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THOMAS & THE HYMN OF THE PEARL

**The Atlanta International Center
for the
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ABSTRACT

The *Acts of Thomas*, which contains the *Hymn of the Soul/Pearl* and may well be an adaptation of an older work redesigned to provide "spy clues" pointing to the Shroud and its image(s). *The Hymn of the Pearl* is one of the earliest documents we have on Edessan Christianity. Possibly dating from as early as the first century A.D., this hymn is described by Ewa Kuryluk as a work which:

...assimilates into an ancient tradition the new theology of Jesus' **incarnation, resurrection** and **transfiguration** by transforming Christ into a soul. His dual nature rendered by his splitting into a humanlike anima - a son clothed in skin - and into a divine soul, an iconic dress of paradise. In the Syrian poem the essence of divinity resides in God's clothing - a heavenly double of the mortal human skin [Emphases added.]

Gregory Riley offers a variant interpretation:

The *Acts of Thomas*, while containing many "orthodox" interpolations and revisions, nevertheless presents a like picture, and closes with a scene similar to that in the Gospel Easter stories; yet in the scene of the *Acts*, the body of the twin brother of Jesus remains in the grave, while his soul ascends to heaven. This is supported, among other passages, by one of the most famous poems in Gnostic Christian literature, the *Hymn of the Pearl*, which describes the archetypal journey of the soul for the Thomas disciple: the soul descends into a body, and abandons it upon return to the heavenly realms. (Riley, 178-79.)

The first half of this monograph which is devoted to the significance of Thomas and the school bearing his name and their respective influence on the thought modes and writings from Edessa. Although a case can be made to support the traditional view that Thaddaeus/Addai was the original apostle who evangelized Edessa, this paper will consider the hypothesis that it was really Thomas who did so. Later, certain Docetic elements in the literature from the school associated with his name his name may have caused Thomas' initial role to be remanded to the more obscure Jude Thaddaeus/Addai.

The second half of this paper will explore the interrelationship of the biblical Thomas, that disciple's connection with the Shroud and the city of Edessa, the school in that region bearing his name, and a suggested interpretation of key passages in the *Hymn of the Soul/Pearl* which reveal both their potential dependence upon the Shroud and the latter's significance at an early date.

*When one reads Syriac writers of the golden age of Syriac literature (4th - 7th centuries), and in particular the poets of this period, one cannot fail to notice that two sets of imagery are especially beloved among these authors, firstly **letter imagery** (fittingly, in view of the earlier role of Aramaic as the chancery language of the Achaemenid empire), and secondly the **imagery of clothing**..... Indeed one can even speak...of a "**theology of clothing**", seeing that the entire span of salvation history can be expressed in terms of clothing imagery.¹ [Emphasis added.]*

Thomas - as portrayed in early legend

In his article on the second century *Gospel of Thomas*, Ron Cameron points out that the peculiar, redundant name Didymus Judas Thomas cited at the beginning of this work ("These are the secret sayings that the living Jesus spoke and Didymus Judas Thomas recorded") :

seems to be attested to only in the East where the shadowy Thomas (Mark 3:18, par.; John 14:5) or Thomas Didymus (John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2) was identified with Judas in the Syriac NT and called Judas Thomas (John 14:22).²

However, Western Christians may be surprised to learn that at one point Eusebius (early fourth century) attests to the significance of Thomas by listing his name first among the Savior's "holy apostles and disciples" - ahead of Andrew, ahead of John and even ahead of Peter (*H.E.* III.1.11).³ In Eastern tradition, it is the *Doctrine of Addai* (ca. 400) which tells us that it was Thomas who dispatched Jude Thaddaeus (Syr. Addai) to King Abgar of Edessa with the sacred linen bearing a likeness of Jesus [*i.e.* the Shroud]. And it is in the fourth century that Edessa became known as "the City of Thomas" and the repository of his bones.⁴ By the time of the tenth century's Court of Constantine Porphyrogenitus' "Story of the Image of Edessa" (ca. A.D. 945), In Chapter 6, Jesus Himself is alleged to have directed Thomas to approach the courier Ananias while the latter is attempting to draw His portrait and bring the "letter" which he is bearing from King Abgar of Edessa⁵ Thus does the later document combine the legends of both the *portrait* and the *letter*. [Note that the subsequent alleged "letter" or written reply by Jesus is often deemed an oral response put into writing by the messenger Ananias.]

The Connection between Thomas and Jude Thaddeus

In his "the Meaning and Origin of the Name >Judas Thomas," **J. J. Gunther** spells out his rationale for believing that **Judas of James (who is also both Thaddeus and Labbeus)** is the brother of the Lord who bears the "hypocoristic [*i.e.* "pet"] names **Thaddeus**, (from *tad* "breast") and **Labbeus** (from *leb* "heart")."⁶ Charlesworth reveals that the above identification has been obscured because of the intentional anonymity of the **Gospel of John** and the confusion of the Encraties, "who mixed Judas Thomas (Jesus brother) with Judas Didymus Thomas (supposedly Jesus' spiritual twin)."⁷

Again Helmut Koester points out that

the author of the (Coptic) *Gospel of Thomas* is named "The Twin (*Didymos*) Judas Thomas," and in the book of *Thomas the Contender* Jesus' words... are spoken to "Judas Thomas." This unique appellation of the apostle Thomas has parallels only in the tradition of the Osrhoene. In the *Acts of Thomas* he is introduced as *Ioudas Thomas ho kai* ["also known as"] *Didumos*. Also, in the catholic Abgar legend from Edessa, Thomas is called **Iudas ho kai Thomas**. Nowhere in the New Testament is there any connection of the names of Judas and Thomas; but in John 14:22, instead of "Judas, not Iscariot," sy/c reads "Judas Thomas" (sy/s reads "Thomas"). For control we can refer to the non-Edessene *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, in which the writer is called "Thomas, the Israelite (Philosopher)." Thus it is obvious that **this tradition of "Judas Thomas (the Twin) "is peculiar to early Christianity in the Osrhoene (i.e. a region whose most prominent city was Edessa).**⁸ [Emphasis added.]

Judah Segal is also helpful at this juncture in noting that:

Addai, however, was unknown to the Greek church. His identification with Thaddaeus, one of the Twelve Apostles - though Eusebius, perhaps by way of compromise, calls him one of the Seventy - was easy enough. The Thaddaeus of Matt. 10: 3 and Mark 3 :18 is called Judas brother of James in Luke 6 :16 and Acts 1:13 (cf. John 14: 22); he is probably the brother of James, author of the Epistle of Judas and brother of Jesus. The name Judas was readily associated with Addai, of which, indeed, it may be a cognate form.⁹

Now it seems likely that there were three stages in the evolution of the identity of the primary apostle to whom is ascribed the conversion of Edessa to Christianity. The Addai whom Syriac-speaking Edessans regarded as their Apostle may well have been an historical personage. A missionary of this name is held - and there is no reason to gainsay the view that this account has a basis of fact - to have brought Christianity to Adiabene at the end of the first or early in the second century. He may have introduced it to Edessa. However, it is possible that documentary evidence can be interpreted to point to Thomas as the original evangelist of the "Blessed City."

1. Thomas as the initial missionary to Edessa? : Contrary to the generally accepted reconstruction of Christianity 's arrival in Edessa via Jude Thaddeus (Addai) who had been dispatched on this mission by Thomas the Apostle, a closer examination of the relevant facts may possibly lead to a radical reconstruction of sindonological "history" as accepted by the majority of today 's believers in the Shroud 's authenticity. Consider the following:

According to Koester:

....to gain a clear picture of the events in the third century seems impossible. Thus, it is only in the fourth century that the orthodox church began to amount to anything. Here we find the first significant bishop (Kune) and theologian (Ephrem). Only now does this group manage to propagate its own story of apostolic succession: **not Thomas, but Thaddaeus is said to have been the real apostle of Edessa, while Thomas (who cannot be suppressed completely) stayed in Jerusalem** (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 1. 13). The completely unhistorical Abgar legend, which tries to connect Thaddaeus's mission to Edessa with the time and person of the toparch Abgar V (A.D. 13-50), succeeded in supporting the claims of orthodoxy upon Edessa, even for many modern scholars. **One century later, when the brutal methods of Bishop Rabbula [d. 435 or 436] succeeded in "converting" legions of heretics, orthodoxy was so well established that later versions of the Abgar legend completely dropped Edessa's original apostle, Judas Thomas (cf. the [Syriac] *Acts of Thaddaeus*¹⁰ [Emphasis and double underlining added.][“perhaps the source of the account of Abgar in Eusebius...completed probably toward the end of the third century”].¹¹**

Thus it would seem that Rabula completed the revision of history which maintained Edessa's claim to its apostolic foundation while simultaneously avoiding the Gnostic drift of the School of Thomas named after its original founder.

