

Review and Rebuttal

The Jesus Papers: Exposing the Greatest Cover-Up in History

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Introduction

The attack on Christianity and Jesus

A reexamination of the veracity and viability of the institutions of a society or culture is not a bad thing within itself but a political and societal movement with nihilistic tendencies - destroying things without any thought of what replaces them - has in times past led to the downfall of civilizations. As George Santayana stated, "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

Over the past several decades there has been controversy and discussion in the public forum - books, movies, the other national media, the education provided by all levels of schools and universities and the teaching of religious organizations - created by those who appear to wish to destroy the institutions that have been the foundation of Western Civilization. Those foundations include the family, marriage, religious beliefs and the rule of law.

The Miriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines "Nihilism" as:

1 a: a viewpoint that traditional values and beliefs are unfounded and that existence is senseless and useless **b:** a doctrine that denies any objective ground of truth and especially of moral truths

2 a: a doctrine or belief that conditions in the social organization are so bad as to make destruction desirable for its own sake independent of any constructive program or possibility

One outgrowth of this nihilism is a religious movement that seems to be intent on proving that Jesus of Nazareth was just an ordinary man and not divine at all and that the Bible was not created by the authors to whom it is attributed and passed down orally until it was committed to writing but rather wholly created by some shadowy group of religious figures who made it all up centuries after the events described.

Perhaps the most prominent symbol of this movement in the popular culture in the United States is seen on the cover of *Time* magazine in April 1966.



Playing off a widely quoted and sometimes misconstrued statement by German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (October 15, 1844 - August 25, 1900), the article from *Time* explored the beginning of this nihilistic era in contemporary religious thought.

God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?

—Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 125, tr. Walter Kaufmann

The article, as expected, created a lot of controversy and was followed over the next two decades with many articles pro and con as to the veracity of the Judaeo-Christian religions and the literature upon which they were based.

Some two hundred scholars and “professionally trained specialists” formed The Jesus Seminar in 1985 and published their most prominent work in 1993 as The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus. In the official introduction to this work the authors wrote:

***The Five Gospels* represents a dramatic exit from windowless studies and the beginning of a new venture for gospel scholarship. Leading scholars—Fellows of the Jesus Seminar—have decided to update and then make the legacy of two hundred years of research and debate a matter of public record. In the aftermath of the controversy over Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (published in 1859) and the ensuing Scopes "monkey" trial in 1925, American biblical scholarship retreated into the closet. The fundamentalist mentality generated a climate of inquisition that made honest scholarly judgments dangerous. Numerous biblical scholars were subjected to heresy trials and suffered the loss of academic posts. They learned it was safer to keep their critical judgments private. However, the intellectual ferment of the century soon reasserted itself in colleges, universities, and seminaries. By the end of World War II, critical scholars again quietly dominated the academic scene from one end of the continent to the other. Critical biblical**

scholarship was supported, of course, by other university disciplines, which wanted to ensure that dogmatic considerations not be permitted to intrude into scientific and historical research. The fundamentalists were forced, as a consequence, to found their own Bible colleges and seminaries in order to propagate their point of view. In launching new institutions, the fundamentalists even refused accommodation with the older, established church-related schools that dotted the land. One focal point of the raging controversies was who Jesus was and what he had said. http://www.westarinstitute.org/Jesus_Seminar/jesus_seminar.html

These two hundred scholars set about to determine - almost two thousand years after the books were written - *by their consensus* which of the recorded words of Jesus were actually uttered by Him.

Setting aside the obvious pompous and arrogant nature of such a venture, it remains obvious from this opening statement that anyone who gave credence to the previous two thousand years of examination and criticism of these scriptures was eliminated from that consensus.

The proof of this statement is apparent from the body of literature generated by The Jesus Seminar almost all of which serve little other purpose than to deny the divinity of Jesus and the veracity of the New Testament scriptures.

In the 1980's there appeared certain books that blended fact, fiction and speculation in an effort to destroy the credibility of Christianity itself by denying the divinity of Jesus and the story of His life as told in the Bible.

One of these books was Holy Blood - Holy Grail by the author of The Jesus Papers, Michael Baigent, co-written with Henry Lincoln and Richard Leigh.

In 2003 Dan Brown's massive bestseller, The DaVinci Code, and the subsequent movie of the same name produced in 2006 are derivative of Holy Blood - Holy Grail and posit basically the same theories as Baigent did in that 1980's book: that Jesus was married to Mary of Magdala (Mary Magdalene), fathered children whose descendents are still alive today and that a massive "cover up" has been accomplished by those who hold power in Christian religious organizations, especially the Catholic Church.

The Jesus Papers is in one sense a follow-up to the Grail tome, but adds a whole new series of "discoveries" Baigent has made since writing that book.

If one considers The Jesus Seminar and the many books associated with that movement, the multitude of scholarly books making claims that the Bible was not written in any sense by the supposed authors (those listed in the Bible), the many other books, articles, television shows and movies critical of all aspects of Christianity and follow those observations with the recent (2007) Discovery Channel broadcast of the James Cameron television documentary on the discovery of the tomb of Jesus (which supposedly contains the remains not only of Jesus but most of his family including his "wife" - Mary Magdalene, of course - and even his young son) it is

evident that today there is a full scale assault upon the very foundations of Christianity.

By co-authoring Holy Blood- Holy Grail and now writing The Jesus Papers, Michael Baigent has become famous, or perhaps infamous, for taking on the precepts of the Christian religion. He attracted a lot of attention for making claims in his latest book that some regard as outrageous but others consider "enlightening" by "freeing the reader from the shackles of traditional Christianity".

Most critics panned The Jesus Papers as in the review by Laura Miller in *Salon.com*.
<http://www.salon.com/books/review/2006/04/07/baigent/index.html>

Likewise, he's treated pretty harshly by Thomas L. Knapp from *blogcritics.org*.
<http://blogcritics.org/archives/2006/04/21/173029.php>

But Marie D. Jones on the web site *Curled Up With A Good Book* says:

Baigent offers plenty of solid research into the deeper mysteries surrounding Jesus, such as the clearly Egyptian influence of Christ's teachings, the possible whereabouts of the Messiah during the missing years, and the possibility that Jesus never died on the cross, but was part of a concerted effort to fool the public and the authorities into thinking he had. <http://www.curledup.com/jesuspap.htm>

What the range of reviews available shows is that even those critical of Baigent respect his writing ability while a substantial portion of them think this book is an important work offering important concepts to consider.

There will be some readers who take The Jesus Papers to be substantial and authoritative, just as did those who bought 40 million copies of The DaVinci Code and who have traveled throughout Europe to visit the places described in that book and the subsequent movie made from that writing and those who believe that the James Cameron documentary on the discovery of Jesus' tomb is authentic.

The panning by a majority of critics will not affect those who think Baigent is writing truth - it is only those who have thoroughly studied the Bible and secular history with open minds who will come to the truth of the matter: *something* of vast importance happened around 30 A.D. - something that totally altered world history - something that convinced thousands of people at that time of the veracity of the story told in the New Testament.

Baigent proclaims to all of those who believe in the divinity of Jesus, i.e. most Christians, that he has "irrefutable proof" that Jesus was not divine at all but was merely a very clever man who was not only something of a "mystic" but systematically manipulated the people of His day by taking advantage of Old Testament prophecies in order to make his claim to be the Messiah that he knew the Jews were expecting at that time.

Baigent makes the claim that he has not only seen but held in his hands ancient documents proving that Jesus was alive and writing letters to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem a few years after the time of His supposed crucifixion - proving that there was no resurrection and therefore that Jesus was not the son of God but only human - hence the title for his book - The Jesus Papers.

Baigent also makes much of purported documents that he never saw, but only heard about when writing Holy Blood - Holy Grail, that state that Jesus was alive in A. D. 45. He includes a description of that document first described in Grail in this book to give more credence to the newly discovered "Jesus Papers" and to his theories that Jesus did not die on the cross.

Baigent makes quite a number of other startling "revelations", which he claims to have unearthed in his investigative studies and dealings with what he describes as the oftentimes shady and underhanded black market style of wheeling and dealing that he says goes on in the archaeological underworld of antiquities.

He has "proof" that Jesus survived the cross, married Mary Magdalene, and had children by her, and that these children of Jesus later became the royalty of Europe and were related to the Knights Templar of medieval times. This whole movement - the Knights Templar and the royalty of most of Europe - began in southern France with Jesus' children as a result of Mary having fled the Middle East with Jesus' son or daughter to an established colony - a Jewish settlement that was located there.

Baigent's subtitle pretty much sums up the book: "Exposing the Greatest Cover-Up in History". The first paragraph from the inside flap of the cover sets the stage:

What if everything you think you know about Jesus is wrong? In *The Jesus Papers*, Michael Baigent reveals the truth about Jesus' life and crucifixion. Despite – or rather because of – all the celebration and veneration that have surrounded the figure of Jesus for centuries, Baigent asserts that Jesus and the circumstances leading to his death have been heavily mythologized.

On the back of the cover of the book, there are even more controversial questions like these:

- * **What if everything we have been told about the origins of Christianity is a lie?**
- * **What if a small group had always known the truth and had kept it hidden.... until now?**
- * **What if there was incontrovertible proof that Jesus Christ survived the crucifixion?**
- * **Where could Jesus have gone after the crucifixion?**
- * **Who could have aided and abetted Jesus and why?**
- * **What is the truth behind the creation of the New Testament?**
- * **Who is working to keep the truth buried and why?**

Even if one attributes these blurbs to the publisher's marketing people, they are no more flamboyant and controversial than the statements made on virtually every page of the book.

For instance, Baigent asks, "What if Jesus was a 'Zealot', part of a political movement of his day and it was this political activity that caused the Roman government to execute him rather than doing it at the urging of the Jewish religious leaders of that day as the Bible teaches?"

How can a Christian today answer these questions? Would Christianity survive if Baigent's answers to these questions were true? The whole faith of Christianity is based upon the resurrection of Jesus. As the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth almost 2,000 years ago:

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. NIV 1 Corinthians 15:12-14

The apostle Paul speaks the truth from almost 2,000 years ago: if Michael Baigent's answers are true, then the whole Bible - not just the New Testament but also the Old Testament itself - is false. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus were prophesied throughout the Old Testament, beginning with God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and later with Moses.

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. NIV Deuteronomy 18:15

The authors of the New Testament cite any number of Old Testament references to prophecies that foretold the coming of Jesus. Jesus, Himself, pointed to such prophecy.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." NIV Luke 4:16-21

So it is, that if what Baigent claims in The Jesus Papers is true, then both the Old and New Testaments are worthless or at least deserve to be relegated to the stacks of other books full of fables and folklore and not to be considered true in any sense.

Can we, as Christians, fail to respond to the challenge of searching for the real answers to Michael Baigent's questions? The authors of this review and commentary answer that question with a solid, resounding, "No!"

