

THE VALTORTA ENIGMA

A Fictionalized Life of Jesus?

Jean-François Lavère

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To the Reverend Father A. R.
and to my dear wife,
Thanks to whom I undertook this study.

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Preface

Never has the market been so flooded with books as today. It would be a simple matter to draw up a list of the causes they defend, the best and the worst, through the medium of the written word, to convince readers that their messages are as important to the authors as to the readers themselves. What is at stake here for the author is clearly apologetic. It is the scientific demonstration that a work is inspired by God, the God of Christian Revelation and that this Christian Revelation is today addressed to our contemporaries to convey an important message, of which the Catholic Church should take due note, this charisma having time and again accompanied and clarified her own history.

This is an admirable book in many ways. It looks circumspectly and scientifically at one of the greatest, little-known enigmas of our times, the case of Maria Valtorta, probably the greatest visionary in the history of Christendom. Its consequences are considerable, because the fundamental light that Jean-François Lavère sheds on this work is based on objective facts that stand up to scientific scrutiny and are linked to the most recent, notably archaeological, discoveries. For the reader, the conclusions will speak for themselves.

This remarkable work would not have been possible fifty years ago. Maria Valtorta died in 1961 and *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* was “inspired” during the darkest years of World War II. Pope Pius XII, then reigning Supreme Pontiff, reacted positively to it, saying, “*Publish this work as it is. There is no need to give an opinion about its origin, whether it be*

extraordinary or not. Who reads it will understand". The word of a Pope carries weight, and conveys the idea that the Pontiff is telling his contemporaries that this is an orthodox text. The word of Pius XII is the best guarantee that the work conforms in every way to the Canonical Gospels and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. His advice is that it should be read... However, Pius XII notes, cautiously, as befits a Pope, "*There is no need to give an opinion about its origin, whether it be extraordinary or not*". At that time the Holy Father did not have the tools of objective analysis which would have enabled him to assert the supernatural nature of the work. Nevertheless, he leaves the door of this hypothesis ajar, going so far as to reveal his own inner feeling: "*Who reads it will understand*".

Things have changed dramatically today. Science has progressed in leaps and bounds over the past fifty years. Computer science has drastically changed every field of research, unifying knowledge and classifying and coordinating analytical data. This has brought about immense progress, notably in the realm of what concerns us here, namely archaeology and astronomy. Over the past fifty years, even, let us say, since the end of the last (sic!) war, the state of Israel has encouraged full-scale excavations on most of the Jewish and Christian sites of its territory, the very places that Jesus and His Apostles trod two thousand years ago. Much more advanced knowledge than was available fifty years ago has emerged, giving us a multitude of new and precise places and contexts of the way of life in Late Antiquity, as the specialists call it.

This is precisely where the strength of Jean-François Lavère's prodigious and patient work lies. He reveals an astonishing correlation between recent scientific discoveries and Maria Valtorta's visionary descriptions, which cover

thousands of pages with nothing crossed out, no contradictions and within a unity of time and place substantiated by very rigorous research. All of this half a century ago, from a sickbed, with no documents and no link to any scientific community, this woman “sees” live, in a sort of shortcut, what scientists would laboriously deduce much later from two-thousand-year-old archaeological data. Village names in Aramaic, long-lost cities and monuments rediscovered today, knowledge of usage, customs, landscapes, scenery and dress... a whole context whose stunning *tour de force* the author of this work amply demonstrates to be impossible, unless we take into account what the visionary herself declares: that it is God who shows these things to her, it is Jesus who dictates these teachings that accompany and illustrate the Gospels within their cultural context, never distorting them and, what is more, very often in moving poetry, consecrating the union of Truth, Goodness and Beauty that surges up from Christ like water from a spring.

Pius XII’s remark, “*There is no need to give an opinion about its origin, whether it be extraordinary or not*” is clearly superfluous fifty years later. The origin of this work is extraordinary. If it were not, it would be simply inexplicable, even unimaginable, from a scientifically objective point of view. It is amazing that scientific rigour, in order to remain logical, must posit the existence of a supernatural origin when faced with a chain of phenomena in which the law of cause and effect, the foundation of all science, is not merely called into question, but found wanting by the very facts that it attempts to analyse. This is the case for every miracle. In Maria Valtorta’s case and this her brilliant work, science, that powerful tool, even more powerful when it brings to light new data lost for two thousand years, is not simply floundering in epistemological subtleties, but is suddenly in sharp contradiction with its own

experience... How could this simple woman have known what remained buried for two thousand years and only came to light half a century after her death?

This veritable enigma can be classed with two other great enigmas of Christian history: One concerning Christ Himself and the other, the Blessed Virgin, His Mother. I refer to the Holy Shroud of Turin and 'la Tilma' of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Here again, we have had to wait until the present day and the rigorous tools of science which come up against facts that are extremely resistant to the logic of the phenomena under study. Science has exhausted every resource in ever finer analyses of the facts and the more advances it makes, the more the demands of its own logic hit the brick wall of its own contradictions. There comes a time when we need to leave the absurd behind us and consider the hypothesis of the supernatural and its incursion into the field of scientific experiment.

