

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



The Messianic Legacy

Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh &
Henry Lincoln

Contents

About the Book
About the Authors
Also by
Title Page
Dedication
List of Illustrations
Acknowledgments
Introduction
Maps

PART ONE THE MESSIAH

1. Scholarship and Public Understanding
2. Jesus as King of Israel
3. Constantine as Messiah
4. Jesus as Freedom-fighter
5. The Zadokite Movement of Qumran
6. The Formation of Christianity
7. The Brothers of Jesus
8. The Survival of Nazarean Teaching
9. The Last Days

PART TWO THE QUEST FOR MEANING

10. The Activation of Symbol
11. The Loss of Faith
12. Substitute Faiths: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany
13. The Post-War Crisis and Social Desperation
14. Trust and Power
15. The Artist as Priest, the King as Symbol
16. Towards an Embrace of Armageddon

PART THREE THE CABAL

17. Fragments in the Post
18. The British Connection

19. The Anonymous Tracts
20. The Elusive 'American Contingent'
21. The Vista Widens
22. Resistance, Chivalry and the United States of Europe
23. The Return of De Gaulle
24. Secret Powers behind Covert Groups

Picture Section

Epilogue

Bibliography

Notes and References

Index

Copyright

About the Book

After the shocking revelations of *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail* the authors, in their quest to determine the discrepancies between early and modern 'Christian' thought, found that they were forced to ask such questions as:

- Was there more than one Christ?
- Was Christ the founder of Christianity?
- Were the disciples as peace-loving as it is traditionally assumed?
- What links the Vatican, the CIA, the KGB, the Mafia, Freemasonry, P2, Opus Dei and the Knights Templar?
- What mysterious modern crusade implicates British Industry, Churchill and de Gaulle, the EEC and Solidarity?

The Messianic Legacy offers enthralling new investigations into the shadowy society of the 'Priore de Sion' - 'The Guardians of the Holy Grail' - as the authors discover the murky world of politics, finance, Freemasonry and religion that exists beneath the most solid and conservative seeming of European institutions. The ominous global conspiracy of disinformation they uncover ensures that *The Messianic Legacy* is an up-to-the-minute thriller and a work of biblical detection that is even more significant than *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*.

About the Authors

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Also available by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh

The Temple and the Lodge
The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception
Secret Germany: Claus von Staffenberg and the Mystical
Crusade against Hitler
The Elixir and the Stone
The Inquisition

Also by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln

The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail

By Michael Baigent

From the Omens of Babylon
Ancient Traces

by Henry Lincoln

The Holy Place
Key to the Sacred Pattern
The Templars' Sacred Island

The Messianic Legacy

Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh & Henry
Lincoln



arrow books

Dedication

Aborde la Nef ensablée
Et jeûne à ton clou subtil
Et à ton marteau lourd.
Console-toi. Du tombeau vide
Poussera un rejeton généreux.

Bientôt d'une âme heureuse
Le chant se lèvera.
Joue, Nymphaea
Joue, ta musique céleste.
Ta boudego bourdonne
Comme la voix de Verbe.
Sa chaleureuse mélodie nous attire.
Comme la Rose rose, Apophile
Et la Rose rouge, l'Abeille.
Jehan l'Ascuiz

Illustrations

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Plates

- [1](#) The Garden of Gethsemane, Jerusalem.
- [2](#) The archaeological evidence that Pontius Pilate existed: an inscription found at Caesarea in 1961.
- [3](#) Qumran: Cave 4, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.
- [4](#) The remains of the Qumran community buildings.
- [5](#) Qumran, with the ruins of the tower.
- [6](#) The Cathedral at Santiago de Compostela, north-west Spain.
- [7](#) Fourth- and fifth-century Christian burials at Santiago de Compostela.
- [8](#) Santa Maria de Bretona, north-west Spain.
- [9](#) Kidron Valley, Jerusalem.
- [10](#) Kilfenora Cross, Co. Clare.