This article will attempt to answer some of Michael Baigent's questions and statements about Christianity, the writers of the New Testament and the divinity of Jesus. We will also point out that Michael Baigent and many of his peers - both journalists and Bible "scholars" - often fail to differentiate between information found in the Bible and the "traditions" of the Catholic Church and many of its offspring Protestant denominations. It is in this latter area - confusing the teaching and traditions of the Catholic Church (in which Michael Baigent was reared) with the truth written in God's word to mankind - the Holy Bible - that Baigent most often falls into error.

Make no mistake about it; Michael Baigent is a very able and well-educated investigative journalist and storyteller who weaves intricate tales, the likes of which - because he deals in grey areas - very few theologians or ministers of the established Christian denominations can match. Even worse, the leaders of these religious organizations either ignore books like The Jesus Papers or simply denounce them without having an adequate answer to them in terms of refuting the claims or, even more often, fail to read them at all. Even worse, many of those from the political left - theologically liberal - support his claims. This is especially true of the nihilists who are eager to destroy the foundations of Western Civilization.

Why? Because Baigent calls the Bible itself into question and claims in The Jesus Papers that any argument you might bring forward in its defense would be invalid because the Bible itself is suspect as a source of truth; that it is unreliable as a source of truth as a result of tampering or "doctoring" by previous men of religion. To Baigent this means the Catholic Church, primarily.

Beginning with that premise - that the Bible can be proved false and Christianity a huge hoax - Baigent negates the primary historical source of information that refutes his claims about Jesus and Christianity.

Instead, Baigent (and many other contemporary Bible "scholars") grant authenticity to almost any historical, pagan or secular source other than the Bible. A manuscript from some Greek, Roman or Egyptian who believed in multiple gods or who was an atheist and highly antagonistic to the religion of the Israelites or Christianity is granted immediate authenticity - especially, it seems, if its contents or premise supports their assertion that what is written in the Bible is false. The apocryphal books (those excluded from the recognized canon of the Bible) are treated as having the same or greater authenticity as the Bible.

But this proves to be the Achilles heel of Baigent's book - his acceptance of anything written by someone other than the authors of the Old and New Testament as authentic while denying the truth of the Bible. The authors of this article will show that even if Baigent held in his hands the very documents he calls "The Jesus Papers", which claim that Jesus did not die and was not resurrected, or a document claiming to prove Jesus was still alive in 45 A.D., such documents *prove* nothing. In fact the authors of the Bible foretold that such lies would be promulgated.

Only if one grants unlimited authenticity to secular or historical documents and denies authenticity to the Bible - the most widely copied and distributed, the most questioned, the most studied, the most criticized, the most debated, the most widely-read book the world has ever known - can one believe such documents contain truth because they directly contradict the teaching of the Bible.

It would take a book the size of Baigent's to answer every assertion he makes. This article will therefore cover only some claims that the authors of this rebuttal consider the most important (and most egregious) of Baigent's assertions that Christianity itself is a sham and a hoax.

The Jesus Papers contains many outrageous claims that should not go unanswered. It may surprise you that the authors of this rebuttal believe that in both Holy Blood-Holy Grail and The Jesus Papers, Baigent is actually doing a great service to the Christian community by bringing up such questions and making such claims. After all, if these claims cannot be refuted, then all that we Christians believe is worthless.

Christians can learn by studying, not only the Bible and other religious writings of the past and present, but also the writings of those who attempt to discredit both Jesus and the Bible using "scholarly" language and research to back their claims.

As the Psalmist long ago wrote:

Help, LORD, for the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men. Everyone lies to his neighbor; their flattering lips speak with deception. May the LORD cut off all flattering lips and every boastful tongue that says, "We will triumph with our tongues; we own our lips—who is our master?"
"Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the LORD. "I will protect them from those who malign them."
And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times. NIV Psalms 12:1-6

And as the proverb states:

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. NIV Proverbs 27:17

Therefore, the authors offer this article in rebuttal of The Jesus Papers.

Authors' note: Throughout this document quoted passages from the Bible, The Jesus Papers and other sources contain underlining, *italics* and **bold type** added by the authors for emphasis and to call special attention to certain words, phrases or sentences.

The Role of Mary Magdalene The Basis of Baigent's Claims about Jesus and Mary of Magdala

A little knowledge of the literary background of Michael Baigent is needed to understand the genesis of Holy Blood-Holy Grail and The Jesus Papers and Baigent's claims concerning the supposed intimate relationship between Jesus and Mary of Magdala - Mary Magdalene.

Baigent, Henry Lincoln and Richard Leigh wrote Holy Blood-Holy Grail in 1982. This book was influenced heavily and based in large part on books written earlier by Gérard de Sède and papers secreted into the French National Library by Pierre Plantard, who fabricated the history of a cult called the Priory of Sion,

In summary, the Grail authors argue that there is evidence that Jesus married Mary Magdalene, had one or more children, and that those children or their descendants emigrated to what is now southern France. Once there, they intermarried with the noble families of that land and eventually founded the Merovingian dynasty. Though that dynasty disintegrated in the 8th Century A.D., the family is championed and protected to this very day by a secret society called the Priory of Sion, according to the Grail authors but based primarily on the writings of Plantard and de Sède.

Critics of Holy Blood-Holy Grail like those in the independent investigations of *60 Minutes*, *Time Magazine*, and the BBC were quick to point out that both Grail and Sion were based on a complete fallacy.

According to *Wikipedia* - the online encyclopedia:

The "Priory of Sion", which was listed as "fact" in Holy Blood Holy Grail, never actually existed. Far from having a "history (that) spanned more than a millennium," the Priory was a hoax created by an anti-Semitic French pretender to France's throne, Pierre Plantard, a convicted con-man, in 1956. As part of his hoax, Plantard had planted two sets of forged mediaeval documents: one in the French National Library, and another in the 1967 book *Le Trésor Maudit de Rennes-le-Chateau*. The documents were taken as factual by the authors of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, which led to many of the false claims in the book.

In 2005, United Kingdom archaeologist Tony Robinson narrated a critical evaluation of the main arguments of Dan Brown (author of The Da Vinci Code) and those of Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln in a program called *The Real Da Vinci Code*, shown on BBC Channel 4 and repeated on The History Channel in the USA and elsewhere.

The program featured lengthy interviews with many of the main protagonists. Arnaud de Sède, son of Gérard de Sède, stated categorically that his father and Plantard had made up the existence of the *Prieuré de Sion* (Priory of Sion), and described the story as "piffle." The program concluded that, in the opinion of the presenter and researchers, the claims of Grail were based on little more than a series of guesses and almost no factual information at all.

The authors of Grail, including Baigent, have also backpedaled in subsequent interviews, claiming that they were only presenting a "hypothesis."

Even after the premise of Holy Blood-Holy Grail has been debunked and shown to be based on fallacies, Baigent picks up in The Jesus Papers where he left off in Grail and once again treats the Grail's claims as fact.

Mary Magdalene in The "Gospel" of Philip

The idea that Jesus might have married and had children was certainly not original with Baigent or his co-writers. Many theologians had previously suggested that premise from study of the Gospel of Philip.

A single manuscript of the Gospel of Philip, in Coptic, was found in the Nag Hammadi library, which was discovered near the town of Nag Hammadi In Egypt in 1945. It was a cache of documents secreted in a jar and buried in the Egyptian desert at the end of the fourth century, when Gnostic writings and pagan documents were being burned by the official church. Wesley W. Isenberg, the text's translator, places the date "perhaps as late as the 2nd half of the 3rd century" and places its probable origin in Syria due to its references to Syriac words and eastern baptismal practices as well as its ascetic outlook.

Even the apocryphal Gospel of Philip, upon which Baigent heavily relies, does not make the claim that Jesus and Mary were married. The passage referring to Mary Magdalene from which all the speculation comes is incomplete due to damage to the original manuscript and had to be "reconstructed" but to Baigent - in The Jesus Papers - the meaning is clear. As Baigent puts it:

The crucial text in the Gospel of Philip has certain words reconstructed – placed with brackets in the translation – but even without these, the close and very special relationship between the two is clear.

And the companion of [the savior was] Mary Magdalene. [Christ loved] her more than [all] the disciples, [and used to] kiss her [often] on her [mouth? face? cheek? head?]. The rest of [the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval].

But there is more here than an emotional or sexual relationship. If we look further into this Gospel and into others that also date from around the second century A.D. and have been similarly excluded by the Church, we find that Mary Magdalene had a special knowledge of Jesus's teaching – an insight, or understanding, not necessarily shared by the other disciples. The Gospel of Philip, after mentioning Jesus's close relationship with her, goes on to explain his relationship with the disciples.

They said to him "Why do you love her more than all of us?" The Savior 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."

Jesus is implying that Mary Magdalene is able to “see the light” whereas the disciples are not. She, in other words, understands fully what Jesus is teaching; the others do not. [The Jesus Papers P. 111-112]

Not only was there - according to Baigent - a special “emotional or sexual relationship” between Jesus and Mary Magdalene but she was far ahead of the men Jesus named as His ambassadors to the world (apostles) in understanding what Jesus taught.

To the authors of this review and (we would assert) to most people reading this passage from an apocryphal writing, it “proves” nothing of the sort. Most secular journalists - not to mention scholars - work with the rule that one should always view a single source of information with skepticism. Even the average newspaper news story has at least two sources to verify authenticity.

Where is Baigent’s “second source” for his assertions? Although he refers to other apocryphal writing to support the idea that Mary Magdalene may have been a teacher or an important figure in the early church, he cites no other source verifying any intimate relationship between Jesus and Mary of Magdala.

He is quite willing to ascribe authenticity to a manuscript that all Bible scholars agree was written “perhaps as late as the 2nd half of the 3rd century” - two hundred years after the events described - and yet is willing to deny that same authenticity to documents those same Bible scholars almost all agree were written at most within 60 years of the death of Jesus.

Baigent cites this passage to “prove” that the disciples of Jesus were “unhappy” about this “special” relationship that Mary had with Jesus because he was asked by them why he appeared to love her more than them. From this single source, he leaps to the conclusion that *Jesus had intercourse with Mary Magdalene, married her and fathered children with Mary.*

That Mary Magdalene was much closer to Jesus than the Bible depicts is a possibility but Baigent’s “human” logic in assuming sexual relations between the two is far from sound, being based just on the “kissing on the mouth” scenario.

It is not uncommon in many families throughout the world to greet relatives and family members and even friends with a kiss - even a kiss on the mouth. It is certain that this practice of greeting by a kiss on the cheek or mouth was common in Jesus’ day.