Our times are indeed complex and fascinating! The advances in science and technology have brought us the best, but also the worst, our creature comforts, but also the forgetfulness of God that it so often brings in its wake. It has even been said in the West that 'God is dead'... Many churches are empty... Little by little, Christian influence has been marginalized by a certain type of humanism cut off from its evangelical roots. And yet, the great enigmas of Christianity endure, with all the strength of Divine Providence that accompanies the people of believers. The Holy Shroud of Turin does not prove the Resurrection of the Christ Jesus, but it consistently stands up to ever more demanding scientific investigation, rather like a permanent question mark, postulating a 'space', an 'afterlife' that makes this prestigious relic an acceptable witness to fortify the Christian faith in the face of the

world. Our Lady of Guadalupe's Tilma also bears witness for us (thanks to modern science, unable to explain phenomena that, like an unyielding brick wall, consistently resist analysis) to the fact that the Mother of Jesus is legitimately the Mother of Saints and of sinners. Mary will probably be recognized one day as co-redeemer of mankind by the grace of Her Son. As the Apocalypse of Saint John announces, She is invested in the Communion of Saints with a particular mission in the end times.

As for the third "enigma" that of Maria Valtorta, fifty years after her death it remains stubbornly impervious to science, bearing witness to the Supernatural which brought forth this magisterial work for us. For us indeed, we who await the Return of Christ in the difficult times which will precede it, times in which "the faith of a great number will grow cold", times which will bring the persecutions foretold by numerous prophets. This testimony of a simple and humble soul is given to us like a journey twenty centuries back in time, in order for us to rediscover the roots of our faith in the footsteps of He Who walked on the earth and on the waters of the earth, and still walks among us today, still Alive, always present, Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, Son of David and Saviour of Mankind.

May I finally mention the judgement of Padre Pio, who during his life was another miraculous witness to Christ, whom he carried within himself. This Saint needed neither science nor technological advances to advise the people he directed about *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*. His advice was, "Not only can you read it, you **must** read it!" Enlightened as he was by the Holy Spirit, could he have advised people to read a work that did not come from God? Moreover, if it comes from God, shouldn't His "instrument" be speedily and attentively examined by the Church as an authentic witness of Jesus?

Shouldn't the Church be privileged to relay the Word of Christ, whose incarnation continues in our troubled times via the manifestation of charismas, the mark of His solicitude? Pope Benedict XVI asked Christians to recapture the Christian spirit of the Early Church. Would it be unreasonable to do so also through the work of Maria Valtorta, when we know that it was ordered by Paul VI for the Vatican library and that Cardinal Stanislas Dziwisz testifies that he has often seen a volume of *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* on the bedside table of Pope Saint John Paul II?

Whatever the answers to these questions, we extend our thanks to Jean-François Lavère for this considerable labour which has put the reliability of Maria Valtorta's "revelations" into the forefront. Thanks to this indispensable work, their supernatural origin appears legitimately established here, following the analyses of great theologians like Mgr. Roschini, who have clearly established their perfectly orthodox nature. As for the fruits, in quantity and quality, by which, according to Holy Scripture, we are to judge the tree, fruits received by people who testify that they have reached a better understanding of Christ's Love and received the benefit of many graces after coming into contact with this unquestionably inspired work... that it leads to an authentic spirituality in which the True Tradition, given by the Lord to His first disciples, is what we absolutely *must* retrieve when the chaff threatens to suffocate the wheat! Many saints have announced a renewal to come; the return to a poor, modest and virtuous Church, manifesting true unity, far removed from the pathetic squabbles born of nostalgia or repulsion for the Church of our grandmothers' times! Christ did not manifest Himself to Maria Valtorta in order take us on some quaint tourist walk, but most truly to show us the way to this renewal.

On this Ash Wednesday 2012,
+ Mgr. Johanan-Mariam.

FOREWORD

Man of little faith, why did you doubt?

Mt 14, 31

« *When you seek the truth, you must start by doubting* ». St Thomas Aquinas

We first came into contact with Maria Valtorta's work in the 1980s through the initiative of a priest and friend. He had already read *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*¹ three times when he told us with all the authority conferred by his doctorate in theology: "*I have found no theological error in The Gospel as Revealed to Me and I strongly recommend that you read it*". My wife immediately followed this wise council and began to do so. Very soon, not wanting to keep this discovery to herself, she tried her best to share it with me. After a few weak excuses like "*not tonight, my dear, I'm too tired...*", I finally accepted, with a marked lack of enthusiasm, her repeated requests to listen as she read a chapter aloud to me every evening, while I "relaxed" with crossword puzzles...

