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## TWO Gnostic GOSPELS\*

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FOR the study of Gnosticism and the apocryphal gospels this has been an exciting year. Actually the excitement should have arisen considerably earlier, for photographs of the Coptic texts of the gospels of Thomas and Philip were published by Dr. Pahor Labib at Cairo in 1956. But there is always a certain lag in studies of this sort: for one thing, after the Suez troubles it was a bit difficult to get copies of Labib's book from Cairo; for another, not many of us know Coptic; and for a third, inertia tends to make us keep on studying whatever we are studying instead of leaving everything we have in order to pursue elusive novelties. The ice was broken, however, in the last eighteen months when Johannes Leipoldt translated Thomas into German<sup>1</sup> and his work was followed by H.-M. Schenke, who produced versions of the Hypostasis of the Archons<sup>2</sup> and the Gospel of Philip.<sup>3</sup> It was Schenke who also pointed out that the missing pages of the Gospel of Truth were available in Labib's collection of pictures.<sup>4</sup> The pioneering work of Leipoldt has already driven others to work on Thomas, in addition to speeding up the publication of texts, translations, and commentaries which are beginning to appear.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the burst of publicity which Thomas received in America last spring has led scholars to realize that in the Nag-Hammadi materials are contained documents which are relevant not only for the study of Gnosticism but also for the analysis of early Christianity as a whole. They have already recognized that valuable as the Dead Sea Scrolls are in relation to the OT, still more light is cast by them on the obscure question of Christian origins. In some of the Nag-Hammadi documents, however, we find illumination not only for the background of the NT (or, more properly, part of the background) but also for the

\* The Presidential Address delivered at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis on December 30, 1959, at the Union Theological Seminary, New York City.

<sup>1</sup> *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, LXXXIII (1958), pp. 481-96.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 661-70.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXXIV (1959), pp. 1-26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXXIII (1958), pp. 497-500.

<sup>5</sup> J. Doresse, *L'Évangile selon Thomas* (Paris, 1959); A. Guillaumont, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, W. Till, and Yassah 'Abd Al Masih, *The Gospel According to Thomas*; R. M. Grant, D. N. Freedman, and W. R. Schoedel, *The Secret Sayings of Jesus* (New York, 1960).

subapostolic, and *possibly* for the apostolic, age. It may be that future historians of criticism will look on the fifties as the Dead Sea Age and the sixties as the Age of Nag-Hammadi.

In part the enthusiasm for the new gospels is due to modern concern for Gnosticism, often regarded as a key to the mysteries of the NT. To what extent did Paul or John make use of Gnostic terms or ideas as they proclaimed the gospel? We actually do not know the answer to this question, and anything which will show how Gnostics did proclaim the, or their, gospel deserves attention.

To a greater degree the enthusiasm is due to the fact that modern study of Christian origins is not altogether satisfactory. There are countless gaps in our reconstructions, some due to lack of information, some due to the invincible ignorance of scholars (I use the phrase descriptively, not theologically). Anything which seems to illuminate the dark areas of Christian history in the first and second centuries deserves a cordial welcome. The real question is not how cordial our welcome ought to be but what it is that we are welcoming.

There are those who say of Thomas, or at least of the sections in it which resemble our canonical gospels, that it deserves to be treated just as respectfully as Matthew, Mark, or Luke, since it stands just, or almost, as close to the early oral tradition as they do. (It will be observed that none of the traditional ascriptions of authorship are highly regarded, though by implication that of Thomas is taken more seriously than the others.) These scholars usually proceed to argue that "the laws of form criticism," assumed to be evident to all men diligently reading holy scripture, prove that some of the parables and sayings in Thomas are set forth in forms older than the forms found in our gospels. But if Thomas made use of our gospels, such laws cannot prove anything. Form-critical methods were designed for analyzing materials transmitted orally. They are irrelevant when one considers the literary use of sources by an author.

This is not the only preliminary question which ought to be raised. It is quite obvious that not only Thomas but also Philip consists of materials which seem to be arranged chaotically, if one can speak of chaotic arrangement. In spite of this lack of order, both Thomas and Philip are written in order to present very special theological viewpoints. Is it not the duty of the analyst to look first of all at books as a whole before proceeding to break them up into what he imagines their sources to be? Must he not, in other words, consider the purposes for which Thomas and Philip were written and treat these gospels as entreties before considering what the books were made up out of? This is to say that, in modern literary criticism, formal analysis should not supersede genetic analysis entirely; but we know that Matthew, for example, is not adequately appreciated when it is treated as Mark+Q+M. The purpose, the direction, the "thrust" of the book is basic.

