

The relationship between the New Testament figures of “Mary,” the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” and “Mary Magdalene”

(Full version)

(taken from Part II of the essay “Against the Lie”)

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[If the reader can endure reading it, this section should—probably more than anything else in the essay—help to show not only why esotericist religion ought to be regarded as the product of individuals with significant mental disorientation, but also why religions of that kind can be assumed to potentially lead to substantial mental disorientation in those who seriously attempt to follow them.]

I propose—at least according to one *plausible* way of reading the New Testament’s Gospel narrative—that the understanding of the authors of the New Testament may have been that the figure of the “disciple whom Jesus loved” that is spoken of in the Gospel of John *started off* as a “woman” (“Mary Magdalene” in particular), and was then *transformed into* the archetypal “Son,” at which point “he” married his archetypal “Mother”—who, meanwhile, from the perspective of that “Son,” had been magically *transformed back* into a “virgin.” As bizarre and unlikely as this sounds, let us begin by considering the Greek Septuagint version of Isaiah 62:5, which says,

And as **a young man** [*neaniskos*, derives from *neos*, meaning “young” or “new”] **takes up residence with** [or dwells with; more literally, “houses with”: *syn-oikeō*] **a virgin** [or maiden: *parthenos*], **so your sons** [*huioi*, a plural form of *huios*] **will dwell** [*kat-oikeō*] **with you**. **And it will be (that) (in the same) way that a bridegroom** [*nymphios*] **would rejoice** [or make merry, or enjoy himself, or be glad: *eu-phrainō*] **over a bride** [*nymphē*], **(the) Lord** [or master: *kyrios*] **will thus rejoice** [or make merry, or enjoy himself, or be glad: *eu-phrainō*] **over you**.

Isaiah 62:1 indicates that this “virgin mother” (as well as “bride”) was meant to correspond to the symbolic city of “(new) Jerusalem”; and a comparison of Isaiah 62:4 and Isaiah 54:1 with Galatians 4:22-27 indicates that the authors of the New Testament apparently understood this “virgin mother” to correspond to the figure of “Sarah.”¹

¹ Consider that the notion that is found in Isaiah 62:5 of a “virgin” also being a “mother” is very likely related in some way to the notion of Jesus Christ being born to a “virgin mother.” (See, e.g., Luke 1:26-34.) Also, if something like this same symbolism was commonly taught to initiates of the various ancient mystery religions, it might help to explain the origin of the Oedipus legend in ancient Greece.

Also consider the possibility that the idea found depicted in Revelation 21:2, in the image of the “coming down (Greek *kata-bainō*) to earth **from heaven**” of the “new Jerusalem”—described as “a **bride** [*nymphē*] adorned for her husband [or man: *anēr*]”—may constitute a modified re-presentation of the less polite image found in Isaiah 47:1 (LXX), which describes the “coming down (Greek *kata-bainō*) to earth” of the “virgin daughter of Babylon” from her “throne” (presumably located in “the heavens”). And, at the same time, both of these images may have been understood to correspond to or parallel the “fall of the King of Babylon **from heaven**” that is described in Isaiah 14:4-19 (LXX), as a result of which he is made to “go

Furthermore, notice that the “Lord” is being compared to *multiple* “sons” in Isaiah 62:5, suggesting that the “Lord”—in the person of the collective or archetypal “Son”—may have been understood to collectively represent *all* of the individual “sons of God” (by which term I mean all “disciples” who had been made fully “male,” or “spiritual,” or “pneumatic,” as I will explain more below). According to the allegory presented in the Book of Genesis, “Isaac” is the “son” of “Sarah”; so, by following the allegory it may be inferred that “Isaac” should be thought of as the “bridegroom” who would marry “Sarah.” Notice how such a figurative arrangement parallels the way in which in Galatians 3:16 Paul compares “Isaac” to “Jesus,” but in Galatians 4:28 Paul also compares “Isaac” to the Christian “brothers” (or “siblings”: *adelphos*) regarded as a collective entity. It also tends to imply that, since “Isaac” was understood to correspond to “Jesus,” the Old Testament figure of “Sarah” would have been understood to correspond to the New Testament figure of “Mary”—and, since the figure of “Mary” is depicted as a “virgin mother,” that would be consistent with the apparent identification in Isaiah 62:5 of the figure of “Sarah” as a kind of “virgin mother.”

Now compare Isaiah 62:5 to John 19:25-27, which says,

And standing [histémi] beside [or near: para] the cross [stauros] of Jesus² were his mother [météter] [i.e., “the virgin Mary”], and the sister [adelphé] of his mother [météter], Mary the (?) of Klopas [klōpas], and Mary Magdalene.³ So Jesus, having

down [kata-bainō] into the foundations [themelios] of the earth [gē]” (verse 15). In other words, the *same* archetypal “Woman” or “City” would “come down from heaven” in *two different ways*, depending on whether she was regarded under her aspect of “Babel” (or “Babylon”), or of Jerusalem (or the “new Jerusalem”). And if that is correct, those two “ways of coming down” would probably (for reasons I explain elsewhere) have been understood to correspond to whether the attitude of the “Woman” was one of “haughtiness” or one of “submissiveness” toward the will of “the Lord” or “the Master.”

² This “standing [histémi] beside [para] the cross of Jesus” may reflect the same double meaning that (if I am not mistaken) can be found in 2 Corinthians 11:2, in which, according to one way of translating it, Paul writes to the Corinthian church members, “For I have betrothed you [harmozō] to one [or a single: heni] husband [or man: anér], a pure [or holy: hagnos] virgin [parthenos] to present [par-istémi] to the Christ.” But translating it in a different way (if I am correct in believing that this is a permissible translation), Paul writes, “For I have joined you together [harmozō] into [or to, or in, or beside, or before, or because of, or by, or with, or with respect to; the word ‘man’ or anér is in the dative case, so the preposition is only implied] a single [or one: heni] man [anér], a holy [or pure: hagnos] virgin [parthenos] to compare to [or ‘to set side-by-side with’: par-istémi, derived from the words para, meaning ‘near, beside,’ and histémi, meaning ‘to stand, to set’] the Christ.” (Cf. Revelation 14:4-5.)

³ I suspect that the word/name “Klopas” was meant to serve as a “clue” of some sort, but I am not certain what it would have been meant to signify. Note that if this “Klopas” (klōpas) was the same person as the “Kleopas” (kleopas) of Luke 24:18, as some commentators believe, then Luke 24:10 tends to suggest that he was one of the “apostles.” Also, if one assumes that the name “Klopas” was understood to be a variant of the name “Kleopas,” it is worth considering that the name “Kleopas” is *probably* an abbreviation of the name “Kleopatros,” which means “the glory of the father” or “the celebrating of the father,” being derived from the word *patros*, the genitive of *patér*, meaning “father,” and the noun *kleos*, meaning “glory, fame, renown, good report, celebrity,” or the verb *kleō*, meaning “to celebrate, to make famous, to glorify.” (By the way, the female version of “Kleopatros” is “Kleopatra,” or “Cleopatra.”) On the other hand, if the name “Kleopas” is *not* an abbreviation, it might literally mean something like “the glory of all things” or “the celebrating of all things” or “the glory of the whole.” But if we assume that it means “the glory of the father,” then it should be kept in mind that there are a number of New Testament passages—such as, for example, Luke 9:26, John 8:54, John 12:28, John 17:1, John 17:5, Romans 6:4, and 2 Peter 1:17—that seem to either identify or associate “Jesus” or the “Son of Man” with the “glory” (*doxa*) or the “glorifying” (*doxazō*) of “the Father.” This suggests that “Klopas” may have been used as an epithet for “Jesus.” So, if

beheld [or seen, or perceived: *idōn*, a form of *horaō*] **the mother** [*métér*] **and the disciple** [*mathétés*] **whom he loved** [*agapaō*] **standing near** [or comparing (to him), or standing side-by-side (with him), or “sizing up (to him)”: *par-istēmi*],⁴ **said to the**

we were to substitute the the epithet “the glory of the Father” or the name “Jesus” for the word/name “Klopas,” then “Mary the (?) of Klopas” might, in effect, also be legitimately translated as “Mary the (mother) of (the glory of the Father)”—i.e., “Mary the (mother) of (Jesus).”

But whatever the name “Klopas” means, I think the possibility must be seriously considered that, according to a more “esoteric” reading of the passage, “the sister [*adelphē*] of (Jesus’s) mother”—who *might* have also been given the name “Mary the (?) of Klopas”—may have been meant as a reference to “Mary Magdalene.” (In that case, perhaps, the author may have actually meant for the *last three* of the four “persons” mentioned to be seen as *one* “person.”) Somewhat more likely, however (because of the inclusion of the word “and,” *kai*, before the name of “Mary Magdalene”), there may have been a symmetry intended between the two pairs of names or descriptions, so that “(Jesus’s) mother” would have been serving as an alternative description of “Mary the (?) of Klopas,” while “the sister of (Jesus’s) mother” would have been serving as an alternative description of “Mary Magdalene,” in which case the passage would be better translated, “(Jesus’s) mother, and the sister of his mother—(that is), **Mary the (?) of Klopas, and Mary Magdalene.**” (And note that this would be consistent with the hypothesis according to which the name “Jesus” would be substituted for the name “Klopas.”) Still another possibility is that the author deliberately left the phrase “Mary the (?) of Klopas” ambiguous, so that—if, again, we assume that it would be permissible to substitute the name “Jesus” for the name “Klopas”—it could apply either to “(Jesus’s) mother,” in which case the phrase would be read “Mary the (mother) of (Jesus)”; or to “Mary Magdalene,” in which case the phrase would be read “Mary the (sister) of (Jesus),” or “Mary the (wife, or betrothed bride) of (Jesus).” Most translators give a translation of “Mary the wife of Klopas”—but, as is pointed out by Matthew Poole’s Commentary on John 19:25 (which is available at <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/john/19-25.htm>), “These words ‘the wife’ are not in the Greek, but supplied by our translators; which leaves it doubtful whether that Mary was the wife, or the mother, or the daughter of Cleophas [i.e., ‘Klopas’].” (Or, I would also add, possibly the “sister.”)

