

Illuminator vs. Redeemer:

A "Trajectory" of Ebionite Christology
from Prophet Messianism to Bahā'ī Theophanology

by Christopher Buck

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ABSTRACT

Central to the Judaic, Christian, Islamic, and Bahā'ī Faiths are doctrines of mediatorship, or prophetology, originating from their respective Founders: Moses, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, and Bahā'u'llāh. Doctrinal parallelisms have been obscured by polemics and dogmatic competition. Yet a remarkable continuity may be drawn by plotting a "trajectory" of prophetological concepts from Prophet Messianism to Bahā'ī Theophanology, wherein Ebionite Christology provides the missing link to an ideological evolution observable in predominantly Semitic milieus.

Why Ebionite Christology? In 1969, Quispel of Utrecht declared: "...the Jewish Christians or Ebionites were the legitimate heirs of primitive Christianity, whereas the New Testament to a large extent reflects the views of Gentile Christianity as defended by St. Paul and his fellows. This is the present state of scholarship." Now scholarship tends to emphasize the rapid diversification of the early Christian world, largely through cross-fertilization with other cultures. Even so, Ebionism in the literary amber of the Pseudo-Clementines fossilizes a very primitive Christology.

A lost source for the PSC romance is the Kerygmata Petrou (KP), an Ebionite apology representing Christ as "the True Prophet" whose Spirit illumines the world through the Patriarchs and all those whom God chooses to reveal the truth, each being "the True Prophet" or genius for each age. Developed from Prophet Messianism, roots for this idea occur in 1QS 9:11 and 11QMelch, while Samaritan sources insert Deut 18:18 into the Decalogue. Later formulation renders the KP anti-Pauline and anti-Gnostic. In the course of time, Ebionites along with Sabian baptists appear to penetrate Arabia. This fertilization invites the hypothesis that the Qur'ān echoes Ebionite prophetology.

The Surah of Mary speaks of a succession of Prophets "of truth"; and when recited by Muslim emigrants, this Surah found favor with the King of Ethiopia. Indeed a hitherto-unknown Ethiopian Jewish Christianity has been rediscovered by Isaac of Princeton. Saadia, 'Abd al-Jabbar, Qirqisani, pseudo-Barnabas and others betray Ebionitic influence. In 19th-century India, the Nazarene New Church taught the essence of Islam to be revoiced Ebionism. Acclaimed Bahā'ī apologist Dr. Udo Schaefer asserts the historically-related Mosaic/Ebionitic/Islamic/Bahā'ī prophetologies, by virtue of their ideological harmony, augment Bahā'u'llāh's theory that "all the Prophets of God proclaim the same Faith."

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In developing a typology of monotheism, distinguished Orientalist Allesandro Bausani of Rome ordered monotheisms along a triple-scheme: 1) Monotheisms proper; 2) Failed monotheisms; 3) Para-monotheisms. Four religions belong to the first class: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bahā'ī Faith. Bausani refers to Judaism and Islam as primary monotheisms, since both originated out of archaic, pre-monotheistic milieus; while Christianity and the Bahā'ī Faith are termed secondary monotheisms, both born in already monotheistic thought-worlds.

Failed monotheisms included Zoroastrianism, as primary; Manichaeism as secondary; and, as archaic, Akhenaton's reform. Para-monotheisms are exemplified by the Sikh religion and by various communities of mystics. Among the monotheisms proper, Bausani is careful to clarify an all-too common typological problem: the designation of the Bahā'ī Faith in academic texts as a Muslim sect. It is as improper to mistake the Bahā'ī religion as sectarian as to misclassify Christianity as a Jewish sect, though both first appeared as such.¹

Central to the Judaic, Christian, Islamic, and Bahā'ī Faiths are doctrines of mediatorship, or prophetology, originating from and around their respective Founders: Moses, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, and Bahā'u'llāh. Of course Moses and Jesus are both accepted as major Prophets within our Judeo-Christian tradition; but the question, "Was Muhammad a Prophet?" is in fact the question, "What is a Prophet?" Beginning with this question, Dutch scholar Wagtendonk sought to establish criteria for Muhammad's prophethood.

Concluding that if the Old Testament profile is to be drawn upon as a standard, then Muhammad compares favorably with what may be proposed as an archetype of the Hebrew Prophet.² So far as I know, however, a definitive typology of Prophethood is still lacking. For our study, therefore, Muhammad and Bahā'u'llāh are functionally and historically parallel to Moses and Jesus. Our interest will center on how Christology plays a formative role in especially Islamic and Bahā'ī prophetologies, as a genetic factor in the evolution of the concept of Prophet.

All prophetologies share certain similarities. Begin of course with the fact that all four Founders of monotheisms proper were first regarded as Prophets. Yet, the ontological stature of the Prophet tends, over time, to become more "glorified"; such that, in the case of Jesus and even Moses, the Prophet can suffer deification.³ In ethics as well as prophetology, parallelisms among the four religions have been obscured by the competition of dogmas seeking for supremacy in the arena of polemics. Even so, still a remarkable continuity may be drawn by plotting a "trajectory" or movement of prophetological concepts, from Prophet Messianism to Bahā'ī Theophanology, wherein Ebionite Christology provides the missing link to an ideological evolution observable in predominantly Semitic milieus.

All Christology starts with the belief that Jesus was, at the very least, a Prophet par excellence. Beyond this irreducible dignity, the extent to which Jesus saw himself as "more than a Prophet" has stimulated vigorous debate. Curiously, though, no direct references to Jesus as a Prophet occur in the hypothetical document Q. Moreover, it is startling that nowhere throughout the entire Pauline corpus--our earliest NT written source--is Jesus honored as a Prophet. The Synoptics are likewise indirect and cautious over calling Jesus a Prophet.⁴ All this may be explained by the fact that the title Prophet was abandoned at a very early stage in the history of Pauline Christianity.

Fortunately, Luke preserves a Petrine Christology (Acts 3:22)--shared by St. Stephen (Acts 7:37)--in which appeal to Deut 18:15 shows Jesus to be a Prophet like unto Moses. It is significant that Ebionite Christianity develops this primitive Christology.

The rediscovery of Ebionite Christianity is one of the achievements of recent scholarship.⁵ Since World War II, specialists in Christian origins have sought to recover what might be thought of as "lost" forms of Christianity. Of all forms of Jewish Christianity, Ebionism is the most distinct and well-known. So important is Ebionite Christianity within Christian history as a whole, that Prof. Gilles Quispel of Utrecht in 1969 declared: "...the Jewish Christians or Ebionites were the legitimate heirs of primitive Christianity, whereas the New Testament to a large extent reflects the views of Gentile Christianity as defended by St. Paul and his fellows. This is the present state

of scholarship."⁶ Now scholarship tends to emphasize the rapid diversification of the early Christian world, largely through cross-fertilization with other cultures. Being so, the significance of Ebionite Christianity is no less diminished; for in the literary amber of the Pseudo-Clementines, a very primitive Christology is fossilized--a Christology destined to impact Islam and, indirectly, the Bahā'ī religion.

The Pseudo-Clementine romance (PSC)--considered one of the "New Testament Apocrypha"--is the first great Christian novel with a didactic purpose, representing thus a new literary genre within Christianity. This romance may also be thought of as an ancient historical novel. It has captured the interest of scholars for over 150 years, because of lost historical and apologetic documents it appears to have drawn from, even to the extent of incorporating portions extensively into its text.⁷

The mysterious PSC writings survive in two major forms: 1) the Homilies (H), so-called as they profess to give us the discourses of St. Peter who confutes the wicked sorcerer Simon the Magician along the coast of Syria; and 2) the Recognitions (R), which title refers to the miraculous reunitions with Peter's convert Clement of lost, shipwrecked relatives. Of the two forms, the Recognitions was by far the most widely diffused, with manuscripts preserved in more than 100 monasteries. In 1980, recently-discovered fragments of the Recognitions in Armenian were published,⁸ adding thus to the Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, Georgian, and Slavonic witnesses.⁹

Our major source for the PSC discourses of Peter is thought to be the lost Kerygmata Petrou (KP) or "The Preachings of Peter"--an Ebionite apology representing Christ as "the True Prophet" whose Spirit illumines the world through the Patriarchs and all those whom God chooses to reveal the truth, each of whom becomes "the True Prophet" or Promethean genius for each age. The KP pericopes have been identified within the PSC romance primarily to the extent to which they are attested to by other sources (the Church Fathers, especially the fourth-century "Patriarch of Orthodoxy", Epiphanius, along with rabbinical writings and the translations of the Ebionite scholar

Symmachus)¹⁰.