Convinced of my supposed intellectual powers, I only needed to hear a few pages to "*understand*", like so many of the "*the wise and learned*" before me, that it was yet another of these "*pseudo revelations invented by a mystic with an over-active imagination*". As Henri Poincaré once remarked, "*To doubt everything or to believe everything are two equally facile solutions, both of which dispense with thought*". From then on, my "*reason*" took control, and I was very soon exasperated by all those "*useless, apocryphal and unverifiable details*" which spoilt my listening pleasure. How often did I, irritated, say to my dear wife, "*OK, that's enough, skip the details and come to*

¹ Maria Valtorta's main work, published in 10 volumes by the CEV, 03036 Isola del Liri, Italy

the point”, at the risk of spoiling her own pleasure! I still continued, however, to lend a more or less distracted ear to this “*gilded legend*”, partly in order to humour her, partly out of respect for the recommendations of our friend the priest and also, a little, “*to hear the rest of the story*”. But I did not abandon myself completely. I refused to “*become like a child again*” and the “*treasure*” remained hidden from me for the whole of the first of the ten volumes that make up the work.

God cannot deny Himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth

Vatican Council I, Dei Filius IV

Then came the second volume and these few luminous words of Jesus (vision of February 9, 1944): “*I desire to give to whoever believes in Me a vision brought down to the truth of my stay upon earth*”²_{44.8}. And a few pages later, (dictated on February 4th, 1944): “*The more attentive and precise you are (in describing what you see), the greater will be the numbers of those who will come to Me...The implication is that the descriptions must be known*”_{L.2, Ch. 4, p.21}. I then noticed in the notebooks that on January 25th 1944, Jesus had already given “*this gentle advice*” to Maria Valtorta: “*So remember to be as meticulous as possible when you repeat what you see to them. The slightest detail is important and is not “yours”, but “mine”. (...) In the contemplations, you observe a lot, but in your haste to write them down (...) you sometimes leave out certain details. You must not do this. Put them at the bottom of the page, but write them all down*”.

² The references of the quotes are those of the 2004 Italian original version as well as those of the 2017 English version.

These few words had the effect of an electric shock on me. I, who had kept complaining about “*these superfluous descriptions*”, there I was, suddenly struck by the awareness that these “*useless and over-abundant*” details, upon which my unbelief had fed, were there precisely to reinforce my faith! These descriptions were not futile lest, or padding in the text, put there for “*poetically sensitive minds*” to admire. They were there to be subjected to the cool scrutiny of human logic, given to strengthen our Faith. It was therefore by the study of these details that “*the wise and learned*” could fortify their belief in the veracity of the teachings contained in the work transmitted by Maria Valtorta.

“The agent of sin is the agent of punishment”

Wisdom, 11, 16

I had had great doubts... It now behoved me to undertake a great study. On that day, and since the means to do so were shown to me, I decided to investigate and seized the branch that had just been proffered to me. All that I had to do was to verify, systematically and with all possible scientific rigour, every detail given in the work, analysing its credibility, coherence and precision in order to judge the overall veracity of the work, thus applying to it the age-old principle of Ambrosaster³ : “*All truth comes from the Holy Spirit, regardless of who expresses it*”.

I must admit that when I made this decision my scepticism for the work had not completely dissipated. I thought “*in one or*

³ *Omne verum a quocumque dicatur a Spiritu Sancto est* : this principle, attributed to St. Ambrosia, is reported by St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Complete Theological Works* (I-II, quest. 109, art. 1).
(continued on following page...)

two months I'll be certain as to whether all of this is true or if there are errors in it"⁴...

But, according to the adage "*Dubitando ad veritatem parvenimus*"⁵, at that time I was a long way from imagining that this study would reveal a host of hidden treasures to me, to the point that I would catch a glimpse of "*the splendour of the Truth*" of which John Paul II spoke to such effect...

Who does not dream of finding a treasure?

"Let us seek something that is a good in more than appearance – something that is solid, constant and more beautiful in its more hidden part, for this let us delve. And it is placed not far off; you will find it – you need only to know where to stretch out your hand. As it is, just as if we groped in darkness, we pass by things near at hand, stumbling over the very objects we desire."

Seneca, On the Happy Life III, 1

The quest for Truth can be compared to the search for treasure. And in this, as in every treasure hunt, in order to have the best chances on your side, you need to choose your basic equipment carefully: a precise map, a good metal detector and a strong pickaxe.

The map is Holy Scripture with the Gospels as its centrepiece. Those who go off on a Treasure hunt without this map will discover from bitter experience that all that glitters is not gold. More often than not they will find only tawdry, illusory trinkets, the modern idols against which Benedict XVI warned us: "*money, the thirst for possessions, power and even*

⁴ Similar analyses carried out on the writings of Marie of Agreda and St. Anne Catherine Emmerich had fed my scepticism concerning the quality of the transcription of certain visions.

⁵ *By doubting we reach the truth* (Cicero, *De officiis*).
(continued on following page...)

knowledge”⁶... The Scriptures indicate the real Way that leads to the Truth.

The detector that will enable us to find and extract the nuggets of Truth from within the fields of error and lies is called Faith. Faith guides us step by step in our quest, leading us towards the Truth, as the compass needle once helped the sailor to stay on course. When Faith shows us clearly enough where Truth is to be found, the time is ripe to truly discover it and admire its beauty.