The authors may have wanted to indicate that both of these two figures—that is, “Jesus’s mother Mary” and “Mary Magdalene”—were “disciples,” and therefore, according to Matthew 12:46-50 (quoted in the footnote immediately below), both of them were fellow “siblings” (singular *adelphos*) or “sisters” (singular *adelphē*) even while both of them were, *at the same time*, serving as Jesus’s “mother”—and this *at the same time* as the author was evoking Isaiah 62:5’s “mother marrying her sons” motif. In other words, the authors may have gotten far too “greedy,” wanting the symbolism to have *more than one* “inner meaning” (in fact, at least three), with the result that it became very hard for the reader to discern what *any* of the intended “inner meanings” may have been, since they were “getting in each other’s way,” so to speak. **And this would relate to the nature of schizophrenic thought disorder.**

⁴ Compare this to Matthew 12:46-50, in which Jesus’s “mother” (*métér*) and “siblings” (or “brothers”: *adelphoi*, the plural of *adelphos*) are said to be “standing outside” (*histēmi exō*), striving to “speak with him” (*autō laleō*); and Jesus then contrasts these with his “disciples” (*mathétés*), saying, “**Behold** [or understand: *idou*], **(here are) my mother** [*métér*] **and my siblings** [or brothers: *adelphoi*, the plural of *adelphos*]! **For whoever does the will of my father** [*patér*] **(who is) in (the) heavens is my brother** [*adelphos*] **and sister** [*adelphē*] **and mother** [*métér*].” (Note, by the way, that this might be read to imply that Jesus ought to be regarded as “the son who is in the heavens,” and Jesus’s *true* “brothers” as “the brothers who are in the heavens,” and Jesus’s *true* “mother” as “the mother who is in the heavens”—which would in turn imply that anyone “doing the will of God” would have been regarded as *already* being located in the metaphorical “heavens,” and not being found among “the tribes of the earth.”) A possible suggestion is that Jesus’s true “Disciple”—as well as his true “Mother,” and “Sister,” and “Brother”—would be found “standing by his side” (*par-istēmi*, derived from *histēmi*, meaning “to stand”), rather than “standing outside” (*histēmi exō*).

Also, as I mentioned in the previous footnote, it is conceivable that John 19:25 was meant to be read as involving a symmetrical pairing, in which case the author would have been identifying “Mary Magdalene” as the “sister of Jesus’s mother”—which would be consistent with the notion that the author meant to identify Jesus’s “mother” as a “disciple,” making “Mary Magdalene”—also a fellow “disciple”—her “sister” (at the same time as the “sister” of Jesus). Again, I think it is conceivable that different but

mother [métér], “Woman [gyné], behold [or look, or perceive, or understand: *ide*, a form of *horaō*], **your son** [huios].” Then he said to the disciple [mathétés], “Behold [or look, or perceive, or understand: *idou*, a form of *horaō*], **your mother** [métér].” And from [or out of, or because of, or in consequence of: *apo*] that hour [hōra] the disciple [mathétés] **took** [or received: *lambanō*] **her into (his) own (home)** [*ta idia*].

It is interesting that, according to a more straightforward or “outer” reading, the author first identifies **four** persons (if one assumes that “the sister of (Jesus’s) mother” was meant to be seen as a different person from “Mary the (?) of Klopas”),⁵ but he then says that Jesus “beheld” (or “saw” or “perceived”: *idōn*) only **two** persons: “the mother,” and “the disciple whom he loved.” That tends to imply, for one thing, that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” must have been *among* those four persons; and the most likely candidate would seem to be “Mary Magdalene.” (And, in any event, we know that the author **must** have meant for the term “the disciple whom Jesus loved” to refer to at least one of these four persons—**all** of whom are **women**.)⁶ But that would mean that, since according to the passage this “disciple” is identified as a “son,” “Mary Magdalene” would had to have been somehow transformed from a “woman” into a “man.”

I posit that this may have been thought to occur as a result of Mary Magdalene’s having renounced or advanced beyond her former status as a so-called “Mary” (this being understood as a kind of “role” or “function” or “type,” one which might or might not be carried out or conformed to by any particular individual).⁷ In other words, I think “Mary Magdalene” may have been meant to be understood as “laying aside” her “maryness,” so to speak—that is, her “femaleness”—and “taking up” the “sonness” and “maleness” expected of a “perfected Disciple.” The authors of the New Testament may have thought that with the “death of Jesus” (perhaps understood to signify or accompany the final “perfecting” of the “Disciple”), the archetypal “Disciple” would take over the role of the archetypal “Son (of God),” while Jesus would go on to take up the role of archetypal

overlapping “inner meanings” had unfortunately been put into play at the same time, making the author’s thinking very difficult to follow.

⁵ I think it would be reasonable to make the assumption that—according to this more “surface” or “outer” reading—the author would *not* have meant for “Jesus’s mother” (i.e., “Mary”) and “Mary the (?) of Klopas” to be regarded as the same person, on the grounds that two sisters would have been unlikely to have the same first name.

However, if some more “inner” reading was intended by the author, then it becomes less implausible to think that the author may have meant for “the sister of his mother” to be thought of as equivalent to “Mary the (?) of Klopas.” Similarly, note the suggestion I make in a previous footnote, that the author may have actually intended that the third and fourth “persons” that are listed be read as *alternative descriptions* of the first and second “persons”—which would explain why Jesus is said to have only perceived *two* persons.

⁶ And it would be completely nonsensical and absurd—even by esotericists’ standards—to suppose that the author would first present the reader with a list of all of the persons who were “standing beside” (*histēmi* and *para*) Jesus on the Cross; and then, that **the same author, in the very next sentence**, would say that Jesus suddenly noticed **someone else** “standing beside” him (*par-istēmi*, derived from *histēmi* and *para*) that the author forgot to mention in the previous sentence. The only reasonable way in which this passage can be explained is to assume that Jesus perceived a male “Disciple” that somehow existed (perhaps in germinal or potential form) **within** the “women,” or at least one of the “women.”

⁷ In an allegorical writing—and I am positing that the canonical Gospels are allegorical writings—it should never be assumed to be a coincidence when the same name is given to two different characters (in this case, Jesus’s mother “Mary” and “Mary Magdalene”), since it would be so easy for the author to prevent confusion on the reader’s part by simply changing one of the two names.

“Father” (see Revelation 21:7).⁸ Jesus’s perceiving of only *two* persons—the archetypal “Mother” and the archetypal “Disciple”—may have been meant to dramatize the stark *division* of the “body of Christ” into two elements: “soul” (Greek *psyché*, perhaps signified by “blood”), which may have been understood to correspond to the ideas of “motherness” and “femaleness”; and “spirit” (Greek *pneuma*, perhaps signified by “water”), which may have been understood to correspond to the ideas of “discipleship” and “maleness.” If so, it may be significant that it is only a few verses later, in John 19:34, that the author says that “blood” and “water” came out *separately* out of Jesus’s pierced side.⁹ The belief may have been that these two elements would need to be clearly *separated* or *distinguished* from each other before they could be properly “married”; but also that it was only *by means of* the metaphorical “death of Jesus” that these two elements could first be fully separated.¹⁰

As strange and even absurd as all of this sounds, it is actually made somewhat more plausible by the fact that the final verse of the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas (verse 114) says,

Simon Peter said to them, “Make Mary [observe that Simon Peter does not say ‘Mary Magdalene’] leave us, for females don’t deserve life.” Jesus said, “Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit”

⁸ Another possible way of thinking about this is that the phrase “the disciple whom Jesus loved” would have been divided into its two component parts: “the disciple,” which would correspond to its “male” component, and “whom Jesus loved,” which would correspond to its “female” component. Once the “male” component was no longer merely “the Disciple,” and had succeeded in becoming “the Son” (i.e., “Jesus”), it would then be in a position to “marry” the other “female” component—making that other component “the disciple whom Jesus loved”—or, to be more precise, “*the part of* the disciple that ‘Jesus’ loved.”

⁹ The Greek preposition *apo*, meaning “from, away from, out of,” can indicate causal origin; so when John 19:25-27 says, “**And from** [or out of, or because of, or in consequence of: *apo*] **that hour** [*hōra*] **the disciple** [*mathētēs*] **took** [or received: *lambanō*] **her into (his) own (home),**” the author’s meaning may have been that “that hour” was signifying the Crucifixion—as the word “hour” (*hōra*) also appears to be doing, for example, in John 2:4 and John 8:20—and the (possible) “marriage” of the “Mother” and the “Disciple” (and now “Son”) was in some way *made possible* by the “Crucifixion”; and the image presented in John 19:34 of “blood” and “water” “coming out” (*ex-erchomai*) of Jesus’s body may have been meant to indicate that very idea.

Note, incidentally, that John 2:4 might also be alluding to the idea of a separation of symbolic “blood” and “water”—as well as to the idea of a symbolic “marriage”—given the context in which that verse is found. Significantly, John 2:1-12 does not mention the identities of the “bride” and “bridegroom” who are getting married at the “Wedding at Cana”; but, according to John 2:5, for some unexplained reason, Jesus’s mother enjoys a great deal of authority there (but, at the same time, she also shows herself to be very submissive to the wishes of “the Son”). In fact, if anything, John 2:1-2 hints that “Jesus’s mother” is to be regarded as the “bride,” while “Jesus and his disciples” collectively constitute the “bridegroom” (unless the “disciples” were meant to be thought of as the “friends of the bridegroom” or “sons of bridechamber”; cf. Matthew 9:15). Furthermore, John 2:9-10 strongly hints that it is *Jesus* who is being addressed as the “bridegroom” (*nymphios*) in that passage. It is thus possible that the entire “Wedding at Cana”—including the changing of “water” into “wine” (or, of “wine” into “water,” depending on how one chooses to interpret or describe what is going on)—was meant to prefigure the Crucifixion, including any symbolic “marriage” that may have been understood to occur as a result of it.

¹⁰ Also, consider that according to John 19:35, and based on a cross-reference with John 21:20-24, it appears to be “the disciple whom Jesus loved” who witnessed the “blood” and “water” coming out of Jesus’s pierced body.