- [11](#) Detail from an illustration of Anthony and Paul, Monastery of Anthony, Egypt.
- [12](#) Carving of St James, Santiago de Compostela.
- [13](#) Cross shaft at Tighlagheany, Inishmore.
- [14](#) Egyptian Church gravestones.
- [15](#) A page from the Celtic 'Book of Durrow'.
- [16](#) The North Cross at Ahenny, Co. Tipperary.
- [17](#) Illustration from the Egyptian Church 'Bohairic' Gospel.
- [18](#) Remains of the ancient stronghold of Megiddo.
- [19](#) The 'Cathedral of Light' at Nuremberg.
- [20](#) Poster of 1936 showing Hitler as Grail Knight.
- [21](#) The crypt beneath the north tower at the castle of Wewelsburg.
- [22-3](#) Projected constructions at Wewelsburg, 1941 and 1944.
- [24](#) *The Last Supper*, fresco by Leonardo da Vinci.
- [25](#) The temporary structure used to house Lenin's tomb in Red Square, Moscow, in 1924.
- [26](#) Lenin's tomb as it now stands, dating from 1930.
- [27](#) The grave of Jean Cocteau, Milly la Forêt, France.
- [28-9](#) The first issue of *Vaincre*, 1942.
- [30](#) Pierre Plantard de Saint-Clair, 1982.
- [31](#) Charter recording the donation in 1152 by King Louis VII of the Abbey of Saint Samson to the Order of Sion.
- [32](#) Official copy of the charter recording Pope Alexander III's confirmation of the Order of Sion's possessions abroad.
- [33](#) Rennes-le-Château, Aude, France.
- [34](#) The Sals valley, looking towards Rennes-les-Bains.
- [35](#) Paved Roman road between Rennes-le-Château and Rennes-les-Bains.
- [36-37](#) Documents allegedly found by the Abbé Saunière in the Rennes-le-Château church in 1891.
- [38](#) Detail from the Arch of Titus, Rome, showing part of the treasure of the Temple of Jerusalem.

Maps and charts

- [1](#) Israel at the time of Jesus.
- [2](#) From the Hassidaeans to Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism.
- [3](#) The ancient Atbash alphabetical cipher.
- [4](#) The Celtic Church at its greatest extent.
- [5](#) Alleged site of the Battle of Armageddon: Megiddo.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1982, some twelve years of research into a small local mystery in the south of France culminated in the publication of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. Bérenger Saunière, an obscure Languedoc priest of the late nineteenth century, had metaphorically taken us by the hand and directed us to the stones we had to turn in order to discern the pattern underlying his story. He led us to a secret, or semi-secret, society, the Prieuré de Sion, which could be traced back nearly a thousand years, which included in its membership a number of illustrious figures and which remained active in France and possibly elsewhere to the present day. The avowed objective of the Prieuré de Sion was to restore to the throne of modern France the Merovingian bloodline — a bloodline which had vanished from the stage of history more than thirteen hundred years ago. This appeared to make no sense. What could possibly be so special about the Merovingian bloodline? Why should its restoration be of interest to men such as Leonardo da Vinci and Victor Hugo — and, more recently, to men such as André Malraux, Marshal Alphonse Juin and perhaps Charles de Gaulle?

A partial, but crucial, answer to this question emerged when we discovered that the Merovingians themselves claimed direct lineal descent from the Old Testament House of David — and that that claim was acknowledged to be valid by the dynasty which supplanted them, by other monarchs and by the Roman Church of the time. Gradually, the evidence assembled itself, as if with a momentum of its own. It led us into the sensitive territory of biblical scholarship. It prompted us to suggest a provocative

hypothesis — that Jesus had been a legitimate king of Israel, that he had been married and had sired children, that these children had perpetuated his bloodline until, some three and a half centuries later, it merged with the Merovingian dynasty of France.

