

Gospel of Eve: The Second Adam and the Pangs of the Messiah

The Peaceable Kingdom of the Branch

The 'first' Isaiah wrote circa 740-700 BC, although additions by the 'second' Isaiah and possibly others 200 years later added materials to make a composite work. However one passage of the 'first', Isaiah chapter 11, makes a prophecy which will come to have major impact on history. The first part of the prophecy concerns a messiah of the line of David, more precisely his father Jesse:



Miniature of David, Mary and Jesus emerging from the rod out of the stem of Jesse (Cook)

Isa 11:1 "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."

Although he will presumably be a king like David, there is nothing to say this person will be a monarch, just a righteous person of spiritual insight and social justice, who is, perfecting Adam, 'righteous

in his loins' and who is faithful, but a sharp speaker. However the really mysterious thing is that he doesn't just bring about a change in the social order, but a profound and very peculiar change in the natural order as well, a biologically impossible 'peaceable kingdom' of childlike innocence, in which the evolutionary roles of the fauna are abrogated, in a manner which later Christian theologians, and possibly Jewish prophets before them, were to associate with the pristine era before original sin caused the Fall:

Isa 11:7 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

It is also clear this man will be a signal who will attract the gentiles and become glorious in his death: "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." This is one of the older messianic prophecies, but it leads one way only and that is towards a messiah who will undo the Fall, however un-biological the vision of nature is.

Durer's Adam and Eve has below a cat about to pounce on a mouse, as Eve grasps the apple. The natural order of 'original sin' is about to begin with the fall from innocence (Fedija).



The Messianic Proclamation

The 'black verses' of the Bible are those of Isaiah 61. This is the one place where the proclaimer claims themselves to be anointed as messiah in the eyes of God, by contrast with being a king such as David formally anointed by a priest. It is these verses that Jesus read to his home congregation at Nazareth from which his title Bridegroom derives, but these are also bursting with the return of God as the very renewal of nature.

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me;
because the Lord hath anointed me
to preach good tidings unto the meek; ...
to proclaim liberty to the captives
opening of prison to them that are bound*

to proclaim the acceptable year of the

Lord ...

*that they might be called trees of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. ...*

*And they shall build the old wastes,
they shall raise up the former desolations,
and they shall repair the waste cities,
the desolations of many generations.*

*For as the earth bringeth forth her bud,
and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth*

The Apocalyptic Heritage

2 Ecc'us 5:24 "From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die." From this passage in Ecclesiasticus, the wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach, we find the first returning references to the dilemma of Eden and the origins of death. The Book of Enoch similarly claims that God created death to punish humanity for Eve's sin (Walker 290).

The theme continues; 33:10 "All men are from the ground, and Adam was created of the dust. In the fullness of his knowledge, the Lord distinguished them and appointed their different ways; ... As clay in the hand of the potter ... so men are in

the hand of him who made them, to give them as he decides. Good is the opposite of evil, and life the opposite of death; ... Look upon all the works of the Most High; they likewise are in pairs, one the opposite of the other.”

The following reference to the mother of all living reflects Gen 3:20 in a new way which suggests returning to the ancient mother in death, something which becomes pivotal to her subsequent overthrow in the Crucifixion:40:1 “Much labor was created for every man, and a heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam, from the day they come forth from their mother's womb till the day they return to the mother of all.”

In Aramaic, the title Son of Man *bar enas* is ‘one in human likeness’. In Hebrew, this is translated *ben adam* son of Adam or son of man (Spong 1994 152). The prophetic son of man of Ezekiel, and the later transcendental figure of Daniel and Enoch, who more closely resemble the Aramaic are thus both linked to the archetype of man - Adam transfigured to become a transcendental saviour.

Standing in the shadow of the myth of the Fall from the Garden, some apocalyptic Jewish thinkers became increasingly troubled by the conflict and misery that they believed had been caused by the sexual origin of death. They believed the life-span was shrinking (it was certainly a lot shorter than Adam's reputed nine hundred and thirty year span) and that malaise was rife. They blamed Adam for giving in to the physical wiles of Eve, who was regarded as the source of original sin and death itself. Over the centuries, as a result of interaction between Babylonian, Persian and Jewish ideas, a great anticipation began to build that this state of affairs could be reversed. The new “King David” of the Jews, who would regain the Jewish kingdom, evolved into a transcendental Messiah.