The apostle Paul wrote to the churches in Rome, Corinth and Thessalonica to “greet each other with a holy kiss” [Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 16:20; II Corinthians 13:12; I Thessalonians 5:26] and the apostle Peter suggested greeting each other with a “kiss of charity” [I Peter 5:14], while Judas betrayed Jesus with a “kiss” [Matthew 26:48 et al].

Should we infer sexual activity from all these “kisses”?

Baigent’s Claim of Mary Magdalene “Anointing” Jesus as “King”

Because of Baigent’s assertion of the special status of Mary Magdalene with Jesus and perhaps of her actual “leadership” among Jesus’ disciples, in The Jesus Papers he makes another astonishing claim about her relationship with Jesus - that she was the one who “anointed” Jesus as “king of the Jews” and claims to base this on the Bible account of that incident.

As we will show later, this view is not from the Bible but from the “tradition” of the Catholic Church - a mistake Baigent makes over and over again throughout all his writing.

In chapter seven, *Surviving the Crucifixion*, he devotes four pages (119-123) to claiming that the woman never said by the Bible to be Mary Magdalene “anointed” Jesus as “King of the Jews” by pouring some perfume on His head [Matthew 26:6-13] and that this was a ritual anointing of a “king” performed by a woman.

Baigent claims that this woman was Mary Magdalene. He states that John identifies the woman as “Mary of Bethany” (the sister of Lazarus) but relies on the Catholic tradition that “Mary of Bethany” was the same person as “Mary of Magdala” - Mary Magdalene. To see the full context and origin of this Catholic “tradition”, see the following URL from the official website of the Catholic Encyclopedia Online:
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09761a.htm>

Baigent writes:

The entire incident hints of a *shadowy* source of wealth behind those close to Jesus [p. 119].

Most modern readers of the Gospels have no great knowledge of the politics and practices of the time, and so for them this anointing seems incidental, a mark of respect perhaps, or as some church commentators have argued, an ornate ceremony for greeting an honored guest. Perhaps, but in the context such an explanation is hardly convincing. *For those of the first century A. D., the implication of this action would have been unmistakable: this was a royal anointing*. Traditionally, the priests and kings of Israel were anointed with expensive oil: with kings it was poured on the head as a symbolic wreath, while a priest’s head was anointed with a diagonal cross [p. 120].

This act by a woman close to Jesus *obviously* triggered official alarm. We may now be clear where the Gospel is obtuse: Matthew, *however hesitantly*, is indicating that Jesus was being recognized and proclaimed in his role as messiah. [p. 120]

But the method of his anointing raises another deep mystery, *as if there were not enough mystery about Jesus already*. One would expect such a ceremony to be performed by a group of top officials, perhaps priests, perhaps representatives of the Sanhedrin, whether the “official” one or perhaps some Zealot “alternative” one – if any Zealots were still talking to Jesus after the incident with the denarius. [p. 121]

The "incident with the denarius" [Matthew 22:15-22] is where Jesus, when asked whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Rome, told the Pharisees to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's". Baigent claims that Jesus was a political dissident, a member of the "Zealots", and that this statement would have infuriated them.

But no such person was present. Jesus was, according to Matthew's account, simply anointed by "a woman" – identified in John's Gospel (12:3) as Mary "of Bethany" – and the event took place in the home she shared with her sister and her brother Lazarus, who had recently been "raised from the dead." *In the history of royal or priestly confirmations by a male-dominated organization, this is unprecedented: the anointment ceremony presided over by a woman? A woman confirming and acclaiming Jesus as meshiha? Exactly what kind of ceremony was it that has left its brief, perhaps garbled, trace in the Gospels like a comet obscured by dark clouds?*

Furthermore, it is curious that a woman, Mary of Bethany, should perform this role rather than *the woman who was far more prominent in the circle of the disciples: Mary Magdalene*. Unless, of course, the two were the same – unless Mary of Bethany was, in fact, Mary Magdalene.

A distinction between the two *seemsto* be made in the New Testament, but there was certainly a *tradition* combining the two, *a tradition that was put into the faith during the sixth century by Pope Gregory I*. Evidence is lacking, however, and this identification is no longer maintained by the Vatican. *However, as we shall see, that is not the end of the matter.* [p. 121-122]

Here again, Baigent confuses the issue by equating the Bible with the teaching and traditions of the Catholic Church, which he cites above.

Baigent's almost breathless approach to this incident is typical of his theorizing throughout *The Jesus Papers*. He takes a small, straightforward incident that the Bible recounts and turns it into proof of some mystical "anointing" by a woman who was the "leader" of Jesus' followers. He posits some "political plot" by the dissident political group - the Zealots - of which Baigent supposes Jesus to be the leader. He claims that it was this political activity by Jesus, coupled by this anointing of a "king" by Mary Magdalene that caused the Romans to execute Him - though later claiming that Jesus didn't really die!

Read the incident as it is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew:

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." NIV Matthew 26:6-13

Where did Baigent come up with his theories about this matter? In the context of The Jesus Papers, it is necessary to support his other theory that Jesus was not killed at the request of the Jews, as the Bible shows clearly, but was done solely by the Roman government as a result of Jesus' political activities. He was not killed, according to Baigent, because the Jews accused Jesus of "blasphemy" - claiming to be the "son of God" - but because Jesus was stirring up the people of Palestine to revolt against the Roman Army.

In fact, a little research (that Baigent failed to do or misunderstood) will show that such "anointing" was a common practice in the time of Jesus - a time when Baigent claims:

Most modern readers of the Gospels have no great knowledge of the politics and practices of the time. [p. 120]

Perhaps Baigent is one of those ignorant of the "practices of the times". According to *Easton's Bible Dictionary*:

The practice of anointing with perfumed oil was common among the Hebrews. Anointing was also an act of hospitality [Luke 7:38, 46]. It was the custom of the Jews in like manner to anoint themselves with oil, as a means of refreshing or invigorating their bodies [Deuteronomy 28: 40; Ruth 3:3; 2 Sam. 14:2; Ps. 104:15, etc.]. This custom is continued among the Arabians to the present day. Oil was used also for medicinal purposes. It was applied to the sick, and also to wounds [Psalms 109:18; Isaiah 1:6; Mark 6:13; James 5:14]. The bodies of the dead were sometimes anointed [Mark 14:8; Luke 23:56].

In the account of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus offers yet another reason for the anointing:

While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." NIV Mark 14:3-9

Couple this with the recorded description by Matthew, and it's hard to understand why Baigent make so much of this incident common to the times. But, as one who reads The Jesus Papers will quickly come to understand, such distortion is necessary for Baigent to tie together all his theories and misunderstanding of the Bible and a result of his confusing of the scriptures with Catholic "traditions".

The Role of Mary Magdalene as Recorded in the Bible

The Bible does not support the claims of some special closeness between Jesus and Mary Magdalene though there is little doubt that she worshipped Jesus and He was kind to her and healed her. She appears to have been a devout disciple.

In Luke 8:1-2 she is mentioned as one of the women who "ministered to Him [Jesus] of their substance". In other words, they provided Jesus with money or supplies - though Jesus had His own personal source of money. He was a skilled artisan and had worked for many years (eighteen or more years) in His trade. This was plenty of time for Jesus to have saved funds to support Himself in His ministry.

He was not some poor, itinerant preacher as many contemporary religious organizations teach but owned a home in Capernaum [Mark 2:1]. The garment that He wore to His crucifixion was quite an expensive garment [John 19:23,24]. Jesus was a "carpenter" but the Greek word *tekton* - translated as carpenter - means "an artificer in stone, iron, and copper, as well as in wood" and is from the same root word from which we get the English word "technician" - meaning a highly trained and skilled person.

The Bible tells the story of Jesus casting out seven demons from Mary. She and several of these women, who earlier "had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities," later accompanied Jesus on his last journey to Jerusalem [Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:41; Luke 23:55] and were witnesses to the Crucifixion.

Mary remained at the crucifixion site until the body was taken down and laid in a tomb prepared for Joseph of Arimathea. In the early dawn of the first day of the week Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of James came to the sepulcher with sweet spices to anoint the body [Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2]. They found the sepulcher empty but saw the "vision of angels" [Matthew 28:5].

As the first witness to the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene went to tell Peter and John [John 20:1-2], and again immediately returned to the sepulcher. She remained there weeping at the door of the tomb. According to John she was the first person to see Jesus after the Resurrection though at first she did not recognize Him.

When He said her name, she recognized Him and cried, "*Rabboni*". She started to touch Him, but He told her not to touch Him.

"Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."' [John 20:17]

This is the last entry in the canonical Gospels and the rest of the New Testament regarding Mary of Magdala, who now returned to Jerusalem. She may have been

included in the group of women who joined the Apostles in the Upper Room in Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension [Acts 1:14] though she is not mentioned.

What if Jesus *Were* Married?

The Bible is almost silent on the personal part of Jesus' life from birth to the start of His ministry at age 30. There is only one mention of Jesus' childhood after His birth and before His ministry - that being the short description of Jesus conversing with the religious leaders in the temple at age 12 [Luke 2:41-51] - and that is covered only in Luke and not mentioned in the other gospels.

There would have been nothing wrong - no sin involved - if Jesus had married and had children. Sex within marriage is not a sin by Biblical standards and Jesus would have remained without sin even though married.

Catholic traditions claim that His mother remained a virgin for the rest of her life. There's no Biblical or common sense basis for this claim. Catholics who developed the traditions of that organization seem to have a real hang-up about sexual matters and such claims of virginity are possibly there in order for the prudish to fit their own sensibilities on the real Bible story. It is such traditions, when confused with the Bible that cause some to think Christianity is ridiculous and not reflective of real life.

Jesus was a man; His mother was a woman and they were both fully human. Jesus was "tempted in all points," [Hebrews 2:18; 4:15] just like we are though "without sin". There is no reason to believe that Mary was not the mother of other children after Jesus. The Bible mentions Jesus' "brothers and sisters" [Matthew 12:46; 13:55,56; Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19; John 2:12; 7:3,5,10; Acts 1:14; Galatians 1:19 et al]

Likewise, there is no reason to believe that Jesus was not sexually aware. Though He did not participate in fornication or adultery, certainly He experienced the most common temptation of all men and women.

But, there is a very good, simple, logical reason why Jesus would never have married and certainly why He would have had no children: those children would have been worshipped by His followers. This is effectively demonstrated by the claims made by Baigent and others in Holy Blood - Holy Grail and The Jesus Papers that Jesus' offspring became "royalty" in France and other places.

Jesus, had He had children, would have fathered human children who would have been normal human children, prone to sin and error like all people. For them to be assigned or to claim some special dispensation or to be worshipped would have been anathema to Jesus as well as to God, the Father. Logic and common sense suggest there was no marriage and no children to prevent such things happening.

Did Jesus Found His Church on a Man - Peter?