Again, note that in the "Story of the Image of Edessa" - a narrative commissioned at the court of Constantine Porphyrogenitus ca. A.D. 945 and based on various historical accounts of how the *acheiropoietos* of Christ was sent to Abgar - it is Thomas whom Jesus has bring Ananais to Him after the latter had attempted to draw His portrait. Jesus then gives His alleged letter to Abgar to Ananias for delivery (Wilson. 1979. pgs. 272 & 278).

Add to all of the above (as we will note in No. 3 below) that Thomas' bones are alleged to have been transferred to Edessa from the site of his martyrdom by a merchant from "India" ca. A.D. 371. In time the body of *the Apostle of the East* (as Thomas was known) became one of Edessa's most venerated relics, second only to the "portrait" and "Letter of Jesus to Abgar." Records show that the city's Monophysites in voicing complaints about Bishop Hiba to the Byzantine Governor in 449 averred that Edessa was glorious in faith – "first because of the blessing with which it was blessed by the Creator of heaven and earth..., next because it was worthy of the treasure of the bones of the *Apostle Thomas* who was *the first to acknowledge that our Saviour is the Lord God...*"¹² [*Italic added.*] In fact, Edessa became known as "the City of Thomas" - a strange appellation indeed if Jude Thaddaeus (Addai) were its original apostolic link..

Still more difficult to explain is a copy of the letter of Jesus discovered at Kirk Mağara near Edessa which "refers to 'Thaddaeus that is Thomas' ". On epigraphic grounds this inscription is to be ascribed to the fifth century, but it may be older."¹³ Now "if" this source

from Kirk Mağara truly is from the fifth century - or even as early as the fourth - why in the world would the Orthodox, wanting to disassociate Edessa from the Gnosticism of the School of Thomas, use a phrase like "Thaddaeus that is Thomas" which reinforces "Thomas" as that city's initial evangelist?

On the contrary, both of the last two examples would appear to reinforce the "persistence of memory" among Edessa's Christians that Thomas's connection with them dated from apostolic times rather than from a fourth century setting when his body was returned from India.

Finally, there are two more intriguing clues pointing to the primacy of Thomas over Addai. First, it is remarkable that the Spanish pilgrim Egeria (ca. A.D. 378-389 or 394+) does not mention the names Thaddaeus or Addai at all, although she reports in detail about the alleged correspondence between Jesus and King Abgar. She treats Thomas as the apostle and evangelist of Edessa, noting that:

"...immediately after our arrival there, we hastened to the church and the shrine of Saint Thomas."¹⁴

Second, even as late as the 5th c. Isaac of Antioch, Syriac poet, native of Amid who passed his early years in Edessa - though a pupil of *St. Ephraim (c. 306-73) who himself mentions Addai - writes scathingly of the reverence shown at Edessa to the shrine of St. Thomas..

. . . Crooked are his voices, they make us wander from the holy place. Greatly we despise the Church, truly we scorn its oaths. The man who swears and adjures by the Church-we have no respect for his oath. One seeks to swear by the Church, but he that adjures him has no respect for it. `If by the shrine of the Apostle Thomas you swear not' [he cries] `I shall not hold [your oath] true.' **[Thomas] they hold dearer than his Lord, because the demons have mourned [by his tomb]. If one swears by the Church -it is in haste; by the Apostle's shrine he lingers.**¹⁵ [Emphasis and double underlining added.]

Thus, even as late as the 5th c. Isaac of Antioch still testifies to the significance of Thomas --not Addai--in the minds of the Edessa's populace.

***Note:** Ephraim (var. Ephrem) appears in a lower panel of the c.950 icon at St.Catherine's which depicts Constantine Porphyrogenitus as King Abgar holding the *mandylion*. Though relatively late, this icon interestingly enough also contains a depiction of Jude Thaddaeus/Addai mentioned by Ephraim in his writings. Could it be that this icon reveals the fact that Ephraim was known to have some connection with the Image of Edessa/"portrait"/Shroud prior to the composition of the Doctrine of Addai which is dated c. 400?

2. Jude ("The Obscure") Thaddaeus (Addai), the less prominent Apostle, added to the story: It is the 4th c. *Doctrine of Addai* which first tells us that it was Thomas who

dispatched Jude Thaddaeus (Addai) with the Shroud to King Abgar [*H.E. I.XIII*]. But note that Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History III.1*, in citing that very document, states that when the disciples were deciding which parts of world they would evangelize, **“Parthia was allotted to Thomas.”** It is though still in the fourth century even when the Orthodox Church attempts to replace Thomas with the shadowy Jude Thaddaeus/Addai, the primacy of Thomas and his initial mission to Parthia intrudes itself in this attempt to rewrite history.

Adding to the suspicion that Addai is a late addition to initial story of Edessa's conversion are the variety and disparity of the accounts of his death. Strangely enough only the *Doctrine of Addai* has him dying a "peaceful death" in Edessa itself. It is this fourth century document alone which claims that "after ten or eleven years of preaching, converting and even building a church, 'Addaeus' was stricken by disease and died in Edessa on Thursday, May 14th of an unspecified year."¹⁶

All of the other accounts describe Jude Thaddaeus/Addai as a martyr and victim of a violent death in a locale other than Parthia. The three best known versions of his death are as follows:

A. "According to Western tradition, ...[Thaddaeus] joined with Simon in preaching the gospel in *Persia*, where both were martyred....In art Jude's usual emblem is *a club, the instrument of his death*..."¹⁷ [*Italic added.*]

B. In the *Armenian tradition*, "Jude's life expands beyond Edessa to a place where from a reportorial, if not scholarly, perspective, an unworthy kinsman of Abgar had him *stoned to death*."¹⁸ [*Italic added.*]

C. Jacobus de Voragine 13th. c. apocryphal account relates a fanciful account based "on the improbably named Pseudo-Abdias, the presumed first bishop of Babylon and author of the *Apostolic Memoir*, has Jude "*waylaid and murdered in the desert with a battle-ax*." Writing this apocryphal account in the sixth century, Pseudo-Abdias attributes the murders of both Simon and Jude, to two priest-magicians, Zaroës and Arfaxat, whom the Apostle Matthew had already driven out of Ethiopia"¹⁹ [*Italic added.*]

3. Thaddaeus and Thomas's roles melded into single story: We know that Clement of Alexandria (ca. 160-215) states in his *Hypotyposis* that both "*Thaddaeus et Iudas in Britio* [v. 1. *Beruto*] *Edessenorum*."²⁰ Since we know that this version was a Latin translation of Clement's original Greek, it seems likely that the translation was made after Thomas' body was returned from "India" [A.D. 371] and re-buried within the city's walls [A.D. 394]. As Clement died in 215, it is obvious that the original *Hypotyposes* in Greek could not have known of Thomas' body in Edessa. However, it is possible that, writing at this late date, the translator of the original text added names [*i.e. Thaddaeus et Iudas in Britio* [v. 1. *Beruto*] *Edessenorum*] being aware of the *Doctrine of Addai's* and that work's role in replacing Thomas and by proclaiming Jude Thaddaeus as the founder

of Christianity in that city. Thus Clement is altered and used to canonize this pseudo event.

If one acknowledges that the original text of the *Hypotyposes* does contain Addai's burial in the *Birta* built by Abgar VIII in 205 - long before he has replaced Thomas as the apostle who brought Christianity to Edessa - then another rationale must be sought for Addai's inclusion in that text.