[corresponding to *pneuma*, I would assume] **resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven.**"¹¹

Also compare this passage to John 21:20-23, which says,

Peter turned back [*epi-strephō*] **and saw** [*blepō*] **(that) the disciple** [*mathētēs*] **whom Jesus loved** (was) following [*akoloutheō*], **the one who also during the supper lay** [or reclined: *ana-piptō*] **against** [or upon: *epi*] **(Jesus's) bosom** [or chest, or breast: *stēthos*] **and said, "Lord, who is it who is delivering you over** [or handing you over, or betraying you, or transmitting you (as a teaching), or imparting you (as a teaching), or handing you down (as a tradition), or passing you down (as a tradition): *para-didōmi*]?" **So, having seen him**, Peter said to Jesus, **"But Lord, what about this one** [*houtos*]?"¹² **Jesus said to him, "If I wish him to remain** [*menō*] **until I come** [*erchomai*], **what is that to you? You follow** [*akoloutheō*] **me.**"¹³ **So the saying** [or word, or message, or meaning: *logos*] **went out** [or "came out": *ex-erchomai*] **among the brothers** [or siblings; more literally, "sharers of the same womb": *adelphos*] **that this disciple** [*mathētēs*] **does not die** [*apothnēskō*]. **But Jesus did not say to him that he does not die, but, "If I wish him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"**¹⁴

¹¹ Translation by Stephen Patterson and Marvin Meyer; the emphases are mine. Source: the Gnosis Archive, available at <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/gosthom.html>, which cites as its source Robert J. Miller, ed., *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version* (Polebridge Press, 1992, 1994).

¹² Notice that this may have been meant to suggest that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was also the one who was "handing Jesus over," or "delivering Jesus," since the intended reference in the phrase "having seen him" is ambiguous. So it is conceivable that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was meant to be compared to the "harlot of Babylon" (for reasons that I explain more elsewhere in Part II of the essay). It is also conceivable that the authors of the New Testament might actually have thought of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" as being "Judas" (at least at those times when they felt like doing so; schizophrenic esotericists tend to be quite casual about *adhering to* these sorts of identifications). The non-canonical "Gospel of Judas" actually portrays Judas as Jesus's "favorite disciple," which suggests that, whether or not this was the actual understanding of the authors of the writings that eventually came to form the New Testament, others who read those writings may have found at least some basis in them for making such an association. Given that John 17:12 seems to be associating the figure of "Judas" with that of the "Man of Lawlessness" (or "Man of Sin"), and given the substantial overlap between the figures of the "Man of Lawlessness"—along with the "King of Babylon"—and the "harlot of Babylon" (as I explain in my other writings), it would not be surprising to find an association between all four of those figures and the figure of "the disciple whom Jesus loved"—as strange as that might at first sound. (But it may help to explain the odd reference made in 1 Peter 5:13 to "She who is in Babylon, chosen together with (you) [*syn-eklektos*]....")

A possible instance of verbal ambiguity similar to the one I just noted can be found if one carefully considers the way in which the Greek word *ekeinos*, meaning "that one," is twice used in John 13:24-26. This may have in like manner been meant to indicate that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was also, in some sense, identified or associated with the disciple who would "betray" or "deliver over" Jesus.

¹³ Compare this use of the Greek word *menō*, meaning "to remain, to abide, to stay, to wait," with the use of the same word in 1 Timothy 2:15. The comparison between these passages suggests that the "coming of the Lord" may have been analogized to the "birth of a child" (and probably the "birth of a *male* child"; cf. Revelation 12:5,13).

¹⁴ The simple fact is that there are only three possible ways to interpret this passage: 1) "the coming of the Lord" has already occurred since this passage was written; 2) "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is still alive; or 3) "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was meant to be understood to be a "type" or "archetype" of some kind, not an individual flesh-and-blood person. No Christian can claim the first and still be considered a Christian in any ordinary sense. So Christians must decide whether they wish to claim: a) that "the

Notice how in both passages Jesus similarly “comes to the defense” of the person about whom Peter expresses wariness and whom he seems not to wish to “remain” with the other disciples. So, based on a comparison of these passages, I again posit that the generic figure of “Mary” may have been understood to represent the archetypal “Female” or “Woman” (*gyné*) and “Mother” (*méter*), while the generic figure of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” may have been understood to correspond to the archetypal “Male” and “Son” (*huios*)—but only *after* “he” *started off* as Jesus’s *betrothed* “Bride” or *future* “Wife” (or “Woman,” since the Greek word *gyné* can mean either “wife” or “woman”)—in other words, his “Mary Magdalene.”¹⁵ The figure of “Mary Magdalene” would have

disciple whom Jesus loved” is an individual person who is still alive—now at least 2,000 years old—and is hiding out somewhere; or b) that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was meant to be regarded as a figurative “type”—in which case all of the other characters of the Gospel narrative, including Jesus, were presumably meant to be regarded as no less figurative “types,” since they are described in the Gospel of John as having interacted with him and having been in physical contact with him—which would tend to imply that no literal, historical Crucifixion and Resurrection was *ever understood* by the authors of the New Testament to have taken place. As unattractive as they might appear, those are the only two options that Christians have to choose from.

¹⁵ An identification of “Mary” or “Mary Magdalene” as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is also suggested by the non-canonical “Gospel of Mary” and “Gospel of Philip.”

I realize that John 20:1-2, taking place after Jesus’s burial, seems to imply that Mary Magdalene and “the disciple whom Jesus loved” must have been two different persons, since in that passage “Mary Magdalene” is described as speaking to “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” But a person, before having read the passage I quoted in the main text from the Gospel of Thomas, might just as easily have assumed that if a writing spoke of a “female person” and a “male person,” the author would *necessarily* have meant for those to be understood as corresponding to two *different* persons. In other words, it is necessary that these figures be regarded by the reader as *symbols*, and not as actual, flesh-and-blood, historical, individual *persons*. It may be that at this point in the narrative the figure of “Mary Magdalene” that is being depicted was thought to have parted ways with all of the “sonship” and “maleness” which had been “extracted” from her (considered as a figure or symbol), and she was now understood to signify only the “put-off maryness” or “put-off femaleness” that had previously been contained in the figure of “the disciple whom Jesus loved”—at least, that *part* of the “put-off maryness” or “put-off femaleness” which had not yet been “purified” by being projected out of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” into the figure of the pure “virgin Mary.” It must be understood that in the mind of a schizophrenic esotericist, *what a particular figure or symbol signifies does not necessarily remain constant at all times*.

In addition, according to Mark 16:1 and Luke 24:10, both “Mary Magdalene” and “Mary, the (mother) of James” are described as being at Jesus’s empty tomb. (Matthew 28:1 speaks of “the other Mary”—which suggests that there was only understood to be *one* other “Mary” with which the reader ought to be concerned.) And in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3, Mary is implicitly described as being the mother of “Jesus” as well as of his “brothers” (*adelphos*), namely, “James” and “Joseph” and “Simon” and “Judas”—which suggests that “Mary, the (mother) of James” may have actually been referring to Jesus’s own mother. So, if “Jesus’s mother” had not yet gone off to live in the home of her new “Son,” then there would be no reason why—assuming that “Mary Magdalene” was in fact meant to be identified in some way with that “Son”—“Mary Magdalene” would have yet done so either. Maybe the “marriage” was understood to be merely a “potential marriage” that could only become “actualized” once the “Ascension” or “Second Coming” occurred, so that the “sacred marriage” performed by Jesus at the Cross was merely “prefigurative”—in which case, perhaps the transformation of either “Mary Magdalene” or the archetypal “Disciple” into the archetypal “Son” was also merely “potential” or “prefigurative.” It is impossible to know for sure what the authors were thinking.

Also, assuming that there is a contradiction here, the very fact that esoteric writings have an “outer meaning” and an “inner meaning” *inevitably* gives rise to such contradictions. If “Mary Magdalene” had—according to the “outer meaning” and in literal terms—actually shed all of her “femaleness” and gone off to take up residence with Jesus’s mother “Mary” as a “married couple” of “man and wife,” then the “inner

been understood to correspond to the symbolic “Bride” when she was still only “betrothed”—that is, *when she was still at the stage of being the “harlot of Babylon.”* And if so, that would tend to suggest that the figure of (the virgin) “Mary” would have been understood to correspond to that *same* symbolic “Bride” *once she had reached the stage* at which, having been “made ready” by God (Greek *hetoimazō*)¹⁶—in other words, transformed into a purified “virgin”—it would finally be time for her to be revealed in the form of the “new Jerusalem.”¹⁷

meaning” whose existence I am positing would no longer *be* an “inner meaning”: at that point, it would be an “outer meaning.” (Incidentally, the need even to have this ridiculous discussion points to how and why the esotericist mode of discourse leads to utter confusion and should be rejected entirely.) If the authors had worked to eliminate this *particular* contradiction, then it is quite possible that another contradiction would have popped up somewhere else in the writing, regarding some other matter. (But, in any event, my overall sense is that schizophrenic esotericist authors simply do not find such logical inconsistencies as *disturbing* as most other people do—since they, the authors, understand perfectly well what they mean by the way they use their own symbols, and are not especially bothered if no one reading their writings can be expected to share that same understanding—and so an author of that sort may not feel any pressing need to eliminate a particular logical inconsistency *even if* it is easy for him to do so without losing any of the meaning that he is trying to convey by the allegory.)

It must be understood that there is *no such thing* as an allegorical writing in which a single discrete “outer meaning” (or set of “outer meanings”) and a single discrete “inner meaning” (or set of “inner meanings”) *run completely in parallel to each other*—that is, one in which correspondences between the individual “inner meanings” and individual “outer meanings” can be *reliably* made in all of the various instances in which any given “outer meaning” or “outer symbol” is presented. If there are a sizable number of instances in which a particular “inner meaning” or “outer meaning” is used, the meanings will be *forced* to “change partners” in at least some of those instances. (And this “unreliability” or “promiscuity” of meaning is in fact fundamentally related to the problem of *dishonesty*.) However, the idea of a clear and definite “inner meaning” running *in parallel to* a clear and definite “outer meaning” seems to be the unrealizable dream of esotericists, who imagine that once they manage to get “into the spirit” it will become possible for them to gain access to a kind of separate “underground tunnel system” in which everything will *remain meaningful* for them at the same time that they are free to roam wherever they please, just like everyone else does who lives up above in the realm of “outer meanings”—only the esotericists will be able to do so *in private* and *in secret*. But the *only* way in which meaningfulness can be preserved—for *all* people, even would-be esotericists—is by keeping meanings public; and this will always be true no matter how much some persons might want to try to get around the fact.

¹⁶ See Revelation 21:2.