Following the tradition set on the return from exile, the Essenes expected two messiahs, followed a life of renunciation and regarded the female as, dangerous and potentially evil, to be related to only for producing offspring. They embraced the spirit of renunciation and penitence, stood in the imminence of the apocalyptic end of days and celebrated a meal of bread and wine officiated over by the messiahs. They renounced polygamy and believed in the Gen 1 account as in Jesus description of marriage we see later in Matthew. They also believed that this messiah would come in the form of ‘the Man’ the archetypal Adam figure. The Teacher of Righteousness became identified with ‘removing the threatening sword from Adam’. Essenes dreaded the earthy curse of woman and consorted with them only to beget children as necessary under Jewish religious protocols to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ leaving them again to return to the Essene brotherhood.

The late apocalyptic prophets inserted into Isaiah, Zechariah and Daniel passages that in combination with several of the Psalms foretold that this Messiah would return as the Suffering Servant (p 239) or Foolish Shepherd (p 633), who unlike the kingly Davidic Messiah would be despised, pierced and die as an atonement offering. As a sacrificial Messiah, such a prophet not only fulfils the heritage of the Yahwistic prophets, but also in a very archaic way still carried in the Hebrew tradition becomes a sacrificial offering, himself dying to usher in the new eternal Kingdom of the Father. The Messiah had to be both a spiritual leader of his people and also suffer a death of atonement by becoming herem or taboo - coming too close to God, just as Moses who died on the mountain, or accursed for ‘blaspheming’ as the Foolish Shepherd of Zechariah whom Jesus emulated in his final hours.

This figure became the Elchasaite ‘secret Adam’ a recurrent supernatural figure

illuminating historical personalities, such as Jesus. He was supposed to be ninety-six miles high. Little wonder John the Baptist could only stoop to his shoe lachets. This tradition continued with the Ebionite Christians closely linked with the first Jewish Christian tradition of James, Jesus' brother.

Eisenman (427) comments about the continuing 'standing Adam' tradition in early sects: "Hippolytus, in discussing the group he calls the 'Naassenes' ('Sebuaeans' in Epiphanius), also, ties the 'Gate' imagery to the 'Primal Adam' ideology. Saying that, like al-Biruni's 'Sabaeans' centuries later, the Naassenes pray towards 'the Dome of Heaven' (that is, the North), Hippolytus notes that, for the Naassenes, 'Adam is the Primal ['First'] Man' and Jesus, 'the True Gate', through whom the Perfect Man enters. As they appear to have believed, 'the Perfect Man is incapable of being saved unless he be born again'. So in all these presentations, 'the Gate to Jesus' is generally connected in some manner to 'the Perfect Man'. Not only do we have here the 'Great' or 'Hidden Power' ideology (p 243), but for him, anyhow, 'the Son of Man' is literally 'the Gate of Jesus' or 'Perfect Adam'. Before proceeding, however, it is important to grasp that in Hebrew 'Son of Man' literally is 'Son of Adam' (in Aramaic, 'Son of Enosh') and, therefore, what we have, the reference to the imminent 'coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of Heaven' - in the War Scroll, as we shall see, identified with 'the Heavenly Host' - is basically a more incendiary version of the 'Primal' or 'Perfect Adam' ideology."



The Annunciation of Mary shadowed by the plight of Adam and Eve - Fra Angelico (Morante) Disruption of the fertility cult by the male deity. Note the dove of Aphrodite in the ray. Through her chasteness, Mary is attributed to have corrected Eve's carnal sin.

To quote Barbara Walker: "Take the snake, the fruit-tree, and the woman from the tableau and we have no fall, no frowning Judge, no Inferno, no everlasting punish-

ment - hence no need of a saviour. Thus the bottom falls out of the whole of Christian theology”.