It is then the turn of the pickaxe to remove everything that still keeps it hidden from us. In this parable, the pickaxe is, of course, reason. We can use it to dig, clear away, and sift. And suddenly, to our joy and bedazzlement, the treasure appears, illuminating the spirit with a thousand lights.

We must not, however, lose sight of the fact that in this quest for Truth, Faith must always precede reason, as Pope John Paul II⁷ reminded us: *“Faith alone makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently”*...Thus, the signs that Revelation presents *“serve to lead the search for truth to new depths, enabling the mind in its autonomous exploration to penetrate within the mystery by use of reason’s own methods, of which it is rightly jealous. Yet these signs also urge reason to look beyond their status as signs in order to grasp the deeper meaning which they bear.”* (...) *“Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth”*(...) *“Human beings attain*

⁶ Benedict XVI, Sermon of 13 September 2008 at the Esplanade des Invalides, Paris.

⁷ In his splendid encyclical, *Fides et Ratio* (September 14th 1998)

truth by way of reason because, enlightened by faith, they discover the deeper meaning of all things”.

*

Private revelations, visions and apparitions concerning the evangelical message can be seen as so many notes on the map. They often illustrate Scripture, making it more pleasurable to read and easier to understand. But the map, Scripture itself, is written once and for all. We can neither add nor subtract anything. That would change its very nature or even make it illegible. This is what the Church explains when she declares Revelation to be finished. She is the guarantor of its content and the conservation of its Message, “*The Church watches over its treasure as a mother watches over her children*”. It is thus her duty to judge everything concerning the Deposit entrusted to her care. And this is the reason why, before embarking on a detailed study of a document such as *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*, it is also licit and prudent, even indispensable, to have a clear vision of the position of the Church on the subject. Otherwise, in the words of Saint Paul⁸, concerning the message transmitted by Maria Valtorta, in what way “*would [it] be useful, if it brings us neither revelation, nor science, prophecy nor teaching?*”

So, let us now look at the true judgement of the Church on Maria Valtorta’s work.

*

⁸ *First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians 14, 16 in which he writes: “Now suppose, brothers, I come to you and speak in tongues. What good shall I do if my speaking provides no revelation, or knowledge, or prophecy, or instruction?”*

CONDEMNED BY THE CHURCH?

“With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially Pastors and Theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the Divine Word, so that revealed Truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage”..

Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*. Gaudium et Spes, § 44.

If there is one field in which the Catholic Church exercises caution, it is that of private revelations. But this circumspection does not mean that all revelations are unworthy of faith. One need only consider the private revelations of the saints or the blessed, such as Maria of Agreda, John Bosco, Anne Marie Taïgi, Saint Matilda, Saint Gertrude... to name but a few. The Church has only given “*negative approbation*” to their writings, declaring that it “*finds nothing contrary to Faith or Morals in their writings*”.

Concerning the writings of Bridget of Sweden, John Paul II stated even in the Motu Proprio of October 1st 1999: “*Yet there is no doubt that the Church, which recognized Bridget’s holiness without ever pronouncing on her individual revelations, has accepted the overall authenticity of her interior experience*”. And at the beatification of Anne-Catherine Emmerich on October 4th 2004 by Pope St. John Paul II, Cardinal José Saraiva Martins, the prefect of the Congregation for the causes of saints said in an interview given to the Osservatore Romano on October 7th 2004: “*The works under discussion cannot therefore be considered as written or dictated by Anne-Catherine Emmerich nor as faithful transcriptions of her declarations and accounts, but as a literary work by Brentano, who has so amplified and manipulated them that it is*

impossible to establish the true core of the work that may be attributed to her”.

The approbation of the Magisterium does not claim to tell us anything other than that they are *“probable and piously credible, and that we can read them without danger, and even with edification”*. In fact, the Church very rarely affirms the *“supernatural”* nature of a private revelation or apparition. This attitude is consistent, notably in order to remind us that *“Revelation is closed”* dating from the death of the last apostle and that nothing can be added to *“this sealed deposit”*⁹. Private revelations must always be put back into the framework of Revelation proper, given to us in Jesus Christ and by His Spirit living in the Church. These revelations, for example, those of mystics such as Saint Catherine of Siena or Saint Theresa of Avila, do not modify Christian Doctrine, but *“only further enlighten it”*.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (§67) recalls this in the following terms: “Throughout the ages, there have been so-called “private” revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Guided by the Magisterium of the Church, the sensus fidelium knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church”. Hence,

⁹ For example, when the Church pronounces a dogmatic definition, it does not proclaim a new revelation, but only explains what was already contained in the deposit of faith.

(continued on following page...)

Urban VIII approved the writings of Marie d'Agreda¹⁰, but refused to confirm their “*celestial origin*”.

Similarly, on December 11th, 1878 Leon XIII, referring to the apparitions at La Salette and Lourdes, declared: “*It is only permissible to believe them with purely human faith*”.

