

5-1-1998

# Eyewitness to Jesus: amazing new manuscript evidence about the origin of the Gospels

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### Recommended Citation

Scott-Thomas, John (1998) "Eyewitness to Jesus: amazing new manuscript evidence about the origin of the Gospels," *Consensus*: Vol. 24 : Iss. 1 , Article 13.

Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol24/iss1/13>

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and available the testimony of the Old Testament in all of its polyphonic, elusive, imaginative power and to offer it to the church for its continuing work of construal toward Jesus."

In spite of some of the suspicion surrounding the postmodern perspective I personally believe this perspective provides an opportunity to the church. In a day when the witness of secular society and the university is being called on the carpet for its own over-confident objectivism, the church and synagogue can increasingly make its own testimony about the God of Israel and our Lord Jesus Christ in equal and new-found legitimacy. I believe this book is one such testimony.

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**Eyewitness to Jesus**  
C.P. Thiede and M. D'Ancona  
New York: Doubleday, 1996

Basically this book is the account of the reasoning and path followed by Dr. C.P. Thiede, an eminent papyrologist, in re-dating the Magdalen Papyrus, as recorded by his amanuensis, M. D'Ancona, the Deputy Editor of *The Sunday Telegraph*. Putting aside the breathless and rather precious prose of the dust jacket, it really is a fascinating volume to read. In addition to reporting the line of argument developed by Dr. Thiede, Mr. D'Ancona, who is himself a graduate of Magdalen, records a brief biography of Rev. C.B. Huleatt who acquired the manuscript fragments while serving in Luxor, Egypt, and donated them to Magdalen College at the turn of the twentieth century. Rev. Huleatt was also a graduate of the College, and thought of himself as a "Magdalen man".

Dr. Thiede's contention is that the fragments contain elements from Matthew 26:7-8, 10, 14-15, 22-23, 31-33, that the fragments came from a complete codex of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and that the codex pre-dates the end of the Jewish revolt against the Romans, which occurred in the late sixties and early seventies of the first century A.D. The arguments are detailed, filled with examples taken from other investigations in papyrology, and replete with esoterica such as line length analysis, the use of "nomina sacra", editorial techniques used in marking "new lines" or "new paragraphs", the development of microscopes and microscopic analysis methods in order to reconstruct debatable characters, and so on. Further, the story of Charles Bousfield Huleatt is interwoven through the text. Unfortunately, this rather mixed method of presentation gives the lay reader much trouble in following the thread of the argument. To the expert in the field it is no doubt obvious that the work of O'Callaghan on 7Q5 is being used as an

example of methodology, but to a lay person, running into a discussion of the dating of fragments of a scroll from Qumran of St. Mark's Gospel while in pursuit of fragments of a codex lodged in Magdalen College, purportedly from St. Matthew's Gospel, is somewhat disconcerting. Similarly the repeated emphasis on the digraph iota beta as standing for twelve (ten + two), causes one with "little Latin and less Greek" considerable difficulty, since iota is the ninth letter of the Greek alphabet. (This confusion is resolved by asking at your local library. It turns out that in Archaic Greek there was a letter allied with the Phoenician Vav, or the Hebrew Vaiv, located in the sixth position. When it became obsolete in the language, it was retained for counting and arithmetic. It is called Digamma.) Although the presentation is somewhat chaotic, following the argument is great fun. The conclusion reached is very plausible. Dr. Thiede does not dispute the priority of St. Mark—he just pushes things back to the middle of the first century. Thus it would be probable that many of those who had been eye-witnesses to all or part of Jesus' teaching and ministry would have been able to read and comment on the reliability of at least the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, and quite likely that of Luke in addition. Discussion of the implications for the church would lead us too far afield, and would be out of place in a book review. For an alternative view, it might be well to read "The Search for a No-Frills Jesus" in the *Atlantic Monthly* of December, 1996, 278/6.

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### **The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul's Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry**

McMaster New Testament Studies 2

Richard N. Longenecker, editor  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997  
xv + 253 pp. \$25.00

The purpose of the McMaster New Testament Studies (MNTS) series is to make accessible substantial biblical scholarship to a non-specialist, though educated, audience through annual symposium volumes. In this collection of essays on Paul readers are brought into the very complex world of Pauline studies. The conversion/call of Paul has been one of the most profound and debated conversions in Christian tradition and scholarly discussion. Here the focus is placed upon the impact of Paul's conversion in his later thinking as a Christian leader.

The essays included in this volume are varied in the range of thematic topics addressed. After Richard Longenecker's introduction (xi-xv), the following eleven essays are given: Bruce Corley, "Interpreting Paul's