The KP first establishes that God is unknowable until revealed. Peter in the KP teaches about an almost Platonic God: and Philosopher-King:

"Not only so; but God cannot be good or evil, just or unjust. Nor indeed can He have intelligence, or life, or any of the other attributes which can exist in man; for all these are peculiar to man. And if we must not...give Him the good attributes which belong to man, it is not possible for us to have any thought or make any statement in regard to God; but all we can do is to investigate one point alone,-- namely, what is His will which he has Himself allowed us to apprehend" (H 19:10). "The will and counsel of God have for many reasons been concealed from men;...evils have filled this world, like some enormous smoke, and preventing those who dwell in it from seeing its Founder aright... What, then, is fitting for those who are within, excepting with a cry brought forth from their inmost hearts to invoke His aid,... so that the smoke may be dissipated...and the light of the sun...may be admitted" (R 1:15). "He, therefore, whose aid is needed...for the darkness of ignorance and the smoke of vices, is He, we say, who is called the true Prophet, who alone can enlighten the souls of men,... For otherwise it is impossible to get knowledge of divine and eternal things, unless one learns of that true Prophet" (R 1:16). "For this is peculiar to the Prophet, to declare the truth, even as it is peculiar to the sun to bring the day" (H 2:6).

The doctrine of the True Prophet is the most salient Ebionite Christian belief. This is attested to by Epiphanius, who as Bishop on the island of Cyprus had Ebionites within his diocese towards the end of the fourth century: "Christ they call the Prophet of Truth and 'Christ, the Son of God' on account of...the exaltation which descended upon him from above..." (Panarion 30:18:5). This refers to the adoptionist Christology of the Ebionites, where the man Jesus is elevated to the station of Prophet-Messiahship symbolized by the descent of the Holy Spirit at the river Jordan, where Jesus is "born" as the "beloved" Son of God (H 3:53; R 1:48). A distinction obtains here between Jesus and Christ. Christ the heavenly Spirit is "born" into the man Jesus at the age of thirty, thus becoming the genius or light of God within Jesus. In other words, this is when Jesus is transformed into, as the KP states, "the good one having been begotten from the most beautiful change of God" (H 20:8).

Not only is Jesus the true Prophet, but Moses also. Hence, "through both" Moses and Jesus "one and the same teaching becomes known" states the KP, and "God accepts those who believe in one of them" (H 8:6). The Ebionite St. Peter concludes: "but if a man has been considered worthy to know both teachers as heralds of a single doctrine, then that man is counted rich in God" (H 8:7). But Peter cautions: "Neither is there salvation in believing in teachers and calling them lords" (H 8:5). For the KP belief is only half of faith; its completion is in its internalization within the person, expressing itself in action, whereby words become actuated into deeds: "But salvation is in this, that you do His will of whom you have conceived a love...; lest that saying of His be addressed to you which He spoke, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not what I say?'" (R 4:5). The essence of salvation is expressed so: "Therefore the love of men towards God is sufficient for salvation" (H 3:8). However, love of God is judged by deeds, not words: "For the time is short, and the judgment of God will be occupied with deeds, not questions" (R 2:20).

Striking is the fact that not only Moses and Jesus but Adam and all the Patriarchs are considered to be manifestations of the true Prophet. There is a curious oscillation between the one and the many in this KP belief. On the one hand, "this true Prophet is the Christ" (R 1:44), "the eternal Christ" (R 1:43), "the only true Prophet" (H 3:21). Yet, at the same time, the KP asserts: "But he would act most piously, if he...should say that He alone the true Prophet has it, who has changed His forms and His names from the beginning of the world, and so reappeared again and again in the world, until coming upon His own times, and being anointed with mercy for the works of God, He shall enjoy rest forever" (H 3:20). Peter in the KP states that the Father was "revealed ...from the beginning...to Moses, so also to the other Prophets" (R 2:48 whom Simon the magician had just enumerated as seven: Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses (R 2:47; H 17:4; cf. H 18:13-14 not KP, calling these "the seven pillars of the world"). The great scholar Hans Joachim Schoeps correlates the one and the seven by commenting that the Ebionite sources "betray a certain vacillation between manifestation and incarnation in the mode of the presence of the Shekinah in the bearers of the Spirit of revelation, who are, in any event, brought into a unity through this Spirit."¹¹ In this sense, Jesus incarnates the Christ-Spirit but not the monarchical God.

This Ebionite doctrine of progressive revelation through the true Prophet has its roots in and was prefigured by Prophet Messianism. It is interesting that the first-century Judaic world nourished a hope for not one but three Messiahs: a Warrior-King, like David; a Priest supreme, like Elijah; and a Prophet, like unto Moses. The Qumran Covenanters awaited the advent of "the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel" (IQS 9:11). This same eschatological trio is alluded to again in the Testimonia or Messianic Anthology of Qumran.¹² Its pesher midrash on Deut 18:18-19 has been identified as from the tenth commandment in the Samaritan decalogue.¹³ Eusebius reports that "the Samaritans were persuaded that Dositheus, who arose after the times of the Savior, was the very prophet whom Moses predicted; they were deceived by him, so that they said he was the Christ" (Theophany 4:35).¹⁴ If Eusebius' record is accurate, the association of the terms "prophet" and "Christ" or Messiah would show that a Prophet-Messiah expectation was then quite alive, as the Gospel of John also attests in its first chapter, where the Jewish priests enquire after whether or not the Baptist was either the Christ, or Elijah, or "that Prophet". The KP affirms, "for what in the present age is more glorious than a prophet, more illustrious than a priest, more exalted than a king?" (R 1:46).

The KP is most convincingly traced to Coele-Syria ("Hollow Syria") as its area of origin. Koester acknowledges this as the most widely-accepted determination.¹⁵ Coele-Syria is usually distinguished from northern or Upper Syria (Antioch region), as well as from the Osrhoene (capital: Edessa) or East (or better Northeast) Syria. Thus West Syria most closely defines Coele-Syria, the Lebanese Beqa' (Valley of Lebanon), situated between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon Mountains. A curious pattern of apostolic tradition obtains here: 1) a Peter tradition dominates Coele-Syria; 2) a Judas Thomas tradition occupies Osrhoene (especially Edessa); and 3) a Paul veneration is pronounced throughout Asia Minor, northeast of Upper Syria, with Antioch claiming both Peter and Paul.¹⁶

Did Prophet-Christology die out along with the Ebionites? When did this form of Oriental Christianity become extinct. What perpetuating influence, if any, did Ebionite ideas impress on subsequent history?

It appears that Ebionite communities were distributed throughout Transjordan and all parts of Syria, the entire region bordering on Arabia.¹⁷ In addition to the patristic evidence, there are villages around Damascus with the name of "Menim"--which, it has been suggested, manifest the presence of minim, a Jewish stigma denoting "heretics", by which term Ebionite Christians were branded.¹⁸ Continuing south, Adnan Hadidi, Director of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, informed me that the joint Sydney-Wooster Expedition will be carrying on another season in 1983 of archaeological excavations at Pella, the most famous center of Ebionites, according to most ancient reports.¹⁹ For example, in speaking of the Ebionites, Epiphanius relates: "Their origin goes back to the time after the capture of Jerusalem. For after all those who believed in Christ had generally come to live in Perea, in a city called Pella" (Panarion 30:2:7). The Cyprian bishop further explains: "When the city (sc. Jerusalem) was about to be taken by the Romans, it was revealed in advance to all the disciples by an angel of God that they should remove from the city, as it was going to be completely destroyed. They sojourned as emigrants in Pella...in Transjordania."²⁰ Hans Joachim Schoeps believed an allusion to the Pella-flight was to be found in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, where the sun-moon-and-star-robed takes refuge into the wilderness.²¹ Against the authenticity of the Pella-story, however, is Gerd Ludemann of Vanderbilt, who is co-chairman of the five-year SBL Jewish Christianity Seminar.²² In any event, even Prof. Ludemann concedes (in a footnote) that there must have been Ebionites in the city of Pella and the surrounding territory, leaving only their claim to apostolic ancestry to be in question.²³