Our conclusions, as they crystallised, were initially as startling to us as they subsequently proved to our readers. But for us, the import of what we were uncovering had become apparent only by degrees, seeping into our consciousness piecemeal over a period of years. For our readers, the same process of discovery was compressed into the confines of a single book, and its effect was therefore more sudden, more unexpected and more disturbing — or more exhilarating. It involved no slow, painstaking, week-by-week and month-by-month assembly of facts, correlation of data and shuffling of confused jig-saw pieces into a coherent picture. On the contrary, it occurred with the disorienting abruptness of a detonation. Given the sphere in which this detonation occurred, the results were perhaps inevitable. For many of our readers, the primary — if not, indeed the only — point of discussion in our book was ‘the Jesus material’.

Jesus projected our work on to front pages around the world and invested it with an element of ‘sensationalism’. So far as the media in particular were concerned, everything else we had written took second place, if it was assigned a place at all. The excitement we had felt when, for instance, we discovered a new dimension to the Crusades, a new fragment of information concerning the creation of the Knights Templar or new evidence about the source of the notorious Protocols of Sion, was not generally shared. All such discoveries were eclipsed by the shadow of Jesus and our hypothesis about him.

For us, however, our hypothesis about Jesus was by no means the only aspect of our research. Nor, ultimately, was it the most important one. Even while the media, and many

readers, were concentrating on our biblical conclusions, we could perceive the direction in which our subsequent investigations would have to move. Our attention would have to be focused upon the Prieuré de Sion today.

What was the Prieuré's true *raison d'être*? If restoration of the Merovingian bloodline was the ultimate end, what were the means to be? Individuals such as Malraux and Juin were neither naïve idealists nor religious fanatics. This applied equally to the members of the Order whom we had met personally. How, then, did they propose to implement their objectives? The answer, quite patently, seemed to lie in areas such as mass psychology, political power and high finance. We were dealing with people active in the 'real world', and it was in terms of the 'real world' of the 1980s that we had to make sense of their centuries-old history.

But what *was* the Prieuré doing today? What traces could be found of its contemporary activity, of its involvement in current affairs? Who constituted the Order's membership? How powerful were they? What kind of resources could they command? If our hypothesis proved valid, how might they seek to turn to account the claim of a lineal descent from the Merovingians, and/or Jesus, and/or the Old Testament House of David? And what, in the modern world, might be the social and political repercussions of such a claim?

It seemed clear that the Prieuré was working to some kind of 'grand design' or 'master plan' for the future of France, ultimately for the future of Europe as a whole, and perhaps even beyond. This, certainly, had been the implication attending the various hints, suggestions and fragments of information which had come our way. Nor could we forget the flat, categorical, matter-of-fact way in which the man subsequently to become the Prieuré's Grand Master told us that the Order actually possessed the lost treasure of the Temple of Jerusalem. It would be returned to Israel, he said, 'when the time is right'. What might constitute time's

‘rightness’? Only social and political factors, and perhaps a ‘psychological climate’.

It was obvious that our research into the modern Prieuré would entail investigation in several directions simultaneously. First, we would have to recapitulate our research in religious history and biblical material, retracing our footsteps, re-examining and if possible augmenting our work in those fields. Previously, we had sought evidence attesting to a sacred bloodline. This time, we would have to concentrate primarily on the concept of Jesus as Messiah. We had observed that, in the Prieuré’s own thinking, Messiahship seemed to enjoy a special relevance. It was impossible, for example, not to notice the insistence with which the Merovingian dynasty was repeatedly described in language usually reserved for Messianic figures. We would have to determine precisely what the idea of the ‘Messiah’ meant in Jesus’s time, how it had altered in the ensuing centuries and how the ancient and modern ideas might conceivably be reconciled.





Secondly, we would have to try to establish how the concept of Messiahship could be applied in practice today. At a most basic level, we would have to satisfy ourselves that the concept could be in any way relevant to the twentieth century. This would entail a survey of the spiritual and psychological climate which characterises the modern world. We would have to confront certain apparently clichéd aspects of contemporary Western society — the crisis of meaning and the quest for spiritual values.