Moreover, as Benedict XIV remarked in his time¹¹ : “*It must be clear that the approbation given by the Church to a private revelation is nothing more than the permission granted, after close examination, to make this revelation known for the instruction and the good of the faithful. We cannot and must not grant an assent of faith to such revelations, even when approved by the Church. According to the dictates of prudence, all we can do is grant them the assent of human belief, insofar as such revelations are probable and credible for piety. (...) Consequently, it is possible not to grant our assent to such revelations and to turn away from them, but with fitting modesty, for the right reasons and with no contemptuous intention*”.

Thus, private revelations constitute a field of liberty, insofar as they are free of doctrinal errors.

¹⁰ Maria de Agreda completed a first writing of *God's Mystical City* in 1637, but burned it in obedience to her confessor's advice. Her superiors later ordered her to re-write it. She finished this task in 1660 and died 5 years later. Her work gave rise to very heated debates, prompting Innocent XI, on August 4th 1681, to temporarily forbid the reading of it, placing it in the Index for 3 months. For 14 years the Inquisition Tribunal contested it, the Sorbonne condemned several extracts of *God's Mystical City* in 1679 but the order of St Francis issued a peremptory refutation of this. Then, in 1704 Pope Clement XI formally forbade it to be put into the Index catalogues, which was nevertheless done in 1710 (according to the theologian Eusèbe Amort). Finally, on March 14th 1729, Benedict XIII affirmed with his total authority that the books of *God's Mystical City* could be retained and read. This was 92 years after the first writing and 69 years after their publication! (According to V. Viala, *Vie Divine de la Très Sainte Vierge Marie*, 1916, reprinted by Tequi).

¹¹ Benedict XIV, Book III, *De servorum Dei beatificatione* C.53, n. 15.

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It was undoubtedly in the same spirit that the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith recommended that this indication should appear in future editions of Maria Valtorta's work: "*The visions and data reported in the volumes (Maria Valtorta's) cannot be recognised as being of supernatural origin, but can be considered as literary forms used by the author to relate the life of Jesus in her own way*"¹². Dictated as it is by the virtue of prudence, this attitude should thus not come as a surprise to adequately informed Catholics.

What is the situation regarding Maria Valtorta's work?

The world over, detractors of *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* put forward the fact that it was placed on the Index in 1959 as their main, if not sole, argument to discourage readers with dire warnings. They state, or suggest, that this condemnation proves the harmful content of the work, occasionally even going to the length of declaring it to be inspired by Satan (sic!). They reject it as a whole, dismissing both the work and its potential readers with a contemptuous wave of the hand and the peremptory: "*Move on, please, move along!*" Others, never having found the time to study this monumental work, use the rough and ready method of taking a sentence out of context, often not even bothering to refer to the original version. How easy it is then for them to "*prove*" just about anything! Over the last decade, Catholics, North Americans in particular, have sometimes been so disconcerted and confused by these simplistic, unfounded arguments that they have turned away from the work.

¹² Letter dated 18/9/95 to the Canadian bishops, transmitted by Mgr Carlos Curis (Apostolic Nuncio in Ottawa) and published by the Canadian editor Karl Keating on his internet site in 2007.

The judgement of the Church

The judgement of the Church on Maria Valtorta's work is, of course, far removed from this simplistic, distorted, black-and-white caricature. Here are some facts supporting this statement:

A/ There is no official Church text denouncing Maria Valtorta's work as contrary to Faith or Morals. If such a text existed, the detractors of the work would surely not have waited 50 years to publish it!

B/ In contrast, one of the first people who read the manuscript was Monseigneur Alfonso Carinci¹³, Secretary to the Congregation of Rites. As early as 1949 he declared: *"There is nothing in this work that is opposed to the Gospel. On the contrary, one might say that it contributes to a clearer understanding of its meaning"*.

C/ The future Cardinal Agostino Bea (1881 – 1968), then Rector of the Institute of Pontifical Biblical Studies, and Pius XII's confessor, wrote in 1952: *"I have read a large part of Maria Valtorta's books in typewritten manuscript... As far as exegesis is concerned, I have found no error in the parts that I have read..."*

D/ The fact that the prohibited books were placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1959 does not, in Maria Valtorta's case, call into question the orthodoxy of the text, but rather, as Bishop Roman Danylak reminded us on 13/2/2002¹⁴, the fact that it was diffused before receiving the official *Imprimatur*¹⁵.

¹³ In charge of the movement entitled *Adoratio Quotidiana et Perpetua Sanctissimi Eucharistiae Sacramenti inter Sacerdotes Cleri*.

¹⁴ *"The Poem of the Man-God was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books, not because of doctrinal errors, but because it was printed without the required nihil obstat and imprimatur"...*

¹⁵ *"Imprimatur"* means *"Let it be printed"*. This is the formula used by the ecclesiastical authority to indicate its approbation of books on religious subjects which, in its judgement, may be published without damage to the truths of faith and to the integrity of morals.

(continued on following page...)

Cardinal Edouard Gagnon¹⁶, in a letter dated 31/10/1987, addressed from the Vatican, judged as “*being in total conformity with the demands of Canon Law the type of Imprimatur granted by the Holy Father before witnesses*”¹⁷. His doctoral thesis in Canon Law on “*La censure des livres: Etude historique et juridique des canons relatives à la censure préalable des livres*” confers upon him the authority to make this judgement¹⁸.