With Epiphanius' locations for the Ebionites found to be a generally trustworthy "historical geography", as it were, the following statement of his is indeed crucial to our trajectory: "But now I am told from other sources of his (Ebion's) connection with...Arabia far and wide" (Pan 30:2:9/tr. Finegan).²⁴ Epiphanius uses the term "Arabia" quite loosely, but the association is inviting, in trying to determine a trajectory for Ebionite Christology after the last record of their existence by Theodoret of Cyr in the middle of the fifth century.²⁵ We would have two centuries to account for to support the tantalizing hypothesis, advanced by Schlatter, Harnack, Tor Andrae,

Schoeps, and others²⁶ that, over the course of time, Ebionites along with Sabian baptists appear, as Epiphanius indicates, to penetrate Arabia. The ensuing fertilization of ideas invites the rest of the hypothesis, viz., that Muhammad's Qur'ān echoes Ebionite prophetology. Quispel has pointed out that the Quranic reference to Sabians (S 5:73; 2:59; 22:17) encompasses not only the so-called "Christians of St. John"--the Mandaeans--but also the Elkesaites, a Jewish Christian baptist movement into which, thanks to the newly-discovered Cologne Mani Codex, we find the founder of Manichaeism to have been born.²⁷ The Elkesaites are related ideologically to the Ebionites, as most of the Church heresy-fighters were quick to point out.

The Cologne Mani Codex, the discovery of which was announced in 1970, reports that at the age of four, Mani joined, along with his father, a community called "Baptizers", from whom he broke when he was twenty-four. The CMC goes on to state that the founder of this Baptist sect was Alchasaïos²⁸ or Elxai. It is interesting that some of the baptists were so impressed by Mani's powers as a theologian that they regarded him as the True Prophet and as the incarnation of the Living Logos.²⁹ Mani, who was perhaps the first person in history ever to have consciously pursued the role of a world-prophet,³⁰ also claimed to be "the seal of the prophets"--which title Muhammad would later also adopt.³¹

That the Qur'ān might refer to Jewish Christian baptists does not in itself establish a link with Ebionism in any direct sense. In the absence of any further historical data, therefore, how should we proceed? What methodology should be pursued? Ludemann, in approaching the historicity of the Ebionites' relation to the mother church in Jerusalem, provides a course to follow. He states: "As in historical-Jesus research, where literary criticism, form-criticism and redaction criticism are done first (a methodological procedure which has yielded unexpected insights into the self-understanding of the people who transmitted the traditions about Jesus), so a thorough analysis of the relevant Pella texts should precede a judgment on the historicity of the flight to Pella."³² In adapting this course for our purposes, let us examine the Qur'ān itself to find out if correspondences to Ebionite prophetology do in fact present themselves in the Quranic text.

The Qur'ān is a collection of 114 revelations of Muhammad, a distant parallel afforded by the Gospel according to Thomas, composed of 114 sayings of Jesus.³³ Of all 114 Surahs, the nineteenth, called the Surah of Mary, stands out as the most important formulation of Muhammad's position on Christianity. I state this because the Surah of Mary was articulated just prior to the departure of the first Muslim refugees to the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. There, seeking religious asylum, the persecuted Muslims would doubtless be obliged to present, when questioned, the "Christianity of the Qur'ān" which, if tolerable, could find sanctuary under Abyssinian protection.

In the year 615, ~~the hostile~~ ^{the hostile} Quraysh tribe dispatched two ambassadors to the court of the Negus of Ethiopia, to dissuade the Monarch from harboring those Muslims who had just emigrated ^{there} from Mecca. The King summoned, according to the earliest biography of Muhammad, to his court representatives from among the Muslims, for whom Ja'far ibn Abī-Ṭalīb was the spokesman. Present also in the court were the learned bishops with their sacred books and scrolls. The Negus was curious as to the nature of the new religion and for what reason Muslims chose not to enter his, the Christian religion. After Ja'far described the plight of the Muslims and what they had suffered at the hands of the Quraysh, the Monarch asked Ja'far if the Muslims had brought with them anything which had come from God. When Ja'far said that they had, the Negus commanded Ja'far to read it to him. This is what the ruler must have heard, in full or in part, if the story is history:

He (Jesus) said: "I am indeed
A servant of God:
He hath given me
Revelation and made me
A Prophet...

Such (was) Jesus the son
Of Mary: (it is) a statement
Of truth, about which
They (vainly) dispute.

It is not befitting
To (the majesty of) God
That He should beget
A son...

But the sects differ
Among themselves...

(Also) mention in the Book
(The story of) Abraham:
He was a man of Truth,
A Prophet...

We bestowed on him
Isaac and Jacob, and each one
Of them We made a Prophet...

And We granted them
...the tongue
Of truth...

Also mention in the Book
(The story of) Moses:
For he was specially chosen,
And he was an Apostle
(And) a Prophet...

Also mention in the Book
The case of Enoch;
He was a man of truth,
A Prophet...

Those were some
Of the Prophets on whom
God did bestow His Grace,--
Of the posterity of Adam,...
Noah...
We guided and chose...

Then shall We certainly
Drag out from every sect
All those who were worst
In obstinate rebellion
Against (God) Most Gracious...

They say: "(God) Most Gracious
Has begotten a son!"

Indeed ye have put forth
A thing most monstrous!

At it the skies are ready
To burst, the earth
To split asunder, and
The mountains to fall down
In utter ruin,

That they should invoke
A son for (God) Most Gracious.

On those who believe
And work deeds of righteousness
Will (God) Most Gracious
Bestow Love.³⁴

Tradition relates that upon hearing verses from the Surah of Mary, the Negus wept until his beard was wet, and then said, "Of a truth, this and what Jesus brought have come from the same niche."³⁵

All this is only part of legend surrounding the Abyssinian king, but historians concur that ^{the} Negus was friendly to the Prophet's followers and favorably disposed towards the Prophet himself.

The Qur'ān's almost hypnotically-recurrent association of Prophets with Truth reads like some kind of prophetological litany. Indeed, elsewhere in the Qur'ān are concepts which evoke an ultra-Ebionitic concern over preserving the Monarchy of God: "God doth not command you to take...Prophets as Lords" (S 3:74) sounds like the KP which states: "Neither is there salvation in believing in teachers and calling them Lords" (H 8:5). An Adam/Christ parallel is even made in the Qur'ān: "Verily, Jesus is as Adam in the sight of God" (S 3:52). This concept again corresponds to the KP in which we find "the Man Adam fashioned by the hands of God...had the Holy Spirit of Christ" (H 3:20). The Qur'ān, which makes no distinctions in essence among the Prophets (S 2:285; 3:78), agrees with the KP's designation of all Prophets of God as "the only true Prophet" (H 3:21). This brotherhood of Prophets is perceived to be such a unity that Muhammad in the Qur'ān can assert: "He who warneth you is one of the Warners of old" (S 53:57).

It is interesting to speculate as to why the Negus was ^{open to} so Muhammad's perspective on Christianity. The whole situation makes perfect sense once one learns of the Ethiopian Jewish Christianity only recently rediscovered, primarily through the researches of Prof. Ephraim Isaac of Princeton.³⁶ As background, we may recall that many cultural affinities between Arabia and Ethiopia were observed by ancient travellers.³⁷ This is natural, for both countries form the two shores of the Arabian Gulf. Furthermore, the dates of 335-370 and 525-575 A.D. can firmly be established as periods of Ethiopian cultural superiority

over South Arabia.³⁸ Since the year 330, the official religion of Ethiopia was Christianity, so far as we know.³⁹ During the fourth through the sixth centuries, many Christians flocked into Ethiopia. That many of those were from Syria is "beyond question".⁴⁰ The first Ethiopian ruler to embrace Christianity, it is generally agreed, was Esana (c. 320-350). Inscriptions and coins from that reign are surprisingly free from the orthodox trinitarian formula, with "the Lord of the Heavens" invoked instead.⁴¹

In fact, an anti-trinitarian stance in pre-Islamic Ethiopia was adopted by such leaders as Za-Michael and Asqa (5th-6th c.), who professed the unity of God. Another Jewish Christian, Fre Mahbar, taught a metaphorical reformulation of the Trinity while conserving the monarchy of God: "The Father is the Sun, the Son is the Light, and the Holy Spirit is the Warmth of it."⁴² This Ethiopian Jewish Christianity Prof. Isaac calls "Za-Michaelianism". It was soon suppressed by its rival Monophysitism, which supplanted Za-Michaelianism.⁴³

Also significant is the place in Ethiopian scripture which pseudo-Clementine apocrypha was to occupy. Qalementos--the Ethiopian form of Clement--was in legend the intermediary through whom the Apostles passed their teaching. Eight such books ascribed to Qalementos became known as the Octateuch of Clement, which even secured a place in the Ethiopian NT canon.⁴⁴ Other Pseudo-Clementine works circulated in Ethiopic translation. Does the awesome possibility that the lost Kerygmata Petrou might indeed survive among the unsearched Clementine sources have any validity? Professor Isaac responded to this in a letter to the present writer dated 4/30/82:

"Concerning your question about the possibility of Kerygmata Petrou being found in Ethiopic sources, this is indeed a very important question; and about five years ago I started examining some of the Ethiopic Pseudo-Clementine sources precisely with a view to it. Alas, due to other scholarly and personal distractions, I had to put it aside and I have not been able to return to it... In the meantime, let me suggest that perhaps you can take up this matter as your own project for study."

