THE ROLE OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN
THE JESUS INDUSTRY

BY

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I, Jennifer Dyer, declare that *The Role of Archaeology in the Jesus Industry* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

9 December 2015

SIGNATURE
(Ms J Dyer)

DATE
SUMMARY

The question leading to this study is whether the facts and theories pertaining to the Bible and *Jesus Story* as presented by The Authors (H Schonfield, D Joyce, B Thiering, M Baigent, R Leigh, H Lincoln; M Starbird, and D Brown) could be verified by the Archaeology evidence. I have adopted a multidiscipline and holistic approach considering information gathered from all media sources to ascertain what theories, if any could replace the traditional *Jesus Story* of the New Testament. I considered whether the alternative theories or traditional theories were believable due to the evidence presented by Biblical Archaeology or by the techniques used by The Authors in presenting their facts. By using Thouless’ system of Straight and Crooked thinking I was able to ascertain that the theories used in the novels written by The Authors may have been persuasive, but lacked substance.

Key terms:
*Jesus Story*; Thouless; Mary Magdalene; Crucifixion; Resurrection; Merovingian blood line; Holy Grail; Knights Templar; sacred feminine; Jesus of Nazareth; Pesher theory; The Passover Plot; The Jesus scroll; The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail; Jesus the man; The woman with the alabaster Jar; The Da Vinci Code; The Cross Bones; The Archko Volumes; The Two Babylons; The Last Temptation of Christ; Jesus of Montreal; The Passion of Christ; Catholic Church; Masada; Nag Hammidi Library, Dead Sea Scrolls; The Gospels; Jesus Seminar; Gospels; Straight and Crooked Thinking.
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1. This picture is used with the kind permission of Biblical Archaeology Review. To my mind, it epitomises this study, portraying the profiles of The Jesus Industry, Jesus in Fact and Fiction and Jesus in Literature and Archaeology.
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1.1 BACKGROUND

The seed of an idea for this study was personal. It germinated when my sister, a nominal Christian (someone who attends church for weddings, funerals and baptisms), announced that I need not worry about her spirituality as she had read *The Da Vinci Code* and was now a believer in the ‘real truth’. “Dan Brown is right. The Bible is a conspiracy created and perpetuated by the Catholic Church.” I found this statement strange as I had read the book and had not interpreted it as making a statement on the Christian religion or introducing a new dogma. Rather, it was a fast-paced, clever and intriguing detective story that kept you captivated by the pace and plot until the very end. Even though I knew the book was a piece of fiction, the statement piqued my interest. I started to wonder if this point of view was widespread. I soon realised it was, in fact it was a media phenomenon; to date it has sold over 85 million copies and produced its own billion dollar industry. The airwaves and press, at the time of the book’s publishing, were filled with interviews, and panel discussions, questioning the book and Christian, especially the Catholic Churches doctrines.

The book divided people: some saw it as a great detective novel; some as heresy, others as revealing hidden truths and exposing sub-cultures within society - in particular, the Catholic Church. Religious groups, not just Christians, got caught up in the frenzy. Friends who are Hindu and Muslim related that their institutions were holding discussion groups and talks on *The Da Vinci Code* and its place in their religions. Some religious organisations forbade

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3 Kalki Bhabwan states that, from the Hindu point of view, *The Da Vinci Code* presents to the Christian laity and the popular psyche of the west a chance to peek at the immensity of the harm done to Christian heritage by the suppression of the sacred feminine by a power-centric theological authority of Jewish dominated Orthodox and Catholic Church leadership. *The Da Vinci Code* convinced almost every Christian laity that the Christian Bible was based on the lie and that Church leaders conjured up notions about a patriarchal, monotheist God, the immaculate conception of Mary, the divinity of Jesus, original sin, biblical stories, the concept of salvation and the sacraments.’

4 According to Dr. Muzammil H Siddiqi: ‘... one is positive and the other is negative. The positive thing is that for the first time after the initial four centuries Jesus was known only as a Prophet of God, not God. The negative is that *The Da Vinci Code* is a novel, a fiction. It has not presented facts about Jesus’ life in a serious and respectful manner ... in a sense it has downgraded this great messenger of Allah’ [https://www.islam.thetruecall.com/davincicode](https://www.islam.thetruecall.com/davincicode)
the reading of the book; others held discussion groups, citing Dan Brown as a fraud and his book a threat to the church and in particular Christianity - and all this for a detective story?

Although people knew the book was fiction, they also knew it was based on fact\(^5\). This dilemma caused many to see it as a major challenge to Christianity and to become embroiled in its intrigue. I wondered how many other of the 85 million\(^6\) people who had bought and the many more that had read the book thought this way and how much of this book and others written on the so-called Jesus Story\(^7\) were ‘fact’ and how much of the writings were ‘fiction’ or ‘altered fact’. How did the lines between truth and fiction become blurred? Where would I find the answers?

During my honours degree I was introduced to Applied Biblical Archaeology\(^8\) which, in the form presented in this study, is the use of archaeological facts in the media, for example, books, films and digital games, usually of the fictional kind. I came to the realisation that this was the ideal conduit to use to unravel the problem of fact vs. fiction. I decided to look at whether Biblical Archaeology had a role in The Jesus Story and whether Biblical Archaeology could be used to define Jesus of Nazareth. I decided to take Dan Brown’s The Da Vinci Code and analyse it to see if it really introduced a new set of doctrines and where it got it facts from.

This study is an attempt to trace The Jesus Story in fact and fiction. This study will investigate the facts and evidence that make up The Jesus Story, their origins and whether the archaeological finds, reports and texts line up with these facts. In my opinion, the profile picture of this study (Jesus’ face divided between a painting and a mosaic) is apt in

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5 This book is an example of what the publishing industry calls a faction novel, a novel based on facts. In other words, it is a non-fiction novel (Oxford Concise Dictionary).


7 The term The Jesus Industry, which the study is using, describes the different narratives of Jesus of Nazareth, the base story of which is the narratives found in the four gospels of the New Testament. In a broader sense, it includes the narratives put forward in non-canonical gospels, novels and academic works.

8 Applied Biblical Archaeology is defined by Unisa’s in their 2011 calendar as a subject which will equip students with skills to apply the knowledge they gathered from Biblical Archaeology critically to popular literature, film and video productions, art works, stage performances, sermons, etc. based on biblical history and culture. The module further aims to sensitise students to become aware of how the modern media, film industry, journalists, artists, and clergy sometimes abuse and distort the history and cultural practices from the biblical period to serve their own agendas. Finally, the aim is to allow students to discover that knowledge gained from Biblical Archaeology is applicable and still valuable today (https://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/myRegistration/docs/My_Modules.pdf).
portraying the dilemma many are faced with when they consider the media’s version of Jesus versus the traditional Jesus of the New Testament. Is *The Jesus Story* set in stone or in the fluidness of a painting?

Do the times people live in have anything to do with ‘new’ perspectives of *The Jesus Story*? The current age is influenced by the postmodern culture, a time of challenging and questioning the status quo. This has facilitated the growth of an alternative/conspiracy theory industry, which has seen exponential growth since the end of the Second World War and turned viral with the advent of the electronic media. Theories cover almost anything, from UFO’s to governments, the church or religions, food, seeds, medicine, science, ancient history, end times and more.

*The Jesus Story* has become one of the popular focuses of this genre. This could be because *The Jesus Story* is a simple, miraculous story which is difficult to prove or disprove with current archaeological evidence. The discussion is a very emotional one as it affects a large portion of the world’s population - most have a stake in either proving or disproving the story.

When one looks at the possible reasons for the development of the recent alternative/conspiracy theories concerning *The Jesus Story*, some of these reasons could be the delay in the publishing of reports and doubts regarding the authenticity of some of the major archaeological discoveries of the last sixty years. *The Dead Sea Scrolls* form a prime example. The mood of the public regarding this discovery was summed up in an article by John Noble Wilford that appeared in the *New York Times* on 22 September 1991 under the headline of ‘Breaking the Scroll Cartel’:

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9 According to the website Postmodern Psychology: ‘Postmodern thought is regarded as the position of postmodern culture versus traditional culture. The emphasis is facts, observation and logic vs. feelings, imagination (vision), speculation; trust absolute truth vs. rejecting absolute; accepting objective knowledge vs. rejecting objective knowledge, replaced with visions driven by subjective wants and group thinking; emphasize doctrine vs. emphasize story and personal discovery. In other words, a postmodern approach seeks to deconstruct previous authorities’ sources and power, because power is distrusted. It is an attempt to set up a less hierarchical approach in which sources are diffused’ ([www.postmodernpsychology.com.htm](http://www.postmodernpsychology.com.htm)).
The team of scholars charged with publishing the Dead Sea Scrolls has sown bitterness the world over with the way it has managed the 2,000 year old scrolls, which it took control of in the early 1950’s, not long after the first of them were discovered...

Going on to say:

The editors who act as custodians of the scrolls have been accused of delaying publication and withholding manuscripts from other scholars except their own students and favoured colleagues. Dr Geza Vermes, a biblical scholar at Oxford in England has called the handling of the scrolls ‘the academic scandal par excellence of the 20th century.
(Wilford 1991:20).

The interested public saw this delay as part of a ‘conspiracy’ amongst religious and political leaders, the Vatican, Israel, the French government and even Islam to keep the truth about Jesus of Nazareth away from the public. The delays in publishing helped fuel and even in some ways created the so-called current Jesus Industry10. This was aided by the superbooks11 dealing with The Jesus Story. The superbooks may have in some senses changed public opinion of the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern history, archaeology and the Catholic Church. All the books used at some stage go back to the controversies surrounding The Dead Sea Scrolls. These controversies are not all negative as they opened up dialogue amongst people who do not frequent religious institutions, read religious literature or have an interest in archaeology.

The explanations of why the information from The Dead Sea Scrolls was withheld depend on which interest group you support or which book you read: some are convinced the scrolls contain information that would destroy or at least compromise Judaism or Christianity by releasing the truth about Jesus and the Holy Grail. Some describe the writers of the scrolls as early Christians who had fled to Masada and Qumran. This would mean the Jewish sacred Masada, the soul of Israel a title used in tourism brochures 12 was instead a Christian sanctuary and the people that took their lives on that fateful night in 73 AD were Christian Martyrs (McRay 2008:136). Others theorise that the scrolls contain information that the New Testament in its present form was a story created by Constantine and perpetuated by

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10 The Jesus Industry is an industry that has grown out of the stories and narratives of Jesus of Nazareth as portrayed by the Gospels and the Christian church.
11 Super books defined as books that sell over a million copies.
12 https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/masada.html
the Catholic Church\textsuperscript{13}. Some theories, according to The Authors, state that some of the scrolls dealing with Jesus Christ were spirited away to either Russia or France to protect the Catholic/Orthodox Church. Other theories state that an intact skeleton found on Masada was that of Jesus of Nazareth (Joyce 1975:19), although this find was not included in the final report on Masada but was included in a press briefing by Nicu Haas (Reichs 2005:1).

All these theories have formed, in one way or another, the foundations of The Jesus Story. The controversy of the scrolls is not confined to the general public, but can be found amongst the academic community. Although the Dead Sea Scroll teams over the years have stated that no scrolls or fragments discovered were texts found in the New Testament, in 1972, José O’Callaghan identified pieces of The Dead Sea Scrolls from Cave 7 as being sections of the New Testament books of Mark, Acts, Romans, 1 Timothy, James and 2 Peter. This meant that texts older than John Ryland’s Papyrus existed\textsuperscript{14}. Joseph Fritzmyer dismissed this claim, saying that ‘favourable reactions to the claims have only come from uncritical sources. Containing only scattered words, the fragments are too scanty for positive identification’ (McRay 2008:359).

Some of the theories put forward by The Authors\textsuperscript{15} of The Jesus Story that challenge the traditional story are:

- \textit{Jesus was the King of the Jews}. He was from the line of David and carried the ‘God Gene’ (part man, part God). The ‘Grandson of Jacob-Heli ... Jacob the patriarch of Ephesus he was in charge of five provinces of Asia Minor, which brought in half of the income under the taxation scheme (Thiering 1992:59).

\textsuperscript{13} This has been disputed by authors and academics as having no basis in fact. Among the dissenters are Dan Burstein, D. L. Bock, and James Garlow.

\textsuperscript{14} The oldest New Testament fragment was by B.P. Grenfell in 1920 either in Fayum or Oxyrhynchus. The fragment contains John 18:31-33 on the recto and John 18:37-38 on the verso side. The fragment was part of a codex rather than a scroll and has been dated by leading papyrologists to 125 AD. The autograph has been dated by F.F. Bruce at about 100 AD, but this could be earlier as, since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, this type of writing has been dated as present in about 40 AD (McRay 2008:355).

• *Jesus was sentenced to death, but did not die.* He was either spirited away by Pilate and/or His followers or underwent a lesser crucifixion and survived (Schonfield 2005:155).

• *Jesus was a cunning political leader.* He staged the so-called miracles to promote His overthrow of the Roman occupation and the local religious government (Schonfield 2005:90-100).

• *Jesus was a married teacher (rabbi).* He married Mary Magdalene, ‘a demented psychotic’ (Joyce 1975:33), and fathered children whose bloodline became the *Holy Grail* and the ‘true’ French Royal Bloodline of ‘Merovingian’ ¹⁶, which when not on the throne has been the power behind the throne’ (Baigent et al 1996:4; Brown 2004:322, 580-589).

The protagonists of the alternative *Jesus Story* all insist their theories cannot have any effect on the Christian Church, as the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are not the foundations of Christianity:

> It is not generally understood by Christians that the Gospels had nothing to do with the actual birth of their religion; their role came much later. In fact, the faith was flourishing in at least a dozen centres in the pagan world, before the very first Gospel was written when Paul – the former Saul – was in his grave (Joyce 1975:15).

In the book *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, Baigent et al state:

> It is quite simply more likely that a man would have married, sired children and attempted to gain a throne than He would have been born of a virgin, walked on water and risen from the dead. Contrary to the assertions of both theologians and interviewers, such a statement does not constitute an attack on the very core of Christianity and the Christian ethos. The core of Christianity and the Christian ethos is in Jesus’ teachings … They do not need miraculous biographical details to support them – especially the kind of miraculous biographical details that characterised rival deities throughout the ancient world … (Baigent et al 1996:9).


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¹⁶ Gérard de Sède finally came out with his book Rennes-le-Chateau: Le Dossier; Les Impostures; Les Fantasmes; Les Hypotheses, in which he admitted that the dossiers were forged and the Merovingian line does not exist today (Burstein 2004:304).
Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those Gospels, which portray Jesus’ human traits and embellished those Gospels that made Him godlike. The earlier Gospels where outlawed, gathered up and burnt.

‘Fortunately for historians Teabing said,’ some of the Gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950’s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert. In addition, of course, there are Coptic Scrolls found in 1945 at Nag Hammadi. In addition to telling the true grail story, these documents (The Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammidi Library) speak of Christ’s ministry in very human terms. Of course the Vatican in keeping with their traditions of misinformation, tried hard to suppress the release of these scrolls. And why wouldn’t they? The scrolls highlight glaring, historical discrepancies and fabrications, clearly confirming that the modern Bible was compiled and edited by men who possessed a political agenda – to promote the divinity of the man Jesus Christ and use His influence to solidify their own power base (Brown 2004:317).

Most of the popular theories and books in the study tell similar stories. The Author/s are approached by a man, given or shown secret documents, a photograph or, in the case of The Da Vinci Code, a riddle that would lead to information that would destroy the fabric of the Christian faith, the Catholic Church, the Islamic faith, the Jewish faith, and/or France, Israel and/or the Vatican City. These documents or photographs turn out to be proof that Jesus did not die and therefore faked His death in Jerusalem and died later on Masada. They tell us that He was married to Mary Magdalene and that their child or children were the start of the Merovingian bloodline17.

The stories are usually linked to the Freemasons, the Roman Catholic Church and its closed secret sects and/or orders (for example, The Priory of Sion), the Illuminati18, the Knights Templar, the Rosicrucians, the Treasures of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, Masada and The Dead Sea Scrolls, but can also include the Brotherhood of Islam and the Arab League organisation that are said to be behind an Islamic takeover of the world.

All the usual suspects and accoutrements of paranoid history get caught up in this thousand-year jaunt. The Cathars, Heretics, the Knights Templar, the Rosicrucians, the Freemason, the Nazi’s, The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the

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17 In some theories, this bloodline runs through many of the USA presidents up until and excluding President Obama (who is ‘part of the Illuminati’ or Arab League). This bloodline includes George Washington, John Adams, John Quincy, Thomas Jefferson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, The George Bushes and Sarah Palin (www.bibliotecapleyades.net/bloodlines).

18 A Secret society founded by Weishaupt in Bavaria in 1776, with a similar model as the Freemasons. Some claim the Illuminati rule the world.
Order of The Golden Dawn – everyone but the Abominable Snowman seems to be in on the game (Burstein 2004:298-299).

All the books have a basic theme - an item of immense importance was found in the Holy Land. This item is the proof of the bloodline of Jesus and Mary Magdalene and/or Jesus’ survival of the crucifixion. In the books by Brown and Baigent et al, the Priory of Sion (The Templars) keeps this secret.

Brown and Baigent et al imply that the real treasure found by the Knights Templar was not that which was described in the Copper Scroll\textsuperscript{19}, as suggested by some, but rather the secret proof of Jesus’ marriage to Mary Magdalene and a royal bloodline as well as ‘The God Gene’ which stems from it. The proof, it is claimed, was found in documents discovered under Solomon’s stables, part of the wing of the palace the Templars lived in for over a decade. This argument is interesting, in light of the fact that Brown and Baigent et al do not see Jesus as the Son of God, but rather from the lineage of the High Priests and King David. As Jesus had brothers and sisters, He was probably not the last of a line (Mt 12:46). Jesus, according to The Authors, was not a deity, but rather, as Brown describes Him:

... (As) a great and powerful man, whose deity was voted on at the council of Nicaea, which also established the date of Easter, Sunday as a Holy day, the role of the bishops, and the administration of the sacraments among others. Constantine is credited with officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, turning him into a deity who existed beyond the human world (Brown 2004:315).

The Jesus Story comes in many forms: some agree, while some are contradictory. This study will attempt to use the system of Straight and Crooked Thinking by Thouless originally written in 1930 to sift through the presentations of fact, fiction and new truths found in the books and films in the study.

\textsuperscript{19} A scroll found amongst The Dead Sea Scroll that listed tons of treasure buried in the Holy Land (www.copper-scrolls-project.com).
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENTS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem statements and research questions for this study are:

- Does the archaeological data available agree with the ‘facts’ that this industry grew out of, or was these ‘facts’ taken out of context or changed slightly to create ‘new facts’?
- Are the authorities, whether government, academic, scientific or the church (the guardians of this truth), in reality hiding the ‘real truth’?
- Have the books and films in the study redefined the Christian religion - have they changed The Jesus Story?

These questions will be answered when Chapter Five highlights the statements made by The Authors and the Jesus Seminar in their rewriting of The Jesus Story.

Remembering that the main theme for this study was taken from The Da Vinci Code and looking at a few of the many books that set out to debunk²⁰ The Da Vinci Code, I realised that alternative theories coming out of The Da Vinci Code and taken as ‘new truths’ are quite common. As James L. Garlow in his book The Da Vinci Code Breaker (Garlow 2006:9) relates:

A friend told me that her brother-in-law had read a book attacking the Bible and Jesus and he believes the book. Further, once my book was released, many people who attended the book signings would say that the book was for a family member or friend who believed in The Da Vinci Code. Radio shows confirmed this when the lines were opened and immediately filled with believers of the New Truth (Garlow 2006:9).

His experience appears to be similar to mine when I was faced with the redefinition of someone’s belief coming into line with what Dan Brown decided was ‘truth’ or ‘fiction’ concerning The Jesus Story. The popular media catapulted The Jesus Story into the public domain, creating a phenomenon that in some respects eclipses the texts the books and

films claim to disprove. Many of the millions of people who have read the novels and seen the films have probably never read the Gospels in their entirety and most have probably never read the reports on the archaeological finds. However, surprisingly, most have read many of the newspaper reports, internet reports and seen and listened to at least some of the television and radio reports on the books in the study. Armed with this information, the general public feel equipped to pass judgement on the legitimacy of the academic research and integrity of the archaeologists, university departments, Israeli authorities, the Catholic Church and biblical texts based on what they have read, seen, or heard in the media. Many are willing to create for themselves a religious dogma with fictitious novels as their religious text. Only a small number of people who are information rich may ask the question: ‘What has changed?’

This study is an attempt to trace The Jesus Story in fact and fiction by looking at the ‘facts’ found in the novels, and comparing them to the archaeological reports of The Dead Sea Scrolls, Masada, the James Ossuary and the Jesus Family Tomb. While looking for archaeological proof of the stories, the study will also attempt to understand the cult-like frenzy that has taken place with the publishing of the novels and media reports on the archaeological finds and reports. This phenomenon has been extraordinary as public opinion has charged church authorities and academics with explaining the theories appearing in fiction and the media. Public opinion and the print and electronic media seem to start from the premises that the academics, archaeologists and the church leaders were wrong and part of an international conspiracy, while The Authors of the popular novels were right. I find this intriguing - again ask - why all this for a detective novel?

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This study uses archaeological evidence and the traditional texts of the New Testament for the primary literature review. The secondary review entails the texts, books and films the study uses in presenting the alternative and traditional model of The Jesus Story.
1.3.1 The Biblical Archaeological Review

The Biblical Archaeological finds that caught the imagination of the public with regard to *The Jesus Story*, presented by the media as being important to the ‘true’ telling of *The Jesus Story*, are as listed below:

1.3.1.1 Masada  The revolt against Rome ended on top of the cliffs of Masada four years after the fall of Rome and the destruction of The Temple in 70 AD. Masada was a fortress-palace complex built nearly a century before by Herod the Great. In 1963 and 1965, Yigael Yadin excavated the site. The site quickly became a metaphor for the state of Israel:

“Never again will Masada fall”. Just as with overzealous Christian archaeologists who seek to confirm the biblical story from archaeological remains, so do some Israeli archaeologists who operate from a politic framework, even though recently there has been some doubt concerning the initial interpretations (Crossan & Reed 2001:189).

As Crossan & Reed points out that overzealous archaeologists, whether Jewish or Christian, come with an agenda. During the time of political unrest and war, Masada became a rallying point of the endurance, bravery and righteousness to the people of Israel. Bearing this in mind, the presence of Christian martyrs and/or the remains of a once-crucified man could change the significance of Masada to Israel in some people’s minds.

1.3.1.2. The Dead Sea Scrolls  Crossan & Reed suggest that Masada was one means of protest against Roman rule, and *The Dead Sea Scrolls* was another (Crossan & Reed 2001:195). The scrolls were community and religious writings found between 1946 and 1956 near the ruins of Khirbet Qumran. The writings are of great religious and historical importance as they are the oldest biblical texts, dating 150 BC to 70 AD (Bosshoff et al 2000:233). The find includes fragments of most of the Old Testament books. The texts are written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek and are written mostly on parchment with a few on papyri. The discovery of these manuscripts and the lack of publishing and translations not only opened space for discussion, but also had some people querying their faith in the church and the credibility of the scholars. Limited access to the scrolls and the inability of *The Dead Sea Scrolls* team to finish their task has allowed for a situation where the media has taken license to fill in the blanks with their own interpretations and findings, which could in some cases be seen as abuse by the media. A glance at the timeline of *The Dead
Sea Scrolls in Chapter Two shows how even the political situation and the history of Israel has been instrumental in drawing the media’s attention to this find and delaying the completion of transcribing and translating the scrolls.

1.3.1.3 The James Ossuary  The James Ossuary is a 2,000-year old limestone box used for containing the bones of the dead. This box comes with its own controversy, but even before its authentication Crossan & Reed, in their archaeological book Excavating Jesus, placed this discovery at the top of their Top Ten Archaeological Discoveries list:

The ossuary is of importance in raising the profile of James and how he reflects on Jesus not only fraternally but also theologically ... and we put the James Ossuary first because it underscores the importance of archaeology as a scholarly discipline and not as treasure hunting. We put it first because of the questions it raises. There are five questions: Is the ossuary authentic? Is the inscription original? Is the family identifiable? Is the discovery important? Is the process ethical (Crossan & Reed 2001: XV)?

The ossuary, it is claimed, was uncovered in Israel in 2002, although other evidence suggests it may have been unearthed before 1976. Archaeologists at a registered site did not discover this find, but rather it came to light through a seller of antiquities, so the provenance of the artefact is murky. The point that The Authors in the study the hone in on is the Aramaic inscription on the artefact, which reads: Ya'akov bar-Yosef akhui diYeshua, "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus". The question is whether the ossuary and/or the inscription are authentic (Shanks 2009:35(1)12).

1.3.1.4 The Crucified Man  Josephus tells us that thousands of people were crucified in Rome around the first century AD (McRay 2008:204-206), but to date archaeologists have only found one example of a crucified man. In June 1968, Vassilios Tzaferis, of the Israel Antiquities Authority, excavated several burial caves in the northern Jerusalem suburb of Givat Hamivtar. In one of the caves, an ossuary was found that contained the bones of a child and two adult men. One man had a heel bone pierced by an 11.43 cm nail, which was still attached to a piece of olivewood. He was about twenty years of age and 1.65 m tall. Yehochanan, the name by which the crucified man is now known, came from a wealthy, well-connected family, as can be seen from the quality of the ossuary. Their wealth could
explain why they were allowed to collect the body, which was probably attained through bribes. A crucified person was usually left on the cross until the corpse was eaten by carrion birds or just rotted off. Denying the person a burial was part of the punishment. The executed were denied their humanity even in death (Crossan & Reed 2001:290).

1.3.2 Secondary Review

The secondary sources have contributed to the phenomenon referred to in this study as The Jesus Story as well as the billion-dollar industry that has developed around this story. The sources include academic books, fictional books that fall into the superbook category, media articles, documentaries, talk show discussions and films. It also includes internet resources which, although they do not usually form part of a dissertation, in this case are very important as they provide a large part of the general public’s source of information.

1.3.2.1 The emergence of The Jesus Industry’s media hype. What started all the media hype around The Jesus Story? It might have been this small advert appearing in The Wall Street Journal of 1 June 1954\(^{21}\) as well as two books: Hugh Schonfield ‘The Passover Plot’ originally written in 1965\(^{22}\) and ‘The Jesus Scroll’ written by Donovan Joyce in 1975. These two books individually sold over 3 million copies\(^{23}\), making them the first of the so-called superbooks on the subject. The books argue that Jesus did not die on the cross, but either as an old man at Masada after writing a scroll, (Joyce 1975:19) or He died by mistake when a Roman soldier pierced Him in the side and His resurrection was faked, by Jesus and His followers. Although the theories of a faked death have been around for hundreds of years, these were usually claims made by so-called ‘heretics’, Gnostic writers, academics, philosophers and Muslims. However, these two books brought the theories into the public domain (Schonfield 2005:42).

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\(^{21}\) A copy of the advert seen on the left.

\(^{22}\) The study will be using the 2005 edition.

Information included in this study will be obtained from books, films and documentaries that contain or use *The Jesus Story* as their basis, have been bestsellers and have in some way influenced the modern church.

There have probably been hundreds of books written about *The Jesus Story* in the last fifty years. The discussion of His death, resurrection, deity and bloodline has often meant bestsellers as well as by-lines and headlines for reporters, authors and filmmakers. In this study, we have only chosen the books, films and media reports that have caused media phenomena. The central books which the study will initially consider are: *The Passover Plot* by Hugh J Schonfield (2005); *The Jesus Scroll* by Donovan Joyce (1975); *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* by Baigent M, Leigh R, Lincoln H (1996); *Jesus the Man* by Barbara Thiering (1992); and *The Woman With The Alabaster Jar* by Margaret Starbird (1993), all of which are claimed by their authors to be fact or fact-based. On the other hand, *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown (2004), the main secondary source of this study, has always been presented by its author as a works of fiction. Each of the above-mentioned books presents a part of the jigsaw puzzle that make up the theories that have developed around *The Jesus Story* recently.

In *The Passover Plot* (2005), Hugh J Schonfield, who is part of *The Dead Sea Scrolls* team, has a PhD in Sacred Literature and is a founding member of the Commonwealth of World Citizens. Schonfield proposes that Jesus was a messianic pretender who connived to fulfil the prophecy of the Old Testament. According to the book, Jesus persuaded a young man (Lk 7:12-17), Lazarus (Jn 11:1-44) and Joseph of Arimathea to take part in a plan to fake His death and resurrection. He was to ‘die’ on the cross and later be ‘resurrected’ in Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb (Schonfield 2005:170-172).

In *The Jesus Scroll* (1975), Donovan Joyce, an Australian radio producer and writer, tells his readers of a trip to Israel he made to gather information for a novel. Joyce claims that he was denied access to Masada and that unknown agents harassed him by clogging up his hotel toilet. On his way out of Israel, he meets a Professor, Max Grosset (this, he says, was not the person’s real name), who wants him to smuggle a scroll from Masada out of Israel. This scroll was written by a person called Jesus Kinneret (the person known today as Jesus of
Nazareth). The scroll is the last will and testament of Jesus, written the day before the suicide pact was carried out by the hostages on Masada. Joyce argues that Jesus could not have come from Nazareth as Nazareth did not yet exist (Joyce 1975:17).

*The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (1996) was written by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln. This book was the result of a lecture tour the authors held across Britain. The authors are self-claimed experts on Free Masonry and the Holy Grail. A documentary, sponsored and shown on the BBC, was released soon after the book was published. This long work sends most of the pages tracing the Holy Grail, the treasures of Solomon, the Merovingian bloodline, the Templars’ role in protecting that bloodline and the Templars’ rise and fall. A small part of the book tells the tale of how the authors came upon proof of Mary Magdalene’s marriage to Jesus and the existence of their children. This proof is found in codes hidden in religious artworks, architecture and symbols.

*The Woman with the Alabaster Jar* (1993) was written by Margaret Starbird, who has a Master’s Degree in Medieval Studies from the University of Maryland, USA. Starbird, according to her preface (Starbird 1993: XIX), read *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* and the book offended her. In response, she started to write her book, *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar*. During her research for her book, she came to realise that Baigent et al were correct; Jesus had married Mary Magdalene. Starbird’s book went from debunking *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* to supporting it and adding to the story.

*Jesus the Man: New Interpretations from the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1992) was written by Barbara Thiering, a lecturer in the School of Divinity at The University of Sydney, who has claimed that the New Testament should be rewritten in light of the Pesher method of interpretation, which she devised. She claims to have uncovered evidence that contradicts *The Jesus Story* found in the Bible. She says her Pesher method has revealed that the Gospels were written in code. The narrative has two levels of meaning: a ‘surface meaning’ or for ‘babes’ and a deeper or true meaning which the surface meaning disguises. She suggests that Jesus was the leader of a sect called the Essenes, He was not born of a virgin, but rather an unmarried

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24 Thiering is referring to those who do not understand the intricacies of the Bible and so therefore are “babes”
mother and He survived a lesser crucifixion, married Mary Magdalene and fathered a family. This book was a best-seller and its information was presented in an ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) documentary, *The Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1992), part of the popular ABC series, *Beyond 2000*, undertaken by the *Beyond International Group* which began in 1990.

These five books are the books Dan Brown used in researching his novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, and are used as proof of his theories laid out by his main characters as well as the central theme to his story (Brown 2004:339).

*The Da Vinci Code* (2004) by Dan Brown is the basis of the discussion of this study. The other books, although superbooks had almost faded into obscurity until interest was revived in them by *The Da Vinci Code*. This was probably due to reading fads and the wealth of books on the market. The renewed interest in these books, as mentioned before was sparked when Brown claimed that he had read these five books and used them to write *The Da Vinci Code*. Brown is a fiction author whose genre is the conspiracies and ‘mysteries’ of the Catholic Church and Freemasonry. Brown’s story begins when the Louvre curator, Jacques Sauniere (Grand Master of the Priory of Sion), is found dead. The body is carefully posed in the form of the Vitruvian Man. A cryptic message is found written beside his body and a pentagram drawn on his stomach. Professor Robert Langdon, Professor of Religious Symbology at Harvard University, who is in Paris to lecture, joins the victim’s granddaughter, Sophie Neveu, to investigate the murder. They are confronted with bizarre riddles and clues hidden in the works of Leonardo Da Vinci. They discover a battle between the Priory of Sion and Opus Dei over the theory that Jesus of Nazareth may have been married to

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25 The Vitruvian Man, or the perfect man, is a drawing creating by Leonardo da Vinci and comes with notes based on Vitruvius who in the reign of Caesar Augustus wrote a treatise on architecture (De Architectura), which established what he believed, was the perfect architectural proportions. These, he said, applied to the human form. The drawing, which is in ink on paper, depicts a male figure in two superimposed positions with his arms and legs apart and simultaneously inscribed in a circle and square (Garlow 2006:196).

26 The Prieuré de Sion is mentioned in Brown’s ‘facts’ at the beginning of *The Da Vinci Code*. He describes the Priory of Sion as a ‘European society founded in 1099, a real organisation’. Brown’s Priory is the central force of conspiracy power, wealth and historical significance. The Priory is a controversial fraternal organisation created and dissolved by Pierre Plantard in 1956. He (Brown) describes it as a secret society founded by Godfrey of Bouillon (Garlow 2006:162).

27 A Catholic organisation founded in 1928 by Josemaría Escriva de Balaguer and which has approximately eighty thousand members worldwide (laypersons and priests). Although Brown depicts it as a monastic order
Mary Magdalene. The riddles and clues lead Langdon and Sophie to discover the Priory Keystone and the knowledge that the Priory of Sion has been protecting for centuries - the mystery of the Holy Grail. Langdon and Sophie take the cryptex to Langdon’s friend, Sir Leigh Teabing, who has a life-long passion for the Holy Grail. However, as it turns out, Teabing is the one who has ordered the murders of Jacques Sauniere and four others who were the keepers of the secret (The Holy Grail).

The last three books referred to (Cross Bones, The Archko Volume and The Two Babylons) show how The Jesus Story has captured the public’s imagination in the past and how this has continued into the present. Written in 2005, Kathy Reichs’ book Cross Bones will be referred to in order to show the continuation of The Jesus Story. Kathy Reichs’ bestseller looks at the theories of the first five books the study discussed and the discoveries made public since the books were written and comes up with a detective story, probably to cash in on the media hype of The Da Vinci Code. Her website describes her book Cross Bones as:

The story of an orthodox Jew who is found shot to death in Montreal. Temperance Brennan is called in to examine the body and to figure out the puzzling damage to the corpse. Unexpectedly, just as she in finishing the autopsy, a stranger slips her a photograph of a skeleton and assures her the picture is the key to the victim’s death. Along with detective Andrew Ryan and biblical archaeologist Jake Drum, Tempe travels to Israel to probe the origins of the skeleton and the ancient crypt in which it was found. Have they made a startling discovery that raises questions about Christ’s death? Alternatively, has someone concocted an elaborate hoax?  

(Brown 2004:28), it is mainly made up of laypersons. It has its headquarters in Rome and in 1982 Pope John Paul II elected the organisation as a personal prelature. The idea that the organisation practises corporal mortification comes from a book its founder wrote called The Way, in which he states: ‘Blessed be pain. Sanctified be pain... Glorified be pain’. Their mission is to “spread throughout society a profound awareness of the universal call to holiness and apostolate through one’s professional work carried out with freedom and personal responsibility” (Cox 2004:119).

The keystone or final factor is the last stone placed into the crest of an arch, locking it firmly in place. Brown says that this is the “best kept secrets of the early Masonic Brotherhood” (Brown 2004:203) but in truth it was used widely long before the Masons appeared (Garlow 2006:52).

An anagram of the names Baigent and Leigh, two of the writers of The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail makes up the name Leigh Teabing (Burstein 2004 :XVI).

www.kathyreichs.com
The next two books, first published in the 1800’s, have had influence beyond their content, not only are they still available and sold today, their content is used by New Reformation churches in defending the Jesus Story and in defence of a anti-papist stance.

The Archko Volume (1887), written by Drs McIntosh and Twyman, shows how far back The Jesus Story has appealed to the public. This is a delightful book written in about 1887 and as its forward says: ‘Popular demand never allows The Archko Volume to remain out of print for long’ (The copy I have was published by Keats Publishers in 1978). The documents contained in the book are claimed to be documents found in Constantinople and the records of the Senatorial Docket were taken from the Vatican in Rome and were translated by Drs McIntosh and Twyman of the Antiquarian Lodge, Genoa, Italy. The book contains Constantine’s letter which talks about having fifty copies of the scriptures written and bound. Included in this bound volume are: Jonathan’s interview with the Bethlehem shepherds; a letter of Melker (a priest of the synagogue at Bethlehem); Gamaliel’s interview with Joseph and Mary and other interviews concerning Jesus; the report of Caiaphas to the Sanhedrin concerning the execution of Jesus; the report of Caiaphas to the Sanhedrin concerning the resurrection of Jesus; Valleus’s notes – “actaPilati” or Pilates’ report to Caesar on the arrest, trail and crucifixion of Jesus; Herod Antipater’s defence before the Roman Senate with regard to the execution of John the Baptist; and Hillel’s letters regarding God’s providence to the Jews (by Hillel the Third). Among the emergent or New Reformation churches, these letters are quoted as proof of Jesus and His deity.

The second book that still has influence today is The Two Babylon’s (1853), written by Alexander Hislop. This book was first published as a pamphlet and later as a revised and expanded book. Hislop claimed the Catholic Church is a Babylonian mystery cult and pagan. The church’s adoration of Mary and child, he said, merged Christian characters with the ancient Roman state religion: for example, the goddess ‘Venus’ or ‘Fortuna’ emerges as the Madonna and the boy Jesus has His origins in Jupiter-Puer. According to Hislop, Satan prompted this pre-shadowing of the virgin birth and child. Emergent and New Reformation churches see Hislop as an authority on paganism and the Catholic idolatry cult. It has been described by Bill Ellis, (University of Kentucky) in his book Raising the Devil, New Religions, and the Media (2014) as ‘conspiracy theory propaganda which mixed sketchy knowledge of Middle Eastern antiquity with a vivid imagination’.
Furthermore, the study will also focus on three films that have, in recent years, made significant noise in the religious sphere:

*The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988)\(^{31}\), directed by Martin Scorsese, is an adaption of the 1960 novel by Nikos Kazantzakis. The film depicts the life of Jesus who, while free from sin, is subject to every form of human temptations. Jesus imagines Himself engaging in sexual activities including homosexuality, an idea that caused an outrage in the church. The film includes a disclaimer explaining that it is not based on the traditional *Jesus Story* or the Gospels. The film won an Academy Award nomination for best director and a Golden Globe for best supporting actress for Barbara Hershey’s performance as Mary Magdalene.

*Jesus of Montreal* (1988), directed by Denys Arcane, is a play within a film about Jesus of Nazareth. A group of actors are hired by the Catholic Church to present a passion play. Their representation of *The Jesus Story* is unconventional; it includes Jesus being fathered by a Roman soldier and a suggested homosexual relationship with John the Apostle. In the film, the play is met with accolades until the Catholic Church closes it down. The central character, Daniel, is a healer, a prophet and is persecuted in his life offstage. This mirrors his life as Jesus onstage. The film received The Ecumenical Jury Prize at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival and the Genie Award for best Canadian film of 1989; it twice placed second on the TIFF list of ten best Canadian films and was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film\(^{32}\).

*The Passion of the Christ* (2004), directed by Mel Gibson, depicts *The Jesus Story* according to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The film covers the last twelve hours of Jesus’ life, beginning with the agony in the garden and ending with a brief depiction of the resurrection. The film’s dialogue is entirely in Aramaic, Latin and Hebrew with subtitles enabling the viewer to follow the dialogue. Fr. William J. Fulco, a professor of Ancient Mediterranean Studies at Loyola Marymount University, who is an authority on Aramaic, was the film’s theological consultant and translated the script. The film won fifteen awards

\(^{31}\) [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0095497/lasttemptationofchrist](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0095497/lasttemptationofchrist)

and is the top-grossing foreign film of all time. Surprisingly, this film is the most successful even though it sticks to the biblical text, with a budget of $30 million and grossing revenue of $611,899,420.

1.4 HYPOTHESIS

The problem of this study is complex. As a qualitative study, the aim is not to look for a right or wrong answer, but rather to discover and compare the facts, fiction and so-called New Truths against the biblical narrative and available archaeological data.

1.5 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.5.1 Approach

This study is a qualitative study and as such will describe, explain, analyse and compare the evidence put forward by the main players and their theories, some of which deal with fact and others with fiction, but most of whom claim that their books are fact-based. An Applied Archaeological approach will be used. As The Jesus Story comes in many forms, some of which agree and some which are contradictory, this study will attempt to use the system of Straight and Crooked Thinking by RH Thouless, a psychologist, first published in 1930 to sift fact from fiction. Thouless laid out a simple system for sifting through information of a controversial nature. The study will be dealing with many statements that Thouless would define as:

Statements that carry more or less strong suggestions of emotional attitudes are very common and are ordinarily used in the discussion of such controversial questions as those of politics, morals and religion. This is one reason why men can go on discussing such questions without getting much nearer to a rational solution of them (Thouless 1974:11).

To help one deal with sifting fact from fiction or logical against emotional argument, Thouless devised a list of ‘thirty-eight dishonest tricks which are commonly used in argument, with the methods of overcoming them’ (Thouless 1974:192). These dishonest tricks will be used to sift statements made by The Authors.

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33 www.passionofthechrist.com
1.5.2 Structure of the Dissertation

The study is not attempting in any way to prove or disprove the New Testament Biblical texts or the existence of Jesus of Nazareth; the study is looking at how these as primary texts, along with archaeological evidence have been used and in many cases abused in order to create the multibillion-dollar industry centred around the story of Jesus of Nazareth’s crucifixion and resurrection.

In Chapter Two the study will consider *The Jesus Story in ‘Fiction’* and the statements and discussions the ‘factional’ books and films have introduced to the public forum. In Chapter Three *The Jesus Story in ‘Fact’* as well as the canonical and non-canonical Gospels which make up the Jesus narratives and sayings attributed to Jesus of Nazareth will be discussed. The role of Biblical Archaeology in the *Jesus Story* both in fact and fiction will be considered in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will start with three profiles of Jesus of Nazareth: the traditional Jesus; the *Authors* ‘new truths’; and the antagonists’ view of Jesus. Once ‘Jesus’ has been established, the statements presented in Chapter Three will be considered in light of Thouless’ book *Straight and Crooked Thinking* in Chapter Five. Concluding the study will be Chapter Six, a chapter considering the questions raised in whether the ‘new facts’ and insights discussed in the study will bring about change to the traditional Christian belief system and doctrines.

1.6 SYMBOLS AND DEFINITIONS

Relics and symbols have always been important to the Catholic and Orthodox churches, over the years a lot of these relics have funded the churches and cathedrals that housed them. In our technologically advanced age logic would have us believe that relics would have become just quaint objects of history, not so. Crowds still throng to see relics and the media is quick to print stories of relics and miracles. Oxford University’s Keble College have formed a multi-disciplinary cluster made up of scientists, historians, archaeologists and theologians to study devotional objects (relics). The cluster, the Oxford Centre for the Study of Religious Relics
has been nicknamed the “Da Vinci Code Unit’. Its missions is to attempt to verify the many relics and objects of religious worship authenticity, although they will be able to state categorically, that a relic was from particular person or article the cluster would be able to give information on the item, e.g. whether a shard of wood was 2000 years old and a contender for a piece of the cross\textsuperscript{34}.)

Some of the symbols and definitions the study will be dealing with are:

1.6.1 The Jesus Story

This study looks at The Jesus Story, the story that is found in the media, the texts and the New Testament. Reading the Gospels in the New Testament of the Bible, it is a story, in its simplest form, of a man born to an artisan-level family (not living in poverty, but a family that constantly need to be frugal to make ends meet). Jesus is born during the time of Herod, a time when Israel is occupied by the Romans. The people are oppressed by their occupiers and their own government. Times are hard. Jesus of Nazareth grows up in Nazareth as the eldest son of a carpenter. As the eldest, He is responsible for His family. As the scriptures do not mention Joseph, His earthly father, after the family’s visit to Jerusalem when Jesus is about twelve, it can be presumed Joseph died before Jesus becomes an itinerant Rabbi. Jesus leaves His family and goes out to preach, teach and heal in Judea and Galilee. His ministry lasts about three years; Jesus teaches His followers that He is the Son of God who brings a message of love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, salvation and the coming of the Kingdom of God. He is arrested for insurrection and blasphemy, tried by both a Roman court and religious Jewish court and sentenced to death. He is crucified at Calvary during Passover on the day before the Sabbath. His body is buried in Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb and guarded by Roman guards. His body disappears after three days. Numerous sightings of Him are reported for forty days after His resurrection. At the festival of Pentecost, His disciples report, He is taken up into heaven\textsuperscript{35}.

\textsuperscript{34} \url{http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11968199/Holy-quest-of-Oxords-Da-Vinci-Code-team.html}

\textsuperscript{35} The story as found in the Gospels of Matthew (Mt), Mark (Mk), Luke (Lk) and John (Jn).
1.6.2 The Holy Grail

All the ‘factional’ books that are part of The Jesus Story deal in some form or other with a concept of the Holy Grail and/or relate back to what was revealed or not revealed at the archaeological digs at Masada and Qumran. The Holy Grail has various meanings and these meanings vary according to time and place. The stories of the Holy Grail are probably some of the oldest mystery stories ever written and not originally linked to Jesus Christ. The first formal story of the Holy Grail where the Grail is connected to The Jesus Story is probably Le Conte Del Grail, written by Chrétien de Troyes in the twelfth century. About thirty years later, more appeared and it is thought that they had been written by a group of Cistercian monks. In these stories, the Grail may be a chalice or a cup (a chalice being an ornate vessel usually of religious or royal significance). It is either the chalice used at the last supper, or a cup used to catch the blood of Jesus on the cross (Duchane 2006:8). Another interpretation is that the Grail is the plate or platter that held the head of John the Baptist, or from which the Passover lamb was served at the last supper. It has also been described as a crystal, silver or gold skull, the carved skull of Jesus, or the emerald that fell from Lucifer’s crown when he plummeted to earth. In essence, the Holy Grail is usually a holy object that has the power to endow the finder with miraculous powers (Duchane 2006:9). The legends of the Holy Grail grew out of a time when life was cheap and chivalry was expressed as service to a king, land, or Holy quest. These stories told of the highest service that could be performed by a man, intermingled with the crusades, tales of exotic lands, romance and valour, making knights not just warriors but rather something akin to saints, or today’s icon and stars (Levene 2009:46). Pope Urban II organised the first crusade in 1095 and declared by a papal decree that all who fought in the crusade would receive forgiveness of all sins without penance, including those who committed murder in the crusades. They were guaranteed a place in heaven and all the riches they could plunder (Duchane 2006:16). The most sought after piece of plunder was the Holy Grail. The promise of heavenly reward has travelled through the ages almost intact. It is a promise given by leaders who see themselves as all-

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36 Prominent Muslim scholars consider the general jihad declaration against unbelievers to be crucial to Islamic success. Those who sacrifice their material comfort and bodies for jihad win salvation. By their sacrifice, they obtain all the pleasures of paradise, be they spiritual – the close presence of God – or material. As an additional incentive, Muhammad promised those mujahdeeen who fight in a jihad war a reward of virgins in paradise. Importantly, those conducting suicide bombings do not consider themselves dead, but rather living with Allah (Sura 2:154) (Bukay 2006:28).
powerful.\textsuperscript{37} Looking at the novels, the study will explore how the \textit{Holy Grail} has changed, according to the study’s Authors, from an object to a person and a bloodline.

\subsection*{1.6.3 The Knights Templar}

The Knights Templar was founded in about 1118 by Hughes Payen, a nobleman from Champagne. He together with eight comrades petitioned Godfrois de Bouillon, the first King of Jerusalem, to create a monastic order to protect pilgrims in the Holy Land, especially on the road to Jerusalem which abounded with bandits and highwaymen, which often meant pilgrims were robbed and killed (Baigent et al 1996:60).

The Knights Templar or, giving them their original name, The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of The Temple was established to help protect these pilgrims. King Baudouin I, the second King of Jerusalem, granted the Templars a headquarters in a wing of the Royal Palace on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Templars regarded the Temple Mount as part of Solomon’s Temple, hence their name. Within two years this small group of knights had become a powerful group, attracting some of the most powerful and wealthiest men in Europe to join them (Picknett & Prince 1997:105).

\begin{quote}
The Knights Templar were a skilled fighting force, with their non-combatants managing an early form of banking. Pilgrims to the Holy Land could expect protection and letters of credit on their travels. They managed the first formal system that supported the use of cheques (Picknett & Prince 1997:105).
\end{quote}

In 1139, a Papal Bull issued by Pope Innocent II stated that the Templars would owe no allegiance to anyone other than the Pope. In effect, they became a law unto themselves. The Templars forged close ties with the Muslim world. They became the major financial

\textsuperscript{37}South Africa’s President Zuma told hundreds of supporters in Mthatha in the Eastern Cape that only an ANC membership card would guarantee an automatic pass to heaven. He was addressing an impromptu rally in the town’s city centre. "When you vote for the ANC, you are also choosing to go to heaven. When you don’t vote for the ANC you should know that you are choosing that man who carries a fork ... who cooks people," Zuma said. "When you are carrying an ANC membership card, you are blessed. When you get up there, there are different cards used but when you have an ANC card, you will be let through to go to heaven," he said to wild applause. "When (Jesus) fetches us we will find (those in the beyond) wearing black, green and gold. The Holy Ones belong to the ANC" (http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2011/02/08/anc-reaction-to-zuma-s-heaven-comment-childish)
institution of the time, lending large sums to destitute monarchs, and were bankers of every throne in Europe and some Muslim potentates (Barber 1994:32).