Therefore in discussing both Thomas and Philip we must first of all look at the books themselves and try to appreciate what it is that their authors are trying to say. They have done their best to make our task difficult. In neither gospel is there much trace of arrangement; indeed, sometimes it looks as if the authors had aimed at disarrangement. It seems significant that in Thomas we *never* find synoptictype sayings in the order of our synoptic gospels. This looks to me like purposeful noncorrelation.

Before I go on to say what Thomas actually teaches, let us imagine for a moment that we are Gnostics who wish to create a gospel in which Jesus will set forth our doctrines. How are we to go about our job? In the first place, our Jesus must have proclaimed our doctrines to a few chosen disciples; otherwise he cannot have been the Gnostic Revealer. In the second place, he must have proclaimed doctrines which in some respects were close to those set forth in the Church's gospels; otherwise he cannot be recognized as Jesus. And in the third place, when what he said was close to sayings preserved in other gospels, there must be some differences of form or of content; otherwise ordinary Christians might have some ground for supposing that they understood what he said. What I mean to say is that if this literature had not been discovered it could have been invented. And, to put my hypothesis in historical language, since the Gnostics found such gospels necessary they did invent them — not out of nothing, but (in the case of Thomas) out of the oral traditions in circulation in the second century, out of the four canonical gospels, and out of the apocryphal gospels as well.

Thomas used or invented sayings in which Jesus speaks as the Gnostic Revealer and tells his disciples that he is the Light or the All. Thomas took sayings out of such sectarian gospels as those According to the Hebrews and According to the Egyptians. And he took sayings from the four gospels of the Church, often combining passages originally found in different contexts. Most important is the fact that while his work is called a "gospel" it is really not a gospel but a collection of sayings. The Church's gospels tell us what Jesus did as well as what he said. They are full of action, chiefly miraculous in nature. The action is miraculous because the evangelists wanted to record striking and significant events; they did not bother to record the fact that Jesus went to sleep at night. The main point, however, is that it is action which they record. Jesus is one who does things and by doing them reveals the power and presence of God. He is not simply a sage or a revealer or even a prophet. He is the messenger, the agent, the expression of the God who acts.

In Thomas there is no action whatever. Everything is peace, unity, spirituality, and talk. The inevitable result of a collection of "sayings of Jesus" is a distortion of the meaning of Jesus — and such a distortion is what Thomas intended to provide. He wanted Jesus to speak to his

disciples and set before them a carefully selected announcement of basic Gnostic doctrines. His monotonous repetition of the phrase, "Jesus said," does not prove that his gospel is Christian. For what Jesus said was that by knowing himself the Gnostic transcended all the limitations of human existence. He recognized his "inner man" (identified with the kingdom of the Father) and hated the world with its ties of family, sex, marriage, and — for that matter — religion (fasting, prayer, and almsgiving). The Gnostic knows; like the Jesus of this gospel he never does anything. For in Thomas we miss not only the miracle stories; we also miss very significant parts of his teaching. Thomas retained a good many parables, but he left out the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Pharisee and the Publican, and the Laborers in the Vineyard. He left out parables which speak of man's sin and repentance and of God's free forgiveness. He left out parables which intimate that repentance might be shown in deed rather than in thought or word. He took Christianity away from its popular Jewish background — that generally reflected in the synoptic gospels — and transformed Jesus into a mysterious figure closer to theosophy than to the synagogue or the church.

The environment in which Thomas did his work is almost certainly Gnostic. Indeed, if we make a point-by-point comparison between Thomas and the Naassenes described in the fifth book of Hippolytus's *Refutation*, we may well conclude that this gospel not only was used by them but also was composed in support of their doctrines. This is not the point at which to enter into details.<sup>6</sup> What should be claimed now, however, is that before we analyze Thomas's sources we should consider the nature of the book as it stands and the probable purposes for which the author wrote. Analysis of sources is not by itself an adequate method of interpreting any existing document. Such analysis is important for both literary and historical purposes, but it does not directly interpret a literary work except by showing how the author modified what sources he used.

With all its fascination, we should beware of valuing the new Gospel of Thomas too highly. It is important as a witness to the development of Gnostic Christology, not to the teaching of the historical Jesus.