Prophet-Christology evidently persisted in Semitic milieus for several centuries to come. Among Jewish authors, Saadia (d. 942) states that a sect of Christians then living accorded to Jesus "the position of Prophet only."⁴⁵ Another Jewish writer, the Qaraite Qirqisani, in the Book of Lights (937 A.D.) that "Jesus was a righteous man" but that "it was Paul who invested Jesus with divinity."⁴⁶ An Arabic Jewish treatise of tenth-century authorship declares that Jesus "wanted that all should know...that he did not claim to be divine... (or) that he and his Father are one God or that, unlike the other prophets, he worked miracles without imploring God." This treatise goes on to cite Peter's use of Deut 18:15f., then urges all Christians to study Peter's proof-text, in order to bring Christians to the realization that: "Moses spoke true, if Jesus is (meant) by these words. You are accordingly obliged to admit that he (Jesus) is a prophet like (Moses)...subordinate to God. Thus there is an end to the contention that he is Lord and Creator." Paul is then criticized.⁴⁷

A further witness to the persistence of Prophet-Christology in a Semitic culture is the 'Abd al-Jabbar text in which Shlomo Pines of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem detected a new Jewish Christian source.⁴⁸ This discovery in 1966 created a small sensation and led to wildly emotional controversy.⁴⁹ The 'Abd al-Jabbar text explains that the lost original of the "true Gospel" had "no mention of the cross or the crucifixion" The text also states: "A group of Christians left Jerusalem and came to Antioch and other towns of Syria." Pines' new Jewish Christian source seems to imply that Jesus' station was that of a Prophet, while Paul is taken to task for "Romanizing" Christianity.⁵⁰ It is an interesting phenomenon that Prophet-Christology is often associated with an anti-Paulinism characteristic of the Ebionites. Source-analysis of Muslim polemical texts is a young field, and such "source-mining" as Pines has done may in the future yield more data on currents of Jewish Christianity running through Arabian history.

The latest effort in this direction is the French translation and critical study, published in 1977, of the Gospel of Barnabas.⁵¹ A medieval pseudo-gospel, this work has become the darling of Muslim apologetics. Yet, upon close examination, Barnabas suddenly becomes much more than an apologetic forgery when its Jewish Christian character

falls into focus. An example of this is the fact that Muhammad is called a "Messiah" in this spurious work, a possible explanation being the projection of Prophet Messianism onto Muhammad, when the author sought to draw a parallel between Jesus and the Arabian Prophet. That other features of this curious text, composed either in the 14th or the 16th century (depending on the argument), are of Jewish Christian provenance is explored throughout the entire volume. Of especial importance, not for scholarship but for ecumenism, is the preface written by the great French Islamicist, Henri Corbin who, in accepting the hypothesis of an Ebionitic, pre-medieval stratum for Barnabas, raises its implications for those who are able to discern a Harmonia Abrahamica among the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic faiths.⁵²

Leaping from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, surfacing in 1890 in India is the New Nazarene Church--a short-lived organization which may be regarded as a conscious revival of Ebionite Christianity. The founder of the New Nazarene Church--E.J.S. White of Kurnool--sought to unite Muslims with Christians through this communion. White advanced the oversimplified argument that "Islam has always been...the mere perversion of the Nazarene or Ebionite sect" which "maintained the pure doctrine" of Jesus, "having nothing to do with ...Paul."⁵³ At the same time in India, the famous Muslim theologian Sayyid Ahmad Khan praised the Ebionites as "early Unitarians" who, like the Muslims, professed an anti-trinitarian God.⁵⁴ I cannot determine whether or not Khan influenced the renown Bengali apologist, Sayyid Ameer Ali, who in 1906 wrote a now-famous^{and} widely-reprinted essay for The Hibbert Journal, the essay entitled, "Christianity from the Islamic Standpoint". The position is similar; he states: "The Moslem belief probably is in accord with that of the primitive Christians--of the Ebionites, 'the sect of the poor', to whom Jesus had preached and among whom he had lived. It has nothing in common with Pauline Christianity."⁵⁵

At last our trajectory takes us to Persia, where the Faith of Bahā'u'llāh originated in the 19th-century, and from thence to Germany to the keen mind of one of the Bahā'ī Faith's ablest apologists, Dr. Udo Schaefer.

Most of what are known as "world religions" trace their roots to the Middle East. Persia (now Iran) proved particularly fertile in this regard, being the land (and thought-world) where Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Mazdakism, and, to a great extent, Sufism, were born. There also was born, in 1844, Bābism, an apocalyptic movement of millenarian character,⁵⁶ drawn to which was a Persian nobleman, Mīrzā Ḥusayn-'Alī Nūrī, later surnamed Bahā'u'llāh.

Arrested during the Bābī purge in 1852, Bahā'u'llāh was held for four months in an underground dungeon known as Sīyāh-Chāl, "The Black Pit". Mystical dreams and visions, along with the sensation that a torrent of consciousness was streaming down the crown of his head onto his chest, awoke Bahā'u'llāh to his destiny as a Prophet. During the forty years to follow, Bahā'u'llāh, from prisons in Iraq, Turkey, and Palestine, wrote an impressive number of works. Though some were destroyed by enemies, around 100 volumes survive in Arabic and Persian.

The theophanology of Bahā'u'llāh, including its Christology, begins with the concept of God as "the Unknowable Essence" Who, in complete transcendence, is beyond the reach and ken of men, save for traces of God's attributes in nature. The metaphysical link between the Invisible Spirit's "fathomless mystery" and the world of man is what Bahā'u'llāh calls the "Theophany" or "Manifestation of God" (zuhūr ilāhī, or, mazhar ilāhī).⁵⁷ Bahā'u'llāh's picture is thus:

"Know thou that, verily, the Manifestation...is the Mystery of Oneness, of the Ancient Identity,...the Unknowable Reality... He is a sea upon which no one can sail, inasmuch as all that thou mayest see in heaven and earth is created by His Word... As to the human temples, verily they are as thrones for His Manifestation... Consider a goldsmith: verily, he makes a ring, and although he is its maker, yet he adorns his finger with it. Likewise God the Exalted appears in the clothing of the creatures."⁵⁸

The Prophet/Theophany is a Messianic genius for the age into which he is born. Bahā'u'llāh asserts an "essential unity" among all the Prophets, this mystical brotherhood transparent to those who perceive essence within form. Bahā'u'llāh writes:

"It is clear...that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, ...proclaiming the same Faith." 59

This is akin to the Ebionite idea of Prophets, all of whom are in essence "the one True Prophet". Proceeding now to Bahā'u'llāh's Christology, we may say of it that Jesus is viewed as "the Messiah and Prophet of God" but that the generality of mankind has an impoverished appreciation of Christ's true greatness. Bahā'u'llāh refers to Jesus as "that peerless Beauty" who "sung...in accents of majestic power".⁶⁰ Also called "that Essence of the Spirit" and "the Revealer of the unseen Beauty" as well as "that most pure Spirit"⁶¹ Jesus is eulogized by Bahā'u'llāh while discoursing on the significance of the Crucifixion:

"Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things... Through Him the leper recovered from the leprosy of perversity and ignorance. Through Him the unchaste and the wayward were healed. Through His power, born of Almighty God, the eyes of the blind were opened and the soul of the sinner sanctified... He it is who purified the world..."⁶²

This description bears close conceptual resemblance to the Ebionite portrayal of Jesus' death: "...though He cured every sickness..., wrought innumerable miracles, and preached eternal life, (Jesus) was hurried by wicked men to the cross; which deed was, however, by His power turned to good. In short, while He was suffering, all the world suffered with Him; for the sun was darkened, the mountains torn asunder... And yet, though all the world was moved, they themselves are not even now moved to the consideration of these so great things" (R 1:41).