On Friday 13 October 1307 this reign of power, privilege and wealth came to an end. Philippe IV, the King of France, ordered his army to seize and place under arrest all Templars in France. The charges were ritually denying Christ and repudiating, trampling and spitting on the cross as well as partaking in occult rituals and beliefs (Haag 2009:108). Many of the Templars were burned and many more imprisoned and tortured. One vital thing eluded King Philippe IV: even though the Templars ostensibly vanished from the stage of history, so had their money. Some believe the Templars were tipped off and smuggled their treasures and money out of France before the arrests. Legend has it that the Templars found refuge in Scotland and were said to have fought at the side of Robert Bruce (Haag 2009:109).

There are many legends surrounding the Knights Templar. The authors Brown and Baigent et al support the legend that while the Knights Templar occupied the wing of the Temple, they found something of extreme value. Brown explains that the treasure found by the Templar is the legendary ‘Q’ document, describing it as:

(Q) A manuscript that even the Vatican believe exists. Allegedly, it is a book of Jesus’ teachings, possible written in His own hand which is a chronicle kept by Jesus of His ministry... along with a manuscript called The Magdalene Diaries – Mary Magdalene’s personal account of her relationship with Christ, His crucifixion and her time in France (Brown 2004:343).

Baigent et al tell us what the Templar treasure might possible be:

The treasure, he declared flatly, did not involve gold or precious stones. On the contrary, it consisted of incontrovertible proof that the crucifixion was a fraud and Jesus was alive as late as AD 45 (Baigent et al 1996:37)

Baigent et al goes on to say this treasure could be the Holy Grail and was not only proof that Jesus survived the crucifixion but that the Grail was carries by Mary Magdalene:

38 The ‘Q’ document is a hypothetical document thought to be the source (Quelle in German) or ‘common’ text of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. It is meant to be a collection of saying of Jesus. It is thought to be material from the early Church’s oral tradition (Funk 1993:1-30).
'Notre Dame' does not imply the Virgin (Mary) either. That resonant title – conferred on all great cathedrals of France – would also be seen to refer to the Magdalene... where according to medieval legends, she is said to have brought the *Holy Grail* to France (Baigent et al 1996:102).

They later go on to say:

Perhaps the Magdalene – that elusive woman in the Gospels – was in fact Jesus’ wife. Perhaps their union produced offspring. After the crucifixion, perhaps, the Magdalene with at least one child, was smuggled to Gaul... perhaps, there is, in short, a hereditary bloodline descended directly from Jesus. Perhaps this bloodline, this supreme sang real, then perpetuated intact and incognito, for some four hundred years... And perhaps in the fifth century Jesus’ lineage became allied with the royal line of Franks, thereby engendering the Merovingian dynasty (Baigent et al 1996:329).

1.6.4 The Sacred Feminine

This term is a central theme in many of the books in this study. This theme ties Mary (Jesus’ mother) and Mary Magdalene (His wife) to Nimrod and his wife. The promotion of the sacred feminine exposes the cover-up by the male domination of the church and general society. This male domination, it is claimed, has been achieved by the suppression of the sacred feminine by the early Roman Catholic Church leaders, from Peter to Constantine (Burstein 2004:358).

The fact that women make up a large portion of the readers of the books in this study might not be coincidence, as the books rescues Mary Magdalene from the position of prostitute and sinner, promoting her, according to Burstein’s explanation of Browns book *The Da Vinci Code*, to:

The strong, independent figure, patron of Jesus, cofounder of His movement, His only believer in His greatest hour of need, author of her own Gospel, His Romantic partner and the mother of His child. To the millions of women who feel slighted, discriminated against or unwelcome in churches of all faiths today, the novel is a chance to see early religious history in a different light (Burstein 2004 : xxii).

Lynne Picknett and Clive Prince in their book *The Templar Revelation* link Sophia, the goddess of wisdom, and Mary Magdalene. According to the book, Mary Magdalene’s
remains were being sought by Charles II d’Anjou. Mary holds the key to a great mystery, one that has been jealously and ruthlessly guarded for centuries. In addition, part of this secret involves John the Baptist (and/or John the Evangelist), a figure that is given more prominence in this book than is given to him in the Gospels (Picknett & Prince 1997:143).

1.6.5 Jesus of Nazareth

Another concept that is recurring in The Jesus Story is that of the meaning of the person Jesus Christ. The Christian church understands Jesus of Nazareth as Prince of Peace (Is 9:6), Emmanuel (Is 7:14), King of the Jews (Mt 2:2), Son of God (Ps 2:7; Mt 2:15) and the fulfilment of prophecy. The books the study is using see Him as follows: ‘He could not possible be Jesus of Nazareth because Nazareth did not exist at the time of Christ’ (Joyce 1975:17); a charismatic preacher with a god complex rather than a God Gene (Schonfield 2005:71-83); and a man who saw Himself as the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy (Schonfield 2005:71). In The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail and The Da Vinci Code, Jesus is described as the start of the royal bloodline of France, but not as the Son of God. He was rather given this title to competitively unite Christianity against the pagan religions in the first to third centuries AD (Baigent et al 1996:362). Dan Brown’s character Teabing describes Jesus as:

A historical figure of staggering influence, perhaps the most important enigmatic and inspiring leader the world has ever seen. As prophesied the Messiah, Jesus kings, inspired millions and founded new philosophies. As a descendant of the lines of King Solomon and King David, Jesus possessed a rightful claim to the throne of the Jews (Brown 2004:313).

1.6.6 The Pesher technique

Pesher (pl. pesharim) is a Hebrew word meaning ‘interpretation’ in the sense of ‘solution.’ A scroll (1QpHab) found in the first cave in Qumran is a good example of this. This scroll is a commentary on the book Habakkuk. The author represents God as the ‘Teacher of Righteousness’, a prominent figure in the Essen community. Each verse is quoted and

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39 Sir Hugh Teabing’s name is an anagram of Baigent and Leigh two of the writers of The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail (Cox 2004:150).
phrase by phrase an explanation of the verse is given. The author claims there is an underlying message in Habakkuk other than the obvious text. The Pesharim found in The Dead Sea Scrolls show a theory of scriptural interpretation that was previously partly known, but is now fully defined. The writers of Pesharim believe that scripture is written on two levels: the surface level for ordinary readers with limited knowledge ‘babes’ and the concealed one for specialists with higher knowledge. The word Pesher is used in the Old Testament to mean “interpretation of dream” (VanderKam 1994:45,150).

The Pesher technique Barbara Thiering uses is of her own development. She claims that, like the scroll (1QpHab) of The Dead Sea Scrolls which used the Pesher technique, the Gospels of the New Testament are also written in a Pesher technique. She claims the Gospels contain an underlying meaning and are not what is understood by merely reading the text.

1.6.7 Conspiracy theories

The term ‘conspiracy theory’ was originally described as a neutral description for any legitimate or illegitimate claim of civil, criminal or political conspiracy. According to the Oxford Dictionary: to conspire means ‘to join in a secret agreement to do an unlawful or wrongful act or to use such means to accomplish a lawful end’ However, the term ‘conspiracy theory’ is also used to indicate a narrative genre that includes a broad selection of (not necessarily related) arguments for the existence of grand conspiracies.40

One popular conspiracy theory concerning The Dead Sea Scrolls is that the Catholics who did the initial analysis of the scrolls under direction of the Catholic Church kept their conclusions a secret because they challenged the Christian faith. In his book The Story of the Scrolls: The miraculous discovery and true significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls (2010), Geza Vermes, who was part of The Dead Sea Scrolls team, disagrees with this theory, although he criticises the team for its slowness and carelessness. He says that although the manuscripts are relevant to the study of Christian beginnings, they are not the whole story (Vermes 2010:34).

40 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conspiracy_theory
1.6.8 Secret organisations

The lists of theories presented by the media are not consistent. They often contradict themselves and each other. They are usually linked to The Priory of Sion\(^{41}\), The Illuminati\(^{42}\), The Knights Templar, The Freemasons, The Roman Catholic Church and its closed secret sects and/or orders and deal with conspiracies involving the treasures of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, Masada and *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, but can also include the Brotherhood of Islam, the Zionist Movement and the Arab League, as Dan Burstein tells us in his book *Secrets of the code* (Burstein 2004: xxii).

The prominent organisations referred to by Starbird, Brown and Baigent et al are The Templars and The Priory of Sion, which they believe were the discoverers and the keepers of the secret of the *Holy Grail*, the sacred feminine, Mary Magdalene and the bloodline of the Christ. There are many theories and countless old and new ‘facts’ that all weaving together to form the tapestry of *The Jesus Story* (Baigent et al 1996:59-64) (Brown 2004:23, 238).

1.7 DELIMITATIONS

This study does not set out to prove or disprove the traditional or alternative *Jesus Story* or the Gospel text. There will be no undertaking to prove or disprove the existence of the Historic Jesus. The study will look at the more popular alternative *Jesus Stories* and how these portray Jesus. The base of these theories will be *The Da Vinci Code* and the books and films it uses as its references. Not all books written on the subject will be used due to the vastness of the industry that has sprung up around this story. Although this study is a combination of fact and fiction, new truths and those truths claimed or believed as present day fact, it will endeavour to maintain integrity of argument.

\(^{41}\) A centuries old secret society, founded in 1090 by Godfroy de Bouillon, who captured Jerusalem in 1099. They built the abbey of Notre Dame du Mont de Sion on the ruins of an ancient Byzantine Church outside the walls of Jerusalem, housing the order of Augustinian canons who, it is said, were involved in the creation of the Knights Templar.

\(^{42}\) The Illuminati is a secret society, founded by Weishaupt in Bavaria in 1776, who many believe rule the world. It is a similar model as the Freemasons.
CHAPTER TWO
THE JESUS STORY IN ‘FICTION’

2.1 INTRODUCTION

_The Jesus Story_ is a multi-media industry, eclipsed in size probably only by the Bollywood genre, but unlike other entertainment, this ‘industry’ has the potential to open new dialogues in the modern western belief systems. It can challenge many traditional beliefs and for some people their faith. _The Jesus Story_, a 2000-year-old story, is responsible for great works of humanity, wars and persecution. It is a story of great love and sacrifice which grew into a religious movement. This story has inspired its believers to take and lay down lives. It has led the world into wars and nation-building, it is responsible for social care, tolerance and persecution. The non-belief in this man Jesus, whose doctrine has changed world systems and time, is seen as courting eternal damnation and belief in Him as giving eternal life.

A story that provokes such passion does and always will lend itself to the epic story sought after in theatre, film, television and print media. The study will look at _The Jesus Story_ and its industry over the last fifty years, focusing on some of the works (fact and fiction, as well as a mixture of both) that arrested the world’s attention. The study will consider whether the archaeological data available agrees with the ‘facts’ that this industry grew out of or whether these ‘facts’ were taken out of context or changed slightly to create ‘new facts’.

2.2 BOOKS AND FILMS

The books that are central to this study are considered ‘superbooks’, having all sold over a million copies, and the films looked at in this study are commercial films. These books and films caused controversy and discussion at the time of publication and release and are revisited each time new archaeological finds or theories are presented. Some have been instrumental in formulating church doctrines, such as _The Two Babylons_ by Bishop
Alexander Hislop (1858), an anti-papist, and *The Archko Volumes* (1887), written by Drs McIntosh and Twyman, which was written from a Catholic conviction. Both books are used by some New Age Apostolic and Charismatic churches as proof of Jesus’ existence and the truth of the events and stories of the New Testament. Both of these books will be briefly discussed in this chapter (cf. 2.3.8 and 2.3.9).

The most popular book and the most popular film looked at in this study could not be further apart. The book, *The Da Vinci Code*, is a work of fiction, a detective novel based on alternative and conspiracy theories surrounding Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, while the film, *The Passion of the Christ*, endeavours to present the last days of Jesus of Nazareth, using the four Gospels and religious symbolism as reference.

The most successful book, as mentioned above, is Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code.* This book has had some amazing spin-offs aside from the number of books sold and the success of the film based on the book; an entire industry of artefacts, souvenirs, games, films and tourism worth billions of dollars has developed from Dan Brown and his books. The book, *The Da Vinci Code*, caused many people to turn to religious centres for an explanation of its ‘theories’ and ‘accusations’. Brown’s book in essence says that the Church and in particular the Catholic Church has been hiding the truth about Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Hugh Teabing, one of his characters, quotes what apparently Leonardo da Vinci said about the New Testament in his book on polemics and speculation. Teabing says to Sophie:

‘I think you will find this relevant to our discussion.’ Sophie read the words,

“Many have made a trade of delusions and false miracles, deceiving the stupid multitudes. – LEONARDO DA VINCI”

‘Here’s another’, Teabing said, pointing to a different quote.

“Blinding ignorance does mislead us, O! Wretched mortals, open your eyes!” – LEONARDO DA VINCI

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43 The spelling of Da Vinci is not correct. The name is correctly spelt da Vinci, but this is how Dan Brown spells the artist’s name, so the study will use Dan Brown’s version of the spelling when referring to the book.
Sophie felt a little chill. ‘Da Vinci is talking about the Bible?’ Teabing nodded. ‘Leonardo’s feelings about the Bible related directly to the Holy Grail ...’ ‘...and everything you need to know about the Bible can be summed up by the great canon doctor Martin Percy.’ Teabing cleared his throat and declared, “The Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven.” (Brown 2004:312).

The most surprising thing to arise from this book’s popularity was the seriousness with which the religious institutions took the book. Religious leaders and academics were drawn into the debate, most wittingly by running courses and warning congregations against this book. Some of the players were not so willing, getting caught up in the media hype, which more often than not meant the media calling on academics and church leaders to explain the book in 30-second sound bites or 100 words, with not the best of results. The only thing that equalled the book and film’s success was the film The Passion of the Christ, which had a similar reception with its controversy44 contributing to its phenomenal success. Surprisingly, The Passion of the Christ, unlike most of the books or films in this study, was based almost solely on the Gospels of the New Testament. The film was met with just as much discussion and accusations.

The discussion of Jesus’ death, resurrection, deity and bloodline often means best sellers, by-lines and headlines for the reporters, authors and filmmakers. In this study, the only books, films and media reports chosen are those that have caused a media phenomenon45.

The study will centre on the following books: The Passover Plot (2005) by Hugh J Schonfield; The Jesus Scroll (1975) by Donovan Joyce; The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail (1996) by M Baigent, R Leigh and H Lincoln; Jesus the Man (1992) by Barbara Thiering; The Woman With The Alabaster Jar (1993) by Margaret Starbird; The Da Vinci Code (2004) by Dan Brown; and The Cross Bones (2005) by Kathy Reichs. All these books, with the exception of The Da Vinci

44The Jewish community complained the film was anti-Semitic and the Italians argued that the Romans were not bloodthirsty murders. Most critics complained about the violence of the film. David Edelstien of Slate magazine called it a “two hour six minute snuff movie,” Jami Bernard of the New York Times said it was “the most virulently anti- Semitic movie made since German propaganda films of World War II” and Time magazine said it was “the most violent movie of all time, followed by the Clockwork Orange” ( http://www.passion-movie.com/).

45Some of the TV channels that produce many Jesus Story documentaries are National Geographic; ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation); ABC Network; BBC and Discovery Channel.
Code and The Cross Bones which are fiction, are claimed by their authors to be fact and most are written by academics. Each of the above-mentioned books presents a piece of the jigsaw puzzle that makes up the theories that have helped develop The Jesus Story.

As with the books, there are films that have opened dialogue regarding The Jesus Story. Each portrays a unique Jesus. The Last Temptation of Christ (1988), directed by Martin Scorsese, is based on the book The Last Temptation of Christ (1953), written by Nikos Kazantzakis. The film looks at a Jesus that faces all the temptations of life: sex, wealth and power. The Jesus of Montréal (1989), directed and written by Denys Arcane, depicts a Jesus-type character who is fathered by a Roman soldier, gets married and criticises Judaism, which in the film is represented by the Catholic Church. The film draws on the theories and research similar to those explored in the study. The Passion of the Christ (2004), written and directed by Mel Gibson, portrays most closely the story written in the Gospels. It concentrates on the sacrifice of the Christ with all its brutality and agony. Each film stirred up controversy, creating a noisy dialogue with those for and against clamouring for centre stage.

The main theories of the superbooks and films are as follows (cf. 2.2.1-2.2.6):

2.2.1 Jesus was the King of the Jews

According to this theory, Jesus was descended from the line of David, the grandson of Jacob-Heli, the patriarch of Ephesus who was in charge of five provinces of Asia Minor, which brought in half of the income under the taxation scheme. As grandson, Jesus was a direct descendent of David. He was, therefore, grafted into the royal line of Judah and the last remaining legitimate king of Israel (Thiering 1992:29, 59) (Starbird 1993:62) (Joyce 1975:22). Jesus took advantage of this lineage and was a cunning political leader who staged miracles to promote His overthrow of the Roman occupation and the local religious government (Schonfield 2005:90-100).
2.2.2 Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene

This theory describes Mary as ‘a demented psychotic’ (Joyce 1975:33), a whore by the Catholic Church (Baigent et al 1996:329) (Brown 2004:385) (Starbird 1993:29) and the mother of children whose bloodline became the Holy Grail and the ‘true’ French Royal Bloodline of ‘Merovingian’\(^\text{46}\), which when not on the throne has been the power behind the throne (Baigent et al 1996:4) (Joyce 1975:23).

2.2.3 Jesus did not die on the cross

The theory states there were two types of crucifixion, soft and hard. This will be discussed in Chapter Four. If this is true, it means Jesus might not necessarily have died on the cross, but rather lived out His life on Masada. One theory is that Jesus survived the cross, aided by Pilate, John the beloved disciple and/or Joseph of Arimathea or His followers (Schonfield 2005:147). Jesus lived in Masada after the fake or non-fatal crucifixion and died in His eighties. A missing skeleton was apparently found, but not reported in the eventual reports on Masada, according to Donovan Joyce (Joyce 1975:26) and Kathy Reichs (Reichs 2005:1). Another theory is that His death and resurrection was a Roman plot to destroy the Jewish society of the day (Joyce 1975:39), while another is that the crucifixion was part of the Essenes’ punishment of members who transgressed the community rules and tried to take over the sect (Thiering 1992:26).

The alleged documents that come into The Authors’ possession turn out to be proof that Jesus did not die, but faked His death in Jerusalem and was married to Mary Magdalene. This formula is presented in all the superbooks considered in this study except The Two Babylons, which is an expose of the Roman Catholic Church, revealing it as a pagan religion, and The Archko Volume, which is a series of letters written by the main characters in the Gospels.

\(^\text{46}\) Gérard de Sède finally in 1988 came out with his book Rennes-le-Chateau: Le Dossier; Les impostures; Les Phatasmes; Les Hypotheses, in which he admitted that the dossiers were forged and the Merovingian line does not exist today (Burstein 2004:304).
The films with similar theories are *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *Jesus of Montréal*, which cast Jesus as a man of modern times who is led into all temptations. In these two films, Jesus is portrayed as married or at least in an intimate relationship with Mary Magdalene. They present Jesus dying on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice for His beliefs. Although they received good numbers at the box office, they stand in the shadow of the films that tried to represent the Gospel as closely as possible. The film *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) by Mel Gibson was a box-office phenomenon, coming second only to *The Jesus Film*[^47] (1979), co-directed by Peter Sykes, John Heyman and John Krish, a film produced and distributed by Campus Crusade, which according to the New York Times of 22 July 2003, page 1 AR, is the most watched film of all times.

### 2.2.4 The resurrection was faked

Barbara Thiering in her book *Jesus the Man* tries to convince her audience:

> Throughout Christian history, the resurrection has not been treated as the very pivot of the faith. This is something that has developed in recent times. Since the Enlightenment, when human reason was given greater authority, requiring evidence for beliefs, Christians have tried to find proofs for their beliefs, using categories of science. Fundamentalism, which holds that there are certain fundamental, factually based beliefs, is a development of the twentieth century (Thiering 1992:118).

This suggests that Jesus’ death and resurrection were recent developments in the Christian religion and not original fact, negating the fact that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19:

> 12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

[^47]: This film is not used by the study as it is not a commercial film; it is used by *Campus Crusade* and other missionary organisations as an evangelical tool.
Joyce (1975:26), Thiering (1992:26), Reichs (2005:1) and Schonfield (2005:147) do not agree, all stating the resurrection is a fable and not necessary for Christian religion.

2.2.5 Mary Magdalene fled to France carrying the Holy Grail

According to the theory proposed by The Authors, Mary Magdalene, who was carrying Jesus’ child and aided by Joseph Arimathea, fled to a Jewish community in France before the destruction of Jerusalem (Baigent et al 1996:230)(Starbird 1993:53). This child was the start of the Merovingian bloodline, the true royal bloodline of France (Baigent et al 1996:106) (Brown 2004:533). In some theories, this Merovingian bloodline runs through many of the USA presidents, excluding President Obama (who is black and so could not be part of the French Royal bloodline, but is part of the Illuminati). This French Royal bloodline includes George Washington, John Adams, John Quincy, Thomas Jefferson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush and Sarah Palin48.

2.2.6 The authority of the Bible is not absolute

The relevance of the Gospels according to The Authors is minimal in the parameters of the Christian faith. They all insist their theories do not have any effect on the Christian Church:

It is not generally understood by Christians that the Gospels had nothing to do with the actual birth of their religion; their role came much later. In fact, the faith was flourishing in at least a dozen centres in the pagan world, before the very first Gospel was written when Paul – the former Saul – was in his grave (Joyce 1975:15).

The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail’s authors state that the core of Christianity (Jesus’ virgin birth, His unmarried status and miracles) are not relevant to The Jesus Story or the foundation of Christianity (Baigent et al 1996:9). Dan Brown agrees, saying that Constantine manipulated the New Testament its contents and texts that told the real story have been lost or destroyed (Brown 2004:312).

48 [www.bibliotecapleyades.net/bloodline](http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/bloodline)
Simon Cox points out in his book *Cracking the Da Vinci Code*: Constantine called the Nicaea in 325 AD for all Bishops to bring about harmony in the Church. He needed to attend to the Arian heresy that denied the divinity of Jesus Christ and the disparate dates of Easter, which was causing disharmony in the Church. After much discuss the conference produced the Creed of Nicaea that stated the Christian belief in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Cox 2004:42).

Most of the books the study considered, even if they do not have similar themes, have similar templates: *The Authors* or the main characters are approached by a man, or taken to a venue. They are given or shown secret documents, a photograph, or in the case of *The Da Vinci Code* the clues to a riddle, that leads to information that would destroy the fabric of the Islamic faith, the Jewish faith, the Christian faith, the Catholic Church and/or France, Israel and/or the Vatican City. *The Archko Volumes* follow this formula, but instead of refuting the story in the New Testament, it is the proof of its veracity.

2.3 THE BOOKS, THEIR WRITERS AND PLOTS

2.3.1 The Passover Plot

Amazon.com encourages people to buy the 40th anniversary edition, saying that this book will ‘rock the establishment’s view of Jesus all over again’; reminding its customers that Hugh Schonfield is probably one of the most controversial figures in Jewish historical research. They quote Schonfield as saying: ‘The scholars deplore that I have spilled the beans to the public. Several of them have said to me, “You ought to have kept this just among ourselves, you know”’ (Schonfield 2005: IV). The ‘beans he spilt’ were, according to him, presenting historical evidence that Jesus was a mortal man who believed He was the Messiah, basing His ministry and life on the Old Testament prophecies of the coming of the Messiah to the extent of plotting the crucifixion and resurrection. Unfortunately, this all went wrong, according to Schonfield, when He was stabbed in the side by a Roman soldier.

Interest in *The Passover Plot* increased when Dan Brown used this book as a reference when he wrote *The Da Vinci Code* and when Mel Gibson used it while making *The Passion of the*
Christ, which aided in growing a new generation of people seeking the truth about The Jesus Story\textsuperscript{49} in traditional and alternative versions of the story.

2.3.1.1 Hugh Schonfield\textsuperscript{50} Hugh Schonfield (17 May 1901-24 January 1988) was an associate and disciple of H G Wells. He was born in London and educated at St Paul’s School and King’s College. He completed his postgraduate studies in Glasgow. He received a Doctor of Sacred Literature and in 1952 he was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for his work in Service to International Humanity. Schonfield was part of the original The Dead Sea Scrolls team. As a biblical scholar, he specialised in New Testament and Early Development of Christianity Studies. As Hugh J. Schonfield said of himself:

... while I was a student at Glasgow University, we were visited by an imminent Scottish Professor of New Testament history and literature, whom I, a Jewish boy rather startled by my youthful arguments and familiarity with Ancient Christian authorities, had studied at my own initiative. Already at the time the person of Jesus greatly attracted me and I wanted to find out what had been the convictions of His original Jewish followers who acknowledge him as the Messiah (Schonfield 2005:9).

In 1956, he founded the Mondcivitan Republic, The Commonwealth of World Citizens, a servant nation for the impartial service of all nations. The Common Wealth of World Citizens was not an organisation, but a worldwide people who had a valid and recognised citizenship with relationships with governments of all countries. This became the basis for The World Trust Service founded in 1955 was a special agency of the Mondcivitan Republic; its aim was to give impartial aid to alleviate poverty, famine, disease, epidemics and to improve standards of living by empowering people.

Schonfield wrote over forty books that cover literature, history, theology, politics, economics and archaeology. In one of the books published in 1932, The New Hebrew Typography, he proposed that Hebrew should be modelled after the Latin alphabet including lower case distinction, no final forms, a vertical emphasis and serifs. This form has not been adopted, but it is an interesting idea.

\textsuperscript{49}\url{http://www.amazon.com/The-Passover-Plot-Special-Anniversary/dp/1932857095}
\textsuperscript{50}\url{http://www.schonfield.org/}
As mentioned above, Schonfield was one of the original *The Dead Sea Scrolls* team (Lunn 2004:119). Amongst the scrolls, he discovered a Hebrew code he called ‘Atbash Cipher’. This code uses Hebrew letters in which each letter is exchanged for an equidistant letter (this in the English alphabet would mean the letter ‘z’ would be exchanged with the letter ‘a’ and ‘b’ with ‘y’). The word Atbash comes from the Hebrew letters Aleph, Taw, Beth and Shin: A, T-B, SH (Brown 2004:404-405). The idea of a code was developed more extensively by Dan Brown in *The Da Vinci Code* through the introduction of a cryptex which Brown fictitiously claims was invented by Leonard da Vinci (Brown 2004:198-200). The cryptex is a vessel that contains an article or documents which needs to be opened with a code. There is no evidence Leonardo da Vinci ever invented something like this (Garlow 2006:64).

2.3.1.2 The Story

*The Passover Plot*, first published in 1965, has had its 40th anniversary edition published by the Disinformation Company in 2005. The study will be using this edition as the editors have included information from recent discoveries in a new prologue.  

*The Passover Plot* is the outcome of an endeavour which has extended over forty years to discover who the man Jesus Christ really was(...) most books about Him have been devotional, apologetic or polemical and I wished mine to be none of these. What I aimed at was to shed all dispositions to make use of Jesus and allow Him from His own time to explain Himself to me (Schonfield 2005:9).

Schonfield argues that Jesus was a well-educated man, very familiar with sects like the Essenes and Nazarenes and teachings in Biblical Galilee, which accounted for His sceptical and rebellious attitude towards the religious leaders and authorities of the Temple in Jerusalem. According to Schonfield, Jesus was an innocent, fanatical, messianic pretender who set up events to ‘fulfil’ messianic prophecies and what He considered His Davidic birthright; He was a master manipulator who believed He would not die on the cross (Schonfield 2005:35-38).

Schonfield says that the expectation for a Messiah was extremely high amongst the Jews during the first century AD. This, along with the despair caused by the occupation of Rome and the subjugation of the Temple and religious leaders, made it an ideal environment for
the existence of Jesus’ revolutionary ideas. Jesus, according to Schonfield, was typical of His time, although extraordinary in His beliefs and convictions (Schonfield 2005:121). A modern-day example of this kind of conviction could be suicide bombers rather than the sacrificial lamb and the last sacrifice. According to Richard Flanagan, a Brooke-prize winner and author of *The Unknown Terrorist* (2006):

> Jesus (…) had no choice when confronted with the failure of love but to seek His own death. In His understanding that love was not enough, in His acceptance of the necessity of the sacrifice of His own life to enable the future of those around Him, Jesus is history’s first, but not last, example of a suicide bomber (Flanagan 2006:41).

According to Schonfield, Jesus was a martyr for the cause, not a pretender who got caught up in history:

> He was no charlatan, wilfully and deliberately misleading His people, well knowing that His posing as the Messiah was fraudulent. There is not the slightest suspicion of pretence on His part. On the contrary, no one could be more sure of His vocation than Jesus and not even the threat of imminent death by the horrible torture of crucifixion could make Him deny His Messiahship. We have to accept the absolute sincerity of Jesus. But this does not require us to think of Him as omniscient and infallible. It is possible to hold that the messianic hope was not only a justifiable but indeed an inspired conception and yet in many respects the predictions and expectations of the interpreters of the scripture could be quite wrong (Schonfield 2005:41).

According to Schonfield, Jesus ‘schemed in faith’ (Schonfield 2005:173) with the help of an unnamed young man, Lazarus and Joseph of Arimathea to escape the cross, feign death, be revived in the tomb and convince His disciples (who were not part of the plot) that He was risen from the dead. Jesus, Schonfield argues, manipulated all those around Him including the High Priests, religious and Roman rulers (Schonfield 2005:121). *The Passover Plot*, according to Schonfield, unfortunately went wrong when a Roman soldier pierced the side of Jesus.

A Coptic manuscript from Egypt now in the British Museum, titled *The Book of the Resurrection* and attributed to the apostle Bartholomew, has a variant of the story. The gardener called Philogenes, whose son Jesus had cured, speaks to Mary at the tomb. Though the Mary here is the mother of Jesus, not Magdalene and tells her: ‘from the very moment when the Jews crucified Him, they had persisted in seeking out an exceedingly safe sepulchre wherein they might lay Him, so that the disciples might come by night and carry Him away secretly. Now I said to them, there is a tomb quite
close to my vegetable garden: bring Him, lay Him in it and I myself will keep watch over Him. I thought in my heart saying: when the Jews shall have departed and entered into their houses, I will go into the tomb of my Lord and will carry Him away and will give Him spices and sweet-smelling unguents and scents (Schonfield 2005:171).

Schonfield sees merit in this argument from *The Book of Resurrection* by Miguel Serrano and his scenario is not much different:

What seems probable is that in the darkness of that Saturday night when Jesus was brought out of the tomb by those concerned in the plan, He regained consciousness temporarily, but finally succumbed. If, as in the fourth Gospel says, His side was pierced by a lance before He was taken down from the cross His chance of recovery was slender. It was much too risky and perhaps too late, to take the body back to the tomb, replace the bandages left there, roll the stone across the entrance and try to create the impression that everything was as it had been on Friday evening. It would also have been thought most unseemly. Before dawn, the mortal remains of Jesus were quickly yet reverently interred, leaving the puzzle of the empty tomb (Schonfield 2005:172).

There is no mention of the guards at the tomb, but Schonfield keeps the two-tomb theory. The Gospels tell us Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb close to town and the crucifixion site. This probably meant once the Sabbath and Passover weekend were over He was to be reburied in His own tomb.

*The Passover Plot* extends beyond the Passover weekend. Schonfield tells us The Beloved disciple John was a priest and member of the Sanhedrin who with Joseph of Arimathea was responsible for staging the sightings of Jesus after the crucifixion. Schonfield even suggests that the beloved disciple, John, may have been the person they all saw (Schonfield 2005:177-179).

By His planning beyond the cross and the tomb, by His implicit confidence in the coming Kingdom of God over which He was deputed to reign, Jesus had won through to victory. The messianic programme was saved from the grave, of all dead hopes to become a guiding light and inspiration to men. Wherever humankind serves to bring rule of justice, righteousness and peace, there the deathless presence of Jesus the Messiah is with them. Wherever a people of God are found labouring in the cause of human brotherhood, love and compassion, there the King of the Jews is enthroned. No other will ever come to be what He was and do what He did (Schonfield 2005:180-181).
Jesus, in Schonfield’s opinion, appears to have been a scholar of the prophets of the Old Testament. He manipulated the system and those around Him to ‘fulfil’ the prophecies of the coming Messiah and a world ruled by the Messiah, a Messiah acknowledged by all, a world with no strife and war. The Messiah would gather His people to Him: a Holy People, a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation (2 Samuel 1:14, 16) (Daniel 9:25-26).

2.3.1.3 The Theories According to one theory, Jesus was a deeply religious, well-educated Galilean, well versed in the laws and customs of the Nazarenes and Essenes who, according to Schonfield, lived mainly in Galilee:

Whether through some experience (some prophecy over Him) which defined His Messiahship or as the outcome of His own imaginings, the seed of identification of Himself with the Messiah was planted in the mind of Jesus and it is quite possible that He was of tender years when this happened ... The land in which Jesus lived had rung with exploits of the patriot leader Judas of Galilee. It was told how He opposed paying tribute to Caesar, proclaiming that Jews had no ruler but God ... In Galilee, there was hatred of the heathen Romans and their Herodian minions who controlled the country and ostracism of Jews who sold their souls to serve them. Preachers in the synagogue urged the people to repent that God might intervene on their behalf and send the Messiah: they expounded the scriptures of consolation and hope. There was much to make any sensitive Jewish lad conscious of strange and momentous events in store, events with which He might be intimately associated (Schonfield 2005:53).

Schonfield mentions another theory, where Jesus was brought up in poverty, which contradicts the statement above as a poor family would not be in the financial position to educate a child past the minimum needed for His bar mitzvah:

It is certified that Jesus was the eldest of a fairly large family brought up in humble circumstances (...) the household at Nazareth was accustomed to frugal living. Things that Jesus said point to personal experiences of economic stringency, which His association converted into a philosophy of life. He was assured that in God’s providence, there would be enough for simple necessities, enough to mangle on and one should not be anxious about tomorrow. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Schonfield 2005:58).

Another of the theories proposed by Schonfield is that Jesus was perfectly aware of the consequences of His actions:
The Jesus of the Gospels alludes to Himself from the beginning as the son of man, a northern messianic title (Schonfield 2005:63).

Going on further to say:

For Jesus it was the essence of His faith that God in His mysterious ways had made the choice of Him, a descendent of David as means of fulfilling those purposes, which from age to age the Lord had inspired His messengers to proclaim (Schonfield 2005:68).

Perhaps one of the most important and most controversial theories proposed by Schonfield is that Jesus did not plan to die on the cross:

We have already made the point that Jesus has sought to bring about that He would be on the cross not much more than three or four hours\textsuperscript{51}. If we follow the Four Gospels, the ordeal lasted barely three hours, from a little after midday to about three o’clock in the afternoon (Schonfield 2005:164).

This theory is supported by statements made by Josephus, who tells us that people did survive crucifixion:

I saw many captives crucified and remembered three of them as my former acquaintance. I was very sorry at this in my mind and went with tears in my eyes to Titus and told him of them; so he immediately commanded them to be taken down and to have the greatest care taken of them, in order to their recovery; yet two of them died under the physician’s hands, while the third recovered (Whiston 2012:3467).

Schonfield’s plot only works if the friends and disciples of Jesus had abandoned Judaism so that the fact that they were doing all this work on the Sabbath would not be deemed a sin. Exodus 20:8-11 instructs no work on the Sabbath:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{8}Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. \textsuperscript{9}Six days you shall labour and do all your work, \textsuperscript{10}but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it, you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. \textsuperscript{11}For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{51}Josephus relates how three of his friends were crucified and that he begged Titus for them. When they were taken down two died, but one recovered. This is very close to what the Gospels say. The two robbers crucified with Jesus died, but He was resurrected after Josephus tended His wounds with spices similar to those mentioned in the Gospels (Schonfield 2005:64).
2.3.2 The Jesus Scroll

In the introduction of his book, Donovan Joyce tells us that he was ‘critically studying old evidence’ in the light of the New Testament which recently emerged from the wilderness of Judea...’ (Joyce 1975:13). This, he claims, proves that The Jesus Story is a Catholic Church myth. Joyce sees the existence of God as ‘...unsupported by real experience and that there is therefore no valid reasons for doubting what his Holiness, Pope Leo X, is reputed to have called ‘The Fable of Christ’, “How well we know what a profitable superstition this ‘Fable of Christ’ has been for us’, Pope Leo X (1513–1521)(Joyce 1975:13). He feels that the discovery of The Dead Sea Scrolls and the evidence at Masada proves this.

The idea that the Jesus Story is just that ‘a story’ is still prevalent in the Catholic Church today. Father Harry Wilkinson of the Immaculate Conception in Rosebank (Johannesburg, South Africa) reminded the family and friends attending Janet Askew’s funeral in May 2011 (after reading a portion of the New Testament) that ‘the stories and mythology of the Bible are secondary to the traditions of the church and are just the cherry on the top.’ This statement reminded me of Joyce telling his readers that:

It is not generally understood by Christians that the Gospels had nothing at all to do with the actual birth of their religion; their role came much later. In fact, the faith was flourishing in at least a dozen centres in the pagan world outside Judea many years before the very first Gospels were written and Paul – the former Saul – was in his grave (Joyce 1975:15).

2.3.2.1 Donovan Joyce

Joyce was born in Hawthorn (Melbourne, Australia) and received his education at Scotch College Hawthorn in 1910. In 1932, he joined a commercial radio station. In 1945, Joyce formed ‘Donovan Joyce Productions’. The company wrote and commissioned dramas for radio, which he was successful in exporting to The USA and South Africa (they were performed on Springbok Radio). The T-Men, the first drama he ever submitted to the USA, sold to US networks within weeks of its arrival. Donovan Joyce, by all accounts, was a successful radio play-writer; some of his plays revolved around the church.

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52 Joyce’s reference to The Dead Sea Scrolls and Masada.
53 https://www.donovanjoyce.com
and Christianity, but unlike the Authors who claim their books are fact, he was not an academic.

2.3.2.2 The Story  

In the first sentence of his book, by way of introduction, Joyce explains: ‘This is a detective story!’ Joyce is not talking about a novel, but rather a journey of discovery to reach Joyce’s conclusions and truths (Joyce 1975:13).

The story is told in the past tense, according to the story, in 1964 Joyce travelled to Israel to visit Masada while researching for a book he planned to write. Joyce claims that Yigael Yadin prevented him from visiting the site. ‘Despite the intervention of Mr. Menachem Begin, then leader of the Gahal Party in the Israeli Knesset (parliament) and later Prime Minister, and Mr. Levi Eshkol, Yadin remained mysteriously obdurate and refused to reverse his decision’ (Joyce 1975:21). Joyce claims the reason for the refusal of the permit was due to him being a suspect in a smuggling operation. Joyce claims his hotel room was searched and his toilet blocked so that there would be a reason to move him to a bugged room. His flight to Masada on Arika Airlines was ‘cancelled’; he was followed by twin sisters and sent on a wild goose chase to Beersheba to meet Yadin. Just before leaving Israel, Menachem Begin met Joyce and apologised to him for not being able to go to visit Masada (Joyce 1975:172-176).

After an unsuccessful trip, he decided to return home. When Joyce arrived at Tel-Aviv’s Lod Airport to leave Israel, a Professor Grosset accosted him (Joyce 1975:167). Professor Grosset had apparently stolen a clay jar containing a scroll from Masada while working on the site. Joyce met Grosset in the men’s toilet, where he produced a scroll wrapped in a towel in a bag (the professor had broken the original clay jar in which the scroll had been found when he removed the scroll). Grosset, according to the story, had seen and read the contents of the scroll. Professor Grosset informed him the scroll was a personal letter written by a man just before the fall of Masada (Joyce 1975:182).

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54 This was not his real name. A man Joyce had met in Israel, who said he had been the Chair of Semitic Languages & Studies at a university in the U.S.A. and had been part of the team at Masada (Joyce 1975:167)
55 This would be an amazing feat, considering the fragility of the scrolls and the length of time it takes to translate scrolls.
Grosset then offered him $5000 to smuggle the scroll (the fifteenth scroll from Masada) to Australia. The scroll, Grosset told Joyce, had been written by a man whose son had been crucified at Masada. According to Joyce, the crucifixion was a device used by Romans to force a city to surrender (Joyce 1975:24). This man’s name was Yeshua ben Ya’akob ben Gennesareth (Jesus of Gennesareth56, son of Jacob), the last rightful descendant of the Hasmonean (Maccabean) Kings of Israel and the person now referred to as Jesus of Nazareth57 (Joyce 1975:22-23).

Joyce’s flight was delayed for eight hours, which Grosset said was a plot to ensure that the scroll did not leave Israel. Professor Grosset and the scroll disappeared after Grosset said that he was in danger and that people were after him. Joyce was put up in a hotel and a few hours later told his plane to Australia via Delhi, India, was leaving. At Delhi, Joyce caught a glimpse of a man that looked like Grosset leaving the plane at Delhi and heading for a Russian plane and the Soviet Union (Joyce 1975:186-188).

2.3.2.3 The Theories Joyce argues that Yadin had a political and military agenda. This is also a theory that Kathy Reich uses in her book, Cross Bones. This agenda was, according to Joyce, in part the reason that The Dead Sea Scrolls took so long to be released (Joyce 1975:20-21, 167-168). The reasons for Yadin preventing Joyce from visiting Masada was, according to Joyce, a cover-up to prevent the world finding out that Jesus was married and had a child. However, why this would interest Yadin, an Israeli Jew, is not clear. As for the rest of the information supplied by Professor Grosset, it consists of one meagre fact: the scroll’s author had a son and, therefore, had been married. ‘This son, whose name was not given me, had actually been crucified before his father’s eyes’. The lack of further details does not prevent Joyce from guessing that this had occurred at Masada (Joyce 1975:22-24).

56 Gennesareth is one of history’s several names for the Sea of Galilee but, specifically, it was applied to the small but exquisite and fertile plain – on the lake’s western shore just south of Capernaum (Joyce 1975:23).
57 Nazareth was Gennesareth. Jesus did not come from Nazareth as Nazareth did not exist until after 70 AD (Joyce 1975:17).
Joyce continues in his book by saying that Jesus was the last descendant of the Maccabees\(^{58}\). He was the rightful and last king of Israel:

With his son dead and his own death probably only an hour away, the scroll author announces the end of the High Priest - Kings of Israel, of whom he claims to have been the last direct descendant... These were the Hasmonean kings or, as you probably know them better, the Maccabees... So, old boy, you’d better face it; the author was in fact, King of Israel (Joyce 1975: 184)

Joyce goes on to say that if this man was the Christ, then Jesus survived the cross:

-we have no absolutely, reliable evidence that, historically, the resurrection ever occurred, so that complete belief in the event must depend on faith alone... The Romans used two different methods, which were never combined... they might be described as ‘fast and slow’. Although death was the ultimate objective of both methods, the ‘slow’ was designed to inflict hideous suffering as well, on any particularly offensive criminal such as anyone guilty of treason. These poor wretches took up to six days to expire... With the ‘fast’ method, however, used when it was more of a case of speed than the infliction of unbearable pain almost infinitely prolonged, the ‘horn’ was replaced by a tiny platform on which the doomed man stood, preferably on the balls of his feet. Now, instead of wrists being nailed they were bound to the crossbar by leather thongs (Joyce 1975:30-31).

Joyce adds that Jesus lived and died at Masada, according to the character, Professor Grosset. Joyce relates that:

[The scroll] had been written on the night of 15 April 73 AD ... So, as the scroll author reports both the battering-down of the gate and the Romans withdrawal, it must have been during the ensuing thirteen hours of darkness that – as the Romans sharpened their swords for the work of the morrow – the author had penned his scroll. By dawn, he was dead! And his name? Again, according to Professor Grosset, the man had written his name: Yeshua ben Ya’akob ben Gennesareth and described himself as a son of eighty years. But he added the astonishing information that he was the last rightful inheritor of the Hasmonean (Maccabean) King of Israel (Joyce 1975:22-23).

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\(^{58}\)The Maccabees were the leaders of a Jewish rebel army that took control of Judea, which at the time had been a province of the Seleucid Empire. They founded the Hasmonean dynasty, which ruled from 164 BC to 63 BC. The Hasmoneans revived the Jewish religion, partially by force, and expanded the boundaries of Judea by conquest and reduced the influence of Hellenism and Hellenistic Judaism (Crossan & Reed 2001:51).
Joyce states in his book that Jesus’ divinity was decided by a vote at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD.

Some saw Him as divine and the Son of God, while others recoiled from such a pagan and blasphemous view. Still others sat on the fence of indecision, harvesting their splinters. Alarmed at the schisms that threatened to tear the Church apart, Constantine convoked the council of Nicaea in 325 AD and demanded that the assembled bishops end their squabbles and decide, once and for all, who and what Jesus and His true nature had been. Incredibly, a ballot was held and in a vote which was not unanimous, let it be noted, it was decided that ‘Jesus was truly divine and the Son of God.’ Surely, He was the first God ever elected to the Seat of Heaven by democratic process (Joyce 1975:33-35).

The questions that arise from Joyce’s book, even if these stories of Professor Grosset and the missing scroll are true, are as follows: If there was a fast and slow method of crucifixion, why would the Romans use the slow method to crucify Jesus and the thieves when the Sabbath was so close and the bodies had to be taken down before the Sabbath? If Jesus had survived that crucifixion, would He have survived a spear piercing His side? Lastly, do we need to believe that somewhere out there is a scroll giving us the Last Testament of Jesus, which a professor Grosset had stolen from Masada, unravelled and deciphered? Did Yadin, according to Joyce and the other Authors, attempt to cover up the fact that Jesus did not die on the cross, had been married and father a child in order to protect Judaism and the new state of Israel?

2.3.3 The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail
The book, The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail, was a follow-up of part of the BBC TV documentary series, The Chronicles. The book and documentary episodes were the culmination of a 1970’s lecture series road show the writers put together. The writers say their lecture series, documentary and book were inspired by the L’Or de Rennes Project and the book titled Le Trèsor Maudit.\(^9\) Le Trésor Maudit was first published in 1967 by Gérard

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\(^9\)The book contains the ‘reproduction’ of two ‘parchments’ which the writers alleged were discovered by Bérenger Saunière, a parish priest of a small village of Rennes-le-Château. These have been revealed as forgeries by Philippe de Chérisey. These documents, according the Baigent et al and Gérard de Sède, are proof that the last Merovingian king, Dagobert II, was ‘assassinated’ on 23 December 679, although the authors claims he did not die. His son hid at Rennes-le Chateau and founded the line of descent before his death in
de Sède in collaboration with Pierre Plantard. The book led them to the pseudo-historical Dossiers Secrets at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France Lenoncourt (Baigent et al 1996:98-102). The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail popularises the theory that Jesus’ bloodline is the Holy Grail, which is also the main theme of the book.

According to Baigent et al, Jesus married Mary Magdalene, had one or more children, moved to the South of France and married into the French Royal Dynasty, the Merovingians. This bloodline has been protected over the centuries by a society called the Priory of Sion (Baigent et al 1996:215).

2.3.3.1 Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln  The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail was the culmination of a work by three friends, Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, brought together by the legends of The Holy Grail, The Priory of Sion, The Knights Templar and Freemasonry.

- Michael Baigent (1948-2013) was born in Christchurch, New Zealand. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Comparative Religions, Psychology and Philosophy at Canterbury University, followed by a MA in Mysticism and Religious Experience at the University of Kent.

Michael Baigent moved to England in 1976 where he met Richard Leigh who introduced him to Henry Lincoln, an English television scriptwriter. Leigh was researching the mystery of Rennes-le-Château in France and was soon joined by Baigent.

758. The documents tell of the work of the Priory of Sion in protecting the line of Merovingian and the Holy Grail (Jesus’ bloodline) (Baigent et al 1996:24, 32, 103).

60 The Priory of Zion was founded and dissolved in France in 1956 (abiding by the 1901 French Law of Associations) by Pierre Plantard. In the 1960s, Plantard created a fictitious history for that organization, describing it as a secret society founded by Godfrey of Bouillon on Mount Zion in the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1099, conflating it with a genuine historical monastic order, the Abbey of Our Lady of Mount Zion. In Plantard’s version, the priory was devoted to installing a secret bloodline of the Merovingian dynasty on the thrones of France and the rest of Europe (Cox 2004:131).