Michael Baigent joins his peers and, surprisingly, a great many Bible "scholars" who criticize Christianity, in misunderstanding the Bible and/or confusing Bible teaching with the traditions of the Catholic Church and its Protestant offspring with regard to the organization of the church that Jesus established.

Baigent is one of many thousands of former Catholics who have discovered the many errors in Catholic doctrine and left the fold. But instead of turning to the Bible or even churches that have corrected many of those errors, he apparently chose to discard all of Christianity.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Catholic interpretation (echoed by Baigent throughout his books, including The Jesus Papers) of the Bible teaching on the founding of Jesus' church and its organizational structure. This interpretation underlies the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church and underpins its reliance on church traditions and the teaching of the church hierarchy as "infallible" and having more weight for Catholics than the Bible itself.

Here is the official Catholic interpretation from the Catholic Encyclopedia on the Internet found at this URL: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11744a.htm>.

Later, meeting his brother. Simon, Andrew said, "We have found the Messiah", and brought him to Jesus, who, looking upon him, said: "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter". Already, at this first meeting, the Saviour foretold the change of Simon's name to Cephas (*Kephas*; Aramaic *Kipha*, rock), which is translated *Petros* (Lat., *Petrus*) a proof that Christ had already special views with regard to Simon.

Peter becomes Head of the Apostles. In especially solemn fashion Christ accentuated Peter's precedence among the Apostles, when, after Peter had recognized Him as the Messiah, He promised that he would be head of His flock. Jesus was then dwelling with His Apostles in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, engaged on His work of salvation. As Christ's coming agreed so little in power and glory with the expectations of the Messiah, many different views concerning Him were current. While journeying along with His Apostles, Jesus asks them: "Whom do men say that the Son of man is?" The Apostles answered: "Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets". Jesus said to them: "But whom do you say that I am?" Simon said: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God". And Jesus answering said to him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter [Kipha, a rock], and upon this rock [Kipha] I will build my church [ekklesian], and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven". Then he commanded his disciples, that they should tell no one that he was Jesus the Christ (Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21).

By the word "rock" the Saviour cannot have meant Himself, but only Peter, as is so much more apparent in Aramaic in which the same word (Kipha) is used for "Peter" and "rock". His statement then admits of but one explanation, namely, that He wishes to make Peter the head of the whole community of those who believed in Him as the true Messiah; that through this foundation (Peter) the Kingdom of Christ would be unconquerable; that the spiritual guidance of the faithful was placed in the hands of Peter, as the special representative of Christ.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume XI. Published 1911. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, February 1, 1911. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York

Baigent repeats this doctrine in The Jesus Papers and does a rather good job of explaining the Catholic doctrine and its importance to that religious organization.

According to the Gospel of Matthew (16:18), Peter was the rock upon which Christ's church was built. Ignoring the difficult question of why a good Jew would want to found a church, Vatican tradition insists that by this statement – not mentioned by any of the other gospel writers – Christ transferred to Peter the supreme right to rule over the Christian Church. All subsequent bishops of Rome have this right transferred to them specifically. Peter was, according to this tradition, the first bishop of Rome, and as we have noted, the bishop of Rome elected in A. D. 440, Pope Leo I, claimed that this heritage gave Rome the right to lead Christendom. This is crucial to the Vatican's assumption of spiritual validity. Without this claim – if it should be shown to be nonsense – the entire edifice of the Vatican and the papacy would crumble into dust. And further, built on this claim is the truly extraordinary assertion that the Catholic Church is the only path to truth and that the pope is Christ's – that is, God's – primary representative on earth. The historical Jesus would have been appalled at what was spawned in his name. (p. 110-111)

Baigent is correct in his conclusion that Jesus would have been "appalled at what was spawned in his name." In fact, this claim to power is in direct contradiction to the teaching of Jesus. As He told His apostles, including Peter (Jesus is speaking here of the religious leaders of His day):

"Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them `Rabbi.'

"But you are not to be called `Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth `father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called `teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. [NIV Matthew 23:5-12]

What religious organization, in direct contradiction to the teaching of Jesus, calls their priests "father" and calls the head of their organization "holy father"? Jesus specifically condemned such exalting of church leaders.

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." NIV Matthew 20:25-28

The scripture from Matthew concerning the founding of the church ("on Peter", the Catholics claim) is not repeated in any of the other three canonical gospels.

But the scripture concerning avoiding hierarchical structures in the church appears as the exact same quote in Mark 10:42-46 (Mark is considered the oldest of the gospels) and the same incident from a slightly different perspective is found in Luke:

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. NIV Luke 22:24-27

So what did Jesus really mean? Did He tell Peter that He would found His church on a man - Peter? Not so. While Catholic scholars have proven themselves erudite and forthcoming in many areas, this one appears to the authors of this review to be a *deliberate deception*, the end result of the distortion of Jesus' teaching that began within a few decades of His death and resurrection.

For instance, John wrote to his friend Gaius, who was an "elder" in a local congregation:

Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth. I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church. Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. NIV 3 John 1:5-11

This quotation is from the third letter from John included in the canon and while some dispute its authenticity, there is no reason to doubt the incident described with Diotrophes - one of assuming power over the congregation, "gossiping maliciously" about one of Jesus' apostles and putting people "out of the church". The Catholics today call this "excommunication" and many contemporary Protestant or independent Christian religious organizations call this "marking" or "disfellowshipping" and continue this practice to this day.

John called it "evil"!

To understand clearly what Jesus meant, one should study the scripture carefully and a Greek - English Lexicon can be used for further clarification.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." NIV Matthew 16:13-19

Jesus was actually making a rather clever "play on words". Jesus *gave* the name "Peter" to Simon, son of Jonah [Matthew 16:17; Mark 3:16] - likely because Simon (Peter) was so "hard-headed" and presumptuous as many other scriptures show.

Jesus said to Peter, "You are Peter" [Greek - *petros*, meaning "a piece of rock" or as we might say, a "pebble" or "small stone"] "and on this rock [Greek *petra*, which means a "primary, or very large stone" and which is sometimes translated as "bedrock"] I will build my church".

Was Jesus saying that He was going to build His church on Peter? Nonsense! A straightforward reading of this verse will show that the "bedrock" upon which Jesus was going to build His church was the statement made by Peter (the little stone): "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." That truth - that Jesus was the Christ (Greek - *Christos*, meaning "the anointed one", the promised "messiah") **and** the "Son of the living God" ***is*** the very "bedrock" of Christianity!

People who seek power over others within religious organizations often claim that these scriptures authorize them to make changes to the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles as recorded in the Bible and gives them power to determine who can enter the kingdom of heaven and general power over all the members of that organization. The Catholic Church today (along with many other religious organizations) teaches that the "traditions" of the church (the teaching of its popes and church "fathers") carry the same authority or even more authority than the Bible itself.

This is in direct contradiction to the teaching of Jesus, whose very words quoted above belie this interpretation.

What difference does this make? By giving such power into the hands of men it gives human beings the right to change God's laws! That does not make sense because if sinful men are given this authority, all of God's laws and the Bible itself become meaningless because ***men can change them.***

We know that *all* men are sinful and this applies even to the Apostles - "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." [NIV Romans 3:23] Peter denied even

knowing Jesus and all but one of those who later became Apostles deserted Jesus when He was arrested and killed. Paul, who wrote more books of the New Testament than any other, admitted that he remained sinful many long years after the death of Jesus [Romans 7:19-25].

Even the Apostles did not have the authority to change the New Covenant established at the death of Jesus, just as a human will cannot legally be changed by anyone after his death.

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. NIV Hebrews 9:15-17

Therefore we *know* that the apostles were not given the power to change the covenant established between Jesus and His church at His death and the laws and teaching contained in that covenant, and we are on a firm foundation when we claim that certain scriptures have been misunderstood because we know that no human being has the authority to change God's laws.

As we have shown, the whole doctrine of apostolic succession on which the hierarchies of the Catholic Church and most of its Protestant offspring base their hierarchical structure with their "fathers" having the right to change Bible doctrine and to decide who is a part of Jesus' church is a complete denial of the doctrines taught by Jesus and as Baigent says:

"Without this claim – if it should be shown to be nonsense – the entire edifice of the Vatican and the papacy would crumble into dust. And further, built on this claim is the truly extraordinary assertion that the Catholic Church is the only path to truth and that the pope is Christ's – that is, God's – primary representative on earth. The historical Jesus would have been appalled at what was spawned in his name. (p. 111)

In this matter, we totally agree with Michael Baigent!

The Divinity of Jesus

The Bible is definitely not silent on Jesus' divinity. In the very opening verses in the Gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. NIV John 1:1-4

Although some might interpret verse three as referring to God, the Father, the following verses in the book of John make clear what the author of this book believed and to whom he was referring.

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. NIV John 1:10-13

Could what is said in verse 12 apply to a mere human being who was not "divine" and not given such *authority* from the Father?

Verse 14 sums it up by saying the "Word" mentioned in verse one emptied himself of his divinity to *become flesh*.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. NIV John 1:14

Now, Baigent might claim - if he were to read these words in the book of John - that some of those words in verse 14 might have been "added" by the early "Catholic fathers", since he claims that many of the scriptures were "doctored". But even if that were the case all it would show is that whoever added those words had a very good understanding of the rest of New Testament teachings. Also, the writer of the "Gospel According to Saint John" - even if it wasn't John - also had an excellent grasp of the rest of New Testament teachings when he wrote these words in verse 18:

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. NIV John 1:18

The Apostle Paul Proclaimed the Divinity of Jesus

One of the points that Baigent stresses is that the apostle Paul's writings were so at odds with the rest of the disciples because he (Paul) obviously didn't know Jesus personally. He infers that the other 12 apostles took measures to get Paul away from their sphere of influence and were basically happy to send Paul "packing" off to parts unknown as his views were too radical and even contradictory to everything taught by them.

According to Baigent the apostle James was very much for the "Law" whereas Paul was for freedom from the Law and James was one who was partly responsible for sending Paul away to the Gentile regions and out of harm's way (to keep Paul from doing damage to what the other apostles taught).

In any case, Paul did not know Jesus, and unlike the Gospels, he did not show any great concern about what Jesus may have said or done. We get no information about Jesus from Paul, whose letters proclaim the gospel of, well, Paul: that the crucifixion and

resurrection of Jesus marked the beginning of a new age in the history of the world, the most immediate practical effect being the end of the Jewish law – quite a different stance to that taken by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). [p. 73-74]

But Paul never knew Jesus. He never even met him. And he didn't get on with the messianic Jewish community in Jerusalem. This is hardly surprising, given his previous leading role in the forces of persecution. The Jerusalem community didn't trust Paul. The Book of Acts coyly, but firmly, explains that he was quickly dispatched to Tarsus in southern Turkey. It suggests that this was for his own protection, though it is less clear about who exactly he needed protection from (Acts 9:30). The point is that Paul was removed from Judaea. The Zealots wanted him out of the way. In fact, there were plenty who would have happily arranged for Paul to be out of the way permanently. [p. 240]

A few quotes from Paul's writing show that Baigent is again relying on the traditions of the Catholic Church rather than the scriptures in forming his opinion that Paul thought the “crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus marked” “the end of the Jewish law”.