*I am Eve, great Adam's wife,
'Tis I that outraged Jesus of old;
'Tis I that robbed my children of Heaven,
By rights 'tis I that should have gone upon the Cross ...
There would be no ice in any place,
There would be no glistening windy winter,
There would be no hell, there would be no sorrow,
There would be no fear, if it were not for me.
(Translated from the Celtic original by Kuno Meyer
from Come Hither, ed. W. de la Mare)*

Eventually these energies synchronistically culminated in the arrival of the Messiah, who duly and in quite a magical way fulfilled the prophecies. The trouble was that the story of sexual guilt was wrong in two ways:

(a) Sex is the origin of new life, not the source of death. Entering into mortal combat with original sin will not end death, and worse still, it will fulminate “knowledge of good and evil” into a final Armageddon.

(b) The expectation of the physical world ending and the advent of the kingdom of spirit without the evils of matter was unrealizable. The Kingdom of the Spirit is always there and always has been, lurking in the dream world and telling us we are the ancient spirits of creation, but to end the realm of matter - the mother completely is a fallacy. It just forces mortality in the flesh, because we are separated from the material unity, and can no longer enter into atonement with the immortal continuity of the life stream.

Jesus thus entered into a tragic alliance with mythical destiny, full of the dawn of new understanding but tortured and doomed because it was subject to the demiurge of the patriarchy:

*But he himself was broken
Long before the sky would open
Forsaken, almost human
He sank beneath your wisdom like a stone
And you want to travel with him
And you want to travel blind
And you think maybe you'll trust him
For he's touched your perfect body with his mind.
Leonard Cohen - Suzanne*

Although embraced in its most apocalyptic form by the entirely patriarchal and wholly Jewish Essene order, this sacrificial role inherits with it a collision course with the female, and with the physical, in which the ancient themes of sacrifice of the sacred king to the goddess re-emerge. The very gnostic light and darkness of the Essene view of the end of time, the transcendental role of the Messiahs, the Suffering Servant echoed in the haunting history of the Teacher of Righteousness lead to the notion of the doomed atonement Messiah. The mission of Jesus was to bring in the Kingdom of God. He solved the eschatological problem of the twin kingly and priestly Messiahs and the Suffering Servant by becoming a controversial prophet who assumed the burden of sacred king. In doing so he became the atonement sacrifice to undo the original sin of Eve. A death to end the realm of death, which becomes the central purpose of the Christian religion.

The frequent sacrificial references to the Son of Man; Matt 8:20 “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his

head,” the Bridegroom; Matt 9:15 “but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them” and finally the Sacred King of the Jews; Matt 27:29 “And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!” combine to cement a male sacrifice of the most ancient kind, and one which can only meaningfully be understood in relation to Eve the “Mother of all Living”, although Yahweh, Abba, or the mysterious Father who demanded such sacrifice of his only-begotten Son is really the one whom we should hold to account.

Already with the annunciation to Mary of the conception of Jesus, the myth of the undoing of the mortal sin of Eve is established, for by remaining “virgin”, she has snared Satan into releasing Eve from her ancient bond of sexual union, through which offspring and death came into the world. She was even reputed by the early church fathers to have been circumcised.

Hail! sinful Adam's recalling
Hail! Eve's tears redeeming. ...
Hail! O Star that bore the Sun.
Hail! the womb of God enfleshed. ...
Hail! through whom things made are all new made.
Hail! Bride unbrided. ...
Hail! By whom was loosed our sin.
Hail! by whom was opened Paradise.
Hail! Key of Christ's Kingdom.
Hail! Bride unbrided.
The Akatheosis of Mary - Constantinople circa 646

Jesus claimed to be the primal incarnation John 8:58 “Before Abraham was, I am.” In Luke 3:38 his mythical genealogy is traced back to Adam.