.The Shroud and its influence upon the Thomas Literature (School of Thomas?)

As a precondition for evaluating this monograph and at the insistence of my friend and historical mentor Prof. Daniel C. Scavone, the reader is asked to consider the following:

1. The necessity for utter secrecy surrounding the imaged cloth by those who kept and guarded it during its early days. Theodora Bates Cogswell goes straight to the point when she asks:

Can we wonder that the Apostles and their companions anxiously hid away from the world at large this record of their Lord? Is it strange that they made no open mention of it in the widely circulated Gospels and Epistles which were sure to fall under hostile eyes?...Had the Shroud been openly mentioned in the Acts or Epistles as if it were still existing, undoubtedly the Roman authorities would have instituted a determined hunt for it... [Through the years] references to the Shroud have been overlooked by translators who were not on the alert for such material.²¹

2. In the course of analyzing the *Hymn of the Pearl* we will encounter such phrases as "**The [splendid robe] became like me, as my reflection in a mirror**"; **two in distinction** And again **one in single form** (*Hymn* 76-78); "...the **likeness** of the **king of kings** was <completely> embroidered **all over it**" (82). The reader is asked to ponder what these seemingly *strange expressions* might mean, if they do NOT have reference to the Turin Shroud and the deeper theological meaning of the image(s) which it bears? [**Emphasis added.**]

How well titled is Gregory Riley's *Resurrection Reconsidered*, though I am quite certain that he never "considered" it to be re-evaluated in terms of the Shroud being a *bona fide* and essential component of the Fourth Gospel's purposefully composed narrative of the "Doubting Thomas." I will quote a significant portion of Riley's "Summary and Conclusions" precisely because it makes a strong case for just such a possible interpretation:

Finally, the picture of the Doubting Thomas in John is shown to correspond well with the Thomas literature as a whole. All three of the major Thomas documents preserved, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Book of Thomas* and the *Acts of Thomas* are consistent in their denigration of the body, and their denial of physical resurrection... The *Gospel of Thomas*

declares that no one will be able to raise his body. The *Book of Thomas* pronounces woe upon, and assigns to eternal punishment, those who hold future hope for the body. The *Acts of Thomas*, while containing many "orthodox" interpolations and revisions, nevertheless presents a like picture, and closes with a similar scene similar to that in the Gospel Easter stories; yet in the scene **in the Acts the body of the twin brother of Jesus remains in the grave, while his soul ascends to heaven. This is supported, among other passages, by one of the most famous poems in Gnostic Christian literature, the Hymn of the Pearl, which describes the archetypal journey of the soul for the Thomas disciple: the soul descends into a body, and abandons it upon return to the heavenly realms.**²² [Emphasis and italic added.]

A clue that just such an adaptation took place *may* be hinted at in the works of **Ephraem Syrus** (var. **Ephraim of Syria**, ca. A.D. 306-373). This ecclesiastical writer and biblical exegete settled at Edessa where most of his extant works were written. Is it merely by chance that it is in this very "City of the Shroud" that Ephraem develops a scheme in which a particular piece of Jesus' clothing was designated for each stage of His stay on earth? Is it sheer coincidence that Ephraem - living in the very locale of both the text of the *Hymn* and the iconic textile - developed such a "system" uninfluenced by either or both of these contributing factors? The conclusion is that such a confluence of factors seems highly unlikely!

However, as previously noted, Clement of Alexandria in his *Hypotyposes* had claimed that both "*Thaddaeus [i.e. Addai] et Iudas [i.e. Thomas] in Britio Edessenorum.*" were buried in "Britio [v. l. *Beruto*] Edessenorum." (*loc cit.* f.n. 19) If Clement is to be trusted and we accept the fact that Abgar VIII (177-212) built the *Birta* or citadel palace according to an entry under year 205 in the Archives of Edessa.²³ As part of the overall strategy to disassociate Edessa's apostolic foundation by Thomas and the taint of Gnosticism attached to works from his school, this monarch who may well have honored the "obscure" and non-controversial apostle Jude Thaddaeus/Addai by interring his body in the *Birta*.

It is clear that tremendous confusion accompanied all this because both disciples acquired the name "Jude/Judas. Now it could be let out that Thaddaeus was exhumed from someplace (See p. 6 above for confusion regarding manner and site of Thaddaeus/Addai's death) and buried in the *Birta*. This "event/legend" was then "canonized" by Clement in his *Hypotyposes*. Thus Thaddaeus had to wait till 205 to be buried in the *Birta*, --"a late-breaking story"-- when Clement was writing. Maybe he was buried there and maybe not Remember that, Thomas' body was not initially returned to Edessa until 371 and could not possibly have been buried in the *Birta* in the original text penned by Clement.

Of particular interest here is that Manichaeism was born in the third century. As noted above, Manes (c. 215-275)] - or "Mani(chaeus)" according to the usual Western form of his name - had assistants named Addai and Thomas. Given that Mani was not born until three years after the end of Abgar VIII's reign, logic would seem to indicate that his choice of names derived from those already established beginning with the Apostle Thomas and with Jesus and his

"portrait 's" (i.e. the Shroud 's) ability to "heal". Thus Manes selected the names after they had long been associated with the Portrait of Edessa renowned for its healing role in the Abgar legend and not the other way around as suggested by Drijvers.²⁴

While the Manichees may have known this *Hymn* and adapted it to meet their specific needs, we must not forget that Edessa was already a Christian city under the reign of Abgar VIII (177-212) at least three years prior to Mani 's birth in A.D. 215. The clear implication is that Edessa 's Christian community would have been the first - if not its original composers - to note that the *Hymn* was ideally suited for their own interpretation. This would have been especially true for those aware of the imaged Shroud and even more significantly precisely because they lived in the Blessed City, the repository of that linen portrait.

The following key factors make the potential connection of the Shroud with the "Thomas" and the gospel bearing his name quite intriguing:

1. Edessa, the home of King Abgar of Shroud legend fame. The 9th c. *Chronicle of Edessa* it states "in the year 205 Abgar built the *Birta* (castle) in his town."²⁵ St. Jude's tomb had been pointed out in Edessa certainly from the 3rd c. Edessa is also the city where the bones of Thomas were preserved as relics since the end of the fourth century. Ron Cameron goes on to note that "scholars have generally accepted it as the place of composition of the text"²⁶ [*Ibid.*]

The core problem for advocates of the "Blessed City 's" initial conversion by Thomas lies in the alleged early burial of both Addai and Abgar before the return of Thomas ' body in 371. Clement 's *Hypotyposes* (*Loc. cit.*, p. 7 above) would at first seem to negate any such possibility. However,

The church severely damaged by the great flood of 201 was a converted pagan temple. As it was substantial enough both to meet the needs of the growing community at this time and to be mentioned by the Chronicler, tradition (101) erred in attributing its erection in apostolic times to "Addai." In the same church ("inside the middle door between the men and the women") the Doctrine of Addai has Bishop Aggai being buried after his martyrdom. If the church were the burial site of earlier bishops, and if some older graves were discovered or moved after the flood, **quite possibly a body purporting to be Addai's** was removed and placed in the royal mausoleum as a token of his eternal bond with the monarchy. Or else his alleged body was then brought to Edessa from Southern Syria. The *Doctrine of Addai* tells of his burial in a great sepulchre in which the ancestors of Abgar were laid.²⁷ [**Emphasis added.**]

2. Scholars are in agreement that in the East a major and one of the most influential early Christian schools – "the School of Thomas" - was centered in

Edessa though not limited to that city. It was this school which composed and issued such writings as the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Minor Acts of Thomas*, the "*Book of Thomas*," the *Consummation of Thomas*, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and the *Martyrdom of Thomas* (but not the *Apocalypse of Thomas*). Another early work bearing the name of Thomas is the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, which is preserved only in the *Nag Hammadi Codices*. In the *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* are traditions pertaining and stressing the importance of Thomas; and these too may also reflect the interest in Thomas and his school. According to Charlesworth, there is no doubt that **in Syria Thomas was deemed "the" most important of the disciples and "these traditions spread very early to the East (especially India) and to the West (especially Egypt).**"²⁸ [Emphasis added.]