The relationship of Bahā'ī theophanology to Ebionite prophetology through their remarkably consonant Christologies was formally proposed by acclaimed Bahā'ī apologist, Dr. Udo Schaefer of West Germany. The

translation into English of five essays was published as a book, titled, The Light Shinneth in Darkness, in 1977. The small volume received a favorable review by Choice magazine--a much-used tool university librarians swear by--and was subsequently recommended by Choice as one of its top 250 academic titles endorsed for the year 1978.⁶³ Dr. Schaefer, whose profession is prosecuting attorney in Heidelberg, takes Christian dogma to task for deforming Jesus' teaching. Schaefer then states:

"Years ago, when I became acquainted with the founder of the Christian religion in the faith of the original community through H. J. Schoeps' Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums, the standard work on the subject, I was deeply impressed. Here Jesus was not the only-begotten Son of God come down from Heaven, crucified and resurrected, nor the unique Saviour, but the messenger of God to whom the Qur'ān testifies and who is glorified by Bahā'u'llāh...

"It is worthy of note that there were striking similarities between this Christianity and Islam. Above all in Christology: in the faith of the original community Jesus was the new Moses, the Son of God as 'testified' by the adoptive act of baptism. This Christology, which corresponds completely to that of the Qur'ān, was considered by the Pauline Church as characteristic of the Ebionite heresy. These similarities discovered by research are ambiguous, of course. On the other hand, the Bahā'ī, oriented towards the doctrine of cyclically recurring revelation and convinced of the mission of Islam, finds these results of research--in the light of the unity of religions--extremely instructive, because they are a sufficient explanation for the discrepancy between orthodox Church doctrine and the doctrine of the post-biblical religions, and because they show where the original truth was preserved: not in the pagan-Christian Greater Church based on Paul, but in the Jewish Christianity contemptuously branded as 'Ebionism'."⁶⁴

Our "trajectory" of Ebionite Christology has arced through twenty centuries to the present. Yet the ideological projectile is still in flight, as ballistical as ever. In assessing its ecumenical potential, a Quaker scholar in 1977 wrote:

"Early Jewish Christianity may be able to offer a model of faith for some contemporary individuals who are aware of the essential Jewishness of Christianity's origins and who do not hold the traditional Christian doctrines of the person and work of Jesus. This model may be expected to have considerable appeal for those who in integrity cannot accept Jesus as a divine savior from sin, but who find themselves stirred and motivated by his re-statement of the ancient prophetic call for righteousness and justice before God."⁶⁵

In conclusion, perhaps it is this "ancient prophetic call" which augments Bahā'u'llāh's theory that "all the Prophets of God proclaim the same Faith."

Christopher Buck
April 9th, 1983
Bellingham, Washington

- 1 A. Bausani, "Can Monotheism be taught? (Further considerations on the typology of Monotheism)," Numen 10 (1963) 167-201 (168).
- 2 K. Wagtendonk, "Muhammad and the Qur'ān: Criteria for Muhammad's prophecy," Liber Amicorum: Studies in Honour of Professor Dr. C.J. Bleeker (Leiden: Brill, 1969) 254-68.
- 3 J. McLean, "The Deification of Jesus," World Order 14 (1980) 23-45; W. Meeks, "Moses as God and King," Religions in Antiquity (Goodenough Festschrift; Brill, 1968) 354-71.
- 4 J. Knox, "The 'Prophet' in New Testament Christology," Lux in Lumine: Essays to honor W. Norman Pittenger (ed. R.A. Norris; New York, 1966) 23-34.
- 5 Cardinal J. Danielou, "Christianity as a Jewish Sect," The Crucible of Christianity (ed. A. Toynbee; New York: World, 1969) 275; studies on Ebionite and Jewish Christianity in general are bibliographed in F. Manns, Bibliographie du Judeo-Christianisme (Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1979); G.A. Koch, A Critical Investigation of Epiphanius' Knowledge of the Ebionites: A Translation and Critical Discussion of Panarion 30 (Ph.D.: University of Pennsylvania, 1976; now University Microfilms); F.S. Jones, "The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research, Parts I & II," Second Century 2 (1982) 1-33; 63-96.
- 6 Quispel, "Gnosis and the New Sayings of Jesus," Sinn und Wanlungen des Menschenbildes, ErJb 38 (1969; Brill, 1972) 266.
- 7 G. Strecker, Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen, (TU 70, 2nd ed. rev.; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981 [1st ed., 1958]) 1-34.
- 8 C. Renoux, "Fragments Armeniens des Recognitiones du Pseudo-Clement," OrChr 62 (1978) 103-13 (not noted in Jones' survey).
- 9 Jones, op. cit., 3-7.
- 10 "I now regard a simplified procedure as admissible and more promising, viz., that of considering separately those parts of the [Pseudo-Clementine] novel in both recensions which clearly were heterodox Jewish Christian in character--the heterodox catalogue in R 3:75 is of service, although it is secondary--to the extent that they are attested to as such by other sources (the rabbinic writings, Symmachus, and the Church Fathers, especially Epiphanius," (Schoeps, Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) 52-3.

10 Jones (op. cit., 17) notes that Schoeps later abandoned every effort (along with his own) to reconstruct KP; R 3:75 is to be regarded as a fiction of the Recognitionist, Schoeps conceded. Strecker, however, upheld nevertheless the thesis of a KP source and identified, on the basis of parallels in H and R to Epistula Petri (EpPt) and Contestatio (Cont), the doctrines of KP. While Strecker's defence of KP has widely favored in the scholarly world to date, two challenges have come to fore: 1) Rius-Camps ("Las Pseudoclementinas. Bases filológicas para nueva interpretación," Revista Catalana de Teologia 1 (1976) 79-158) found, on the basis of vocabulary, the pericopes usually attributed to KP in actuality derived from various literary levels; while 2) Wehnert ("Zum gegenwertigen Stand der Quellenkritik in den Pseudoklementinen," [unpublished paper: Gottingen, 1981] who had access to a draft of the forthcoming concordance to the PsC, asserts that an analysis of vocabulary in the PsC fails to confirm Strecker's attribution of PsC texts to KP.

Of course the whole effort to plot a trajectory of Ebionite Christology based on the KP source absolutely collapses if KP never existed at all! It will be interesting to see how Strecker will defend KP, which he continued to maintain in the revision of his monograph in 1981. As to my own defense of KP, I must question conclusions based on vocabulary found in redaction (H and R are redactions of G [Grundchrift (basic writing) behind the PsC] and translation (R, esp. Rufinus' translation). Even Wehnert admits G (which he hopes the concordance will help delineate), and unless H and R make no alterations of G, vocabulary-analysis would apply more to the Homilist and the Recognitionist rather than to the author of the basic-writing which H and R have adapted. In the case of Rufinus, Frankenberg, Schwartz, and Rius-Camps (Jones, op. cit., 5) stress how the Syriac reveals grievous weaknesses in Rufinus' translation. (For an alternative assessment, see M.M. Wagner, Rufinus, the Translator (Wash., D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1945) which is not consulted in Jones' survey.)

For our study, we will proceed from the assumption that Ebionites did indeed exist; otherwise the Church Fathers are fabricators of imaginary heretics, and in this we would obviously abandon KP. But we must also ^{argue} that if there were Ebionite Christians ~~then~~ there were Ebionite scriptures. That some of those scriptures were ascribed to

10 Peter through (pseudo-) Clement is of course the testimony of our star witness Epiphanius (Panarion 30:15:1). Since Epiphanius did live on the island of Cyprus, we may concur with Klijn and Reinink (Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects (Leiden: Brill, 1973) p. 29) who are persuaded that Epiphanius' statement as to the presence of Ebionites on Cyprus in his own time "may be the result of his own observation."