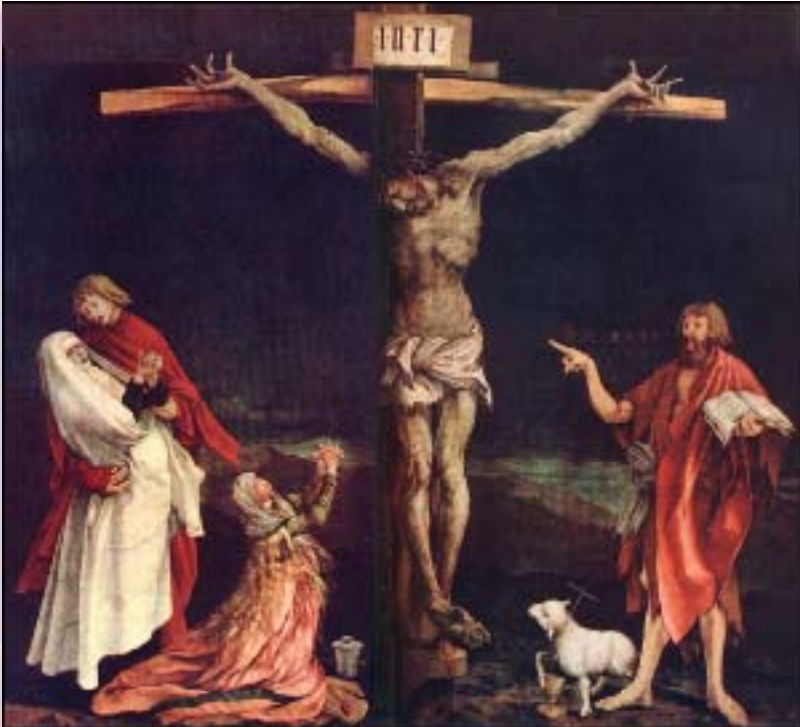
To bring in the Kingdom of the Father, Jesus had to challenge Eve to rejection and die a sacrificial death-to-end-death and to have his hands and feet pierced as foretold in the Psalms (p 241). This admittedly Essene attitude results in a religion in which women are evil, sex is carnal downfall, the physical world is flawed and full of death, suffering and evil, and the great vision quest is to die and thus leave the physical world for the pure and perfect spiritual realm. Mind in a war of dominion over body, just as Man is in dominion over nature.

The Kingdom made anyone who could return to pristine innocence superior to the best who had walked since Adam. It was thus undoing the Fall: Thomas 46 Jesus said, “Among those born of women, from Adam until John the Baptist, there is no one so superior to John the Baptist that his eyes should not be lowered (before him). Yet I have said, whichever one of you comes to be a child will be acquainted with the kingdom and will become superior to John.”

The saviour, Jesus, who came as the Adam - the Son of Man thus embarks on a visionary quest to fulfil the messianic prophecy and bring in the Zoroastrian age of cosmic renovation, the post-Essene “New Covenant” by ushering in the Kingdom of the Father, overthrowing the mortal sins of Eve. He is baptized by John and spends forty days in the wilderness Mark 1:13: “He was with the wild beasts and the angels waited on him” recapitulating Adam in the first era of Genesis (Cohn 1993 195).

The Gospel of Thomas 18 declares “Tell us how our end will be.” Jesus said, “Have you discovered, then, the beginning, that you look for the end? For where the beginning is, there will the end be. Blessed is he who will take his place in the beginning; he will know the end and will not experience death,” confirmed again at Thomas 85:

Jesus said, "Adam came into being from a great power and a great wealth, but he did not become worthy of you. For had he been worthy, [he would] not [have experienced] death."



The dead Adam hanging on his accursed tree before the twin aspects of Eve, the 'virgin of purity' in the mother and the 'penitent sinner' in Magdalen . See also (p 419) Crucifixion (Grunwald - Pevsner and Meier).