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

For in my inner being I delight in God's law; NIV Romans 7:7,12,14,22

What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one. Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. NIV Galatians 3:19-21,24

Understanding that Paul was a Jew, educated in Jerusalem “at the feet of Gamaliel” and was a “zealous” student of the Law [Acts 5:34; 22:3], how does one explain his conversion to Christianity? If he never met Jesus and knew nothing of Him, what could have changed his life and viewpoint so radically?

There are many, including the authors of this article, who believe that Paul would have at least observed and heard Jesus teaching in the temple in Jerusalem since Paul lived there at the time of Jesus' ministry. He may have met Jesus on several occasions and could well have been among those sent by the Pharisees to question Jesus [Matthew 12:38; 15:1; 16:1; 19:3; 22:35 et al]. We also believe that Jesus personally taught Paul in the desert for at least parts of the three years shortly after Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. That belief and part of the reason that Paul's writings are so important to Christianity is based on this scripture:

I want you to know, brothers that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days NIV Galatians 1:11-18.

Before Paul met with the other apostles in Jerusalem, he was preaching and teaching the gospel [Acts 13:16-52]. From whom did he gain this knowledge of the gospel? He only spent a few days with the disciples in Damascus - not enough time to learn enough to preach such a sermon as that in the scripture listed above with all its description of the death and resurrection of Jesus and Jesus' appearance afterward to the disciples.

Look at what Paul believed about the resurrection and the divinity of his Lord and Master and see if there is any incongruity with the book of John.

Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. NIV Romans 8:34

This indicates that Paul believed in a literal or actual death of Jesus and a resurrection and like the writer of John's gospel believed that Jesus is now currently residing with God, The Father. No contradiction here.

Did the apostle Paul believe Jesus to be the Son of God?

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man. He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? NIV Romans 8:3,32

Paul says much the same thing as John 1:12 quoted above in slightly different wording in this scripture:

Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. NIV Romans 8:14

Leaving no doubt that Paul believed in a literal, physical death and subsequent actual resurrection from that death, he wrote:

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. NIV Romans 6:4-5

Although the apostle Paul was using these scriptures to show the beautifully symbolic meaning of our baptism by immersion it shows he clearly knew that Jesus had died a physical death and was resurrected to the life He now enjoys as our High Priest on the right hand of the Father in heaven.

Paul wrote to the church in Philippi concerning the "nature" of Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped [held on to], but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. NIV Philippians 2:6-7

The *Living Bible* translates this passage even more clearly.

[Jesus Christ] who, though he was God, did not demand and cling to his rights as God, but laid aside his mighty power and glory, taking on the disguise of a slave and becoming like men. LB Philippians 2:6-7

The phrase "equality with God" is a powerful statement of Paul's belief in the divinity of Jesus.

In fact the apostle Paul was so passionate about the resurrection that when he came before King Agrippa he gave not only a magnificent account of how badly he (Paul) treated Christians and the vision that occurred on the road to Damascus but also such an impassioned witness of all the events that occurred to him that he almost persuaded the king to become a Christian there and then. The account of this amazing defense of Christianity is found in the book of Acts:

"Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."
Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!"
But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."
Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." NKJV Acts 26:22-28

Notice what Paul said in his defense to King Agrippa: "for this thing was not done in a corner." What an understatement! It was public knowledge in Jesus' day. Crowds of people were coming to Him constantly for teaching and healing and He was attracting a huge following and it didn't go unnoticed by anyone - scholars, philosophers, government leaders and least of all the king - and almost certainly was noticed by Paul. Jesus was the talk of every town he visited. Almost everyone knew of His trial and execution and it was almost certainly known about on a personal basis by Paul.

Did Jesus, Himself claim to be God?

As to Baigent's claim that Jesus never said he was the Son of God personally, He hardly needed to, because his teachings clearly showed that he taught He was from God the Father and represented Him - in fact part of His mission on earth was to reveal the Father. But almost everyone, especially the religious leaders of His day knew what He was claiming.

They're quoted as saying:

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him.
"He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" NIV Matthew 27:41-43

Among the more powerful statements made by Jesus declaring Himself to be the God of the Old Testament is this one recorded in the Gospel of John.

Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."
"You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"
"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"
At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds. NIV John 8:56-59

Jesus is thus making the claim that He was the one who spoke to Moses from the "burning bush".

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" NIV Exodus 3:14

Why did the Jews who heard Jesus make the statement in John 8:58 pick "up stones to stone him"? Because He was claiming to be God and that, to the Jews, was blasphemy and the Law required a blasphemer to be stoned.

On trial for His life and "under oath", Jesus again said clearly that He was the messiah, the Son of God.

But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. NIV Matthew 26:63-65

"Blasphemy" is defined by the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* as "the act of showing contempt or lack of reverence for God" or "the act of claiming the attributes of deity", i.e., claiming to be God. Clearly the latter is what the high priest was accusing Jesus of.

Baigent claims that Jesus never claimed to be God. It only shows that he has not given the same diligence to reading and understanding the Bible as he has to those "ancient texts" he likes to quote.

Did Jesus actually die on the stake?

In The Jesus Papers Baigent devotes 17 pages, all of chapter 7, to questioning whether Jesus actually died on the cross.

Consider this: If Jesus did not actually die on the cross and if He was not buried and resurrected three days later, the whole foundation of Christianity is destroyed. This is no trivial matter! It is a claim that negates the whole New Covenant that Jesus established at His death.

If The Jesus Papers were the only source for this questioning of whether Jesus actually died and was resurrected, it would mostly just provoke ridicule and condemnation as a wild theory and soon be forgotten. But the assault on Christianity continues as it has throughout the ages.

The recent James Cameron documentary on the finding of a tomb claimed to be that of Jesus and his "family" is only one more of many such media productions seeking to undermine Christian beliefs. And much of the major media in the United States and throughout Western Civilization seems eager to publicize each of these assaults, especially around the time of the Easter and Passover celebrations in Christianity and Judaism as well as other holy days or holidays.

It is common for such assaults (Baigent's book is no exception) to first deny that the scriptures are accurate. This discrediting is stated as fact and then assumptions are made on that false basis.

Baigent writes:

Certainly the New Testament is bad history. This is impossible to deny. The texts are inconsistent, incomplete, garbled and biased. It is possible to deconstruct the New Testament to the point where nothing remains but a heavily biased, dogmatic Christian mythology – in which case we could argue that *the account of Jesus supporting the payment of taxes to Caesar was simply a later addition* to reassure the mostly Greco-Roman Gentile converts to Christianity that there was nothing politically dangerous about the new faith, that it was never a threat to Roman power. (Page 123)

Yet, after making such an outrageous statement, Baigent equivocates and partially refutes his own statements. In the very next paragraph he writes:

On the other hand, if we accept that these stories contain some history, however garbled, we need to seek those facts that might have survived beneath the later mythological edifice. As mentioned earlier, the pagan historians themselves, in particular Tacitus and Pliny the Younger, while sparse in their information, do report – and by so doing confirm – that a Jewish messiah was crucified during the period when Pontius Pilate was prefect of Judaea, and further, that a religious movement, centered upon and named after this particular messiah, was in existence by the end of the first century A.D. Consequently, we must admit that there is some real history in the Gospels, but how much of it is there? How we judge the extent of the Gospel's truth ultimately depends upon the perspective we bring to them. (Page 123-124)

Baigent's perspective is evident. If the history comes from a "pagan" historian, it must be true! If it comes from the Bible, it must be suspect!

He speculates, on pages 125-126 that it was really the Jewish "Zealot" movement, incensed that Jesus "approved of paying taxes to Caesar" [Matthew 22:15-22], who set up Jesus to be killed by the Roman government.

Baigent does not exemplify the virtue of consistency – he had just claimed (see the quote from page 123 above) that this event was likely added later to reassure non-Jewish converts.

Then he claims that some "drug" was used to simulate Jesus' death so that he could be proclaimed dead and then later resuscitated by his co-conspirators.

Baigent offers no facts – not even any "pagan historical writing" – to support his thesis that Jesus did not actually die but states these things as "fact" – as a continuing search for the "truth". He does claim that a document exists – discovered during the time he was writing Holy Blood – Holy Grail – that claims Jesus was still alive in 45 A.D. Again it's a document from a "historical" or "secular" or "pagan" source and – in Baigent's mind – it must be true!

To explain how such a "conspiracy" could have come about, Baigent picks a few verses from the scriptures and describes them as clues to the real source of Jesus' training and the powerful effect brought about by this conspiracy. He claims it all started in Egypt.

Baigent's Descent Into "Mysticism" to Explain the Crucifixion and to Explain How The "Hoax" of Jesus' Death, Burial and Resurrection Came to Be.

At the end of the chapter claiming that Jesus did not actually die on the cross, Baigent offers the following as the foundation for claiming that Jesus received his training as a "mystic" in Egypt:

"My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus to Pontius Pilate during his interrogation (John 18:36). Jesus explained, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." This is another statement, like that of the advice to pay taxes, that would have been sure to enrage the hard-line Zealots.

But what does this statement really mean? And even more curiously, where did he learn this approach that so differed from that of his politically active colleagues and contemporaries?

Jesus cannot have learned his trade in Galilee, for Galilee was the Zealot heartland. The zealots would have controlled his training and learning, especially given the destiny they had planned for him. And even if, for some reason, he had, despite all, adopted such a mystical perspective and a political approach that accommodated Roman demands, then his Zealot teachers would have known of his change of heart and would have prevented him from entering Jerusalem as the prospective messiah.

All this suggests that Jesus was working to his own plan – one that not only involved his being anointed as messiah by a woman close to him but ensured that the Zealots would not suspect the truth until it was too late. We have to conclude that Jesus learned his trade elsewhere. (Page 131)

Is it necessary to point out here that Baigent gives Jesus no personal credit at all for his life, his knowledge and his mission? If Jesus grew up in Galilee (according to Baigent) he would have been controlled by the Zealots; since statements Jesus made do not agree with Baigent's beliefs about the political movement of the Zealots, then Jesus must have been controlled by someone else in another location.

Baigent continues:

A clue can be discerned in a very curious statement by Jesus reported in one of the Gospels. He says, "When thine eye is single, thy whole body is full of light." (Luke 11:34) [p. 132]

Baigent reverts to the King James translation here, possibly because it is particularly difficult to understand the "Old English" and he has lifted part of a verse (leaving out the first phrase, "The light of the body is the eye," a phrase similar to our contemporary adage, "The eyes are the window to the soul.") to attempt to show the "mystical" nature of this statement. When seen in context, reading the verses before and after the quote, it is a statement of Jesus' whole mission - to bring light (truth) to the world and there is nothing at all "mystical" about what He said.