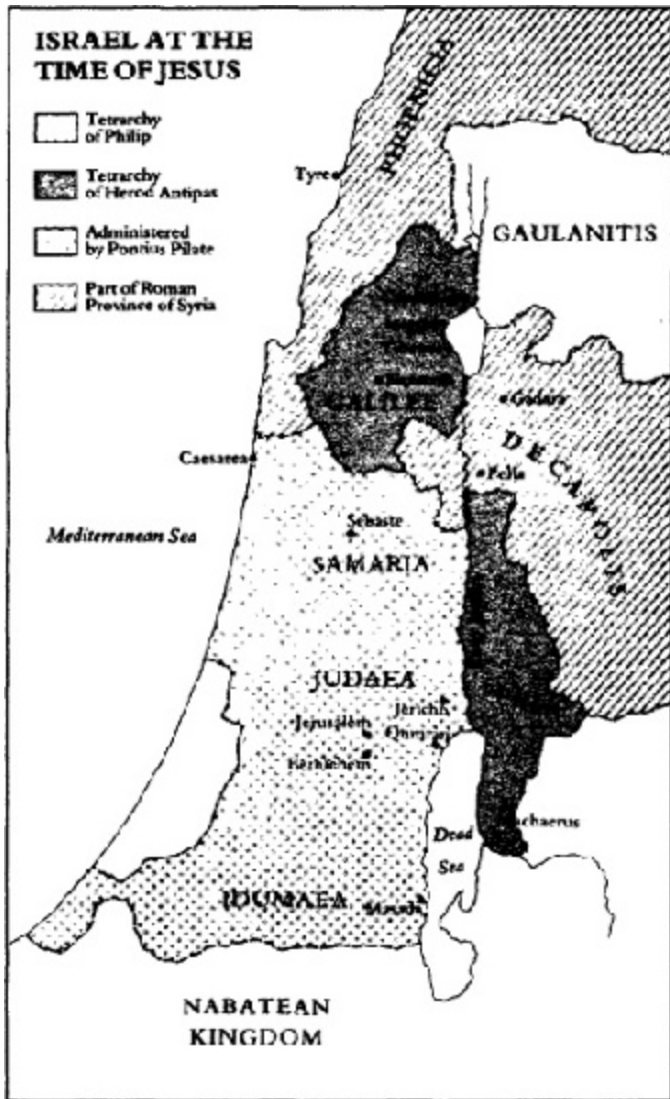
Finally, of course, we would be bound to pursue our own personal contacts with the Prieuré de Sion itself, with its Grand Master and with those members or associates whom we had identified or ourselves come to know. Here, it quickly became apparent, we would find ourselves amid quicksands of rapidly developing events, rapidly changing situations. We would have to determine some sort of truth behind bizarre claims and counter-claims. We would have to

test new documentary evidence, uncover forgeries, thread our way through a maze of deliberately disseminated 'disinformation' — 'disinformation' generated by the obscure machinations of shadowy figures.