Just as John the Baptist was ritually sacrificed by the Salome as her rejected consort in the dance of the seven veils (p 427), Jesus the lamed sacred king, titled Balaam the lame by the Jews, declines to consummate his sacred marriage, despite his ritual anointing on the feet in Luke and by Mary sister of Martha in John and on the head to his doom in Mark and Matthew. He has to escape the crowd the first time they would make him king and finally enters Jerusalem as Zechariah's fertility King. He curses the fig tree because it does not bear fruit and it withers. When faced with the sceptics in his final hours he could not, or would not, demonstrate his miraculous transcendence in the face of impending annihilation, just as was the case in his home town of Galilee, and was crucified in a ritual sacrifice, both to the goddess Mari-Anath as Mot the Lord of Death forsaken by El (p 419), and as sacred atonement King of the Jews, rolled into one ghastly passion, the Last Supper becoming the flesh and blood feast of the Eucharist, a Dionysian delight (p 620) reminiscent more of Edom than Israel.

The sacred king is passed from the Sanhedrin to Herod and to Pilate thus making a complete cultural circuit, including the traditional breaking of the phallic reed sceptre

- setting at nought. He is thus at once the sacred atonement king of the Jews, Dionysus and Tammuz, the bread and wine of the Great Goddess and the Saturnalia of the Romans metering justice to the underdog.

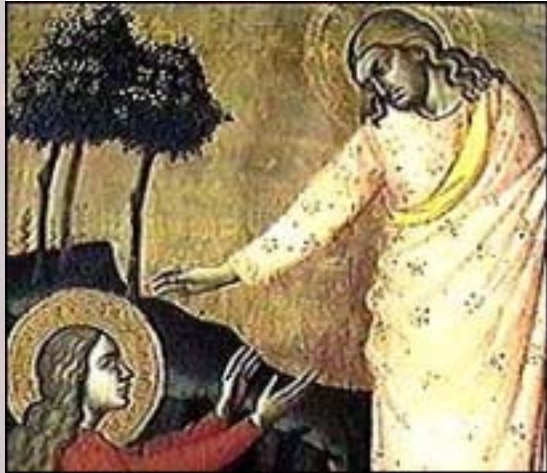
Jesus' title in the Qur'an is Isa - Esau the 'red man' of Edom (p 614), such was his name spread in satire through Arabia by the Jews. Nabataean Edom bordered on Persea, John the Baptist's territory. The god of Edom was Duchares, God of Gaia (Negev 141) - a form of Dionysus, as echoed by the 'body and blood' of the Eucharist, the 'true vine', and Cana.

He is watched over by three women in every gospel (p 434), sometimes the three Marys: "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother (Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses), and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen." And there's more: Joanna and Salome; and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem." These women ministered unto him in Galilee "Mary called Magdalen, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." These are the ones who announce his resurrection on the third day. We must be mindful also of Mary of Bethany "who hath chosen that good part".

In a particularly macabre way, the Cross itself became the Tree of Life. The Deuteronomic curse 21:22 "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death ... thou hang him on a tree" became they very symbol of Jesus' bid to end death through death. This became actualized in the Great Cross of the Lateran in Rome (Cook pl 46).

Noli me tangere (Wilson I)

Christ is betrayed in a garden, crucified in a garden and resurrected in a garden: Mark 14:32 "And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray." John 18:1 "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples." John 19:41 "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid."



The recurring theme of Eden in Christ's rejection of Eve is paralleled in 'real life' in his relationship with Mary Magdalen. In John, the risen Christ is revealed to her in the garden as the gardener (Adam) and Christ makes just this admonishment "Noli me tangere" - do not touch me! 20:14 "And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast

laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary (p 437). She turned, and saith unto him, Rabboni - Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." In Greek this reads "Embrace me not" - the rejection of Adam for the sin of Eve is the key statement of Jesus mission to undo the curse of death of Ecclesiasticus 25:24.

Through this passage, we see Magdalen, the 'companion of the saviour', the new Eve who became the repentant sinner as the physical and sexual complement of Christ's divinity, who remains in the physical world to witness the risen Christ of the heavenly kingdom. Haskins (47) sees here the relationship between Yahweh Adonai and his lost consort Asherah or Anath as continuing traces which are resumed in the "Christian god who was slain and rose again from the dead and the goddess who found him again in the garden of Gethsemane", after searching for the dead Lord (p 437) just as the women searched for Adonis and Inanna for Dumuzi.

It is from this eclectic foundation in both the countryside of Palestine and Jewish monotheism that Christianity became a global religion.