3. "The *Acts of Thomas* [*i.e.* the source of the *Hymn of the Pearl*] shows several pre-Manichaean [Manes (c. 215-275)] - or "Mani(chaeus)"] elements, *i.e.*, it stands halfway between Christian and Manichaean Gnosis. Together with other Acts of Apostles, it was then used by the Manichaeans. It can be affirmed now with respect to the *Gospel of Thomas* found at Nag Hammadi "that it is identical with the document of the same title which our ancient authorities number among the Manichaean Scriptures." There can be little doubt that the *Gospel of Thomas* came to the Manichaeans from Edessa rather than from Egypt."²⁹

While no definitive conclusions can be drawn from the above certifying Thomas as the primary Apostle responsible for Edessa 's conversion, the fact that the *Hymn of the Pearl* is included in the *Acts of Thomas* and was written and/or adapted to reveal the significance of the Shroud once again points to its prominence in the thinking of its composer and the strong possibility of its initially having been brought to Edessa by Thomas rather than Addai.

The Hymn of the Pear/Soul & Its Linkage to the Shroud

Symbolism:

Before considering the date and place of origin of this classic, note that in its very title - like the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* (2nd-3rd c.) described below - the use of the image of the *pearl* (*i.e.* or a *white* "stone" where "white" stands for both victory and joy) conceivably could have been developed on the basis of the symbolism used in a passage like Rev 2:17. According to George Ferguson the pearl is both a symbol of salvation and elsewhere in Matt. 7:6 it represents the word of God.³⁰ Matthew was written in the last third of the first century while Revelation was composed in its present form toward the end of the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96). Thus both texts would have been available to Edessa 's earliest Christian community.

Symbolism:

Before considering the date and place of origin of this classic, note that in its very title - like the use of the image of the *pearl* (*i.e.* or a *white* "stone" where "white" stands for both victory and joy) and, according to George Ferguson, is both a symbol of salvation and elsewhere in **Matt. 7:6** it represents the word of God. The following three examples help to make the point:

A. The symbolism of the *pearl* was incorporated by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215) in Nicetas' *Catena on Matthew* [re. **Matt. 13:46**] where Jesus is compared to a *pearl* in the following fragment:

A *pearl*, and that pellucid and of purest ray, is Jesus, whom of the lightning flash of Divinity the Virgin bore. For as the *pearl*, produced in flesh and the oyster-shell and moisture, appears to be a body moist and transparent, full of light and spirit; so also God the Word, incarnate, is intellectual light, sending His rays, through a body luminous and moist.³¹ [*Italic added.*]

As a stone, George Ferguson reminds us that:

Rocks are a symbol of the Lord. This meaning is [initially] derived from the story of Moses, who smote the rock from which burst forth to refresh his people. Christ is often referred to as a rock from which flow the pure rivers of the gospel....³²

B. *The Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* is yet another work which, in the words of Douglas M. Parrott and R. Mc.L. Wilson, "seems quite consistent with the developing orthodoxy of the church of the second century, when this tractate may have been composed"³³ Here Lithargoel, "the god of the **glistening *stone**, the **god of the pearl** is a physician [*i.e.* one who *heals*] who, after disguising himself, eventually reveals himself as Jesus Christ.

C. **The parable of the searcher for pearls 116 265(223)**

...Saint Barlaam...points at Christ with his finger and holds a scroll saying "**Behold the pearl of great price.**"...Nearby the wise men of the Greeks hold scrolls, and above Christ these words are written: "**Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price.**" (9)³⁴ [**Bold** and *italic* added.]

This interpretation stands out from the rest of the parables by referring to a non-Biblical legend, namely that of Barlaam and Josaph. The latter was the son of an Indian king, and as in his infancy it had been prophesied that he would be converted to Christianity, he was shut up in his father's palace; he escaped, met the hermit Barlaam, and was converted to Christianity.³⁵

Finally, rocks are a symbol of the Lord. This meaning is [initially] derived from the story of

Moses, who smote the rock from which burst forth to refresh his people. Christ is often referred to as a rock from which flow the pure rivers of the gospel....³⁶

Place of Origin and Date:

The Hymn of the Soul/Pearl was written in the vicinity of Edessa and can be found in the *Acts of Thomas*.³⁷ While Kuryluk³⁸ would date it from the early third century, Judah Segal sees this hymn "composed originally in Syriac, [a work antedating] the main text of the *Acts of Thomas* and may go back to the first century A.D."³⁹

Jean Danielou, in an article entitled "Christianity as a Jewish Sect", seems to settle this debate when he declares:

The earliest documents we have on Edessan Christianity - namely the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Song [Hymn] of the Pearl* contained in the *Acts of Thomas*, and the *Odes of Solomon* - go back, in part, to the end of the 1st century and display the characteristic features of Judaeo-Christianity⁴⁰

The significance of a first century C.E. date for this *Hymn* becomes even more apparent when we examine its context in the *Acts of Thomas*. Here the apostle is thrown into jail by Charisimus, a close kinsman of King Misdaeus, angered that his wife Mygdonia refuses him sexual companionship after listening to Thomas (82-106). The latter had spent the time prior to his arrest preaching the Gospel with all the zeal of a missionary. Once in jail, he is asked by his fellow prisoners to pray for them (107). Thomas responds to their request by chanting the *Hymn of the Pearl* (108)⁴¹ Is it too much to suppose that - though unstated - Thomas followed up this "adaptation/recitation" by pointing out the nature of Jesus' resurrection and the role of the Shroud (*i.e.* the *Hymn's* "splendid garment") in pointing to same?

Returning to the Hymn itself, the Soul as the story's narrator, is personified as the king's son who in turn is modeled after Christ leading Ewa Kuryluk to conclude that:

The *Hymn of the Pearl* assimilates into an ancient tradition the new theology of Jesus' incarnation, resurrection and transfiguration by transforming Christ into a soul. His dual nature rendered by his splitting into a humanlike anima - a son clothed in skin - and into a divine soul, an iconic dress of paradise. In the Syrian poem the essence of divinity resides in God's clothing - a heavenly double of the mortal human skin.⁴²

As late as the first half of the century, Cyrus, Bishop of Edessa, using as his text **Gen 49:11** ("he washes his garment in wine, and his **vesture in the blood of grapes**"), comments: "**scripture calls 'robe' the form of a servant that the divine nature assumed**". The "timing" of this remark is worth noting as the Image of Edessa was "rediscovered" following a flood in that city in 525 A.D.. Recall also that an earlier Bishop Qora ("Cyrus") had transferred the coffin of the Apostle Thomas to a church in the southwest of that city (*loc. cit.*, p. 4, f.n. 13). Scholars

like Sebastian Brock speculate as to what factor might have been responsible for this **connection of Christ's body with a garment.**³⁵ [**Emphasis and underlining added.**] The most conservative and traditional interpretation would be to simply equate the garment with Christ's physical body which had been bloodied via the Passion and Crucifixion. However, it certainly is within the realm of possibility that one like Cyrus--an Edessan, potentially knowledgeable about the full-length nature of the Shroud and thus aware of its easily visible bloodstains--would have been inspired to make this connection of a robe washed in "the blood of grapes." Given the fact that the encuastic icon commissioned by Justinian ca. 550 (*i.e.* still preserved to this day at St. Catherine's at Mount Sinai) depicts only the face, the "secret" of the full image may have been kept from the leadership in Constantinople.

Pregnant with potential implications by and for the Shroud is the following brief sample from the Hymn itself:

The [splendid robe] became like me, as my reflection in a mirror [Note: the "reversed image" on the Shroud as if it were a photographic negative.], And in it saw myself [quite] apart from myself, So that we were **two in distinction** And again **one in single form** (*Hymn 76-78*)...I clothed myself with it and **mounted up** [*i.e.* the "ascension "] to the gate of greeting and homage.⁴³ [**Emphasis added.**]

Only six verses later we are told that this "splendid robe" (82) was so decorated that:

...the **likeness** of the **king of kings** was <completely> embroidered **all over it**...