It was only the excessive haste, born of the enthusiasm of Maria Valtorta’s friends, to make this work known to as many people as possible, and as soon as possible, that seems to be at the root of this regrettable misunderstanding.

The notification on the abolition from the *Index of Forbidden Books* on June 14th 1966¹⁹, made a clear distinction between the books placed on this Index because their content was reprehensible from a moral, theological or anticlerical point of view and the other literary works, such as the writings on private revelations, published without the previous assent of Church authorities. Maria Valtorta’s work was, in its time, classed in this second category.

It is therefore unjust, inaccurate and even dishonest, to imply, or to allow others to believe, that *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* was placed on this Index because it contained errors of Doctrine, Faith or Morals..

E/ Moreover, in January 1962 Father Berti was given an authorisation to publish by the Vice Commissioner of the Holy

¹⁶ Then President of the Pontifical Council for the Family and the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses.

¹⁷ An allusion to a remark made by Pius XII on 26/2/1948. Having personally read the text in 1947, the Pope’s opinion was favourable, authorizing the publication of the work, removing nothing, not even the explicit declarations that it was reporting “visions” and “dictations”. He did not, however, approve the preface, which mentioned a supernatural phenomenon, clearly stating: “*Publish this work as it is. There is no need to give an opinion about its origin, whether it be extraordinary or not. Who reads it will understand*”. According to the *Osservatore Romano* of 27/2/1948, those present were Father Migliorini and Father Berti, both of the Order of the Servites of Marie and their Prior, Father Andrea M. Cecchin, none of whom contested the veracity of this statement when it was published.

¹⁸ Reported by Father Ovilla Mélençon in his book, *Exorcismes et pouvoirs des laïcs*. P16 and 17.

¹⁹ *Notificatio de Indicis librorum prohibitorum conditio*, 14 juin 1966: AAS 58 (1966) 445.

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See, Father Marco Giraudo: “*You have our total approbation to continue the publication of this second edition of The Gospel as revealed to me by Maria Valtorta*” (...) “*We shall see how it is received*”²⁰.

F/ As early as 1970, Father Gabriel Allegra²¹ was one of the greatest promoters of the work in the world²². He died in 1976 and was beatified by the Church on April 23rd 2002. He publicly defended the work²³, declaring that it contained nothing contrary to Faith. If this public stance had not been in accordance with the judgement of the Church, she would most certainly have opposed the decree of his beatification!

G/ In 1972 a series of courses based on the work was given at the theological pontifical Marianum Faculty in Rome. Later, in 1973, Father Roschini, who had been an advisor to the Holy See since 59-60, published his book *The Virgin Mary in the writings of Maria Valtorta*, needless to say, with the tacit approval of the highest Church authorities...

H/ In a letter dated May 6th 1992, addressed to the editor E. Pisani, Monseigneur Dionigi Tettamanzi, secretary to the Italian Episcopal Conference, made it clear that *all Catholics were permitted to read Maria Valtorta’s work, on the sole condition that they should not consider it as a supernatural work*. This reservation, a constant reminder by the Church concerning private revelations or apparitions, cannot be interpreted as a negative judgement²⁴.

²⁰ Quoted by the editor Pisani at the end of volume 10 of the French edition of 1985, page 8.

²¹ Theologian, biblical exegete, (1907-1976), translator of the Bible into Chinese.

²² The text, in eleven highly documented pages of his public discourse in Macao in 1970 to promote the translation of Maria Valtorta’s work in diverse languages, is available on Internet.

²³ His letters in favour of Maria Valtorta’s work figure even in his official bibliography!

²⁴ In each country, it was the secretary of the Episcopal conference who transmitted the official position of the Church on such a work.

I/ In August - September 1992 Mgr. Roman Danylak, then Bishop of Toronto, (and afterwards in Rome) published a very exhaustive text in defence of the work, in which he wrote in particular: *"There was, and is, nothing morally, theologically or scripturally objectionable, nothing that is contrary to Church teaching or opposed to the authority of the Church, in Valtorta's works. This was the conclusion of the several authorities that I have adduced, as well, also, of the censors of her works who were responsible for the article in the Osservatore Romano of 1960...I have studied The Poem in depth, not only in its English translation, but in the original Italian edition with the critical notes of Fr. Berti... I have further studied in their original Italian the Quaderni or notebooks of Maria Valtorta for the years from 1943 to 1950. And I want to affirm the theological orthodoxy of the writings of Maria Valtorta"*. The complete text can be consulted on his Internet site²⁵. This bishop provides his sources and his testimony is indisputable. He confirmed his opinion again on February 13th, 2002 in another detailed article: *"I declare that there is nothing objectionable in the Poem of the Man-God and in all the other writings by Maria Valtorta concerning Faith and Morals"*²⁶. Following this, he gave his Nihil Obstat, Imprimatur to an Internet site²⁷ dedicated to Maria Valtorta's writings! (This is perhaps the first Internet site that has received an *Imprimatur*!)