Even those in whose eyes KP is a literary fiction of the PsC (Rehm and now Rius-Camps) admit Ebionitic elements in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies and Recognitions ! (See Jones, op. cit., p. 95, where it is also noted that the other major detractor of the KP thesis-- J. Wehnert--"did not clearly draw out the implicit consequences of his work for the study of Jewish Christianity in the PsC." That Strecker, who is now the major proponent of a KP source, is disinclined to call KP an Ebionite work because 1) KP is not self-consciously Ebionite; 2) the ideal of poverty is absent; and 3)aa sectarian situation is not apparent, is answerable:

1) That the author of KP does not call himself an Ebionite would make sense if both the Homilist and the Recognitionist intended their adaptations of KP to enjoy a wide circulation and thus fulfill its didactic or edifying purpose? How could the Recognitions have survived in over 100 monasteries over centuries of documentary "inquisitions" if portions of the texts were professedly Ebionite? Even the New Testament writings are not professedly "Christian", except for Acts 26:28 and 1 Pet 4:16! Does this fact cast doubt on their "Christian" identity? Perhaps a reason why KP is not extant in its entirety is entirely due to its Ebionite identity, which in the PsC had to therefore be concealed to escape destruction; 2) The ideal of poverty, so characteristic of the Ebionites in patristic accounts, is not prominent in KP, it is agreed. Yet we find the statement: "To all of us possessions are sins" (H 15:9). We cannot realistically expect the patristic evidence to match exactly the documentary evidence, as was pointed out in a recent conference on Gnosticism:

10

Stone: The rush to compare the heresiologists' report to the insiders' self-description is useless. The two will never be the same. Look at the conflict between what one group says about itself and how another group sees them in our present society of Jew and Christian, Roman Catholic and Lutheran, etc. Why should we expect antiquity to be otherwise?

MacRae: Your point is methodologically sound. (The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale...March 28-31, 1978 (ed. B. Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1981) Vol. 72, p. 674).

3) A covertly sectarian situation is visible in the AJ II portion of KP (Schoeps considered the Anabathmoi Iakobou [=R 1:33-71] of the PsC [=AJ II, as compared to AJ I of Panarion 30:16:6-7] to have been incorporated into KP), and perhaps doubly so: a) The tumult raised by Saul in R 1:70 ("some one of our enemies"--a marginal note in one of the mss. of R states that this enemy was Saul) may well be an anti-Paulinism betraying a sectarian situation within Christianity; while the pericope that follows (R 1:71) speaks of the exodus of 5000 Jerusalem Christians to Jericho (= Pella?), this with reference to the sectarian conflict of Christian Jews or "Messianic Jews" vs. Pharisaic Jewry. Corroborative of this is R 1:46, which states: "For on this point only [that Christ is the Mosaic Prophet-Messiah] does there seem to be any difference between us who believe in Jesus, and the unbelieving Jews." The passage goes on to speak of "the Church of the Lord which was constituted in Jerusalem..., being governed by James." Against Strecker, therefore, I do support the identity of KP as Ebionite.

Before Schoeps towards the end of his life gave up the Ebionite ghost, so to speak, and turned to the history of Prussian Jewry, he demarcated KP in the following table:

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Eccl. 15:10-12</u>
M 3:10-20	
M 3:25-27; 35, 38-52	
M 3:2-10; 17-28; 33-50	
M 3:4-23	
M 9:1-23	
M 11:15; 19-33; 35	
M 15:5-11	
M 16:5-11; 21	
M 17:3-19	
M 28:1-10; 18-21	
H	

KERYGMATA PETROU

<u>Homilies</u>	<u>Recognitions</u>
H 1:18-20	R 1:15-17
H 2:16-18	:22
:33	:24
:38-52	:27-71
H 3:2-10	:74
:17-28	R 2:20-48
:33-56	:66-70
H 8:4-23	R 3:2-10
H 9:1-23	:12-30
H 11:16	:33-38
:19-33	:52-61
:35	R 4:1-21
H 15:5-11	:26-36
H 16:5-16	R 5:34-35
:21	R 6:4-14
H 17:3-19	
H 18:6-10	
:19-22	
H 19:1-23	
H 20-1-10	

(From Schoeps' Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums (Tubingen: Mohr, 1949) pp. 52-3. An alternate table is provided by J. Fitzmyer, "The Qumran Scrolls, the Ebionites and their Literature," TS 16 (1955) 350, reprinted in idem, Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974), where the KP passages identified by Waitz, as modified by Bousset and Cullman, are given. Fitzmyer's table has one error: Schoeps' addition should read R 4:26-36, not R 4:25-26.) The KP excerpts which follow in our study are primarily drawn from the standard (though outdated) translations of R and H in Vol. 8 of the Ante-Nicene Fathers (Eerdmans, 1981 reprint). I have so far not been able to access Whiston (the able and oft-reprinted translator of Josephus) whose rendering of the Recognitions is not mentioned in Jones, op. cit., nor in most of the other surveys: The Recognitions, or The Travels of Peter (1712), as Vol. 5 of Primitive Christianity Reviv'd.

- 11 Schoeps, Jewish Christianity (1969) p. 71.
- 12 G. Vermes, Jesus the Jew (London: Collins, 1973) pp. 137, 252; see also Fitzmyer, "4Q Testimonia and the New Testament," TS 18 (1957) 513-37, reprinted in Essays..., 513-37.
- 13 P.W. Shekan, "A New Translation of Qumran Texts," CBQ 25 (1963) 121.
- 14 S. Isser, "Dositheus, Jesus, and a Moses Aretology," Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith (ed. J. Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1972) 4., p. 168.

15 H. Koester, "GNŌMAI DIAPHOROI: The Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity," HTR 58 (1965) 279-318 (p. 289 n. 19); reprinted, idem et Robinson, Trajectories through Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) p. 125.

16 ibid., p. 133; see also, E. Bickerman, "La Coele-Syria: Notes de Geographie Historique," RB 54 (1947) 256-68.

17 Distribution of Ebionite Communities Outside of Western Palestine and Galilee

- I. Cyprus (Epiphanius)
- II. Syria
 - A. North Syria
 - 1. Beroea (?) (Epiph/Jerome on Nazoraeans)
 - 2. Antioch (?) (PsC/St. John Chrysostom [?])
 - 3. Laodicea (Origen [Phil. 23] / PsC)
 - B. West Syria (Coele-Syria)
 - 1. Paneas (= Baniyas) (Epiph [boundary w/N. Trans. ?])
 - C. East Syria
 - 1. Kochaba (= Choba) (Eusebius/Jerome/w. of Damascus)
- III. Transjordan
 - A. Northern (= Bashan) (Epiph)
 - 1. Kochaba (Epiph/near Karnaim)
 - B. Central (= Gilead) (Epiph/Eusebius)
 - 1. Pella (Epiph/Eus/Aristo of Ps/Rev 212 [?])
 - C. Southern (= Moab) (Epiph/Eus on Ps 590:10)
- IV. Arabian Nabataea (Epiph)

18 Fr. B. Bagatti, The Church from the Circumcision (Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1971) p. 25. Koch (op. cit., p. 223) points to the modern-day Dayr-Khabyah, this place-name evidently derived from two Arabic roots: dyr ("religious community") and hwb ("poor"). Could this represent the Arabic equivalent of "Community of the Ebionites"? Koch asks.

19 Personal communication dated 9/14/82. For reports on past digs: R.H. Smith, "Pella of the Decapolis: An American-Australian expedition reconstructs 7000 years of history in the Jordan valley," Archaeology 34 (1981) 46-53; also, F.I. Andersen, "Pella of the Decapolis," Buried History (1974) 109-19; A. Spijkerman, "An Unknown Coin-Type of Pella Decapoleos," Studii Biblici Franciscani Liber Annus 2 (1970) 353-58.