Baigent was a Freemason and a Grand Officer of the United Lodge of England and edited the *Freemasonry Today* from 2001 until his death in 2013. He used this publication as a platform to gather support for a more open and liberal approach to Freemasonry. Baigent was also a trustee of The Canonbury Masonic Research Centre⁶². He lived in Bath with his wife until his death in 2013.

- **Henry Lincoln (1930-2007)** was born Henry Soskin in London, England. He was a television presenter, scriptwriter and supporting actor. He studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Lincoln co-wrote three *Doctor Who* episodes in the 1960’s, starring Patrick Troughton, and had the rights to a recurring character, Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart. As an author and playwright, Lincoln wrote three documentaries and co-authored numerous screenplays on legends featuring the Rennes-le-Château and the Templars. In 1969, Lincoln visited Rennes-le-Château. He read the book *les Trésor Maudit de Rennes-le Château (The Accursed Treasure of Rennes le Château)* by Gérard de Sède. He lived in the garden of the Villa Bethania in Rennes-le-Château till his death. This book started him on his journey of research, which lasted the rest of his life⁶³. Lincoln did not join Leigh and Baigent in suing Dan Brown’s publisher, Random House, for copyright infringement in March 2006; this was probably due to ill health.

- **Richard Leigh (1943-2007)** spent most of his life in Britain although he was born in New Jersey, USA. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts from Trufts University, a MA from the University of Chicago and a Doctorate from the State University of New York at Stony Brook in Comparative Literature. He spent several years working as a university lecturer in the United States, Canada and Britain. Leigh’s interest in The Knights Templar found kindred spirits in Lincoln and Baigent. In the 1970’s he joined Baigent and Lincoln on the road show with their theory of Jesus’ bloodline. The three wrote *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail, which was followed up by The Messianic Library* (1986). Leigh co-wrote five books with Michael Baigent: *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* (1991); *The Temple and the Lodge* (1991); *Secret Germany: Von

⁶² https://sites.google.com/a/canonbury.ac.uk/front/ 
⁶³ https://andrewgough.co.uk/17questions_lincoln.html
The book The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail, as stated above, came out of a road show and documentary on the L’Or de Rennes Project. At the end of the documentary, Baigent alerts the viewer to a deeper mystery:

In 1972, I closed my first film with the words, ‘something’ extraordinary is waiting to be found ... and in the not too distant future, it will be. This book explains what that “something” is and how extraordinary the discovering has been (Baigent et al 1996: xix).

The story starts as so many of the stories presented in this study: a document was found by someone, in this case Bèrenger Sauniére, a parish priest of a small village of Rennes-le-Château, and this document would change the world’s belief system. The introduction of the book starts with Baigent’s story of discovery:

In 1969, en route for a summer holiday in the Cevennes. I made the casual purchase of a paperback. Le Trésor in Maudit by Gérard de Sède, a watery story – a lightweight, entertainment, a blend of historical fact, genuine mystery and conjecture. It might have remained consigned to the most-holiday oblivion of all such reading had I not stumbled upon a curious and glaring omission in its pages.

The ‘accursed’ treasure of the title had apparently been found in the 1890’s by a village priest through the decipherment of certain cryptic documents unearthed in his church. Although the purported texts of two of these documents were reproduced, the ‘secret messages’ said to be the deciphered messages again had been lost. And yet, as I found, a cursory study of the documents reproduced in the book reveals at least one concealed message. Surely, the author had found it. In working on his book, he must have given the documents more than a fleeting attention. He was bound therefore, to have found what I had found. Moreover, the message was exactly the kind of titillating snippet of ‘proof’ that helps to sell a ‘pop’ paperback. Why had M. de Sède not published it (Baigent et al 1996: xvi)?

Bèrenger Sauniére in 1059 decided to restore the village church consecrated to ‘The Magdalene’. He discovered the church stood on older foundations dating back to the six
century. When the renovations started in 1891, the altar stone was removed from two Visigoth columns. One of the columns was hollow:

Inside, the curé, [the priest] found four parchments preserved in sealed wooden tubes. Two of these parchments are said to have comprised genealogies, one dating from 1244 and the other from 1644. The two remaining documents had apparently been composed in the 1780’s by one of the Saunière’s, predecessors as cure of Rennes-le-Château, the Abbé Antoine Bigou who had also been personal chaplain to the noble Blanchefort family – who, on the eve of the French revolution, were still among the most prominent local landowners (Baigent et al 1996:25).

Saunière found parchments that would according to Baigent et al reveal the secret of Jesus’ bloodline and its significance for French royalty. This parish priest went from poor but pure to very comfortable and priest of a significant private property, Villa Bethania, and a fully restored and extended church of St Mary Magdalene. The ‘poor’ parish priest, it is said, spent in the region of several million dollars over the course of 20 years. The question is: What did he find that was so important that it brought in this kind of money to his parish? When he refused to account for the money, he was accused by the bishop of selling masses and suspended from his post. Sauniere appealed to the Vatican and the suspension was lifted (Picknett & Prince 1997:200).


2.3.3.3 The Theories Jesus was married, a father and His bloodline still exists. This is the theme of Holy Blood, Holy Grail. According to Baigent et al, Jesus married Mary Magdalene and fathered a child/children. After His crucifixion, Mary fled to the South of France, before the fall of Jerusalem, with Joseph of Arimathea, taking with them Jesus’ child/children, to keep the bloodline safe. This is the theory that Baigent et al present:

Is there evidence in the Gospels that Jesus actually did have children? There is nothing explicit. But rabbis were expected, as a matter of course, to have children; and if Jesus was a rabbi, it would have been most unusual for Him to remain childless whether He was a rabbi or not’ (Baigent et al 1996:20, 36, 38).
Baigent et al, saying further that parchments found in the South of France a century ago revealed one of the best-kept secrets of Christendom, which is that the Holy Grail is the womb of Mary Magdalene and the sacred Royal Bloodline was the child she carried.

Sir Thomas Malory 1470 wrote le Morte d’ Arthur, a re-emergence of the Holy Grail story that had disappeared for two centuries with the fall of the Holy Land 1291 and the dissolution of the Templars between 1307 and 1314. The National Socialist [in 1940 in Germany] hierarchy [Nazi] believed in the legend of the Holy Grail and extensive excavations for it was actually undertaken during the war in the South of France (Baigent et al 1996:298).

According to Baigent et al the Holy Grail has changed its identity through time:

By Malory’s time the mysterious object known as the Grail had assumed the more or less distinct identity, which is allegedly ascribed to it today. It was alleged to be the cup from the last supper in which Joseph of Arimathea later caught Jesus’ blood. According to certain accounts, the Grail was brought by Joseph of Arimathea to England – more specifically, to Glastonbury... According to medieval legends, she carried with her to Marseilles the Holy Grail. By the fifteenth century this tradition had clearly assumed immense importance for such individuals as King René d’ Anjou, who collected ‘Grail Cups’ (Baigent et al 1996:298-299).

Unwrapping the legends and mysteries further, Baigent et al explain:

But the early legends say that the Magdalene brought the Grail to France, not a cup. In other words, the simple association of Grail and cup was a relatively late development. Malory perpetuated this false association and it has been a truism ever since. But Malory in fact took considerable liberties with his original sources. In these original sources, the Grail is something much more than a cup. In addition, the mystical aspects of the Grail are far more important than the chivalric, which, Malory extols (Baigent et al 1996:299).

The other theories and themes of this book (most related to the Knights Templar), although interesting, do not fall within the ambit of this study. The study’s focus is on the theories connected to Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail.

Although this study will not concentrate on the theories of the secret societies and the sacred feminine, a brief outline is necessary. Baigent et al revealed that the Holy Grail is
protected by a secret society, The Priory of Sion\textsuperscript{64}, which was founded in 1099 and counts Leonardo Da Vinci and Isaac Newton amongst its Grand Masters. The Knights Templar were the Priory’s military and financial branch and have been devoted to re-installing the Merovingian dynasty, which ruled France from 457 to 751, on the thrones of France and other European countries. This dynasty, our writers claim, is the direct bloodline of Jesus Christ (Baigent et al 1996:106, 111).

Not only does this dynasty carry the ‘God Gene’, the recognition of the bloodline, but it would also, according to \textit{The Authors}, change the validation of the Popes as the Vicars of Jesus Christ and the traditional succession of St. Peter, the disciple to whom Jesus said:

\begin{quote}
And I will tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Mt 16:18-19).
\end{quote}

What Baigent et al suggest is that Mary Magdalene was the true foundation of the church as she carried the bloodline of the Christ. The Vatican, however, needed to retain Peter as the foundation. In order to reach this goal, the Vatican tried to kill off all remnants of the bloodline and their guardians (the Cathars and the Templars) so that the line of the Popes and therefore the Catholic Church would come through the Apostle Peter and not the Christ. According to \textit{The Authors}, the symbols of \textit{The Holy Grail} are all around us - in pictures, statues and architecture (Baigent et al 1996:33, 41, 69)(Brown 2004:248). Baigent and Leigh insisted that Brown had copied their theme of the \textit{Holy Grail} in his book, \textit{The Da Vinci Code}.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{64}Jean de Gisors (1188–1220); Marie de Saint-Clair (1220–1266); Guillaume de Gisors (1266–1307); Edouard de Bar (1307–1336); Jeanne de Bar (1336–1351); Jean de Saint-Clair (1351–1366); Blanche d’Évreux (1366–1398); Nicolas Flamel (1398–1418); René d’Anjou (1418–1480); Lolande de Bar (1480–1483); Sandro Filipepi (1483–1510); Léonard da Vinci (1510–1519); Connétable de Bourbon (1519–1527); Ferdinand de Gonzague (1527–1575); Louis de Nevers (1575–1595); Robert Fludd (1595–1637); J. Valentin Andrea (1637–1654); Robert Boyle (1654–1691); Isaac Newton (1691–1727); Charles Radclyffe (1727–1746); Charles de Lorraine (1746–1780); Maximilian de Lorraine (1780–1801); Charles Nodier (1801–1844); Victor Hugo (1844–1885); Claude Debussy (1885–1918); Jean Cocteau (1918–1963) (Baigent et al 1996:129-131).
\end{flushright}
2.3.3.4 *The Trial*  
In 2006, Baigent and Leigh argued before the court that Dan Brown copied their book's ‘central theme’.\(^{65}\) As reported by The Guardian Newspaper:

In an opening argument their lawyer, Jonathan Rayner James, the lawyer for aggrieved authors, Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh said that Mr. Brown had ‘appropriated’ the ‘architecture’ and central argument of their book ‘The Holy Blood, Holy Grail’ (1982) in *The Da Vinci Code* published in 2004. The case has enough twists for a novel itself, for one thing, both *The Da Vinci Code* and *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* are published in Britain by Random House that means that Mr. Baigent and Mr. Leigh were suing their own publisher.

Dan Brown’s lawyers responded as follows:

“Baigent and Leigh were making wild allegations.” He said, “They were suggesting, Mr Brown has appropriated not only the numerous parts of a jigsaw puzzle but the organizational way (Baigent and Leigh) put it together. In brief, the complaint appears to be that, *Holy Blood, and the Holy Grail* discloses the idea that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, that they had children, which survived and married into a line of French kings. This lineage continues today and that the objective is to restore this lineage to the thrones, not only of France, but to the thrones of other European nations as well and that Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* uses some of these ideas”. Jonathan Baldwin QC represented Random House on behalf of Dan Brown.

On 7 April 2006, in The Chancery Division of the High Court of England, the Judge, Mr Justice Peter Smith, said *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* did not have a central theme in the way its authors suggested. ‘It was an artificial creation for the purposes of the litigation, working back from *The Da Vinci Code.*’ He ruled that Dan Brown did use the previous book to write certain parts of his thriller, but did not substantially copy their work.

Justice Peter Smith said he was "still astonished that these two authors chose to file their suit at all.” A novelist must be free to “draw appropriately” from historical works without facing a court and having his integrity called into question.\(^{66}\)

The interesting fact about this trial is that, perhaps had Baigent and Leigh claimed that their book was fiction and not fact, and therefore not a reference book, they might have won their claim of ‘borrowed themes’. As Justice Peter Smith was able to conclude that Dan

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\(^{65}\) The central theme of their book is that the Holy Grail is not a thing but rather a person, that person being Mary Magdalene and her children, the bloodline of Jesus Christ.

\(^{66}\) [http://www.theguardian.com/media/2006/apr/07/pressandpublishing.danbrown](http://www.theguardian.com/media/2006/apr/07/pressandpublishing.danbrown)
Brown had drawn from a historical work, which Brown had acknowledged and had named the source and authors (Brown 2004:240).

The lawsuit was decided in favour of Random House (Brown) with costs, which was about three million pounds. Although the trial did stir up new interest in the book, it certain would not have generated more money than was lost. Dan Brown did mention The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail in The Da Vinci Code, but the manner in which he mentioned it may have been one of the reasons Baigent et al felt they had been affronted:

‘Here is perhaps the best-known tome,’ Teabing said, pulling a tattered hardcover from the stack and handing it to her. The cover read:
THE HOLY BLOOD, HOLY GRAIL 67
The Acclaimed International Bestseller.

Sophie glanced up. ‘An international bestseller? I’ve never heard of it.’
‘You were young. This caused quite a stir back in the nineteen eighties. To my taste, the authors made some dubious leaps of faith in their analysis, but their fundamental premise is sound and to their credit, they finally brought the idea of Christ’s bloodline into the main stream’ (Brown 2004:339-340).

Another reason may be Brown naming one of his main characters Teabing, which is an anagram of The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail authors’ Baigent and Lincoln names (Cox 2004:150). Furthermore, Brown’s first victim and head of the Priory of Sion in The Da Vinci Code, Jacques Saunière, is named after Bèrenger Saunière, the priest who became the new priest in the small village of Rennes-le-Château in France in 1885.

The central theme of the book is the Holy Grail, which the authors claim is Jesus’ bloodline rather than an artefact. This, Baigent et al state, proves why the Cathars and the Knights Templar were slaughtered. As protectors of this knowledge and the descendants of the bloodline, this would have given them extraordinary influence and power in Europe. However, as Europe largely has secular governments and are not totally of the Catholic persuasion, this power in modern times, I feel, would be negligible.

67 The American title for the book
2.3.4  Jesus the Man: New Interpretations from the Dead Sea Scrolls

Barbara Thiering explains that coming from a background in the study of *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, semantics and hermeneutics, she has had the revelation that all the miracles and events in the New Testament should not to be taken literally. Rather, they are to be seen as two stories. The first, and obvious, is a story written for ‘babes in Christ’; the one found when reading the Gospels (the Narrative). The second is a story placed at a higher level, using the symbolism uncovered by her ‘Pesher’ method, which reveals the real story and the real New Testament. The exact meanings of the Gospels, Thiering proposes, are held by the Gnostic schools and in the light of this discovery the New Testament should be rewritten (Thiering 1992:20-25).

2.3.4.1 Barbara Thiering  Thiering was born in Sydney, Australia in 1930. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Modern Languages at Sydney University, a Bachelor of Divinity from the University of London, a Masters of Theology from the Melbourne College of Divinity and, in 1973, a Ph.D. from Sydney University. She was invited to lecture at Sydney University in the Department of Semitic Studies, which she did until her retirement.

2.3.4.2 The Story  In *Jesus the Man: the New Interpretations from The Dead Sea Scrolls*, Thiering proposes the New Testament is written in ‘Pesher’ coding. This code revealed to Thiering that Jesus was born in Qumran in 7 AD and died in Qumran in about 64 AD; in fact, the whole of *The Jesus Story* takes place in and around Qumran. Thiering insists that Jesus was an Essen and that all the stories are in line with the *Community Rule* (a scroll found amongst *The Dead Sea Scrolls*). Thiering examines the miracles and finds they are not miraculous, but rather parables or codes, marking turning events in the history of the ‘fig tree’ as the movement was called (Thiering 1992:73). Dr C B Forbes of the Department of Ancient History, Macquarie University, calls *Jesus the Man* a piece of ‘artistic work’, where

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68 https://westarinstitute.org/Fellows/thiering.html

69 The word pesher is used in the Old Testament to mean ‘interpretation of dreams’ as seen in Genesis 40:5 and Daniel 2:36. A specially gifted person, Joseph or Daniel could discover the hidden meaning of a dream that was not apparent to others. The meaning had been put into the dream by God; the interpreter only had to see it, drawing on his special knowledge (Thiering 1992:21).

70 As the movement Jesus belonged to was called (Thiering 1992:73).
the contrast between the style of presentation and what is actually being presented is so incongruous that it leaves one at a loss.\(^{71}\)

The death and resurrection of both Jesus and Lazarus is not what it appears. Thiering explains that Lazarus’ death is an excommunication ritual (a spiritual death) used by the Essenes; Jesus goes to the ‘tomb’ of the ‘dead Lazarus’ and calls him out in an act of rehabilitation of Lazarus who has transgressed (Thiering 1992:98-99).

According to her, Jesus’ crucifixion was a plan gone wrong; Jesus was not the main subject of the crucifixion. Instead, the main subject was Simon Magus (Pope, King); one of the zealot leaders was, together with Judas Iscariot and Theudas (Barabbas). They were structured as a Triarchy of Priest, Prophet and King and in their minds they formed a reproduction of the triumvirate that had formerly ruled Rome (Thiering 1992:98). Judas leaves the group during the last supper to notify the ‘Romans’ (Essen executors) what the Essenes have planned (trial of the zealots) for contravening Essen rules. The crucifixion takes place because Simon Magus assassinates Agrippa and Jesus takes Judas’ place as He supported the killing of Agrippa. Jesus is at Qumran for His second marriage to Mary Magdalene because she is three months pregnant (Thiering 1992:102-103).

The trial and crucifixion, Thiering claims, happened in and around Qumran and not in Jerusalem. All the players in the events were Essenes, while the King, High Priests and the Roman Governor were not involved. She explains Jesus was crucified outside southern entrance of Qumran by ‘Romans’ (who were special Essenes who carried out executions for the sect) (Thiering 1992:113). He was given ‘poison’ which put him into a deep sleep, which fooled the ‘Roman’ soldier who checked on the body into thinking Jesus was dead. Jesus was taken down from the cross and ‘buried’ with the zealots, the other two that had been crucified with Jesus, in a special tomb reserved for them near Qumran. None of the men were dead, although the other two had had their legs broken so that they did not ‘run away but would rather die in the tomb’ (Thiering 1992:118-119). Jesus was fed an antidote and

was revived; the spices were used to heal His wound in His side, which was an unforeseen complication. The spices hidden in the grave clothes were applied to the wounds. The three men (two with broken legs and one with a wound in His side) pushed away the gravestone from inside the tomb, eluded the ‘Roman’ guards and convinced the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead\(^{72}\) (Thiering 1992:123-125).

2.3.4.3 The Theories  

The central theme of the book is that Jesus was one of the leaders of the Essenes. He was not the product of a virgin birth, but was rather born out of wedlock, probably to a Roman\(^{73}\) soldier.

According to the surface account of the New Testament and according to deeply held and widespread belief Mary the mother of Jesus remained a virgin and Jesus had no father but God... the New Testament does not give very good authority for the virgin birth: it is dealt with in only two Gospels and those same Gospels give a genealogy which says that Jesus was descended from King David through His father Joseph: a complete contradiction... Mary was a virgin, meaning a ‘nun’, betrothed to Joseph. In their case, before the wedding took place, Mary, “the virgin” conceived. Joseph was then in a difficult position: He had committed a minor breach of the rules; one option was to put Mary away. The child would then be classed illegitimate and would be taken in by the highest Essen to be brought up as an orphan without a name or descendants (Thiering 1992:43-46).

Thiering tells us that Joseph chose another option:

Another option was to recognise the child, for it was a boy. He would be a descendant of King David and thus could serve the urgent political hopes of the movement. Joseph took advice from the ‘angels’ Mt 1:20. All angels in the story are men of the rank of Levite were incarnations of heavenly beings, ‘gods’ and ‘angels’...the story also says Mary conceived of the Holy Spirit, Joseph was the Holy Spirit. As priests and Levites were gods and angles, so lower priests, kings and princes were spirits (Thiering 1992:45-46).

Jesus and His family had rocky, unusual relationship dynamics. His father, Joseph, married a woman who had associated with the enemy (a Roman soldier). Jesus married Mary Magdalene, a non-believer, and then divorced her to marry Lydia (Thiering 1992:146-147).

\(^{72}\) One must assume the tomb had a small stone blocking its entrance or that these men, despite the fact they had hung on a cross for about four to six hours and had serious wounds, processed remarkable strength.

\(^{73}\) In this case I presume she is talking about a real Roman Soldier.
According to Thiering, Jesus married Mary Magdalene and fathered a family as it was against Essen rules for a man not to marry:

The account of the marriage of Jesus with Mary Magdalene lies very close to the surface of the Gospel narratives. It is easy to sense an erotic element in the story of the woman with the alabaster flask of nard, who poured it over Jesus, so that the “house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment [Jn 1:6-8].” Those with biblical knowledge would recognise the Song of Solomon: “While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance” (SS 1:12). “While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance, a bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me that lies all night between my breasts” (SS 1:12-13). The Song of Solomon was the wedding liturgy of Davidic kings, a beautiful verbal accompaniment to the ceremonies (Thiering 1992:87).

According to Thiering, Mary is well defined in the Gospels, especially in the Gospel of John. According to Thiering, it is made plain that the woman with the ointment was Mary of Bethany, who is Mary Magdalene. Moreover, according to her the Gospel of Philip sheds more light on Mary Magdalene:

The Gospel of Phillip, which has signs of being written at an early date, gives more. “There were three who always walked with the Lord: Mary His mother and her sister and Magdalene, the one who was called His companion. His sister and His mother and His companions were each Mary.” In a latter passage, it says, “and the companion of the (saviour) was Mary Magdalene. He loved her more than all the disciples (and used to) kiss her often on her (mouth).” The rest of the disciples (were offended and) said to Him; “why do you love her more than all of us?” the saviour answered and said to them, “why do I not love you like her? When a blind man and one who sees are both together in the darkness, they are no different from one another. When the light comes, then he who sees will see the light and he who is blind will remain in the darkness” (Thiering 1992:87-89).

Thiering explains Mary Magdalene’s name:

She was called Mary as a title and not a name. The word was a form of Miriam the name of the sister of Moses. Marys named including the mother of Jesus and the Magdalene had the title of Miriam because they had been given a form of ministry that of prophetess, taking part in the liturgies of orders like Therapeutae. The ascetics celebrated the exodus as a drama of salvation, with two choirs, one of the men led by a man representing Moses, the other women led by a Miriam (Thiering 1992:89).
The *Jesus Story* that Thiering would like us to consider is one of a community at odds. Rather than dying on the cross, Jesus survived and lived on Masada until it was taken in 64 AD.

Thiering continues describes the crucifixion:

A drink was brought, of “vinegar”, wine that had been spoiled. It had been spoiled by poison, as later Christian sources admit. The poison that had been offered earlier was now given to Jesus again and this time He drank it. It was snake poison, taking a number of hours to act. But its first effect, together with that of the trauma he suffered, was to render Him unconscious. He bowed His head and because as a sick man He was now defiled, He “gave up the ghost” (Thiering 1992:115).

The removal of Jesus from the cross is explained by Thiering as follows:

The Tetrarch Antipas, knowing well the rules for the Sabbath, had his plans made. He went to Pilate and asked him to change the method of execution of the men; to burial alive (Thiering 1992:118) ...the cave the Tetrarch showed Pilate was at the southern end of the esplanade where the cross stood... Its main purpose, the Tetrarch explained, was to be a Sabbath latrine. ... On Friday evening, the cave was sealed and, if Jewish times were the only ones kept, they would stay sealed for a week... During the week, the men would die (Thiering 1992:118).

In other words, Jesus was not buried in a borrowed tomb; he was buried in a latrine. It was sealed, but Jesus and His companions forced their way out (Thiering 1992:107).

According to Thiering, *The Jesus Story* with its stories, miracles and parables when subjected to the *Pesher* technique shows a story which Jesus Himself alludes to in Mark 4:9-12. We are all familiar with the *Pesher* method in everyday life, Thiering tells us, explaining it as follows:

Human institutions tend to develop a private language in order to give themselves identity. The more exclusive the institution, the more it develops a language that acts as a set of passwords, giving admission to those who are "in the know", keeping out those who are not. The institutional language may be so rarefied that it looks like nonsense to the outsider. To take some examples: If someone remarked, "I saw the bench talking to a silk," apparently making no sense, it would, in fact, convey to a member of the legal...
profession that a judge had been talking to a queen's counsel. Similarly, "the White House spoke to the Kremlin" would make sense to anyone who followed politics. "The Sharks play the Dragons" would be natural to an Australian rugby fan; a "foundation chair" in a university means the position of a first professor. An actor "treads the boards"; and "the House rises" means that parliament adjourns. The purpose of this book has been to show that the secondary meaning is objectively there in the Gospels and Acts. It has set out the story that emerges and the elements of the basic systems that lie behind the Gospel history: chronology, locations and hierarchy... A great many lesser systems remain to be set out, with their associated vocabulary. But enough has been done to show that a new chapter in our understanding of the New Testament and of Christian origins has been opened up by the discovery of The Dead Sea Scrolls (Thiering 1992:382).

Barbara Thiering feels that the New Testament needs to be rewritten so that the truth can be revealed. Her proposition has not been well received by academics and her theories are seen as fabricated nonsense by many. This standpoint has not stopped The Authors from using her theories in their works and her name as reference. As an academic, a lecturer of the Sydney University, her position gives credence to her works amongst the general public if not academia.

Thiering’s Jesus was an illegitimate son of a Roman soldier, but His bloodline was valuable to the Essen. He became an Essen of some standing. He married a non-believer, Mary Magdalene, a prophetess with a questionable past including accusations of prostitution, mental illness and another husband. They had children after which Jesus divorced her to marry Lydia, the first European Christian convert, a wealthy business woman who traded in purple cloth. Thiering’s Jesus survived the cross to live out His life in Qumran and was active in the foundation of the First Church and the council of Jerusalem in 46 AD (Thiering 1992:144-150).

2.3.5 The Woman with the Alabaster Jar

The preface to Margaret Starbird’s book tells us this book was written in response to Starbird’s first impression of The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail.

My first impression of Holy Blood, Holy Grail was that the Authors Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, had to be wrong. Their book seemed to border on blasphemy. At its core was the suggestion that Jesus Christ was married to the “other
Mary”; found in the Gospels. She is the one called “the Magdalene”, the woman shown in western art carrying an alabaster jar – the saint whom the church calls a penitent prostitute. I was not merely shocked by this suggestion, I was shattered. How could the church have failed to mention this if it were true? So important an allegation could not have been overlooked for the entire two thousand years of church history! Is there another story of Jesus that might be closer to the truth than the version propagated by the church during the Middle Ages before the Protestant Reformation? Was there an alternative version of Christian doctrine? (Starbird 1993: xix)

In writing the book, Margaret Starbird says of her research:

My research drew me deep into European history, heraldry and the rituals of Freemasonry, medieval art, symbolism and psychology, mythology, religion and the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Everywhere I looked, I found evidence of the feminine that had been lost or denied in the Judeo-Christian tradition and of the various attempts to restore the bride to her once cherished status. The more deeply involved I became with the material, the more obvious it became that there was real substance in the theories set forth in *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. And gradually I found myself won over to the central trends of the Grail heresy, the very theory that I had originally set out to discredit (Starbird 1993: xx).

2.3.5.1 *Margaret Starbird*  
Starbird (born in 1942) was raised in the Catholic faith, but says she is a ‘born again’ Christian76. Starbird has a Master’s degree from the University of Maryland, majoring in Comparative Literature and German. She studied at Christian Albrecht’s University in Kiel, Germany. In 1988, Margaret Starbird took courses in scripture and religion at the Vanderbilt Divinity School, teaching religion at various Catholic parishes77.

Starbird has written six books and co-authored one. All the books published after *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar* merely expand on its theme rather than bringing anything new to the table.

2.3.5.2 *The Story*  
The book starts in the prologue with the story of Mary (Miriam) and Joseph of Arimathea’s (Yosef) journey as they flee from Jerusalem to France after the crucifixion. Starbird tells us that the story of the sacred union has been all around us in tarot cards, art, symbols, rituals of Freemasonry and the fact that the Cathars believed that Jesus

76 [www.margaretstarbird.net](https://www.margaretstarbird.net)  
77 [https://www.questbooks.net/authors.cfm?authornum=130](https://www.questbooks.net/authors.cfm?authornum=130)
was married to Mary Magdalene. This is evident in the symbols of the tarot cards. Dan Brown uses Starbird’s symbolism as part of his central theme in *The Da Vinci Code* (Starbird 1993: xix-xxiv).

2.3.5.3 *The Theories* Starbird does not argue whether Jesus may have survived the crucifixion; she is more interested in His wife, Mary, and the suppressed position of women in the Christian religion. Arguing that if the church (presumably the Catholic Church) recognised the marriage of Jesus and His daughter, Sarah, women would take their rightful place in the church and so also in the rest of society, not as equals but elevated above men, as the carriers of the seed of Christ and keepers of the Jewish Royal and High Priest Bloodlines. The fact that Mary was impregnated by the Holy Spirit, carried Jesus, is prayed to and referred to as the Mother of God has in no way elevated the women’s position or motherhood in the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

According to Starbird, Christianity at its inception allowed for the marriage of Jesus and the celebration of ‘Hieros Gamos’78. The marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, Starbird claims, resulted in a daughter, Saint Sarah. Sarah, according to Starbird, is the word for ‘princess’ in Hebrew79. In this daughter, Starbird explains in a section titled *The Flowering Staff and the Sangraal, Mary Magdalene* carried the Royal and Holy Bloodline of the Jews. She suggests that the Royal and Holy Bloodline, the Sangraal, eventually flowed into the veins of the French Royalty, the Merovingians (Starbird 1993:62).

But tradition derived from an Old French legend from the Mediterranean coast tells us that another Joseph, Joseph of Arimathea, was custodian of the “Sangraal” and the child on the boat was Egyptian, which means quite literally “born out of Egypt”. It seems likely that after the crucifixion of Jesus, Mary Magdalene found it necessary to flee for the sake of her unborn child to the nearest refuge. The influential friend of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea, could well have been her protector. If our theory is correct, the child was actually born in Egypt. Egypt being the traditional place of asylum for Jews whose safety was threatened in Israel; Alexandria was easily reached from Judea and contained well-established Jewish communities at the time of Jesus. In all probability, the emergency refuge of Mary Magdalene and Joseph of Arimathea

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78 Hieros Gamos or ‘holy marriage’ refers to a sexual ritual between a god and goddess (Brown 2004:309).
79 8282 (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance); Sarah, a mistress, i.e. female noble: - lady, princess, queen, female or 8369 ‘sar’; a head person (of any rank of class): - captain (that had rule), chief (captain), general governor, keeper, Lord, (task-) master, prince (ipal), ruler, steward.
was Egypt. In later years later, they left Alexandria and sought refuge on the coast of France (Starbird 1993:60).

Jesus’ bloodline flows into Merovingian veins:

There is evidence to suggest that the royal bloodline of Jesus and Mary Magdalen eventually flowed into the veins of the Merovingian monarchs of France. The name Merovingian may in itself be a linguistic fossil. The lore surrounding the royal family mentions an ancestor “Merovee”. But the word Merovingian breaks down phonetically into syllables that we can easily recognise: “mer” and “vin”, Mary and the vine. Broken down this way, it may be seen to allude to the “Vine of Mary” or perhaps the “vine of the Mother” (Starbird 1993:62).

Much of *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar* deals with symbolism pointing to the sacred feminine. The unicorn, Starbird claims, is ‘the universal symbol for Christ, the archetypal bridegroom, important in medieval folklore’ (Starbird 1993:91). The lion of Judah, mentioned first in Genesis 49:8-10, is depicted in many watermarks. The lions found in crests and flags are the Lion of Judea (Starbird 1993:91). The Grail, Starbird tells us, is often portrayed as a bunch of grapes or a band or horn with several fleurs-de-lis budding from it, some bearing the letters MM (Maria Minor, Mary Magdalene) or MR (Marias Regina) (Starbird 1993:94). She also mentions the Merovingian Bear and the Horn of the Spirit, which Starbird says ‘is the symbol of heretical preaching’, like the mythical horn of the ‘French epic hero in *The Song of Roland*’ (Starbird 1993:95).

It would not have been strange to have thought that Starbird would have linked the horn to the ram’s horn, or shofar, as mentioned in Hosea 5:8: ‘Blow the ram’s horn in Gibeah, The trumpet in Ramah! Cry aloud at Beth Aven, “Look behind you, O Benjamin!”’, or the trumpet which is blown to call the Jews to worship and especially to signal the day of atonement, as it is instructed in Leviticus 25:9 Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the

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80 Genesis 49: 8-10: “Judah, you are the one whom your brother shall praise; you hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s son shall bow down to you. 9 Judah is a lion’s whelp; with the prey, my son, you have gone up, he bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? 10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people."
trumpet to sound throughout all your land, or to rally troops for battle’ (cf. Josh 6:4; Jud 3:27; 1 Sam 13:3).

According to Starbird, the symbols of Jesus and Mary, male and female, are the blade Λ (male) and the chalice V (female). These symbols are found in Freemasonry lodges and are represented by the square and compass as seen in the picture to the left. The compass, being the male, and the square, being the female, intertwined to make up the symbol for “Ave Millennium” or “Thy Kingdom Come”. As Starbird says, the implicit meaning of the symbol is that the millennial promises can be realized only when the two symbols Λ and V are joined in harmony. The harmony thus restored in heaven will be reflected in relationships on earth (Starbird 1993:97).

Starbird also shows that a deck of tarot cards is the medieval link to the heresy of the Lost Bride, saying: ‘I believe that the trompes (trumps) of the Charles VI tarot pack form a flash-card catechism for the medieval heresy of the Grail...’ (Starbird 1992:116).

Brown used Starbird's first books as sources for The Da Vinci Code. He said her writing 'is of particular interest to me because it fuses the diverse fields of symbolism, mythology, art, heraldry, psychology and the Gospel’s history'.

Starbird’s book, The Woman with the Alabaster Jar, draws on symbolism from religions that would be regarded by many as part of the occult, pagan and new age cults, many drawing on her books as a source of their modern New Age doctrines and explanation of beliefs. However, Starbird weaves the symbols of these religions into The Jesus Story.

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81 www.margaretstarbird.net
2.3.6 The Da Vinci Code

Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* is probably one of the most successful novels of this century. Brown takes us on a journey through symbology, cryptology, art and church history, Egyptology and paganism. The story is littered with statements that cause the reader to be startled or at least pause. For example, Teabing, one of *The Da Vinci Code*’s academic experts, makes the following statement: ‘What I mean,’ says Teabing ‘is that almost everything our fathers taught about Christ is false’ (Brown 2004:318). ‘As I said earlier, the marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene is part of historical record’ (Brown 2004:330). ‘No dear, I said the church should not be allowed to tell us what notions we can and can’t entertain’ (Brown 2004:332). ‘It was not Peter to whom Christ gave the directions with which to establish the church, it was Mary Magdalene’ (Brown 2004:334). These statements and others are the key statements that have led many to believe that *The Da Vinci Code* has revealed the truth of Christianity, causing some to question their beliefs.

Most of the revelations around the church come from the character Hugh Teabing, the Holy Grail expert in the novel. These ‘revelations’, of which most if not all were borrowed from other books, are what have caused the book’s almost cult-like following. This detective novel spawned its own industry and boosted others like tourism. Tours are very popular in Paris, Milan, London and Rosslyn in Scotland. Tourists demand to see the places and symbols mentioned in the book and most tourists become very irate when the symbols and/or places do not exist as Brown described them. Brown not only used his imagination in the story but in its settings, history and symbols. According to Larry Hurtado⁸² in his article *Ungodly Errors (2006)*⁸³, not only is the statement Brown uses ‘Almost everything our Fathers taught us about Christ is false,’ not true, but ‘Actually just about everything author Dan Brown puts in the mouth of Teabing is ludicrously false history.’ Examples of this are

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⁸² Larry Hurtado (born 1943) is a New Testament scholar, historian of early Christianity and Emeritus Professor of New Testament Language, Literature and Theology at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland (Professor 1996-2011). He was the Head of the School of Divinity (2007-2010) and was until August 2011 Director of the Centre for the Study of Christian Origins at the University of Edinburgh.

⁸³ [https://www.forananswer.org/Top_General/Hurtado_DaVinci.pdf](https://www.forananswer.org/Top_General/Hurtado_DaVinci.pdf)
Brown’s description of the Church of Saint-Sulpice, Rosslyn Chapel and the Templar Church.  

2.3.6.1 Dan Brown Brown was born on 22 June 1964 in Exeter, New Hampshire. He attended Phillips Exeter Academy and graduated from Amherst College. After graduating, Dan Brown moved to California to follow his dream of becoming a songwriter, with limited success. His first book, published in 1995, was titled 187 Men to Avoid, a Dating Survival Guide for Women.

In 1993, Brown joined the faculty at Exeter as an English Creative Writing teacher. While he was there, the CIA visited the school to interview a student who had written an email in which he had joked about killing the President. This incident sparked Brown’s interest in covert intelligence agencies, the theme he used in his first novel, Digital Fortress, published in 1998.

He introduced Robert Langdon, the hero of The Da Vinci Code, in his second novel, Angels and Demons. In this book, Robert Langdon, a Professor of Symbology at Harvard University, protects the Vatican from the Illuminati. This book did not catch the public’s interest when it was first published, but it sold more copies than its original sales after The Da Vinci Code was published and the film of the same name was released.

To date The Da Vinci Code has sold over 85 million copies worldwide and is available in forty languages as of 2012, which makes it one of the bestselling books of the 21st century. In 2006, a film adaption by Sony’s Columbia Pictures was produced. The screenplay was

[84] Regarding the Church of Saint-Sulpice, there is no evidence it was built on a Roman site, nor that it was a pagan temple. The church was built as a seminary for priests. As like many European Catholic churches, there are no kneeling rails, nor pews or a choir balcony, all of which Brown places in the church to further his story. (Brown 2004:83, 127-125). Rosslyn Chapel was built by William Sinclair, a patron of the Scottish Freemasons, prompting speculation of the chapel’s connection to them. The name comes from ‘Ross’ meaning hill in Scottish and ‘Lynn’ meaning river. It does not come from being on the north-south meridian which passes through Glastonbury 51º 09º N; the church is 55º 85º N (Garlow 2006:175, 177). The Templar Church design is based on the church of the Holy Sepulchre, built by Constantine in 335 AD on the site where Christians believe Jesus was crucified (Garlow 2006:187).

[85] www.danbrown.com/
written by Akiva Goldsman and directed by Ron Howard. The all-star cast included Tom Hanks as Robert Langdon, Audrey Tautou as Sophie Neveu and Sir Ian Mc Kellen as Hugh Teabing. The opening weekend of the film grossed $154,073,388 in the USA.

2.3.6.2 The Story  *This is a riveting detective story written in a similar genre to James Joyce’s books* Ulysses (1922) *and* Finnegan’s Way (1939). The whole book’s time period spans 24 hours and, like *Ulysses* and *Finnegan’s Way*, the book finishes in the same place it started. It is a modern-day Holy Grail story with ‘the Grail’ always being just out of reach, but attainable for those who are worthy. The model Brown used to write this story is very clever; there are no long descriptions setting the scenes and each chapter is short and sometimes ends in mid-action or thought, causing the reader to go to the next chapter.

Brown seduces the reader into believing ‘new facts’ by giving the reader an assortment of uncontroversial facts mixed in amongst the new, controversial facts. The ‘facts’ which he lists at the beginning of the book are:

- A crux gemmata is a cross bearing thirteen gems that symbolise Christ and the twelve disciples (Brown 2004:25).
- A pentacle is a pre-Christian symbol that relates to nature worship; a pentagram in a circle (Brown 2004:158).
- The mathematical progression of numbers 1-1-2-3-5-8-13-21 is called a Fibonacci sequence and is the source of all natural proportion (Brown 2004:69).
- The Louvre has about 65 300 works of art (Brown 2004:35).

The controversial facts only come towards the end of the novel when we are introduced to Hugh Teabing; by this time the rate of the novel is almost at breakneck speed. The reader is racing with the characters to find the Grail before Silas, the self-mutilating; member of Opus Dei either gets to the Grail or kills them.

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87 Leigh Teabing is a name made up from two of the authors of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Gail*, Richard Leigh and the anagram of (Michael) Baigent.
The name of the novel gives us a clue as to what the novel is about - a code that Leonardo da Vinci left in his works. This code will lead the readers to the true ‘Holy Grail’ and the ‘truth’ about Jesus.

Da Vinci had always been an awkward subject for historians, especially in the Christian tradition. Despite the visionary’s genius; he was a flamboyant homosexual and worshipper of Nature’s divine order, both of which placed him in a perceptual state of sin against God. Moreover, the artist’s eerie eccentricities projected an admittedly demonic aura: Da Vinci exhumed corpses to study human anatomy; he kept mysterious journals in illegible reverse handwriting; he believed he possessed alchemic powers to turn lead into gold and even cheat God by creating an elixir to postpone death; and his inventions included horrific never-before-imagined weapons of war and torture (Brown 2004:72).

The story starts in the Louvre. Jacques Sauniére, the Grand Master of the Priory of Sion is murdered by Silas, with a bullet to his stomach, causing a slow rather than instant death (Brown 2004:18, 57). Silas is acting on the instructions of someone only known as The Teacher. We discover he has already killed the three other Sénéchaux. Silas is looking for the ‘keystone’, an item that will lead him to the Holy Grail. Sauniére is found lying in the Grande Gallery, naked and posed like Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man with a cryptic message next to the body and a pentacle drawn on his stomach in his own blood, all of which Jacques Sauniére did before his death (Brown 2004:59).

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88 This name inspired from the priest assigned to Rennes-le- Chateau in 1885 who, it is claimed, discovered the dossier of secrets when renovating his church (Baigent et al 1996:25). The priest went from a poor parish priest to a wealthy man (Baigent et al 1996:27).
89 The Priory of Sion, according to Brown, is a European society founded in 1099, a real organisation. His research on this organisation comes from The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail and he claims it is the centre of wealth and power and historical significance. Baigent et al claim in their book that long, undiscovered documents (Les Dossier Secrets) reveal the history and contain an actual list of the priory’s Grand Masters, including men such as Leonardo da Vinci, Sir Isaac Newton and Victor Hugo (Brown 2004:113) (Garlow 2006:163).
90 Sénéchaux - plural of Seneschal. A term which originated in the Middle Ages, meaning ‘officers working directly under the lord of the estate’. The roles usually involved routine responsibility but could sometimes include the administration of justice. In The Da Vinci Code, Sénéchaux applies to those few who know the alleged secret of the Priory of Sion (Garlow 2006:180).
91 Keystone or ‘clé de voûte’ refers to the final stone placed in an arch, firmly locking it in place, or the key to unlocking secrets (Burstein 2004:345).
92 Vitruvian Man is an illustration by Leonardo Da Vinci made in 1478. Langdon investigates this puzzle of Sauniére who was hoping to create an image of the circle as the feminine for protection with the presence of the male body completing Da Vinci’s intended message of male and female harmony (Brown 2004:45).
93 A pentacle is a pre-Christian symbol that relates to nature worship. The ancients envisioned their world in two halves – masculine and feminine. Their gods and goddesses worked to keep a balance of power. This
A crime investigation team is called to the scene; it is headed by police officer Bezu Fache, Captain of the Central Directorate Judicial Police. Part of his team is Sophie Neveu, a police cryptographer as well as the granddaughter of Saunière. Sophie Neveu was very close to her grandfather until she inadvertently witnessed him taking part in a pagan sexual ritual (Hieros Gamos\textsuperscript{94}) when she unexpectedly arrived home from boarding school a few years earlier. The other expert called to the crime scene is Robert Langdon, Professor of Religious Symbology at Harvard. Langdon is in Paris to give a lecture on symbolism and meet Saunière. Part of the riddle tells those who find the body to find Langdon. Langdon and Neveu realise that the position of the body and the cryptic code next to and surrounding Sauniere is a riddle that will help them find not only who murdered Saunière, but also the solution to the question the body and riddle poses.

Langdon could not tear his eyes from the glowing purple text scrawled across the parquet floor. Jacques Saunière’s final communication seemed as unlikely a departing message as any Langdon could imagine (Brown 2004:69).

The confusing cipher found next to the body reads:

\begin{verbatim}
  13-3-2-21-1-1-8-5
  O’ Draconian Devil!
  Oh, lame saint (Brown 2004:69)!
\end{verbatim}

A fourth line, which Fache had hidden from Langdon, had read

\begin{verbatim}
P.S. \textsuperscript{95} Find Robert Langdon (Brown 2004:91-101).
\end{verbatim}

The message was written in a ‘stylo de lumiere noire’, or as explained in the novel:

\begin{verbatim}
STYLO DE LUMIERE NOIRE... The black-light pen or watermark stylus was a specialized pen originally designed by museums restorers and forgery police to place invisible marks on items (Brown 2004:64).
\end{verbatim}

pentacle is representative of the female half of all things – a concept religious historians call the ‘sacred feminine’ or the ‘divine goddess’ (Brown 2004:59).

\textsuperscript{94} ‘Hieros Gamos’ is derived from the Greek words meaning ‘Temple Marriage’ or ‘Sacred Marriage’. It has its roots in ancient fertility cults. Brown describes it as the moment a man achieves a climatic instant when his mind goes totally blank and he can see God. Brown also claims that this continued among Jews and Christians, even in the Temple period, until the established church engaged in a ‘brutal crusade’ to re-educate ‘the pagan and feminine worshiping religions’ (Brown 2004:309).

\textsuperscript{95} ‘P.S.’. The initials of the pet name Sophie Neveu was called by her grandfather ‘Princess Sophie’ (Brown 2003:105).
This message turns out to be a coded message:

LEONARDO DA VINCI

MONA LISA (Brown 2004:138)

Sophie surmises that the necklace she once found had a gold key with an even cross like the sign for female. Embossed in the middle of the cross were the letters P.S. with the flowery design of the fleur-de-lis, the flower of Lisa. Sophie realises that the Mona Lisa holds the key to the clue. Her grandfather used to call her Princess Sophie, the PS found in the clue (Brown 2004:154, 159).

This first clue leads them to the Mona Lisa portrait, which has a message written in black-light ink\(^\text{96}\) across its Plexiglas protective shield:

SO DARK THE CON OF MAN (Brown 2004:172)

This turns out to be an anagram:

MADONNA OF THE ROCKS (Brown 2004:186)

This sends the detectives to another da Vinci painting, the *Madonna on the Rocks*\(^\text{97}\). Sophie finds her necklace with the key she had seen many years before taped onto the back of the painting. On the key is written an address for a private bank, the Depository Bank of Zurich. This clue leads Langdon and Sophie to a safe deposit box with the code 123581321, the first ten letters of the Fibonacci code\(^\text{98}\); inside they find the keystone, which is a large cryptex\(^\text{99}\), a large cylindrical device in a rosewood box that is opened with a code (Brown 2004:191, 240).

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\(^{96}\) Invisible ink that can be read under a ultraviolet or black light.

\(^{97}\) *Madonna of the Rocks* is the name given to two versions of a painting depicting the Virgin Mary sitting with the infant Jesus and John the Baptist, accompanied by an angel believed to be Archangel Uriel. The composition is triangular in shape with the Virgin Mary at its apex (Cox 2004:100).

\(^{98}\) The Fibonacci code is ultimately connected to the golden ratio and the formula runs 1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55,89,144,223 etc. What is amazing about this formula’s recursive sequence is that it is actually found throughout the natural world: the growth patterns of plants and the spirals of nautilus (spiral sea shells) shells follow this mathematical sequence. The Fibonacci discovery is one of many suggested evidences that the universe is structured in accordance with mathematical principles (Garlow 2006:82).

\(^{99}\) A device fictitiously invented by Leonardo da Vinci (there is no evidence he invented one) (Brown 2003:198-200). Websites now sell thousands of reproductions of what they thought it looked like from its image in the film.
Silas, the member of Opus Dei, is given false clues by all three people he murdered. The; According to his victims the keystone which he seeks is to be found in the Church of Saint-Sulpice beneath an obelisk that lies on the Rosé Line (the meridian line that passed through Paris before it was re-designated to run through Greenwich). The message beneath the obelisk is from the book of Job 38: 11a: ‘Hitherto shall you go no more.’ Silas realises he has been tricked when he reads this message: *This far you may come but no further* (Brown 2004:178).

Langdon and Sophie take the keystone to Leigh Teabing, an expert in the *Holy Grail* (Brown 2004:225). He assists them in fleeing France and escaping the police who believe Langdon and Sophie are suspects in the murderers of the four Sénéchaux by taking them on board his plane, with which they fly to Britain. On the plane, they crack the large cryptex code and open it. Inside they find another cryptex with a second riddle. This riddle says they are to seek the orb that is on the tomb where a knight and a Pope are interred. The answer to the riddle is a reference to Sir Isaac Newton who, though not a medieval knight, was knighted, is buried in Westminster Abbey and whose eulogy was written by Alexander Pope (a Pope) (Brown 2004:427, 445).