¹⁷ Again, compare this to the imagery presented in 2 Corinthians 11:2, in which Paul writes, “**For I have betrothed [harmozō] you to one [or a single: henī] husband [anēr], a pure [or holy: hagnos] virgin [parthenos] to present [par-istēmi] to the Christ.**” This comparison helps to explain why it would not be unreasonable to suppose that the figure of the “harlot of Babylon” may have been associated with the figure of the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” Why would Paul have felt the need to mention that the Christians had been “betrothed” (but notice, *not yet “married”*) to “a *single* husband”?—unless it was being implied that they were thought to having been guilty in the past of “serial monogamy” along the lines of that of the Samaritan woman described in John 4:16-18, and of “fornication” or “sexual impurity” along the lines of that of the “harlot of Babylon” described in Revelation 17:1-4. In other words, I think Paul is suggesting that the process of the Church’s being “made ready” (*hetoimazō*) and “put in order” (or “adorned”: *kosmeō*) by God had not yet been completed (cf. Revelation 21:2); so it had not yet become “virginal,” and was still at least a little bit “whorish”—and so was not yet ready to be “married” to the Christ (whatever exactly that was understood to signify).

[And if that suggestion is correct, then a question to be asked of modern-day Christians would be: Did the Church ever *become* “virginal” at some later point in time? If so, where is the “new Jerusalem”? And if not, is it reasonable to suppose that Paul expected that the process of “purifying” would continue going on over the course of the next *two thousand years* or so?]

Consider what the last passage says: “Jesus did not say to (Peter) that (the disciple whom Jesus loves) does not die, but, ‘If I wish him to remain until I come, what is that to you?’” The “disciple whom Jesus loved” may have been thought of by the authors of the New Testament as representing the collective (parallel) “body of Christ” or “betrothed Bride” that Paul was trying to “build up” *next to* or *alongside* some more *ideal* “body of Christ.” One might posit that this archetypal “Disciple,” considered as he (or she) existed *prior to* the symbolic “Crucifixion,” was associated with the archetypal “Woman”—but more specifically, the archetypal “harlot of Babylon”—who would have been imagined as carrying a symbolic “child”—and more specifically, the “Christ child”—within her symbolic “womb.” (As such, the “harlot of Babylon” would in this case have been understood to correspond to the symbol of the “outer body,” while her “unborn child” would have been understood to correspond to the symbol of the “inner body.”)¹⁸ If the “coming” (*erchomai*) of the “Son of Man,” i.e., the “Second Coming,” was analogized to a metaphorical “childbirth”—with this at the same time corresponding to a metaphorical “Crucifixion and Resurrection” (i.e., a “re-birth” out of the “tomb,” signifying a kind of “womb”)¹⁹—then the understanding of the authors of the New Testament may have been that with the metaphorical “birth” (or “re-birth”) of “the Son”—i.e., the “*inner*” body of Jesus Christ—the archetypal “harlot of Babylon” would metaphorically “die in childbirth.”²⁰ This “death” of the “harlot” would at the same time constitute a “death” of

¹⁸ I discuss the ideas of the “inner body” and “outer body” more extensively in Part I of the essay.

¹⁹ See, e.g., 1 Peter 1:3 and Colossians 2:11-12.

²⁰ With regard to establishing a connection between the figure of the “harlot of Babylon” and the specific notion of “childbirth,” consider Revelation 18:4, which speaks of “coming out of (the harlot of Babylon).” With regard to establishing a connection between the figure of the “harlot of Babylon” and the specific notion of her “death,” see Revelation 18:8.

Such an idea is also possibly being indicated by having the “disciple whom Jesus loved” be described as “delivering” the “Lord” (or “surrendering” him, or “betraying” him—depending on how one chooses to translate the Greek word *para-didōmi*). It is still not entirely clear to me whether the word *para-didōmi* was ever used specifically to mean “to deliver (a child).” But it seems likely to me that it was, given that the related word *ek-didōmi* can, like *para-didōmi*, mean “to deliver (a document)” and “to betray (a person),” but can also mean “to bring to the birth,” and (in connection with land) “to yield (produce), to yield (fruit).” [The word *ek-didōmi* can also mean “to give (one’s daughter) in marriage”—which suggests the possibility that the “Crucifixion” may have been associated with a certain kind of “marriage”—at least according to one way of conceptualizing it. If so, then it would explain why Jesus may have been performing a kind of “marriage ceremony” between the “Mother” and the “Disciple/Son” just before Jesus died on the Cross. This hypothesis receives some support from the fact that another word related to these others is *didōmi*, which, like *para-didōmi* and *ek-didōmi*, can mean “to deliver up, to hand over,” but can also mean “to give (one’s daughter) in marriage.”] Still another Greek word that is related to *para-didōmi* is *apo-didōmi*, which, like all of these words, can mean “to deliver over”; but *apo-didōmi*, like *ek-didōmi*, can also mean “to yield (produce), to yield (fruit),” which suggests that it was probably also capable of having the meaning “to bring to the birth”—which in turn would make it more likely that *para-didōmi* was capable of having that same meaning.

Furthermore, if the “handing over” or “delivering” (or “betraying”: *para-didōmi*) of “the Son” that is attributed to “Judas” in the Gospels was understood, at least in part, to represent a kind of symbolic “childbirth” or “bringing to the birth,” then in that case Christ’s entire “Passion” may have been understood to correspond to the “birth pangs” or “labor pains” associated with such a “childbirth.” In support of this hypothesis, consider Matthew 24:8-9, which seems to be analogizing the “tribulation” (more literally, “squeezing” or “pressing”: *thlipsis*) that was expected to occur at the “end of the age,” to “birth pangs” or “labor pains” (*ōdin*). Next, compare that to Matthew 26:36, describing Jesus’s praying in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before his Crucifixion. “Gethsemane” is an Aramaic or Hebrew word (derived from the words *gath* and *shemen*) that means “oil press.” Moreover, Luke 22:44 says that as Jesus was

the “female” (or “natural,” or “earthly”) aspect of the archetypal “Disciple”—i.e., the “*outer* body of Jesus Christ”—thus allowing “the Disciple” to become fully “male” (and fully “spiritual,” and fully “heavenly”); but at that point, there is a sense in which “he” could no longer even be properly considered to be “the Disciple” (thought of as some mixture of “male” and “female” elements), but could then be considered to be “the Son” himself (i.e., the figurative “Isaac” or “Jesus”).

Meanwhile, all of the *now-purified* “female” or “psychic” nature of the archetypal “Disciple” would by then have been *projected out* into the ideal (and idealized) figure of the “virgin Mother” (i.e., “Sarah” or “the virgin Mary”), whom the archetypal “perfected Disciple”—i.e., “Son”—would then be able to metaphorically “marry,” at the same time as making his *new* archetypal “Mother.” That is because the archetypal “perfected Disciple” or “Son,” by having purified *himself* so as to make himself fully “male” and “spiritual,” would have “earned the right,” so to speak, to also have a purified “virginal Mother” rather than an ordinary “whorish Mother”; and a “virginal Mother,” presumably, was thought to be just the sort of “Mother” and “Bride” that a now-purified “Son” would be fit to metaphorically “marry.” The “(inner) body of Christ,” *considered as a collective entity made up of individuals*, would then take over the symbolic “sonship” from “Christ” *considered as a figurative type*—the death of whom, considered as a figurative type (i.e., an “outer body”), would have occurred just in time to allow the “outer narrative” of the Gospels to avoid the awkwardness of having “Jesus” be depicted as marrying his own mother “Mary.” (And some of that awkwardness would also have been avoided by the author’s having been perhaps deliberately vague about what the figure of speech of “taking the Woman/Mother into the Son’s own home” was supposed to mean.) Perhaps the thinking of the authors of the New Testament was that “in the beginning [*arché*],” only Jesus, the “ideal type,” was pure enough to have a pure “virginal Mother” (perhaps signifying a pure “soul”: *psyché*), and all of his actual, flesh-and-blood followers would be temporarily stuck with an impure “whorish Mother” (perhaps signifying an impure “soul”: *psychê*). But, by the time of “the end [*telos*],”²¹ all of Jesus’s “disciples” who had successfully entered the “kingdom of heaven”—that is, all of

praying “in agony” (or “in struggle”: *en agōnia*) in the Garden of Gethsemane, “His sweat [*hidrōs*] became like great drops [or like clots: *thrombos*] of blood [*haima*] falling down [*kata-bainō*] upon the ground [or earth: *gē*]”—which suggests to me that the author may have meant for Jesus’s symbolic “blood” to be understood as being “squeezed” or “pressed” (Greek *thlibō*) out of him. From this, an possible inference can be made that Christ’s “Crucifixion” may have been understood to be serving as an analogy or metaphor for—or, at the very least, to be corresponding to—the “end of the age,” which is the time at which the Christians’ “exodus (or emergence, or delivery) from (the harlot of) Babylon” was expected to occur.

[Incidentally, consider the possibility that the notion of “sweat” being transformed into “blood” may have been understood to signify a *temporary* transformation of symbolic “water” (perhaps signifying “spirit,” *pneuma*) into symbolic “blood” or “wine” (perhaps signifying “soul,” *psyché*)—a transformation which would perhaps be somehow *reversed* or *undone* with Jesus’s death. Note the similarity between the Greek word *hidrōs*, meaning “sweat,” and *hydōr*, meaning “water.” Or, perhaps the author’s meaning was that Jesus’s *psyché* was being “purged” from him by its being “pressed” or “squeezed” out of him.]

The hypothesis that Christ’s “Crucifixion and Resurrection” may have been understood to correspond to or serve as a metaphor for the “end of the age”—at the same time as corresponding to a metaphorical “childbirth”—also receives strong support from John 16:16-25. Pay special attention to the use in verse 21 of the Greek words *gyné*, meaning “woman,” *hōra*, meaning “hour,” and *thlipsis*, meaning “tribulation, distress, anguish, affliction” (but more literally, “pressing, squeezing”); also compare the use of the word *hōra* (“hour”) in verse 21 with its second use in verse 25.

²¹ See Revelation 21:6-7.

the individuals who had learned how to be successfully *conformed to* (Greek *sym-morphoō* or *sym-morphos*) the “ideal type” of “the Son,” thereby becoming “instances” of that “type”—becoming, in other words, “sons of God”—would finally be pure enough to have that pure virginal “Mother” (and now “Bride”) for themselves. The *ideal type* of “the Son”—considered as an allegorical figure and role model, and considered apart from its embodiment in multiple, individual instances—would fall away, no longer to stand between the “sons of God” and their “Mother.”²²

Furthermore, assuming the correctness of my hypothesis that every so-called “Mary” was understood to represent the archetypal “Woman” (*gynē*),²³ I propose that “Mary

²² If the sort of “re-categorizing” that I am doing seems at all “illicit” or “illegitimate” to the reader, consider the quote from Dr. R. D. Laing that I provide in Part I of the essay: “[T]he formal elements of speech [of a schizophrenic] are in themselves ordered in unusual ways, and these formal peculiarities seem, at least to some extent, to be the reflection in language of the alternative ordering of his experience, *with splits in it where we take coherence for granted, and the running together (confusion) of elements that we keep apart.*” (Laing, *The Divided Self* [Pantheon Books, 1969], p. 175; the emphasis is mine.) Those who have managed to stay with me up to this point in the writing should feel a sense of accomplishment, knowing that they may have gotten their first real taste of the disorientation associated with schizophrenic thinking—simply in the course of making a sincere effort to figure out what the authors of New Testament had in mind.