"No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. Therefore, if your whole body is full

of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you." NIV Luke 11:33-36

The KJV translates the Greek word *haplous* as "single" but it means "folded together" or "clear" and the NIV translates this as "good" as does the New King James Version; The New Revised Standard Version translates this as "healthy".

See what Baigent makes of this simple statement:

This is pure mysticism of a type not otherwise found in the New Testament; nor is it found in the Zealot teachings we find expressed in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is unique in a Judaeen context. We are forced to conclude that Jesus had, as it were, been initiated somewhere else. He had had an experience of the Divine Light that mystics all through the ages have reported.

We need to understand this statement more fully, for it is crucial. It is the very pivot around which the truth about Jesus revolves. If we can understand this statement, then we can understand Jesus; we can understand why he broke with the Zealots, and why the Church has pushed lies about him ever since. **The Church had to perpetuate such lies, for clearly if it told the truth about Jesus, it would be finished.** It is really *that* important.

There was only one place where Jesus could have learned this approach. Only one place among the Jewish residents where these kinds of mystical concepts were discussed and taught, where the political obsessions current in Judaea were either absent or much muted. And that place was Egypt.

It is impossible to understand Jesus, his teaching, and the events of first-century Judaea without understanding the Jewish experience in Egypt. [p. 132]

From that one quotation (not clearly translated in today's English by the KJV), Baigent claims to reveal the "truth" about Jesus. Without it, we cannot "understand Jesus". We can understand (according to Baigent) why the Catholic Church, which was not formed for at least 300 years after Jesus died, reached back in history to form this conspiracy to "perpetuate lies" about Jesus because without those "lies", the Catholic Church would have been "finished"!

From that one statement, we can "know" that Jesus must have been controlled by those teachers of mysticism in Egypt!

Chapter 8, "Jesus In Egypt", makes the claim that Jesus spent the time from His early teen years until the beginning of His ministry at age 30 in Egypt being trained by the mystics who lived there. Of course, there is no foundation for this claim either in the Bible or in secular history - no hint, no statements, nothing whatsoever on which to base this claim other than Baigent's interpretation of this one statement made by Jesus to be "mystical" in nature.

See how Matthew records this event:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and

where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. [KJV - The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.] But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" NIV Matthew 6:19-23

Baigent's selective quoting of the scripture from Luke, using the language of the KJV to buttress his point, and claiming that the statement is "not otherwise found in the New Testament" when it is repeated exactly by Matthew, is inexplicable unless it is seen as a device used to claim that Jesus was a "mystic". Other translations of the Gospels' account of the statement just wouldn't do that.

He spends the next 91 pages of The Jesus Papers in exploring the mysticism of the religions of Egypt - chapters 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. While this is reasonably well researched and interestingly written, there is nothing at all to tie this mysticism to Jesus, other than Baigent's interpretation of that one scripture containing Jesus' statement.

He concludes this section by once again assigning almost "mystical" powers to the Catholic Church (not formed until more than 300 years after Jesus' death):

No wonder that the power brokers of Rome wanted to exclude knowledge of this sacred path as well as knowledge of these additional Gospels. Unfortunately – for them – they could do nothing about the Gospels that later became the New Testament except to control the interpretation of them – to control the "spin". The conceit, of course, is that some theologians with attitude presume to understand hundreds, perhaps a thousand or two years later, what the writers meant better than they did themselves. Why ever have we believed this for so long?

Although there were always scholars and commentators who saw through the spin, it is only in recent times that the manipulation and error have come so much to the fore in public. But so far, particularly in the ornate halls of the Vatican, nothing has changed. Power prefers spin to truth. (Pages 243-244)

The "Blockbuster" News - The Jesus Papers

Baigent's narrative of the time he actually touched the "Jesus Papers" comes late in the book. He speaks of a "friend" as being the source of these papers - a friend never named and described only as "an Israeli who had lived for many years in a large European city" and "a wealthy businessman". [p. 267]

These "Jesus Papers" were found by this "friend" in an excavation in a house in Old City in Jerusalem in 1961 among a "number of objects that allowed him to date the finds at **about A. D. 34**". How convenient! That date would be *after* the most commonly allowed years for Jesus' crucifixion.

The most accurate dating methods for such organic artifacts is radiocarbon dating. Baigent claims that his "friend" could date the papyrus to a specific year - A. D. 34. He does not specify how his friend could date something so accurately when there is no dating method that is so specific. Radiocarbon labs generally report an uncertainty as to the specific date, e.g., something dated to the year 3,000 would be state as "3000 ± 30BP" indicating a standard deviation of 30 radiocarbon years. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radiocarbon_dating

If Baigent were following standard archeological principles and not trying to buttress his claim that Jesus did not die by crucifixion, he would have said the papyrus could be dated from 4 A. D. to 64 A. D. Was this obfuscation deliberate?

Here is his narration:

The papyrus texts were two Aramaic letters written to the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin. The writer, my friend explained, called himself *bani meshiha* – the Messiah of the Children of Israel. I was stunned. Was I really hearing this? I listened intently to what my friend was saying. He continued to explain:

This figure, the Messiah of the Children of Israel, was defending himself against a charge made by the Sanhedrin – he had obviously been accused of calling himself "son of God" and had been challenged to defend himself against this charge. In the first letter, the messiah explained that what he meant was not that he was "God" but that the "Spirit of God" was in him – not that he was *physically* the son of God, but rather that he was spiritually an adopted son of God. And he added that everyone who felt similarly filled with the "spirit" was also a "son of God".

In other words, the messiah – who must be the teacher we know as Jesus – explicitly states in these letters that he is not divine – or at any rate, no more than anyone else. This, we can be sure, is something the Vatican would not like to be made public.

Having discovered these two papyrus letters, my friend showed them to the archaeologists Yigael Yadin and Nahman Avigad and asked their opinion of them. They both confirmed that these letters were genuine and important.

Unfortunately, they also told some Catholic scholars – very likely one or another of the members of the École Biblique, consultants to the Pontifical Biblical Commission – for word reached Pope John XXIII. The pope sent word back to the Israeli experts asking for these documents to be destroyed.

My friend refused to do this, but he was prepared to make a promise that they would not be published for twenty-five years. This was done.

At the time I met him the twenty-five years were long expired, but my friend still refused to release the two texts because he felt that releasing them would just cause problems between the Vatican and Israel and would inflame anti-Semitism. [p. 269-270]

Naturally I was desperate to see the Jesus papers for myself. I wanted to be certain that they truly existed, and I wanted to be able to say, "Yes. They exist. I have seen them." But my friend declined; he said that he was not prepared to show me at that time. But he had many other treasures that interested me greatly, and so, over the next few months, I traveled several times to his place to chat and to look at what he had recently purchased. Then one day, just as I arrived, he came out of his door putting on his coat.

"Come with me now," he said. "You have the time?"

Oh, I had the time all right.

We drove to another part of the city, where he led me to a large safe that was big enough to walk into and, like his cabinets, temperature and humidity-controlled. I followed him in. There he presented me with two framed papyrus documents covered with glass. Each was about eighteen inches long and nine inches high. I held them. These were the Jesus papers, the letters from Jesus to the Sanhedrin. They existed. I had them in my hands. I was silent as I fully enjoyed the moment.

But it was also one of those moments of supreme frustration when I wished above all that I might have a familiarity with ancient languages, like some experts I know. It's like holding a treasure chest but not having the key to open it. There was, regrettably, nothing I could do. Despite my many years of experience with manuscript material, I was overcome with the significance of what I held in my hands. I was awestruck and speechless as I thought of the changes in our history that these letters might cause were they to be released publicly. But at least they were safe. I handed them back to him. He smiled. We went to lunch.

I have no idea what we ate that day because I was so utterly consumed by the implications of what I had just seen. I wanted everyone to know about the papers. I wanted to stand in the street and cry out to every passerby that the "smoking gun" exists. I have seen it and held it!

It was as I suspected when our informant, the Rev. Dr. Douglas Bartlett, told us of a manuscript containing incontrovertible evidence that Jesus was still alive in A. D. 45. I had long suspected that this evidence most assuredly would come in the form of secular rather than biblical documents. It is the dry, matter-of-fact nature of such documents that make them so believable – as in the plain testimony of a man defending himself on a charge before a court. As I've asserted before, if we are ever to fully understand the Jesus of history, it is amid such mundane documents that we will get our greatest clues and insights. [p. 271-272]

He claims to have held the "Jesus Papers" in his hands but he could not *read* them and took no photographs or copies of them. And yet he was "awestruck" by holding these documents in his hands even though he has only his "friend's" word as to what they contain.

He does not question why such a "smoking gun" would not be divulged to the public for the certain great monetary gain and accompanying fame for anyone who did so but calmly and unquestioningly accepts this friend's claim that to do so would "cause trouble between Israel and the Vatican" and "inflame anti-Semitism".

Baigent apparently believes without question that these documents offer proof that Jesus was not divine and was still alive after the time He was supposedly crucified. But then, this is the same man who accepted the stories about the Priory of Sion as a valid and upon which he based Holy Blood - Holy Grail and the stories that he repeats in this book.

In addition to these "Jesus Papers", Baigent calls to mind the papers he'd been told about while researching and writing Holy Blood - Holy Grail. Several times in The Jesus Papers he mentions these papers that prove (to him) that Jesus was still alive in 45 A. D.

What is even more striking is that he learned of the contents of those papers first mentioned in Grail from a man *who had been told of them* about 40 years earlier -

and that man never actually *read* those documents. He had learned of them from another man who had supposedly read them about fifty years prior to that time!

Baigent writes:

One of the tasks of any study of history is to try to account for the facts. Unfortunately, in this case, there are no facts, at least none that can be held up as beyond criticism. We have no texts about Jesus, no Roman records, no family papers or inscriptions. All we have is the statement, reported secondhand by the Rev. Dr. Douglas William Guest Bartlett, that “Jesus was alive in the year A. D. 45” and that his survival was the result of help from “extreme zealots”.

The Rev. Bartlett heard this from his mentor, Canon Alfred Lilley, who had translated the original document and asserted this as a fact. Bartlett clearly considered the information to be accurate. Nevertheless, we are dealing with a manuscript that Lilley had read forty or more years earlier and was recalling late in his life. Bartlett was repeating the story another fifty or so years after that. We are right to wonder how accurate those recollections would be.

Mention of the “extreme zealots” sounds like an opinion rather than something within the document itself. To call any group “extreme” is to make a value judgment; who, in this case, is making that judgment? Canon Lilley, perhaps? Furthermore, as we have seen, Jesus would have been hated by the Zealots after he refused to support their opposition to the Roman taxes. So this statement is difficult to support and is, as I suggest, more likely an opinion.