As the story ends, the reader discovers that Teabing is *The Teacher* who instructed Silas to find the keystone and murder its guardians, the leaders of the Priory of Sion. Remy, Teabing’s assistant, is his collaborator. Teabing convinced Bishop Aringarosa, head of Opus Dei, to finance the finding of the Grail, telling him its revelation would destroy the Catholic Church. Teabing believes that the Priory of Sion had vowed to reveal the secrets of the Grail to the world in the year 2000, but had broken that vow. This, he felt, gave him the right to find it and reveal the truth to the world. Teabing kills Remy and notifies the police that Silas is in hiding in the headquarters of Opus Dei in London (Brown 2004:549).

In Westminster Abbey, Langdon opens the small and final cryptex and removes the message before destroying the cryptex and message in front of Teabing. The police then arrest Teabing, who begs Langdon to tell him what the message says (Brown 2004:556). However, Langdon does not answer him; the secret is not revealed and the Grail remains a mystery.
Bezu Fache cancels the arrest warrants for Langdon and Neveu after Bishop Aringarosa privately confesses to him. Silas accidentally shoots the Bishop outside the London headquarters of Opus Dei and realises he has been duped. He is shot by the Metropolitan Police SO19 (specialist firearm) unit. Bishop Aringarosa asks Fache to give the bearer bonds that were to pay for the Holy Grail to the families of the people Silas killed (Brown 2004:558).

Sophie and Langdon go to the Roslyn Chapel, formally known as the Collegiate Chapel of St Matthew. It is a fifteenth-century chapel located at the village of Roslin, Midlothian, in Scotland. The Holy Grail is indeed found in the Rosslyn Chapel, not under the Star of David on the floor, as the riddle seems to suggest, but in the person of the docent of the chapel Sophie’s long-lost brother, whom she thought had been killed along with her parents in a car accident, and her grandmother and wife of Jacques Saunière, Marie Cédhauvel - the woman who had taken part in the sexual ritual Sophie had witnessed - are the mystery. The book ends not with a certainty but a suggestion that perhaps Sophie and her brother are descendants of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene and are therefore the Holy Grail, Christ’s bloodline (Brown 2004:578-82).

2.3.6.3 The Theories This captivating detective story has raised a number of questions in the international religious space. We will look at three of them. Firstly, Brown believes that The Dead Sea Scrolls contain the true story of Jesus and the reason for the entire find not being revealed to the world is that the secrets the scrolls contain would shake, if not end, Christianity. Brown groups The Dead Sea Scrolls with the Nag Hammadi writings, being similar in content. They, according to Brown, have the true Grail Story, speaking of Jesus in human terms. They represent, he says, the earliest Christian record. Even though they do not match up with the Gospels, they are the truth hidden by the Catholic Church (Brown 2004:317, 331).

His second revelation is that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. Brown says that this is part of historical record. The Last Supper is the key to the Holy Grail mystery. ‘John’ in the picture is in fact Mary Magdalene (Brown 2004:318, 327-330).
The last revelation is that the bloodline of Jesus is the *Holy Grail*. The key to this is da Vinci’s Last Supper, where a feminine ‘John the beloved’ is Jesus’ wife rather than a disciple (Brown 2004:319).

*The Da Vinci Code* might be the embodiment of a remark Emperor Julianus is reported to have made:

> What appears to be credible in a myth is precisely what shows us the path to the truth. Therefore, the more paradoxical and extraordinary an enigma, the more it seems to warn us not to trust the naked word, so that we suffer at the hands of the hidden truth. Only in this way will we find what is truly interesting (Crossan 1994:375).

### 2.3.7 Cross Bones

*Cross Bones* seems to be an attempt by Kathy Reichs to jump on *The Jesus Story* bandwagon, led by Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*. It is not one of her best works and, in fact, reads as a ‘me too’ novel. Reichs is a forensic anthropologist who usually writes books that extensively tap into this knowledge. Reichs wrote *Cross Bones* using experts who support her theories, but the book gives the feeling that her questions to them, rather than ‘Is this true?’ were ‘Could this possibly be probable?’ To lend credence to her book, she lists in her acknowledgements fifteen experts from police and forensic departments, universities and archaeological teams.

#### 2.3.7.1 Kathy Reichs

Reichs is a Canadian, born Kathleen Joan Toelle ‘Kathy’ Reichs in 1950. She is an author, forensic anthropologist and an academic. She is Professor of Anthropology at University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA. Her time is divided between Laboratoire Des Science Judiciaires et De Medicine Legale, for Québec province, and her position at UNC Charlotte.
In addition to technical books, Reichs has written 21 novels to date, which have been translated into thirty languages and a TV Crime series, *Bones*, which is in its tenth season. Her first novel, *Déjà Dead*, won the 1997 Arthur Ellis Award for Best First Novel 100.

2.3.7.2 The Story

A 56 year old religious Jew, Avram Ferris, is killed; Andy Ryan and Temperance (Tempe) Brenan are called to the case (Reichs 2005:7). After the autopsy, a photograph of a skeleton, taken at the Masada excavation site, with an inscription on the back (Oct. 1963 H de 1 H) is given to Tempe by a mysterious Mr Kessler (Kaplan), who says he was given the photograph by Ferris (the man who was killed) and it is the reason he was killed (Reichs 2005:13-16).

Jake Drum, Tempe’s archaeologist friend, joins the quest to find out more about the photograph (Reichs 2005:27). Drum says the skeleton is probably the unaccounted-for skeleton from Masada that Donovan Joyce spoke about in his book (Reichs 2005:40-52). Drum says that he believes that Yigael Yadin, who was in charge of the Masada dig, did not report on all the skeletons found. The mystery of the missing skeleton, according to Donovan and other authors, is that Jesus survived the crucifixion and died on Masada at the age of seventy. Therefore, it is a photograph of the skeleton of Jesus (Reichs 2005:79).

Drum flies to Paris to visit the Musee de l’Homme where he discovers a friend of Ferris, Yossi Learner, who found and stole a skeleton from Musee de l’homme in Paris and sent it to Avram Ferris. Ferris was scared that the bones may be that of Jesus so he sent them to a Trappist monk friend, Sylvain Morrissonneau (Reichs 2005:73). Tempe tracks down the monk via the internet to l’ Abbaye Sainte-Marie-des-Neiges, in-between Montréal and the U.S. border. Tempe drives to the abbey and speaks to Abbot Morrissonneau, who gives her the bones (Reichs 2005:89). Shortly afterwards, the monk dies. Tempe saw a car with Arab men outside the monastery just before the monk’s death and presumes that the Arabs are after the bones and must have killed the monk, so laying down another false lead in the story. This proves to be untrue as the monk died of natural causes (Reichs 2005:85-90, 129-136, 144).

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100 [www.kathyreichs.com](http://www.kathyreichs.com)
Ryan and Tempe fly to Israel; Tempe to return the bones to the Israeli authorities and Ryan to track down Kessler, who is suspected of the murder of Ferris. Drum meets them in Israel and takes Tempe to see the tomb in the Kidron - possibly the Jesus Family Tomb. The Skeleton is stolen by a ‘violent’ Hevrat Kadoshe (the bone police) (Reichs 2005:177-179) and Drum is injured. Another skeleton is found; this one was covered in a shroud and are the bones of a crucified man. Tempe has the bones and shroud examined by experts and they are found to be from the first century AD and of a young man. These now become the bones of Jesus. The bones are given to Tovya Blotnik of the Israeli Antiquities Authority who is then killed for the bones. Right until the last chapters, the mystery concerns different sets of bones and who killed whom – Ferris, Abbot and Blotnik: who are the victims and who are the villains?

2.3.7.3 The Theories Reichs’ main theory is similar to those of the other books in the study: Jesus did not die on the cross, but lived until old age on Masada (Reichs 2005:79). Yigael Yadin, an Israeli archaeologist, between 1963 and 1965 excavated the Masada site of a first century Jewish revolt against the Romans. They found 25 fragmented skeletons in loci 2001/2002 at the southern tip of the summit. This find was not immediately reported to the media (Reichs 2005:1). In 1975, Donovan Joyce published a book, The Jesus Scroll, claiming he was given information by a volunteer on the Masada dig (Joyce 1975:21, 180-185). The volunteer claimed there were 26 skeletons and that the missing skeleton was a complete, articulated skeleton of a man. This volunteer gave Donovan Joyce information about a manuscript that was never published. Joyce concluded the skeleton was that of Jesus of Nazareth, who had survived the crucifixion and fled to Masada where He died sometime over the age of seventy, and the manuscript was His last will and testament. According to Joyce, both skeleton and manuscript were smuggled out of Israel by a Professor Grosse and disappeared. Reichs uses this story as the outline for her novel. According to Reichs’ story, the remains of a crucified man are found by Tempe. They are in the cave where the Ossuary of Joseph was found (Reichs 2005:218-220). In 1980 a tomb uncovered in Talpiot101, south of the old city of Jerusalem, contained an ossuary bearing the names Mary; Jude, son of Jesus; Matthew; Jesus, son of Joseph; Joseph; and Mary. In 2002 Obed Golan, an antiquities

101 www.talpiottomb.com
collector, released information of an ossuary in his possession inscribed ‘James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus’, which he said had come from that tomb (Reichs 2005:1-3).

Kathy Reichs’ book is a ‘what if’ scenario which is supported by experts and other books on the subject. There are three skeletons; any one of them could disprove the Gospel stories. Reichs would like people to take these facts and allow them to be discussed in the religious Christian space. Reichs is saying that there may have been a missing skeleton from Masada, but there is also a skeleton of a crucified man, which was found in the place the James Ossuary is claimed to have been found. Reichs says that as long as possibilities exist, the Gospel texts must be viewed with these and other possibilities in mind.

Although Reichs’ book did not spark the same debate as the other books did, it served to confirm the theories laid out in the other books and is supported the other books’ theories. People who read the book are asked to conclude that the other authors must be correct since Kathy Reichs is an academic, and if she thinks The Jesus Story has been misrepresented, there must be some truth in this assertion.

2.3.8 The Archko Volume

All the books discussed so far have been part of modern literature, but The Jesus Story has always been able to draw an audience. The Archko Volume was first published in 1887 and is still in print today. The copy I have was published in 1975 and amazon.com reveals that not only do people still buy this book but it also has value even in the second-hand market.

The book is a delightful collection of ‘ancient letters’ written by the main characters that are part of Jesus’ life and drama. The letters give us an ‘insight’ into the thoughts of the shepherds, Herod, Pilate and others. Some of the followers of New Age, Charismatic, and Apostolic churches refer to this book as proof of The Jesus Story.

2.3.8.1 Drs McIntosh and Twyman  The authors or translators are Drs McIntosh and Twyman of the Antiquarian Lodge, Genoa, Italy, who (as the cover page explains) are responsible for translating manuscripts found in Constantinople and the records of the Senatorial Documents taken from the Vatican.

2.3.8.2 The Story  The story of how the authors of this book obtained the documents is very similar to the stories in the other books the study has presented. However, this book contains an almost classical beginning for bad novels, similar to: ‘It was a dark and stormy night ...’

Sometime in the year 1856, while living in De Witt, Missouri, a gentleman by the name of H.C. Whydaman became snow-bound and stopped at my house several days. He was a native of Germany and one of the most learned men I had ever met... during his stay, he told me that he had spent five years in the city of Rome and most of the time in the Vatican, where he saw a library containing five hundred and sixty thousand volumes. He told me he had seen and read the records of Tiberius Caesar and in what were called the ‘Acta Pilati’ – that is, the Acts of Pilate – he had seen an account of the apprehension, trial and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth; but said it did not add much to the commonly accepted teachings of Christianity. After much negotiation, a transcript was acquired of the transcript as it is on record in the Vatican. I certify this to be a true copy, word for word, as it occurs there. Yours, Peter Freeinhusen, New York, April 26, 1859. After getting the transcript of the Acts of Pilate it was realised there were other documents and after letters back and forth, all were acquired. Peter Freeinhusen, a priest who is chief guardian of the Vatican, copied the documents for the price of $62.44 (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:9-12).

2.3.8.3 The Theories  The theories in this book are in line with the commonly held beliefs of the birth, arrest, trial, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The documents span the whole of Jesus’ life, including the reports Caiaphas makes to the Sanhedrin concerning the execution of Jesus (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:97), the report of Caiaphas to the Sanhedrin concerning the resurrection of Jesus (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:117-127), and Valleus’s notes or the “Acta Pilati” or Pilates report to Caesar of the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:128-147).

These reports give the main players in The Jesus Story drama a chance to answer for themselves. In The Report of Caiaphas to the Sanhedrin Concerning the Execution of Jesus, Caiaphas states that his actions were not based on personal feeling or religious reasons. He,
according to the report, tried and crucified Jesus although he did not see him as a threat, as Jesus’ doctrines were being taught to ‘an ignorant set, who knew but very little about doctrine of any kind’ (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:106). Further, he says that the doctrines preached by Jesus:

...are congenial to unsanctified flesh. They are so suited to human nature that they require no sacrifices; they need not to go to the Temple to worship God; they need not to fast; and they can go when and where they please; they need pay no tithes to keep up the Temple or the priesthood but every man can be his own priest and worship God as he chooses’ (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:104).

Later the text goes on to say:

... if it had not been for the Roman soldiers on the day of His execution we would have had, the bloodiest insurrections ever know to the Jewish commonwealth. I am told that there was never seen such a concourse of people assembled at Jerusalem, as at the cross... But when He yielded up the ghost He proved to all that He was hypostatical [that is, a human body] and that lodi curios had come from the Icelandic covenant and His I trinitas unitas was all a sham, for how could this unpronounced name [God] suffer to be captured by men, or die, unless He is the one that is to die for many? ... And, if so, I was only accomplishing God’s Holy purpose, which exonerates me from guilt, this I did upon Jesus of Nazareth, to save the church from heresy and to save the cause of the Jewish commonwealth from final ruin. But, understand that I did not act rashly nor illegally, as I am accused. I only passed sentence under the protest and order of the whole court belonging to the High Priest, containing twelve members, or elders or priests. Thus you will see it was not my voluntary act but was a legal one and in accordance to the law (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:105, 113).

The next letter to be looked at is by Caiaphas on the resurrection, addressed to Sanhedrin:

A few days after the execution of Jesus of Nazareth, the report of His resurrection from the dead became so common that I found it necessary to investigate it, because the excitement was more intense than beforehand my own life as well as that of Pilate was in danger. I sent for Markus, the captain of the Royal City Guard, who informed me he knew nothing personally, as he had placed Isham in command of the guard; but from what he could learn from the soldiers the scene was awe-inspiring and the report was so generally believed it was useless to deny it. He thought my only chance was to suppress it among the soldiers and to have John and Peter banished to Crete or arrested and imprisoned and, if they did not keep quiet, to treat them as I had treated Jesus. He said all the soldiers he had conversed with were convinced that Jesus was
resurrected by supernatural power and was still living and that He was no human being... (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:119).

Caiaphas ends his letter:

...So noble masters, I do not feel that I can officiate as priest anymore. If this strange personage is from God and should prove to be the saviour we have looked for so long and I have been the means of crucifying Him, I have no further offerings to make for sin; but I will wait and see how these things will develop. And if He proves to be the leader we are looking for, they will soon develop into something more grand in the future. His glory will be increase; His influence will spread wider and wider, until the whole earth shall be full with His glory and all kingdoms of the world will be His dominion. Such are the teachings of the prophet on this subject. Therefore, you will appoint Jonathan, or someone, to fill the Holy Place (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:127).

According to Valleus Paterculus¹⁰³ notes, the ‘Acta Pilati’ or Pilates report to Caesar of the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus, tells us he was aware of Jesus and the claims surrounding Him. Pilate also says he had seen Him preach and had told his secretary, Manlius, to listen to Him and find out more about Jesus and to report back. Pilate’s impression of the Jewish royalty and religious leadership is that they are deceitful and sanctimonious, willing to betray their own mothers for gain. He sees that Jerusalem is a dangerous city difficult to rule. Pilate also predicts that the Roman religion will one day be supplanted by the religion of Jesus. Pilate writes that he had a prior conversation with Jesus whom he warns of the priests and Jewish leaders’ plot against Him and against His intentions. Jesus is claimed to have answered the charges against Him with the words:

Prince of the Earth, your words proceed not from true wisdom. Say to the torrents to stop in the midst of the mountain-gouge: it will uproot the trees of the valley. The torrent will answer you that it obeys the laws of nature and the creator. God alone knows whither flow the waters of the torrent. Verily I say unto you, before the Rose of Sharon blossoms, the blood of the just shall be spilt (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:135).

¹⁰³Valleus Paterculus, a Roman historian, must have been a close friend of Caesar, who raised him by degree until he became one of the greatest men of Rome. He returned to Rome in the year 31 AD and finished his work, which was the Historia Romanis. He held the office of Praetor when Augustus died and while Vinceus was consul (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:128).
Pilate’s take on the situation is as follows:

Three powerful parties came against Jesus, the Herodians, Sadducees and Pharisees stirred up the crowds against Jesus calling for His death... Jesus was dragged before the High Priest, Caiaphas, performed a divisor act of submission. He sent his prisoner to me to confirm his condemnation and secure his execution. I answered that Jesus was a Galilean, the affair came under Herod’s jurisdiction, and ordered him to be sent thither (McIntosh & n 1975:138).

Jesus was brought before the High Priest who condemned Him to death. Jesus was then sent to Pilate who tells the leaders that as Jesus is a Galilean He needs to be tried by Herod. As the night drew on a more and more “discontent” crowd surrounded the palace and Pilate was scared. His wife [from Gaul] throws herself at Pilate’s feet begging him not to touch Jesus, or he will be cursed, as she has had a dream (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:135).

Pilate is faced with a decision to let an innocent man free or bow to the threat of the people of Jerusalem and crucify Jesus. Pilate, in an attempt to appease the leaders, has Jesus scourged but this only increases their fury (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:41). Due to his fear of the masses, the priests and their power, Pilate washes his hands and gives Jesus over to be crucified. The Archko Volume portrays Pilate and the Romans as men caught up in history, wanting to prevent unrest at all cost, wanting to prevent the deaths of the innocent people of Jerusalem. Pilate says, ‘I never witnessed such an extreme revulsion of feelings’ (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:143). After the crucifixion, he (Pilate) is approached by Joseph of Arimathea and grants Joseph’s request to take the body and bury it. A few days later, it is reported that the tomb is empty and that Jesus is alive. As the Royal Guard (these are guards for the Jewish King’s regiments) guarded the tomb, Pilate says the Romans are not responsible for the disappearance of the body. Pilate says that Marcus of the Royal Guard insists he placed a hundred soldiers around the tomb and they were alarmed to find the tomb empty. Pilate ends the letter with the following statement:

... If the Jewish theory were true, the conclusions are correct, for they are in accord with this man’s life, as is known and testified by both friends and foes, for the elements were no more in His hands than the clay in the hands of a potter. He could convert water into wine; He could change death into life, disease into health; He could calm the seas, still the storms, call up fish with a silver coin in its mouth. Now I say, if
He could do all these things, which He did and many more, as the Jews all testify and it was doing these things that created this enmity against Him - He was not charged with criminal offenses, nor was He charged with violating the law, nor of wrongdoing to any individual in person and all these facts are known to thousands, as well by His foes as by His friends – I am almost ready to say, as did Manlius at the cross, ‘Truly this is the Son of God’ (McIntosh & Twyman 1975:147).

The Archko Volume is the dialogue the Gospels never enter into, allowing many to find a voice to the question ‘Is it true?’ It is probably not more or less true than many of the books this study has considered and therefore has a place in the discussion. Yet it is considered a serious piece of work by many New Age Christian sects.

2.3.9 The Two Babylons

The Two Babylons was written as an anti-papist pamphlet in 1853 by a Scottish Presbyterian theologian, Bishop Alexander Hislop. Later in 1853, it was expanded and it was eventually published in book form in 1919.

2.3.9.1 Bishop Alexander Hislop

Hislop was born in 1807 and died on 13 March 1865. He was a Free Scotland minister who was known for his criticism of the Catholic Church. He married Jane Pearson in 1831. He was a parish schoolmaster and editor of the Scottish Guardian Newspaper for a time. Ordained in 1844 at the East Free Church in Arbroath, he became a senior minister a year before he died.

2.3.9.2 The Story

The central theme of the book is that the Catholic Church is a continuation of the ancient religion of Babylon (Hislop 1919:1). Hislop believes that the Catholic Church is a mystic Babylonian religion which worships pagan gods whereas the Protestants are true believers who believe in Jesus and a true single God.

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104 The Two Babylons which I am using for the study is from the website https://www.biblebelievers.com/babylon/sect1.htm, so the references will be the chapters and chapter page numbers.
He claims that the Catholic doctrines and practices and especially their festivals are no more than pagan practices grafted on to the base of Christian religion during the reign of Constantine. He believes that the worship of the Madonna and child is no more than worship of Semiramis, an exceedingly beautiful blond woman, her son Jupiter-puer (Jupiter-boy) and her husband Nimrod, the founder of Babylon. Nimrod was killed and Semiramis, pregnant with child, claimed the child was Nimrod reborn. This pseudo-virgin birth, he states, is part of this religion.

2.3.9.3 The Theories The main theory is that the Catholic Church is a form of paganism, i.e. the two Babylons being the ancient and modern version of Babylonian religion, with the Catholic Church being the modern Babylon.

The areas that Hislop discusses are The Trinity (Hislop 1919: Chpt 2), The Worship of the Mother and Child (Hislop 1919: Chpt 3), Christmas, Easter, Mass, Purgatory and Prayers for the Dead, idol worship and processions, relic worship, the Rosary, the Sign of the Cross, the sovereign Pontiff or Pope as well as the Roman Catholic offices of priests and nuns (Hislop 1919: Chpt 1). He draws a parallel between the whore of Revelations and the Catholic Church. This book and a book written on The Two Babylons by Ralph Woodrow, Babylon Mystery Religion, have become the source of material for preaching against modern-day paganism.105

2.4 THE FILMS, DIRECTORS AND PLOTS

The Times Newspaper of 22 April 2014 had an article titled ‘Hollywood plays to the faithful, finds hits with God’. It starts by saying ‘Hollywood has embraced God in a big – and – lucrative way. In the beginning of 2014 Hollywood has seen four ‘Christian’ movies that all open with impressive box office figures, amassing $221.5 million in their opening weekends’. The films Heaven is for real, Noah, God’s not dead and Son of God are not controversial, they

105These books have had some surprising consequences. Ashley Bell, head of the ICC of Africa (International Church of the Covenant) and member of their Translocal Team (the eldership team of ICC), said that the church would not be celebrating Christmas or Easter, as these were pagan festivals and part of a Catholic Church plot to lead Christians away from the teachings of the New Testament. His authority on this subject was Bishop Hislop. The ICC is an Apostolic Church organisation with related churches in most countries in the world and millions of members.
are feel-good films. Their earnings placed these films in the top five earners of the year on opening.

This study will discuss three films that have in recent years made significant noise in the religious space. The question of whether keeping to the script of the New Testament or not affects the popularity of The Jesus Story films is answered in the film The Passion of the Christ.

2.4.1 The Last Temptation of Christ

This film, directed by Martin Scorsese, is an adaption of the 1960 novel by Nikos Kazantzakis. The film depicts the life of Jesus who, while free from sin, is subject to every form of human temptation. Jesus imagines himself engaging in sexual activities, amongst them fornication\(^{106}\). Although the film includes a disclaimer explaining it is not based on the traditional Gospel stories of Jesus, it caused an outrage in the church. The film won an Academy Award nomination for Best Director and a Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actress for Barbara Hershey’s performance as Mary Magdalene. The film is mentioned in The Da Vinci Code when Sophie remembers her grandfather’s reaction to the Catholic Church wanting it banned. She recalls:

...it sounded like the French government under pressure from the priests, had agreed to ban an American film called The Last Temptation of Christ, which was about Jesus having sex with a lady called Mary Magdalene. Her grandfather’s article said the church was arrogant and wrong to ban it (Brown 2004:332).

2.4.1.1 The Story

The film begins with a scene of a man whispering in despair:

The feeling begins. Very tender, very loving. Then the pain starts. Claws slip underneath the skin and tear their way up. Just before they reach my eyes, they dig in. And I remember. First, I fasted for three months. I even whipped myself before I went to sleep. At first it worked. Then the pain came back. And, the voices. They call me by the name: Jesus.\(^{107}\)

\(^{106}\) According to the film, Jesus has an intimate relationship with Mary Magdalene before marrying her.

\(^{107}\) [www.imdb.com/title/tt0095497/thelasttemptationofchrist](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0095497/thelasttemptationofchrist)
In this film, Jesus is torn between His own desires and the knowledge that He is part of God’s plan for mankind. This conflict causes Jesus to sink into deep depression and self-loathing; He collaborates with the Romans to crucify Jewish revolutionaries. Judas is not the betrayer in this film, but is sent to kill Jesus for collaborating with the Romans. After meeting Jesus, he decides that Jesus is the Messiah and asks Him to lead the revolution against Rome. Jesus refuses the offer, saying His message is one of love. Judas becomes His disciple but holds the fact the Jesus has had an intimate relationship with Mary Magdalene over him, threatening to reveal this secret if Jesus does not support the revolution.

Jesus gathers disciples around Him, but He is uncertain of His role in Israel. He takes counsel from John the Baptist, who then baptises Jesus. Jesus goes into the desert and is tested by Satan who appears to Him as a snake, a lion and a pillar of flame. Jesus resists Satan and envisioning Himself as an axe, a symbol of His decision to follow the path of violence. He is nursed back to health by Martha and Mary of Bethany who persuade Him that in order to please God He needs to marry and have children.

Jesus’ ministry moves across Galilee to Judea and finally to Jerusalem. Here He puts His plan of insurrection into play by cleansing the Temple of the traders and then leading a small army to take the Temple by force. He pauses, calling on God for a sign to take back Jerusalem for Israel; this appears as stigmata. This, He decides, is a sign He must die on the cross for mankind’s salvation. Jesus convinces Judas to hand Him over to the Romans for trial, even though Judas tries to talk Him out of it. Pontius Pilate tries and sentences Him to death for threatening the Roman Empire. He is then crucified.

On the cross, Jesus has a conversation with a young girl, His guardian angel. The guardian angel tells Jesus He is the Son of God, not the Messiah, but that God is pleased with Him and wants Him to be happy. The angel takes Jesus off the cross, taking Him to Mary Magdalene who nurses Him back to health. They marry and have a child. Soon after, Mary Magdalene dies and Jesus takes Mary and Martha of Bethany for His wives and they have a large family.
Later, as an elderly man, the film shows Jesus meeting Paul, who is teaching the Gospel. Jesus tells Paul He is Jesus of the Gospel and He was not the Messiah. Paul repudiates Him, saying that even if Jesus was not sacrificed on the cross, His message of love, mercy and grace is true and nothing would stop Paul proclaiming the Gospel. Jesus argues that salvation could not be based on lies.

At the end of Jesus’ life, He calls His disciples to Him. Judas reveals that the angel that spoke to Jesus on the cross was in fact Satan. Jerusalem is in its last throws of rebellion against Rome. Jesus crawls through the destructed city of Calvary to His cross, begging God for forgiveness and asking God to allow Him to fulfil God’s original plan for His life.

The last scene is of Jesus once more on the cross, having to overcome The Last Temptation, trying to avoid His death as God’s sacrifice for man. He cries out in ecstasy as He dies, ‘It is accomplished’ as the screen flickers to white.

2.4.1.2 The Theories  This film tries to portray a Jesus figure - a very human Jesus figure - tempted by all manner of things, yet with the deep knowledge that He is God’s instrument on earth. The Jesus figure is misled and lied to but in the final hour becomes once again the instrument of God.

2.4.2 Jesus of Montreal

Jesus of Montreal (Jésus de Montréal) is a 1989 Canadian film directed by Denys Arcane. The film features a group of actors who are hired by the Catholic Church to present a passion play. Their representation of The Jesus Story is unconventional, including Jesus being fathered by a Roman soldier. In the film, the play is met with accolades until the Catholic Church closes it down. The central character Daniel’s life and Jesus’ life mirror each other throughout the play. The film received The Ecumenical Jury Prize at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival and the Genie Award for best Canadian film of 1989, was twice placed second on the TIFF list of ten best Canadian films and was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{108} \url{http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097635/jesusofmontreal}
2.4.2.1 The Story

The film’s plot centres on a group of actors, led by Daniel, who are commissioned to present a passion play by the Catholic Church at a pilgrimage site. The story implies the passion play is to be held at St Oratory\textsuperscript{109}. The playwright is inspired to write the script after seeing a badly acted play at St Oratory and decides to produce a film on the subject.

The play takes its subject matter from current academic theories and research. The story is about Daniel who has returned from a journey of ‘spiritual searching’ in the east. The opening scene, where Daniel is ‘proclaimed’ as a much better actor than the rest of the cast, has echoes of Jesus’ baptism and John declaring Jesus the Messiah (Jn 1:29-34). One of the actors ‘sells out’ and allows his head to be used in a poster, paralleling John the Baptist’s beheading (Mt 14:1-8). The gathering together of the cast, some of whom lose their jobs, symbolises Jesus calling the disciples to Him (Mt 4:18-21; 9:9). A pre-publicity casting session is disrupted by an angry Daniel who is upset with the casting director for humiliating the actors; this parallels Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple (Mk 11:15-18). Daniel is arrested for his outburst and tried by an indecisive judge mirroring Jesus’ trail by Pontius Pilate (Mk 15:1-15). A smooth lawyer tempts Daniel with a career in commerce, talking to him on top of a skyscraper, indicating that the city could be Daniel’s if he gives up acting - a re-enactment of the temptation of Jesus by Satan (Luke 4:1-13).

Daniel has an accident and is first taken to a Catholic hospital and discharged after no care. He collapses at a railway station and is then rushed to The Jewish Memorial Hospital and put on life support, but he is pronounced brain-dead by the doctors. This scene depicts two stories: the Good Samaritan who is denied help from the establishment (Catholic Church) but receives help from an outsider (Jews) and it is also the story of the Jews being responsible for the death of Jesus (Jh 18:12-14, 28-40).

\textsuperscript{109}Saint Joseph of Oratory of Mount Royal in Montreal is the largest church in Canada and a national shrine. It is purported that Saint Joseph’s spirit within the church allowed Brother André, who started the construction of the church in 1904, to perform all his reported miracles. The church walls are lined with crutches of those who have been healed. In 2010 Pope Benedict canonized Saint André, deeming the miracles to be true (www.saintjoseph.org).
After Daniel is pronounced dead, his friends give permission for his organs to be harvested. This depicts the resurrection; life beyond death. Daniel’s group of actors come together and start an experimental company symbolising the start of the Christian Church.

2.4.2.2 The Theories Except for the ‘fact’ that Jesus was fathered by a Roman soldier and the suggestion of an intimate relationship with Mary Magdalene, the film portrays the traditional story told in an unconventional way in the use of symbolism.

2.4.3 The Passion of the Christ

This is probably the most influential modern film on The Jesus Story. It grossed in excess of $600 million during its release, making it the highest grossing R-rated film in the United States film history.110

2.4.3.1 The Story The film opens with Jesus praying in Gethsemane and being tempted by Satan while the apostles Peter, James and John are sleeping (Mt 26:36-40; Mk 14:32-40; Lk 26:36-46; Jn 18:1). Satan appears to Jesus in the form of a man, tempting Him to turn away from the cross by saying ‘It’s not right for one man to die for their sins’. Jesus sweats blood (Lk 22:42-46) while a snake slithers from Satan. Jesus hears His disciples calling Him, He rises and steps on the snakes head, so tying the first Adam of Genesis and the Old Testament with the last Adam of the New Testament (1 Cr 15:45).111

The story moves forward to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas (Mt 26: 21, 47; Mk 14:18-21, 43-45; Lk 22:1-6, 47, 48; Jn 11:45-50; Jn 13:2, 21), His trial by Caiaphas (Mt 26:57-65; Mk 14:53-63; Lk 22: 66-71; Jn 18:19-27), His sentencing by Pontius Pilate (Mt 27:11-26; Mk 15:1-15; Lk 23:1-25; Jn 18:28-19:1-16) and His crucifixion (Mt 27:34-56; Mk 15:23-37; Lk 23:32-46; Jn 19:16-30). After Jesus calls out on the cross, giving up His spirit (Mt 27:50; Mk 15:37; Lk 23:46; Jn 19:30), He dies. A single drop of rain falls from heaven, triggering an earthquake (Mt 28:2) which rips the curtain of the Temple in two (Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45), to the horror of

110 www.boxofficeemojo.com/alltime/world/

111 So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit (1 Cr 15:45).
Caiaphas and the other priests. Satan is shown screaming in agony as he is defeated by the Son of God.

2.4.3.2 The Theories  *The Passion of the Christ* tells the traditional story of Jesus as told by the Gospels, although there is a liberal use of poetic license. For example, Satan appears in the garden of Gethsemane to distract and tempt Jesus. Jesus crushes the serpent beneath His feet (Genesis 3:15, the proto evangelium, a prophecy of the Messiah). Another example is Judas being tormented by children after he betrays Jesus; the children appear to Judas as demons. The film focuses on the fragile relationship between Pontius Pilate and Caesar Tiberius. The film also leaves one with the impression that the Romans carry the greater burden of guilt than the Jews do over the death of Jesus.

Some of the other scenes that do not appear in the Gospels are crows the pecking out the eyes of the thief on the cross who taunts Jesus and a flashback to a table that Jesus the carpenter made for a Roman. Satan as a bystander carrying a grotesque forty-year-old demonic baby has been construed by the Catholic Church and others as a perversion of the depictions of the Madonna and Child. Mel Gibson describes the scene as follows:

> It is evil distorting that which is good. What is more tender and beautiful than a mother and child? So the Devil takes and distorts it just a little bit. Instead of a normal mother and child, you have an androgynous figure hold a 40-year-old baby with hair on its back. It is weird, it is shocking, it’s too much – just like the soldiers turning Jesus over to continue scourging him on his chest is shocking and almost too much, which is the exact moment when this appearance of the devil and the baby takes place.\(^{112}\)

*The Passion of the Christ* cost $30 million to produce and to date has grossed in excess of $600 million\(^{113}\).

Pope John Paul II is reported to have said about the film, ‘It is as it was’\(^{114}\). According to the national reviewer Katha Pollitt, the film is considered by some as an anti-Semitic statement, depicting the ‘bad’ Jews, the priest, with big noses and yellow teeth and Herod Antipas and his court depicted as a bizarre collection of oily-haired, epicene perverts. The

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113 [www.boxofficeemojo.com/alltime/world/](http://www.boxofficeemojo.com/alltime/world/)
‘good’ Jews, on the other hand, all look like Italian movie stars. Another criticism of the film is its violence; some say it is the most violent film ever, even more so than *A Clockwork Orange*. Critics cite the flogging of Jesus than is mentioned in one sentence in three of the Gospels, but the film devotes ten minutes to this event. A. O. Scott of the New York Times commented that the film seems to arise less from love than from wrath and succeeds more in assaulting the Spirit than uplifting it. A film critic from the film industry’s publication Slate, David Edelstein, dubbed the film ‘a two-hour-six-minute snuff movie - The Jesus Chainsaw Massacre – that thinks it an act of faith’.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The books and films discussed in the chapter all agree on three premises: Jesus did exist; He was an itinerant preacher, healer and prophet; and He was crucified. What most *Jesus in Fiction* writers, I believe, try to do is to make more of Jesus of Nazareth, the man from Galilee, than Jesus Christ the Son of God. As a human He makes mistakes, sins, has bad judgement. As a deity, He moves out of the physical realm of corrupt and failing man to glorious saviour.

At first reading, the books and films in this chapter, *The Jesus Story in Fiction*, may be dismissed as popular fiction, and some are. However, popular fiction, whether in books or films, is a powerful medium and should not be underestimated or brushed aside as just fiction. These books and films have opened up a new discourse, one which is studied in Applied Archaeology. All the books and films have been written on a basis of some fact, even if that is just a grain of truth. This clever weaving together of ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ and presenting the whole as ‘new fact’ appeals to audiences and is skilfully achieved. An idea, a sliver of a theory, has developed in the public space, allowing existing theories and facts to be questioned.

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116 [www.boxofficeemoji.com/alltime/world](http://www.boxofficeemoji.com/alltime/world)
A great amount of research and resources have gone into producing *The Jesus Story in Fiction*. However, most of the books and films in this study that portray Him as a flawed prophet seem to have used the same method of proof they accuse the early church fathers of employing to define what was placed in the canon of the New Testament - disregarding what they themselves find hard to believe or comprehend.

Barbara Thiering’s book *Jesus the Man* travels the furthest from the Gospels narrative. I am not sure, after reading the book, that I really understand her *Jesus Story* or the motivation behind it. There is no doubt Thiering did an enormous amount of work to invent her Pesher method and rewrite the story, but I am unsure to what purpose. Like Karen King, who presented the world with *The Gospel of Jesus’ Wife*[^117], which will be discussed in the next chapter, Thiering risked her academic career by publishing theories that were not accepted by the academic community, and can be seen as extremely brave or foolish.

The theories are also used to bolster up New Age religions which use books like *The Archko Volume* to scratch together proof for their doctrines. Surprisingly, as most of these churches are strongly anti-papist, seeing the Roman Catholic Church as a pagan religion, which worships multiple gods, the same churches are quick to use documents reportedly coming from the Vatican Library.

Are the authorities, whether government, academic, scientific or church (the guardians of this truth), in reality hiding the ‘real truth’? Where does the evidence of the books come from? Do the theories of the books stand up to current archaeological evidence?

[^117]: Karen King was the Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard University. In September 2012, King published details of what she described as the *Gospel of Jesus’ Wife* at the *International Congress of Coptic Studies.*
CHAPTER THREE
THE JESUS STORY IN ‘FACT’

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will look at *The Jesus Story* in the Gospels, both the traditional and alternative writings. The path of this story twists and turns, sometimes meeting, sometimes going off on tangents, but it is this that makes the story continually news-worthy and guaranteed to catch the public’s attention. The basis of this story is whether the Historical Jesus can be among the texts used in this study.

Finding the Historical Jesus, John Dominic Crossan\(^{118}\) says in his eBook *Jesus* (2013), ‘is like trying in atomic physics to locate a sub-microscopic particle and determine its charge. The particle cannot be seen directly, but on a photographic plate we see the lines left by the trajectories of the larger particles it put in motion’ (Crossan 1994:117). This is an apt description for the man who lived over 2,000 years ago, a man who was executed at about the age of thirty and changed the world and time, with His message of love and sacrifice. Jesus, the man, elusive, yet whose presence is felt across time and space.

This study, just as Crossan, asks why it is necessary to prove the existence of Jesus and of His ministry if in fact, as Crossan points out, there is better research on Jesus than on the Contemporary Roman Emperor Tiberius. ‘There are biographies on Tiberius by Velleius Paterculus, Tacitus, Suetonius and Dio Cassius, but only Velleius Paterculus was directly connected with him. The other writers wrote from seventy-five to two hundred years after Tiberius’ death’ (Crossan 1994:131). If this is the case, why is the evidence as is laid out in the Gospels concerning Jesus in question?

Vermes in his book eBook *Jesus* (2013) explains that the image of Jesus and the Messiah is influenced and honed by the social dialogue of the society of the time (Vermes 2003:4326). Jesus became a liberator in the 1950’s through to the 1970’s for the Liberation

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\(^{118}\) A noted member of the Jesus Seminar.
Theologians\textsuperscript{119}, while Mary Magdalene became the founder of the church instead of Peter for the feminist movement in their effort to rescue the sacred feminine from obscurity and place her firmly back as alongside and equal to a Father God\textsuperscript{120}.

Today there is a move towards Islamic-Christian Theology to help accommodate Islam and lessen Muslims’ feeling of isolation in their adopted western countries, or to help assimilate those who have converted to Christianity. The champion of this ‘new faith’ is an Islamic convert, Gary Miler\textsuperscript{121}. However, even if Christianity is moulded into the current politically correct shape, the basics remain.

\textit{The Authors}\textsuperscript{122} in this study would argue that the true Jesus has been systematically removed from the Gospels and the Catholic Church has prevented the world from knowing the ‘true’ facts. They believe if the ‘true’ facts were revealed, they would bring an end to the Christian faith as we know it. According to them, the Jesus the church worships is a combination of myth and pagan gods, which would make the evaluation of Jesus Christ using the Gospels as references invalid. Bishop Alexander Hislop says that:

\begin{quote}
The Babylonians, in their popular religion, supremely worshipped a Goddess Mother and a Son, who was represented in pictures and in images as an infant or child in his mother’s arms. From Babylon, this worship of the Mother and the Child spread to the ends of the earth. In Egypt, the Mother and the Child were worshipped under the names of Isis and Osiris. In India, even to this day the mother and child are, worshipped as Isis and Iswara, in Asia as Cybele and Deoius; in Pagan Rome, as Fortuna and Jupiter-puer, or Jupiter, the boy; in Greece, as Ceres, the Great Mother, with the babe at her breast, or as Irene, the goddess of Peace, with the boy Plutus in her arms. Even in Tibet, China and Japan, the Jesuit missionaries were astonished to find the counterpart of Madonna and her child as devoutly worshipped as in Papal Rome itself. Shing Moo, the Holy Mother in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Liberation Theology} can be described as ‘an interpretation of Christian faith through the poor's suffering, their struggle and hope and a critique of society and the Catholic faith and Christianity through the eyes of the poor,’ but it usually is a political ideology using the Bible for political ends (Berryman 1987:xii).
\textsuperscript{120} \url{www.theharmonyproject.org/feminine.html}
\textsuperscript{121} \url{https://www.thetruereligion.org/priests}
\textsuperscript{122} The Authors of \textit{The Passover Plot, The Jesus Scroll, Jesus The Man, The Woman With The Alabaster Jar, The Da Vinci Code and Cross Bones}; the authors of the ‘superbooks’ that have sold over a million copies each.
China, is represented with a child in her arms and a glohislopry around her, exactly as if a Roman Catholic artist had been employed to set her up (Hislop 1919:628).

What Hislop is saying is that instead of the Mother and Child depicting Jesus and Mary this is pagan worship borrowed from religions found in various parts of the Middle and Far East.

There are four biographies, referred to as the New Testament Gospels, of this first century itinerant Rabbi and prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, all written by His contemporaries or near contemporaries. Even if we discount the traditional view that the Gospels were written by His followers, they were all still written at least within 75 years of Jesus’ death. The difficulties with the Gospels are that they are not just historical texts. The New Testament Gospel texts are more than a collection of Jesus’ sayings and narratives about Jesus. Rather, as Van den Heever and Scheffler say:

The Bible functions as a foundation for Christian identity, group identity, life orientation and worldview. Christianity is constantly recreated and sustained by taking recourse to its foundational document, its ‘constitution’. However, the Bible is not only the Christian ‘constitution’ but also the Christian’s ‘court of appeal’. It provides the shared or common terms of reference for a wide spectrum of moral debates, political questions and issues of social re-engineering (Van den Heever & Scheffler 2001:1).


When the Christian myth is taken literally, its central theme develops dangerous implications. For if Jesus was literally God, in the sense of being the second person of the Godhead living a human life, it follows that Christianity alone among the world’s religions was founded by God in person and is thus God’s own religion, uniquely superior to all others. This conviction was used to validate Europe’s conquest of most of what today we call the third world, carrying off many of its inhabitants as slaves.

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123 Bishop Hislop sees the church as influenced and controlled by the Catholic Church, which he sees as a pagan sect that introduced Easter, All Saints Days (Halloween), Christmas, Saints Days and Baptism, which all are pagan celebrations (Hislop 1919:43).

124 Here are the dates given in the Modern NIV Study Bible: Matthew: c. 50’s to 70’s, Mark: c. 50’s to early 60’s, or late 60’s, Luke: c. 59 to 63, or 70’s to 80’s, John: c. 85 to near 100, or 50’s to 70 (NIV Study Bible).

125 The words ‘in person’ may need clarification. Is John Hick saying ‘on earth,’ ‘in flesh’ or ‘spiritually’? I believe that Jews would argue that their religion was created by God for His people; the Muslims that Allah created theirs; the Hindu, Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva, or Shakti - a henotheistic religion (i.e., involving devotion to a single god while accepting the existence of others) and whose scriptures contain both revealed and passed down orally. Three of the major religions contradict this statement, while religions, ancient or modern, who believe in a god or many gods see themselves as being separated out to their deity.

126 Slavery was not and is not confined to Christian cultures. One cannot blame The Jesus Industry for this blot on humanity. In fact, the abolition of slavery in the Americas and western society is almost solely due to
exploiting its economies and destroying its cultures. The idea that Jesus was God likewise validated the Christian perception of the Jews, who were guilty of deicide, thus creating a deep-seated prejudice within the European psyche, which continued in the secular anti-Semitism of the nineteenth and twentieth century’s, culminating in the Holocaust of the 1940’s. When taken literally, the Christian myth becomes a supremacist ideology which, in conjunction with human greed, pride and prejudice, has used the name of Christ to justify profoundly un-Christ like acts (Funk 2002:143).

Jesus is described by Crossan in his book Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography (1994) as a ‘peasant Jewish Cynic’, He and His followers being hippies in a world of Augustan yuppies’. Crossan supports this theory with the verses describing Jesus sending out His disciples in Mk 6:8-9, Mt 10:9-10, Lk 9:3 and Lk 10:4, where Jesus instructs His disciples to take only a staff, a single tunic and sandals, no bag, no money on their journey when He sends them out to preach to the surrounding area (Crossan 1994:127). Evans disagrees with Crossan, saying in his book Jesus and His World, the Archaeological Evidence that Jesus’ instructions did not conform to the cynics’ code. ‘What makes a Cynic is his purse and his staff and his big mouth’ (Evans 2012:28). To align Jesus with the cynics because He and His followers appear to lead a simple life not caught up in materialism does not fulfil cynicism’s basic requirements. Jesus teaches His disciples in Mt 6:29-33 not to focus on worldly things, what to eat and what to wear, but ‘rather seek first the kingdom of heaven and all these things will be added unto to you’ (vs. 33). This is not conclusive evidence of being a cynic. Jesus’ philosophy was to seek God, as in Matthew 6:33 ‘But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteous and all these things shall be added to you’. Another of Jesus’ philosophies was to love your fellow man, as in Mark 12:31 ‘and the second is, like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.’ The last philosophy is forgiveness, as in Matthew 6:14-15 ‘For if we forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But, if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses’ (Evans 2012:18).

When discussing people’s understanding of the Gospels, there may be comprehension problems. Not all people have read the Bible, while some have a more comprehensive

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127 The Cynics were founded by Diogenes (c 412-321 BC). The word means ‘dog–like’, which was a name earned by their ragged, unkempt appearance. They would defecate, urinate and even copulate in public. They truly did not regard society’s rules and norms. Cynics were members of a group of ancient Greek philosophers who believed that virtue is the only good and that the only means of achieving it is self-control. The sect was founded by Antisthenes in the fourth century BC (https://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cynic)
understanding of theories, commentaries and doctrines put out by religious organisations, social media, electronic media, films and novels rather than knowledge of the Bible, as many have not read it in its entirety. The strange phenomenon is that apparently many people have more knowledge of the *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, *The Da Vinci Code*, *Jesus the Man* and other popular novels on the subject of Jesus than the biblical text. This is not just due to people who do not consider themselves religious and see no need to read the Bible but have read all the popular *Jesus Stories*, but strangely, some followers of Catholicism and the Orthodox Church are still actively discouraged by their local priests from reading the Bible. The argument given is that only the church and its leaders are learned enough to interpret the Bible, as it is not as simple as fundamental Christians believe, but filled with symbolism and could be open to misinterpretation and threatens one’s faith\(^\text{128}\). In other words, many Christian beliefs do not come from the Bible, but from books on or relating to the subject.

John Lübbe presents an interesting view in his paper *Jesus the Jew: According to Mark* (2010.) He says:

> ...as one who still believes in authorial intent, I cannot ignore the evidence of the text and am still trying to understand the depictions of Jesus in the Gospels and the New Testament as a whole. The issue is of concern because it remains a conundrum that this Jesus of Nazareth, who is reported by all four evangelists to have been Jewish, has been so widely embraced and variously depicted by non-Jews, yet rejected and ignored by the vast majority of Jews. Is it possible that our perceptions of this Jesus of Nazareth have become greatly skewed by the innumerable interpretations and portrayals of this person? Would the understanding of this Jesus, by Gentiles and Jews alike be enhanced, if closer attention were paid to His “Jewishness”?