In order to *make sense* of the thinking that has been presented in the writings of the New Testament, it is necessary (to borrow Laing’s language) to “*re-order*” the conceptual distinctions made by the author in “less unusual” ways—and this so that *the original intentions of the authors* might be made *more comprehensible* to readers. **It is necessary to *create* conceptual splits or distinctions where they *do not* already *seem* to exist, and to *join together* or *eliminate* conceptual splits or distinctions that *do seem* to exist.**

Consider that what I am trying to do is reminiscent of Plato’s “Collection and Division,” and especially of what Plato wrote in the *Phaedrus* (265E). I am desperately trying to *undo* some of the damage done to our sanity by esotericists, by, unlike them, “**dividing things by classes** [or ‘according to Form’: *kata eidē*], **in keeping with where the joints *naturally come forth*** [or naturally appear, or naturally arise: *phyō*], **and not attempting to break [katagnymi] any part [meros], in the way a bad [or evil: *kakos*] butcher would.**” To “divide where the divisions **naturally** appear” is really just another way of saying that one adheres to conventional, *shared* understandings about the *meanings* that might legitimately be assigned to the words we use, and about how those words ought to be used in discourse with others. In other words, one does not unnaturally *force* words to mean things that most of the other people using the same language would not understand them to mean, or make conceptual distinctions that most others would not make (unless the making of such a distinction is explicitly disclosed), or consistently *fail* to make conceptual distinctions that most others *would* make. And this is what *all of us* must try to do if we are to overcome both religious esotericism and schizophrenia in society—as well as irrationality and dishonesty in general.

The ironic reason why esotericism has persisted for so long is that most people are actually *already inclined*—to *some* extent, anyway—to do exactly what they *ought to* be doing in this regard, and so it does not even occur to them that there might be people who would redefine words and conceptual categories in such a completely *unrestrained* manner, and to such an *exaggerated* extent. That is why I believe undoing the damage of esotericist thinking requires first engaging in a work of *translation*—in other words, an *undoing* of precisely those ordinary understandings of words and concepts that we *ought to* be able to have—before we can *re-organize* and then *explicate* the thinking of the esotericists in a more “natural” way, one that is more in keeping with ordinary understandings of words and ordinary ways of making conceptual distinctions—*even if*, after the thought processes have been explicated in more ordinary terms, people do not agree with or like what they end up discovering.

²³ And as additional support for that hypothesis, consider a passage from the non-canonical so-called “Gospel of Philip” (which is not really a “Gospel” so much as a very early commentary on some of the New Testament writings): “**There were three who always walked with the Lord: Mary, his mother, and her sister, and Magdalene, the one who was called his companion. His sister and his mother and his**

Magdalene” may have been understood—at least in certain respects—to be functionally equivalent to the figure of “John” (who is, incidentally, widely assumed to be “the disciple whom Jesus loved”).²⁴ In support of this second hypothesis, consider the possibility that the Greek word *gyné*, meaning “woman,” may be etymologically related to the Sanskrit word *yoni* and the Latin word *juno/yuno* (as well as the Chinese word *yin*), which I have elsewhere in Part II of the essay given reason to think might bear both an etymological and conceptual relation to the figure of “John” (Hebrew *yonah*).²⁵ If the

companion were each a Mary.” (Translation by Wesley W. Isenberg; the emphasis is mine. Source: the Gnosis Archive, available at <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/gop.html>.)

²⁴ Some readers might find such a suggestion preposterous. But unless there was a secret meaning or a riddle involved in the identity of “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” why would the author have been so coy about this disciple’s identity? Why would the author have not plainly and simply *stated* that “John” in particular (or someone else) was one of the twelve disciples whom Jesus loved more than the other disciples—*if* that was indeed the author’s real meaning? Or, more simply: Why did the author refuse to give this particular “disciple” an ordinary *name*?

²⁵ Such an association might also have been hinted at by the author of Luke 24:10, which speaks of “**Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the (mother) of James, and the rest (of the women) with them**” having been at Jesus’s empty tomb. The name “Joanna” (Greek *iōanna*) is the female equivalent of the name “John” (Greek *iōannés*). The Hebrew noun *yonah* (also corresponding to the name “Jonah”), from which both of these names are derived, is feminine, and means “dove.”

Related to this, John 2:13-17 says, “**And the passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up** [or ascended: *ana-bainō*] **into Jerusalem. And in the temple** [*hieron*] **he found** [or discovered: *heuriskō*] **those selling** [*pōleō*] **oxen** [or cattle: *bous*, which is a masculine noun] **and sheep** [*probaton*, which is a neuter noun] **and doves** [or pigeons: *peristera*, which is a feminine noun], **and the money-changers sitting (there)** [*kathémai*]. **And having made a whip out of cords, he drove out** [or cast out, or threw out: *ek-ballō*] **all** [or ‘all things’: *pantas*, which is a masculine adjective] **from the temple** [*hieron*], **both the sheep and the oxen.** [Notice, by the way, that this indicates that the ‘doves’ were not regarded as being part of the ‘all’ or ‘all things’ (*pantas*) driven out of the ‘temple.’] **And he poured out** [*ek-cheō*] **the coins of the money-changers, and overthrew the tables. And to those selling** [*pōleō*] **the doves** [*peristera*], **he said, ‘Take** [or take away, or take up, or **raise (up)**, or **lift (up)**: *airō*] **these things from here!** [or “from (over) here,” or “from (down) here”: *enteuthen*, suggesting the idea of one of two “sides”; cf. Revelation 22:2, quoted below in the main text, describing the situation of the “tree of life” in the “new Jerusalem”]. **Do not make the house** [*oikos*] **of my Father a house** [*oikos*] **of trade** [*emporion*]!’ **His disciples** [*mathétés*] **remembered** [*mimnēskō*] **that it is written** [*graphō*], **‘The zeal** [more literally, the “heat” or the “burning”: *zēlos*] **of your house** [*oikos*] **will consume me** [more literally, “eat (me) up”: *kat-esthiō*].” (The last sentence is quoting Psalm 69:9.)

I posit that since the “oxen” and “sheep” and “doves” were being “sold” (*pōleō*) in the temple, the author may have meant to insinuate the idea of “slavery” of some kind. And, if the “doves” were symbolic of “women” (as I am suggesting the etymology of the Hebrew word for “dove” might indicate), then the “selling of doves” would probably have been meant to signify (symbolic) “sex slavery,” while the “selling of sheep” and “selling of oxen” would have signified other kinds of (symbolic) “slavery.” This would help to explain why the author would make a distinction between the way Jesus treats the selling of “sheep” and “oxen,” on the one hand, and the selling of “doves,” on the other.

Such a suggestion may at first seem fanciful, but consider that in Revelation 18:3, 18:11, 18:15, and 18:23, the city of “Babylon”—as well, implicitly, as the “harlot” (*porné*) of “Babylon”—are associated with “**traders**” (or “**merchants**”: *emporos*). So, by describing the “Temple of Jerusalem” as a “house of trade,” the author seems essentially to be identifying it with symbolic “Babylon.” [As I explain in Part I, the “Temple of Jerusalem” would be analogous to the “Tower of Babel” (i.e., “Tower of Babylon”) based on a distinction between the “present Jerusalem”—i.e., “Babel” or “Babylon”—and the “new Jerusalem.”] In addition, the Greek word *porné*, meaning “harlot, prostitute, whore,” is probably derived from the Greek word *pernémi*, meaning “to export (captives) for sale”—which indicates that the “harlot” of “Babylon” should probably also be thought of as the “sex slave” of “Babylon.” So, in other words, the “selling of doves” that John 2:13-17 describes as having taken place in Jerusalem’s “temple” would seem to be

functioning, at least in part, as an implicit allusion to the idea of the “harlot” of “Babylon,” since a “harlot” would be a “dove” (i.e., a “woman”) that had been “sold.” (Also consider Revelation 18:11-13, which—if one makes the assumption the “souls [*psyché*] of men” were understood to be symbolically equivalent to “women”—may have been meant to lead at least some readers to think of “sex slaves” or “harlots.”)

Also, in Revelation 18:14, the angel says to the “harlot of Babylon,” “**And the ripe fruits** [or, more figuratively, ‘ripe virginity’: *opōra*] **of the desire** [*epithymia*] **of your soul** [*psyché*] **have gone away** [*aperchomai*] **from you, and all the luxurious things** [or sumptuous things, or rich things, or smooth things; more literally, ‘fat things,’ or ‘oily things’: *liparos*] **and splendid things** [or bright things, or radiant things, or clear things, or transparent things, or distinct things, or manifest things: *lampros*] **have been put away** [or cut off: *apollymi*] **from you, and no more will (men)** [or (merchants)] **find** [or discover: *heuriskō*] **them.**” The notion of “the ripe fruits of the desire of your soul” being taken away from this “woman” may have been intended to lead the reader to think of the archetypal “Woman,” i.e., “Eve,” “the Mother of all the living” (see Genesis 3:1-7 and 3:20)—in which case, it would suggest that the “post-Fall Eve” was thought of as having been “sold” (or, as having “sold” herself) into a condition of “sex slavery” as the result of her initially having eaten from “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” in the “Garden of Eden.” (Cf. Zephaniah 2:15—which, by a comparison with Genesis 3:20, seems to suggest that the archetypal “Great City”—which I think was probably understood to be equivalent to the archetypal “Mother of all the living”—had been reduced to the status of a “harlot” forced to service her own metaphorical “offspring.”) The next verse, Revelation 18:15, then describes “**the merchants** [or traders: *emporos*] **of these things**” (namely, of her “ripe fruits,” i.e., her “luxurious things” and “splendid things”) as “**having been made rich** [*plouteō*] **off her**”—which may suggest an identification between, on the one hand, the “serpent,” which in Genesis 3:14 is described as having been condemned by God to “eat earth [LXX: *gē*] all the days of (its) life,” and, on the other, “**the kings of the earth** [*gē*]” and “**the merchants** [*emporos*] **of the earth** [*gē*]” that are mentioned in Revelation 18:3 in connection with the “harlot of Babylon.” (Also consider what Matthew 10:16 says about “serpents” and “doves.”)