I bowed my head and worshipped the splendour of the father <who> had sent it (the robe) to me, Whose commands I had accomplished, As also he had done what he had promised...For he rejoiced over me and received me, and I was with him in his kingdom... And he promised me that to **the gate of the king of kings** I should journey with him again. And with my gift and my pearl with him **appear before our king** (*Hymn 86; 99-102; 104-105*).⁴⁴ [**Emphasis added.**]

At the risk of reading unwarranted meaning into the above citations, given Edessa's knowledge of the Shroud, Jesus' Image(s) upon it, and Thomas' connection both with the burial linen and that city, I wonder if those who were aware of the Shroud's secret might well have heard and understood in this *Hymn* clearly intended allusions to:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. The Image(s) on the Shroud</p> | <p>reflection in a mirror...two in distinction...one in single form</p> |
| <p>2. Jesus as King of the Jews
(<i>Cf.</i> Purple robe)</p> | <p>likeness of the king of kings</p> |
| <p>3. Edessa's West Gate</p> | <p>the gate of the king of kings</p> |
| <p>4. Appearance to King Abgar</p> | <p>appear before our king</p> |

1. Remember that the image(s) on the Shroud are "mirror-reversed" (*i.e.* the side wound which appears to be on the body's left is actually on its anatomic right side). In *Against Praxeas* (written after 213), Tertullian provides a clue as to the nature of the contemporary thought modes in his day by quoting Paul (**I Cor 13:12: "For now we see in a *mirror* dimly, but then *face to face.*"**) to describe Jesus' appearance on "the mount [of transfiguration]":

...it is evident that in early times it was always in a **glass** [*i.e. mirror*] (as it were,) and an **enigma, in vision** and dream, that God, I mean the Son of God, appeared - to the prophets and the patriarchs, as also to Moses indeed himself...yet it was not as man that he [Moses] could **behold His face** unless indeed in a glass [*i.e. mirror*], (as it were) and **by enigma.**⁴⁵ [**Emphasis added.**].

Could there be even the slightest chance that as early as the first century both St. Paul in *I Corinthians* and the author of Edessa's *Hymn of the Pearl*-- each aware of the Shroud's **mirror reversal property** image(s)--used the same mirror imagery borrowed by Tertullian a century later?

2. Remember in vs. 82 of the *Hymn of the Pearl* when the parents of the hero send him the *splendid robe* (*i.e.* the New Adam, the New Man in Christ), "he recognised it as **his own reflection and united with it into a single form. The complete likeness of the king of kings was embroidered on the robe."**

3. For Edessans, the West Gate of their city would have had special significance. It was through it that Ananias, Abgar's designated messenger, initially entered with the "portrait". It was also this **gate** to which the pilgrim **Egeria** was taken by Edessa's saintly bishop who informed her: "From the day when the messenger Ananias entered this gate with the Lord's letter up to the present day, they take care that no unclean man or any man in grief should pass through this gate, and further that no body of a dead man should be borne through this gate."⁴⁶ Note also that it is in a niche above the West Gate that the Shroud is rediscovered following repairs on the walls caused by the flood of A.D. 525.⁴⁷ "I bowed my head and worshipped the splendor of the father [who] had sent it [the robe] to me (*Hymn*, 88-99)."⁴⁸ Thus it would seem that the stress on the West Gate would argue against the theory of Segal, R. Levenant and Charlesworth that Christianity had come to Edessa from Adiabene - a city to the East of Edessa.

4. Just as the son will "**appear before our king**" (*i.e.* the Risen Christ before His Heavenly Father), so also his "portrait" in the form of the Shroud appears before **King Abgar**, cures him of his "leprosy" and results in the conversion of this Parthian kingdom. Later Christian art will portray Christ as the *Christus Rex* - the "King of kings" and ruler of all nature.

Odes of Solomon

Of special interest for further consideration is *Ode 23* of the *Odes of Solomon*. You will

remember from above that this work - one of the earliest documents we have on Edessan Christianity dating from the end of the 1st to the early 2nd century - displays the characteristic features of Judaeo-Christianity.⁴⁹ Here there are repeated references to a *letter* - a concept well known to those familiar with the legend of Christ's *letter* to Abgar which begins:

Blessed are you, Abgar, in that you believed in me without having actually seen me. For it has been written about me that those who have not seen me do not believe in me, so that those who have not seen me may believe and live.⁵⁰

In a footnote to *Ode 23*, James Charlesworth calls our attention to **Zech. 5:1f** [*i.e.* a reference to a *flying scroll*, the same description used in the *Hymn of the Pearl*] and **40-55** of the latter.⁵¹ The *letter* is described as *sign* (**vs. 12**) and further at **vss. 18** and **21** we read:

[That] there appeared at its **head**, the **Head which was revealed, even the Son of Truth** from the Most High Father... And the **letter** became a large volume [f.n. **k, Gk. pinakidion**] which was entirely **written by the finger of God.**⁵² [**Emphasis and italic added.**]

The word for *book* or *scroll* in Greek is *Biblion* [*Biblíon*] and, according to Schrenk, can also signify an *epistle* or *document*.⁵³ He goes on to note that the word *Biblion*

"acquires a special sense in the Apocalypse as an **image of a divine secret** which is declared and developed as a firmly sketched entity" (p. 618). The author of Revelation uses *Biblion* 23 times and applies it in five different permutations."⁵⁴

Finally, Charlesworth reveals that the **Odes**

"are significant for a better understanding of the origin and meaning of the Gospel of John... containing numerous ideas similar to those found in John. But the terminology is not as sophisticated."⁵⁵

At this point one can only speculate at the unexamined potential importance of the convergence and significance for the Odist of such influences as: **1.** The Johannine School and the Fourth Gospel (*i.e.* the latter containing the only "eyewitness account" of the discovery of the Empty Tomb with its "sindonic spy clue" that the Shroud bore the double image of the Body which it once contained [**20:12**]); **2.** Edessa, the probable site of the *Ode's* composition and the city to which the Shroud was brought from Jerusalem and housed until A.D. 944; **3.** Knowledge by a segment of the early Church of, if not dependence upon, the contemporary *Hymn of the Pearl/Soul* - especially *Ode 23*.⁵⁶ Thus if one acknowledges both the *presence* and *significance* of the Shroud for Edessa in the late 1st/early 2nd century, then it becomes both conceivable and plausible - if not highly likely - that this textile "testament" of the Resurrection is reflected in the writings of the city in which it was housed.

The Gospel of Thomas

We have already considered and dated the *Hymn of the Soul/Pearl* as contained in the *Acts of Thomas* in light of its possible adaptation to provide "spy clues" pointing to the Shroud and its Image(s). Let us now consider the *Gospel of Thomas* itself to determine if it too might be a source of similar clues. When one seeks to the date its composition, the earliest possible would be in the middle of the 1st century, when sayings' collections such as the Synoptic Sayings Gospel Q first began to be compiled. "The latest possible date would be toward the end of the 2nd century...a date of composition in, say, the last decades of the 1st century would be more likely ...As such, this gospel would provide the earliest surviving evidence for the beginnings of Christianity in and around Edessa."⁵⁷

What makes this 1st century dating so important is that much of the imagery is quite similar to that which we have already reviewed above in the *Hymn of the Soul/Pearl* contained in the *Acts of Thomas*. Thus even if the date of the *Hymn* is as late as the 3rd century, its "imagery" replicates - or rephrases - thought modes already expressed in the *Gospel of Thomas*.

Concrete Clue or Curious Coincidence?

Gospel of Thomas, Saying 22:4-7 reads:

⁴ Jesus said to them, "When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower,⁵ and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female,⁶ when you make eyes in the place of an eye, a hand in the place of a hand, a foot in the place of a foot, an image in the place of an image,⁷ then you will enter [the <Father's> domain]⁵⁸ [Italic and double underlining added.]

This *Saying* is generally seen by scholars as an allusion to baptism and early Christian concern with the need for rebirth in order to enter God's Kingdom. One of the most obvious and simplest way to decipher it is to analyze it is the probable site of the *Ode's* composition in terms of the comparison between the earthly and heavenly realms. If such a baptismal context is favored, then the contrast is between the ignorance *before* initiation contrasted with the new status and insight *following* Christian baptism.