However, Magdalen, the physical heart and true bride of the Church as the feminine physical component of the sacred marriage was to become sidelined in another very troubling manifestation of the continuing schism between the genders (p 439) the orthodox suppression of the gnostics in Peter's deposing of Magdalen.

Jesus and Gender: Synoptic and Gnostic Views

Jesus overturned traditional Jewish morality, which stressed the fertility of the male line, replacing it with a more Essene interpretation of non-polygamous pairing, without divorce based on genesis itself: Matt 19:4 "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

He furthermore regards divorce as a form of adultery: Matt 19:9 "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

Although he admits this is a hard saying for Jews, he even extends this idea as far as suggesting that ritual castration might be a solution: Matt 19:12 "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." This is used to justify celibacy in the Catholic priesthood.

The idea of the supreme male sexual principal of the Kingdom of the Father in Jesus' teaching is confirmed in the Gospel of Thomas (114), an early work dating from the first century, containing saying of Jesus in archaic form (Robinson 124):

*Simon Peter said: 'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of Life.'
Jesus said, 'I myself shall lead her, in order to make her male,
so that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males.
For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven'*

According to Clement of Alexandria in the Gospel to the Egyptians, Shelom (Salome) asked the Lord: "How long shall death prevail?" He answered "So long as

you women bear children” ... and when she enquired at what time these things would be known, He answered: “When you women have trampled the garment of shame, when the two become one, when the male with the female is neither male nor female”. And in the same work the Lord said: “I have come to destroy the works of the female.”

When describing the after-life Jesus is said to have portrayed a sexless heaven in which, in so many words, original sin is replaced by angelic immortality: Luke 20:34 “And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.”

This idea of the undoing of the original sin of sex in the Kingdom portrays it in effect as a return to the childlike innocence of Eden:

Luke 18:16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Thomas 37: His disciples said, “When will you become revealed to us and when shall we see you?” Jesus said, “When you disrobe without being ashamed and take up your garments and place them under your feet like little children and tread on them, then [will you see] the son of the living one, and you will not be afraid.” and again in 46: “whichever one of you comes to be a child will be acquainted with the kingdom”

Thomas 22 echoes this return to innocence, stressing the androgynous state which the Jews associated with the epoch before Adam and Eve were cleaved: Jesus said to his disciples, “These infants being suckled are like those who enter the kingdom.” They said to him, “Shall we then, as children, enter the kingdom?” Jesus said to them, “When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female; and when you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness, then will you enter [the kingdom].”

In Thomas 106, he adds to this a key quotation, which in Mark 11:12 occurred when he cursed the fig tree for not bearing fruit and it withered, another symbol of frustration of the female “When you make the two one, you will become the sons of man, and when you say, ‘Mountain, move away’, it will move away’.”

A telling view female appears in Thomas 105 “He who knows the father and the mother will be called the son of a harlot.” and 15 “When you see one who was not born of woman, prostrate yourselves on your faces and worship him. That one is your father.”

The Dialogue of the Saviour, again originating in the first century, further conveys these sentiments, suggesting the oldest components of the gnostic gospels contain an original tradition: (91) The Lord said: “Pray in the place where there is no woman”. Matthew said: “meaning Destroy the works of womanhood, not because there is any other [manner of birth] but because they will cease [giving birth]”.

Mary said “They will never be obliterated” The Lord said ...“Now a true word is coming forth from the Father [to the abyss] in silence with a [flash of lightning] giving birth” (Robinson 254). This is reminiscent of both Zeus begetting Dionysus and Thoth-Hermes’ logos.

Thomas further echoes the derogation of the flesh and the physical: 29 Jesus said, “If the flesh came into being because of spirit, it is a wonder. But if spirit came into being because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders. Indeed, I am amazed at how this great wealth has made its home in this poverty.” 56 Jesus said, “Whoever has come to understand the world has found (only) a corpse, and whoever has found a corpse is superior to the world.” 87 Jesus said, “Wretched is the body that is dependent upon a body, and wretched is the soul that is dependent on these two.”