The other gospel is that according to Philip; at least, so the title says at the end of the book. But Philip is mentioned only in one insignificant section of the gospel. The title may be an addition. In our Coptic text we do not find the one Greek fragment which is preserved by Epiphanius (*Pan.* 26, 13, 2-3).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Vigiliae Christianae* 13 (1959), pp. 170-80; *The Secret Sayings of Jesus* (New York, 1960); W. R. Schoedel in *Vigiliae Christianae* 14 (1960). The parallels are not only Naassene but also Basilidian and Valentinian; further analysis of Gnostic interrelations is therefore necessary.

Like Thomas, Philip contains a number of sayings of Jesus, but most of them clearly come from the canonical gospels. According to P 17, Jesus was accustomed to use the expression, "My [Father] in heaven" (the word "Father" has to be restored here) — and the term occurs seven times in Matthew. In P 69 we find Gnostic exegesis of Matt 6 6: "thy Father who is in secret." In P 89 there is an almost exact quotation of Matt 3 15. And in P 72 there is a quotation of Matt 27 46: "My God, my God, why — O Lord — hast thou forsaken me?" It is quite clear that Philip uses Matthew, and also that he uses John (P 23, 110, etc.).

In a Gnostic work, however, we are sure to find extracanonical sayings. So in Philip we encounter two sayings close to the Gospel of Thomas. P 57 ascribes these words to the Lord: "Blessed is he who is before he was, for he who is was and will be" (cf. Thomas 19). The form of this saying which we find in Philip seems to be based on Johannine ideas: "is — was — will be" is said of God in Rev 1 8 and elsewhere, and in John 8 58 we read that "before Abraham was, I am." In P 69 Jesus says, "I came to make the under like the upper and the outside like the inside." This is close to a saying found in Thomas (T 23) and in the Gospel of the Egyptians, though in both cases the programmatic words "I came" are lacking. Elsewhere in Egyptians, however, Jesus does say "I came" (Clement, *Str.* 3, 63, 1-2). Perhaps Philip's quotation comes from Egyptians rather than from Thomas. In Philip there is also a parallel to the Coptic Gospel of Mary Magdalene. In P 55 Jesus discusses Mary with his disciples. "Why do you love her more than all of us?" they ask. "Why do I not love you as I do her?" he replies. The notion that he loved her more than them is found in this gospel; presumably it is based not only on the resurrection narratives but also on the identification of the Mary whom Jesus loved (John 11 3) with the repentant sinner who loved him (Luke 7 36-50). In the Gospel of Mary, however, Jesus really does love Mary more than the others — and so he does in the Gospel of Philip. She was his companion (P 32); she became spiritually pregnant and perfect (P 31).

The Gospel of Philip is thus in some respects close to the Gospels of Thomas and Mary. It contains other sayings ascribed to Jesus which have no gospel parallels.

According to P 18 "the Lord said to the disciples, '[. . .] come into the Father's house, but do not steal in the Father's house, and take nothing away.'" This saying seems to reflect John's mention of the Father's house (John 14 2), combined with the synoptic version of the cleansing of the temple. Other sayings in Philip show that these Gnostics were concerned, as Christians were, with reinterpreting sayings related to the temple in Jerusalem. Such sayings now were taken to refer to Gnostic worship.

P 26 gives us another saying. "One day in his thanksgiving (εὐχα-

ρυσία) he said, 'Since thou hast united the perfect one, the Light, with the Holy Spirit, unite the angels also with us, with the images.' " This saying can be explained from the Valentinian doctrines reported in Clement's *Excerpts*. It is the Christ-Aeon above who prays (*Exc.* 41, 2); the Light is the Savior Jesus (*Exc.* 35, 1), who is united with the Mother or Spirit (*Exc.* 64). The prayer is eschatologically directed; in Valentinian thought, the Gnostics, who were formed as images of the angels, will finally be united with the angels.<sup>6a</sup> In other words, this saying of Jesus is entirely Valentinian.