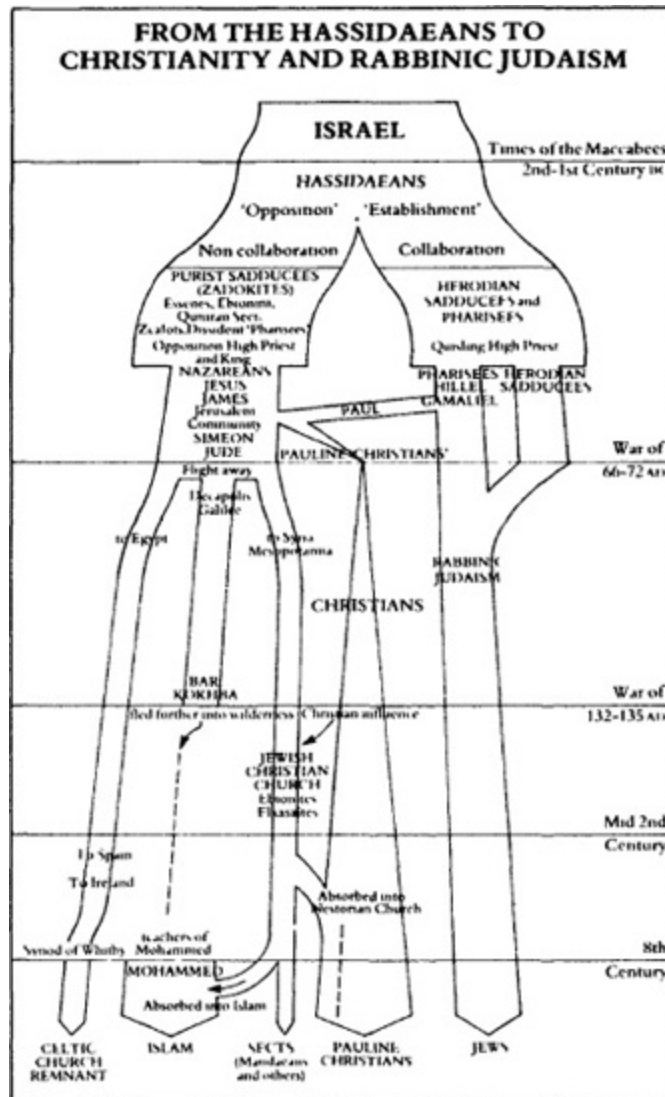
Gradually, we began to discern some extraordinary amalgams of possibility. We began to understand how an organisation such as the Prieuré de Sion might address itself to, and even capitalise upon, the current 'crisis of meaning'. And we learned that so apparently rarefied, ethereal and mystic a concept as 'Messiahship' could indeed figure in the practical world of twentieth-century society and politics.

ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF JESUS

-  Tetrarchy of Philip
-  Tetrarchy of Herod Antipas
-  Administered by Pontius Pilate
-  Part of Roman Province of Syria