Would this mean reconsidering the Christian religion? Would it mean seeing it as a Jewish sect or at the very least a religion that is embedded in and bound by the law, poetry and prophets of the Old Testament? Would this change the beliefs and attitudes of many Christians who see Christianity as an isolated religion divorced from Judaism? Christianity, I feel, would be enriched by the study of the Old Testament, beyond the ‘Bible Stories’ and Ten Commandments. The context of Jesus and His ministry can only be fully appreciated within the scope of the Old Testament. Finding the ‘Historical Jesus’ means needing to

\(^{128}\) This is the view held by a number of my Catholic and Greek Orthodox friends and family.
embrace Him in context and as a Jew, a resident of Galilee and Judea in the first century AD, with all the hardship an occupied nation endures.

It seems, in my opinion in investigating *The Jesus Story*, there is always a bogeyman: the devil, the Vatican, people who are different and therefore scary, technology, education, governments, the Catholics, Orthodox and New Age Churches, Evangelical Churches, Judaism and Islam, all of which cast shadows of unbelief on the contents and interpretation of the Gospels. This bogeyman is a supreme shape-shifter appearing to support the proponent’s arguments with all the ‘proof’ needed, while at the same time supplying the ‘proof’ needed to disprove the same arguments. The New Testament is often read and beliefs developed within cultural realities, making it impossible to secure a concrete model for a spiritual understanding of the Historical Jesus.

The Gospels the study will be using are mainly the four Gospels in the New Testament and two non-canonical Gospels: the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Philip. The two main non-canonical Gospels used in this study contain the basis for the arguments that the above-mentioned Authors tabled in maintaining that the New Testament Gospels are not presenting the true *Jesus Story*.

3.2 THE GOSPELS

The word ‘Gospel’ is an old English word ‘gos-spell’ meaning ‘good news’ or ‘glad tidings’ and is the English translation for the Greek word evangelion (ev- ‘good’, -angelion ‘message’) or in Aramaic ‘ewang’eliyawn’, which is the word used by Paul when he speaks of the ‘Good News’ in 1 Corinthians 15:1: ‘More over brethren, I declare to you the Good News which I preached to you, which also you received and in you,’. In Islam, the term used for the Koran’s book containing *The Jesus Story* is the Injil, which is believed by Muslims to be one of the four books given to Mohammed by God to correct the corrupted versions appearing in the Bible (Cross 2005:295).

129 According to Islam, Jesus never died on the cross, nor ever wanted to die on the cross, nor was He ever born to die on the cross. Muslims believe that Jesus was sentenced to death and people thought that He was executed on the cross. The Holy Quran rejects the idea of Jesus being crucified and claims that it is a false one.
The ministry of Jesus was initially a reformed Jewish movement which, as can be seen in the letters of Paul, spread quickly from Palestine to other parts of the Greco-Roman world to include Syria, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome, and soon moved from a purely Jewish sect to a religion of Gentiles. Jesus became ‘The Son of God’, escalating from the King of Israel to King of all the world, due in part to the fluid relationship between humans and gods in a Hellenistic religious environment (Van den Heever & Scheffler 2001:130).

During the first century after Jesus’ death, many texts were written to tell The Jesus Story. Many of the texts have been lost or not considered for the final composition of the New Testament. The Gospels come to us in canonical and non-canonical Gospel form.

3.2.1 Canonical Gospels
The canonical Gospels are the four Gospels which were accepted as part of the New Testament. Irenaeus of Lyons (185 AD) insisted there should be four Gospels; he denounced earlier works of the early Christian groups that used only one Gospel, for example, sects such as the Marcions, who used only a version of Luke, or the Ebionites, who seem to have used an Aramaic version of Matthew. Irenaeus stated that the four Gospels were the four pillars of the church and therefore there could not be more or fewer Gospels as, logically, there were four corners of the earth and four winds. Irenaeus took his imagery from Revelations 4:6-10 which describes God’s throne as being supported by four creatures with four faces: the faces of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle: the conventional symbols of the Evangelist being lion, bull, eagle and man. Irenaeus was ultimately successful in declaring

Jesus never died on the cross, nor did He ever die for anyone’s sins. The Holy Quran (The Muslims Holy Scripture) says in verse 4:156-159 "That they rejected Faith; that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge; that they said (in boast): ‘Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the Son of Mary, Messenger of Allah.’ And did not kill him, nor crucified him, but (another) was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain. Rather, Allah raised him to Himself. And ever is Allah exalted in Might and Wise. And there is none of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) but that he will surely believe in him (Jesus) before his death. And on the Day of Resurrection he will be against them a witness” (Surah 4:156). The false charge against Mary was that she was unchaste. Such a charge is bad enough to make against any woman, but to make it against Mary, the other of Jesus, was to bring into ridicule Allah's power itself. Islam is especially strong in guarding the reputation of women. Slanderers of women are bound to bring four witnesses in support of their accusation and if they fail to produce four witnesses, they shall be flogged with eighty stripes and debarred forever from being competent witnesses” (www.isalmawarenes.net).
that these four Gospel contained the truth, as these are the Gospel included in the New Testament (Brown 1997:27).

The four Gospels have been included in the canon at a number of Synods: the Council of Rome in 382 AD, the Synod of Hippo in 393 AD, and the two Synods of Carthage in 397 AD and 419 AD and in the translation of the Bible by Jerome, who was commissioned by Pope Damasus I, in 382 AD.¹³⁰

The four Gospels appear to be in agreement with each other if they are read one after the other. However, once they are compared with each other, another picture is formed. The Gospels seem to disagree more than they agree with one another. One of the reasons for this is that the Gospels are different people’s interpretations of the events and the man Jesus. Each Gospel gives a different ‘face’ of Jesus; in other words, although there is only one Jesus, there are many interpretations of Jesus. At one extreme the Gospels are considered inerrant descriptions of Jesus’ life and at the other extreme it is concluded that the Gospels provide no historical information about Jesus’ life and are mythology. As J. R. R. Tolkien says:

Of course, I do not mean that the Gospels tell what is only a fairy-story; but I do mean very strongly that they do tell a fairy-story: the greatest. Man the storyteller would have to be redeemed in a manner consonant with his nature: by a moving story. But since the author of it is the supreme Artist and the Author of Reality, this one was also made . . . to be true on the Primary Plane (Carpenter & Tolkien 1998: 100–101).

It appears many who consider themselves Christians say that most of the Gospels are symbolic or need to be combined with a large amount of faith to make them believable. This is confirmed by the Authors of this study. Miracles are too ‘farfetched’ for modern people who have never experienced one, or they have been redefined by today’s understanding of the word as something that is remarkable on one end of the scale and impossible on the other, God’s intervention in a natural situation. The supernatural now is something people experience in science-fiction, zombie or cyber movies, board games or role-playing games, where it makes a good genre for romance, war and detective stories/games.

¹³⁰ http://www.catholicevangelism.org/?page_id=25
The origins of the Gospels are a source of much debate. Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that a new interpretation has emerged, although The Authors claim this interpretation is not new, but ancient and the truth.

Reading the Gospels and comparing Matthew, Mark and Luke, it seems to suggest that there may have been a common source, as Matthew and Luke share verses with Mark. The most widely accepted theory of the origins of the Gospels is the two-source theory.

3.2.1.1 The Two Source Theory. In the nineteenth century, scholars concluded that portions of Matthew and Luke were ‘borrowed’ from Mark, but this did not account for passages that seemed to come from a second source outside that of the four Gospels. The source they proposed was a hypothetical collection of sayings they called Quellé (referred to as Q), meaning ‘source’ in German. Q comprises of the texts in Mathew and Luke that do not appear in Mark and it is made up of sayings of Jesus. For many years, before 1945, interest in Q waned as scholars could not agree with the content (Van den Heever & Scheffler 2001:130). The Authors in the study use this Gospel of Q to underpin their theory of manipulated texts by the Catholic Church, revealing that Q is actually ‘a book of Jesus’ - His teaching probably written in His own hand that the Catholic Church has hidden (Brown 2004:234) (Baigent et al 1996:334).

After the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library in the winter of 1945, interest in the Gospel of Q was revived. Amongst the hundreds of texts found were a number of non-canonical Gospels; these included the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Philip. These two Gospels, like the proposed Gospel of Q, are collections of sayings of Jesus rather than narratives of the New Testament Gospels. The discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library renewed the hope that other ‘lost’ texts are yet to be discovered. It also led to a revival of the idea that the Gospels of Philip and Thomas may be legitimate texts rather than forgeries (Crossan & Reed 2001:7-8).
More texts might still surface but whether these will cause any change to the New Testament canon is not certain. Whatever the case may be, they would certainly contribute to a better understanding of the existing Gospels.

3.2.2 Non-canonical Gospels  When the four Gospels were selected in the second century, they were parts of greater works. Some Gospels were disregarded in the decision on what would be in the Bible. Some were put aside due to being written too late, not believed to be apostolic, or were heretical, and some Gospels have just been lost or not yet located. According to some estimates, there are about twenty ‘lost’ Gospels. Some of these Gospels have left a trail of proof for scholars as they have been mentioned in other ancient writings including Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Some of the non-canonical Gospels which have been discovered include the Gospels of Peter, Mary and Judas (these are not necessarily the names of the people who wrote these Gospels). The authors are not known and the texts could have attained these names as part of a marketing process, ascribing a book to a famous person to give the book more authority and publicity (Crossan 1994:145).

_The Authors_ in this study claim that the early Church Leaders intentionally destroyed some Gospels in order to cover up embarrassing facts about _The Jesus Story_, one of the facts being that there is a ‘Jesus lineage’ or ‘God Gene’ and another being the ‘true’ origins of Christianity. The discovery of the Gospels of Thomas and Philip and the secular scrolls amongst the _Nag Hammadi Library_ and _The Dead Sea Scrolls_ have provided theologians, archaeologists and writers alike with more information about early religious sects and first century times in Palestine.

Some of the theories discussed have a basis in the non-canonical Gospels e.g. Jesus’ marriage to Mary Magdalene is stated in the Gospel of Philip. Other theories that have originated from legends might be evidenced in symbols found in paintings, sculptures, tarot

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131 The emphasis _The Authors_ put on this ‘God Gene’ is contrary to their insistence that Jesus was not the Son of God. His High Priesthood and royal lineage seem to them to be part of this sacred gene. Why a gene from an itinerant preacher from the first century is important to European royalty, I am unsure. According to Jh 7:5, Mk 3:33, and Mt 13:46, Jesus had brothers and sister and unless they all died without producing children, there must be more of this lineage than a single line through the woman Mary Magdalene if Jesus married her.

132 As Baigent et al and Brown explain, Mary Magdalene and not Peter founded the Christian Church (Baigent et al 1996:403; Brown 2004:340).
cards, texts and references to texts that surround the stories of the *Holy Grail* and the Knights Templar. Not all the theories come from archaeological discoveries; most are from artwork and legends. *The Authors* claim that inconsistencies and misleading information published by archaeologists and academics prove their theories of the ‘true Jesus’. They argue that the inaccuracies and conflicting reports show conclusive proof of conspiracies or alternatives to the ‘truth’ put out by the church. In Chapter Five, the study will test *The Authors* against Robert Thouless’ system of *Straight and Crooked Thinking*.

### 3.3 BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE GOSPELS

Archaeology has made an invaluable contribution to the study of the Bible and especially the New Testament. Archaeology does not only give us buildings and artefacts but adds to our knowledge of the geographical setting of the Bible and the understanding of the religious milieu of the New Testament world. Archaeology helps stop the mythologizing the events and stories of the New Testament. The image of the biblical archaeologist with a pith helmet, Bible in hand and a donkey, forcing sites to fit biblical events or vice versa has been replaced by a team of experts ranging over various disciplines from pure science to humanities (McRay 2008:17-19).

Two findings that have excited the world of Biblical Archaeology and caused much discussion by the general public and academics are the *Nag Hammadi Library* and *The Dead Sea Scrolls*. These two finds produced texts that cast light on the life and times of Jesus and the early church, as well as some non-canonical writings.

#### 3.3.1 The Nag Hammadi Library

*The Nag Hammadi Library* was discovered near the modern city of Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt, about 80 kilometres from Luxor. The discovery of the codices was probably as exciting as the codices themselves. James Robinson in his book *Nag Hammadi Library* tells the story of the find. Two brothers found several papyri in earthenware vessels in the Jabal al-Tarif caves. The initial find was not immediately reported. In 1946, the brothers became involved in a family honour dispute and the codices were left with a Coptic priest. In 1947, one of the codices (Codex III) was sold to the Coptic Museum in old Cairo. Jean Doresse, the Coptic Museum’s resident Coptologist and religious
historian, realised the importance of the text and published a paper on the text in 1948. More codices became known over the next few years and these were passed on to a Cypriot antiquities dealer who sold them to the Egyptian Department of Antiquities. After the 1952 Egyptian Revolution and overthrowing of the monarch, the codices were returned to Egypt, housed in the Coptic Museum in Cairo and declared a national treasure (Robinson 1990:113).

The *Nag Hammadi Library* comprises fifty texts in thirteen codices. The original thirteen papyri codices are bound in leather and undertook a journey from Upper Egypt to the black market in Cairo. After attracting the attention of authorities in Egypt, twelve codices were placed in the Coptic Museum. Some parts of the thirteenth codex containing five texts were smuggled out of Egypt to America. These were bought by Giles Quispel of Utrecht University in 1955 and taken to the Netherlands (Robinson 1990:40). Quispel, after studying them, discovered that there were pages missing from the texts, which he found in the museum in Cairo. Studying the photographs of the missing pages, he translated the first paragraph of the codex and found the words: ‘These are the secret words which the living Jesus spoke and which the twin, Judas Thomas, wrote down.’ He knew that these were the opening lines to the Gospel of Thomas, part of which had been discovered in the 1890’s. He did not have in front of him a few paragraphs of a Gospel, but the entire Gospel (Robinson 1990:41).

Quispel and his colleges dated the texts at around 140 AD. Recently Helmut Koester of Harvard agreed with 140 AD being the date the texts were compiled, but suggested that the collections of sayings in the Gospel of Thomas includes much older traditions, maybe even older than the Gospels of the New Testament. Included in the *Nag Hammadi* texts are stories of creation that differ from that in Genesis. *The Testimony of Truth*, for instance, tells the story of the Garden of Eden from the serpents’ point of view (Robinson 1990:45). The serpent is portrayed as the Gnostic representation of divine wisdom who offers Adam knowledge, while God jealously threatens Adam with death and eviction from the garden of paradise when he achieves it (Robinson 1990:45).

As imagined, the *Nag Hammadi Library* has evoked robust debate. Amongst the codices, there are texts that seem to have been influenced by Far Eastern religious philosophies,
revealing a god, unlike the Jewish and Christian tradition, who is separated from humankind by a chasm. In this philosophy god is portrayed as the philosophy of self-knowledge, which is the knowledge of god and where the self and the divine are identical. Jesus is portrayed not as a saviour, but rather as a guide who leads us to a place of spiritual understanding. It has been suggested that the Thomas Christians were in contact with Buddhists, as there were trade routes between the Greco-Roman world and the Far East during 80-200 AD. For generations, Buddhist missionaries were active in Alexandria. Hippolytus, a Greek, included Indian Brahmin traditions as part of the sources of heresy in 225 AD (Robinson 1990:14). Amongst the *Nag Hammadi* codices are the Gospels of Thomas and Philip. Although the Suez Cannel crisis in 1965 delayed work on the library, under the leadership of James Robinson, who was appointed by UNESCO, the completed translation of the library was published in 1975 (McRay 2008:357-358).

3.3.1.1 The Gospel of Thomas (GTh) The Gospel of Thomas, commonly referred to as GTh, was considered a Gnostic forgery from the late second or third century AD, but it is now agreed that the Gospel of Thomas is not a forgery.

The Gospel starts with the words:

> These are the secret words that the living Jesus spoke and that Didymos Judas Thomas recorded. And He said: Whosoever discovers the interpretation of these saying will not taste death (Patterson 1993:2).

This Gospel appears to be a collection of Jesus’ sayings and is unusual as it declares that it is ‘hidden words’ and a secret. The entire writings of Thomas do not seem to come from the same era; parts could have been written as early as 50 AD and some of the texts as late as the second century. Thomas seems to suggest that the people that the texts deal with may have been homeless or itinerant, exchanging their family and lifestyles for poverty and begging; this is also themed in the Gospel of Q. This picture of a wandering believer is not evident in Matthew and Luke, who suggest settled, structured communities (Van den Heever & Scheffler 2001:130).
Elaine Pagel, the Harrington Spear Paine Professor of Religion at Princeton University, best known for her studies and writing on the Gnostic Gospels, writes that the Gospel of Thomas presents the idea that if you bring forth what is within you, you will save yourself. But, if you do not bring forth what is within you, what is within you will destroy you. The idea behind that is that if you can bring forth something from within yourself, something intrinsic to human beings, it allows you to have access to God (Burstein 2004:103).

3.3.1.2 The Gospel of Philip  
A single copy of the Gospel of Philip was found amongst the Nag Hammadi Library, but unlike the Gospel of Thomas, it is a collection of Gnostic teachings and reflections. Reading through the verses of Philip, two things stand out: Firstly, he must have come from an area known for dying as he used a number of dye and dyer references, including the words “God is a dyer”. These references do not appear in any other Gospels. Secondly, Philip also writes about sex and relationships, both in and outside marriage; again, this theme does not appear to any great extent in the other Gospels. There are a number of paragraphs that have caused controversy and are taken as proof for the theories that Jesus married Mary Magdalene. According to verse 36:

There were three Mariams who walked with the Lord at all times: his mother and [his] sister and [the] Magdalene “this one is called his companion.” Thus his [true] mother and sister and mate is [also called] Mariam.

Then again in verse 59:

The wisdom which [humans] call barren is herself the Mother of the Angles. In addition, the companion (koinōnos [companion, consort and partner]) of the [Christ] is Mariam the Magdalene. The [Lord loved] Mariam more than [all the (other) disciples, [and he] kissed her often on her [mouth, feet, hands, cheek]. The other [women] saw his love for Mariam, they said to him: why do thou love [her] more than all of us? The Saviour replied, he says to them, Why do I not love you as ([I do] her? (Robinson 1990:139-169)

These two verses, along with the account of the wedding in Cana in the Gospel of John Chapter 2, are the proof used by The Authors to prove that Jesus was married and His wife was Mary Magdalene. Reading the verses above if all the words in parenthesis are missing, a variety of interpretations are possible. In my opinion, the canonical Gospels would have
mentioned if Jesus was married, but they are silent on this matter, and this piece of text is not conclusive.

### 3.3.2 The Dead Sea Scrolls

Unlike the *Nag Hammadi Library*, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* are still not completely transcribed and translated, although the majority of the work has now been completed and is available for study. Found in 1945, the story of the discovery and management of the publishing of *The Dead Sea Scrolls* is intertwined with the history and political climate of the world and especially the Middle East. Reputations of academics charged with transcribing, preserving and translating the scrolls have been made and lost over the years. *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, together with the *Nag Hammadi Library*, are probably among the ten most important Biblical Archaeological texts found to date. Sixty-eight years after their discovery, they still garner debate, accusations and conspiracy/alternative theories and this will probably carry on into the foreseeable future (Vermes 1997:32). Fortunately, according to Lawerence H. Schiffman, most of the scrolls are now available to scholars. When he first started studying the scrolls, he was asked by his colleagues: “Why would you want to go into a field where you can’t see all the evidence?” as most of the scrolls were only available to a select few scholars (Schiffman 2015:45). The story on *The Dead Sea Scrolls* will be expanded on in the next chapter.

The fact that it has taken so long to make the scrolls available for general study may have been a contributing factor to readers of the ‘superbooks’ used in this study believing that there is a conspiracy surrounding *The Dead Sea Scrolls*. 
Written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Nabataea, the scrolls were mostly written on parchment, but a few are on papyrus and bronze one of which is the Copper Scroll, which is a list of treasure. The age of the manuscripts is between 408 AD and 318 AD, coins aided in dating the scrolls, the oldest are John Hyrcanus (135-104 AD) most recent from the First Jewish-Roman War (66–73 AD). The Dead Sea Scrolls are divided into three groups; copies of texts from the Hebrew Bible, which comprise roughly 40% of the identified scrolls; texts from the Second Temple Period, like the Book of Enoch, Jubilees, the Book of Tobit, the Wisdom of Sirach, Psalms 152–155, etc; which were ultimately not included in the Hebrew Bible. The final 30% of the identified scrolls, are sectarian manuscripts (previously unknown documents that shed light on the rules and beliefs of a particular group or groups within greater Judaism) like the Community Rule, the War Scroll, the Pesher on Habakkuk and The Rule of the Blessing (Vermes 1981:32).

Although most academics on The Dead Sea Scrolls team agree that the scrolls do not have any New Testament texts\textsuperscript{133}, the community texts give us some insight into sects in the first century AD.

The community that was responsible for The Dead Sea Scrolls could have been the Essenes, although Norman Golb has disputed this theory. The Essenes were a religious sect in the New Testament period, discussed by Josephus in his Jewish Wars. McRay supports Golb and says in his book Archaeology and the New Testament that ‘while the scrolls do not provide us with important background material on the nature of sectarian Judaism in the time of Jesus and on the possible relation of John the Baptist with the Essen sect and they have not proven to be of any real significance for the study of the text of the New Testament’ (McRay 2009:360).

3.4 THE TRADITIONAL JESUS STORY

The Jesus Story is told in narrative form in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These Gospels are neither just a history, nor a biography of Jesus of Nazareth. The Gospel writers say something specific about the meaning of Jesus; they portray His teachings, receptions and life with carefully selected material to carry the Gospels’ own particular emphasis or message. The Gospels are a profile of the awaited Messiah, Israel’s King and the

\textsuperscript{133} Fr. Jose O’Callaghan, a Spanish Jesuit, claims to have found fragments of Mark, 1 Timothy and James in Cave 7 at Qumran in 1972.
World’s Saviour and they present four different faces of Jesus Christ: in Matthew, the King; in Mark, the Servant; in Luke, the Man; and in John, God (Unger 1983:465).

The traditional story of Jesus is of an itinerant Rabboni (Jn 20:16), born in Bethlehem, the city of David. His mother, Mary, was a virgin impregnated by the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35). The baby was born of Royal and High Priest lineage (Mt 1 and Lk 3), with Joseph, a carpenter, as His earthly father. His birth was heralded by heavenly hosts (Lk 2:13); he was visited by shepherds from the fields (Lk 2:8, 15-18) and sages from the east (Mt 2:1-12). His life was threatened by Israel’s King Herod (Mt 2:16). Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt with the baby (Mt 2:13-14). After the death of King Herod, the Holy Family returned to Israel and settled in Nazareth (Mt 2:15-23). Very little is known of Jesus’ early childhood, except for his bar mitzvah134 (Lk 2:42-49). At the age of about thirty, Jesus was baptised by His cousin, John the Baptist (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Jn 1:29-34), before entering into His ministry. For three years this prophet, preacher and healer spoke of a New Covenant (Mt 26:28; Lk 22:20), a contract of love (Mt 5:44; Jn 5:42; Jn 3:16; Jn 13:35), mercy and grace (Lk 2:40; Jn 1:17) instead of law between man and God. The religious leaders of the time felt threatened and plotted successfully with the aid of the Romans to have Him crucified (Mt 27:32-54; Mk 15:21-41; Lk 23:26-49; Jn 19:17-30). He was buried in a borrowed tomb. On the third day, He rose from the dead (Mt 28:1-15; Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-12; Jn 20:1-10) and for the next forty days was seen by many in and around Jerusalem (Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:9-18; Lk 24:13-35; Jn 20:11-18) before ascending to heaven (Mk 16:19; Lk 24:50-53).

This story is in essence consistent throughout the four Gospels, but are the Gospels the original story?

Helmut Koester, a scholar at the Harvard School of Divinity, in his article in Biblical Archaeological Review Vol. 35, ‘Gospel and Gospel Traditions in the Second Century’, says that:

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134 The rite of passage into adulthood for a twelve- or thirteen–year-old boy. He is presented to the members of the temple and reads a passage from the temple scrolls, after which he is consider responsible for his actions (www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2473-bar-mizwah).
Finds of ancient manuscripts are often fragmentary and quotations by the church fathers have shown that during the first and second centuries, at least ten Gospels were circulating. The New Testament had not yet been canonized. That the Gospels were joined together in a collection of four became part of what we know now as the canon of the “New Testament” is a process that began at the end of the second century; the first manuscript containing all four canonical Gospels appears only in the third century.

This was not the end of changes to the New Testament; as Helmet Koester goes on to explain:

Even during the following centuries, scribes who copied the texts made changes. For example, the Gospel of John received an additional chapter, John 21; the original ending of this Gospel stands, after the three stories of the appearance of Jesus in John 20:30-31: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God and that through believing you may have life in His name.” (Koester 2009: 6: 55).

There is a similarity in the first three Gospels and they are believed to be the result of two sources:

The first three Gospels are synoptic; they follow a similar outline and are very similar in content and order of events with a few divergences. Among scholars the two-source hypothesis is the majority view, this is the view that Matthew and Luke are written from Mark and the hypothetical Gospel of Q (Vermes 2010:23).

John, the fourth Gospel, does not follow the outline of the first three Gospels. In this Gospel, Jesus has a ministry of three years instead of one and instead of short parables there are long reflections on the meaning of Jesus. There is also an inference that the chasing out of the money lenders in the Temple may have happened twice, as John has this incident taking place early on in Jesus’ ministry. This incident takes place in John 2:13-16: ‘Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem…15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables.’ This is contrary to the other Gospels, which place this event just before the arrest of Jesus (Crossan 1994:103).
3.4.1 The Gospel of Mark

Traditionally the author of Mark is John Mark, as named in Acts. His mother was a Mary (At 12:12, 25). Mark was one of the eleven disciples that Jesus sent to spread the Gospel in Judea after His crucifixion (Mt 28:16; Mk 16:14) and founder of the Church of Alexandria. John Mark became the Apostle Peter’s interpreter and scribe after Peter had restored his failing faith. Therefore, the Gospel of Mark could be referred to as the ‘memoirs of Peter’. John MacArthur says that this agrees with early church tradition, saying ‘Irenaeus, writing about 185 AD, called Mark “the disciple and interpreter of Peter”’ (MacArthur 2005:152). According to Catholic tradition, John Mark is one of the disciples that left Jesus when Jesus explained that His blood was ‘real drink’ and His flesh was ‘real food’ (Jn 6:44-6:66). In 43 AD, Mark founded the church of Alexandria, becoming the first bishop and founder of Christianity in Africa. Mark is also said to be the young man who ran away naked as Jesus was arrested (Mk 14:51-52) and is traditionally held to be one of the servants at the wedding in Cana who poured out the water that Jesus had turned into wine (John 2:1-11), although there is no mention of these two events being connected to Mark in the Gospels (Koester 2009:44-46).

Mark is considered the oldest Gospel, written in approximately 67-70 AD, although this has been disputed by Fr. Jose O’Callaghan, a Spanish Jesuit, who published an article in Biblica claiming he had found fragments in Cave 7 at Qumran in 1972 that contained the following remnants:

Mark 6:52-53: For they had not understood about the loaves, because their hearts were hard. When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there.

1 Timothy 3:1-4: This is a true saying, if a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous One that rules over his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.
James 1:23-24: 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

This would mean that the Gospel of Mark was written before 70 AD (McRay 2008:357).

Mark's Gospel is considered the Gospel of the Servant of the Lord. It is a dynamic text, not ritualistic, but full of movement and action (Unger 1983:493). It is the shortest Gospel. It contains nothing of Jesus’ birth and childhood and little of his teachings. This Gospel seems to have been written for a Roman audience since Jewish customs are explained in the Gospel. Mark presents Jesus as a mighty conqueror and suffering servant of the Lord. Because Jesus is portrayed as conqueror, no genealogy or infancy narratives are used in the Gospel. Mark used the Greek word *euthys* meaning ‘straight away/immediately’ forty times in his text (Unger 1983:493).

This Gospel is not new to controversy; in 1958 Morton Smith, a 43-year-old Columbia University History Professor, spent the summer looking for ancient manuscripts in Turkey. He claimed to have discovered a letter attributed to Clement of Alexandria during a visit to the Greek Orthodox monastery at Mar Saba, 15 km southeast of Jerusalem. The letter was purported to be a copy of a letter by a second century church elder, Clement of Alexandria. It was a letter to a person known as Theodore who asked questions about a secret Gospel of Mark. Clement answered by quoting two sections of the Gospel. Smith published Clement’s letter fifteen years after the discovery in two works: *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel* and *The Secret Gospel: the Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel according to Mark*. After years of study, Smith came to the conclusion that the letter was genuine and that the ‘Jesus movement had started a mystery-baptism initiation’. The baptism was done singly and at night; in the baptism, the disciple was united with Jesus. The union may have been physical (there is no telling how far symbolism went in Jesus’ rites), so raising the idea of homosexuality among Jesus and His disciples (Shanks 2010:36 (6)7).

Shanks, in his article, *Is the secret Mark a forgery?*, claims the letter was not written in Greek during the second century by the church father Clement of Alexandria, but rather that it was written in ink on the blank bookends of a seventeenth century printed book. It is less
than a thousand words long; the text attacks a Christian first century sect, the Carpocratians, who claimed they had a secret version of the Gospel of Mark. In this version, Jesus seems to have condoned and even encourage His followers to experience the carnal side of life (Shanks 2010:36 (6) 7).

The easiest way of testing this Gospel would be to examine it with modern technologies and expertise, but the original text, according to Smith, was lost while being transferred to another monastery. All the recent research has relied on photographs and copies of the texts, including those made by Smith himself (Shanks 2010: (6)7).

The traditional message of Mark can be summed up in Mark 10:45: ‘For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to give His life as a ransom for many’. The message of Mark is one of a Servant constantly moving and instantly responsive to the will of the Father. His life is completely taken up with the ministering to the people, even in His death and resurrection. Mark’s message is an encouragement to the believers in a time of a persecuted church. Mark teaches that the life of a follower of Jesus is a life of misunderstanding and rejection. Jesus is quoted in Mark 8:34-35 saying: ‘Whoever desires to come to Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and that of the Gospel will save it’ (Boring 2006:12).

3.4.2 The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew, according to church tradition, is attributed to Matthew the Apostle and tax collector. Matthew was a Jew, writing to his people. He portrays Jesus as King of the Jews, the long awaited Messiah. Matthew’s writings include carefully selected Old Testament quotations, genealogy, the baptism, messages and miracles. Matthew puts forward Jesus’ claim to the throne and the rejection of Jesus by Israel’s leadership. This Matthew says results in the extension of God’s salvation to all people who will believe and receive Him rather than reject Him. ‘The kingdom of God will be taken from you (Israel) and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it’ (Mt 21:43). The Gospel of Matthew lays down the
‘laws’ of Christianity (Mt 5-7:28) and portrays Jesus as the fulfilment of all God’s promises almost a second Moses giving the world a new Torah (Morris 1989:110-114).

According to Lawrence Richards, even in death and seeming defeat, Jesus’ resurrection is the ultimate triumph. The King of the Jews lives, reigning on earth and in the heavens. Matthew emphasises that Jesus is the fulfilment of 41 prophecies, showing His life, death and resurrection was part of God’s divine plan from the beginning of time (Richards 1987:485).

3.4.3 The Gospel of Luke

The Gospel of Luke, the longest book in the New Testament, is the Gospel of the Perfect Man. Luke is believed to be written by the same person who wrote Acts. According to the book of Acts, Luke was a physician; both books are dedicated to Theophilus. The title of this Gospel was added to the text at a very early date. Luke is mentioned three times in the New Testament (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 24). Luke was a Greek and a Gentile and wrote as a doctor; this comes through in his writings. Luke showed compassion and warmth with the failings and strengths of people; he portrayed Jesus as a man. The Gospel of Luke is preserved in two different versions: one found in manuscripts from Egypt, the other appearing in the so-called Western Text found in the old Latin translation and in a bilingual (Greek and Latin) codex. Some scholars have suggested that Luke himself may have written both language editions of his work (Richards 1987:506).

In his two books, Luke traces the Christian movement from its beginnings with John the Baptist’s birth, Jesus’ birth and the establishment of Jesus’ ministry to the development into a worldwide fellowship, transcending the limits of Jewish nationality and embracing Jews and Gentiles impartially in the Book of Acts. Luke presents Jesus not only as a Jewish Messiah, but also as the world’s Saviour.

Luke is a devotional Gospel emphasising prayer. Women are more prominent; some of the verses in which this is found are: Luke 2:37, 4:26, 7:12, 22:31 and 23:27. The key verse in
Luke is 9:10 ‘For the Son of man has come to seek and save that which is lost’. About half of the verses in this Gospel do not appear in other Gospels (Boring 2006:576-590).

3.4.4 The Gospel of John

The ‘beloved’ disciple John (Jn 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20), who was included in Jesus’ inner circle, probably wrote the Gospel according to John. This John, the prophet, was traditionally also responsible for Revelations, one of the more controversial books of the Bible, the basis of many conspiracy theories about end times and Armageddon. In the Gospel and letters of John, Jesus is presented as the ‘begotten son of God who became flesh’. The Gospel of John is considered the deepest and most spiritual book in the Bible. More than half of the Gospel reports on Christ’s life and sayings during His last few days. There are three paths of thought prevalent in this Gospel: faith, love and eternal life. The key verses that sum up John are John 3:16 ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life’ and John 20:21 ‘So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”’ According to John, Jesus’ mission was twofold: as the Lamb of God, He was the sacrificial lamb procuring mankind’s redemption and His ministry was to reveal the Father. In this Gospel, Jesus constantly refers beyond Himself to the Father whom He sought to glorify (Nelson 2002:1442).

Although this Gospel is made up of eyewitness accounts, it could still be written by a person other than John the Apostle, according to Bart Ehrman, as it is not conclusive that these might not have been primary witnesses, but reported witnesses (Ehrman 2011:43). F.F. Bruce does not agree, saying that John 19:35 is the most conclusive and emphatic eyewitnesses authority. His proof is John 19:35:

And he who has seen has testified and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe (Bruce 1996:17).

The traditional Jesus Story as given in John is one of love and sacrifice, a message that tells its followers to ‘love one another as I (Jesus) have loved you’ (Jn 15:12). It is a message of unity in the ‘body of Christ’ of servanthood and priesthood, of desiring the things of a
heavenly kingdom rather than earthly goods. John gives an account of Jesus, which is a more complete that the other gospels, this Gospel is a revelation of the Christ and God. The writings of John is said to be God’s love letters to the world (Bruce 2003:103).

The traditional Jesus Story is the ultimate story of grace, giving man more than any earthly leader could: freedom from a lowly life and not only in this world, but in the hereafter. Man was no longer a lost, unimportant entity; God had come to earth to lift up those who caught His vision. Humanity was adopted into God’s family and made part of the Royal Priesthood, heirs of the creator of the universe. A very powerful and persuasive message.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The Jesus Story in the scriptures is the narrative and sayings of an itinerant teacher, preacher and prophet embedded in controversy and speculation. The intrinsic problem of finding the ‘true’ story is not only that He left no archaeological traces; there are no statues of Him, no pottery, coins, buildings or texts written by Him. However, He left many voices behind, those like the people at the foot of the cross and the people in Jerusalem for that Passover who condemned Him and jeered at Him. He also left the voices that want Him to be representative of their doctrines, politics and culture and those who would wish Him away.

The role of archaeology becomes important in The Jesus Story, especially the narratives of the Gospels as they fill in the missing pieces to complete the mosaic that is the Jesus of the ancient world. Jesus is not just a speculative theory that rouses emotions and passions. One cannot, as Baigent et al say their book The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail, say:

All biblical scholarship entails speculation, as does theology. The Gospels are sketchy, ambiguous and often contradictory. During the course of the last two thousand years, people have argued, even waged war over what particular passages mean. In the coalescence of Christian tradition, one principle has consistently obtained. Confronted by any of the numerous ambiguities in scripture, ecclesiastical authorities would speculate about its meaning. Their conclusions, once accepted, were enshrined as dogma and - quite erroneously – came to be regarded over the centuries as established fact (Baigent et al 1996:7).
Is it necessary to find a clear definition of the Historical Jesus? For historians this is important but for believers less so. What is important is the imprint of His words, philosophy and doctrine. Alternatively, are we so tied up in doctrines that we fail to see the Man from Galilee? A Man whose publicity has never been rivalled by any ancient or modern media campaign, He commands gallery, museum, religious space, airtime and print space on a continuous basis, yet the story is over 2000 years old. A Man with probably little or no education, outside his professional knowledge and religious education, according to modern standards, yet who pulls in the world’s academics to debate Him and His doctrines.
CHAPTER FOUR

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE JESUS STORY

ALBRIGHT JOSEPHUS cave 2001/2001
VERMES Dead Sea Scrolls SAMUEL ossuary 4 tomb 1
YADIN ar Giv'at ha- Mivtar KANDO crucified man DE VAUX
Sicarii WAR SCROLLS kohanim skeletons ALLEGRO
ISAIAH SCROLL (1QISA) GOLB Jewish ESHEL Christian martyrs
SHANKS Essen SCHIFFMAN Masada PHILO IAA jehoash
inscription EDH-DHIB wadi Qumran TZAFRIR Rome
HEROD James ossuary SMITH yehohanan son of hagakol
JUBILEES IAA COPPER SCROLL GOLAN Jesus' family tomb
ZIAS Huntington library ABUSHAKRA migsat ma'ase PLINY
carbon 14 GOREN temple worker MEYERS cross
CHAPTER FOUR
BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE JESUS STORY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Biblical Archaeology is a correlation of textual data for the Bible and material evidence from Archaeology. Biblical Archaeology examines the lives of real people, places and events. The archaeological evidence is not proof of the supernatural and in studying the evidence one must constantly be reminded that social dynamics are not transferrable but are pertinent to the time studied. Jesus cannot be described as coming from a middle class family as we know in the 21st century, but rather a crafts or artisan level of society; not the wealthy aristocrat, nor the unskilled peasant family. Artisans in Biblical times, according to Botha in his book Everyday Life In The World Of Jesus, were not poor, but even with wealth were not welcomed into high society as they were considered labourers (Botha 2000:131).

Biblical Archaeology is often not revelation or proof but rather clarification, especially in revealing the detail or nuances of the events. If Biblical Archaeology is not considered clarification, there is an inclination to force events to fit finds.

Vassilios Tzaferis advised in an interview in the 2013 July/August issue with The Biblical Archaeology Review that:

In my professional career, I have been aware of three important axioms: First, archaeology is not an exact science. Second, the interpretation of finds is usually subjective. Third, the conclusions need to be substantiated through multidisciplinary collaboration. If these axioms are not carefully observed, the results of a dig may lead to historical perversions (Tsaferis 2013:46).

Recent years has seen the discovery of much that reveals more of the historical Jesus: Peter’s mother-in-law’s House in Capernaum, the Galilean boat on the Sea of Galilee, the crucified man, and tombs of the first century. Each of these discoveries along with many others has revealed more of Jesus and His disciples. They have come out from behind the veil of mythical creatures similar to comic book superheroes and stepped into a world of
conflict and hardships. Their lives were filled with the worries and toil of a world so different yet similar to ours in many ways. Circumstance and solutions may change, but people and their responses to the socio-economic environment change little.

In this chapter, the study will consider the archaeological finds that have awakened the public’s interest by challenging some people’s belief in *The Jesus Story* as portrayed in the Gospels. Each artefact has been revealed with a fanfare, or in the case of the contents of Cave 2001/2002 at Masada, according to Kathy Reichs, a silence, quickly followed by criticism, doubt, and accusations.

Academics, religious groups and antiquities authorities have questioned parts or all of each find. In the cases of *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, the James Ossuary and the Jesus Family Tomb, the discussions have been very public, with debates often being carried out in the media and at times in the courts.

What the public sees of most of these debates is usually determined by what the media publishes, often in a dramatic, sensational way - nothing sells like a Biblical conspiracy. Reputations and millions of dollars can and have been made and lost in ‘the pursuit of the truth’, as has been seen in this study.

The study hopes to present the Biblical archaeological findings of five of the major discoveries in the Middle East alongside the conjectures and opinions of the writers.

### 4.2 THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

*The Dead Sea Scrolls* is probably one of the most controversial recent discoveries made in Israel. William Foxwell Albright said to John C. Trevor (March 1948) when looking at Trevor’s photographs of the scroll of Isaiah from Cave 1 at Qumran: ‘I repeat that in my opinion you have made the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times ... Certainly the greatest Biblical manuscript find... What an incredible find!’ By 1981, Geza Vermes said: ‘Unless
drastic measures are taken at once, the greatest and most valuable of all Hebrew and Aramaic manuscript discoveries is likely to become the academic scandal par excellence of the twentieth century’ (Vermes 1981:24).

The term *Dead Sea Scrolls* covers the scrolls and fragments found in eleven of the limestone caves on the left bank of the Dead Sea, overlooking the Wadi of Qumran. The closest cave, Cave 4, is 125 m from the settlement, and the furthest cave, Cave 1, is about one kilometre away from Qumran.

These scrolls have become the intense focus of public and academic debate relating to the history of the area and the origins of Judaism and Christianity.

### 4.2.1 The questions most commonly asked about the scrolls

With the interest of the public in the scrolls certain common questions have been asked over the years. Some of the most common are:

- Who wrote the scrolls?
- Were the scrolls written at Qumran or were they brought from somewhere else?
- Are the authors of the scrolls the Essenes, as described by Josephus, Philo, and Pliny?
- Do the contents of the scrolls change the origins of Jewish history or Christianity?
- Are there any scrolls missing?

The story of the scrolls is full of twists and turns. It is far more complex and in some instances more unbelievable than many fiction stories, and certainty surpasses any of the study’s stories in mystery and intrigue. Barbara Thiering, Baigent et al and Dan Brown, however, ask different questions. Theirs are:

- Do the scrolls tell the true Grail story?
- Was Jesus an Essen?
- Do the Scrolls represent the earliest Christian records?

Can Biblical Archaeology answer the questions posed?
4.2.2 Theories about who wrote the scrolls

Many theories centre on who wrote the scrolls and who lived at the site. This study will look at the five most popular theories.

4.2.2.1 The Qumran-Essen Theory This is the predominant theory. The Essenes were a sect of Judaism living at Khirbet Qumran, according to Josephus. This theory proposes that the Essenes or another sect wrote/copied the scrolls. During the 66-68 AD revolt, they hid the scrolls in the nearby hills and never got to go back and retrieve them. There are many similarities between the lifestyle and rules of Essenes written about by Josephus and the rules found in the Community Rule scroll. During the excavation of Khirbet Qumran, two inkwells and plastered elements were found, suggesting that the area could have housed a scriptorium. Miqvah (Jewish ritual baths) were also found, which may prove that observant Jews lived on the site (Golb 1995:3293).

4.2.2.2 The Qumran-Sectarian Theory This theory suggests that the Jews living at Qumran were a sectarian group, not a religious group, this would mean the library of texts could be just that a collection of manuscripts (Golb 1995:3293).

4.2.2.3 The Qumran-Sadducean Theory This theory was developed by Lawrence H. Schiffman who proposed that this was a Sadducees sect led by Zadokite priests who lived in Qumran. This theory is supported by the (4QMMT) also known as the Halakhic Letter or the Sectarian Manifesto, the scroll containing purity laws and a festival calendar which have been attributed in rabbinic writings to the Sadducees (Golb 1995:3279).

4.2.2.4 The Christian Origin Theory Although most scholars deny there is any connection between the site and Christians, the Spanish Jesuit, José O’Callaghan, argues that one fragment of text (7Q5) is Mk 6:52-53 and Robert Eisenman has suggested that some of the scrolls are describing an early Christian community (McRay 1991:361). Barbara Thiering goes further to say that this Christian sect is the sect to which Jesus and John the Baptist belonged. She says that the New Testament is written in a code, which she calls the Pesher Code, and Jesus did not die, but lived out his life at Masada (Thiering 1992:21-23).
4.2.2.5 The Jerusalem Theory  This theory argues that the scrolls were scrolls that had been moved from Jerusalem’s Jewish Temple Library for safekeeping during the destruction of Jerusalem. Karl Heinrich Rengstorf was the first to propose this, and Norman Golb later proposed that the scrolls were from a number of libraries in Jerusalem, not necessarily the Temple Library. These scholars that support this theory point out that the scrolls are not uniform in thought or style so were probably written by various people (Golb 1995:3293).

Archaeologists present these five theories set out above to answer the question ‘Who wrote the scrolls?’ The most widely accepted theory is that Qumran may have been an Essen settlement, although the idea that the scrolls may have been scrolls taken from Jerusalem for safekeeping, I feel, has some importance.

4.2.3 The Dead Sea Scrolls timeline

The discovery of the scrolls and Israel’s fight for independence are intertwined, and the political climate appears to have influenced when and what information was released about the scrolls. The argument against their release was that the scrolls are precious and fragile and therefore cannot be subjected to unnecessary stress. The partnership between The Israel Museum and Google Cultural Institute in November 2011, just before Rosh Hashanah, has meant that five of the first seven scrolls found in Qumran in 1947 have been digitised and are available on the internet to anyone with an internet connection. Since then, most of the scrolls can be accessed. This project also protects the scrolls, as a digital copy is now safe from most forms of destruction and deterioration.

For over sixty years, controversy has surrounded these texts. This has been fuelled mostly by the inaccessibility and attitudes of the people entrusted to transcribe, translate and

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135 www.deadseascrolls.org.il/learn-about-the-scrolls/historical-timeline
preserve the scrolls. Below is a condensed timeline to show some of the political and academic controversy surrounding *The Dead Sea Scrolls*.

Although the history of *The Dead Sea Scrolls* usually starts with the finding of the scrolls by Bedouin shepherds in 1946/47, according to Lawrence H. Schiffman in his article *A Short History of The Dead Sea Scrolls* in BAR May/June 2015, the history starts when two medieval manuscripts now known as Damascus Document (formerly the Zadokite Fragments) were found by Solomon Schechter of Cambridge University in the Cairo Genizah in Egypt in the late nineteenth century. Schechter identified them as being written by a Second Temple-period Jewish sect. When other copies of the fragments were found in Qumran, scholars put the Damascus Documents into context and Schechter was proven right. From here a story with many twists and turns develops, making this discovery one of the most discussed discoveries. A brief timeline highlights many of the hurdles *The Dead Sea Scroll* team and academia either created or encountered in the project.

1946
- Qumran is part of the British Mandate of Palestine.

1946 – 47
- Muhammad edh-Dhib falls into a cave and retrieves a handful of scrolls while he and his cousin are watching sheep. The scrolls are taken back to their encampment and hung on a tent pole. None are destroyed, contrary to popular rumour.

1947
- March
  - The British barricade Jewish settlements in Jerusalem to contain incidents of violence.

- April
  - The Isaiah scroll, Habakkuk Commentary and the Community Rule are taken by the Bedouin to a Bethlehem antiquities dealer, Ijha. He tells them they are worthless were probably synagogue scrolls which if they kept them could get them into a lot of trouble. The Bedouin takes the scrolls to a local market where a Syrian Christian offers to buy them. They are then taken to Khali Eskander Shahin ‘Kando’, a cobbler and part-time antiques dealer. One scroll is left with Kando and three other are sold to a dealer for £7. A deal is done for the other scrolls with a Syrian Orthodox Archbishop of Jerusalem, Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, who purchases the Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa), the Habakkuk Commentary, the Genesis Apocryphon and The Community Rule Scroll for about $250.

November/December
- The United Nations vote to partition Palestine between Arabs and Jews. Civil war breaks out over the United Nations vote.
Feidi Salahi, an antiquities dealer in Bethlehem, shows two scrolls to the Hebrew University Professor, Eliezer Sukenik, Yadin’s father. More scrolls appear in the market and Sukenik buys three: The War Scroll, Thanksgiving Hymns and a fragmented Isaiah Scroll.

1948

Sukenik is shown Archbishop Samuel’s scrolls but does not buy them.

February

A Syrian Orthodox monk shows the Isaiah scroll to John C. Trevor at the American School of Oriental Research (ASOR) centre in Jerusalem. Trevor and his colleague photograph the scroll.

March

William Albright, the American archaeologist, confirms Trevor’s findings that the scroll is the oldest Hebrew manuscript. Archbishop Samuel gives ASR director Millar Burrows the rights to publicize the scrolls. The scrolls are taken to Beirut during the Arab-Israeli war for safekeeping.

11 April

Burrows issues a press release announcing the discovery of the scrolls.

15 May

The British leave Palestine. Jews establish the State of Israel and repel Arab attacks. When the civil war is over, Jordan is in control of the West Bank, which puts Jordan in control of the Qumran caves. Trevor describes ‘The discovery of The Dead Sea Scrolls’ in Biblical Archaeologist 11 (46-48). Sukenik publishes portions of his scrolls, identifying the authors as Essen.

G. L. Harding, the British Director of Antiquities for Jordan, starts his search for any additional scrolls in the caves around Qumran with the aid of Jordan’s Arab Legion.

December

By end of 1948, Caves 1-4 containing the scrolls and fragments have not yet been discovered.

1949

Cave 1 is discovered by a United Nations observer.