In P 54 we read that the Lord said, "The Son of Man came in order to [take away] defects"; perhaps this is ultimately based on the Johannine words about the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world (John 1 29). More mysterious is P 97: "Well did the Lord say, 'Some went laughing into the kingdom of heaven and came out [of the world].'" Most of the explanation of this saying is missing, but enough is left to show that the true Gnostic can laugh because he despises the world and regards it as a joke (παλγνιον). I know no parallel to this notion of the laughing Gnostic.<sup>7</sup>

In any event, it seems unlikely that anyone will suppose that Philip contains sayings or doctrines which have come from Jesus. The work is too obviously derived from speculation, largely Valentinian in nature, about the hidden significance of the titles given to Jesus in our gospels; about the meaning of baptism and unction (closely related, as in the accounts of Valentinianism provided by Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria); and about the meaning of the spiritual marriage which is a foretaste of the unions of spiritual beings above. Along with doctrines which reflect Valentinian conceptions, there are also some which are close to those held by other Gnostic sects. For instance, P 6 tells us that "when we were Hebrews, we were orphans and had our Mother; but when we became Christians we received Father and Mother." This saying is close to what Irenaeus reports from the Basilidians (*Adv. Haer.* 1, 24): "we are no longer Jews but are not yet Christians."<sup>8</sup> With it we may also compare P 46: "he who has not received the Lord is still a Hebrew."

Though he may not be a Hebrew any more, the reader of Philip is expected to be concerned with the Hebrew and Syriac languages. In Hebrew the name Jesus means "salvation" (P 47), while his Syriac name is Pharisatha, which means "extended" (on the cross, P 53). Jesus is a hidden name, but Christ is a revealed one; it is a Greek translation of a word which in Syriac means either "Messiah" or "the measured"

<sup>6a</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1, 13, 6; cf. F.-M. Sagnard, *La gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de saint Irénée* (Paris, 1947), pp. 418-19.

<sup>7</sup> At the meeting I was reminded of the "deriding Jesus" of the Basilidians (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1, 24, 4), and this may be analogous.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Vigiliae Christianae* 13 (1959), pp. 121-25.

(P 19, 47). Another name is "revealed in the hidden"; this is "the Nazarene," which refers to Nazara, the truth (P 47). Since Nazara does not seem to mean "truth" in any human language, presumably this is a Gnostic secret — especially since a Valentinian formula reported by Irenaeus<sup>9</sup> translates Jesus Nazaria as "savior of truth." Philip also tells us that "Echmoth" means "Sophia," while with a different vocalization "Echmoth" means the Sophia of death (from Hebrew *mōth*) or "the little Sophia" (P 39). The expression "the little Sophia" seems to arise from an environment where Judaism and Gnosticism met; it reminds us of "the little Iao" or similar names which are found in the Apocalypse of Abraham, in 3 Enoch, and in Pistis Sophia. Hebrew formulas were used by some Valentinians in their initiatory rites, as we have already indicated.

It should not, of course, be supposed that simply to know Hebrew means being a Gnostic. Philip explains to us that all the names given to worldly matters contain errors; they turn one's attention away from the permanent and toward the transitory. Error-containing names include God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Life, Light, Resurrection, and Church (P 11). What this means is that none of these terms can be understood properly without the Gnostic key to their meaning. Furthermore, none of these terms is a truly creative name like the one which the Father gave the Son; this name is not expressed in the world. Here we encounter the rudiments of Jewish-Gnostic speculation about the name of God which reminds us of the so-called Gospel of Truth.

Thus far we have spoken chiefly of various details which help us to classify the kind or kinds of doctrine which we find in Philip. Not everything in it is necessarily early; Schenke points out that it is a Coptic book of the fourth century, and that two passages in it must have been composed in Coptic (P 109, containing a Coptic play on words; P 110, based on a Coptic version of I Cor 8 1). At the same time, most of what it teaches finds parallels, to some extent, in the Valentinian groups of the middle of the second century. And it may be that its chief value lies in what it tells us of three subjects to which its author's attention is principally devoted. One is the story of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Here the author finds great significance in the creation of Eve from Adam's rib. This kind of creation involved separation from Adam, and separation means death. Another subject is the combination of baptism with the use of chrism and the development of a separate rite of confirmation. Sagnard has already studied this subject in his edition of Clement's *Excerpts*; the new material in Philip corroborates his analysis but does not show whether or not the practice was Gnostic in origin. A third subject is the rite of sacred marriage, discussed in a good many

<sup>9</sup> *Adv. Haer.* 1, 21, 3, p. 185. On these formulas cf. H. Gressmann in *ZNW* 16 (1915), p. 195.