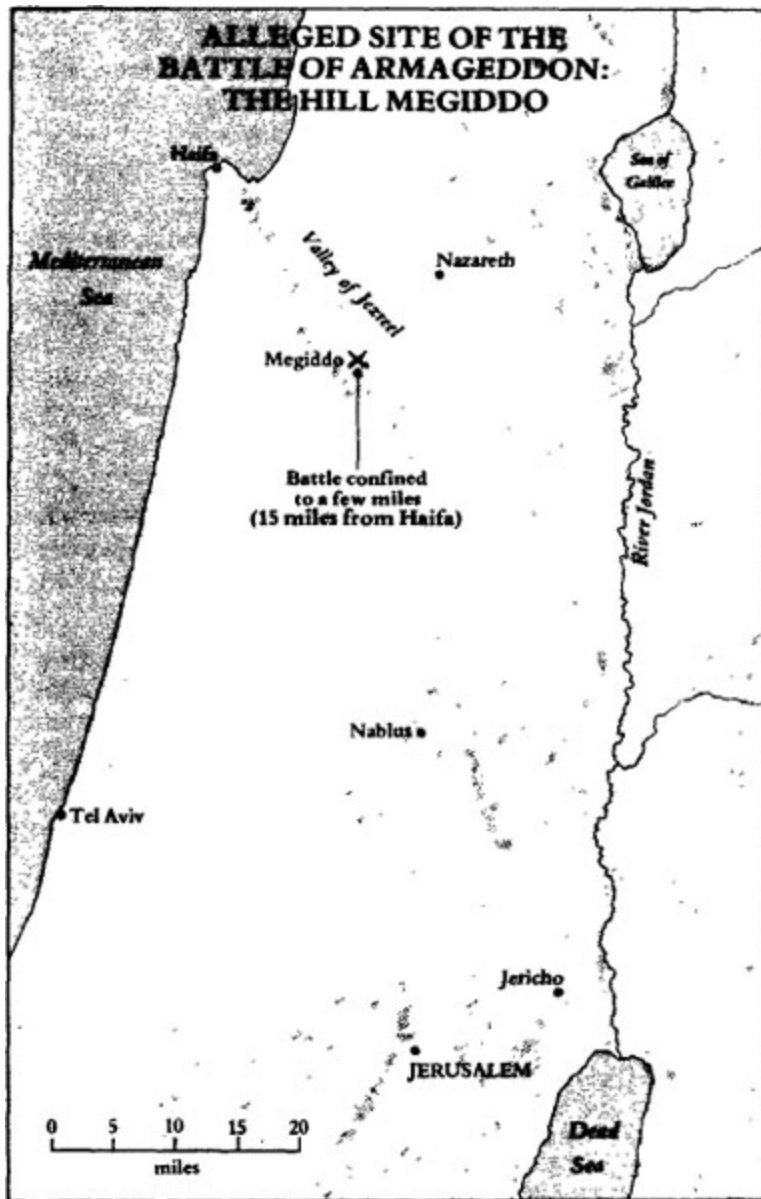
FROM THE HASSIDAEANS TO CHRISTIANITY AND RABBINIC JUDAISM



THE ANCIENT ATBASH
ALPHABETICAL CIPHER.

ז	=	ח
ח	=	ז
ט	=	ו
ו	=	ט
י	=	ה
ה	=	י
כ	=	ד
ד	=	כ
ל	=	א
א	=	ל
מ	=	ק





ONE

THE MESSIAH

1

SCHOLARSHIP AND PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING

. . . This fell into my hands by chance a little while ago. Until then I'd never had any intimation of what was being done nowadays in the field of biblical research, or of the attacks being launched by competent historians. It was a shock to me — and a revelation! . . . I learnt all sorts of facts that were entirely new to me. That the Gospels, for example, were written between the years 65 and 100. That means the Church was founded, and was able to carry on, without them. Think of it! More than sixty years after Christ's birth! It's as if someone today wanted to write down Napoleon's words and deeds without being able to consult a single written document, only vague memories and anecdotes.[1](#)

Apart from the reference to Napoleon, the above quotation, to judge from the letters and verbal declarations we received, might have expressed, almost verbatim, the reaction of a contemporary reader to *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* when it was published in 1982. In fact the words are from a novel, *Jean Barois* by Roger Martin du Gard, published in 1912, and in that novel they elicit the response:

. . . Before long all theologians of any intellectual standing will have reached these conclusions. In fact, they'll be amazed that nineteenth-century Catholics contrived to believe for so long in the literal truth of those poetic legends.[2](#)

Yet even before the time of this fictional dialogue, set in the 1870s, Jesus and the origins of Christianity had begun to emerge as a burgeoning industry for researchers, writers

and publishers. In the early sixteenth century, Pope Leo X is on record as declaring: 'It has served us well, this myth of Christ.' As early as the 1740s, scholars had deployed what we would now recognise as a valid historical methodology for questioning the veracity of scriptural accounts. Thus, between 1744 and 1767, Hermann Samuel Reimarus, a professor at Hamburg, had argued that Jesus was nothing more than a failed Judaic revolutionary whose body was removed from its tomb by his disciples. By the mid-nineteenth century, German biblical scholarship had truly come of age, and a dating of the Gospels had been established which — in its approach and in most of its conclusions — is still deemed valid. Today, no reputable historian or biblical scholar would deny that the earliest of the Gospels was composed at least a generation after the events it describes. The thrust of German research was eventually to culminate in a position summarised by Rudolf Bultmann of the University of Marburg, one of the most important, most famous and most esteemed of twentieth-century biblical commentators:

I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary.³

Yet Bultmann remained a devout Christian. He did so by insisting on a crucial distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. As long as this distinction was acknowledged, faith remained tenable. If the distinction were not acknowledged, faith would inevitably find itself eroded and embarrassed by the ineluctable facts of history.