As I also discuss in Part I of the essay, John 2:13-17 needs to be considered in the context of the subsequent text found in John 2:18-21, which says, “**So the Jews responded and said to (Jesus), ‘What sign** [*sémeion*] **do you show** [*deiknymi*] **to us that you do these things?’** [I offer the suggestion that by ‘these things,’ the author meant to refer especially to the immediately preceding words, ‘the zeal [more literally, the “heat” or **the “burning”**: *zēlos*] **of (God’s) house will consume me** [more literally, “eat (me) up”: *kat-esthiō*.]’ **Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Pull down** [or tear down, or pull apart, or tear apart: *lyō*] **this temple** [*naos*], **and in three days I will raise it up** [*egeirō*, possibly related to *airō* (Epic dialect *aeirō*)].’ **So the Jews said, ‘This temple** [*naos*] **was built** [*oiko-domeō*] **(over the course of) forty-six years, and you will raise it up** [*egeirō*] **in three days?’** **But he was speaking** [or ‘meaning’: *legō*] **about the temple** [*naos*] **of his body** [*sōma*].” So, in this passage, Jesus **compares his own “body”** to the “temple” (*naos*) in Jerusalem—which he in turn implicitly **compares to “Babylon,”** in part because of his calling it a “house of trade” (*oikon emporiou*). Revelation 18:8 says that “Babylon” would be “**burned up** [or consumed: *kata-kaiō*] **in fire** [*en pyri*],” and Revelation 18:9 and 18:18 speak of Babylon’s “burning” (*pyrōsis*). [And in Revelation 20:9 one can find the Greek word that is used in John 2:17, *kat-esthiō*, meaning “to consume, to devour, to eat up,” used specifically in connection with the idea of “fire” (*pyr*).]

This shows not only that the authors of the New Testament were probably identifying the “present Jerusalem temple” with the symbols of “Babylon” and “the harlot of Babylon”—and, I believe also, with the “Tower of Babel”—but also that “Jesus” was in some way being **identified with** this “harlot” and with “Babylon,” and the two would be expected to share the same fate; so that just as “Babylon” and the “harlot” would be “burned up,” so too would “Jesus” be “burned up,” in a sense, along with them. Additional evidence for such an “identification” might be found in Galatians 4:30, in which Paul says, “**But what does the scripture say? ‘Cast out** [*ek-ballō*] **the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not inherit** [*kléronomeō*] **with the son of the free (woman)**”—which suggests that the fates of the two symbolic “women” or “mothers” were deemed to be somehow tied to the fates of the two symbolic “sons.” In Galatians 3:16, “Jesus” is identified with “Isaac”; so the “burning up” of “Isaac” (i.e., “Jesus”)—**along with** “Sarah” (i.e., the “virgin Mary”)—may have been deemed to be the same “burning up” that “Hagar” (i.e., “the harlot of Babylon” or “Mary Magdalene”)—**along with** “Ishmael”—would also have to go through; but maybe it was believed that the figures of “Isaac” and “Sarah” would emerge victorious from this “purification by fire” or “testing by fire,” while the figures of “Hagar” and “Ishmael” would not. If so, that would suggest that the “burning up of Babylon” was being **equated with** Jesus’s

“Crucifixion”—and such an hypothesis receives some support from the fact that in Revelation 18:10, 18:17, and 18:19, the destruction of “Babylon” is described as occurring at a certain “hour” (*hōra*); and, as I point out in another footnote in this section, in the Gospel accounts Jesus repeatedly speaks of his “Crucifixion” as also occurring at a certain “hour” (*hōra*).

As I discuss in Part I of the essay, I believe Jesus’s “Crucifixion” ought to be conceptualized as a “separating” of Jesus into two “parts”: an “inner body” (or “inner self,” or “inner person,” or “inner meaning”), and an “outer body” (or “outer self,” or “outer person,” or “outer meaning”). And I believe that this separating of Jesus into “two parts” or “two bodies” can be analogized to a distinction that I think the authors of the New Testament may have made between “two birds” (or “two doves,” or “two sparrows,” i.e., “two women”)—one of which would “fall,” and the other of which would “rise.” This is suggested by Matthew 10:29, in which Jesus says, “**Are not two** [*dyo*] **sparrows** [or ‘little sparrows’: *strouthion*, the diminutive of *strouthos*] **sold** [*pōleō*] **for a penny** [*assarion*]? **And one** [*hen*] **of them will not fall** [*piptō*] **upon** [*epi*] **the earth** [or ground: *gē*] **without your Father.**” (Cf. Isaiah chapter 47, and especially verses 1-4 (LXX).) (Incidentally, the juxtaposition of Matthew 10:29 with the verse that immediately precedes it may suggest that one of the “two sparrows” was being compared to the “body,” which in this case would correspond to what I am calling the “outer body,” and that the other was being compared to the “soul,” which in this case would correspond to what I am calling the “inner body.”) The language in Matthew 10:29 might be read to imply that the “falling” of one of the two “birds” would have been regarded as a *positive* thing, since it would require the willingness of “the Father.” At the same time, however, there is a possible suggestion to be found that even though one of the two symbolic “sparrows” or “birds” was expected to “fall to the earth,” the other was expected to “fly away into the heavens,” that is, to “escape” or “be rescued” (Greek *rhyomai*) from its present condition—or, to put it another way, to “rise” (Greek *an-istēmi* or *egeirō*) or “ascend” (or “go up”: Greek *ana-bainō*).

So, when the author of John 2:13-17 speaks of the “taking away” (or “raising up,” or “lifting up”: *airō*) of the “doves,” he may have meant to allude to the idea that I am suggesting might be contained in Matthew 10:29, that one of the two “sparrows” or “birds” (corresponding, I suspect, to two symbolic “women”) would be allowed to “fall” (*piptō*), while the other one would be “raised up” (*airō* or *egeirō* or *an-istēmi*) or would “ascend” (*ana-bainō*); but after that, it too would “come down” (or “descend”: *kata-bainō*) to the “earth” (*gē*)—only it would be in a way that was *different from* the way in which the first “bird” or “woman” would have “come down” (*kata-bainō*) or “fallen” (*piptō*) to the “earth” (*gē*). And I think part of the reason for that difference may have been understood to be that one of the two symbolic “women” would be “falling out” of the “first heaven” down to the “first earth,” while the other “woman” would be “descending” from the “new heaven” to the “new earth.” (See Revelation 20:11 and 21:1-2.) It is conceivable that the understanding of the author of John 2:13-17 was that one of the two “sold birds” or “sold doves” would be “taken away” (*airō*) in the sense of “being killed” (which is one of the possible meanings of *airō*) (and see Revelation 18:8), or, in the sense of “passing away” (*ap-erchomai*) *along with* the “first heaven” and the “first earth” (again, see Revelation 21:1-2), while the other of the two “sold birds” or “sold doves” would be “taken away” (*airō*) in the sense of being “lifted up” or “raised up” to the “new heaven”—before she then descended to the “new earth.” It is also conceivable that the “two sides” of the “river of water of life” on which the “tree of life” was seen in John’s vision of the “new Jerusalem” (see Revelation 22:1-2) were understood to correspond to the “new heaven” and the “new earth”; and if that is correct, then, since the *same* kind of “tree” could be found on *either* side of the river, that would suggest that “heaven” and “earth” had been in some way united, or made identical in at least certain respects.

[By the way, the same possible double meaning for *airō* that I am suggesting in connection with the “sold doves”—such that the same word in the same context could mean *either* “to lift up” or “to kill”—might also be involved in the way in which the word *airō* is used in John 19:15, in connection with Jesus’s Crucifixion. If that is correct, it would give support to the suggestion I make that the “two bodies” of Jesus may have been understood to “parallel,” at least to some extent, the “two birds” (or “two doves,” or “two women,” or “two cities”); and it might additionally indicate that the authors of the New Testament may have thought of the symbolic “Crucifixion” of “Jesus” as what would make it possible to “rescue” (*rhyomai*) one of the two symbolic “women” from her “captivity”—*in the course of* “Jesus” “rescuing” his *own* “inner body” (or “inner self”) from his own “outer body” (or “outer self”). Cf. Romans 7:22-25.]

According to the hypothetical model I am proposing, an important thing to keep in mind is that the “two birds” or “two women” (e.g., “Sarah” and “Hagar”) would finally be *separated* or *distinguished* from each other—and, in the process, one of them would be “cast out” (Greek *ek-ballō*) of the “kingdom of heaven”

two figures of “John” and “Mary Magdalene”—both corresponding, *ex hypothesi*, to “the disciple whom Jesus loved”—were thought to be equivalent (at least for certain purposes), then a comparison of the two passages quoted above (that is, Gospel of Thomas verse 114 and John 21:20-23) might again suggest that the “coming of Jesus” was thought by some early Christians to be equivalent to a “female” (or at least “female-ish”) entity being transformed into a “male” entity, perhaps by way of the symbolic “birth” of a “male child” or “son” (perhaps understood to symbolize the “male” *pneuma*) out of the metaphorical “womb” of the “female” *psyché* that was thought to exist *within* every “disciple.”²⁶ Since the “soul,” *psyché*, was and has been traditionally depicted by Christian esotericists and other esotericists as female—in fact, the ancient Greek mythological figure named “Psyche” was female²⁷—it may be that, according to the scheme existing in the minds of the authors of the New Testament, every person was thought of as *starting off* as relatively “female”; and it was only when the person’s own *psyché* or “soul” had become *fully transformed* into *pneuma* or “spirit”—but also when what had *formerly been* the person’s “soul” or *psyché* had become purified *in the course of* its having been *projected out* into an *objectified* archetypal “Mother,” or “City,” or “Bride,” or “Woman”—that the person could be regarded as being a “*son* of God,” as opposed to a “*daughter* of God” (as all of the symbolic “daughters of God” would presumably by that point have been metaphorically “incorporated” into the archetypal “virgin Mother”).²⁸ When the process of transformation was complete, that may have

(see Galatians 4:26,28-31). But the notion that *both* of these two symbolic “women” would have been considered to have *started off*, at least in some sense, as “*sold doves*” seems to be indicated by Isaiah 40:1-2; perhaps one of them was regarded as the “part” of the *single* archetypal “Woman” that was deemed to always remain “pure” and “innocent” in spite of whatever the other “part” might do or be forced to do. And, for additional evidence seeming to indicate that the authors of the New Testament may have routinely compared the archetypal “Woman” or “Mother” and the archetypal “City” to a kind of “bird”—such that the figure of “two birds” and “two doves” would have symbolized *two aspects* of that *same* archetypal “Woman” or “Mother” or “City”—see Matthew 23:37, in which Jesus implicitly compares “Jerusalem” to a “hen” or “(female) bird” or “(mother) bird” (*ornis*). (And notice that he also implicitly compares *himself* to a “bird” at the same time—which lends support to the suggestion that the archetypal “Woman” and the archetypal “Son” were thought to share the same fate.) Furthermore, that verse also suggests, by a comparison with Revelation 18:24, that Jesus was identifying the symbolic city of “Jerusalem” in its then-current state with the symbolic city of “Babylon”—which gives additional support to the suggested interpretation of John 2:13-17 that I offer regarding the symbolic significance of “doves.”