sayings in Philip. The discussion takes its point of departure from texts found in both Testaments, and it sometimes is combined with remarks about the slave and the free children, just as in the Bible. Perhaps the most interesting passage is to be found in P 125. There Philip identifies the "bedroom" (*koiitōn*) with the Holy of Holies, since both are relatively concealed. At first the Holy of Holies was covered with a veil — while God was setting the creation in order. Then, at the Crucifixion the veil was torn, from above to below (Matt 27 51). Why from above to below? Because if only above it would be open only for those above; if only below, open only for those below. It was torn from above to below so that those below who belong above can ascend into the Holy of Holies. Those who are in the true tribe of the priesthood will enter within the veil, together with the true high priest (Heb 6 19–20; 10 20). What of those who are not in this tribe? Of them was spoken the prophecy of Matt 23 37–38; the earthly house will be left desolate when the veil is torn, and those who remain below and are not quite spiritual will be "under the wings" of the cross and its arms. In this situation they can be saved from a deluge by the ark. Apparently Philip is thinking primarily of the ark mentioned in Heb 9 4, since the Holy of Holies is mentioned in the preceding verse. But he moves imaginatively from one ark to another.

This passage is significant for Valentinian exegesis of the New Testament. It shows that these Gnostics were busy at work combining various NT passages, especially the more mysterious ones, in an effort to produce new mysteries and fit them into their system. It is also significant for the study of exegesis in general, for it shows the dangers of allegorization without the controls provided either by common sense or by some dogmatic system with roots on earth.

What has become of the Church in the Gospel of Philip? We can see that it is founded upon apostolic tradition, for Philip (P 47) speaks of "the apostles who were before us," taking over the phrase from Gal 2 17; indeed, Philip not only knows the word "apostle" but is acquainted with the term found in late second-century writings, *apostolikos*, to indicate the apostles' successors (P 17). But such words do not prove that the work is anything but Valentinian; Valentinus was said to have learned traditions from a certain Theodas, disciple of Paul, while Ptolemaeus says that the Valentinians have an apostolic tradition which they have received from succession.<sup>10</sup>

Philip seems to show us that they did rely on apostolic tradition but that it came to them secondhand. Their rites of baptism, chrismation, eucharist, and sacred marriage look as if they were based on what the Church taught in an earlier period; their quotations of Jesus' words look

unoriginal; their theological ideas are largely founded upon the O and NTs. Just as in the case of Thomas, then, Philip possesses significance more for the second century than for the first. This is not to say that it is unimportant. Especially in recent years, NT students have been coming to recognize that the apostles and the Apostolic Fathers cannot lightly be put asunder, just as they have found that the lines between canonical and apocryphal gospels are sometimes hard to draw. All the same, we cannot look for much light on the Jesus of history from books which served as scripture for sects which ultimately denied history. We cannot hope to find support for faith where secret knowledge reigned supreme.

We may wonder what real reason, then, there can be for discussing the gospels of Thomas and Philip at such length. After all, this is the Society of Biblical Literature; neither of these works was ever included in a Bible, unless we suppose that being placed in a Nag-Hammadi jar is equivalent to being canonized! But just as the Dead Sea scrolls have done much to restore historical study of the environment of the New Testament, so these books should help in the historical study of the New Testament itself, and of the early Church. Before these books were discovered we possessed no complete examples of the early apocryphal gospels. Now we have two of them. Now we are in a position to ask whether the apocryphal gospels or, at any rate, these apocryphal gospels were rightly rejected by the Church in the second and third centuries. The discovery of these gospels forces us to reexamine the canon. Again, since these gospels claim to report sayings of Jesus we are confronted once more with the problem of historical criticism. Somehow or other we have to find a method for determining what Jesus is likely to have said and what he is not likely to have said. These two problems are interrelated. Our judgments about Thomas or Philip cannot consist of such affirmations as "the Church has already rejected them" or "these gospels do (or do not) speak to my existential condition." Doubtless older methods for determining authenticity were often too rigidly applied. That kind of rigidity does not seem to be our problem today. Instead, we are in a situation where many are either unwilling or unable to look at, or for, historical facts. Almost any Gnostic document carries one in the direction of "passionate subjectivity" — but is this subjectivity (historically considered) Christian?

Such questions seem to me to be the major ones which arise from Thomas and Philip. Perhaps they can be divided up so that they are easier to approach. First, the "gospels" of Thomas and Philip show what the earliest Church did not mean by the term "gospel."<sup>10a</sup> Thomas gives nothing but sayings of Jesus; Philip, in Schenke's words, is "a kind

<sup>10</sup> *Ep. ad Floram* 7, 9, p. 68 Quispel.