This was the kind of conclusion to which nineteenth-century German biblical scholarship would eventually lead. At the same time, however, the bastion of traditional scriptural authority was also being challenged from other quarters. The controversial contentions of German research remained confined to a rarefied sphere of specialists: but in

1863 the French writer Ernest Renan caused a major international controversy with his celebrated best-seller *The Life of Jesus*. This work, which sought to strip Christianity of its supernatural trappings and present Jesus as 'an incomparable man', was perhaps the single most talked-about book of its age. Its impact on the public was enormous; and among the figures it most deeply influenced was Albert Schweitzer. Yet even Renan's treatment was to be regarded as saccharine and uncritically sentimental by the generation of Modernists who had begun to appear in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. And the majority of Modernists, it should be noted, were working within the framework of the Church — until, that is, they were officially condemned by Pope Pius X in 1907 and an anti-Modernist oath was introduced in 1910.

By this time, the findings of both German biblical scholarship and of the Roman Catholic Modernists had begun to find their way into the arts. Thus, in 1916, the Anglo-Irish novelist George Moore published his own fictionalised account of Jesus in *The Brook Kerith*. Moore caused considerable scandal by depicting Jesus as surviving the Crucifixion, and being nursed back to health by Joseph of Arimathea. In the years since *The Brook Kerith* was published, there have been numerous other fictionalised accounts of the Gospel story. In 1946, Robert Graves published his ambitious fictional portrait, *King Jesus*, in which Jesus again survives the Cross. And in 1954, Nikos Kazantzakis, the Nobel Prize-winning Greek author, caused an international rumpus with *The Last Temptation*. In contrast to the Jesus figures in Moore and Graves, Kazantzakis's protagonist does die on the Cross. Before he does so, however, he has a vision of what his life should and would have been had he not voluntarily submitted himself to his final sacrifice. In this vision — a kind of 'flash-forward' in fantasy — Jesus sees himself married to the Magdalene

(for whom he has lusted all through the book) and fathering a family upon her.

These examples illustrate the extent to which biblical scholarship opened up new territory for the arts. Two hundred years ago, a novel dealing with scriptural material would have been unthinkable. Even poetry would not address such matters except in the more or less orthodox, more or less devotional form of *Paradise Lost*. By the twentieth century, however, Jesus and his world had become 'fair game', not for luridly sensational purposes, but as valid points of enquiry and exploration for serious, internationally acclaimed literary figures. Through their work, the fruits of biblical scholarship were disseminated to an ever-widening audience.

Biblical scholarship itself did not stand still. Jesus and the world of the New Testament continued to be addressed by professional historians and researchers who, with increasing rigour and fresh evidence at their disposal, sought to establish the facts surrounding that enigmatic individual of two thousand years ago. Many of these works were intended primarily for other experts in the field and attracted little popular attention. A few, however, were pitched to the general reading public and engendered considerable controversy. *The Passover Plot* (1963) by Dr Hugh Schonfield argued that Jesus staged his own mock crucifixion and did not die on the cross; the book became an international best-seller, with more than three million copies now in print. More recently, controversy was provoked by *Jesus the Magician*, in which Dr Morton Smith depicts his protagonist as a typical wonder-worker of the age, a figure of a kind that thronged the Middle East at the beginning of the Christian era. The Jesus of Morton Smith is not significantly different from, say, Apollonius of Tyana, or the prototype (assuming one existed) of the legendary figure of Simon Magus.

In addition to material devoted specifically to Jesus, there have been innumerable works on the origins of Christianity,

the formation of the early Church and its roots in Old Testament Judaism. Here, Dr Schonfield has again played a prominent role with a series of works addressed to the background of the New Testament. And in 1979 Elaine Pagels attracted the world's attention, and an immense readership, with *The Gnostic Gospels* — a study of the Nag Hammadi Scrolls, discovered in Egypt in 1945, which offered a radical new interpretation of Christian teaching and tradition.