These few, far from exhaustive, testimonies have been retained because they come solely from high-ranking Church authorities.

*

²⁵ <http://www.heartofjesus.ca/MariaValtorta/inDefense.htm>.

²⁶ *"Not only am I saying that there is nothing objectionable in The Poem of the Man-God and all the other writings of Valtorta in so far as faith and morals are concerned."*

²⁷ <http://www.bardstown.com/~brchrys/>.

In the early 1970s, the Church noted that *“because of present-day instruments of knowledge, the contributions of science and the exigencies of rigorous criticism”*, it was becoming *“more difficult, if not impossible, to arrive as speedily as before at the judgements which formerly concluded inquests on the subject.”* New norms for the discernment of revelations were then defined by the Holy Congregation for Doctrine and Faith and approved by Pope Paul VI on February 24th, 1978: *“In order for the ecclesiastical authority to be able to acquire greater certainty concerning any apparition or revelation, it will proceed in the following manner:*

a) first of all, by judging the fact according to positive and negative criteria...

b) then, if this examination is favourable, by allowing certain public religious and devotional demonstrations, all the while continuing an extremely cautious investigation of the facts (which amounts to the formula: “for the moment, there is no opposition”).

c) finally, after a certain lapse of time and in the light of experience, (from a particular study of the spiritual fruits engendered by the new devotion), by judging the authenticity of the supernatural nature, if the case requires it”.

The few preceding reminders and testimonies show that in the case of Maria Valtorta this is exactly the approach adopted by the Church, at her own rhythm, which is not the rhythm of the world. And we observe that, fifty years after its publication, the Church has not condemned the content of the work concerning the Doctrine of Faith or Morals²⁸, nor has she yet made a definitive judgement on its possible supernatural nature. Let us hope that this long finalizing process will contribute to

²⁸ For more details on the sole official criticism of the content of the work, see the following chapter, *“A clumsily romanticised life of Jesus”?*

lift the scruples of certain Catholics who, through obedience and humility, or unknowingly deceived by often peremptory statements of misinformed censors, have turned away from a work considered by others as “*an inestimable treasure of universal literature*”.

Let us also hope that the censors will meditate and put into practice the exhortation that Monseigneur R. Danylak addressed to them: “*I strongly urge that all the critics obtain and study The Poem of The Man-God, reading it in its entirety, and not relying on cursory impressions or the rehash of other critics. They will find in it, I am sure, the peace and joy, the deeper and more intimate knowledge of our Divine Saviour and His Blessed Mother that I and countless other readers around the globe, have found*”. In fact, like everything relating to education or knowledge, this work forms “*a whole*” on which it is impossible to make an unbiased judgement without previous immersion in its plenitude by a reading that is at once assiduous, attentive, critical and free of preconceived ideas. And, to close the subject, I adhere totally to the words of Blessed Gabriel Allegra, who ended his intervention in favour of the work²⁹ in 1970 by these words: “*Now, without anticipating the judgement of the Church, which, as from the present moment I accept with absolute submission, I take the liberty of affirming that, given that the principal criterion of the discernment of spirits is the Word of the Lord: “By their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 3, 20) and given the good fruits that the Poem produces in an ever-increasing number of readers, I think that it comes from the Spirit of Jesus*”.

²⁹ This declaration also shows that he had perfectly understood that the fact that it was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1961 was not a fundamental judgement on the work.

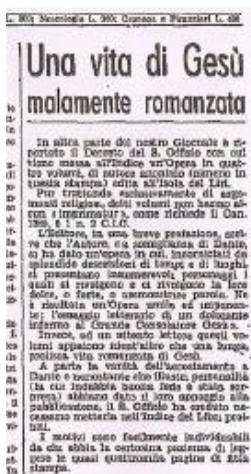
A CLUMSILY ROMANTICISED LIFE OF JESUS?

“...these volumes appear to be little other than a long (and) verbose life of Jesus...”³⁰

“Disparagements have a great advantage over reason: that of being accepted without proof by a multitude of readers”

Alessandro Manzini, *Unpublished and rare works* 2, 482

“A *Clumsily Romanticised Life of Jesus*³¹”, is in fact the first and only *official* criticism of Maria Valtorta’s work, as it appeared in an anonymous article in the *Osservatore Romano* on Wednesday, January 6th, 1960.



This subjective opinion does not condemn the content (orthodoxy in relation to Doctrine, but only the form (the length of the work, its presupposed descriptive errors, its style...). Of all the negative judgements of the work, this one is the most surprising, one might even say paradoxical. Coming from the Church, one would more readily expect commentaries on the doctrinal content of the work and its conformity to Faith and

Morals...

History has consistently spawned clumsily romanticised lives of Jesus. They are forgotten in the space of a few months, sometimes a few years, rarely longer... However, in this instance, this *clumsily romanticised life* has been translated into twenty languages and its word-of-mouth diffusion has been

³⁰ “Questi volumi appaiono nient'altro che una lunga prolissa vita romanzata di Gesù”.