<sup>10a</sup> For another view cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, S. J., in *Theological Studies* 20 (1959), p. 555.

of anthology of Gnostic sayings and thoughts." Is this what a gospel should be? If not, what should it be? And what is the so-called Gospel of Truth? Second, our need to analyze the contents of these gospels historically seems to imply the need to provide similar analysis for the Church's gospels. We can see that Gnostics have edited traditions about Jesus. How could we deny that more orthodox writers have performed similar tasks in regard to canonical writings? The difference doubtless lies in the purposes and in the results, not in the methods employed. Third, whatever the precise date of these books may be, they cast considerable light on the ways in which Gnostics viewed the work and words of Jesus. At least in Thomas and Philip we find little reason to regard Gnosticism as a pre-Christian phenomenon. It looks like a special way of viewing materials which are largely Christian in origin. Fourth, both gospels show us that Gnostics continued to be concerned with Judaism, and with going beyond Judaism. Thomas tells us explicitly that circumcision and dietary laws are to be rejected;<sup>11</sup> here he is in agreement with gentile Christians. In addition, however, he rejects prayer, almsgiving, and fasting — cardinal duties of the Judaism and the Christianity of his time.<sup>12</sup> Is there a movement from Judaism to Christianity to Gnosticism? Philip suggests that this is the case. Christians are "no longer Hebrews," though they continue to be deeply concerned with Hebrew words and with the meaning of the story of Adam and Eve. These examples show us that Christian Gnosticism, at any rate, could not easily free itself from its Jewish origins.

For all these reasons, and for many more which have doubtless already occurred to all of you, the new gospels from Nag-Hammadi deserve a welcome because they will help show what Christianity is not, and what our canonical gospels are not. They may conceivably help us to see what our gospels are, but the differences will remain more important than the similarities.

Finally, I should like to pass from these two gospels into the stratosphere of methodological questions and try to say something about the light that is shed on method. First of all, I suppose these gospels tend to revive the *religionsgeschichtliche Methode*, if not the *Schule*. The *Schule* cannot be revived; it flourished before the first war, and most of its members are dead. The *Methode* — what was it? Did it ever really exist, except as a straw man for postwar writers to beat? What can and must be revived is a way of looking at early Christianity not in complete isolation from its surroundings, not in complete isolation from other religious movements of its time. Differences need to be stressed, of course; so do resemblances. Second, these gospels show us that, just as we now suppose that Matthew, for example, had not only scissors and

<sup>11</sup> T 54, 5, 14.

<sup>12</sup> T 5, 14, 101.

paste but a mind of his own, so even a Gnostic evangelist had some idea of what he was trying to say; his work deserves to be treated as a whole before it is excavated for sources. Third, these gospels show us that we are in need of a much clearer picture of the Jesus of history. Admittedly modern scholars are better aware of difficulties than their predecessors were. But to spend all one's time bemoaning difficulties is to fail completely in the positive work of scholarship. One's contemporaries may wish to sit in the desert; their attitude gives no excuse to those who are ready to move toward the promised land. We need to know what Jesus was like so that we can understand what in Gnosticism was like, what unlike his meaning.

I should not like to leave you with the notion that I feel myself competent to lay down the law on questions of critical method. A few years ago, when Robert Penn Warren was interviewed, he said just what needed to be said. "We have to remember that there is no *one, single, correct* kind of criticism, no *complete* criticism. You only have different kinds of perspectives, giving, when successful, different kinds of insights. And at one historical moment one kind of insight may be more needed than another."<sup>13</sup>

The kind of insight needed now, it seems to me, is one which will try to combine various kinds of criticism which we have undertaken during the last generation or so. We need the history of religions so that we are not under the illusion that so-called biblical religion or biblical theology existed in some isolated state. We need the purest of formal literary criticism so that we can try to see how our authors' ideas were expressed. We need thoroughgoing historical criticism, along with equally thorough criticism of critical presuppositions. We need theological analysis too. By this overworked word "theological" I do not mean to imply that I have the answers before I ask the questions; I simply want to suggest that we need to know (a) why an ancient author thought his book was worth writing, and (b) why we suppose that it is worth reading. These points are theological, and they belong to critical study.

No one person can work in all these ways equally well. Each of us has his own function to perform, and it might be a good thing if the more dogmatic of our prophets were to read I Cor 12 and 14 (as well as Paul's intentional digression, chap. 13). The body, at least for the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, consists of many members. It is animated by the same spirit, the spirit of adventure and discovery in the search for truth. The members have different functions, and only when all of the members work together sympathetically can the body perform its task.

<sup>13</sup> In Malcolm Cowley, ed., *Writers at Work* (New York, 1959), p. 199.