To better understand how biblical scholars make this connection with baptism, let us consider the "[neither] *male*...nor *female*" of vs. 5 in this saying. Around A.D. 55 Paul penned his *Magna Carta* of Christian Liberty, the *Epistle to the Galatians*. In Chapter 3 of this letter Paul states:

For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. *There is neither* Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither *male* nor

female; for you are all one in Christ [**Bold Italic** added.] (vss. 27,28).

According to Ron Cameron:

Becoming a solitary or single one is signified in *Gos. Thom.* by baptismal initiation...According to this tradition [interpretations of the Genesis accounts of Creation and the Fall], the unity of the first human was disrupted by the creation of woman and the subsequent sexual division. Redemption was imagined to be the replication of Adam and Eve's primordial state, the reunification of the sexes and the transcendence of the world. *Gos. Thom.* thus presents baptism as a symbol of rectification.⁵³

Could it be that Paul, true to his Jewish heritage and simultaneously aware of the Gnostic thought modes of his own day, satisfies the demands of both by proclaiming that in the resurrected state there will be no division and/or distinction according to the earthly categories of *male* and *female* - a theological insight also borrowed or shared by the author of the *Gospel of Thomas*, *Saying 22:4-7*?

But is this strictly "baptismal" analysis the only possibility or, for that matter, even the most meaningful one? What happens when one allows for knowledge of the Shroud being a factor in the development of this *Saying*? Should we be surprised to discover that Drijvers in examining this passage concludes:

In the sealing and water *baptism*, man is clothed with Christ, or Christ takes up his abode in him. The faithful strip off the old man and put on the new (c. 48, cf. Col. 3:9f.; c. 132). **The *garment symbolism* which is predominant in the *Hymn of the Pearl* also plays an important role in the *baptismal ritual*, in which man is clothed with Christ, the new Man, or to put it in other terms is united with him as in a marriage.**⁵⁴ [**Emphasis and italic added.**]

Having established the significance of baptism in both the *Hymn of the Pearl* and the *Gospel of Thomas* - at least as early as the 1st century with respect to the latter - Christian scholars may be surprised to learn that the Moslem writer Massoudi (d. 957) - a contemporary of the of the linen's arrival in Constantinople in 944 - refers to a precious linen in Justinian's basilica of "Roha" (Edessa). Apparently Massoudi did not know the original Abgar legend in which Jesus imprinted only his face on the linen since he did not speak of any image(s) on the cloth. However, he does attributes its value as deriving from its use as *Christ's baptismal towel*. Even stranger is the fact that though Massoudi knows the Arabic word *mindil*, he does not use it or its Greek equivalent *mandylion*!⁵⁵

And what if the reader continues to approach the following phrases with a knowledge of the Shroud in mind?

the **two** into **one**

Recall that in the *Hymn 76-78* we have already encountered "The [splendid robe] became like me, as my reflection in a mirror"; **two in distinction** And again **one in single form**" (See p. 10 above, fn 33). In addition to signifying both the earthly and heavenly natures of the wearer of the robe, the author may also be employing this symbolism to express the realization that the **two** (*i.e.* ventral and dorsal) images on the Shroud are in reality but aspects of **one** and the same *Body* (*i.e.* that of the earthly Jesus of Nazareth who has now been resurrected as the divine Christ).

inner like the **outer**

Once again we may be merely encountering a parallelism reinforcing the duality of "the earthly and heavenly natures" noted in the initial *the two into one* of this passage. However, when allowance is made for the influence and significance of the Shroud in this analogy, it is also possible to consider it to be a reference to the **inner** side of the Shroud's looking like the **outer** form of Jesus when alive? Remember that Souls of the dead, according to Greco-Roman tradition, normally bore their pre-mortem characteristics, and especially their death wounds. Gregory Riley reminds us that "Jesus as a *ghost* would appear with wounded side, hands and feet, was what would have been expected in his culture."⁵⁶ [*Italic added.*] Certainly these very wound marks helped identify the Risen Christ to be one and the same as the crucified Jesus. The empty Shroud with its image(s) of glory would be further proof that like Enoch and Elijah before Him, the body of Messiah had not be subject to corruption, but rather passed directly from death to the heavenly realm. Not only does the **inner** divine nature reveal itself through the outer incarnate Jesus, but his resurrected image(s) left on the Shroud are an **outer** and visible testimony to that inward and spiritual truth.

upper like the **lower**

Granted that the phrase may simply express the contrast between the heavenly (*i.e.* **upper**) and the earthly (*i.e.* **lower**) realms, the Shroud - when held vertically - also reveals an **upper** and **lower** half. It is in just such a vertical and folded manner that the linen may have been presented to Thomas in the Cenacle.. I hope to elaborate on this point in a future paper entitled unpublished paper "Thomas and the Shroud", but the idea is graphically represented on the cover of *Linteum*, Number 26, June 1999 and the vertical mode of the Shroud's ventral image was well known in the tenth century when it was displayed every Friday at the Church of St. Mary of Blachernae in Byzantium as described in the oft quoted account in 1203 by the French crusader, Robert de Clari.

eyes in the place of an **eye**

The connection or relation of this phrase to the Shroud is tenuous at best. However, it seems to me that a more logical case can be made for such a relationship than was the case for baptism. In his treatment of the **eye** [ὄφθαλμός] in the *Interpreter's Bible Dictionary*, Robert C. Dentan informs us that:

...the eye may occasionally be used to represent the whole process of cognition and understanding, as in Jer. 5:2 1... **On rare occasions it may "see" God, as in Isa. 6:5 [5b "for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!"]**, although this privilege is usually accorded to it in an eschatological context (Isa. 33:17; Ezek. 38:23; cf. Rev. 1:7["...and every eye shall see him, every one who pierced him, and all tribes on earth will wail on account of him."].⁵⁷ [*Italic added.*]

What is so fascinating here is that "if" - and I stress "if" - the author of the *Hymn of the Pearl*, who used the phrase "**The complete likeness of the king of kings was embroidered on the robe.**" (See pgs.5 & 10 above) was in any way influenced by Isa. 6:5b and Rev. 1:7, then the references to the *King* and those who *pierced him* could well have been influenced by the Shroud where the "eye" of the beholder is able to understand the deeper meaning of the "eyes" of Him whose image appears on this linen burial wrap.

a **hand** in the place of a **hand**, a **foot** in the place of a **foot**,
an **image** in the place of an **image**

Of special consideration in this *Gospel of Thomas, Saying 22* is vs. 6 with its mention of **a hand in the place of a hand, a foot in the place of a foot, an image in the place of an image.** We know that both **hands** and **feet** are prominent features which are immediately and easily discernible on the Shroud. Nor should we be surprised that both these very prominent features are stressed in the *Epistula Apostolorum* (first half of the 2nd c.) combines them with Thomas' stress on the side in a single version. In this rendition, **Peter** is asked to lay his **hand** and finger in the nail print of the **hands**, **Thomas** to touch the wound in the **side**, and **Andrew** is added to the story to verify "whether my [*i.e.* Jesus'] steps on the ground ...leaves a **footprint**".⁵⁸ Is it merely that the wounds of crucifixion are being catalogued in this variant, or does another motive lie behind this account? Could it be an attempt by the author of the epistle to gain status for both Peter and Andrew by connecting them, like Thomas, with the known and most obvious marks on the Shroud?

a **hand** in place of a **hand**

Once again with the Shroud in mind, the *original* flesh and blood *hand(s)* of the crucified Jesus is (are) now revealed as *image(s)* of that (those) *hand(s)* on the Shroud. Could we possibly be reading a cryptic allusion to **Jn. 20:27** where Jesus says to Thomas: "Put your finger here, and see my *hands*; and put out your *hand*, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing"?