Also in connection with the hypothetical model I am suggesting, consider Psalm 124:7 (LXX: Psalm 123:7), which says, “**Our soul** [*nephesh*; LXX: *psyché*] **has escaped** [or slipped through: *malat*; LXX: *rhyomai*, meaning ‘to be **rescued**’] **like a bird** [*tsippor*; LXX: *strouthion*, meaning ‘(little) **sparrow**’] **from the snare** [*pach*; LXX: *pagis*] **of the ensnarer** [or fowler: *yaqosh*; the LXX has ‘hunter’: *théreuō*]; **the snare** [*pach*; LXX: *pagis*] **is torn** [or broken apart, or broken in pieces, or disintegrated: *shabar*; LXX: *syntribō*], **and we have escaped** [or gotten loose, or slipped through: *malat*; LXX: *rhyomai*, meaning ‘to be **rescued**’].”

²⁶ Again, compare 1 Timothy 2:11-15, especially verse 15.

²⁷ Conversely, in Luke 1:31-35 the “spirit” (*pneuma*) is depicted as serving in a “male” role.

²⁸ It is conceivable that what I am here calling a “daughter of God” (a term never found in the Bible, as far as I know) was thought to be equivalent to a “daughter of Zion” or a “daughter of Jerusalem” (see, e.g., Matthew 21:5 and Luke 23:28), with “Jerusalem” possibly having been thought to correspond to the “female” aspect of God. I make this suggestion since in Galatians 4:25-26 Paul compares “Jerusalem” to the women “Sarah” and “Hagar,” and describes “Sarah” in particular as “*our* mother”; and, since the New Testament routinely speaks of “sons of Abraham,” but not “daughters of Abraham”—and assuming that “Abraham” was understood to serve as a symbol for the “male” aspect of God, as I discuss elsewhere in Part II—it seems fitting that in order to have a complete symbolic “family,” there would have been

been when the “coming of Jesus” referred to in John 21:20-23 was deemed to occur. Similarly, the completion of this metaphorical “sex change” may have been what “overcoming” or “conquering” or “prevailing” (*nikaō*: see Revelation 21:7) was understood to entail, which would allow a person to gain entrance to the “new Jerusalem.” (Consider, for example, that the Book of Revelation never makes mention of any “daughters of God” to be found in the “new Jerusalem.”) And this may have been deemed to make it possible for every person to become a “son” (*huios*: once again, see Revelation 21:7) who was fully “pneumatic” or “spiritual,” who would then be eligible to “marry” his “virgin Mother” (that is, the figurative “Sarah,” or the “virgin Mary,” or the “new Jerusalem”). They would do this at the same time that “Jesus” *also* married her, in a sense, since all of the “sons” would be marrying her *through* “Jesus,” as they would all be “members” or “limbs” of the “body of Christ.” (Again, consider that in Galatians 3:16 Christ is compared to “Isaac”; and in Galatians 4:28, Christians are *also* compared to “Isaac.”) So Jesus could thenceforth be regarded as the “father” of his “sons” (see Revelation 21:7), even as his “sons” would be able to participate in Jesus’s “fatherness”—analogous to the way in which “the Son,” Jesus, would now be participating in the “fatherness” of his own “Father.”

Thus the understanding of the authors may have been that in the “new Jerusalem,” Jesus (i.e., “the Lamb,” Greek *arnion*, corresponding to the figure of “Isaac”) would become *united* with *his* “father” (i.e., “God,” Greek *theos*, likely corresponding, for reasons I give elsewhere in Part II, to the figure of “Abraham”) by their sharing of the same “throne” (*thronos*), as indicated in Revelation 22:1-3:

And (the angel) showed [*deiknymi*] me a river [*potamos*] of water [*hydōr*] of life [*zōē*], clear [*lampros*] as crystal [*krystallos*], going out [*ek-poreuomai*] from the throne [*thronos*] of God [*theos*] and of the Lamb [*arnion*] in the middle [or center: *mesos*] of the street of (the city), and on either side [*enteuthen kai ekeithen*] of the river, (the) tree [*xylon*] of life [*zōē*] producing [*poieō*] twelve [*dōdeka*] (kinds of) fruit [*karpos*] according to month [*mén*], each yielding [or delivering, or rendering; or, more figuratively, “explaining,” or “expounding,” or “defining,” or “interpreting”]: *apo-didōmi*] its fruit [*karpos*], and the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations [*ethnos*]. And no longer will there be any curse [or “anything accursed”: *katathema* or *kat-anathema*] (in the new Jerusalem), and the throne [*thronos*] of God [*theos*] and of the Lamb [*arnion*] will be in it....

To state the matter more bluntly, a good argument can be made that there is something “oedipal” involved here, since the author of this passage seems to have been imagining that “Isaac” (i.e., the “Son”) would be *joined together* or *merged together* with “Abraham” (i.e., the “Father”); and this so that “the Son”—*along with* “the Father” (or *as* “the Father”)—would, because he had inherited the Father’s “throne,” finally be able to participate in the “paternal” role of “watering” the archetypal “City” (that is, the archetypal “Mother,” represented by the figure of “Sarah”) with the fertilizing “river of

“daughters” thought to especially reflect the image of their symbolic “mother.” (And such a notion does indeed receive support from 1 Peter 3:1-6.)

water of life [zōē],” thereby making it possible for the “tree of life [zōē]” to “bear fruit” (i.e., “bear or deliver offspring” out of its metaphorical “womb”).²⁹

However, until all of the members of Jesus’s Church or Body became fully incorporated into “Isaac,” i.e., the “Son” or “Lamb,” it appears that they would continue to be regarded as part of the female “Bride” that had been betrothed to Jesus the “Bridegroom” (see 2 Corinthians 11:2 and Ephesians 5:23-33),³⁰ presumably because

²⁹ Compare Genesis 3:20 (LXX), which says, “Adam called the name of his wife [or woman: *gynē*] Life [zōē; the corresponding Hebrew word/name meaning ‘Life’ is *chavvah*, or ‘Eve’], because she was mother [mētēr] of all the living [zāō].” It is conceivable that the authors of the New Testament meant to associate the archetypal “virgin Mother” with the “tree of life,” and the “twelve disciples” with the “twelve (kinds of) fruit” that were the *offspring* or “fruit” of that “tree” or “Mother” of “the living”; and this suggests that the authors may have meant for the “twelve disciples” to be regarded as the “twelve brothers [*adelphos*]” of Jesus (i.e., the “Son,” as well as the “new Adam”), all of whom shared the *same* “virgin Mother.” Also consider that after the Fall, mankind was denied “access” to this “tree of life” (see Genesis 3:22-24), and this denial of “access” was expected to continue up until the advent of the “new Jerusalem”—possibly suggesting that God would have been protecting its “virginity” or “chastity” in the meantime. Note, in fact, that up until the occurrence of the Fall, Adam and Eve would always be able to see each other’s “nakedness”—but it was only *after* the Fall that they engendered their first children. That suggests the possibility that so long as the archetypal “Woman” (i.e., “Eve”) was thought of as *still being* in her original state of innocence in the “Garden of Eden” (subsequently updated to the “new Jerusalem”), she was thought to still remain in the role of “virgin Mother.” And the “tree of life” may have been understood to serve as a symbol of the “virginal feminine fertility” or “nubility” of the “virgin Mother.”

Related to this theme of sexual symbolism, also consider the possibility that the “city lying [or sitting, or positioned, or situated: *keimai*] atop [or above, or upon: *ep-anō*, derived from the preposition *epi* and the adverb *anō*, which is itself derived from the preposition *ana*] a mountain [or hill: *oros*]” that is spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 5:14 may have been meant to refer, at least in part, to the idea of the “new Jerusalem” being seated upon “Mount Zion.” Assuming that this is correct, there may have been sexual symbolism intended to be seen in this that might relate to the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” who is said in John 13:23 and 13:25 to have been “lying on” or “leaning on” or “reclining on” (*ana-keimai en*), or “lying down upon” or “lying back upon” or “falling back upon” (*ana-piptō epi*), Jesus’s “bosom” or “chest” (*kolpos* or *stéthos*)—which seems rather intimate, and so may have been analogized to, and perhaps was meant to prefigure, the sort of “marriage” between the symbolic “Bride” and “Bridegroom” that is described in Revelation chapter 21. [And the Greek word *stéthos*, which can mean “chest” or “breast” (of either sex), was also sometimes used more figuratively by the ancient Greeks to describe a “hill” or “bank”—making it more likely that such an analogy was indeed intended by the authors of the New Testament.]

³⁰ Incidentally, Ephesians 5:23-33 provides a good example of the esotericist’s out-of-control use of metaphor. Husbands, Paul says, are to love their wives as their own bodies. At the same time, Christians are members of Christ’s body. And the husband is the head of the wife. And Christ is the head of his body, the Church. And a man and his wife are to become one flesh.