But what is significant is the date, A. D. 45, when Jesus is said to have been still alive. This is valuable data because a date is not open to interpretation: A. D. 45 is easy to remember, even after many years, and it is a fact that remains true whatever spin might swirl about it. This is the only part of Bartlett’s letter that I can accept without dispute or suspicion that opinion has become confused with fact. [p. 263]

This whole statement would be laughable were it not obvious that Baigent is completely serious. Baigent states that the use of the “judgmental” term “extreme” calls that point into question but a secondhand memory of a date read 100 years ago is “a fact that remains true”!

This and other such flights of fancy call into question the believable content of this entire book and all of Baigent’s work.

Summary of The Jesus Papers

In the last two chapters of The Jesus Papers, Baigent attempts to put all his claims in context: Jesus was taught and controlled either by the Zealots and their political movement or by the mystics of Egypt who trained him; that Jesus never claimed to be divine; that He did not die on the cross but was given a drug that made Him appear to be dead; that He was later resuscitated and was still alive in 45 A.D; that Jesus wrote letters to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem a few years after the time of the crucifixion and denied that He had ever claimed to be the actual son of God; and that all of this could be proven if only certain documents from the early years and even documents found among the Dead Sea Scrolls had not been suppressed by the all-powerful Catholic Church. He further claims that Paul’s writings are so divergent from the rest of the New Testament because he never knew Jesus.

Of course, the underlying thesis of this book is that almost all of Christianity is a lie and that the Bible should be disregarded or discarded entirely and that we should rely on his knowledge of the "truth" about Jesus.

Michael Baigent does not deal with the many scriptures that do show Jesus' divinity in the Bible. His answer is to dismiss all of them by not only avoiding mentioning them but to claim that the Catholic hierarchy has so distorted the scriptures when they "canonized" them that they are largely inaccurate and unreliable as a source for believing in the divinity of our Saviour.

Such claims are easy to make but not as easy to prove as Michael Baigent would have us believe. Baigent puts all of his faith in "ancient writings" outside of the Bible as being accurate - how so? What makes other "ancient writings" any more accurate than the Bible? Does a document's antiquity and its antipathy to the Bible equate with accuracy?

There were many other people and groups present in the Palestine of Jesus' day, outside the established religious sects of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes, such as Greek and Jewish philosophers - not to mention Roman ones - who wouldn't have supported the story of the resurrection. No doubt many of these wrote documents or even an article or two for whatever passed for the equivalent of the local newspaper in those days.

Finding ancient writings from those days doesn't necessarily mean they are accurate or should be regarded as a "viable alternative" to the truth of the Bible and in no way prove the inaccuracy of the Bible.

As we mentioned earlier in this paper, Baigent is quite a good investigator and writer and would be an even better one if not for his propensity to give credence to any pagan, atheist or secular document over the Bible.

As to his claim that Jesus' death on the cross was faked and there was no resurrection, this is simply restating a lie concocted by the Jewish Sanhedrin and told by the Roman soldiers who witnessed the events preceding the resurrection but accepted bribes to repeat the lie given them by the Sanhedrin.

After the account of the appearance of an angel who rolled away the stone that was placed over the opening to Jesus' grave - which almost scared them to death - Matthew added this:

While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were

asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."
So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.
NIV Matthew 28:11-15

The Chief priests and Pharisees were so afraid that Jesus' disciples were going to "fake" a resurrection that they demanded Roman guards be put on Jesus' tomb. These leaders knew exactly what Jesus taught - because he openly taught for 3 1/2 years - but it's also clear that they did not believe him - they called him a "deceiver". Their concern was that Jesus' disciples would steal his body from the tomb and "fake" a resurrection by telling everyone that he had been resurrected, thereby giving credence to his claims of rising the third day - the only sign he said he would give an "evil and adulterous generation" that he was the Messiah [Matthew 12:38-40].

With Jesus death on the cross and the Roman guards there to assure that the disciples could not perpetrate the fraud of stealing Jesus' body and claiming resurrection, they thought their problems in dealing with Jesus and his unusual power with the people were over.

But the story the guards told caused these men to take a completely new stance and drove them to desperate measures in an effort to hang onto their positions of authority. This "emergency" meeting dissolved into a hastily prepared "cover story" that would explain the events described by the soldiers.

It's almost incredible to think that the actions of a group of Jewish religious leaders could filter down to our time now and affect us and possibly be responsible for influencing Baigent to write such a book as he has done - but this may be exactly what has happened.

Because of the lie concocted by these Jewish leaders, everything Baigent has claimed about the existence of papers claiming Jesus was alive in A.D. 45 may very well be true! We're speaking of the ones Baigent says the Rev. Dr. Douglas Bartlett *said* his mentor, Canon Alfred Lilley, had told him about some 40+ years before, that Lilley *claimed* to have unearthed and read some 50 years before that, which *prove* (according to Baigent) that Jesus did not die on the cross and was not resurrected.

The Bible does not say why the Roman guards didn't report directly back to Pilate - they were his soldiers. Perhaps they were confused by the events. Nor does the Bible say how long it took them to recover from their fright and panic.

What is abundantly clear is that all of the soldiers in question - no matter how many there were - suddenly became rich soldiers by taking a "large sum of money" to report to Pilate only what the chief priests and elders told them to say. Not only did the chief priests offer these soldiers vast sums of money but also backup and protection from their Roman boss, the Governor.

When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." NIV Matthew 28:12-14

Is this not - in effect - the same thing that the papers described by Canon Alfred Lilley said? Why would finding an ancient, written account of this lie be considered so momentous? The Bible itself tells the origin of the lie and recounts the whole story for all to read and understand. It's not blockbuster news nor is it even new!

The Jewish priests couldn't do anything about the two women that got away but they could do the only other thing that would defuse the situation and allow them to retain their power and hold over the religious world of their day – they bribed the only other (male) witnesses to the presence of a 'holy angel of God' pronouncing the validity of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection and basically confirmation of his entire ministry.

Do you realize what this “brilliant strategy” could have meant in terms of the spread of Christianity? It could have severely slowed the growth of it considerably by putting a huge stumbling block in the way of potential converts. Only two *women* spread the news of the angel's words – and what status did women have in those days? Who do you think would have been more believable – the established Jewish religious order and the word of professional Roman soldiers or the testimony of two women of a relatively new “sect” with radically different views to that of the established or traditional Jewish religion?

But it didn't work!

The reason that it didn't work was that too many people saw Jesus after His resurrection and the 12 good men He appointed as ambassadors of His Kingdom and to whom He gave great power did what He asked them to do - provide powerful witness to the truth of what really happened. The immense growth of Christianity and the fact that the whole story, including the description of the origin of the lie that He did not die and was not resurrected, demonstrates how successful they were in spreading the truth.

As the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. NIV 1 Corinthians 15:3-9

The irony is that Baigent has been pursuing evidence of a nearly-2,000-year-old lie perpetrated by Jewish priests in Biblical times and has so far based parts of two best sellers - Holy Blood - Holy Grail and The Jesus Papers on this lie.

What could Canon Alfred Lilley (the man who supposedly once possessed the ancient document— if it indeed existed — claiming Jesus did not die on the cross and was alive in 45 A.D.) have “discovered”? It would only be some form or a follow up to this very same lie told almost 2,000 years ago in written form! It could have been an almost 2,000-year-old scroll or parchment of a “report” to Pilate or a “confession” of one or more of those same Roman soldiers described in Matthew’s account of the incident stating that they “witnessed” the removal of Jesus’ body by his disciples!

So there is the possibility that such a document might still exist. Baigent has been chasing after this ancient lie to prove his theories without seeming to realize that he is only repeating the lie concocted by the Jewish religious authorities. Could the saying that was “commonly taught among the Jews” have been written down as well as taught by word of mouth? The answer is that it was most likely, and probably was written down at least in the soldiers’ reports to Pilate and perhaps in other venues and then repeated generation after generation right down to our day. There were likely “follow-up” stories told and written to continue to try to justify the previous lies told.

That is a joke on Baigent — played on him by ancient Jewish chief priests. The “punchline” is that he is repeating a lie recorded in the Bible to prove that the Bible is not authentic! This part of his books contain, in this sense, little more than repetition of a quote from the Bible written almost 2,000 years ago: “His disciples came and stole him away by night while we slept.”

Perspective - The Catholic “Cover Up”?

One thing remains a mystery to us concerning The Jesus Papers — “Exposing the Greatest Cover Up in History” — why Baigent lays all the blame for that cover up at the “door” of the Catholic Church?

Has the Catholic Church denied the truth of the resurrection? No! Have they denied the truth of the Crucifixion? No! Have they somehow “doctored” the scriptures to add or claim a “divinity” of our Saviour that just wasn’t there to begin with? No!

Baigent seems to think the Catholic Church has done exactly that and adds the accusation that they are hiding the “true knowledge” that the death and resurrection were in actuality “faked”. This would make not only the Catholic Church a sham, phony institution but also the rest of Christianity.

In order to pull off this subterfuge - doctoring the scriptures and hiding the truth - Baigent also claims the Catholic Church altered or doctored the scriptures and then "canonized" them in the New Testament. Did they really? Where's the proof of that?

Baigent doesn't even consider the possibility that the New Testament might have been "gathered together" — effectively "canonized" — by the early Christians themselves. In perspective, this is quite surprising because he is quite good at research.

There is a gap in written and oral history of the church from about 50 A. D. to about 200 A. D. during which time very little if anything is known. The thorough written history of the Catholic Church effectively begins with the Council of Nicaea in the 300's A.D. and only the writings of a few "church fathers" speak to earlier times. The formal Catholic "canon" reached its present state in approximately 367 A. D.

Almost all agree that the latest book of the New Testament canon was written in the last half of the first century. Many believe that all these books we call the New Testament were written before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 67 - 70 A. D. for the simple (logical) reason that none of these books specifically mentions that destruction, of which Jesus had prophesied [Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21].

The Catholic Church became a full blown hierarchy around 350 years after Jesus' death and gave its formal imprimatur to the "canon" in 367 A. D. What happened to the books of the New Testament and any other "Gospels" or writing of the apostles during that 150 - 300 year time span?

It is possible that the Gospels were transmitted orally for quite a long time before they were written down. Perhaps those who wrote these books did so at the request of the apostles rather than the apostles themselves doing the writing. Or perhaps the apostles never put anything in writing but their followers wrote down the versions they had heard from the original sources. Even if they were written down immediately by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John before 67 A. D., or by one of their disciples, how long would such documents survive without being copied? How many copies were made? To whom were they distributed and how widely were they distributed? The zeal with which the first century Christians spread the message of Jesus is obvious from the pages of the Bible and from secular history.