At an even more subtle level, we even might have here a comparison of the *hand of God* the Creator and Redeemer with the *hand of the Son* by whom this Gospel is proclaimed to all mankind. Students of the Old Testament are well aware that:

In more than 200 places the OT speaks of the **Hand of Yahweh**. The reference is always to God's activity by which He shows Himself mighty in creation and

work...As God's hand and arm accomplished creation, so they initiate redemption, **Is. 51:5,9; 52:10**...Because Israel constantly experienced the working of the hand of God in history, it extols in worship and confession and praise the acts of salvation which the hand of Yahweh has accomplished, **Ps. 89:10f., 13; 98:1 etc....**⁵⁹ [Emphasis added.]

an **image** in place of an **image** - *eikōn* (εἰκῶν)

The word *eikōn* is used frequently in the New Testament (e.g. in **Gen. 1:26; Rom. 8:29; I Cor. 11:7, 15:49; II Cor. 3:18, 4:4; Col. 1:15, 3:10; Heb. 1:3**. However, as most biblical scholars do not consider the Shroud when exegeting these passages, let us take a closer look at them:

<p>Romans 8:29 (Written 54-58 A.D.)</p>	<p>"(mankind) to be conformed to the <u>image</u> of his (God's) Son"</p>
<p>I Cor. 11:7 (Written 51-56 A.D.)</p>	<p>"(mankind as representing) the <u>image</u> and of God"</p>
<p>15:49</p>	<p>"Just as we have borne the <u>image</u> of the man of dust, we shall also bear the <u>image</u> of the man of heaven"</p>
<p>II Cor. 3:18 (Written 51-56 A.D.)</p>	<p>"...we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his <u>likeness</u> from one degree of glory to another"</p>
<p>4:4</p>	<p>"...the glory of Christ, who is the <u>likeness</u> of God"</p>
<p>Col. 1:15-18 (Written early 60's A.D.)</p>	<p>"He (the beloved Son) is the <u>image</u> of the invisible God...the first born from the dead"</p>
<p>Heb. 3:10 (Written prior to 70 A.D.)</p>	<p>"He reflects the glory of God and bears the very <u>stamp</u> of his nature"</p>

Otto Flender offers the following for our consideration:

In **Heb. 10:1** *eikōn* signifies the true form of the good things to come which has appeared in Christ, in contrast to the law which is a mere shadow of these things. In **2 Cor. 4:4** and **Col. 1:15** Christ is said to be the *image* or *likeness of God*.

There is no difference here between the image and the essence of the invisible God. In Christ we see God (cf. Jn. 14:9).⁶⁰ [Emphasis added.]

If the Shroud is the underlying basis for this imagery, then my "guess" is that "an *image* in the place of an *image*" might well have been intended to mean that the figure(s) on the Shroud testify to the glorious Resurrection of the Image of God made manifest in the Incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ.

Summary/Conclusion

We have now completed our review of the *Hymn of the Pearl* and its potential origin stemming from its association with the Apostle Thomas and the rather late account of his supposed his role in the dispatching of Jude Thaddaeus (Addai) with the Shroud to Edessa. We have established the fact that "the School of Thomas" -- a major and one of the most influential early Christian schools -- was centered in Edessa though not limited to that city. We have shown that this school issued such writings as the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Acts of Thomas* (which contains the *Hymn of the Pearl*), the *Minor Acts of Thomas*, the "*Book of Thomas*," the *Consummation of Thomas*, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and the *Martyrdom of Thomas*. We have dated the *Gospel of Thomas* to the end of the first century (See above p. fn 30). We have further attempted to make a case for first century dating of the *Acts of Thomas* citing both Danielou and Segal, the latter who sees this *Hymn* to be a work antedating the main text of the *Acts of Thomas* and may go back to the first century A.D."⁶¹

Willi Marxsen reminds us:

It is essential to realize that where we use abstract ideas the ancient world, particularly in the east, used images or picture language...where we might have *insight* into a thing... [the gospel] authors start from a reality. They came to believe in Jesus after Good Friday. They express this in pictorial terms. But what they want to say is simply: "We have come to believe." Because they make reality their starting point they can externalize it in different ways, without feeling any contradiction thereby. It really is possible to verbalize the same reality in different ways.⁶² **[Emphasis added.]**

Is it too much to acknowledge that the "reality" which occasioned the composition of the *Hymn of the Pearl* was the veritable linen "Portrait of Edessa" - the burial "robe" which today we know as the Shroud of Turin?

This paper began with Sebastian Brock's conclusion/revelation that among the imagery "especially beloved" by

Syriac writers of the golden age of Syriac literature (4th - 7th centuries), and in particular the poets of this period...[was] the **imagery of clothing**.....

Indeed one can even speak...of a "**theology of clothing**", seeing that the entire span of salvation history can be expressed in terms of clothing imagery.⁶³
[**Emphasis** added.]

This author's own conclusion is that the *Hymn of the Pearl* is a magnificent expression of such a "*theology of clothing*"--a cloth which once touched our Savior's resurrected Body and still touches us today.

ENDNOTES

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1. Brock, S. 1982. p. 11.
 2. Cameron, R. 1992. p. 536.
 3. Cruse, C. F. 1979. p. 82.
 4. Riley, G. 1995. p. 80. Cf. Walter Bauer. 1971. *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 11, n. 24.
 5. Wilson, I. 1979. p. 276.
 6. Gunther, J. J. *Le Muséon* 93. 1980. 113-48.
 7. Cited by Charlesworth. 1995. p. 197. ***Encratites**: "A title applied to several groups of early Christians who carried their ascetic practice and doctrines to extremes which were in most cases considered heretical...The name...seems never to have been used very precisely, but to have been applied in a general sense to many of the Gnostic, Ebionite and Docetic sects. . They commonly rejected the use of wine and flesh-meat, and often also of marriage. It was largely in encratic circles that the Apocryphal Gospels and Acts were produced" (*ODCC*, pp. 450-51).
 8. Koester. 1971. pgs. 126-27. Note that "Edessa was the most prominent city in the Osrhoene Ba name that may be derived from Orhay, the native name of Edessa." (Segal. 1970, p. 9)
 9. Segal, J. 1970. pgs. 65-66.
 10. Koester. 1971. p 142.
 11. Segal. 1970. p. 62, f.n.2.
 12. Segal, J. 1970. p. 174, fn 6. Though Bishop Hiba's remark in A.D. 449 does not prove that Thomas was personally in Edessa, it does tend to reinforce a local tradition or folk memory of his connection with that city. And because it was Thomas who dispatched Thaddeus to Edessa with the Shroud, it also tends to establish the former's relationship as the second

century to both the Shroud and the "Blessed City" as early.

13. Segal, J. 1970. p. 66. Segal apparently sees this inscription from Kirk Mağara to be of sufficient significance to be included as Plate 31b of his book.
14. Gingras, G.E. 1970, p. 77. In an informative footnote (f.n. 204, p. 205) Gingras notes:

"**204** The wording here, *ad ecclesiam et ad martyrium sancti Thomae*, has been cited in support of several opposing theories concerning the date of the *Diary*. The discussion has centered on the precise meaning of the *et* here. Gamurrini, Geyer, Deconinck, and Kruger interpret it disjunctively, thus having Egeria visit two separate buildings. Baumstark, Morin, and Meister interpret the *et* conjunctively, taking the *ecclesiam* and the *martyrium* as referring to a single building. The first group of critics date Egeria's pilgrimage in the period 378-389, while the second group must date it after 394. The chronicle of Edessa states that the sarcophagus of St. Thomas was transferred to the great church dedicated to him on August 22, 394 (the 27th Ab of the year 705 of the Seleucid era). For a summary of the question, see Bludau 246-51.
15. Segal. 1970. p. 169.
16. Trotta. 1998. p. 140.
17. Farmer. 1962. p. 271.
18. Trotta. 1998. p.191. For this legend, see 13th c. *Le Synaxerion Armenian de Ter Israel*, preserved in the 14th c. *Patrologia Orientalis*, a martyrology of the Armenian Church.
19. Trotta. 1998. p. 98. See M.R. James. 1989. "Apostolic History of Abdias." pgs. 462-69.
20. Zahn, Theodor. 1884. , p. 70. **Note:** Quotation found *Vol III* relating to the tombs of the Apostles, said to have derived also from the *Hypotyposes* of Clement of Alexandria: *Petrus et Paulus Romae sepulti sunt; . . . Iohannes in Epheso; . . . Thaddaeus et Iudas in Britio* [v. l. *Beruto*] *Edessenorum; etc.*).
21. Cogswell, T.B. 1939. pgs. 3-5.
22. Riley, G. 1995. pgs. 178-79.
23. Scavone, 1999. p. 23, n. 39. As the basis for this date, Scavone cites Ludwig Hallier , *Untersuchungen ueber die Edessenische Chronik*, 1892. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche, pp. 84 and 91.); and as previously suggested, Abgar Amay have honored Thaddaeus by moving his body to the *Birta* **Note:** As evidence of the "persistence of memory" of consideration of an early date for Addai 's arrival in Edessa, consider that even today in Urfa one can still visit the Church of Addai which, according to Professor A. Cihat Kürkcüğü, lecturer and one-man archaeology department at Harran University:.. "was restored [in 1992] without changing the original shape.... Originally, there was an older church on that site, **one of the early wonderful churches of the first Century**..."(Trotta, Liz. 1998. *Jude: a Pilgrimage to the*