February

Harding authorises Roland de Vaux of The French Dominican l’Ecole Biblique to survey Cave 1 where the first 7 scrolls had been. Many more fragments are discovered, including the original Hebrew versions of the Jubilee and the Testament of Levi.

Archbishop Samuel takes four of the scrolls to the U.S. to raise money for Palestinian refugees and publishes an account of his purchase in Biblical Archaeology 12 (26-31). American Museums display some scrolls from 1949 until 1951.

1950

W.F. Albright engages Zenitlin in a public debate on the external evidence of the authenticity of the scrolls. Trevor publishes the photographs of the Isaiah scroll and a commentary of Habakkuk (1QpHaab).
1951 November
Burrows and Brownlee publish the text of 1QS as Manual of Discipline (1951). Harding locates Kando and agrees to purchase all the scrolls the Bedouin still has and might find. Fr. R De Vaux begins the excavation of Khirbet Qumran.

1952 February/March
Bedouins find another thirty fragments of the scrolls in Cave 2, including the Jubilees and Ben Sirach in original Hebrew.

March
Teams from ASOR explore other caves. The Copper Scroll¹³⁸ is found in Cave 3.

September
Khali Eskander Shahin Kando sells De Vaux a large pile of fragments from another Cave. Jordanian consortiums try to raise funds from American Universities and Museums to purchase more scrolls.

De Vaux locates Cave 4 less than 200 metres from Khirbet Qumran. 15,000 fragments of texts are found, which include Aramaic versions of 1 Enoch and Tobit, a scroll of Samuel that is closer to the Greek Septuagint than the official Hebrew text, and fragments of a copy of the Damascus Covenant, a text that was found in 1896 in the Geniza of an old Cairo synagogue.

Nearby, Caves 5 and 6 contain more fragments and copies of the Damascus Covenant.

1953
R. de Vaux holds lectures at the British Academy on his Qumran excavations, supporting Du-Pont-Summer’s hypothesis that scrolls were written in scriptorium by the Essences. Harding assembles an international team of eight scholars¹³⁹ to work on the scrolls.

1954
An advertisement appears in the Wall Street Journal for the sale of scrolls.

July
Sukenik’s son, Yigael Yadin, arranges a covert purchase of Archbishop Samuel’s four scrolls for $250,000.

1955
Edmund Wilson argues that Dupont-Sommer’s observation that there are parallels between the figure of the Teacher of Righteousness and Jesus shows that Christian ideas were borrowed from the scrolls.

Fragments of Cave 1 are published. Caves 7-10 reveal more fragments and scrolls. The Copper Scroll is opened by John Allegro with the help of the Manchester College of Science and Technology.

1956
John Allegro publishes The Dead Sea Scrolls, announcing that the Copper Scroll is a list of Essen treasures. Fr. R. De Vaux

¹³⁸ The Copper Scroll is important to this study as it was claimed that The Knights Templar found the treasures listed in The Copper Scroll (Baigent et al 1996:87)
¹³⁹ Frank Moore-Cross, McCormick University; Patrick Skehan, Catholic University (USA); John Allegro, University of Manchester; John Strugnell, Oxford University (UK); Dominique Barthélemy; Jean Starcky (France); Claus-Hunno Hunziger, Gottingen University (Germany); Roland De Vaux, Team Leader, French Dominican l’Ecole Biblique (https://virtualreligion.net/loh/dss.html).
and G. L. Harding dismiss the treasures as fiction, not compatible with Essen ethos and economy. Chaim Rabin suggests zealots buried the temple treasure. Allegro on BBC claims the Essen worshipped a crucified Messiah and suggests Christianity borrowed the story. De Vaux, Milik, Skehan and Strugnell challenge Allegro in a letter to the *London Times*. Allegro retracts his claims, saying it was based on interpretation rather than text.

Jewish scholar Cecil Roth proposes that ‘A *Solution To The Mystery of The Scrolls*’ (Commentary 21) claims the writers are Zealot followers of Menachem who was executed in Jerusalem in 68 AD by other Judean rebels. Theodore H. Gaster, University of Columbia, publishes English translations of thirteen scrolls from Cave 1, claiming they furnish a picture of the religious and cultural climate in which John the Baptist conducted his mission and in which Jesus was reared - whose religious ideals formed a seedbed for the New Testament.

1957

De Vaux finished excavations at Khirbet Qumran.

1958

Allegro returns to Palestine to search for the Copper Scroll treasure. He is accused by De Vaux of disturbing the excavations for a treasure hunt.

1959

Allegro publishes *The Treasures of the Copper Scroll* using unauthorised pictures. John D. Rockefeller dies and with him the main funding for scroll project.

1960

De Vaux attacks Allegro’s book *The Treasures of the Copper Scrolls*, saying it is imprecise and dishonest.

1961

De Vaux publishes a paper at the Albright Institute in Jerusalem, questioning whether all the scrolls were written by the Essen. He is then denied authorization to examine the unpublished scrolls.

1967 - 69

De Vaux, Skehan, Starcky and Milik refuse to co-operate with Israel. Further publication of the scrolls is blocked.

1970

Norman Golb, University of Chicago, presents a paper at the Albright Institute in Jerusalem, questioning whether all the scrolls were written by the Essen.
1971 W.F. Albright and R. De Vaux die. Fr. Pierre Benoit of Dominican École Biblique becomes the Project Director; he promises to co-operate with the Israeli’s in publishing the scrolls.

1972 Jose o’ Callaghan (Spanish Jesuit) publishes an article in *Biblica* 53 in which he interprets fragments found in Cave 7 as remnants of the New Testament books Mk 6:52-53; 1 Timothy 3:1-4 and James 1:23-24.

1973 An agreement is reached to publish the scrolls under the title *Discoveries in Judean Desert* – no reference to the modern political jurisdiction is made with Israel and the project team.

1975–77 *The Halakah of Qumran*, based on *Damascus Covenant and Community Rule*, is published by Lawrence Schiffman (NYU). Milik publishes fragments of the *Book of Enoch*.

1979 Allegro publishes *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Myth*. He claims the Gospels are narrative fiction about a non-existent hero (Jesus) based on the teaching of the Teacher of Righteousness, a figure described in the Community Rule Scroll.

1980 Norman Golb publishes *The Problems of Origin and Identification of The Dead Sea Scrolls*, which leads some academics to reconsider alternatives to the Qumran-Essen hypothesis.

Elizabeth Bechtel finances a re-photographing of the scrolls and has a microfilm copy made for herself.

1983 Yadin publishes the *Temple Scroll* from Cave 11.

1984 A British archaeological conference is held in Jerusalem at which Elisha Qimron delivers a paper disclosing a few lines of foundation text known as MMT (for the Hebrew Miqsat Ma’ase ha-Torah), Some Principles of the Law. The audience is shocked that a document of such importance has been kept from scholars and the public. Golb argues that the lack of autograph letters and legal documents means the scrolls were not composed at Qumran.

1986 Robert Eisenman, California State University at Long Beach, publishes *James The Just in The Habakkuk Pesher* (1QpHab), identifying The Teacher of Righteousness as the brother of Jesus and his opponents, The Man of The Lie and The Wicked Priest, as Paul and Hanan II.

1989 Eisenman asks again for access to the scrolls, John Strugnell
from Oxford University who took over from Fr. Benoit, head of project when he died, denies him access, citing lack of education as reason.

Herschel Shanks, editor of Biblical Archaeology Review, calls for a publication timeline for the release. Shanks calls Strugnell's decision 'a hoax or fraud'. Shanks publishes letters between Strugnell and Eisenman which are then picked up by The New York Times and other newspapers.

Robert Eisenmann obtains photographs of the scroll fragments and, with James Robinson of Claremont University, releases them in a facsimile edition published by the Biblical Archaeology Review. Shortly afterwards, William Moffit, a librarian of the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, where a microfilm was deposited for safekeeping, decides to reveal his copy to the world. The lock, which bound the scrolls so tightly, was broken.

1990

In an interview with the HaAretz, an Israeli newspaper (November 9), Strugnell characterises Judaism as a ‘horrible religion’ and laments the survival of Jews as a group. He is removed from the project.

December

Emanuel Tov replaces Strugnell as editor-in-chief of The Dead Sea Scrolls Project. His first task is to increase the team to sixty international and interdenominational scholars and to reorganise the publishing process. Eisenman shows 1,700 photographs of the scrolls to Michael Wise, who immediately starts transcription.

1991

Barbara Thiering of the University of Sydney interprets the scrolls as the product of rivalry between the supporters of John the Baptist (The Teacher of Righteousness) and Jesus (The Man of the Lie).

1992

Golb publishes Who Wrote The Dead Sea Scrolls. In it he challenges Qumran as an Essen settlement, saying the scrolls came from libraries in Jerusalem.

Scientists at the National Science Foundation Laboratory at The University of Arizona report that mass spectrometer analysis of the scrolls confirms the dating of most of the texts to be in the pre-Christian era.

Hanan Eshel, an Israeli archaeologist, announces the discovery of four sealed manmade caves near Cave 4.

2005

Hanan Eshel announces in July that he has obtained new scroll fragments. This leads to hope that there is more to be found. In November, Eshel is arrested for illegally trading in antiquities, but he is released without charge. Eshel’s fragments are confiscated by the Israeli Antiquities Authority.

2007

Eshel complains the IAA has ruined the fragments of the Torah.
trying to prove that they are forgeries.

2010-2011 Google finishes the Dead Sea Scroll Project and the first five scrolls are available to anyone with an internet connection.

Looking at even a brief outline of the timeline of The Dead Sea Scrolls, from their discovery to Google publishing them, it is obvious that the politics of the Middle East, finances and academic personalities have caused the delays and conjectures surrounding The Dead Sea Scrolls. Ethics have been questioned, wars have been fought, reputations have been damaged, and many people on The Dead Sea Scrolls Team have lived and died without producing a completed work.

4.2.4 Conclusion

The disagreements on interpretation and the origin of the scrolls are not just from fiction or faction\textsuperscript{140} writers or the general public who do not understand the body of work, but more importantly, they are from the academics who worked on the scrolls. This mixed with a volatile political or religious environment is a recipe for conspiracy theories and accusations of hidden agendas.

The mood of the public regarding the discovery of The Dead Sea Scrolls is summed up in an article by John Noble Wilford that appeared in the New York Times on 22 September 1991 under the heading Breaking the Scroll Cartel:

The team charged with publishing the ‘Dead Sea Scrolls’ has sown bitterness the world over, with the way it has managed the 2000 year old scrolls which it has had control of since early 1950’s, not long after the first of them were discovered... (John Noble Wilford, New York Times, 1991:20).

The interested public saw the delay in publishing the scrolls as part of a conspiracy amongst religious leaders, the Vatican, Israel, the French government and even Islam to keep the truth about Jesus of Nazareth away from the public. The delays in publishing helped fuel and even in some ways created The Jesus Story. The superbooks dealing with The Jesus Story in this study have in many senses changed public opinion of the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern

\textsuperscript{140} A work of fiction with a factual base.
history, Biblical Archaeology and the Catholic Church, and all of them at some stage go back to alternative/conspiracy theories surrounding *The Dead Sea Scrolls*.

Schiffman feels that the scholars can thank the delays in publishing the scrolls as this has meant immense public attention, which has led to exhibitions, documentaries and conferences. This interest means that *The Dead Sea Scrolls* are now an academic discipline in their own right (Schiffman 2015: 41 (3), 45 - 52).

It is important to note that the world religions have not suffered due to revelations of *The Dead Sea Scrolls* or their e-publishing by Google in 2012.

4.3 MASADA

Perhaps no archaeological site in the past several decades has captivated our imaginations as dramatically as Masada. Masada transports us back to a time long ago when a small group of people defied the Roman Empire even in death. In 73 AD, under Roman siege, 960 Jewish zealots – men, women, and children – committed suicide rather than surrender (McRay 2008:136).

Masada is on the west side of the Dead Sea, about thirty miles south of the sea’s northern end. Masada is an isolated mountain fortress 1,380 feet above the level of the Dead Sea and surrounded by steep cliffs, an ideal place to build a fortress. Herod the Great fled to Masada in 40 BC during the Jewish revolt for his and his family’s safety. The fortress kept him safe, but it was inferior to the surroundings he was used to. Therefore, between 37 BC and 31 BC Herod built fortifications and palaces over the previous structures from the second century BC. He created a luxurious, impenetrable fortress (McRay 2008:137).

Masada holds an almost mythical place in the modern Israeli society; here the zealots took the last stand against the Romans, and it is seen as the ‘soul’ of the Jewish people, a mirror image of a people who have fought eradication, enslavement and isolation throughout history. In 1965, the Chief of Staff of the Israel Defence Forces, Moshe Dayan, initiated the tradition of holding the swearing-in ceremony of soldiers who had completed their basic
training on Masada. The ceremony, held at night, ends with the declaration: ‘Masada shall not fall again’\textsuperscript{141}.

According to Josephus\textsuperscript{142}, the Masada story’s omissions and additions have helped in the social construction of a mythical narrative. This means that even in his time there were discrepancies as there are today. Many scholars, one of whom is Jonathan Roth in his book \textit{The Length of the Siege of Masada}, argues the facts versus myths:

- The numbers taking part in the siege: according to Roth was less than a thousand men, women and children against 10,000 to 15,000 Roman soldiers often quoted. This reinforces the continuous struggle of the Jewish remnant against the many.
- The length of the siege is normally portrayed as being one to three years, rather than four to nine months, which is probably more correct.
- Many writers portray Masada as the centre of operations against the Romans, which is more than likely poetic license as there is no proof of this.
- The rebels are defined in the telling of the story as defenders of Masada, fighters of Masada and more often zealots. Josephus says they were Sicarii, whom he describes as a group of thieves and assassins who killed and robbed other Jews, who had captured Masada in 66 AD.
- Religious Jews and Zionists object to the myth of Masada being the Jewish last stand as its creation seems to have started at the beginning of the 1900’s and gained momentum in the 1920’s when in 1923 an excellent translation of Josephus’ \textit{Jewish Wars} and part of Yitzhak Lamdn’s Epic Poem \textit{Masada} were published. The line in the poem ‘Open your gates, Masada, and I the refugee shall enter!’ caught the imagination of Jewish writers. The Zionist leaders began to look to Masada as their ‘heroic last stand’.
- Roth does agree Masada and its heroic story could have been a major influence in the ghetto uprising in Warsaw 1943. The fact that the last stand at Masada and the Warsaw uprising happened over Passover is not missed in the retelling to the stories of Jewish heroism (Roth 1995:87-110).

According to Josephus, the Sicarii were a threat to the Romans. In the fall of 72 or 73 AD, the Romans besieged Masada, building a ramp on the west side and an additional circumvallation wall to prevent the escape of the zealots. The military operation was very impressive considering all the supplies, for example food, water and building materials for about 10,000 legion soldiers, needed to be brought in from considerable distances. This was

\textsuperscript{141} \url{www.zionism-israel.com/dic/Masada.htm}

\textsuperscript{142} Historians are not sure whether Josephus is referring to Judah the Maccabees or Alexander Yannai (\url{https://mosaic.lk.net/g-masada.html}).
a large operation, even in today’s terms, to rid Rome of about 900 zealots whose numbers included women and children (McRay 2008:137).

4.3.1 Popular Theories about Masada

The conspiracy/alternative writers of The Jesus Story used in the study propose the following theories about Masada:

- An articulated skeleton of a seventy-year-old man has been left out of all reports on Cave 2001, and has possibly gone missing along with a scroll. This could have been the skeleton of Jesus, according to Joyce 1975:17, Reichs 2005:1 and Thiering 1992:119.

- The skeletons may have been from a later area; no carbon-14 dating tests were ever carried out on the skeletons, according to Joyce 1975:17, Reichs 2005:1 and Thiering 1992:119.

- There was no press release of the finds at Cave 2001/2002; in the same year, 1963, the discoveries of the Northern Palace were much publicised. During the excavation, the Jerusalem Post published regular stories about the finds on Masada, but nothing on the contents of Cave 2001. The Illustrated London News published a comprehensive report on the excavation on 31 October 1964, including pictures, but again there was no mention of Cave 2001143.

- Yadin, rather than being an objective archaeologist, had a political agenda. Masada was too important to the Israeli Nation not to conform to its myth. Yigael Yadin was part of the military; his career started in his being part of the Haganah, a paramilitary group, while Israel was occupied by the British. He then became part of the Israeli army. During his military career, he became Head of Operations during the War of Independence and then Chief of Staff until his resignation in 1952. He was recalled in 1967 as Military Advisor to the Prime Minster during the Seven Day War (Reichs 2005:160) (Joyce 1975:21-22).

143 https://religiousstudies.uncc.edu/people/JTabor/mqasada.html
4.3.2 Biblical Archaeological and literary evidence of Masada

Masada is one of the most popular tourist sites in Israel. Here the tourist can enjoy a light show, the walk up the Snake Path or experience the steepness of the natural boundaries of the fortress from a cable car. Nevertheless, underneath the tourist veil lie stories of bravery, excess, power, corruption and death.

4.3.2.1 The excavation of Masada Yigael Yadin began the excavations of Masada in 1963. The Cave of Skeletons (loci 2001-2002) was first mentioned in his preliminary report Masada: First Season of Excavation 1963-64 Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1965 and then in the book Dead Sea Discoveries (Talmon & Yadin 1965: 142). Yadin used a crew of about 300 people on average over the eleven months of excavation. His supervising excavator was Yoram Tzafrir. Tzafrir reported, based on Nicu Haas’ evaluation, that there were 25 skeletons found in the westernmost caves below the cliffs of Masada, designated 2001 (western half) and 2003 (eastern half). The skeletons comprised fourteen males (ranging between twenty-two and sixty years old, one was over seventy years old), six females (between fifteen and twenty-two years old), four children (eight to twelve years old), and one foetus. It remains unclear whether it is 24 skeletons plus one foetus or 25 skeletons plus one foetus. In addition, Haas seems to separate the complete skeleton of a seventy-year-old man from the other male skeletons. This fact is the basis of some of the questions surrounding Masada (Reichs 2005:1).

In his book Masada: Herod’s Fortress and the Zealots Last Stand, Yadin’s count of the skeletons appears to be different. The book includes a photograph of the cave floor with some of the skeletons (Yadin 1966:198-199). His count is fourteen males (ranging between 22 and sixty years old); one man over the age of seventy; six females (ranging between fifteen and 22 years old); four children (eight to twelve years old) plus an baby. The man over seventy does not seem to be included in the total of 24 skeletons plus one foetus. Six

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144 There is no published record regarding when the cave was discovered or cleared. According to James Tabor, Cave 2001 was discovered and cleared in October 1963, a month before the much-publicised discoveries in the northern palace in November 1963 (https://www.religiousstudies.uncc.edu/jdtador/Masada.html).

145 Professor Emeritus of Archaeology of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

146 Anthropologist at Hebrew University Medical School, Jerusalem.
of the men, in contrast to the others, were powerfully built. Yadin concludes in his book that these skeletons were those of the defenders of Masada, ruling out that they were Roman or later Byzantine monks (Yadin 1966:192-199).

The bodies were not neatly laid out but in disarray, according to Yadin, as if they had been tossed on a heap. This does not correspond with the picture of a mass suicide to defy Rome.

4.3.2.2 Christian or Jewish bones  Two years after the discovery of the skeletons, Agudat Yisraek insisted in the Knesset that the skeletons needed to be given a military funeral. The archaeologists and medical researchers, it was claimed, were violating Jewish burial laws. Even the argument that research was necessary to determine whether the skeletons were that of Christians or Jews did not deter them. Haas had the bones for another two years in which to do research, but never published a report on them (Reichs 2005:1). In an interview with the Jerusalem Post in 1981, Yadin said he had told Rabbi Yehuda Unterman in 1969 that he could not vouch for the fact that the remains of cave 2001 were Jewish, as pig bones had been found in the cave (Schiffman et al 1995:732-738).

4.3.2.3 Carbon dating  Although there is much controversy about the bones found in Cave 2001, Yadin admits he never sent the bones for carbon testing. The reason given for this by anthropologist Patricia Smith is that carbon testing was too expensive and not available in Israel at the time. Yet a check of the *Journal of Radiocarbon* indicates that Yadin did send other samples to a laboratory in Cambridge, England, from the Bar Kocha caves during 1961-1963. Other excavations used the facilities in Washington D.C. (*Radiocarbon* 6(1964):134; 4 (1962):70). In fact, the tests were relatively inexpensive at about $150 per sample up to 1981.

It can only be presumed that the hesitation in dating the bones was because if they were not from the first century AD, the story of Masada would lose much of its meaning. Ironically, wool taken from the cave was carbon-14 tested in 1991 at the Weizmann

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147 [https://religiousstudies.uncc.edu/people/jabor/Masada.html](https://religiousstudies.uncc.edu/people/jabor/Masada.html)
Institute and indicated the time period was correct and that the remains could have been of the Jewish defenders (Schiffman 1995:732-738).

4.3.3 Conclusion

Politics and science are never good bedfellows. Political agendas have throughout time distorted scientific and humanity studies; Masada is just another casualty. The actual identity or number of the skeletons found will never be conclusively known as the bones have been reburied in an unknown location. The controversy surrounding the find and its reports unfortunately did much harm to a man as significant as Yigael Yadin. It is easy to say he should not have become embroiled in a conspiracy that casts doubt on his archaeological reputation and career, which covered most of the important finds in Israel. But the history and politics of the Middle East is not always simple.

The ‘missing’ skeleton, the seventy-year-old man, and the ‘missing’ scroll, if they do exist, could perhaps have told the story for the dead. Something awful happened at Masada in the first century AD and those who could tell the story are gone, replaced by a cable car, a museum with examples of artefacts found on Masada, and a light show, all the trappings of a popular tourist destination.

4.4 THE JAMES OSSUARY

The James Ossuary is another piece of intrigue and mystery in The Jesus Story. The authenticity of the ossuary has never been in doubt148, but its inscription has been the centre of a legal battle that lasted for ten years.

One of the problems facing the archaeological world is that the ossuary was from an unknown site; it appeared not only to have an unknown provenance, but may also have had a questionable recent history. The ossuary, like many other artefacts with unproven provenance, was probably looted from an archaeological site, sold to an antiquities dealer

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148 It had been dated by the Geographical Survey of Israeli and Andre Lenmaire (Sorbonne University) dated to 1st century CE (BAR November 2002).
and then sold to a collector. The ossuary, a limestone box carrying an inscription, came to light in 2001. The announcement of the find took place at a press conference co-hosted by the Discovery Channel and the Biblical Archaeology Society on 21 November 2001. This was a preview to an article that appeared in the Biblical Archaeologies Review, written by Andre Lemaire of the Sorbonne University in November 2002. The limestone ossuary was presented with the inscription *Yaakov bar Yoseph Achui de Yeshua ‘James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus’*. Hershel Shanks of the Biblical Archaeology Review announced that the ossuary belonged to an anonymous antiquities dealer in the Old City of Jerusalem, who was later named as Odeb Golan, a well-known collector of antiquities. Golan claimed he had bought the ossuary decades before from an antiquities dealer in the Old City of Jerusalem and as he lived in an area under Palestinian authority, he would have to remain anonymous. It was later established that his name was Mahmoud Abushakra.¹⁴⁹ Golan claimed he was not aware of the significance of the inscription. Zoe Zias, a former IAA (Israel Antiquities Authority) employee, told Shanks in 2003 that he had seen the ossuary without the words ‘brother of Jesus’ in the antiquities shop. This was apparently part of the IAA’s case against Odeb Golan, although Zais who had told Shanks he had seen the ossuary, later denied speaking to Shanks. In 2003, the IAA raided a storage space rented by Golan in Ramat Gan and discovered many dubious artefacts - forged seals and inscriptions in various stages of production as well as the materials needed to achieve this. Golan broke down under questioning and confessed to the forgeries. During the interrogation, Golan apparently confessed to having manufactured many items along with an Egyptian (Shanks 2009: 35 (4), 74).

In 2002, Hershel Shanks organised to loan the ossuary to the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) with the permission of the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA). When it arrived on 31 October 2002, the museum staff found it boxed in a few layers of bubble wrap and placed inside a cardboard box instead of the usual wooden box packaging for antiquities, and it had been damaged. Cracks now ran through the once-solid stone and, more seriously, through the controversial inscription (Shanks 2012:38 (4)29).

¹⁴⁹ Abushaka claimed he never had the ossuary in his shop, and it had never been in his inventory (Shanks 2012 (38) 4:32).
4.4.1 Debate on the James Ossuary

Some of the theories surrounding the ossuary are:

- The ossuary is Jesus’ family ossuary.
- Jesus’ bones were interred in the ossuary and therefore He did not rise from the dead.
- The ossuary is the ossuary that went missing from the Jesus Family tomb.
- The inscription is not authentic.

4.4.2 Biblical Archaeological and literary evidence of tombs

One of the problems with the James Ossuary, as discussed by Crossan & Reed (2001: xv) in their book *Excavating Jesus*, is as follows:

The *James Ossuary* has come to us through the sale of antiquities rather than excavation by archaeologists. We do not know, therefore, whether its original discovery was a planned finding or a planned looting. The possibility of forgery will always haunt it. When such an artefact eventually surfaces to public awareness, individual scholars, learned societies and museums are caught in a double bind. To accept and discuss it may encourage paralegal searching, illegal looting, and unethical destruction of heritage. To avoid and ignore it may be impossible since even a refusal to discuss it is inevitably a comment upon it.

Hershel Shanks, editor of *Biblical Archaeological Review*, has a different take on artefacts with unproven provenance. In their 200th issue, he writes:

One of BAR’s most controversial stances over the years has been our open support of scholars who study and publish unprovenanced artefacts – objects of unknown origins with no documented history of scientific discovery. Many of them were undoubtedly looted from archaeological sites, and then sold to antiquities dealers, who in turn sold them to collectors around the world (Shanks 2009 (200)37).
He goes on to say:

Many of these collectors, several of whom have been featured in the pages of BAR have allowed scholars free access to their artefact collections in hopes that the academic community and the broader public can learn from them. Unfortunately, many field archaeologists, and their organisations have condemned the publication of unprovenanced artefacts (Shanks 2009 (200)37).

Following these arguments, one is led to ask: if the academic community insists on a provenance that can be established by professional archaeologists or societies before acknowledging a find, then why were the initial finds of the Nag Hammadi Papyri and The Dead Sea Scrolls, to name just two, snapped up by the academic community?

Since the surfacing of this ossuary, a debate has raged in the Biblical Archaeology world on the ossuary’s authenticity. The Biblical Archaeological Review has been very prominent in the debate. Hershel Shanks has always been adamant that the ossuary and its inscription is not a fake (Shanks 2012:38 (5)26).

The presentation of the ossuary sparked interest around the world. A second inscription, the Jehoash Tablet, was found in the possession of Oded Golan, who owned the ossuary. This was a fifteen-line inscription engraved on a nine by eleven inch stone tablet. It describes repairs to the temple like those described in 2 Kings 12:5-17 and 2 Chronicles 24:4-11. The Israel Antiquities Authority appointed a commission to investigate the ossuary’s inscription and the Jehoash inscription and found that both were modern-day forgeries, according to their report in 2006 (Shanks 2009 (200) 23).

‘The forgery trial of the century’ - Shank’s name for the ossuary trial - went on for over four years. It involved three items: the inscription of a small ivory pomegranate which reads ‘(belonging) to the temple of [Yahwe] h holy to the priests’; the inscription on the James Ossuary; and the inscription on the Jehoash Tablet. By the end of the trial, the IAA had no committee report on the ossuary and tablet, only inconclusive statements by individual members. Instead of relying on their own expertise, they relied on a single expert, Yuval Goren (Shanks 2012 38 (5)26).
Goren’s methodology, the oxygen isotope test, was questioned. A report by a team from Tel Aviv University and the American Museum of Natural History stated that ‘the oxygen isotope test [that Goren used] is... unreliable. To our knowledge this method is not used in any lab in the world today’. The oxygen isotope test was used by Goren to support his claim that the inscription was ancient, but the team from Tel Aviv University and the American Museum of Natural History stated that it was unreliable.

The criminal charges became shaky towards the end of the trial. The prosecution admitted that the ossuary and part of its inscription were ancient, and the crime was that a modern-day forger had added the words ‘brother of Jesus’. This theory was put forward by two experts, Joe Zias, an anthropologist who had worked for the IAA, and an epigrapher, Émile Puech of Jerusalem École Biblique. Both testified that they had seen the ossuary in Mahmoud Abushakra’s shop without the end words. Mahmoud denied that the ossuary had ever been in his shop. Puech later retracted his claim, admitting he had never seen the ossuary in the shop.

The trial became more entangled as time went on, with statements being retracted, findings reversed and the integrity of the IAA and their expert witnesses coming into question.

In January 2011, the trial finally ended, although the judgement took another eleven months. The judgement was received with mixed results, the media declaring the inscription was authentic and academic more cautious.

Eric Meyers of the American Schools of Oriental Research, in their blog, sums up the trial and outcome:

‘It is significant that Judge Farkash says in his 475 page verdict: the prosecution failed to prove beyond reasonable doubt what was stated in the indictment that the ossuary is a forgery and that Mr. Golan or someone acting on his behalf forged it.’ He went on to add: ‘this is not to say that the inscription is true and authentic and was written 2,000 years ago. We can expect this matter to continue to be researched in the scientific worlds, and only the future will tell. Moreover, it has not been proved in any way that the words ‘brother of Jesus’ definitely refers to Jesus who appears in Christian writings’. The prosecutor Dan Bahat said the case had been weakened by the refusal of a key witness to testify.

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150 BAR has stood by its opinion that this inscription is authentic. It makes this the only surviving relic of Solomon’s Temple (Shanks 2010:35 (5):114).
witness to travel from Egypt to testify, the same person\textsuperscript{152} who appeared on Sixty Minutes.

Concluding, he said:

I would therefore emphasize that because the government, in this case, the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Israeli Police, failed to prove that the artefacts in question were inauthentic in no way means that they are authentic. The burden of proof that falls on the prosecution in a criminal case must rise to a high level of proof beyond reasonable doubt. The fact that the defendants have been acquitted thus does not end the matter of the quest to decide authenticity. This leaves much opportunity for academic opinion to continue to believe that these artefacts are not authentic and to question their provenance... \textsuperscript{153}

On the American Schools of Oriental Research blog, many leading archaeologists responded to Eric Meyers’ reaction to the trial’s verdict, and the consensus seems to be that the debate on the authenticity of the artefact has not ended; in fact, in a real sense, the verdict has just broadened the debate. New questions are being asked: When was the ossuary discovered? Is there a scientific standard for patina classified by date, area and material? Should Israeli antiquities law allow for trade in artefacts obtained before 1978? If Oded is innocent, does that mean the \textit{James Ossuary} is the missing ossuary from the Jesus Family Tomb?

Until the next discovery, real or otherwise, the debate will continue, with the IAA and archaeologists going head to head with the ‘finders’ of unprovenanced artefacts and untested or untestable theories.

4.5 THE JESUS FAMILY TOMB

\textit{The Lost Tomb of Jesus} was the title of a documentary first broadcast on the Discovery Channel and Vision TV in Canada on 4 March 2007 after the discovery of the Talpiot Tomb. It was released at the same time as a book of the same name. The book was co-authored by Simcha Jacobvici and Charles R. Pellegrino. The book and film describe the archaeological find discovered during a housing project, and proposed the tomb is that of Jesus’ family.

\textsuperscript{152} Not named
\textsuperscript{153} https://asorblog.org/?p=1966/jamesossuary
The discovery of this tomb was a dramatic race against time. In March 1980, engineers from Solel Boneh Construction Company where excavating in Taproot. It was a Thursday afternoon when their engineer, Ephraim Schochat, saw an entrance to a tomb had been uncovered by one of the bulldozers. Realising it was a large tomb, he shut down the site and contacted the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA). At the same time, a young boy, Ouriel Maoz, ran to his mother, telling her he had seen a tomb at the building site and boys were playing soccer with some of the skulls. Rivka Maoz, a recent immigrant from France, contacted the IAA, but they said they could only send someone that Sunday. Rivka collected the skulls and skull fragments in plastic bags and brought them home for safekeeping. The IAA claim Amos Kloner and Joseph Gat went to the site the next day and did preliminary sketches of the tomb. A permit to dig was obtained and the site was catalogued as IAA 80/500-509 (Jacobovici & Pellegrino 2007:7).

Although by law all finds have to be reported, construction companies were discovering new archaeological sites at the rate of a dozen every month – and in particularly ‘bad’ season, a dozen a week. Sites that the companies thought to be unimportant or would cause too much of a delay were ignored. Yosef Gat, an antiquities expert for the IAA, and Eliot Braun, a professional archaeologist, realised just how close Israel came to losing the tomb to the construction company’s bulldozers. The tomb was cleared in a couple of days - not an ideal situation; however, this forms part of the limitations in ‘salvage archaeology’ where delays are not looked on kindly. Shimon Gibson sketched the tomb and the position of the artefacts retrieved. The tomb was a first century tomb (Jacobovici & Pellegrino 2007:7).

The film and book claimed that there were ten ossuaries found in a cave; six became the subject of the documentary and one of the ossuaries, the book claims, went missing and was presumably stolen. Amos Kloner, who is now Professor of Archaeology at Israel’s Bar-Ilan University, wrote the excavation report. Although the documentary and book claimed to use Kloner’s work for the research, he dissociated himself from the film and documentary. He objected to claims that it contained ‘never before reported information’

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154 James Charlesworth in his book *The Tomb of Jesus and His Family* points out that this is not the only tomb to be discovered in Jerusalem to bear the inscription ‘Jesus the son of Joseph’. The book goes on the say that this could be as high as one in ten. It concludes there is no proof this was Jesus’ family tomb or that it can be deduced from the inscriptions that he was married (Charlesworth 2013).
as he had published all the details in *The Journal Antiquot* in 1996. Kloner denied ever saying it was the ‘*Tomb of Jesus*’. He considered it ‘very unserious work’ and the film as all nonsense.

Six of the remaining ossuaries carry inscriptions. *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* claims that three of them carry names of people from the New Testament. As translated in *The Lost Tomb of Jesus and The Jesus Family tomb* (Jacobovici & Pellegrino 2007:89-90), they read as follows:

- *Yeshua bar Yehosef* ... for ‘Jesus son of Joseph’.
- *Maria* ... written in Aramaic script but Latin for the Hebrew name Miriam (Mary).
- *Yose* ... diminutive for Joseph as the name of one of Jesus’ brothers in the New Testament (Mark 6:3).
- *Yehuda bar Yeshua* ... possibly Aramaic for ‘Judah son of Jesus’.
- *Mariamene e Mara* .... ‘Mary known as the master’. The similar name ‘Mariamene’ is found in the acts of Philip and is the name Mary Magdalene.
- *Matya* ... Hebrew for Matthew – This is not necessarily Matthew the evangelist, but possibly a husband of one of the women in an unmarked ossuary. The filmmakers claim that Mary the mother of Jesus had many relatives named Matthew.

Another interesting fact about the inscriptions on the ossuary is that they are not all written in the same language. *Jesus* and *Judah* are in Aramaic; *Maria, Joseph* and *Matthew* are in Hebrew and *Mariamene e Maria* is written in Greek. Do the inscriptions suggest these were people with different backgrounds or perhaps coming from different areas? Michael S. Heiser answers the question as follows: ‘No, It is not known if the people in the tomb are related, if they were, are they close or distant relatives?’ It is difficult to assess the ages of the people. Do the two ‘Jesus’ names on the tomb refer to the same person? Is this Mary the mother of Jesus, and is she married to the Joseph of the tomb? Is Mariamenou Mary Magdalene? There is no proof in the tomb of whether she was or whether she was married to one of the Jesus.

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The film claims that the tenth ossuary, which went missing, was the James Ossuary. Simcha Jacobovici, the filmmaker, claims that this ossuary would have been part of this tomb, but antiquities dealers removed it. However, Ben Witherington III\textsuperscript{157}, who worked with Jacobovici on the documentary, denies there is a connection and says that the James Ossuary, according to the report of the antiquities dealer that Oded Golan got the ossuary from, came from Silwan and Taproot and had dirt in it that matched up with the soil in that part of Jerusalem. Furthermore, Eusebuis reports that the tomb marker for the James Ossuary tomb was close to where James was martyred near the Temple Mount, indeed near the famous tombs in the Kidron Valley such as the so-called Tomb of Absalom. Talpiot is nowhere near this locale\textsuperscript{158}.

4.5.1 Theories proposed for The Jesus Family tomb

The book and film directed and co-authored by Simcha Jacobovici was released in Canada on 4 March 2007. It covers the discovery of the Talpiot tomb and it presents a number of theories concerning Jesus and his family. According to the film and book, the tomb was Jesus’ family tomb, as the names on the ossuaries were those of Jesus’ family: Mary, Judah and Joses (diminutive of Joseph). Jesus was married to Mary; the inscription Mariamene e Mara, ‘Mary known as the master’, similar to the name found is the Acts of Philip, is indicative of this. DNA testing done by Lakehead University on the remains in the ossuary with the inscription ‘Jesus Son of Joseph’ and the one marked Mariamene or Mary are not related. However, this does not prove Jesus and Mary were married. The tenth ossuary had gone missing some years before, and this was the James Ossuary, containing the inscription ‘James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus’. This is the first archaeological evidence of Jesus. Testing shows that there was a match between the patina on the James and Yeshua ossuary and referred to the James Ossuary as the missing link from the tomb of Jesus.

\textsuperscript{157} Ben Witherington III is an American New Testament scholar. Witherington is Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, and an ordained pastor in the United Methodist Church. He has written over thirty books and has made many appearances on radio and television programs, and is frequently featured on the History Channel, Discovery Channel and other major networks.

\textsuperscript{158} https://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2007/02/jesus-tomb-titanic-talpiot-tomb-theory.html
Although these theories have been rebutted by many academics, they have been picked up by writers like Dan Brown and Kathy Reichs. The academic world saw the tomb as a valuable find and a good example of Jewish tombs in the first century AD, but do not agree with the film and book. The remains were not dated using radiocarbon which would have at least would have dated the remains. Neither was DNA testing done on the other ossuaries to see if there were any familial relationships. Experts also argue that the DNA results only proved that there was no common mother, but does not prove other familial relationships e.g. father/daughter, cousins, half brother/sister or any other possibilities. Amos Kloner, who originally excavated the tomb, and Joe Zias, former curator of Biblical Archaeology at the Israeli Antiquities Authority, told the Washington Post that the documentary and book were nonsense. The film, Kloner describes, as a ‘hyped-up film which is intellectually and scientifically dishonest.’ Amos Kloner, who was among the first to examine the tomb, said the names on the ossuaries were very common in the first century AD. Ted Koppel\(^\text{159}\), when writing his critique The Lost Tomb of Jesus a Critical Look, said that the forensic archaeologist denied saying that the remains of Yeshua and Miriamne showed that they were man and wife as you could not genetically test for marriage. Koppel had a written denial from Suffolk Crime Lab Director, Robert Genna, in which he had stated that the patina of the James Ossuary and the Yeshua matched, as well as a verbal denial from Amos Kloner that the missing ossuary was the James Ossuary, as the original had been photographed and it was not the same size; the missing ossuary was unmarked, whereas the James Ossuary has the name of James and a rosette on the side (Crossan & Reed 2001: xiii-xv).

The archaeologist William Dever\(^\text{160}\) summed up the film and book by saying: ‘Their conclusions were already drawn in the beginning of the enquiry and their argument goes far beyond any reasonable interpretation’. R. Joseph Hoffmann, chair of the committee for Scientific Examination of Religion, says: ‘the film is all about bad assumptions... beginning with the assumption that the boxes contain Jesus of Nazareth and his family... it is amazing

\(^{159}\) American talk-show host.
\(^{160}\) William G. Dever (born 27 November 1933 in Louisville, Kentucky) is an American archaeologist specialising in the history of Israel and the Near East in Biblical times. He was Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Arizona in Tucson from 1975 to 2002. He is a distinguished Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at Lycoming College in Pennsylvania.
how evidence falls into place when you begin with the conclusion – and a hammer’ (Dever 2007:35).

‘Simcha has no credibility whatsoever,’ says Joe Zias, who was the curator for Anthropology and Archaeology at the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem from 1972 to 1997 and who personally numbered the Talpiot ossuaries. ‘He is pimping off the Bible... He got this guy Cameron, who made ‘Titanic’ or something like that – what does this guy know about archaeology? ...people want signs and wonders. Projects like these make a mockery of the archaeological profession’ (Zias 2007:46).

4.5.2 Burials and tombs of the first century AD

Most of the tombs of the Second Temple (late Roman period) have been found mainly in two areas, Jerusalem and Jericho. The Jesus Family Tomb was found in east Talpiot. Many tombs of this period have unfortunately been broken into and looted. Tombs changed during the Second Temple period, during the reign of King Herod the Great. The most important tombs were loculi tombs, which were hewn out of rock (Craffert 1999: iv-vi).

4.5.2.1 Loculi tombs This type of tomb consisted of a square or oblong burial chamber. The centre of the chamber was usually dug down into a pit so that those putting bodies into the tomb could stand up. The pit ended with benches on three sides. If it was a large tomb, like the one found in the Talpiot tomb, there were perhaps arched tunnels, or loculi (Latin), or kokhim (Hebrew), leading off from the main chamber. In each loculus, a single body was interred. The arched loculi were usually about one metre high, about two metres deep, and 0.5 metres wide.

The entrance to this type of tomb was commonly square and closed with a rectangular blocking stone or a brick plug. The entrance was quite small, some less than a metre high. In a few cases that have been found, the tomb was closed with a round rolling stone, which can weigh up to a few hundred kilograms. The tracks this stone ran on were either flat tracks or slanted tracks, which meant the stone would close the tomb if unattended or if it
had no stopping stone. The tracks allowed one man to move the stone to close the tomb, but many more to open the tomb.

Tombs cut into the rock for a person and his family were common practice among the more wealthy of the population. The poor were still being buried in shallow graves outside the cities, with the criminals and those who had been ‘put’ outside of the community (rejected by the community) being cremated or tossed onto dumps (Craffert 1999:6-7).

4.5.2.2 System of burial During the Second Temple period, bodies were buried twice. First the body was wrapped in linen and placed on a bench in the locus of a tomb. The body may have been placed in a wooden coffin. Here the body was left for between twelve and thirty – six months, until the flesh on the bones had fully decomposed. The bones were then collected and placed in an ossuary. The bones were placed in the ossuary with the long bones at the bottom and the bones of the arms and legs at either side. The remaining bones were placed on top and the skull was placed at one end on top of the bones. Although it was practice to put only one body in a lokhim or ossuary, in more than half of the tombs found the ossuaries contained more than one skeleton (Crossan & Reed 2001:27).

The ossuaries were marked with charcoal or scratched inscriptions, and many were decorated with plants (palms, ivy leaves and fruit), architectonic elements, and pure geometric forms. The most popular motif used was a stylised rosette with six or more portals in a circular border (Crossan & Reed 2001:30).

4.5.3 Conclusion The significance of this tomb is that by large it was intact. Many tombs during this period have been broken into and plundered. This tomb gave archaeologists the chance to study a well-preserved tomb and ten ossuaries. The media interest was in whether this was The Jesus Family Tomb and if the names on the ossuaries prove Jesus was married. Tests have so far not answered these questions.
4.6 The Crucified Man

The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth is described in the Gospels (Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23 and John 19). It was described by Josephus as ‘the most pitiable of deaths’ (Gibson 2009:109). The cross was not merely a method of execution; it was a form of extreme torture that resulted in death. Originally, crucifixion was only the impaling of an already dead man’s head on a stake and placing it at the city gate or on battlement walls, but this later developed into hanging the condemned person on wooden poles. The prolonged suffering was more important than the death itself. It was probably invented by the Persians and used by the Assyrians, the Phoenicians, the Greeks, the Seleucids and Ptolemies, in the Mediterranean area by Alexandra the Great, and finally the Romans who used it extensively. Crucifixion was occasionally practised by Jewish rulers even before the arrival of the Romans, but by the first century, this form of execution was abhorrent to them. Crucifixion was forbidden according to religious law, which had strict rules. According to Deuteronomy 21:22-23, it says:

...if a man has committed a sin deserving of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you will surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, for he who is hanged is an accursed of God.

The traditional methods of execution used by Jews during the Roman occupation of Palestine were stoning, burning, beheading and strangling, but crucifixion was not unknown at the time (McRay 2008:204-205).

Crucifixion’s popularity lasted from about 600 BC until 337 AD when Emperor Constantine outlawed it. Although during this period thousands of people were crucified in Israel, to date only one skeleton has been found. This had much to do with the fact that crucifixion punished the condemned man as well as his family and friends. Bodies were left on the

161 The tying or nailing people to a ‘cross’ first adopted by the Assyrians was a method of scaring or humiliating their enemies. A carving of such was found in a wall carving in the palace of Nimrod (McRay 2008:205).
162 www.bible-archaeology.info/crucifixion.htm
163 The Hasmonean Alexander Yannaeus (103-76 BC) is reported to have had 800 Pharisees crucified in Jerusalem at one time, with their “wives and children butchered before their eyes, while he looked on, drinking with his concubines reclining beside him” (Josephus: War 1.97) (Gibson 2009:108).
cross to rot and fall apart, the flesh and bones being carried away by birds and wild animals (McRay 2008:204-205).

4.6.1 Methods of crucifixion

The theories on the different methods of crucifixion cover ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ methods and the victims’ different positions on the cross. The methods of crucifixions discussed are mostly based on the evidence presented by the bones found in 1968 in ossuary no 4\textsuperscript{164} in Tomb I at Giv’at ha-Mivtar. The man, Yehohanan, according to research, was a temple worker.

4.6.1.1 Soft method of crucifixion The idea that Jesus survived the crucifixion has been around for a number of years. It has once again gained prominence in \textit{The Jesus Story} with the discovery of ‘the crucified man.’ The idea that there was a ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ method of crucifixion has become more feasible in many peoples’ minds. The ‘soft’ method was a form of punishment, as the theory goes, that did not necessarily result in death; it was possible that men could have survived\textsuperscript{165}. This theory is presented by Joyce in \textit{The Jesus Scroll} (Joyce 1975:30-32), Hugh Schonfield’s \textit{The Passover Plot}\textsuperscript{166} (Schonfield 2005:171) and Barbara Thiering’s \textit{Jesus the Man} (Thiering 1992:114). These books state that Jesus never died, or should not have died, because he had a ‘soft’ crucifixion. Presumably, the ‘soft’ form of crucifixion may have had the body positioned according to Joseph Zias and Eliezer Sekeles’ theory. They argue that the person was not nailed to the cross, but was rather tied to the crossbeam; the legs were nailed to separate sides of the vertical beam. This they ascertained after a later re-examination of the right calcaneus (heel bone) of the ‘crucified man’. Zias and Sekeles also refuted Haas’ claims that a nail had pierced the wrist area and determined that the marks found in this area were non-traumatic and did not indicate crucifixion. Zias and Sekeles put forward in their report

\textsuperscript{164}The tomb contained five ossuaries (https://www.bible-archaeology.info/crucifixion.htm).
\textsuperscript{165}The only person known in history to survive a Roman crucifixion is a friend whom Josephus saved after intervening with the Roman commander (carington-arts.com/cliff/JOEGOS4.htm).
\textsuperscript{166}Hugh Schonfield claims in his book that the soldier piercing Jesus’ side was not accounted for in the initial plans, which meant that Jesus needed a double to appear to have resurrected three days later (Schonfield 2005:121).
that the heels had been nailed separately on either side of the upright beam so the victim straddled the cross (McRay 2008:205).

**4.6.1.2 Hard method of crucifixion** As opposed to the soft method of crucifixion, this was a method that would kill the condemned, as put forward by Yadin, Haas and Tzaferis.

Nicu Haas in his first report on the discovery stated the feet were joined almost parallel, both transfixed by the same nail at the heels, with the legs adjacent; the knees were doubled, the right one overlapping the left; the trunk was contorted; the upper limbs were stretched out, each stabbed by a nail in the forearm. This description was supported by Tzaferis. Haas’s osteological analysis was done rapidly as the religious community insisted that the bones needed to be reburied as soon as possible. A brief summary of his report appears in the summer 2002 issue of *Bible and Spade* (McRay 2008:205).

Yigael Yadin proposed that the man had been crucified in an open position with the knees apart and nailed to the vertical beam with the help of a bar across the feet (McRay 2008:205). Yadin has also suggested that the man may have been executed upside down, his head down with his legs looped over the cross bar and nailed together. According to church tradition, Jesus’ disciple Peter was crucified in this way, which was considered exceptionally cruel (McRay 2008:205).

Crucifixion was part of a combination of punishments metered out to a prisoner. The accused was arrested, brought before a court and subjected to torture before being taken before a judge to be judged and sentenced. Part of that sentence could include flogging before crucifixion. Flogging involved stripping the prisoner and tying him to a post and whipping him with a flagrum. The flagrum, as it was called, was repeatedly brought down on the condemned’s head, shoulders and back, cutting into tissue and skin, ripping open blood vessels found near the surface of the body and eventually tearing open the veins and arteries found in the muscle. Flogging was used to terrify the victim and hasten his death through bleeding. The severity of the beating usually matched the crime, but was not harsh.
enough to kill the prisoner and so deny him the torturous death of crucifixion (McRay 2008:206).

