

# In this number

HEIKKI RÄISÄNEN

## The Vision of Jesus

How do eschatology and ethical wisdom traditions relate to each other in the proclamation of Jesus? In the wake of E. P. Sanders, this article argues that Jesus probably expected a dramatic turn of history in the near future. Much of the evidence hints at earthly expectation, focusing on the restoration of Israel. Even the ethical sayings can be plausibly interpreted in this framework. Since the turning point is imminent, one need not be concerned about the long-term consequences of Jesus' radical demands. The application of Jesus' message today requires reinterpretation on an eclectic basis.

ISMO DUNDERBERG

## The Gospel of Mary – Sequel to the Gospel of John?

It is argued in this article that the rhetorical situation described in the Gospel of Mary, a Christian dialogue gospel from the middle of the 2nd century, follows on from the image of the disciples' future anxiety in the Johannine farewell discourse. This provides the narrative framework in the Gospel of Mary for discussing how fear, preventing the soul's ascent, can be overcome. It need not be assumed that the author of the Gospel of Mary deliberately imitated the Gospel of John; the similarities could just as well be based on loose reminiscences of details ultimately going back to John.

SUSANNA ASIKAINEN

## Marriage in Plutarch and the New Testament

The article discusses views of marriage expressed by Plutarch on the one hand and in the New Testament on the other; there are both similarities and differences. Plutarch's view of marriage, presented in his *Advice to the Bride and Groom* and *Dialogue on Love*, is unequivocally positive, whereas the New Testament has several opinions ranging from positive to negative. Advice for the choice of a spouse given by Plutarch is similar to that given in ancient Graeco-Roman treatises in general. Early Christian writers require only that the spouse is Christian. Both emphasise mutual faithfulness. However, Plutarch is not as strict as the New Testament. Both Plutarch and the New Testament writers have a negative attitude towards divorce.

MINNA HEIMOLA

## “The Virgin Whom None of the Powers Defiled”: The Mother of Jesus in the Gospel of Philip

This article analyses how the early Christian debates concerning virgin conception are apparent in the Gospel of Philip. Concerning Mary giving birth to Jesus, the Gospel of Philip flatly states that the Holy Spirit, being female, could not have impregnated Mary (Gos. Phil. 17). The text further asserts that Jesus had an earthly father since he refers to God as “his heavenly father”. Thus, the idea of virgin conception is interpreted symbolically, and

Mary is still referred to as “the virgin”, which may refer to her spiritual status (elsewhere in the Gospel of Philip, “the virgin” is one of the metaphors used of those who will enter the bridal chamber: Gos. Phil. 73).

PETRI LUOMANEN

### **James the Just in the *Gospel of the Hebrews***

James the Just is an interesting figure in early Christian literature. He was espoused by conservative Jewish-Christian writers as well as Gnostic and early Catholic writers. The present article shows the importance of the research at the Nag Hammadi library for the study of early Jewish Christianity and especially for the new reconstruction of early Jewish-Christian gospels. Jesus' appearance to his brother James the Just (Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 2) is analysed as an example of traditions traditionally attributed to the Gospel of the Hebrews. In line with the new reconstruction, the analysis shows that the Gospel of the Hebrews was not as 'Gnostic' as is usually assumed. The story about Jesus' appearance to James the Just was probably composed in the heat of the Quartodeciman dispute, in order to defend the 'Christian' timing of Passover/Easter celebrations and the practice of ending the Passover/Easter fast on the day of the Lord's resurrection.

KIRSI SIITONEN

### **Merchants and Commerce in the Book of Revelation**

The Book of Revelation contains several critical references to merchants and commerce, but the meaning of the economic imagery remains unclear concerning the whole of the book. Although the imagery is symbolic, it also deals with the social reality of the communities addressed in the text. The purpose of this article is to evaluate at whom John was aiming this criticism. The article focuses on four topics: the description of the merchants, the mark of the beast, Jezebel of Thyatira and the eating of the sacrificial meat. It is argued that John did not object to all trade but criticised

Christian merchants who engaged in the wholesale trade with Rome.

ULLA TERVAHAUTA

### **Ascent of the Soul in Early Christian Literature**

This article explores discussions on the soul's ascent in the Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V, 2), the First Apocalypse of James (NHC V, 3), Authoritative Teaching (NHC VI, 3), and the Gospel of Mary (BG). The earliest three of the discussed texts emphasise the therapy of emotions, whereas Authoritative Teaching puts more emphasis on the soul's way of life, as does later ascetic literature. Accounts of the soul's ascent could be understood as alternatives to the belief in the resurrection, but also as symbols of an ascetic way of life. The Graeco-Roman background and Jewish apocalyptic literature are taken into account as literary and cultural contexts, but the point is that several themes in the soul's ascent narratives survived in eastern ascetic literature.

PÄIVI VÄHÄKANGAS

### **Women, Conversion and the Judaeo-Christian Identity in Pseudo-Clementine Literature**

Pseudo-Clementine literature, unlike many other contemporary Syrian Christian writings, maintains a positive view of family life. The framework narrative is about the reunification of Clement's family and the conversion of each family member to Christianity. Two women stand out in the story: Clement's mother Mattidia, and Justa, the foster mother of Clement's brothers. They receive praise due to their chastity, which according to the Pseudo-Clementine literature is the primal virtue. In these novels, men and women seem to come to embrace the new faith for different reasons: men after being persuaded intellectually and women after witnessing a miracle. Yet one thing is common to the conversion of both men and women: most of the main characters in the Pseudo-Clementine writings have contacts with Judaism before becoming Christians.

IVAN MIROSHNIKOV

### **'In' or 'About'? Gospel of Thomas 52 and 'Hebraising' Greek**

The article reflects on the first part of saying 52 in the Gospel of Thomas. The disciples state that 24 prophets spoke 'in' Jesus. What does this mean? A number of scholars felt that the context of the saying suggests that the prophets spoke 'about' Jesus and thus translated the phrase as "all of them spoke of you". However, none of these scholars offered any explanation for such an interpretation. The author's suggestion is that the Coptic expression used in saying 52 renders **ἐν σοί** of the Greek *Vorlage*. The reasoning behind this is that the Coptic translator found in the Greek text the expression **λαλεῖν ἐν τινι**, where the preposition **ἐν** had the unusual meaning 'about', specific to the Greek translation; and, not understanding the meaning of this phrase, the Coptic translator rendered **ἐν** with its usual Coptic equivalent.

NANNA LIV ELKJÆR OLSEN

### **Thunder Perfect Mind – or How Nonsense Makes Sense**

The most characteristic feature of Thunder Perfect Mind (NHC VI,2) is its paradoxical style of antithetical affirmations. Because each proposition is followed by its counter-proposition, meaning is undone, and as a result the text seems completely nonsensical. This article argues that in spite of the heavy information overload, the primary way of conveying meaning in the text is not informative, but performative. Through examples it is illustrated how the text makes sense, i.e. how it produces sense in the implied reader by putting forth obstacles and perpetually disrupting, defying and destroying meaning.

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