia may have been based therefore on Jewish ideas and so it would seem probable that the Gnostics took over these two Saviour-brothers from Jewish speculations.

When we turn to the Hymn of the Soul, it is hard to explain the presence of "the second in rank", the elder brother but this may be due to the influence of the purely Jewish idea of two Messiahs, two Saviours. With regard to this, Kuhn's article "The two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel"<sup>95</sup> offers some interesting suggestions and the Targum of the Song of Songs where two Saviours are mentioned provides additional evidence in support of the prevalence of this idea.<sup>96</sup>

If it is thought that the Hymn of the Soul dealt originally with Jesus only then the elder brother would be a later insertion, prompted by the feeling which some Christians may have had, that Jesus was here portrayed as being far too human, e.g. he eats the food of the Egyptians and forgets his divine origin. As a result of this revision the King's son came to mean the soul and the "second in rank"<sup>97</sup>, Jesus.

What is more there is no sign of the unbiblical doctrine of the two saviours in the rest of the Thomas literature. The Od. Sol. state explicitly that "the Messiah is truly one"<sup>98</sup>, and in the A.Th. ch. 66 we read: "But I leave unto you Xenophon the deacon in my stead;

<sup>93</sup> Op. cit. p. 32f.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 155 Ein Wort über den Bruder des Erlösers in der Pistis Sophia.

<sup>95</sup> K. Stendahl, *Scrolls and the N.T.*, p. 54ff.

<sup>96</sup> Targum to the Song of Songs II,12 "And there appeared Moses and Aaron, likened unto the palm-branches, who began to work miracles in the land of Egypt" (Translations from Hebrew and Aramaic... The Targum to the 'Song of Songs' tr. by H. Gollancz, London 1908, p. 35f.). Ch. IV v. 5 — Thy two breasts are like two fawns, that are twins of a roe, which feed among the lilies.

Thy two deliverers, who in time to come shall deliver thee, Messiah, son of David, and Messiah, son of Ephraim, may be compared to Moses and Aaron, sons of Jochabed, resembling two young roes, or twins of a gazelle (Ibid. p. 50). Ch. VII v. 4 — Thy two breasts are like two fawns, that are twins of a roe.

Thy two redeemers that shall in time to come redeem thee, Messiah, son of David, and Messiah, son of Ephraim, are like Moses and Aaron, sons of Jochabed, resembling two fawns, twins of a roe. (Ibid. p. 75).

<sup>97</sup> For a different view, see G. Widengren, *Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung in partischer Zeit* (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, Geisteswissenschaften, Heft 70, Köln und Opladen 1960), p. 27f.

<sup>98</sup> Ode 41,16. R. Harris refers to Ign. ad Magn. 7 *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, Cambridge 1909, p. 136.

for he also like myself proclaimeth Jesus: for neither am I aught, nor he, but Jesus only.”

In our opinion the twin-tradition cannot be based simply on the heavenly twin cult (Harris) or on Gnostic thought but must be very primitive. We do not subscribe to the view that Thomas was really Jesus' twin-brother, a view which could hardly be aligned with the accepted tradition as formulated in our Creeds (the virgin birth etc.) but there is nothing "heretical" or unbiblical in the supposition that Jesus' brother Judas was so like our Lord that he acquired the popular designation the twin.

R. Harris translates the West Saxon versions of the Gospels in John 20,24; 21,1 and a sentence in the Old English Martyrology into modern English as follows:

Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didimus, that is to say likest /simillimus/ in our language.

Thomas, who is called likest /simillimus/.

He was in Greek named Didimus, and in Latin geminus, that is twin in our language, he was so called because he was like our Saviour.

Harris remarks: "These Anglo-Saxon passages are evidently reproduced from Latin explanations that Thomas was Christ's twin, and was *simillimus salvatori*... These Latin glosses must be early and may involve a knowledge of the *Acta Thomae*. Perhaps the Latin Gospel from which the Anglo-Saxon was made was already glossed with *Thomas didimus Christi, simillimus salvatori*" (The Twelve Apostles, 1927, p. 56f.).

#### APPENDIX II: The Heavenly Palace in the Acts of Thomas

The story about the building of the heavenly palace (in the Second Act) has several parallels. These are to be found in Dhammapadam 25.236.238 where we hear about the island of refuge which a man prepares for himself; in the sixth parable of Barlaam and Joasaphat (Arabic text); *Fākihātu l-hulafā'* by Ibn 'Arabšāh and from this into Syriac by Lidzbarski, *Geschichten und Lieder* (Weimar 1896, p. 149); also in the Mandaean *Sidra d-Jahja* (Lidzbarski 171 and 179): "Wehe dem Baumeister, der vor sich keinen Bau errichtet hat... Er hat keinen Bau vor sich aufgeführt, auf den, wenn er dahingeht, sich stützen könnte". Ahrens believes that Qur'ān sūra 29,58 "Stockwerke im Garten" and 25,11 "Burgen" has been influenced by this same motif (*ZDMG* 84, p. 56). In Europe we find it in *Gesta Romanorum* (ed. Oesterley 74.224, p. 745a). The most striking parallel, however, appears in C. H. Bompas, *Folklore of the Santal Parganas* (London 1909, p. 241f.) where the story runs as follows:

Once upon a time there was a Raja, who had many water reservoirs and tanks, and round the edges he planted trees, mangoes, pipals, palms and banyans; and the banyan trees were bigger than any. Every day after bathing the Raja used to walk about and look at his trees, and one morning, as he did so, he saw a maiden go up to a banyan tree and climb it, and the tree was then carried up to the sky, but when he went in the evening he saw the tree in its place again; the same thing happened three or four days running. The Raja told no one, but one morning he climbed the banyan tree before the maiden appeared, and when she came, he was carried up to the sky along with the tree. Then he saw the maiden descend and go and dance with a crowd of Gupinis (Divine milk maids) and the Raja also got down and joined in the dance.

He was so absorbed in the dance that he took no note of time, so when at last he tore him away, he found that the banyan tree had disappeared. There was nothing to be done, but stay where he was; so he began to wander about and soon he came to some men building a palace as hard as they could. He asked them for whom the palace was being built, and they named his own name. He asked why it was being built for him, and they said that Thakur intended to bring him these, because he was a good ruler, who did not oppress his subjects and gave alms to the poor and to widows and orphans.



There was no difference between night and day up in the sky, but when the Raja came back, he found that the banyan tree was there, and he climbed up it and was carried back to earth by it. Then he went home and told his people that he had been on a visit to a friend. After that the Raja used to visit the banyan tree every day, and when he found that it did not wither although it had been taken up by the roots, he concluded that what he had seen was true and he began to prepare for death. So he distributed all his wealth among his friends and among the poor; and when his officers remonstrated he made them no answer. A few days later he died, and was taken to the palace which he had seen being built.

It is said that what you give away in this world, you will get back in the next; there you will get good wages for what you have done in this life.

The beginning of this story has many parallels in Indian folktales (Stith Thompson – Balys F 54.1 and 66,1.1), but the second part<sup>99</sup> doesn't follow on naturally and smoothly from this and seems at first sight to have been taken from the A.Th. This kind of story could have formed part of the collections of sermon exempla but then we might suppose that the Santals got hold of this story at a very early date, most probably from missionaries. It would seem that the Santals had no contact with missions until much later, however, and two possibilities therefore present themselves — either the Santals gained cognizance of the story via the missionary efforts of the Thomas Christians or there is one ancient Indian story known to both the Santals and the author of the Acts.

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<sup>99</sup> Stith Thompson – Balys Q 172.4.