How are we supposed to put together these various images? Should we imagine the head of a man sitting on top of the headless body of a woman? [Actually, I believe there is good reason to think that this may in fact be what Paul and other New Testament authors *did* have in mind, at least at some level of thinking; I think that both the symbolic city of “Babel” or “Babylon,” and that of “Jerusalem,” may have (at least sometimes) been visualized as “headless female bodies” that were awaiting their “head” or “top” (Hebrew *rosh* or Greek *kephalé*) in the form of “Christ” in order to make them complete.] Should we imagine husbands devouring their wives in order to assimilate them into themselves, or sticking them back into their bodies like a missing rib? In other words, how does one maintain the image of “loving *another* person” at the same time as that other person constitutes one’s *own* body? Or should we simply make no effort to reconcile the various images?—in which case, what is the point of using them together? And isn’t the very reason for using a visual metaphor to lead one’s readers to actually *visualize* that metaphor, at least at some level of thought? If anyone wishes to claim that I am “working the analogies too hard,” then my response would be that a reader who is trying to understand an author’s meanings has no alternative available to him when the author is writing esoterically—writing, that is, almost entirely in the form of metaphor without

they would still be “psychic” or “natural” rather than “pneumatic” or “spiritual.”³¹ Or, maybe the understanding was that those persons who were unable to completely “conquer” or “prevail” or “overcome” (*nikaō*) and thereby become “sons” would, to the extent they were not able to “overcome,” continue to serve as Jesus’s “Bride” even in the “new Jerusalem.” (This suggestion receives some support from Matthew 9:15, which speaks of “sons of the bridechamber,” to be distinguished from the “bride” whom they were charged with escorting to the house of the “bridegroom”; and these “sons” may have been understood to correspond to the “disciples” or “apostles.”) Or, as a variation on this, maybe it was thought that the “psychic” or “natural” part of each individual person itself constituted the archetypal “betrothed Bride,” which needed to be metaphorically transformed into the archetypal “virgin Mother Bride” by means of its “purification,” while the “pneumatic” or “spiritual” part of that same person constituted the archetypal “Disciple,” which needed to be metaphorically transformed into the archetypal “Bridegroom” and “Son” by means of an analogous purification—so that once the process of “purification” was complete on both sides, the “sacred marriage” would be consummated in an essentially internal and hermaphroditic way.³² If so, then whether the still-impure Church was depicted by the early Christian apostles and evangelists as a “betrothed bride” or as a “disciple whom Jesus loved” would depend only on whether the particular apostle or evangelist who was speaking or writing happened to be in the mood to focus more on people’s “natural” (*psychikos*) aspect, or more on their “spiritual” (*pneumatikos*) aspect—again, assuming that their belief was that both of these aspects needed to be “purified.”

I wish to point out—in case it is not already clear—how well this material illustrates why one might reasonably expect esotericist religion to promote significant mental disorientation and perhaps even insanity. Regardless of whether one chooses to accept my suggested interpretations of the passages I have been discussing, just consider the quoted and cited passages themselves, on their own terms: We find four persons being transformed into only two persons in Jesus’s perception. We find a mother being

bothering to let the reader know what the particular concepts are that the metaphors were meant to illustrate. On the contrary, *it is the esotericist authors* who are “working the analogies too hard,” and trying to make their metaphors “do more” than what they are inherently capable of “doing.” And it is, I believe, likely due to this proclivity to “misuse metaphor” that people in the ancient world ended up producing all of the bizarre imagery of “chimeras” and “sphinxes” and “griffins” and the like that one encounters in ancient myth, with body parts having been taken from various individual creatures and fused together into some new creature that no person could ever encounter in the real world.

³¹ Incidentally, all of this might be reflected in Peter’s identification of “Jesus” as the “Son of God” or “Christ of God” in Matthew 16:16, since it is conceivable that in that episode Simon Peter is being described as a “son of the Woman” (which I think, as I explain elsewhere in Part II of the essay, may be the idea that the author meant to convey by having Jesus refer to Simon as a “son of *yonah*,” or Greek *bar-iōna*, derived from the Aramaic), even as he is also, I suspect, being described as a kind of “father” of the “Son of God”; and this would tend to imply that it was also *by* this same “Woman”—his “Mother,” perhaps representing the “collective soul” or “world soul” or “cosmic womb”—that he *begat* the “Son of God” within himself. (Or something like that.)

³² Or maybe—in fact, quite probably—all of these various ways of thinking, even though they contradict each other (for example, “sons” cannot be “brides” in any ordinary sense), were unconsciously entertained at the same time—except on those occasions when the contradictory implications were actually *pointed out* to them by another person. Then, I can imagine them protesting, “Well of course I didn’t mean *that*! That should have been obvious to anyone.” In other words, they would have been revealing their autistic (as well as, in this case, probably dishonest) manner of thinking.

transformed into a virgin. We find multiple sons being transformed into a single “Lord” or “Master” so that they can all marry their mother at the same time. We find this mother being transformed in the reader’s perception into a city, with this city eventually becoming **MARRIED TO A LAMB** out of which a river of living water unceasingly flows. We find women being transformed into men. We find the mother of one person being transformed into the mother of another, presumably unrelated person. We find the figure of Jesus being transformed into the figure of Isaac; and all Christians likewise being transformed into the figure of Isaac; and all Christians being transformed into the various limbs of Jesus’s body.³³

As these examples ought to illustrate, one of the primary defects at the heart of esotericist religion is, not its mere *use* of metaphor (which in itself is unobjectionable and indeed necessary for human thought and communication), but its thoroughly **undisciplined, unrestrained, reckless, self-absorbed, and irresponsible** use of metaphor. Esotericist writing is, in short, metaphor run amok. What it produces resembles a moving kaleidoscopic image or the contents of a psychedelic hallucination in which everything is always left free to transform, or shift, or metamorphose, or merge, into *something else* other than what it was, so that there can never be any firm mental standing ground or sure sense of what the author of the writing had in mind. One feels that **nothing ever stays put** (and that same feeling may have been what motivated Plato’s frustration with the poets and philosophers of his day); and the result is that when one makes any serious, sustained attempt to understand what the authors of the Bible actually *meant* by their writings, the experience has a pronounced “Alice in Wonderland” quality to it.³⁴ One thing or symbol or idea corresponds to another only as long as the individual author or interpreter wants it to—and then it can stop, so it can start to correspond to something else that, to most people, appears to be completely different from and unrelated to the first thing it corresponded to (with the thread that connects together all of these various things—to the extent that any thread exists at all—existing solely within the mind of the individual author or interpreter). Whether one thing will be deemed to correspond to another is based almost entirely upon the whim of the author or interpreter, and not on *consensual social* understandings regarding whether one concept (for example, a “mother”) can legitimately be thought to be equivalent to another concept (for example, a “virgin bride”)—even if “only” for purposes of a metaphor—based on what most people have in mind when they ordinarily use the words corresponding to those two concepts.

An individual metaphor constitutes a single element of the language we use, and just as the language that we use is shared in common, so too must each of its constituent metaphors be used in such a way that their meanings can be shared in common. Given

³³ Since I do not think that it can be repeated too many times when dealing with this kind of material, and in order to remind the reader of why it is necessary to do what I am trying to do, I again provide the quote from Dr. R. D. Laing: “[T]he formal elements of speech [of a schizophrenic] are in themselves ordered in unusual ways, and these formal peculiarities seem, at least to some extent, to be the reflection in language of the alternative ordering of his experience, **with splits in it where we take coherence for granted, and the running together (confusion) of elements that we keep apart.**” (Laing, *The Divided Self*, p. 175; the emphasis is mine.)

³⁴ Incidentally, it is conceivable that the title of Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* was inspired—whether consciously or unconsciously—by 1 Corinthians 13:12, in which Paul writes, “**For now we are looking through a looking-glass [esoptron] by means of a riddle [or a puzzle, or an enigma, or dark sayings, or in obscurity: ainigma], but then (it will be) face to face.**”

that most people in a society would think that there is a basic logical inconsistency at the heart of any metaphor or simile in which a “mother” was being *equated with* (rather than *compared to*) a “virgin,” or in which the relationship between a “mother” and her “sons” was being *equated with* (rather than *compared to*) the relationship of “marriage,” an author or interpreter should feel obligated to respect the ways in which people do *in fact* think about and would define those words.³⁵ If an author presents the reader with the verbal image of “a virgin marrying her sons,” the simple fact is that this will make no sense whatsoever to just about anyone *unless* the reader chooses to *privately redefine the meaning* of the word “virgin,” or the word “marry,” or the word “sons,” which are contained in that verbal image—perhaps only in this one instance, or perhaps in other instances as well.³⁶ So it is precisely this that he ends up being forced to do—at least so long as he is unwilling to simply ignore and walk away from the whole mental tangle with which he has been confronted. And it is the *making necessary* of this ongoing “private redefining of meaning” that constitutes the essential problem with religious esotericism. The way we achieve peace among individuals in society is by coming to share our *meanings* in common with each other as much as possible (which is not necessarily the same thing as everyone sharing the same *beliefs* in common regarding how one ought to live and think). But esotericist religion, by its nature, constantly works against that goal.

³⁵ As an example, one can imagine the author of Isaiah 62:5 (if we consider that verse in isolation) claiming that by “virgin” he meant to *evoke* the idea of “youthful ardor,” and by “mother” he meant to *evoke* the idea of “the wisdom of age”—and, of course, there is nothing logically inconsistent about combining the ideas of “wisdom” and “ardor.” (So we might posit that he would have claimed that the idea he was really trying to convey was that of some very special kind of “wisdom” that would give rise to increased “ardor” in a person.) But these would be associations that a reader should not be *expected* to make, because they are not contained in, or necessarily implied by, the ordinarily-understood *definitions* of the words; and so they are not *inevitable* associations (since there exist virgins who lack ardor and mothers who lack wisdom). At least with regard to authoritative religious writings, if an author wants to evoke certain *other* ideas than those directly and inevitably produced by the ordinary definitions of the words used, a reader is justified in expecting that the author will do so *openly* and *explicitly*—and, moreover, in such a way that the words that are used do not involve a contradiction (or “paradox,” or “mystery”).

³⁶ Of course, the “private redefining of meaning” will only occur to the extent that the person actually makes the attempt to *think about* and *analyze* what is being said, and does not allow his conscious mind to shut down entirely in the face of such nonsense. And, as a practical matter, the latter is precisely what happens when people make resort to the notion of “miracle” (e.g., a “virgin birth”) as an explanation for whatever they are unable to make sense of. (It is worth noting that it is actually possible to induce a hypnotic trance in a person by flooding the person’s mind with language whose conscious or surface meaning is utterly nonsensical. In fact, I believe esoteric religion has succeeded in putting large numbers of people into actual hypnotic trances in exactly that way, at least regarding certain matters.)