According to the American Medical Association’ website, ‘the actual cause of death by crucifixion was multifactorial and varied somewhat with each case, but the two most prominent causes probably were hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia’ (McRay 2008:206). As the cause of death was hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia, I believe the theories of soft and hard methods of crucifixion are not relevant as both would result in death; in both cases, the person’s breathing would be fatally restricted.

4.6.2 Biblical Archaeological and literary evidence of crucifixions

In the Roman Empire, crucifixion was not normally used to execute citizens or freed slaves. It became known as the ‘slave’s punishment’. Although according to ancient historians thousands of people were crucified during Roman rule, only one skeleton has been found showing evidence of this system of execution. In 1968, Vassilios Tzaferis excavated a site and discovered the remains of a crucified man in a Jewish cemetery northeast of Jerusalem in an area called Giv’at ha-Mivtar (McRay 2008:204). The tomb of the crucified man was a first century loculi. Although the forecourt of the tomb was destroyed, the entrance was intact and had a pit. There were benches on three of the four walls and burial recesses in the walls. There was another burial chamber behind a blocked doorway.

The most exciting find in the tomb was ossuary no 4 in tomb 1, which contained the bones of a crucified man. The ossuary and its contents dated to approximately the late 20s AD, which was the time Jesus lived and died. Amongst the bones was a heel bone, pierced with a twelve to eighteen cm long nail, belonging to a Jewish temple worker from a relatively wealthy family. The proof of their wealth is in the fact that they could afford an ossuary and they had secured the body from the Romans, which usually meant a bribe (Scheffler 2000:129). The man’s kokhim-type tomb was typical of the tombs used between the second century BC and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Osteologists, forensic anthropologist and doctors from Jerusalem’s Hadassah Medical
School, who examined the bones, confirmed it was a male of about 24 to 28 years of age. He was 5 ft 6 in tall, which is average for Mediterranean people of that time, and had a cleft palate. His ossuary had the name of Yehohanan, the son of Hagakol (this is not conclusive as the translation may not be correct.) According to Yigael Yadin, the inscription read ‘Yehohanan, the son of Hagakol, one hanged with his knees apart’ (McRay 2008:207). Initially it was thought the skeleton found had had its legs broken, but this was probably post-mortem as the nail tip used to hammer the nails into the beam had hit a knot in the wood and curled so that it could not be removed without breaking the legs. To bury the body, the legs had been amputated with an axe and part of the beam of the cross was buried with the body. All except a small fragment of wood vanished over the years. The arms did not bear any marks to indicate that the hands or wrists had been nailed to a wooden beam. These theories of different methods of crucifixion have led to The Authors saying that there was a ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ type of crucifixion. They argue that Jesus could have walked away from His crucifixion if it had been the ‘soft’ version.

However, even if Joseph of Arimathea had taken Jesus down from the cross and used the burial spices and cloth of the shroud to clean, treat and bind the wound in His side, the holes in His feet, the lashing on His back (Mark 15:15) and the area of His face where the beard had been pulled from it (Matthew 26:66), Jesus would not have been in any condition to meet the disciples in the various places just three days after His crucifixion (John 20:15).

Jesus was flogged before His crucifixion (Luke 23:22); this would have left Him suffering from hypovolemic shock due to loss of blood. Even if we discount this loss of blood due to the trauma He experienced, the fact that a nail or nails had been pounded into His feet would have resulted in broken bones and damaged tendons, causing Him great difficulty to walk. We also know from the scriptures that His side was pierced with a sword and that water not blood flowed from His side, showing that He was dead. If the body did not bleed, this could have been due to the loss of blood before death (Mark 15:15; John 19:1).

167 This is in line with a reference in Pliny the elder (23-79 AD) who said that ropes were used in crucifixion (Evans 2012:124).
Could Jesus have survived the cross? If we believe Josephus who says one of his friends had survived crucifixion, then Jesus may have survived, although this is most unlikely; the wound in His side would have lessened His chances of survival considerably. The circumstances of Josephus’ friend’s crucifixion and that of Jesus were different. Many people were being crucified at the time, which may have led to the soldiers not having followed strictly to the crucifixion standards (McRay 2008:204). Josephus wrote about the crucifixions in the immediate aftermath of the capture of the city. In describing his return to Jerusalem after visiting the village of Tekoa, Josephus writes: ‘I saw many prisoners who had been crucified, and recognised three of my acquaintances among them, I was cut to the heart and came and told Titus with tears what I had seen. He gave orders immediately that they should be taken down and receive the most careful treatment. Two of them died in the physician’s hands; the third survived.’ What Josephus does not tell us is just how long his friends had been on the cross (Gibson 2009:109).

4.7 CONCLUSION

The artefacts presented in this study are included in the top ten archaeological finds of recent times and have created industries for themselves. The public interest in these artefacts helped fuel the multibillion-dollar industry of The Jesus Story. The accusations and debates surrounding these finds have been the support that has enabled The Jesus Story to remain in the media and flourish into a multibillion-dollar industry. The mystery and intrigue that has developed is a writer’s dream. However, regardless of the media hype, these discoveries are extremely important to Biblical Archaeology, filling in The Jesus Story, giving it the light and shadows to bring it out of dusty libraries and into the media spotlight, even if all this attention has revealed some cracks in the once thick veneer of the traditional churches, turning a very bright spotlight on to The Jesus Story. The public’s interest has increased in Biblical Archaeology as a whole, and this can only be good for the discipline.

Much of the general public search for the finite, and instead find debate and conjecture, disturbing in relation with their faith and beliefs. Religion, especially Christianity, has during its long history endured criticism, revolution and war. If it could not withstand criticism and conjecture, it would not to be referred to as a faith but rather as a fashionable fad.
Does Biblical Archaeology prove *The Jesus Story*? I think it does. This statement does not mean that the bones of Jesus have been found to disprove His resurrection, or that any text has yet been found to affirm He lived on Masada until its destruction. However, it means that looking at the evidence provided by Biblical Archaeology, *The Jesus Story* as told in the New Testament text is not only possible, but also probable.
CHAPTER FIVE

Red beads Use of emotionally toned words. Making a statement in which all is implied but sound is there proof by selected instances. Pink beads Evasion of sound refutation or argument by use of sophistical formula Grey beads Diversion to another question, to a side issue, or by irrelevant objection. White beads Proof by inconsequential arguments. Black beads Pointing to an argument and coming to a circle.

Black beads Discussing a verbal proposition as if it were a factual one, or failing to disentangle the verbal and factual elements in a proposition and setting up both. Red beads Putting verbal scholasticism as if it were a fact, or arguing.

Grey beads The use of speculative argument. Black beads Change in the meaning of a term during the course of an argument in a way which ignores a continuous series of possibilities between the two extremes presented.

Red beads Use of the fact of continuity between them to throw doubt on a real difference between two things. Grey beads The use of pseudo-technical jargon Credentials. Prestige Black beads The appeal to mere authority Overcoming resistance to a doubtful proposition by preliminary statement of a few easily accepted ones. Pink beads Arguments of a doubtful proposition inconsequential such a way that it fits in with the thought-habits or the prejudices of the hearer.

Argument by attributing prejudices or motives of one’s opponent. Gospels logically unsound Gospels fact or fiction Tautology straight and crooked thinking
CHAPTER FIVE
THE VARIOUS RECEPTIONS OF JESUS VS
STRAIGHT AND CROOKED THINKING

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will consider the mechanisms used by The Authors to convince readers to accept their ‘new truths.’ The study will not pass judgement on the facts produced in the books written by The Authors, only at how these facts are presented and how they have influenced the socio-religious arena. Taking into account that all the books by The Authors included in the study, except for two, claim they are presenting the ‘real truth’ about The Jesus Story. The books in the study are a mixture fact and fiction, traditional and alternative, rather than academic dissertations or reference books. Many writers use techniques to ‘hook’ (persuade) the reader into believing ‘new facts’ or alternative theories. The motivation does not have to be malevolent - the basis of a successful story is how well the writer weaves or creates a ‘truth’, taking the reader or viewer into the world of the book’s or film’s characters. Like good April Fools jokes, the best alternative facts have remnants of original facts or truths into which a plausible new fact is eased. The Authors follow the same model, presenting their arguments and facts amongst the stones and environment in which Historical Jesus was born, lived and died, and by doing this they introduce a shadow of new truth.

The difference between popular storytellers and The Authors (with the exception of Reichs and Brown) is in The Authors’ insistence that their writings have been researched fully, revealing ‘new truths’ in the ancient traditional story. If this is the case, their statements will stand up to scrutiny as logical arguments must be consistent, valid,

168 Joseph Boskin, a Professor of History at Boston University, explains that April Fool’s Day may have originated in the reign of Constantine when a group of court jesters convinced the Roman emperor they could do a better job than him in ruling Rome. Emperor Constantine, amused, allowed a jester named Kugel to be king for one day. Kugel passed an edict calling for foolery for the day, and the custom became an annual event. This explanation, which was reported in many American newspapers, turned out to be a very successful April Fools hoax as he had made it all up (www.infoplease.com/spot/aprilfools1.html#ixzz2).

169 The Authors in the study refers to Donovan Joyce; Hugh Schonfield; Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, Henry Lincoln; Barbara Thiering; Margaret Starbird; Dan Brown; and Kathy Reichs.
complete, and sound before they can be considered as facts or truths. If not, they are merely inferences, theories or opinions.

In Robert Thouless’ book *Straight and Crooked Thinking*, he argues that emotive language can and does change the perception of an argument, and is a ‘danger to reasonable thinking’. Thouless gives the example of an American officer accused of shooting women and children during the Vietnam War who justified his actions by saying: ‘They were the enemy and not people’ (Thouless 1974:14).

In a logical argument one needs to always keep in mind that, as people, we are constantly interpreting facts and, as Thouless points out, that those facts may differ in different interpretations:

Three people of different religious denominations arguing about the Catholic Church. One says the Catholic Church is the body of Christians who have bishops, whose consecration has been in direct descent from the apostles. Another says that the Catholic Church is the body of Christians who are in communion with the Bishop of Rome. A third says that the Catholic Church is a body of Christian believers. All three classes of Christians exists, each statement does not describe the Catholic Church in its entirety but can be ‘said of’ the Catholic Church’ (Thouless 1974:70).

Fundamental Protestants who are usually fervently against evolution will often have a limited version of word evolution. Evolution is confined solely to Darwin’s Theory of Evolution and is seen as a theory (taken to mean an unproven, a hypothesis), which states humans not only came from apes but are also close cousins of apes; this is seen by many Christian fundamentalists as an emotive statement threatening their faith.

According to James Merritt in his book *God, I’ve got a Question*, evolution denies that humans are created by God, but rather by accident and are not made in His image, as God is not an ape. He goes on to say Genesis tells us: ‘So God created man in God’s own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them’ (Genesis

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170 Robert Henry Thouless (15 July 1894-25 September 1984) was a psychologist and parapsychologist best known for his book *Straight and Crooked Thinking* (1930, 1953). He earned a Ph.D in 1922 from the University of Cambridge and lectured in psychology at the Universities of Manchester and Glasgow and was a Fellow at the University of Corpus Christi College Cambridge (Thouless 1974 :I).

171 Dr. James Merritt, born on 22 December 1952, is a U.S. religious leader and was the President of the Southern Baptist Convention from 2000-2002 ([www.touchinglives.org](http://www.touchinglives.org)).
1:27), so there is not and cannot be such a thing as evolution. The creationists believe that species cannot diversify or ‘evolve’ to suit their environment as they were created at this specific level and will remain so. This verse by James Merritt sums up the creationist train of thought:

Once I was a tadpole beginning to begin,
And then I was a frog with my tail tucked in;
Then I was a monkey hanging from a tree,
And now I’m a professor with a Ph D (Merritt 2011:57).

Merritt’s is an example of a belief that becomes a blindfold. Creationists often make statements in the vein that all science is contrary to the Bible, making one think back to the Vatican Church and the flat-earth theory. I believe that The Big Bang Model and The Evolution Theory are scientific explanations for Genesis, starting with what God said in Genesis 1:3 and developing to the evolved serpent in Genesis 3:14. Belief does not mean that one needs to suspend intelligence; it means exploring more than the obvious or traditional. Do the ‘new truths’ introduced by The Authors present a new Jesus Story? Do they dilute Christian ideology? Are they significant enough to affect the survival of the Christian religion?

The language in the space that has been opened to relook the traditional Jesus Story is often emotive. Looking at the critics both for and against the traditional story, it is easy to see the similarities in the words used. Traditionalists will say The Authors are guilty of creative writing rather than sticking to facts, while the conspiracy and alternative theorists state that the traditional theory is a story created by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches to maintain a very viable business and is presented in a form of emotional blackmail rather than logic. Both parties are guilty of the emotionally charged arguments that Thouless warns against,

\[172\] Georg Lemaitre in 1927 first proposed that an expanding universe might be traced back in time to an originating point; this was also concluded by Edwin Hubble in 1964. This model, I believe, is in line with Genesis 1:2-3: “The earth was without form and an empty waste, and darkness was upon the face of the very great deep. The Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said ‘Let there be light and there was light’”. The model purports that the universe expanded from a very high destiny temperate state. After the initial expansion, the universe cooled sufficiently to allow subatomic particles and later simple atoms to form. Giant clouds of these primordial elements later came together through gravity to form stars and galaxies (Singh 2005:102).
as will be seen. Before this chapter starts its comparison, it is important to look at the three profiles that will be used.

5.2 THE VARIOUS RECEPTIONS OF JESUS

The Jesus of the first century AD does not always merge well with the centuries that follow, which can cause a problem in the understanding and description of Him. To establish a standard of the perceptions of Jesus, it is necessary to visit three profiles of the Historical Jesus of Nazareth. They do not detour from the physical man but rather His deity, morality and doctrine. For the purpose of this study, three of the profiles are provided by the Gospels’ canonical text, the Jesus Seminar, and The Authors.

5.2.1 The Historical Jesus

The Historical Jesus is hard to define as He did not leave us any writings and His profile is formed by cultural and political environments. Many of the Authors referred to in this study are/were Catholics and are therefore influenced by Roman Catholic doctrines and see the New Testament in light of the smoke and mirrors of a religion considered by New Age Protestant Churches to have grown out of paganism, merely adding the Holy Trinity and Mary to their pantheon of gods.

With many diverse systems modelling the Historical Jesus, the study can only present a few profiles of the Historical Jesus. These will be the academic look at Jesus presented by The Jesus Seminar, the traditional Jesus of the Bible, and the profile of Jesus presented by The Authors. The definition of a Historical Jesus as stated by Amy-Jill Levine in the book The Historical Jesus In Context (Levine 2006:2) ‘...the scholarly reconstructions of Jesus based on historical methods including critical analysis of Gospel texts as the primary source along with

173 The Author that some Protestant Church uses to underpin this belief is Alexander Hislop in his book The Two Babylons, or to use its full title, The Two Babylons or Papal Worship Proved to Be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife. This book was first written as a pamphlet in 1853 before being expanded and published as a book. Bishop Hislop, The Two Babylons (https://www.ldolphin.org/PDFs/The_Two_Babylons-Alexander_Hislop.pdf).
consideration of the historical and cultural context in which He lived’ is used in all various receptions of Jesus.

Crossan in his book *Jesus* argues that, to discover the Historical Jesus, one cannot superimpose modern values, ideals and socio-economic vectors on the ancient Jesus (Crossan 1994:146). Jesus is a man of His time, with a timeless message, and to truly understand His message one needs to understand or at least allow for the fact that He lived 2,000 years ago, not just in a recent era without technology.

According to James Dunn in *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*, in the chapter titled ‘Remembering’, the distinction between “historical Jesus” and the “Christ of faith” is exaggerated, saying that Jesus was a figure who made an impact and even though there were later developments and traditions overlaid in the Gospels, there is still material that remains relatively unaffected by the later layers. During the first century AD, Jesus made an impact on those who followed Him, so to look for a Jesus that made no impact is a misguided and futile undertaking (Beiby & Eddy 2009:206).

Has the Historical Jesus been found? If that means bones in a tomb, the answer is no. However, the background of this jigsaw puzzle is being filled in by Biblical Archaeology. Shimon Gibson in his book *The Final Days of Jesus* argues that:

> Archaeology should be allowed to have its own voice alongside the information and ideas that emerge from the historical exegesis of the gospels. They both have their problems: Archaeological remains may be too fragmentary or interpreted incorrectly; textual sources may be too garbled from transmission or replete with errors by copyists (Gibson 2009: xi).

What Biblical Archaeology has given us is a look into the time of Jesus: the Biblical Bethlehem, the house of bread, the city of David, the burial place of Rachel (Genesis 35:16-19; 48:7), the place where David was anointed king by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:13-15), the

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174 Emeritus Lightfoot Professor at the University of Durham ([https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/staff/profile/?id=664](https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/staff/profile/?id=664)).
birthplace of Jesus ‘the bread of life’ (Luke 2:11). Biblical archaeological Bethlehem is the site of the Church of the Nativity, the present structure, built over a cave area which was a stable and an inn, going back to the sixth century AD - the time of Roman Emperor Justinian (Crossan 1994:19). Jesus’ father, Joseph, was a carpenter (Mt 13:55) who probably built furniture as described in Peter Botha’s book Everyday life in the World of Jesus, simple and practical for the ordinary houses and ornate and finely carved for the rich (Botha 2000:39). According to BAR, Italian excavators working in Capernaum may have actually uncovered the remnants of the humble house of Peter that Jesus called home while in Capernaum:

This house of Peter was one of the first Biblical Archaeology discoveries reported in BAR more than 25 years ago. The house is buried under the remains of an octagonal Byzantine martyrium church. The dig reveals the ruins of an ordinary house dating back to the first century BC. It is slight larger than most houses, but is simple with coarse walls and a roof of straw and earth. Like houses of the early Roman period, the rooms were clustered around two open courtyards. At some stage, the house seemed to have gone from a residential house to a place of gathering and maybe the site of a first church. The plastered walls bear inscriptions, most of which says things like ‘Lord Jesus Christ help thy servant’ or ‘Christ have mercy.’ They are written in Greek, Syriac, or Hebrew and are sometimes accompanied by etchings of small crosses or, in one case, a boat. The excavators claimed that the name of Peter is mentioned in several graffiti.

Another important piece of the Jesus puzzle is the boat from the Sea of Galilee found in February 1986. Due to an exceptional winter drought, an ancient boat was found in the mud on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. The boat was 8, 8 m x 2, 5 m and was built between about 40 and 70 AD, as determined by the type of construction and carbon dating. According to Botha, the boat is an example of the type of boat used by seine net fishermen until the first decades of the twentieth century (Botha 2000:137). These along with many others discoveries including The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi Library, the crucified man and The James Ossuary don’t give us the full picture of Jesus, but they bring Him out of the galleries and churches, letting Him leave behind the lavish robes of religious fervour. Biblical Archaeology takes Jesus back to the cities, towns and rural areas of first century AD Galilee and Judea. It allows Jesus to return to the position of itinerant rabbi, healer, and prophet, the Jesus who is humanity’s hope, a God of love, grace, and mercy, the Messiah.


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As this study has stated, there is more than one profile of Jesus, and the study will be looking at three of them: the *Jesus Seminar; The Authors’ profile;* and the traditional Gospel profile of Jesus.

5.2.2 The Jesus Seminar

*The Jesus Seminar* is a group of antagonists or critical scholars and laymen brought together in 1985 by Robert Funk under the auspices of Westar Institute. The Seminar was very active in the 1980’s and 1990’s, producing three books of their results: *The Five Gospels* (1993), *The Acts of Jesus* (1998) and *The Gospel of Jesus* (1990). The group comprised of 150 critical scholars and laymen whose aim was to work on a new description of the Jesus traditions as they have emerged through the first three centuries AD, or the Common Era (CE). They used the Edict of Toleration issued by Emperor Constantine in 313 AD as the cut-off point. The seminar collected and studied more than 1,500 versions of approximately 500 items of sayings and narratives from surviving Gospels and reports from the period, not just the canonical Gospel. These they sorted into four categories: parables, aphorisms, dialogues, and stories containing words attributed to Jesus (Funk 1993:35).

The system the seminar used to reconstruct their Historical Jesus involved producing new translations of the New Testament and apocrypha from textual sources. To decide what the historicity of the some 500 deeds and sayings of Jesus of Nazareth was, the Seminar used a voting system of coloured beads:

- Red beads – indicated the voter believed Jesus did say the passage quoted, or something very much like the passage (3 Points).
- Pink beads – indicated the voter believed Jesus probably said something like the passage (2 Points).
- Grey beads – indicated the voter believed Jesus did not say the passage, but it contains Jesus’ ideas (1 Point).

176 These scholars include Robert W. Funk, Butler University, Co-Chair of the *Jesus Seminar;* John Dominc Crossan, DePaul University, Co-chair of the *Jesus seminar;* Andries G. van Aarde, University Of Pretoria; Harold W. Attridge, University Of Notre Dame; William Beardsdale, Centre for Process Studies AB, Harvard University; and David Loehr, Peoples Church Chicago, among others (Funk 1993:535).
• Black beads – indicated the voter believed Jesus did not say the passage—it comes from later admirers or a different tradition (0 Points).

A confidence value was determined from the vote, using a weighted average of the points given for each bead; the text was colour-coded from red to black (with the same significance as the bead colours) according to the outcome of the vote\textsuperscript{177}.

During the second phase of the Jesus Seminar, which lasted from 1991 to 1996, it examined 387 reports of 176 events, in most of which Jesus was the principal actor, although occasionally John the Baptist, Simon Peter, or Judas featured. Of the 176 events, only ten were given a red rating. An additional nineteen were coloured pink. The combined number of red and pink events (29) amounts to 16% of the total. That is slightly lower than the 18% of sayings - primarily parables and aphorisms - assigned to the red and pink category in the five Gospels (Funk 1998:1).

The Jesus Seminar in their publication \textit{The Five Gospels} list six bases for the modern critical scholarship of Jesus. They claim that these ‘pillars’ or systems of scholarship have been developed since the end of the eighteenth century (Funk 1998:1-30).

These bases are:

1. Distinguishing between the Historical Jesus and the stories that the Gospels tell about Him. Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) started the Historical Jesus Project and David Friedrich Strauss established it as part of Biblical criticism with His book \textit{Life of Jesus Critically Examined} (1835).
2. Distinguishing between the Synoptic Gospels and John. Since the 1800’s, Bible scholars have distinguished between the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew, and Luke) and the Jesus in John, generally favouring the synoptic Gospels as more historical and John as more spiritual.
3. Identifying Mark as the first Gospel. By 1900, critical scholars had largely concluded that Mark came before Matthew and Luke and served as a source for each.
4. Identifying the hypothetical Q document. By 1900, scholars had hypothesized this lost collection of Jesus' sayings thought to be the source of material found in Matthew and Luke but not in Mark.

\textsuperscript{177} https://www.westarstitute.org/index.html
5. Questioning eschatological (apocalyptic) Jesus. In 1906, Albert Schweitzer (the great theologian, philosopher, and medical missionary to Africa) portrayed Jesus as a failed apocalyptic prophet, and this analysis virtually put an end to historical inquiry into Jesus. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, critical historians returned to the topic of Historical Jesus. Some of these scholars identified the apocalyptic imagery in the Gospels as originating with John the Baptist, and not authentic to Jesus.

6. Distinguishing between oral and print cultures. Since Jesus lived and preached in an oral culture, scholars expect that short, memorable stories or phrases are more likely to be historical. Reversing the burden of proof. In his day, Strauss had to offer evidence to question the historicity of any part of the Gospels because his audience assumed that the Gospels were historical. Today, the assumption is nearly the opposite, with the Gospels understood to be so thoroughly embellished that one needs evidence to suppose that anything in them is historical (Funk 1998:1-30).

In 1998, The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus was published by The Seminar. This publication contained a list of sayings of Jesus; this list had been voted on as the seminar considered them as the authentic sayings of Jesus. According to the Jesus Seminar, this list included the following:

- Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great (Funk 1998:528).
- Jesus’ mother was Mary and His human father was probably not Joseph (Funk 1998:528).
- Jesus was born in Nazareth and not Bethlehem (Funk 1998:533).
- Jesus was an itinerant sage who broke Jewish religious laws and ate with social outcasts (Funk 1998:529).
- Jesus practised faith healing without ancient medicine or magic; He relieved rather than healed conditions we now consider psychosomatic (Funk 1998:531).
- He did not walk on water, feed the thousands with bread and fish, change water into wine, or raise anyone from the dead (Funk 1998:531).
- Jesus was arrested in Jerusalem and crucified by the Romans (Funk 1998:527).
- He was executed for being a public nuisance and not for claiming He was the son of God (Funk 1998:527).
- Jesus did not bodily rise from the dead, the empty tomb is fiction (Funk 1998:449).
- Belief in the resurrection is based on visionary experiences of Paul, Peter, and Mary Magdalene. (Funk 1998:449-452).
- Mary Magdalene was among the early witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus (Funk 1998:479).
- Mary Magdalene was considered a leader in the early Jesus movement along with Peter and Paul (Funk 1998:479).
The Jesus Seminar embarked on this quest in order to rewrite the New Testament with texts and sayings that have been verified by their voting system. One of the most important reasons for a new translation was the discovery of the Gospel of Thomas. The seminar concluded that the Gospel of Thomas needed to be included in the canon. They also pointed out that the translations of the Gospels were ‘wooden and tentative’, so they produced a new translation that was put into easily readable English. Another reason they give for this rewrite is that the four canonical Gospels had to be rewritten so they read similar to each other (presumably for liturgical reasons). In contrast, they say that the Gospels in the original Greek differ markedly from one another. The Seminar endeavours to produce Gospels that are more like the Greek style (Funk 1993: ix).

5.2.3 The Traditional Jesus

Can the Historical Jesus be pieced together, and are there enough of the pieces remaining after more than 2,000 years?

Elhanan Gibli found God. Not in the personal-salvation sense. There was an address. God was last known to reside approximately 300 yards north of the minimart at the corner of Ma’ale haShalom and Wai Hilwa. There had stood the second temple, built around the Ark of the Covenant containing the Holies of Holies. And two millennia after the temple’s destruction, the power of the divine still radiated so potently from the remaining stones that Gibli recalls feeling it in his entire being the first time he entered Jerusalem’s Old City. (Vick 2012:26).

If only it was this easy to find the Historical Jesus. He gets hidden by mythology, conspiracy, debate and rhetoric. A man, who lived 2,000 years ago, wrote no books, built no monuments and left no biographical record of Himself, yet has had more books, articles, films, paintings and sculptures produced of Him and His life than any other single person in history. His name has always sparked controversy, even in reading the Gospel accounts; He certainly was not an easy teacher to follow. Craig Evans in his book Jesus and His World, The Archaeological Evidence tells us that:

The writings of the Bible speak of real people, real places, and real events. Many of these things can be corroborated by archaeological discoveries and by other ancient
sources. Often what archaeologists uncover is not so much proof but clarification (Evans 2012:1).

How does the traditional story of Jesus compare to that of The Authors and the Jesus Seminar? Taking the chronological order of the list from The Jesus Seminar’s book The Acts of Jesus, the canonical Gospels of the New Testament produce this description of the life of Jesus:

- Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great (Mt 2:1).
- Jesus’ mother was Mary and His human father was not Joseph (Mt 1:18-21; Lk 1:26-34).
- Jesus was born in Bethlehem, was exiled in Egypt and returned to Nazareth (Mt 2:1, Mt 2:13, Mt 2:28; Lk 2:4-7).
- Jesus was the heir to throne of Israel through the lineage of David (Mt 1:17) and heir to the position of High Priest through lineage of Levi (Lk 3:23-38).
- Jesus was an itinerant preacher and healer who broke Jewish religious laws and ate with social outcasts (Mt 4:17, Mt 5 and 6, Mt 9:9-11, Mt 9:5.; Mk 2:15-16; Lk 4:33-35, Lk 4:38-41, Lk 19:1-8).
- Jesus practised faith healing (Mt 9:17-25, Mt 12:9-13, Mt 15:29-31, Mt 17:14-18, Mt 20:29-34; Mk 1:21-26, 29-34, Mk 2:12, Mk 3:3-5, Mk 5:2-13, Mk 5:23-34, 39-42, Mk 8:25-30, Mk 8:22-26, Mk 9:17-27, Mk 10:46-52, Mk 4:31-35; Lk 5:12-13, Lk 5:17-24, Lk 8:26-35, Lk 8:44-48; Mk 14:2; Lk 18:35-42; Jh 5:6-13).
- He walked on water, fed the thousands with bread and fish, changed water into wine and raised two people from the dead. (Mt 26:47-50, Mt 27:31-50; Mk 14:43-50, Mk 15:16-27; Lk 7:11-15, Lk 9:10-17; Jh 2:7-8, Jh 6:4-11, Jh 11:1-44).
- Jesus was arrested in Jerusalem and crucified by the Romans (Mt 26:47-50, Mt 27:31-50; Mk 14:43-50, Mk 15:16-27; Lk 22:47-54; Jh 18:3-14).
- He was executed for being a threat to the Temple, for blasphemy and for claiming He was the Son of God (Mt 26:1-5, Mt 26:57-68; Mk 14:60-65, Mk 15:1-4; Lk 23:2-5, Lk 3:13-19; Jh 11:45-47).
- Jesus bodily rose from the dead, there was an empty tomb (Mt 28:2-8; Mk 16:2-8; Lk 24:1-6; Jh 20:1-18).
- Belief in the resurrection is based on visionary experiences of Paul, Peter and Mary Magdalene and many others who saw, heard and spoke to Him in the forty days before He ascended into heaven (Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:9-14; Lk 24:12, Lk 24:13-36; Jh 20:16, 19, 26, Jh 21:4).

This is the Jesus that most people will define as the real Jesus. It is also the Jesus base from which the Jesus Seminar and The Authors launch their arguments. Some of the facts can be verified by Biblical Archaeology, some remain part of the spiritual mystery that is Jesus.
5.2.4 The Authors’ profile of Jesus

The Authors’ profile of Jesus largely follows that of the Jesus Seminars’ list

- Jesus’ mother was Mary and His human father was probably not Joseph, but could have been a Roman soldier (Joyce 1975:53; Thiering 1992:43-46).
- Jesus was the legal heir to the throne of Israel and the position of High Priest; He was the Son of David (Joyce 1975:22, 25; Schonfield 2005:71, 77; Thiering 1992:52; Baigent et al 1996:332; Brown 2004:248, 249, 410, 411; Starbird 1993:7, 53).
- He did not walk on water, feed the thousands with bread and fish, change water into wine or raise anyone from the dead (Brown 2004:233; Baigent et al 1996:388, 408).
- Jesus was a mortal prophet (Brown 2004:233; Baigent et al 1996:332; Thiering 1992:3, 52).
- Jesus was arrested in Jerusalem and crucified by the elders of the Essen. He was executed for being a public nuisance and not for claiming He was the Son of God (Joyce 1975:25; Thiering 1992:109, 111).
- There were two types of crucifixion: soft, from which one could have survived, and hard, from which one could not. Jesus was crucified using the soft method and survived (Joyce 1975:31; Baigent et al 1996:366-5; Schonfield 2005:161; Reichs 2005:219).
- Jesus did not bodily rise from the dead; the empty tomb is fiction (Joyce 1975:115, 141; Thiering 1992:123; Reichs 2005:2, 255, 283).

This study does not pass judgement on the finds by all three groups, but is interested in how the arguments are presented by The Authors, who created a media phenomenon. To look at the how these ‘new truths’ have been presented by The Authors, the study will use Robert H. Thouless’ book, first published in 1930, to see if facts or emotive arguments are being presented.

5.3 THE ALTERNATIVE JESUS STORY VS STRAIGHT AND CROOKED THINKING

This, as stated before, is the title of Robert Thouless’ book. In it he lists 38 dishonest tricks which are commonly used in argument (Thouless 1974:192-199).

1. Use of emotionally toned words.
2. Making a statement in which all is implied but some is true.
3. Proof by selected instances.
4. Extension of an opponent’s proposition by contradiction or misinterpretation of it.
5. Evasion of a sound refutation of an argument by use of sophistical formula.
6. Diversion to another question, to a side issue, or by irrelevant objection.
7. Proof by inconsequential arguments.
8. The argument that we should not make efforts against X, which is admittedly evil because there is a worse evil Y, against which our effort should be directed.
9. The recommendations of a position because it is a mean between two extremes.
10. Pointing out the logical correctness of the form of an argument whose premises contain doubtful or untrue statements of fact.
11. The use of an argument of logically unsound form.
12. Argument in a circle.
13. Begging the question.
14. Discussing a verbal proposition as if it were a factual one, or failing to disentangle the verbal and factual elements in a proposition that is partially both.
15. Putting forward a tautology as if it were a factual judgement.
17. Changing the meaning of a term during the course of an argument.
18. The use of a dilemma, which ignores a continuous series of possibilities between the two extremes, presented.
19. Use of the fact of continuity between them to throw doubt on a real difference between two things.
20. Illegitimate use of or demand for definition.
21. Suggestion by repeated affirmation.
22. Suggestion by use of a confident manner.
23. Suggestion of prestige.
24. Prestige by false credentials.
26. Affectation of failure to understand backed by prestige.
27. The use of questions drawing out damaging admissions.
28. The appeal to mere authority.
29. Overcoming resistance to a doubtful proposition by preliminary statement of a few easily accepted ones.
30. Statements of a doubtful proposition in such a way that it fits in with the thought-habits or the prejudices of the hearer.
31. The use of generally accepted formulae of pre-digested thought as premises in argument.
32. ‘There is much to be said on both sides, so no decision can be made either way’, or any other formula leading to the attitude of academic detachment.
33. Argument by mere analogy.
34. Argument by forced analogy.
35. Angering an opponent in order that he may argue badly.
36. Special pleading.
37. Commending or condemning a proposition because of its practical consequences to the hearer.
38. Argument by attributing prejudices or motives to one’s opponent.
Thouless’ explanation of the ‘tricks’ used will be included in the examination of the Jesus within *The Jesus Story*.

5.4 FIVE ‘NEW TRUTHS’ OF THE *JESUS STORY*

The five statements used by *The Authors* in the creation of their ‘new truths’ concerning *The Jesus Story* are: Jesus’ birth, parents and lineage of Jesus is a myth; Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married and His bloodline is the *Holy Grail*; Jesus did not die on the cross but survived and died on Masada; and the scriptures are not a true reflection of *The Jesus Story*. These will be put up against Thouless’ ‘tricks’. Although each statement probably appears in more than one of the books, in this chapter the critical arguments are being considered. An example for each is taken from different books.

5.4.1 Jesus’ birth, parents and lineage

Jesus’ birth, His parents, and the depiction of the Madonna and child form part of a discussion that includes the theory of the story being part of pagan mythology, added to increase the popularity of Christianity in the first century AD. Donovan Joyce in his book *The Jesus scroll* states that Jesus’ virgin birth was added to *The Jesus Story* by the first church when Christianity did not succeed in Judea.

> Amid the shrill screams of devotion, most ejective New Testament scholars today dismiss the Gospel accounts of the conception, birth and lineage of Jesus as a mixture of contrived fictions and demonstrable myths in which, like the needle in the haystack, might be hidden one tiny grain of truth representing an actual historical event (Joyce 1975:41).

The legend of the virgin birth, according to Joyce, has its origins in pagan religions and would ‘give Jesus a genesis and background of unparalleled prestige sufficient to outrank any pagan deity’. Joyce sees this as an advertising campaign to attract new members.

The virgin birth and subsequent worship of the Virgin Mary owes its origins, he says, to the Roman goddess Isis, the former Egyptian deity whose son was generated by a god. Mary
assumes the deity’s titles as ‘mother of God’, ‘Redemptress’ and ‘Star of the Seas’. He goes on to say that the original status of Mary was Isis with a ‘new coat of paint’. Bishop Hislop in his book *The Two Babylons* (Hislop 1919:21) agrees with this theory, claiming the ‘Virgin Mary and Child’ predates Christianity and exists as deity across the world in numerous religions.

The injection of the ‘new truth’ of Jesus not being fathered by the Holy Spirit, but by a Roman Soldier or just out of wedlock as an illegitimate child by Joseph, brings a question into the discussion of His legitimacy (Thiering 1974:45).

5.4.1.1 The use of emotive language  
The first trick listed by Thouless is clearly used by Joyce to debunk the traditional *Jesus Story*. One example of the use of emotive language by Joyce is: ‘Amid the shrill screams of devotion, most ejective, New Testament scholars today dismiss the Gospel accounts of the conception, birth and lineage of Jesus as a mixture of contrived factions and demonstrable myths’. The traditional Christian thought described as shrills screams of devotion; this statement contains no logic or any academic process.

5.4.1.2 Putting forward a tautology as if it were a factual judgement  
As Thouless explains in a discussion on democracy, one needs to define the meaning of the word (democracy). He points out that democracy is a system of government, but contrary to some beliefs it is not government by the people, but rather by the willing agreement of the people with a system of laws imposed on them by their rulers, after an inclusive rather than exclusive voting franchise (Thouless 1974:73).

The extreme example of this is Barbara Thiering’s argument for her Pesher system, where nothing in the New Testament is what it seems. This is almost like a person who decides to use different values for the numbers 0 to 9 other than the traditional ones e.g. 2 would be presented by the number 5 and 7 by the number 2. Although a person has the right to free thought, this would not make much sense and cause arithmetical problems. When looking at the different profiles of Jesus, a standard from where a common base can be argued must be established and, as mentioned before, the traditional text of the New Testament will be used for the purpose of this study.
The main discussion around the Mary and Joseph as Jesus’ parents comes from Barbara Thiering and Donovan Joyce. In the traditional text, Jesus’ parentage is stated in Matthew and Luke, and His divinity in John:

‘Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place under these circumstances: When His mother Mary had been promised in marriage to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be pregnant of the Holy Spirit’ (Matthew 1:18).

In Luke, Mary’s pregnancy is told by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:30-35), and confirmed by Elizabeth, John the Baptists mother, and Mary’s cousin (Luke 1:41-45).

The traditional text on the subject is short and without inferences and does not state that Jesus’ father is Joseph, but rather the Holy Spirit. The Bible states that Jesus is the Son of David and the Son of Abraham, giving His genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-28. In John 1:1-2, the text summarises Jesus’ divinity. However, The Authors take a different approach. Barbara Thiering, author of Jesus the Man, begins her story when Mary reveals she is pregnant. This is found in the Gospels of Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-19. Thiering says:

‘According to deeply held and widespread belief, Mary, the mother of Jesus remained a virgin, and Jesus had no father but God. This is one of the matters to which the concept of a Pesher, a real history underlying an apparent history, brings considerable illumination. Once it is known that Jesus was connected with the Essen’s an explanation of the virgin birth becomes known; a non-supernatural explanation. ...Nowhere is the virgin birth mentioned in the rest of the New Testament, and in fact Paul says very clearly that Jesus was ‘of the seed of David’ (Romans 1:3). Once the connections of Jesus and His family are seen, considerable light is thrown on this question. ... For Essen’s, celibacy was the highest way of life (most members were celibate)... For some very important people in Essen ranks; however it was essential to continue the family line. They were members of the great dynasties, the Zadocks, and the Davids, who had been High Priests and Kings of Israel before the fall of the temple in the six-century BCE. One reason why the order had come into existence was to preserve these leaders and all that they stood for (Thiering 1987:45).

Thiering says the problem that Joseph and Mary had was that Mary fell pregnant after the betrothal. Joseph was in a difficult position as they had breached the rules. One option was
‘to put Mary away secretly’ (Matthew 1:19); the Essen would then have brought the child up as an orphan. Joseph took advice from an angel (Matthew 1:20-25). According to Thiering, angels were men within the Essen sect who had the rank of Levite (Thiering 1987:45).

Thiering also explains the conception by the Holy Spirit as:

...The story also says Mary ‘conceived by the Holy Spirit’, Joseph was the Holy Spirit. As priests and Levites were ‘gods’ and ‘angles’, so lower priests, kings and princes were ‘spirits’.

She goes on to say:

The virgin birth is a good example of the Pesher form. It is written at the level of a miracle for those for whom the ideal of a virginal concept had symbolic power, but at the same time, it is written in such a way that those who had special knowledge of the Essen marriage rules and did not expect the supernatural would understand the real facts (Thiering 1987:47).

None of this is supported by fact. Can Archaeology prove that Jesus was fathered by the Holy Spirit? No. But this does not mean He was fathered by a Roman soldier or by Mary’s husband Joseph?

5.4.1.3  Extension of an opponent’s proposition by contradiction or misinterpretation of it. Thiering in her theory of a Pesher system she uses the extension of an opponent’s proposition by contradiction or misinterpretation of it. Which in this case is the tradition Jesus Story, by saying that the Christian with a deeper understanding of the scriptures or mythology ought to be defending the extended proposition is misrepresenting and contradicting the traditional story.

Most of The Authors are not that interested in the birth of Jesus, seemingly content to take in for granted that His earthly parents were Joseph and Mary, and that He came from the line of David and was of the High Priesthood lineage, which made Him not only the rightful heir to the throne of Israel, but the rightful heir to the position of High Priesthood at the Temple (Matthew 1, Luke 3).
Joyce does not use any references to substantiate his statements; he doesn’t tells us who these scholars are, but uses his statements in emotive support of his theories. Let’s refer back to Joyce’s statement: ‘amid screams of devotion, most ejective New Testament scholars today dismiss the gospels account of the conception, birth and lineage of Jesus’. *Screams of devotion* – this is not a traditional argument, nor theological discussion, but a purely emotional argument used to open the statement. Next is the section that says *most ejective ( outspoken) New Testament scholars dismiss* – this is again emotive so as to say that any scholar that does not dismiss Jesus’ birth and linage just presents the traditional arguments rather than being brave enough to present the ‘new truth’. Joyce describes the traditional *Jesus Story*, especially its origins, as follows: ‘like a needle in a haystack might be hidden one tiny grain of truth representing an actual historical event’ (Joyce 1974:41). Reading Joyce’s book may lead readers to feel that if they didn’t question the traditional of story of Christ, they were intimidated by the church. After all, even the Bible says Jesus’ father is not Joseph (Mt 1:18).

Readers and the public are almost ridiculed into believing that the story of Jesus’ birth as recorded in the Gospels is a story that at best should be reserved for children. Surprisingly, the Gospel text is not emotive, but the story is told simply, without embellishment.

### 5.4.2 Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene

‘Why should Jesus not be married?’ Sophie’s grandfather posed to her when she had asked whether Jesus had a girlfriend. He answered ‘Would it be so bad if He did?’ Dan Brown proposes as he develops his storyline of Mary Magdalene being the carrier of the *Holy Grail* – Jesus’ Bloodline (Brown 2004:326-336).

*The Authors* claim that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, the woman in the New Testament who was delivered from seven demons (Luke 8:2). Her second name, Magdalene, may mean she came from Magdala, a city on the southwest coast of Galilee. Mary has also been associated with the woman in the city who was the sinner (Luke 7:37) who washed Jesus’ feet, but there is no scriptural basis for this. Magdala, according to the Talmud, was known for their prostitute says Jane Schaberg in her book *The Resurrection of Mary*
Mary Magdalene is also associated with the woman that Jesus saved from stoning (Jn 8:1-11); again there is no textual evidence of this. What is known of this woman is that she was part of the group of women that cared for Jesus and His disciples (Mt 27:55-56); this may mean she was a woman of means. She certainly was present and witnessed most of the events of the crucifixion; she was present at His trial, heard the sentence, stood at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:25), and was the first person to witness His resurrection (Jn 20:11-18) (Nelson 1997:666) (Schaberg 2002:88-90).

5.4.2.1 Proof by inconsequential arguments This is the trick of bringing in defence of one statement another statement, which does not in fact prove the first statement, trusting that one’s opponent will not challenge the proof. This is usually done by referring to an academic or learned theory, or stating the argument in such a way that one’s opponent would fear that if he did not see the consequences, it would show ignorance (Thouless 1974:49).

A reference to a wedding attended by Jesus is only found in the Gospel of John (Jn 2:1-12). Jesus’ marriage is crucial to *The Authors’* theory of the Holy Grail. Jesus needs to have been married and to have fathered children for the Holy Bloodline to thread its way from Jerusalem to Paris to the courts of The French Royal Family, the Merovingians

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” 4 Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.” 5 His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” Now there were set there six water pots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. 7 Jesus said to them “Fill the water pots with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He said to them, “Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.” And they took it. 9 When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the

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178 The Merovingians were German Franks. They began evading the Roman Empire in the mid-third century and had gained considerable power by the reign of Constantine in the area now known as France and Germany. They granted themselves a royal lineage based on their belief in a powerful ancestor, Merovech. Brown claims incorrectly that the Merovingians named Paris. There is no evidence that Mary Magdalene or any of her children married into this line (Brown 2004:257-258) (Garlow 2006:134).
feast called the bridegroom. 10 And he said to Him, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!” 11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him. 12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days (John 2:1-12).

Looking at Botha’s description of a wedding in the first century, weddings usually took place on Wednesdays (elders met to deal with community matters on Thursdays, so they could deal with any controversy that might have occurred because of the wedding). The marriage ceremony took place in the evening. It started when the groom went to collect his bride and take her back to his father’s house. A procession accompanied the groom and bride. A feast was provided by the groom’s family when the bride arrived. The bride was surrounded by other betrothed women (Mt 25:1-13), as the new bride was leaving the safety of her father’s house, but not yet in the safety of her husband’s home. The bridesmaids carried lamps to ward off evil spirits, as demons were obviously creatures of the dark (Botha 2000:77-78). When they arrived at the groom’s house, the bride and groom entered and the gate was closed (Mt 25:10). The couple then had intercourse and the bloodied sheets were shown to the wedding party to prove the bride’s virginity. The gate was opened and the wedding festivities began and could continue for several days. The bride remained in a separate room, the groom visiting her at night and her parents during the day (Botha 2000:77-78).

This falls in line with what appears in the Gospel of John. John says that Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding (Jn 2:2), which does not sound as though they were the groom’s party. His answer to His mother also seems to confirm that this was not His wedding: ‘Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.”’(Jn 2:4). A shortage of wine would be of concern to Him if it was His or a close family member’s wedding. Family honour amongst Jews was and still is of great importance.
The other ‘proof’ that The Authors have to Jesus being married is a verse from the Gospel of Philip\textsuperscript{179}, found amongst the codices of the Nag Hammadi Library.

As for the Wisdom who is called 'the barren', she is the mother of the angels. And the companion of [the Saviour was Mary Magdalene. [Christ loved] Mary more than [all] the disciples, and used to] kiss her [softly] on her [hand]. The rest of [the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval]. They said to him "Why do you love her more than all of us?" The Saviour answered and said to them, "Why do I not love you like her? When a blind man and one who sees are both together in darkness, they are no different from one another. When the light comes, then he who sees will see the light, and he who is blind will remain in darkness (Robinson 1990:54).

This excerpt from the Gospel of Phillip is often used as proof of Jesus’ marriage to Mary Magdalene, but too many parts are missing. In the quote above, the missing parts are those within the brackets. The words within the brackets are suggestions of what the text may have said. Too many options are available to make this conclusive.

Another argument that is used as proof that Jesus was married and had children is that the Old Testament law ‘curses’ those who do not marry and have children. This is an interpretation of Genesis 9:1: ‘So God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”’ Joyce tells us that:

In Jesus’ day every Jewish father was bound by the Torah, and the duties it imposed; his obligation to his son was fivefold: He must circumcise him; redeem him, teach him the torah, teach him a trade, and find a wife for him.” Not only was marriage both legally and socially demanded but avoidance was considered a curse and childlessness a mark of God’s distinct disfavour (Joyce 1975:87).

Brown also uses the same argument:

According to Jewish custom, celibacy was condemned, and the obligation for a Jewish father was to find a suitable wife for his son. If Jesus was not married, at least one of the Bible’s Gospels would have mentioned it and offered some explanation for His unnatural state of bachelorhood (Brown 2004:330).

\textsuperscript{179}The Gospel of Philip is a Gospel of sayings, found in the same codex as the codex that contained the Gospel of Thomas (Robinson 1990:54).
This is an opinion shared in the books *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (Baigent et al 1996:346), *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar* (Starbird 1993:7), and *Jesus the Man* (Schonfield 2005:88, 217).

Baigent et al introduce their hypothesis by saying:

The Magdalene had figured prominently throughout our inquiry. According to certain medieval legends, the Magdalene brought the *Holy Grail* – or ‘Blood Royal’ – into France. The grail is closely associated with Jesus... Perhaps the Magdalene - that elusive woman in the Gospels – was in fact Jesus’ wife. Perhaps their union produced offspring. After the crucifixion, perhaps the Magdalene, with at least one child, was smuggled to Gaul (Baigent et al 1996:329).