These sayings do clearly reflect sentiments attributed to Jesus against the flesh and consistent with a view of the female as sinful. This attitude of renunciation flows ever from Jesus’ teachings, despite his close association with Mary Magdalen and the women of Galilee: Luke 23:28 “But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children”. Nevertheless, Jesus was a great nature shaman who was also renowned for his message of love and forgiveness.

Seed, Tree and Harvest: Fertility and Biodiversity Parables

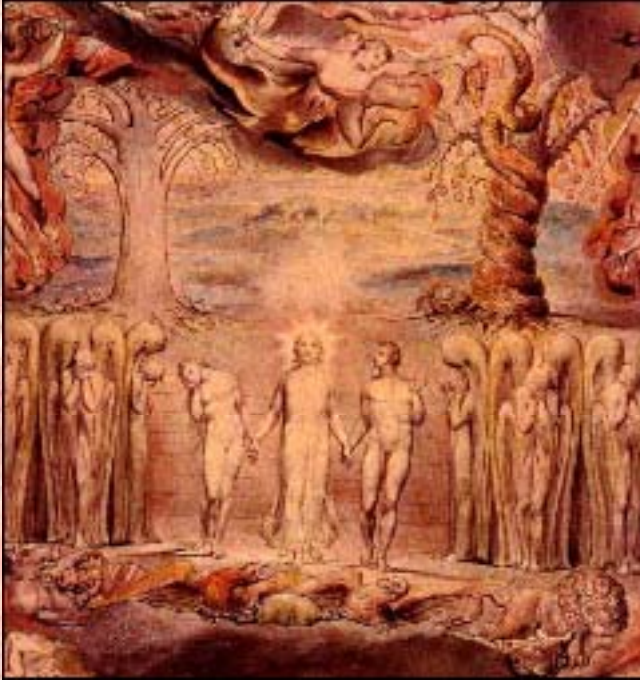
The messianic reading of Isaiah 61 stipulates that the Bridegroom perform the ‘planting of the Lord’, a biodiversity restoration. Jesus’ sayings, even in their most apocalyptic, are permeated with biodiversity imagery and with the parable of the returning tree of life. The most outstanding is that his teachings are themselves the seed of the Tree of Life - the Kingdom is thus also the Garden:

Thomas 20 “The disciples said to Jesus, ‘Tell us what the kingdom of heaven is like.’ He said to them, ‘It is like a mustard seed. It is the smallest of all seeds. But when it falls on tilled soil, it produces a great plant and becomes a shelter for birds of the sky’.” In Matthew the birds also lay their nests, invoking perpetual fertility.

Likewise the teachings are the seed which finds fertile ground by being scattered to every niche and ecosystem - the fertility principle incarnate:

Thomas 9 “Now the sower went out, took a handful (of seeds), and scattered them. Some fell on the road; the birds came and gathered them up. Others fell on rock, did not take root in the soil, and did not produce ears. And others fell on thorns; they choked the seed(s) and worms ate them. And others fell on the good soil and it produced good fruit: it bore sixty per measure and a hundred and twenty per measure.”

Even when he is preaching the final apocalypse, the paradigm is fertility and the harvest and the weeds are left until the last minute to mature: Thomas 57 Jesus said, “The kingdom of the father is like a man who had good seed. His enemy came by night and sowed weeds among the [good] seed. The man did not allow them to pull up the weeds; he said to them, ‘I am afraid that you will go intending to pull up the weeds and pull up the wheat along with them. For on the day of the harvest the weeds will be plainly visible, and they will be pulled up and burned’.”



Christ leading Adam and Eve from the world of innocence into experience while God is above in the clouds. The two trees are present. The serpent is reviled.
The Fall of Man William Blake (Cook)

In the parables of the harvest, Jesus invokes the bounty that nature provides. There is scarcely a more powerful image than the harvest come three months too soon:

Thomas 73 Jesus said, "The harvest is great but the laborers are few. Beseech the Lord, therefore, to send out laborers to the harvest." (cf Matt 9:37)

John 4:35 "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

In the following parable all the aspects of biodiversity precede us to the kingdom because the kingdom is the sentient living universe before us:

Thomas 3 Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father."