Biblical scholarship has made enormous advances during the last forty years, aided immensely by the discovery of new primary sources, material unavailable to researchers in the past. The most famous of these sources, of course, are the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947 in the ruins of the ascetic Essene community of Qumran. In addition to such major discoveries, many parts of which have not yet been published, other sources have gradually been coming to light or, after long suppression, are being circulated and studied.

As a result, Jesus is no longer a shadowy figure existing in the simplistic, fairy-tale world of the Gospels. Palestine at the advent of the Christian era is no longer a nebulous place belonging more to myth than to history. On the contrary, we now know a great deal about Jesus's milieu, and far more than most practising Christians realise about Palestine in the first century — its sociology, its economy, its politics, its cultural and religious character, its historical actuality. Much of Jesus's world has emerged from the haze of conjecture, speculation and mythic hyperbole, and is clearer and better documented than, say, the world of King Arthur. And although Jesus himself remains to a significant degree elusive, it is as possible to deduce plausible information about him as it is to deduce such information about Arthur, or Robin Hood.

The Failure of Biblical Scholarship

Despite all this, the hopeful prophecy which we quoted at the beginning of this book has not been fulfilled. Theologians of intellectual standing have not — at least, not publicly — come to share those conclusions, nor to be amazed at the credulity of their nineteenth-century predecessors. In certain quarters, dogma is, if anything, more entrenched than ever. Despite the current problem of over-population, the Vatican can still impose its strictures on birth control and abortion — not on social or moral grounds, but on theological. A fire, caused by a bolt of lightning at York Minster, can still be regarded as evidence of divine wrath at the appointment of a contentious bishop. This bishop's ambiguous statements on aspects of Jesus's biography can still provoke outrage among people who refuse to believe anything but that their saviour was conceived by the Holy Spirit of a virgin. And in American communities, major works of literature can be banned from schools and libraries — or even, occasionally, burnt — for challenging traditional scriptural accounts, while a new current of fundamentalism can actually influence American politics through the support of millions eager to be raptured away to a heaven more or less interchangeable with Disneyland.

However unorthodox its presentation of Jesus, Kazantzakis's *The Last Temptation* is a passionately religious, passionately devotional, passionately Christian work. Nevertheless, the novel was banned in many countries, including the author's native Greece, and Kazantzakis himself was excommunicated. Among non-fiction works, Schonfield's *The Passover Plot*, despite immense sales, provoked much bitter hostility.

In 1983, David Rolfe, working for London Weekend Television and Channel 4, began work on a three-part television documentary entitled *Jesus: the Evidence*. The series took no position of its own, endorsed no particular

point of view. It simply endeavoured to survey the field of New Testament studies and to assess the value of various theories proposed. Yet even before the project got under way, British pressure groups were lobbying to have the enterprise suppressed. When it was finished, in 1984, it had to be screened, in a private showing, to a number of Members of Parliament before it could be cleared for transmission. And although subsequent reviews found it thoroughly sane and quite uncontroversial, clerics of the Church of England publicly announced that they would be on standby alert to deal with any members of their congregation upset by the programmes.

Jesus: the Evidence had sought to bring some of the advances in New Testament scholarship to the attention of the lay public. Apart from *The Passover Plot*, virtually none of this scholarship has found its way into popular consciousness. A few works, such as *Jesus the Magician* and *The Gnostic Gospels*, have been widely reviewed, discussed and distributed, but their readership has been largely confined to people with a particular interest in their subject matter. Most of the work done in recent years has impinged only on specialists. Much of it is also written specifically for specialists, being virtually impenetrable to the uninitiated reader.

So far as the general public is concerned, as well as the churches which minister to that public, the works cited above might never have been produced. George Moore's depiction of Jesus as having survived the Crucifixion followed on from a contention maintained not only by some of the oldest heresies, but also by the Koran, and thus widely accepted throughout Islam and the Islamic world. And yet the same claim, when promulgated by Robert Graves, then by Dr Schonfield in *The Passover Plot*, attracted as much scandal and incredulity as if it had never been broached before. In the field of New Testament studies, it is as if each new discovery, each new assertion, is