Joyce, unlike the other Authors, sees Magdalene as a harlot and schizophrenic (Joyce 1975:93), not as the discredited leader of the first church. In his book *The Jesus Scroll* he tells us that France has institutions for rehabilitating prostitutes called “les Hospice de la Madeleine” and their inmates are known as ‘Madeleines’ (Joyce 1975:92). Joyce describes Jesus as ‘One involved with a mentally-disturbed reputedly ex-harlot’. This union, however, is still of utmost importance to the rest of The Authors as this ‘heavenly’ union would mean the God Gene is present today. Margaret Starbird tells the reader:

There is strong evidence to suggest that Mary Magdalene can be identified as Mary of Bethany, sister of Martha and Lazarus mentioned in the Gospels of Luke and John. Biblical references to ‘Mary Magdalene’ include the information that she was one of the women who accompanied Jesus after He had healed her of possession by seven demons (Luke 8:2; Mark 16:9). She is also reported to have been one of the women at the foot of the cross (Mark 15:40; Matthew 27:56; John 19:25) and one of the women to arrive at the tomb at first light on Easter morning (Mark 16:1; Matthew 28:1; Luke 24: 10; John 20:1-3).

Starbird goes on to say:

The anointing Jesus with oil could have been misinterpreted by Luke’s Gospel: rather it was the anointing performed by the woman at Bethany was similar to the familiar ritual practice of a sacred priestess or temple ‘prostitute’ in the goddess cults of the Roman Empire. (Starbird 1993: 117-120).
The proof of Mary Magdalene being Jesus’ wife she says can be found in a set of tarot\textsuperscript{180} cards. These tarot cards were used by the Templars to play games and keep a record of the \textit{Holy Grail}, which she says was the bloodline of Christ carried into France by Mary Magdalene and protected by Joseph of Arimathea (Starbird 1993:17). Starbird says that Mary Magdalene appears in the Micah’s prophesy (Mc 4:8). ‘As for you O magdal –eder), watchtower of the flock, o stronghold of the daughter Zion! The former dominion will be restored to you; kingship will come to the daughter of Jerusalem’ (Starbird 1993:50).

\textit{The Authors} of the studies tell us that Mary Magdalene’s womb was the vessel for the \textit{Holy Grail} (Holy Royal bloodline) which protected the child she carried into France when she and Joseph of Arimathea fled Jerusalem.

As none of \textit{The Authors} agree that Jesus was the Son of God\textsuperscript{181}, it is difficult to understand why it is important that He married and had children, or why it is important that the Merovingian bloodline should be traceable to the Davidic lineage. Traditional versions and alternatives of \textit{The Jesus Story} do not reveal Mary Magdalene’s lineage, so any bloodline proceeding from her and Jesus would not necessarily be pure, and therefore the God Gene would be diluted, especially if these offspring married into the French Royal bloodline of the Merovingians. Thiering also proposes that Jesus’ father was a Roman soldier, which further dilutes this Holy Bloodline. Another problem with the theory of a God lineage is that Jesus had brothers and sisters, so they too would carry this bloodline if Joseph and Mary were His biological parents and He was not the manifest Son of God. Some of this bloodline could exist today.

\textsuperscript{180} Tarot cards have their origins in cards used by the crusaders in the fifteenth century. They were used to play card games i.e. Italian tarocchini and French tarot. In the eighteenth century, they became part of the mystics’ and occultists’ efforts of divination to map mental and spiritual pathways. Although still used throughout Europe to lay card games, they are used for divination mail in English-speaking countries. Some occultists claim that the tarot cards are ancient with ties to ancient Egypt and the kabbalah (attempts to explain the relationship between unchanging eternal and mortal and finite universe) (Dummett et al 1996:20-25).

\textsuperscript{181} Mary the Mother of Jesus was impregnated by the Holy Spirit (Mathew 2:18).
The Authors tell us that Jesus was married and had children, but are there any texts to prove this theory? No. Except for the stories of the Holy Grail and the documents that The Authors of The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail say exist, no primary evidence has been found. Or has it?

‘Jesus Married’; ‘Gospel of Jesus’ Wife’; ‘A Faded Piece of Papyrus Refers to Jesus’ Wife’; ‘Gospel of Jesus is a Fake. These are just some of the headlines that appeared after Karen King announced her new findings in a paper at the 10th International Congress of Coptic Studies in Rome on 18 September 2012. Karen King, Harvard’s Hollis Professor of Divinity\(^{182}\), revealed the existence of recently discovered papyrus, pictured on the left, at a conference at the Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, a research centre of the Faculty of Theology at the Pontifical Lateran University (known as the Pope’s University)\(^{183}\).

According to King, the text contained the words ‘Jesus said to them, “My wife ....”’. The next line read “she shall be able to be my disciple,” and two lines later “I will dwell with her...” Although the words on the fragment scattered across fourteen lines leave much to interpretation, King’s interpretation states that the “wife” Jesus refers to is Mary Magdalene, and he appears to be defending her against one of the male disciples. The text is written in Coptic and according to King and her supporters was probably translated from Greek written in the first century into Coptic during the third and fourth centuries, when Alexandria competed with Rome as incubator of early Christian thought.

The papyrus is owned by a collector of Greek, Arabic and Coptic papyri. The collector wrote to King about the fragment after he had read her book The Gospel of Mary Magdalene: Jesus and the First Women Apostle in 2010. As she was busy, she was unable to help the collector. He contacted King again in 2011 and asked her once more to look at the fragment.

\(^{182}\) One of the most sought-after positions and the first woman to ever hold the position.

King did this and with the help of papyrologist AnneMarie Luijendijk (Department of New Testament Studies at Princeton), Roger Bagnall (Director for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University), and Ariel Shisha-Halevy (expert in Coptic Linguistics at the Hebrew University) the text was transcribed and translated. The verdict on the text was that it was not written by the hand of a well-trained scribe and that his pen appeared to be ‘nubby’, with the result that the ink did not flow consistently. The experts decided that dating the ink would lead to its destruction; it was decided not to go that route. Even though the ink had not been tested, it was decided to reveal its existence as a great many people had been enquiring about the text, and King was concerned that the delay caused by further study of the fragment would lead to misinterpretation of the find. King went on to say that by presenting it to qualified colleagues, it would mean the text would be rigorously examined\(^{184}\).

This reveal caused the international media to print the findings, but very soon the voices of doubt and disbelief appeared. By 18 September, the Smithsonian Magazine’s Ariel Sabar published an article:

The inside story of a controversial new text about Jesus has a number of academics questioning the authenticity of the text. Most comments questioned why the ink had not been tested before the text’s release, and then Andrew Brown of the Guardian Newspaper wrote an article on 21 September 2012, saying that the text was a modern fake. He quotes American academic Andrew Bernard and Francis Watson from Durham University who discovered that the Jesus wife manuscript copies a typo in one of the most widely distributed electronic copies of the Gospel of Thomas. They argue that there was an unlikely word break in the Gospel which had been carried over into the Jesus wife’s fragment. They argue that the interlinear translation of Thomas’ Gospel, made by Michael Grondin and freely available online, show that when the text in the Gospel of Thomas is downloaded as a PDF file, one letter is lost. This has been reproduced in the Gospel of Jesus’ Wife; this is not the case in the web version\(^{185}\).

If theory of an electronic forgery is correct, does this make way for many other ‘good’ forgeries with the help of the internet and advanced printing techniques available now and in the future?


\(^{185}\)http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/21/gospel-jesus-wife-forgery
Does this Karen King’s ‘new finding’ bring us any closer to whether Jesus was married? No, but again it opens the space for discussion and draws attention to the world of Biblical Archaeology, academia and what is considered scientific proof and peer review.

With all the significance of the authenticity of King’s text and her integrity as an academic being put on the line, the New Yorker Newspaper, in their humour column *Shouts and Murmurs*, had a look at the marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene with tongue in cheek. Mary Magdalene reminisces about her marriage:

We were married in a simple, private ceremony in the dessert, by a rabbi and someone who Jesus called a Baptist Minister. Right before the vows, the rabbi whispered to me, ‘Think about what you’re doing. Your children will be half Christian.’ Which was when the Minister whispered, ‘So what? College isn’t for everyone.’ New Yorker, 15 October 2012. Shouts and Murmurs.186

All these arguments fall into the category of inconsequential argument; the fact that Jesus and His disciples were invited to a wedding does not prove it was His. A fact which is overlooked by *The Authors* is found in John 2:9 ‘And when the manager tasted the water just now turned into wine, not knowing where it came from, though the servants who drew the water knew, he called the bridegroom’. The wedding manager called the ‘bridegroom’ and not Jesus, who the author of the gospel has named throughout the passage. Therefore, Jesus was not the bridegroom. The fact that the Gospels do not state He was not married does not prove He was. The last ‘fact’, namely that it was customary for a Jewish man to marry according to the verse in the Bible that instructs people to go forth and multiply, does not make it clear that it is a sin for a man not to marry. Returning to Genesis 9:1, God says to go, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth; nowhere does God say an unmarried man is cursed. In fact, the beginning of the verse tells us that marriage is a blessing; no mention is made of a curse.

King’s, the *Jesus Seminar’s* and the other *Authors’* arguments are not valid against the canonical Gospels; there is no substantial proof of His marriage. A married Jesus, who had

186 [https://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2012/oct/16/Gospel-jesus-ife-mode](https://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2012/oct/16/Gospel-jesus-ife-mode)
an earthly father, makes Him more man than deity. Without proof, He remains single and the ‘bridegroom’ with the church as His ‘bride’ (Mt 9:15; Mk 2:19; Lk 5:34; Jn 3:29).

5.4.3 Jesus did not die on the cross

The significance of this statement, if it can be proven, would indeed destroy the Christian religion and take it from a faith to a philosophy and lifestyle choice. The Christian religion stands on the foundation of Jesus being the Son of God who was crucified, died and rose from the dead after three days, the resurrected Messiah.

5.4.3.1 The use of suggestion Thouless states that the use of suggestion relies on three things: (1) repeated affirmation; (2) a confident, insistent method of writing/speaking; and (3) prestige.

Suggestion is used by Schonfield in his discussion of Jesus’ plot for crucifixion and resurrection. He tells us that his theory is not novel and relates that two prominent people also held this view. His book, he tells us, is an exposé of The Passover Plot. He is insistent in his argument, almost asking the reader to challenge him. Schonfield has strong academic credentials: a background in Biblical Archaeology as well as his prestige in being part of the team that worked on The Dead Sea Scrolls. He is a distinguished academic (not an author of a novel) revealing the ‘truth’ to which the average reader has not been exposed. It presents the reader with another profile of Jesus Christ instead of a Messiah, blameless and godly; they are presented with a fake, a delusional, itinerant, charismatic speaker.

It is by no means a novel theory that Jesus was not dead when taken from the cross, and some will have it that He subsequently recovered. The idea was used in fiction by George Moore in The Book Kerith and by D.H. Lawrence in The Man Who Died (Schonfield 2005:163).

Schonfield sees Jesus as a zealot who believed He was the Messiah and therefore needed to walk the Messiah’s path.

If Jesus was convinced from Scripture that He was to suffer on the cross, but not to perish on it, there was no reason why He should not have been concerned to make what provision He could for His survival. We have ample evidence that Jesus used His intelligence to assure the fulfilment of the predictions...He plotted and schemed with utmost skill and resourcefulness, sometimes making secret arrangements, taking
advantage of every circumstance conducive to the attainment of His objectives (Schonfield 2005:162)

Jesus’ friends enabled Him to successfully complete His plot to be crucified as the Passover Lamb and then rise as the Resurrected, Redeeming Messiah.

...Jesus made arrangements with someone He could trust, who would be in the position to accomplish His design. This person is identified to us in the Gospels as Joseph of Arimathea. He is one of the great mysteries of the Gospel. He is represented as a wealthy man and a member of the Sanhedrin; and since he is said to be waiting for the Kingdom of God, he would have been a messianically-minded Pharisee (Schonfield 2005:163).

Jesus, according to Schonfield, was given a poison or strong sedative on the cross which would render Him unconscious. It would have appeared to the guards who were ordered to break the men’s legs to hasten their deaths believed that He was dead. The circumstance that Jesus did not foresee was that the Roman guard would pierce His side with a spear to confirm His death. (Schonfield 2005:167, 169).

If Jesus survived the cross, He would not have regained consciousness for many hours, and in the meantime the spices and linen bandages provided the best dressing for his injuries... What seems probable is that in the darkness of Saturday night when Jesus was brought out of the tomb by those concerned in this plan He regained consciousness temporarily, but finally succumbed ... Before dawn the mortal remains of Jesus were quickly yet reverently interred, leaving the puzzle of the empty tomb (Schonfield 2005:170-172).

Schonfield tells us that Jesus did not survive the cross due to unforeseen circumstance, but that His disciples were in on the plot and carried on the deception of the Resurrected Christ. According to Schonfield there was no proof to substantiate the claims of the women who went to the garden and found an empty tomb (Schonfield 2005:173).

Schonfield uses the trick of the use of suggestion: Jesus was the Messiah Israel was looking for; He played the part with the help of mass hysteria; He healed, preformed miracles and, the ultimate proof, died and was resurrected. Schonfield uses his prestige and those of the team of The Dead Sea Scrolls (by implication) to present his argument. By saying that The Passover Plot went terribly wrong when Jesus was stabbed by a spear, he rewrites The Jesus Story with a man of dubious moral and mental instability as the central hero.
The Jesus who is taken off the cross after scourging, crucifixion and stabbing and moves the stone from a tomb and appears to His disciple is not credible. John standing in for Jesus to people who knew Him well is just as incredible.

5.4.3.2 The appeal to mere authority, suggestion of prestige and false credentials  As Thouless explains, appealing to the knowledge of academia is not always a guarantee of fact being introduced to an argument. He uses the example of the authoritative voice of the learned world putting off the acceptance of Lister’s\textsuperscript{187} lifesaving discovery of antiseptic in surgery for a whole generation (Thouless 1974:123).

Thouless instructs the participants in the argument to consider whether the person presumed to have authority has a sound reason for making the call of judgement, although also he cautions against not taking heed of authorities when testing a novel idea as not all traditional arguments turn out to be invalid assertions (Thouless 1974:197).

Both Reichs and Joyce quote or refer to knowledgeable people in their books: Reichs does this in her foreword of listing the academics she says she conferred with to write the novel (Reichs 2005: v), while Joyce introduces us to a mysterious Professor Max Grosset who Joyce says was a volunteer on the Masada archaeological site and a learned archaeologist and professor at a university in America (Joyce 1975:19).

Reichs and Joyce don’t tell us what happened to Jesus after the crucifixion. They just lay a trail of crumbs that they believe should lead us to questioning the traditional belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Both writers tell of a skeleton found on Masada that could be the bones of an eighty-year-old Jesus.

Reichs’ story is that in the 1990’s, a photo surfaced of a single intact skeleton that was also recovered from Loci 2001/2001 (the code given to an area of the archaeological dig) during

\textsuperscript{187} Joseph Lister (1827–1912) was a British surgeon who pioneered antiseptic surgery. By using carbolic soap to clean operating area instruments and wounds, he brought down the incidents of death due to post-surgery infection by about 90% (Thouless 1974:123).
the 1963-1965 excavations. That skeleton was never mentioned or described by the project’s physical anthropologist, Nicu Haas. It was also not discussed by Yadin in his published reports or interviews.

Reichs summarises some interesting facts regarding the skeleton and its discovery:

- Formal field notes were not kept during the Masada excavation, but oral briefings took place regularly between Yadin and his staff. Transcripts of these sessions are archived at the Mount Scopus Campus of the Hebrew University. Pages covering the period of the discovery and clearing of Loci 2001/2002 are missing.
- There are no descriptions of the bones from the 25 commingled individuals, the articulated skeleton or the contents of Loci 2001/2002 in the six volumes of the final excavation publication.
- Though Nicu Haas was in possession of the bones for more than five years, he published nothing on the commingled individuals or the complete skeleton recovered at Loci 2001/2002. Haas’ handwritten notes, including a full bone inventory, indicate he never received the complete skeleton.
- In the late 1960’s, Yigael Yadin stated in press interviews that carbon-14 dating was seldom done, and that it was not his job to initiate such tests. The journal *Radiocarbon* indicates that Yadin sent samples for carbon-14 dating from other Israeli excavations during this period. Despite uncertainty concerning the age of the Loci 2001/2002 remains, Yadin never sent samples for radiocarbon dating (Reichs 2005:1-2).

Reichs lists her experts and references as Dr James Tabor, Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Charlotte; Dr Charles Greenblatt and Kim Vernon, Science and Antiquity Group; The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Dr Shimon Gibson, Jerusalem Archaeological Field Unit; and Debbie Sklar, Israel Antiquities Authority. Reichs’ reference books were *Masada: Herod’s Fortress and The Zealots’ Last Stand* by Yigael Yadin (1966) and *The Jesus Scroll* by Donovan Joyce (1975) (Reichs 2005:1).

The finding of a skeleton that is not available for examination, a scroll that has been damaged and has disappeared, and a tomb with an inscription that may or may not name Jesus as one of the bodies buried in the ossuary have all been part of this mystery. However, even with the introduction of academics and learned people as part of the explanation of
‘new facts’, this mystery has not been solved. When looking at an impressive list of authorities and references given by the ‘faction’ author, the question that needs to be asked is ‘What did they really contribute?’ They may have simply given the author an idea for a plot.

5.4.4 The Bloodline of Jesus is the Holy Grail

Legend tells us that the *Holy Grail* has always involved blood, human flesh or a receptacle (a platter which carried John the Baptist’s head or the cup that was used at the last supper and to catch the blood of Jesus on the cross) that held the blood or flesh. The *Holy Grail* is said to endow those who possess it with supernatural powers (Duchene 2006:9-11).

Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln (1996), Margaret Starbird (1993) and Dan Brown (2004) use the *Holy Grail* as their main theme. According to The Authors, Mary fled Jerusalem to France in the protection of Joseph of Arimathea. She was pregnant and her child, the offspring of Jesus Christ, married into the French Royal Family, enriching it with the ‘God Gene’.

According to some accounts, it (the *Holy Grail*) was brought by Joseph of Arimathea to England (Glastonbury); according to other accounts, it was brought by the Magdalene to France. As early as the fourth century AD, legends describe the Magdalene fleeing the Holy Land and being set ashore near Marseilles. According to medieval legend, she carried with her to Marseilles the *Holy Grail* (Baigent et al 1996:299).

Early legends say that the Magdalene brought the Grail into France, not a cup. In other words, the simple association of Grail and cup was relatively late (Baigent et al 1996:299).

The Authors expand their theory on the *Holy Grail*:

We began to suspect that he Grail itself, the ‘Blood Royal’ actually referred to the Blood Royal of the Merovingian dynasty – a blood which was deemed to be sacred and invested with magical or miraculous properties (Baigent et al 1996:322).
Once *The Authors* have established the theory of Holy Blood being Jesus’ blood, they merge the *Grail* stories:

The Grail Romances stress the importance of Jesus’ blood. They also stress a lineage of some kind. In addition, given such factors as the Grail’s family culmination in Godfrois de Bouillon, they would seem to pertain to Merovingian blood. Could there possibly be some connection between these two apparently discordant elements? Could the blood of Jesus in some way be related to the Blood Royal of the Merovingians? Could the lineage connected with The Grail, brought into Western Europe shortly after the crucifixion, be intertwined with the lineage of the Merovingians (Baigent et al 1996:324)?

Starbird in her book *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar* tells the story of Miriam in the Garden. She prefaces the story with the lines:

> In this fictional account of the Lost Bride, the Hebrew names Yeshua, Miriam, and Yosef are used for Jesus, Mary (sister of Lazarus of Bethany) and Joseph of Arimathea (Starbird 1993:3).

Starbird continues with the story of Mary, who she says is the Magdalene (the woman with the Alabaster Jar who anointed Jesus’ feet and Mary the sister of Lazarus) who flees Jerusalem after the crucifixion first to Alexandria, Egypt, while pregnant with her husband Jesus’ child. A girl child is born, she is called Sarah, and Joseph decides to travel with mother and child to Gaul to distance themselves from the persecution of Jesus’ followers. One day, Joseph knows, the descendants of Jesus would return to Zion and reclaim their inheritance (Starbird 1993:10-17).

The story of the Grail combines with the story of Jesus’ Bloodline in legend form from the fourth century, according to Herve Duchene’s book *The Golden Treasures of Troy*:

> Based on a fourth-century legend preserved in Old French, Mary Magdalene is said to have brought the “Sangraal” to the southern coast of France. It was asserted in later legends that this Sangraal was the “Holy Grail” – a chalice. In fact, it was said in later versions to have been the very cup from which Jesus drank at the last supper on the night of his arrest (Duchane 1995:9, 124).

Dan Brown uses a combination of the different Grail stories to write his book *The Da Vinci Code*, which is in essence a *Holy Grail* story. Brown concentrates on the mystery of the Grail,
leading the reader through a maze of mysteries, riddles and smoke screens to a place where the reader and characters in the book come to the ‘obvious’ conclusion that the Grail is the heir of Jesus Christ.

The idea that the quest Silas, Robert Langdon, Sophie Neveu, and Leigh Teabing have found themselves on is connected with the *Holy Grail* is reinforced by this type of statement:

Sophie looked over. ‘You’re kidding right? We’re going to visit a knight?’ Langdon gave an awkward smile. ‘We’re on a Grail quest, Sophie. Who better to help us than a knight?’ (Brown 2004:297)

Brown’s book, as stated in the title, is the journey the main characters make in solving Leonardo da Vinci’s code, who was, according to Teabing, a main character, one of the keepers of the Grail secret:

“An enlightened soul. Superb! Then you must be aware that Leonardo was one of the keepers of the secret of the Grail. And he hid clues in his art.”

“And finally, before I show you Da Vinci’s paintings of the *Holy Grail*, I’d like you to take a quick look at this,” he opened the book to a colourful graphic that spanned both full pages. “I assume you recognise this fresco?”

*He’s kidding, right?* Sophie was staring at the most famous fresco of all times - *The Last Supper* - Da Vinci’s legendary painting on the wall of the *Santa Maria delle Grazie* in Milan. .. There was no chalice in the painting, no *Holy Grail*... “This fresco, in fact, is the entire key to the Holy Grail mystery: Da Vinci lays it all out in the open in *The Last Supper.*”

Sophie scanned the work eagerly. “Does this fresco tell us what the Grail really is?”

“Not what it is,” Teabing whispered. “But rather who it is. The Holy Grail is not a thing. It is, in fact, a person.”

The last clue as to the location of the *Holy Grail* is hidden in a riddle in the last cryptex. The Grail, according to Brown, is the bloodline of Christ found in Sophie and her brother; the two finally reunited at the *Rosslyn Chapel*, the *Cathedral of Codes*. Sophie’s brother has been protected by Sophie’s grandmother as she has been protected by her grandfather (Brown 2004:553-564).
5.4.4.1 The use of logically unsound arguments

Thouless points out that arguments based on unsound logic use this method. He says:

A sound argument based on false premises does not prove the conclusion; we cannot infer from it whether the conclusion is true or false, as we can from a sound argument with true premises, it is a trick sometimes found in an argument for those who are trying to get accepted to the formal logical correctness of their argument. They may indeed wind up their very dubious argument with the triumphant assertion ‘And that’s logic’ (Thouless 1974:58).

The Holy Grail stories are based on legends that date back 800 years in Christian literature and a Grail story can be found in Homer’s The Odyssey, written in about 700 to 800 BC (Scott 2004:6), but this still does not, as The Authors purport, make the stories true. Scott quotes a literary motto:

Shroud the interesting in mystery, and make the insignificant parts clear (Scott 2004:6).

He adds that Emperor Julianus made a similar remark:

What appears to be credible in a myth is precisely what shows us the path to the truth. Therefore the more paradoxical and extraordinary the enigma, the more it seems to warn us not to trust the naked word, so that we suffer at the hands of the hidden truth. Only in this way, will there be found what is truly interesting (Scott 2004:6).

Holy Grail stories have never lost their popularity. They have been popularised in new forms including books, video games, and films. Grail stories are stories of the brave, pure and worthy searching and finding the ultimate prize. Whether that prize is to rescue the fair damsel in distress or finding the prize and securing it from the evil competitors, the excitement and moral justification always make these stories popular. These stories are popular and common in various forms, but this does make them a reference library to prove propositions.

Jesus’ bloodline is spiritual according to Romans 8:16-17: ‘The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.’
5.4.5  The Gospels are not a true reflection of the *Jesus Story*

All *The Authors* and antagonists repudiate a large part of the traditional *Jesus Story* as found in the canon of the New Testament. Their main objection is that the Catholic Church has manipulated the New Testament canon. *The Authors* claim that the New Testament contains only a small part of the texts written about Jesus available at the time. Donovan Joyce explains that the Church not only produced a new Bible under Constantine, but until the 1800’s it used torture to enforce the Catholic Church’s dogma. He writes:

In its early years, the church was a great scavenger of writings suitable for its purpose, irrespective of their origin... Bishops evolved strange concepts of the true nature of Jesus. Some saw Him as divine and the Son of God, while others recoiled from such a pagan and blasphemous view. Still others sat on the fence of indecision harvesting their splinters... Constantine convoked the Council of Nicaea\(^{188}\) in 325 AD and demanded that the assembled Bishops should end their squabbles and decide, once and for all who and what Jesus had been, and His true nature. Incredibly, a ballot was held and in a vote, which was unanimously, be it noted, it was decided that Jesus was true Divine and the son of God. Surely, he was the first God ever elected to the Seat of Heaven by the democratic process (Joyce 1972:34).

On the Church’s persecution, Joyce tells us:

In 1816, the use of torture to force heretics to confess was forbidden by the Pope. Eighteen years later - bowing to the inevitable - His Holiness disbanded the inquisition and, after some six hundred years, Europe could at last breathe clean air, untainted by the stench of burning corpses... Thinking men all over Europe began to wonder was the truth expounded by the Gospels literally the historic truth. Did it all really happen? As one by one, they got their hands on Whiston’s English translation of ‘The Jewish War’ by Flavius Josephus, they were suddenly transported to ancient Judea and, at last, received their first comprehension of those times and of the great social, political and religious ferments which had turned a country into a frenzied ant heap (Joyce 1972:28-29).

\(^{188}\) At the first council of Nicaea (325 AD), held in Alexandria, a dispute about the nature of Christ developed between a presbyter, Arius, and his bishop. Arius taught that Christ (the Logos) was a created being - not eternal and not of the same substance of God. His bishops differed. The Emperor Constantine intervened and convened a council of the whole church to settle the matter. About 300 bishops accepted this standard of faith:

‘We believe in one God, Father, Almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, as His only Son, that is, from the substance with the Father, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; who for us men and our salvation came down and was made flesh, became man, suffered, and rose on the third day; ascended into Heaven, and is coming to judge both the living and the dead. And we believe in the Holy Spirit’ (Kruger et al 1996:186).
Hugh Schonfield states that the Gospels were tailored to the needs of the congregations at the time, making the texts Christian manuals rather than true reflections of the originals. As he states in his book *The Passover Plot*:

The four Gospels on which we must largely depend for information about Jesus were the products of historical circumstances, which to an appreciable extent are ascertainable. On the showing of many Christian scholars who have devoted themselves to the study of these documents, there is no special inspiration in their either origin or composition. They are dramatisations with policy features; and what inspired them were the needs and conditions of particular communities of Christians in different lands (Schonfield 2005:201).

He explains that there may be a chance at some stage for the true and original texts to be found:

When we come to assess the character and worth of the Gospels, it is important to know that behind them is a considerable amount of material about Jesus, which fortunately, because of Roman oppression in Palestine between 45 and 55 AD, had been conveyed to other lands before the outbreak of the fatal Jewish revolt against Rome. This material as far as it was in documentary form is not available, though there is always the chance that some of it may be recovered. Consequently, while we can be convinced that Jesus really lived and that a good deal reported about Him is worthy of credence, we must accept that we are without direct access to the oldest and most reliable sources of information (Schonfield 2005:240).

Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln in their book *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* insist they do not want to discredit the Gospels (Baigent et al 1996:333), while citing them as not being the word of God and of questionable authority:

Given their discrepancies, the Gospels can only be accepted as highly questionable authority, and certainly not as definite. They do not represent the perfect word of any God; or, if they do, God’s words have been very liberally censored, edited, revised, glossed, and re-written by human hands (Baigent et al 1996:333).

After discrediting the Gospels, the authors state this is not their intention:

It was not our intent to discredit the Gospels. We sought only to winnow through them – to locate certain fragments of possible or probable truth and extract them from the matrix of embroidery surrounding them (Baigent et al 1996:346).
Barbara Thiering’s theories are the most removed from the understanding of the texts. She sees a different story hidden under the layers of the traditional text, which her Pesher method reveals:

The word ‘Pesher’ is used in the Old Testament to mean ‘interpretation of dreams’. A specially gifted person, a Joseph or a Daniel, could discover the hidden meaning of a dream that was not apparent to others. The meaning had been out into the dream by God; the interpreter only had to see it, drawing on his special knowledge (Thiering 1992:21).

Thiering goes on to explain:

But the Qumran Pesharists nevertheless offer us something of the greatest importance: their definition of scripture. Scripture is a mystery, a puzzle, something that meets the needs of a whole range of readers, from the simple believer to the intellectually sophisticated. It is well known that this kind of view was widely held in the Greek world. In the Diaspora, where Jews away from their homeland were in contact with Greek thought and culture, they were finding allegorical meanings in the Old Testament. But the scrolls give us for the first time, hidden historical meanings (Thiering 1992:22).

Thiering shows us that readers and scholars of the Bible have missed even Jesus’ alert to the readers and His followers that the scriptures contain more than just the superficial story as presented in the texts:

The Gospels quote Jesus as saying, “to you [His inner circle] is given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those outside everything is in parables.” The insiders, those who “ears to hear” will understand the mystery (Mk 4:9-12) (Thiering 1992:22).

Margaret Starbird also asserts that:

The official version of Christianity, which gradually evolved and articulated by church councils of the third and fourth centuries AD, was based on the consensus of the Christian elders present at the council, often with pressure from the reigning Roman emperor or other political factions. These councils voted on the articulation of doctrine such as the nature of the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, the virginity of Mary, the nature of the Godhead itself. They decided which scriptures from the Jewish canon were to be considered canonical by Christians and which Gospel and epistle of the early church were to be included in the Bible. These patriarchs decided which Gospels reflected the authentic teachings and which letters of Paul and that of the early church leaders should be included among the official scriptures (Starbird 1992:24).
Starbird also states:

Recent scholarship suggests that in all likelihood none of the book was actually written by an Apostle. In fact, a number of scholars consider it unlikely that any of the four writers of the Gospels ever knew the historical Jesus of Nazareth at all. In addition, there is evidence that portions of the four Gospels were deleted, added, and perhaps even censored over the centuries. It is hard, in light of these facts, to view the existing canon of scripture as the only possible version of the Word of God (Starbird 1992:25).

Dan Brown in his book *The Da Vinci Code* uses all *The Authors* above in coming to his conclusions of his ‘new truths’. According to Brown, the New Testament canon only emerged in the fourth century. The format and books were compiled and edited by people with political agendas to solidify their own power base; he goes on to say that the *Nag Hammadi Papyri* are the earliest Christian records. What is troubling is that according to his character Teabing, they do not match up with the Gospels in the Bible. “What I mean,” Teabing countered, “is that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false. As are the stories about the *Holy Grail*” (Brown 2004:234, 245, 318).

Teabing (...) nothing in Christianity is original. The pre-Christian god Mithras – called the son of god and the light of the world – was born December 25, died, was buried in a rock tomb, and then resurrected in three days. By the way, December 25 is also the birthday of Osiris, Adonis, and Dionysus. The newborn Krishna was presented with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Even Christianity’s weekly holy day was stolen from the pagan. Constantine shifted it to coincide with the pagan’s veneration day of the sun.’ He paused grinning, ‘to this day, most churchgoers attend services on Sunday morning with no idea that they are there on account of the pagan sun God’s weekly tribute – Sunday (Brown 2004:314).

Brown goes on to say:

Constantine ... held a famous ecumenical gathering known as the Council of Nicaea ... at this gathering,’ Teabing said, ‘many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon – the date of Easter, the role of the bishops, the administration of sacraments, and, of course, the divinity of Jesus.’ ... Until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet ... a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless, a mortal. ... Jesus’ establishment as the son of God was officially proposed and voted on by the council of Nicaea. ... Jesus divinity was the result of a vote... a relatively close vote at that,’ Teabing added’ Nonetheless, establishing Christ’s divinity was critical to the further unification of the Roman empire and to the new Vatican power base. By officially endorsing Jesus as the son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity who existed beyond the scope of the human world, an entity whose power was unchallengeable.
This not only precluded further pagan challenges to Christianity, but now the followers of Christ were able to redeem themselves only via the established sacred channel – the Roman Catholic Church (Brown 2004:316).

Brown, like many other people, believes that The Dead Sea Scrolls contain a true revelation about Jesus. As has previously been discussed, many believe that the delay in publishing the scrolls in their entirety is due to the fact that they contain information that will destroy the Christian Church. Brown goes on through Teabing to say:

‘Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible\(^{189}\), which omitted those Gospel that spoke of Christ’s human traits and embellished those Gospels that made him Godlike. The earlier Gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned... Fortunately for historians,’ Teabing said, ‘some of the Gospel managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950’s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert (Brown 2004:317).

5.4.5.1 The use of speculative argument suggestion by repeated affirmation In many instances, it is difficult to get accurate and complete knowledge of facts. It becomes tempting to suppose that thinking without the necessary facts will in itself supply one’s needs. When The Authors consider the truth of the Gospels, they use these two argument tricks: the argument that all A’s are B’s, and C is B, therefore, C is an A (Thouless 1974:59).

Just because the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD laid down Christian standards in festivals, text and ordinances of the church, this does not necessarily mean the Council was part of a

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\(^{189}\) Larry Hurtado is Professor of New Testament Language, Literature and Theology at The University of Edinburgh, Scotland. He is an expert of the Gospels (esp. the Gospel of Mark), the Apostle Paul, Early Christology, the Jewish Background of the New Testament and New Testament Textual Criticism. In his article Ungodly Errors (2006) he states: To clear up another piece of history on which The Da Vinci Code is completely unreliable, the New Testament was not created at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. The question wasn’t even on the council’s agenda. The formation of the New Testament had begun much earlier and continued on later than Nicaea. The familiar four Gospels, which scholars commonly regard as the earliest such texts, were treated as a completed set at least by 150 A.D. in many or likely most Christian circles. Still earlier, Paul’s letters were collected and circulated as scripture. In the early third century, the Christian scholar Origen listed the writings regarded by most Christians of his time as scripture, other writings that had largely been rejected, and others still under consideration. Among the texts regarded as scriptural, he included most of those that became part of the New Testament. It’s also important to emphasize that this question of which writings to treat as scripture, which to treat merely as edifying reading, and which to regard as heretical, was not decided at a single point by a church council, a pope, or a Roman emperor. Once again, in service of its conspiracy theory, The Da Vinci Code gets it wrong (https://www.slate.com/articles/life/faithbased/2006/05/ungodly_errors.html).
conspiracy or that Nicaea prescribed the canon for the New Testament. The Christian church is a faith that is founded on the canon contained in the New Testament. The suggestion that the new profile of Jesus - a mortal man who suffered from a delusional belief that He was the long-awaited Messiah, who married, divorced, had children, avoided death on the cross, and did not perform any miracles other than sleight of hand and mass hypnosis - will not compromise the Christian religion as its faith is not founded on any of these premises is not true.

Christianity is not just a lifestyle of doing good and loving one’s neighbour; this could be attributed to many philosophies and religions. It is also not true to write off Christianity as being based on a plagiarised pagan story, a mixture of pre-Christian gods Mithras, Krishna, and Isis. To say this would mean negating the entire New Testament as all its books point to a suffering Messiah, victorious Christ and the church.

Thouless states emotion is the spirit of speculation which leads us away to spinning of fanciful theories out of the minds of their authors (Thouless 1974:78).

5.5 CONCLUSION

After reading the books presented in this study and looking at the questions they pose to their readers, what are the conclusions? The New Testament text is a sacred text; one on which Christianity is based. The text provides the story and symbolism of a sacrificial Messiah and Saviour. Jesus, a Saviour, the Messiah who has inspired people to lay down their lives for others. Christianity is altruistic, where the needs of others should be put before one’s own, and the teaching of this man Jesus should be the centre of one’s life as a Christian.

The remedy for all cases of diversion is to bring the discussion back to the question from which it started. This is not in practice always an easiest thing to do, since an unscrupulous debater will then object that you are evading his arguments (Thouless 1974:30).
What does that mean in the case of the Gospels? All *The Authors* and theories considered use the Biblical text as their base. From this starting point, they try and apply new profiles of Jesus. The evidence of these is according to their claims in art and literature, not necessarily from the period of the texts, but rather from hundreds of years after His death. They are moving from modern thought and morality backwards into antiquity. An age of technology is not comfortable with a Messiah, miracles or theocracy at whatever level. As Karl Marx said in 1843: ‘Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people’ (McKinnon 2005:15-38). However, Karl Marx, as a Jew, had a limited knowledge of Christianity (his aim was not to start a religion but a system of society that would free people from the restraints of religious dogma and law).

Starbird in her foreword to her book *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar* makes an interesting observation. She says:

> Truth is not determined by human desire, nor by human decree. Truth is the harmonization of the human mind and heart with what is. It seems necessary to say these things because too often power, common opinion and tradition are taken-for-granted as synonyms for truth (Starbird 1993: xiii).

This statement is true and should be applied to her and the other author’s book.
CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS

DO ALL THE PIECES

MAKE UP A WHOLE
CHAPTER SIX
THE CONCLUSION

6.1 CONCLUSION

The statement I opened this study with was that this study was inspired by a comment by my sister made after she had read the Dan Brown’s *The Vinci Code*. “Dan Brown is right. The Bible is a conspiracy created and perpetuated by the Catholic Church.” Now, at the end of this study, was my sister right? Could a detective novel get her to reconsider the traditional Christian beliefs?

Much of the task for this study was trying to sift the fact from sensational fiction. Normally all one would do is to look at the credentials of the writers. In *The Jesus Story*, an academic qualification does not necessarily mean that information published is always sound or can in any way be proven. This was evident in most of the books used in the study. Academics, whom many believe are gatekeepers of knowledge and truth, may argue that they have a right to produce arguments that do not conform to traditional thinking. The other side of this argument could also be that *The Jesus Story* in the last twenty to fifty years has become a very lucrative genre.

*The Da Vinci Code*, according to [www.amazon.com/davincicode](http://www.amazon.com/davincicode), has sold over 85 million copies to become a media phenomenon, but more than that, it drew attention to some alternative theories of *The Jesus Story*. This detective novel has become the centre of a religious debate. Brown used four books written on the subject of an alternative theory to the traditional *Jesus Story* as reference to write *The Da Vinci Code*. These were *The Jesus Scroll, The Passover Plot, Jesus The Man, The Woman with the Alabaster Jar* and *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. At first glance, these books could be written off as popular novels, part of the enormous body of fictional work written on the subject of *The Jesus Story*, but they can’t. The public looks at these books as references to secrets from which they have been excluded.
The Authors cannot just be written off as novelists because, with the exception of Donovan Joyce, the author of The Jesus Scroll who was a radio playwright and author, and Dan Brown, the author of The Da Vinci Code and a conspiracy mystery writer, all the others are experts in their fields, and/or lecturers at universities. Hugh Schonfield, as part of The Dead Sea Scrolls team and an academic, in his book The Passover Plot tells us that “The scholars deplore that I have spilled the beans to the public. Several of them have said to me, ‘You ought to have kept this just among ourselves, you know’” (Schonfield 2005:15).

The books’ covers beckon the readers with statements such as ‘A time-bomb for Christianity’ (The Jesus Scroll),’ A New Interpretation from the Dead Sea Scrolls’ (Jesus the Man), and ‘The Shocking International No. 1 Best Seller Revised and updated with Explosive New Discoveries’ (The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail). As Hugh Schonfield says: “The traditional portraiture (of Jesus) no longer satisfies: it is too baffling in its apparent contradiction of the terms of our earthly existence.”

As can be seen in Chapter Two and Chapter Three of the study, the academics in this study have diverse views on The Jesus Story, each vying to produce their finite theory of the Messiah, Christ, and in many cases, His wife. If a simplistic view is taken of The Authors’ theories, the Gospel writings are not narratives of Jesus Christ of the first century AD, but rather Constantine’s version of Christianity from the third century AD, and are a result of the consensus of the Counsel of Nicaea. The question ‘Where does this place Christianity?’ must be asked. What the traditional Jesus Story antagonists accuse the Church of the third century AD of is exactly what they propose. The Jesus Seminar has put the authenticity of the Gospels to a vote and Barbara Thiering would like to rewrite the Gospels in light of her new discoveries and academic discussions, using the Pesher technique she devised on the contents and truth of the four Gospels. The other authors would like the gospels to accommodate Gnostic writings and mythology.

When the study started, I was convinced that finding Jesus in first century Israel would be a difficult challenge. To date it appears that Jesus did not write any texts. After this study, I would not say with absolute certainty that a text attributed to Jesus will not emerge at some stage. Even without texts attributed to Jesus of Nazareth, there is enough evidence to put
flesh onto the bones of this man from Galilee. Biblical Archaeology gave me the context and background of this man Jesus. Although Biblical Archaeology, like its artefacts, is often fragmented and subject to interpretation, in can and should be used to provide an understanding of the man called Jesus of Nazareth.

The Jesus tripping through the fields with a lamb under His arm, in snowy white robes and long coiffure hair, disappears as Biblical Archaeology reveals the man of the first century. A time of upheaval in Judea and Galilee, a country torn apart by politics, religion, greed, war, rebellion and poverty. Biblical Archaeological finds highlighted in the study along with many others fill in the mosaic. Often the interpretation denies the finer details and fabric of the man. Jesus, I believe, can only be studied as a Jew from the first century, not a contemporary Christian preacher or faith healer.

A question was posed at the beginning of this study – is there a role for Biblical Archaeology in The Jesus Story and hence The Jesus Story Industry? Could any of the statements and/or theories the Authors present be answered or validated by Biblical Archaeological evidence? The Jesus Story has become a multibillion Dollar industry that produces documentaries, films, books, artefacts, souvenirs, stationery and trinkets. The evidence of the Biblical Archaeology finds ground and add to the experience of the Gospels without which The Jesus Story is just a story.

In 2004 Dan Brown’s The Da Vinci Code, a modern-day Holy Grail story, arrested the public’s attention. It was a book that topped all the bestseller lists, and then went further to become a discussion document for religious institutions. The media blazed with reviews and discussions of the books of ‘truths’. The Catholic Church had conspired for centuries, according to Brown, to withhold the truth of the origins of the Church and The Jesus Story. The media was electrified by the questions about this man Jesus: Was He married? If He had married, did He have a child or children? Was His wife, Mary Magdalene, the true founder of the Church? Was this ‘God Gene’ the Holy Grail and was it the gene running through the leadership of the world today? These questions brought to the public’s attention the Knights Templar, the keepers of the Grail, and Mary Magdalene, Jesus’ wife, and most of all Jesus of Nazareth, the man rather than the deity.
Only once these questions had been posed could they be answered. Where was the evidence? *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* and *The Da Vinci Code* laid artworks, codes and religious architecture on the table, saying these pieces were the proof to their answers. Jesus was not the Son of God; in fact, His deity was decided by the Nicaea conference and voted on. Jesus the charismatic preacher, faith healer and prophet, left a bloodline, which is the *Holy Grail* - an artefact that has been sought after for 2,000 years. The evidence found in the books relies heavily on romantic mysteries leading the reader from Judea to France to the Illuminati.

The great story of mystery which, with the aid of Biblical Archaeology, can be clarified to some extent. The artefacts and buildings of the first century help to fill out the outline found in the Gospels. Like the mosaic half of the picture of Jesus’ face, Biblical Archaeology presents the mosaic tiles defining the features of the artwork.

Biblical Archaeology allows one to walk the journey of Jesus of Nazareth. Visit a first century house, walk into the storeroom, workshop and stable adjoining the simple dwelling, the roof through which the paralysed man was lowered can be visualised. It is not hard to watch in one’s mind’s eye the busy mother surrounded by her family’s pots, jugs, plates and bowls as she prepares a meal for her self-sufficient family.

The Galilee Boat, similar to the one used by Jesus’ disciples, pulled up on the shore urges one to join the man from Galilee as He sails out helping His friends to bring in the catch of the day, or to distance Himself from the crowd to preach His message.

Does Biblical Archaeology give us the picture of the old man on Masada writing a last will and testimony to his crucified son? Is a Jesus twice married, Jesus, eighty years of age, survivor of a crucifixion, taking part in a Roman siege feasible? A man being taken off the cross, His wounds cleansed and bandaged, meeting His disciples within three days of His torture on broken feet and fatal wound in His side? The public is asked to believe this profile based on legend art and conjecture.
Jesus the historical figure may be important to history, but not as important as Jesus Christ the Messiah is to a walk of faith. He does not give much as a carpenter in the first century, but rather as a personal saviour of billions of Christians. This study has shown that even though most people who declare they are Christians and own bibles (more than 5 billion sold according to the Guinness Book of Records) are more likely to have read the books and papers written to explain or rewrite *The Jesus Story*. Wars will still be fought in His name and great deeds accomplished because of His teachings. His story will see wars and peace, hatred and love, it will attract the attention of the media and the public as many try to prove or disprove the story. It will make and break reputations and fortunes but, in essence, it will be a simple, miraculous love-story.

The problem with unravelling a belief is that there is often nothing to replace the whole. Mary Magdalene as Jesus’ wife and rightful leader of the first church, even as a harlot, she is appealing to the overlooked, broken, and abused women. Her importance except as a forgiven woman has not travelled well through the millennia; the reinstatement of the sacred feminine need not be dependent on a married Messiah. The problem intensifies when *The Authors* extend the story to the Illuminate and world domination by a few. A secret society with all the wealth, power and knowledge lifted to even greater heights by sharing a gene pool with Jesus of Nazareth. This theory leads away from a Messiah for everyman, but rather leads to an exclusive Messianic empowering of the elite.

The headlines ‘Jesus was married’; ‘Jesus’ family tomb found’ and ‘Jesus survived crucifixion’ will always spark interest in *The Jesus Story*. These headlines seem to come and go and the content of ‘new’ media breaks of this ancient story seem never too far from the headlines, but they have no lasting on Christianity as a religion or on their audience.

What this study has shown me is that using a single source in forming an argument of dogma is not always that wise. Society for many years believed what the Catholic Church said about the Bible and not necessarily what was in the Bible. Then, as the Catholic Church showed itself to be fallible and the general public became more educated, this source of doctrine became tainted. Two extra paths grew out of this dissatisfaction: one of the antagonists and one of the fundamentalists. Education was obviously the key, but this has
proven to be an area not without problems. Academics like Barbara Thiering and Karen King produced works that have been criticised by peers and public alike, and both are recognised academics from reputable universities.

Is this a journey about the canonical text of the Gospels and the media? The media is obviously not reliable as its main purpose is to capture the public’s attention and snatch them away from one media or publication to another; money is the goal and purpose of the media. *The Jesus Industry* is one of the world’s most lucrative industries. Get the formula right and you reap its rich rewards; get it wrong and it can destroy your credibility, but regardless you will capture the public’s imagination.

Much of the general public are searching for the finite, and find debate and conjecture disturbing in relation with their faith and beliefs. Religion, especially Christianity, has during its long history endured criticism, revolution, and war. If it could not withstand criticism and conjecture, it would not to be referred to as faith, but rather is a fashionable fad.

Hugh Schonfield says:

> Wherever a people of God are found labouring in the cause of human brotherhood, love, and compassion, there the King of the Jews is enthroned. No other will ever come to be what He was and do what He did (Schonfield 2005:180-181).

Kahlil Gibran rejected the institution of the church while revering the writings of the New Testament. He sums up his take on the situation in a few words in his book *Sand and Foam* (2009:19). This take, in my opinion, sums up this study:

> Once every hundred years Jesus of Nazareth meets Jesus of the Christians in a garden among the hills of Lebanon, and they talk long. And each time Jesus of Nazareth goes away saying to Jesus of the Christian, “My friend, I fear we shall never, ever agree.”

Have any of the theorist proved their case or are they guilty of exactly what they accuse the traditionalists of doing - fabricating *The Jesus Story* to suit their own ends, and that in some cases being financial?
I would love to say a detective novel or popular media could not possibly shape a person’s religious dogma or doctrinal beliefs. However, after studying the evidence of the books, films, and social and electronic media’s articles, both fact and fiction, I cannot say that. The media more than ever is fashioning our belief systems and concepts of the world around us. For better or worse, the generations now and in the future will test all knowledge against cyber information, some of which may intentionally or unintentionally lead our world down paths which could lead humans away from enlightenment to a dark age of mythology and conjecture, rather than reality and tested theories. In that garden amongst the hills of Lebanon, my hope is that my sister and others like her will meet Jesus of Nazareth, listen to His words, and as the disciples did, leave all behind and follow Him.
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