Saint of Last Resort. New York: Harper San Francisco, p. 110.) **[Emphasis added.]** Furthermore, Professor Kürkçüğülu notes that there are "shafts beneath the Ulu, or Great Mosque, a synagogue taken over by Christians in the fifth century and known as the Red Church for its many red marble columns..". **The well of Addai was there, the one in which the Mandylion was thrown...**" (*Ibid.*, p.111.) **[Emphasis added.]** The fact that the term *mandylion* was not used in a Greek text with respect to the Image of Edessa until the late 10th c. (ca. 990) when it "first appears...in a biography of the ascetic Paul of Mt. Latros" (Drews. 1984. *In Search of the Shroud of Turin: New Light on its Historical Origins*. Totowa, NJ: Roman & Allanheld, p. 39.).

24. Drijvers, H.1991. p. 494.

25. Scavone, e-mail, 27Sep99 .

26. *Ibid.*.

27. Gunther. 1980. p. 132.

28. Charlesworth, J. 1995. p. 362.

29. Koester. 1971. p. 127.

30. Ferguson, G. 1958. p. 23.

31. *ANF, Vol. II*. 1886. p. 578.

32. Ferguson, G., *op. cit.*, p. 24. [See also: "the *stone* which the builders rejected" (**Matt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10; 20:17; Acts 4:11**); the *stone* which was rolled away to reveal the Empty Tomb, and **Rev. 2:17** "...a *white stone* with a new name written on the *stone* which no one knows except him who receives it."]

33. Parrott, D.M. & Wilson, R. McL. 1981. p. 265.

34. Hetherington, P. 1989. p.41.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 103. [For the text of the legend, see P.G. **96**, 857-1250; and for a survey of illustrated cycles of the legend, see S. Der Nersessian: *L' Illustration du Roman de Barlaam et Josaph*; Paris, 1957.]

36. Ferguson, G., *op. cit.*, p. 24.

37. Bornkamm, G. 1964, pgs. 433-441; 498-504.

38. Kuryluk, E. 1981. pgs. 216-220.

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39. Segal, J. 1970. pgs. 31 & 68.
40. Danielou, J. 1969. *The Crucible of Christianity*. Ed. Arnold Toynbee. New York: World Publishing Company., p. 277. See also A. Adam (*Die Psalmen des Thomas und das Perlenlied als Zeugnisse vorchristlicher Gnosis* [Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 24; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1959], 60, 70) who judges it to have been written in the first century C.E. and G. Widengren ("Der iranische Hintergrund der Gnosis," *Zeitschrift für Religions - und Geistgeschichte* 4 [1952] 97-114) 1969 who dates this hymn as early as 150 B.C.E.
41. Bornkamm, G. 1964, pp. 486-504.
42. Kuryluk, E. *op. cit.*, p. 218). [For full text of the Hymn, see *NTA Vol. 2*, 498-504. See also Ephraim of Syria's "The Pearl: Seven Hymns On The Faith" trans. By J.B. Morris & re-edited by John Gwynn found in The Saint Pachomius Orthodox Library ([http:// www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/ reading/ St.Pachomius](http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/reading/St.Pachomius)).]
43. Text of the *Hymn* proper.
44. *NTA, Vol. 2*. pgs. 502-504.
45. Tertullian. *ANF, Vol. III*. 1892, p. 609.
46. Gingras, G. E. 1970. p. 80.
47. Wilson, I. 1979. p. 254.
48. Kuryluk, *op. cit.*, pgs. 217-18.
49. Danielou, J. 1969. p. 277. See also A. Adam (*Die Psalmen des Thomas und das Perlenlied als Zeugnisse vorchristlicher Gnosis* [Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 24; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1959], 60, 70) who judges it to have been written in the first century C.E. and G. Widengren (Der iranische Hintergrund der Gnosis," *Zeitschrift für Religions - und Geistgeschichte* 4 [1952] 97-114) 1969 who dates this hymn as early as 150 B.C.E.
50. Wilson. 1979. p. 276. Cf. Segal.1970. p. 63.
51. Charlesworth, J. 1985. p. 755, f.n. 23c
52. Charlesworth, J. 1985. p. 756. Strangely enough Gregory , archdeacon and *referendarius* at Constantinople 's Hagia Sophia, uses the same expression (*i.e.* "the **finger of God**" (ἐντετύπωται καὶ δακτύλῳ Θεοῦ) in his sermon of August 16, 944 describing the

Shroud 's image upon its arrival the previous day from Edessa. Though the word *acheiropoietos* is not used, it clearly seems to mean "not made by man". Gregory says the **bloody sweat** on the face was **traced** as **by the finger of God**. (See paragraph 26 of Gregory's sermon. on page 29 of Andre'-Marie Dubarle, "L'Home'lie de Grégoire le Référendaire pour la Réception de l'Image d'Édesse," in *Revue des Études Byzantines* 55, 1997. (Personal E-mail from Scavone dated 23Oct99). Cf. Wilson.1998. p.268.).

53. Schrenk, G. 1968. p. 617

54. *Ibid*, p. 620.

55. Charlesworth, J. 1985. p. 728.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 755, f.n. c.

57. Cameron, R. 1992, p. 536.

58. Funk, R. *et al.*, 1993. p. 486.

53. Cameron, R. 1992 , p. 539.

54. Drijvers, H. 1991. *NTA, Vol. 1, rev. ed.* p. 331.

55. I am deeply grateful to Daniel C. Scavone for shared personal correspondence between him and Fr. A-M. Dubarle. Scavone cites von Dobschütz 209* who in turn cites Barbier de Meynard, ed. *Maçoudi, les prairies d' or*, ch. 29, (Paris 1863) II, o. 331).

56. Riley, G. 1995, p. 117.

57. Dentan, R.. 1962, pp.201-202.

58. Duensing, H. 1965. *NTA*, Vol. 1, p. 197)

59. Lohshe, E. 1968. p. 427.

60. Flender, O. 1976. p. 288. **Note**₁ that the word for "**the very stamp of his nature**" (*RSV*) [*charact r* (χαράκτήρ)] is unique in the NT. Note further: The *NRSV* translates **Heb. 1:3** as "the reflection of God's glory, and **the exact imprint of God's very being**", the *NKJV* as "who being the brightness of His glory and the express *image* of His person" and the *NIV* as "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the *exact representation of his being*". **Note**₂ Most scholars date the Epistle to the Hebrews prior to A.D 70. Ergo, if our interpretation is correct , the **very stamp/exact imprint/image of his person** (*i.e.* the **exact representation of his being** was **known prior to the fall of the Temple!!!**)

However, in **II Maccabees 4:10** Arndt & Gingrich define the word as meaning “**an exact representation of his** (i.e. God’s) **nature**” (p. 884)]. When contrasted with the image(s) left on the Shroud (See **Jn. 20:12**), an obvious comparison here would be that of Jesus as the *image of God* and the *image(s) of the Resurrected Son* so clearly visible on the Shroud.

61. Segal, J. 1970, pgs. 31 & 68.

62. Marxen, W. 1979, p. 156.

63. Brock, S. 1982, p. 11. See above, p. 2, fn 1.

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