Are we to make the assumption that the early Christians did not distribute multiple copies of the gospels and letters written by the apostles of Jesus? Would they have not wanted to share the truth and teaching of Jesus as witnessed, expounded and taught by the apostles?

There would be, common sense asserts, not only hundreds but also maybe thousands of copies of these scriptures gathered together by enthusiastic early Christians who would have been eager to preserve these precious documents.

There may have been writings other than those in our present canon grouped with those in the canon at various times but only those that could be traced orally or in writing to the apostles (including Paul) would have credence.

Even one hundred years after the last apostle (likely John) died, the most the church leaders could have done would be to change the order of the New Testament books slightly and eliminate the ones without proper credentials or the ones that conflict with the body of writing they found already gathered. There would have been far too many copies for them to do much else.

Because it is integral to Baigent's assertion that the Catholics "doctored" the scriptures, we hereby state emphatically - using logic and common sense - that the Catholic Church could not possibly have doctored the New Testament other than in very small ways (cf. I John 5:7, which supports the Catholic doctrine of the "Holy Trinity" but which is acknowledged as a mistranslation of or addition to the original text).

Why? Because the writings of the eye witnesses to the story of Jesus *was* the church literature of that day and age! Every single Christian of those times who could read or write would have wanted their own accurate copies of every single writing of every author.

Even without the printing press there would have been far too many copies of the scriptures for the Catholic Church or anyone else to alter them significantly even if they wanted to. Even if someone or some organization tried to find and destroy every copy, some people would have hidden their copies and moved to other geographical areas taking their precious copies with them, and start the preservation process all over again.

Every scrap - every portion of the New Testament books found - agrees almost 100% with the scriptures we have today. There are spelling and grammar errors but these are corrected by other scrolls and codexes and no significant variation of the canon has ever been found.

The Catholic Church of 367 A. D. could not be sure that there might not be many other copies around that would have contradicted any doctoring or re-writing of already existing texts — they would have been immediately detected by anyone who possessed the originals or copies of the originals.

Do we really think that the ancient world of that day didn't have secular and religious scholars every bit as good as those of today who would be able to detect a fake book or text in much the same way as art dealers today are able (mostly) to detect fake art from the original or genuine article?

In the "big picture" of the history of God's church, we conclude that God's plan for getting the message of His New Covenant with all of humanity worked to perfection.

Through the apostles personally selected by Jesus (including Paul), God wrote the scriptures we call the New Testament. He used the monks and other scribes of what became the Catholic Church to pass down these scriptures through the "dark ages"; He used Martin Luther and the other "reformers" to call attention to the error that had crept in to the Catholic Church; He used the inventors of the printing presses to spread His word to everyone who could read or who could find someone to read the scriptures to them.

Today, He uses the Internet and people like Alan Ruth – the Webmaster at <http://www.biblestudy.org> to inform any of the billions of people on this planet of His word and to bring together people like the authors of this review - one in Australia and the other in the United States.

Not long before His death, Jesus prayed for these apostles who would write the scriptures we call the New Testament:

"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." NIV John 17:13-21

No one and nothing can thwart the will of God!

Apology and Explanation to Catholics

It has been necessary for us to point out a number of what we see as errors in Catholic traditions and teaching because so much of Baigent's theories are formed to combat those traditions and teaching. And yet we find that Baigent confuses the traditions and teaching with the actual scriptures and ends up denigrating both.

We wish to state clearly that we are not denigrating Catholics individually or even the religion itself - just pointing out that it is not exactly the same religion taught in the Bible. We know many honest, God-fearing Catholics who exhibit many of the traits espoused by Jesus. The Catholic Church itself - while involved in some pretty horrendous phases like the Inquisition - cannot be blamed for the actions of its leaders without also pointing out the many good things the organization has accomplished over the centuries of its existence.

No one and no human religious organization has a corner on the truth. All human religious organizations have experienced splits and schisms over the years as leaders have come and gone and none of them is without sin!

We say this because we do not want Catholic readers of this document to think we've singled them out as being in error. We'll just say, to close this apology section, that we find it somewhat amusing that the Catholic Church claims and is proven to have changed the weekly day of worship from the Sabbath (Saturday) to Sunday and that this is taken by Catholics to be a sign of the authority of the Church. The amusing part is that almost all of the Protestant Churches - most offshoots of the Catholic Church and which deny its authority - follow that lead without question.

We offer this small apology as a way of showing our sincerity in what was written above and although we sometimes see humour where others may not we are serious about that apology.

Conclusion

Books such as The Jesus Papers and Holy Blood, Holy Grail and video productions like James Cameron's recent "documentary" of the discovery of Jesus' family tomb serve an excellent purpose: they force Christians to check out what they believe and why they believe it. They ask important questions: Can we trust the traditions and teachings of the Catholic Church and other religious organizations? Is the Bible really true? Are the accounts of Jesus life, death and resurrection only the "mythology" concocted by those who were trying to protect their power and station in religious organizations?

The important thing is that each of us must reach conclusions based on fact, faith and common sense - not necessarily in that order. Perhaps some of those whose belief in Christianity is based on what others have told them or based on a superficial reading of the Bible will struggle with these questions — that is a good thing.

As the apostle Paul wrote almost 2,000 years ago:

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God." So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. NIV Romans 14:10-13

Baigent and many others are placing "stumbling blocks" in our way but those who are willing to consider what they write or show in their videos and then read the Bible and give thought to what they read there will find that these obstacles only make us stronger when they are overcome.

It's not appropriate for us to "judge" Michael Baigent, especially as to his motivation for writing books like Holy Blood - Holy Grail and The Jesus Papers. We don't know his heart nor do we know the circumstances of Michael's personal life and upbringing.

That he is confused about the truth and his own beliefs is an assessment that we can make with reasonable assurance. The Bible says:

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. [Proverbs 22:6].

This is speaking of God's way of life - the way of love.

Clearly, Baigent has departed from his upbringing and the reason for his departure from his Catholic faith seems fairly clear to the authors of this review. If the Catholic Church taught all of the truth and only the truth faithfully – without any error whatsoever and without relying on traditions developed by men – then it is highly unlikely that Baigent or any other individual with understanding would depart from it, especially if he has been shown and received nothing but unconditional love by his teachers.

The truth is that many people depart from all churches either voluntarily or forcibly - if they don't agree with their teachers - and so we have to ask, "Why?"

There is a parallel that can be drawn from a simple but ubiquitous example of what happens when children learn that their parents and other authority figures have misled them about something important to those children.

Look at how children react to the revelation either by other children or by their chagrined parents that Santa Claus does not exist. They've been taught that he is a "magical" figure capable of supernatural things - delivering toys to all the children in world; owning reindeer that can fly and pull a sled across the skies and granting the wishes of children.

It's easy to see the shock, disbelief and disillusionment in their faces when they learn that something they have been taught and grown up with all their young lives is false. This sometimes results in those disillusioned children not trusting completely anything else their parents or others teach them - of a religious nature or otherwise. Many well-meaning parents have set their children on the road to cynicism by pretending that Santa Claus is real.

We don't and can't know all the details, but it is our assessment that something of this order occurred to Baigent when he discovered that much of what he was taught by his Catholic parents and the authority figures in that church as being true and supposedly "unquestionable" was demonstrably false. The Jesus Papers is filled with examples of this disillusionment and cynicism.

In fact, with his being raised as a Catholic where the traditions and teachings of that church are given equal or greater weight than the scriptures, it's completely understandable that Baigent confuses the two. It's tragic that because the former can be proven untrue, he also discards the latter as false.

God is the master potter and we are the clay in His hands [Isaiah 64:8] but if that clay has become brittle or inflexible then it can't be worked with and molded into the design that the potter desires.

If we study of the scriptures with rigid and inflexible ideas or notions or preconceived dogma we should not expect to emerge with understanding because that inflexibility will distort everything we might otherwise learn.

That we believe is what has basically happened in Michael Baigent's case and what has prompted the series of books he has written. But that doesn't matter — we must deal with what Baigent has written — we cannot concern ourselves too much how he came to be that way.

We have given examples of how Baigent confuses the traditions of the Catholic Church with the teaching of the scriptures; we've shown how he gives authenticity to almost any historical or secular manuscript but denies that the scriptures themselves are true; we've shown how he extrapolates from the scriptures and the apocryphal manuscripts to support his theories that Jesus did not die, or was executed by the Roman government because of His political activities; or that Jesus was not resurrected and that the very church of God itself has lied and covered up this "new truth" - that Jesus was only a man, married, had children and perpetuated what has to be the greatest hoax in all of written history.

We've also shown how thin Baigent's research gets when it comes to determining the authenticity of non-Biblical ancient documents, especially those that fit his theories and/or contradict the Bible or the traditions of the Catholic Church.

We've used a lot of words ourselves, to give you the essence of Baigent's theories and the flaws we find in those theories according to our understanding and it is our hope that you find some profit from reading this article — as we did in writing it.

We felt compelled to defend our faith and the authenticity of the Bible and we find ourselves in some sense grateful to Michael Baigent and [The Jesus Papers](#) for the opportunity to test our faith and to increase our knowledge of the scriptures.

The confusion of the teaching of the Catholics and other human religious organizations with that of the Bible leads many to loss of faith as evidenced by Baigent. We earnestly hope and pray that Baigent and others sharing his confusion will turn to the Bible with "new eyes" and open hearts and learn to discern the

difference in the traditions and teaching of men and the truth that comes from the Bible.

The Jesus Papers represents a challenge to all of Christianity of which we are only a very small part. The authors represent the very smallest “spiritual unit” that exists — our Lord and Saviour said: “Wherever two or more are gathered together in my name, There I will be in the midst of them.” [Matthew 18:20] This is just one of the many promises made that we hold dear.

There comes a time in all our lives when we must stand up and be counted — this is one of those times for us. We just *could not* let this challenge to all of Christianity go unanswered!

We have given this review our best shot. We are not members of any church except God's spiritual one and therefore have no institutional axe to grind and no biased beliefs toward any man or woman. There are good men and women inside and outside all churches and we've given all of you our honest appraisal of Michael Baigent's The Jesus Papers.

Those who read the Bible with an open mind and continue to search for the truth will find it.

Clay Willis & Glenn Davies
Acworth, Georgia and Victoria, Australia
May 19, 2007

Author's Postscript: The authors of this article first met via e-mail and the Internet in December 2003 as a result of Glenn submitting a question to <http://www.biblestudy.org>, a web site at which Clay, along with a dozen or so other “mature” Christians, attempts to answer questions submitted to that site. One e-mail led to another and then another and the conversation has been going non-stop since then. In December 2006, Glenn read The Jesus Papers (a gift from his son) and decided to send a copy to Clay, which was received on December 26th. After finishing reading the book in January 2007, they began discussing whether anyone would respond to the book and whether such response would be adequate. After further discussion, they decided to review and rebut the book.

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