This immediate character of the Kingdom is characteristic of the Gospel of Thomas as opposed to the eschatological Kingdom of the synoptic gospels. This is the ultimate irony of devastating the living diversity of the Earth:

Thomas 113 “His disciples said to him, ‘When will the kingdom come?’ Jesus said, ‘It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying ‘here it is’ or ‘there it is’. Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it.”

We also see the metaphors of climate and the chaos of climate implicit in the signs of the times:

Matt 16:2 When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

The Pangs of the Messiah and the Delayed Imminent Kingdom

Between the death of the saviour and the immortal kingdom was to be a prophesied turbulent age called the Pangs of the Messiah. Although Revelation cast a twain millennial span, from Jesus' words this was meant to take no longer than one generation:

Mark 9:1 “Jesus said unto them, ‘Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.’”

Luke 21:23: “But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Luke 21:32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Matt 24:29 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken”

However Jesus himself claimed not to know when the Son of Man would arrive: Mark 13:32 “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. ... Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.”

This uncertainty of the time is echoed in Luke 12:40 and Matthew 24:44 as Christ coming as a thief in the night: “And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have

suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.”

The earliest Christian writing is 1 Thessalonians, dated circa AD 50. In it Paul's message is to wait and not slumber, for the son of man shall come at any time hence, in the Rapture in the air 1:10: “And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. 3:13 ... to stablish your hearts ... at the coming of Jesus Christ with all his saints ... 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. ... Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

This immediate urgency of the Kingdom remains central to Paul's teaching in 55 AD: 1 Corinth 7:25 “Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment ... that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. ... But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

However the very existence of the Gospels arises from the failure of this Kingdom to arrive as expected: John Spong (1994 57-8) notes: “When we read Paul, we find almost no biographical details about the life of the Jesus of history. Few people seemed to care about this in Paul's time. Paul was specifically not interested, he said, in the knowledge of Jesus from a human point of view. One reason for his lack of interest surely lay in the sense among primitive Christians that they lived at the end of history, that the dawn of God's eschatological kingdom was about to occur. What mattered was that Jesus had been exalted to heaven, from whence he would come again as the inaugurator of that new kingdom. But, as the years passed and the New Jerusalem did not descend out of the heavens, questions began to be asked not just about that postponement but also about the life of Jesus. By the time Mark wrote, those questions demanded answers, and part of Mark's motive for writing was to address such concerns as who Jesus was, whence his power came, the reasons for his crucifixion, and what constituted the basis of the claim that God had raised him from the dead. It is fair to say that the tradition of writing Gospels evolved in direct response to the need to address these issues.”

Renan (147) wrote: “Jesus imagined the end to be much nearer than it really was; he did not take into account the slowness of movements of humanity; he thought to realize in one day that which, eighteen centuries later has still to be accomplished.” Maybe it will finally.

Despite his fierce opposition to the gnostic ‘heresies’ Irenaeus remained fully committed to the prophecies of Revelation and the belief in the end of days. However

Origen threw a spanner in the works by claiming the eschatological condition was essentially in the mind - occurring only in the souls of believers. This fitted well with the Hellenistic imagination of “spiritual progress begun in this world and continued in the next”. Once the Christian church became officially adopted with the conversion of Constantine in the fourth century, it became “a powerful and prosperous institution functioning to a well-established routine, and the men responsible for governing it had no wish to see Christians clinging to out-dated and inappropriate dreams of a new earthly paradise” (Cohn 1952 29). Early in the fifth century Augustine propounded in the *City of God* that Revelation was to be understood as a spiritual allegory, and as for the millennium, that had begun with the birth of Christianity and was fully realized in the church - the *ecclesia*..

Despite his warring against the gnostics, Irenaeus' belief in the millennium thus came to be as expurgated as his gnostic victims beliefs and it is only because of a single copy of his “*Against Heresies*” found in 1575 that we know he held the same end days beliefs of many protestants through to this century (Cohn 1952 29). This is itself fitting commentary on the position of the Catholic Church to this very day.