20 For the latest critical review of both the ancient reports and modern scholarship on the Pella-flight, see G. Ludemann, "The Successors of Pre-70 Jerusalem Christianity: A Critical Evaluation of the Pella-Tradition," Jewish and Christian Self-Definition: 1. The Shaping of

- 20 Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries (ed. E.P. Sanders; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 161-73, 245-54.
- 21 Schoeps, "Ebionitische Apokalyptik im Neuen Testament," ZNW 51 (1960) 101-11. An English Abstract: "The voluntary exodus of the Jewish Christian church to Pella immediately prior to the Jewish war 66-70 A.D. was the result of a secret prophecy in Jewish apocalyptic style in its Ebionite form. It has its reflection in the apocalyptic passage of Matt 24 and parallels, as well as in Rev 12:4-17. And the exhortation of Galilee (which at the time included Transjordan) as the land of promise and resurrection (cf. Matt 4:4-16; Mark 14:28 and 16f.)." Although Schoeps does not refer to it, the first to see in Rev 12 an allusion to the Pella exodus was, to my knowledge, Renan (Antichrist [Boston, 1897] pp. 317-18).
- 22 Ludemann, op. cit.
- 23 ibid., p. 253: "Epiphanius enumerates several places not far away from Pella: Moabitis, Kokabe, Basanitis (30:18:1). From his statement that Ebion's preaching originated in Pella (30:2:7), one may conclude that these groups, who claimed to be the poor of apostolic times, were also living at Pella. Or are they even the inventors of the Pella-tradition?"
- 24 J. Finegan, Hidden Records of the Life of Jesus (Philadelphia: Pilgrim, 1969) "Jewish Christianity," pp. 46-59 (tr. of Pan 30:2:9 on p. 57).
- 25 For instance, Epiphanius refers to Kochaba as being "in Arabia" (40:1:5)
- 26 Theodoret states: "And a remnant of these did a long time remain neither of the Cerinthians, nor of the Ebionites, nor of the Theodotians and the Elkesaites..." (Patristic Evidence, p. 251);
- 26 Schoeps, Theologie, 334-42; Jewish Christianity, 136-40 and the studies cited; M. Roncaglia, "Elements Ebionites et Elkesaites dans le Coran," Proche-Orient Chretien 21 (1973) 101-26; H.A. Wolfson sums up the general tenor of this trend of thought: "It happens that the Koran, while rejecting the orthodox type of Christology, upholds the Ebionitic type of Christology... We know that Christians as a minority group on Muslim countries were not entirely impervious to Muslim influence. We know also that the Christian Arabic literature, through its discussions of all sides of the Christological problems, had kept alive among Christians in Muslim countries a knowledge of the Ebionitic type of Christology...and also a knowledge of all the arguments in favor of it," Studies in the History and Philosophy of Religion

- 26 (Harvard, 1977) 2. 412-13. The present writer has not yet been able to J. Flanagan's (U of Utah) unpublished study, "Oriental Christians in Pre-Islamic Arabia: A Consideration of a Special Problem of Origin and Development" (1981). Against the Ebionite/Qur'ān hypothesis is J.S. Trimingham, Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times (New York: Longman, 1979) 314-16. Trimingham does not discuss the tradition that Waraqa ibn Nawful (a cousin of Muhammad's first wife Khadija (ibid., p. 263) upon embracing Christianity, wrote down the Gospels in Hebrew or Aramaic! (see Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, 631).
- 27 Quispel, Gnostic Studies: The Gospel of Thomas & Jewish Christianity (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1975) p. 229. A. Henrichs, "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 77 (1973) 23-59. Critical of some of Henrichs results is J.C. Coyle, "The Cologne Mani-Codex and Mani's Christian Connections," Eglise et Theologie 10 (1979) 179-93. Also important is Klijn and Reinink, "Elchasai and Mani," VC 28 (1974) 277-89; for a further analysis of the codex, see Henrichs, "Literary Criticism of the Cologne Mani Codex," The Rediscovery of Gnosticism (1981) 2. Sethian Gnosticism, 724- 33.
- 228 Coyle, p. 180.
- 29 Henrichs, "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists," pp. 54-5: "The doctrine of the 'True Prophet.' The Pseudo-Clementines and Elchasai coincide in that they propagate the cyclic incarnation of the True Prophet... The Cologne Codex has a clear reference to this doctrine. Some of the baptists were so impressed by Mani's performance as a theologian that they regarded him as the True Prophet and the incarnation of the Living Logos (CMC 86:1-9). This doctrine, which lies at the root of Mani's own conception of his apostleship as the concluding stage in a series of incarnations, forms, in combination with the docetism of Marcion and Bardaisan, the basis of Mani's christology."
- 30 F. Mojtabai, "Mani and Shapur," Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute No. 46 (1978) 93-106 (p. 105).
- 31 ibid., p. 100. This claim has been reported by Muslim historians and confirmed by Turfan and Coptic Manichaean writings.. See G. Widengren, Mani and Manichaeism (New York, 1965) p. 77; C.R.C. Allberry, A Manichaean Psalm-Book, Part II, Vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1938) p. 16.
- 32 Ludemann, op. cit., p. 161.

- 33 A possible explanation for this striking coincidence has been hazarded by W. Attallah, "L'Evangile Thomas et le Coran," Arabica 23 (1976) 309-11.
- 34 Yusuf 'Alī's translation.
- 35 Ibn Ishaq, The Life of Muhammad (tr, A. Guillaume; Oxford, 1955) 152. For Bahā'u'llāh (who will be treated later in this paper) this event was impressive, perhaps foreshadowing in Bahā'u'llāh's consciousness the decision to write to the kings and rulers of the 19th-century world (see Bahā'u'llāh's Tablet to the Shah of Persia in Bahā'ī Scriptures, p. 72).
- 36 E. Isaac, "An Obscure Component in Ethiopian Church History: An Examination of Various Theories pertaining to the Problem of the Origin and Nature of Ethiopian Christianity," Le Museon 85 (1972) 225-58; idem, A New Text-Critical Introduction to Mashafa Berhān (Leiden: Brill, 1973), Chapter Four, "The Jewish Christian Background of MB: The State of Jewish Christianity in the Time of its Completion," pp. 53-75; idem, "Another Note on Luke 6:1," JBL 100 (1981) 96-7.
- 37 "Obscure Component...", 234.
- 38 Ibid., 235.
- 39 Ibid., 228.
- 40 Ibid., 240.
- 41 Ibid., 242-43.
- 42 Isaac, Mashafa Berhān, 61.
- 43 Ibid., 54-9.
- 44 On the Ethiopian Octateuch just referred to, see R.W. Cowley, "The Identification of the Ethiopian Octateuch of Clement, and its Relationship to the other Christian Literature," Ostkirchliche Studien 27 (1978) 37-45.
- 45 Wolfson, Studies..., p. 411; S. Pines, "The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source," Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Vol. 2, No. 13 (Jerusalem, 1966) p. 40: "only the rank of a prophet."
- 46 Ibid., p. 47. It is interesting that the Qaraites occasionally called themselves noserim, i.e., the Hebrew name for Christians, and habitually refer to themselves as "the poor" (Pines, p. 48). See also LeoNemoy, "Al-Qirqisani's Account of the Jewish Sects and Christianity," HUCA 7 (1930) 317-97; idem, "The Attitude of the Early Qaraites towards Christianity," Salo W. Brown Jubilee Volume (New York, 1975) 2, 697-716.

- 47 Pines, "Judaean-Christian Materials in an Arabic Jewish Treatise," PAAJR 35 (1967) 187-217 (pp. 197-99).
- 48 Pines, "The Jewish ChristiansAccording to a New Source," (see
49 above; n. 45): Reviews varied wildly: R. M. Wilson, "The New Passion of Jesus in Light of the New Testament and Apocrypha," Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black (ed. E.E. Ellis and M. Wilcox; Edinburgh: Clark, 1969) 264-71; R.A. Kraft, JBL 86 (1967) 329; E. Bammel, "Excerpts from a New Gospel?" NovT 10 (1968) 1-9; S.M. Stern, "New Light on Judaean-Christianity?" Encounter 10 (1967) 53-7; D. Flusser, "The Conclusion of Matthew in a New Jewish Christian Source," ASTI 5 (1967) 110-20; T. Baarda, "Luke 12:13-14," Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults (1975) . 130-55; Pines, "'Israel My Firstborn' and the Sonship of Jesus: A Theme of Moslem Anti-Christian Polemics," Studies in Mysticism and Religion (Festschrift for G. Scholem; Jerusalem, 1967) 177-78.
- 50 Pines, "The Jewish Christians...", pp. 16, 25, 6, 26-8.
- 51 L. Cirillo and M. Frémaux (preface by H. Corbin), Évangile de Barnabé: Recherches sur la composition et l'origine (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977); reviews include: J. Slomp, "The Pseudo-Gospel of Barnabas: Muslim and Christian Evaluations," Al-Mushir 18 (1976) 15-19 (reprinted from Encounter 18 (1975) 1-6); idem, "The Gospel in Dispute," Islamochristiana 4 (ed. M. Borrmans, et al; Rome: Pontificio Instituto di Studi Arabi, 1978) 67-112; J.M. Magnin, "En Marge de l'Ebionisme l'Évangile de Barnabé," POC 29 (1979) 46-64; L. Legrand, "An Islamic Christology," Indian Theological Studies 18 (1981) 354-64.
- 52 So also Cirillo's conclusion, the last paragraph stating:

"Therefore an Italian community existed which was passionately keen on the religion of the Prophet Muhammad and proposed it as a form of the 'vera religio', the fulfillment of the pure faith of Abraham. The Spanish translation of the Gospel with all the problems of textual criticism it raises, widens this need for a return to the previous simple faith to the Spanish religious milieu which were linked with the evolution of Judaism and Islam in Spain. With these certainties and uncertainties, which go with all historical research, our inquiry about the composition and origin of the G.B.V. ends. Other works will certainly come to perfect our results. But the great realisation of a project remains: to put on the scene the doctrine of the 'True Prophet' of primitive Judaean-Christianity and the unification of the three great Abrahamitic families under the sign of 'discerning' the prophecy which runs through the centuries until its fulfillment, all this constituting the realisation of the message of Jesus." (Slomp's tr.)

- 53 J.N. Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India (Delhi: Munshiram Manharlal, 1967) p. 149.
- 54 C.W. Troll, Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology. (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978) p. 98.
- 55 HibJ 4 (1906) p. 247. "Christianity from the Islamic Standpoint" has been twice reprinted: Christianity: Some Non-Christian Appraisals (ed. D.W. McKain; New York: McGraw Hill, 1964) 225-41; Syed Ameer Ali on Islamic History and Culture (ed. Wasti; Lahore, 1968).
- 56 So holds Abbās Amanāt in his unpublished Ph.D dissertation for the University of Oxford (1981).
- 57 J.R. Cole, "The Concept of Manifestation in the Baha'i Writings," Baha'i Studies 9 (1982) p. 15.
- 58 Baha'u'llah, Tablet of the Manifestation, in Bahā'ī Scriptures, pp. 204-08. Cole discusses this work (Arabic title: Lawhu'z-zuhūr) op. cit. pp. 19-20.
- 59 Bahā'u'llāh, The Kitab-i-Iqan, The Book of Certitude (tr. S. Effendi; Wilmette: Baha'i, 1931 [1974 reprint]) pp. 153-54.
- 60 Bahā'u'llāh, op. cit., pp. 1321 ("the Messiah and Prophet of God"), 22, 2
- 61 Ibid., pp. 257, 20, 26.
- 62 Bahā'u'llāh, quoted by J.R. Cole, "The Christian-Muslim Encounter and the Bahā'ī Faith," World Order 12 (1977-78) 14-28 (p. 22).
- 63 U. Schaefer, The Light Shineth in Darkness: Five studies in revelation after Christ (Oxford: George Ronald, 1977). Reviewed in Choice (Oct., 1978).
- 64 Schaefer, op. cit., pp. 87; 83-4. Schaefer's harsh criticisms of St. Paul and of derivative dogmas follow in an intriguing history of controversy within Christian scholarship itself: see V.P. Furnish, "The Jesus-Paul Debate: From Baur to Bultmann," BJRL 47 (1965) 342-81.
- 65 R.R. Hann, "The Undivided Way: The Early Jewish Christians as a Model for Ecumenical Encounter?" JES 14 (1977) 233-48.

Addenda

- 19 See also, A.W. McNicoll, J.B. Hennessy, and R.H. Smith, "The 1979 Season at Pella of the Decapolis," *BASOR* 240 (1980) 63-84.
- 20 R. Pritz, "On Brandon's Rejection of the Pella Tradition," *Immanuel* 13 (1981) 39-43 (a study which appeared after Ludemann's). Pritz argues that Pella (contrary to the judgment reached by Ludemann) could well have served as a place of refuge for Jewish Christians, and that escape from Jerusalem was possible for significant numbers of people right up to the end of the siege in 70 A.D.
- 26 A favorable assessment of the Ebionite/Qur'ān connexion is given in J. Wansbrough, The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History (Oxford University Press, 1978) esp. pp. 51-52:

"By way of methodological caveat: the simple collation of phenomena common to two or more confessions in the monotheist tradition is seldom adequate to more than a demonstration of the equally simple assertion that a confessional community belonging to the Judeo-Christian tradition must exhibit some, and probably will exhibit other, traditional features. An example is Rabin's list of terminological parallels between Islam and Qumran. The circular argument cannot be avoided, even if each of the items were unexceptionable, by postulating historical continuity...

"Another, rather more substantial, effort along these same lines was undertaken by Schoeps in his exhaustive study of the Ebionites. There at least some of the shared phenomena were fundamental both to Islam and to that particular manifestation of Judeo-Christianity, e.g. identity of 'scriptural' revelation and celestial register, the charge of scriptural falsification, absence/rejection of Biblical prophets, adoptionist Christology. Several subsidiary items, like baptism, prohibition of wine, and dispute about the direction of prayer, belong to the standard emblems of dissent and are of less value to a description of Islamic origins. Schoeps'... characterization has been, and continues to be, a matter of dispute; but as a heuristic postulate in the analysis of Islamic origins, it could be of some value."

An extreme formulation of Schoeps' theory is the recent effort by G. Luling (Über den Ur-Qur'ān [Erlangen, 1974] esp. 174-85, 347-400) to establish an Ebionite Vorlage for Islam on the basis of a new redaction history of Muslim scripture. See B. Walter's review, *ZRGG* 27 (1975) 169-71.

- 29 Also, E. Rose, Die Manichäische Christologie (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1979). Reviewed in *Numen* 29 (1982) 273-75 (H.J. Klimkeit).

- 29 True-Prophet Christology, Rose determines, forms only one of five distinct manifestations of Manichaeian Christology, this one pertaining to discussions of the "historical" Jesus in Manichaeian texts.
- 49 The most authoritative review appears to be that of T. Baarda, "Het ontstaan van de vier evangeliën volgens 'Abd al-Djabbār," *NedTTs* 28 (1974) 215-38.
- 52 Cirillo also undertook a more extensive comparison of the PsC and Barnabas: "Le Pseudo-Clementine e il Vangelo di Barnaba della Biblioteca Nazionale di Vienna," *Asprenas* 18 (1971) 333-69. See also Cirillo's "Dottrine Gnostiche nelle Pseudo-Clementine," *Prometheus* 5 (1979) 164-88 [not noted in Jones' survey].
- 33 For a relationship between Gos. Thom. and the PsC, see Quispel, "L'Évangile selon Thomas et les Clementines," *VC* 12 (1958) 181-96. [reprinted in idem, *Gnostic Studies* (1975) 2. 17-29].
- 58 Bahā'u'llāh draws upon some rather spectacular imagery to further mystify the Manifestation in the eyes of contemplatives. Described as "The Promised One... come down from heaven, seated upon the crimson cloud," (Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh [Haifa, Israel: Bahā'ī World Centre, 1978] p. 182), the Manifestation in the person of Bahā'u'llāh himself becomes a supreme Illuminator of (yet still distinct from) God:
- "I am the Sun of Wisdom and the Ocean of Knowledge. I cheer the faint and revive the dead. I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way. I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight." (Lawḥ-i-Maqṣūd [written in 1882]: Tablets, p. 169.)
- 52 Corbin, long prior to the writing of his preface for Évangile de Barnabē, had developed a thesis of typological symmetry between Islamic and Ebionite prophetologies: "Divine Epiphany and Spiritual Birth in Ismailian Gnosis," Man and Transformation, *ErJb* 23 (1954) 69-160 (esp. section 2., "Ebionite and Ismailian Adamology," 86-94). [Eng. tr.; New York; Pantheon, 1964.] The title of this present paper was partly inspired by Corbin's observation on p. 81: "The Clementine Homilies never speak of the Passion: redemption is effected by the Knowledge of the Truth. Jesus, the Prophet of the Truth, is essentially an Illuminator, not a Redeemer, in the Pauline sense."
- 65 I wish to express my indebtedness to the excellent historical-critical acumen of Dr. Wm. Stoeber of Western Washington University, but for whose editorial direction^{of} an earlier draft this^{of} article would not have been possible.