³¹ *Una vita di Gesù malamente romanzata* was the original title of the article.

growing exponentially for fifty years, all without the help of noisy media campaigns!

Manzoni and Valtorta

But what, in fact, is a *good* historical novel? Alessandro Manzoni³², was one of the masters of this genre and, like him, many authors have tried to answer this question. It transpires from their reflections that a good historical novel is a life experience, with adventure, a successful crossing-over, or a test. It is a book that can be taken up at different stages and devoured from one end to the other. It is both dynamic story-telling and a gripping tale. It binds the reader so closely to the characters that he cannot put it down. It is easily made into a film. Many writers seem to agree on this. As they write their novels they *visualise* them, cutting them up into sequences and varied plans.

The historical novel should be gripping, breathtaking. Its interest should also come from its faithful reproduction of historical ways and customs. According to Gilbert Sinoué's definition "*to successfully level the information, so that it is conveyed effortlessly, and the [historical] documentation is woven into the very fabric of the novel... these are the two essential qualities of an author of historical novels*". Above all, he should re-instil life into the characters and their times. He should bring History to life and literally resurrect the past. Louis Maignon adds: "*The interest of an excellent historical novel lies in its accuracy, its faithful reproduction of the way of life and customs of the historical period (...) the heroes are never anything more than illustrious people, there is simply a background fabric to their scenes, which is always History.*"

³² Alessandro Manzoni 1785 – 1873 whose historical novel *The Betrothed* (in Italian *I Promessi sposi*) is widely considered to be a masterpiece.

*What the customs of these times were, how they felt, their thought processes, in short, their collective soul, which is the only possible subject of a historical novel*³³ ». Unlike the History book, the historical novel shows what people really were, as “*History is made explicit through the individual destinies of the characters*”. This is why Alessandro Manzoni wrote: “*The historical novel is perhaps the best History book*³⁴ », and why someone wrote about Victor Hugo “*that he brought to bear on the history of his country a firmer and more penetrating eye than that of historians themselves*³⁵ ». Maria Valorta’s readers will think that all these definitions perfectly describe her work, insofar as it can be considered a simple novel! Which of course, only a superficial reading could lead one to imagine. But even were it so, the depth and coherence of the characters, the places and events, the quality of the style and the wealth and diversity of the vocabulary cannot fail to awaken the reader’s admiration.

To judge fairly...

Whether the appreciation of this work is positive or negative, it is of paramount importance to justify it. In order to try to *objectively* determine the quality of this work, we will put *The Gospel as revealed to me* through an evaluation grid, adapted to the analysis of a historical novel³⁶. We will successively examine the relevance of the subject chosen, how it is treated, the rendering of the times and places, the authenticity of the characters and the quality of the text.

³³ L. Maigron, *Le Roman Historique à l'Époque Romantique*, 1912.

³⁴ A Manzoni, *Réflexions sur le roman historique*.

³⁵ Augustin Thierry, 1824. Quoted by Jacques Bony, *Lire le romantisme*. Nathan, 2001, p.78 – 79.

³⁶ These *evaluation grids* are sometimes used by reading groups, or by teachers to help their pupils to form judgements.

1 / The theme

The story concerns past events that have left their mark on history.

The historicity of Jesus Christ is accepted today. For us all, believers or unbelievers, He is one of those illustrious figures who have changed the course of our life and times. He is even the most frequently filmed historical figure in the history of the cinema.

The subject should interest a maximum of readers.

There is no doubt that the subject (the life of Jesus) always has, and always will arouse passionate interest in untold numbers of people of all races and nations. The interest that the subject arouses is such that many readers testify that after reading it, they proceeded to re-read it³⁷.

The novel relates the history of a country, a figure or a period.

In Maria Valtorta's work, the country is Palestine, under Roman domination. The central figure is Jesus Christ and the period covers the beginning of the Christian era, between 20 BC and 40 AD.

The plot remains plausible within its time; it might contain fictitious adventures.

As this is the life of Jesus, we can simply take note of the fact that the story told by Maria Valtorta is perfectly coherent, not only with the four Gospels, but also with many episodes transmitted by Tradition. In addition, there are *new adventures* in the text that some people might consider fictitious or apocryphal...

³⁷ Mgr João Pereira Venâncio (1904 – 1985) Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, former professor of dogmatic theology in Rome, confessed that he had continuously read and re-read the 10 volumes. (Quoted by J. Haffert).

2 / The narration

The main thread enables the reader to situate the story and to follow its progress.

The chronology is so precise that it has been scientifically possible to reconstruct a day by day dating of all the events of the three years of the public life of Jesus. Jean Aulagnier³⁸, by a meticulous study of 4,000 indications noted here and there over the 6,000 pages of the work, was the first to reconstruct a perfectly coherent chronology of the life of Jesus in minute detail. As I was unable to find the *sources* of this study, I took it up in detail with modern computer tools. The research and scientific analysis of thousands of clues (climate, astronomy, chronology, calendar, the duration of journeys, etc) found all over the work, and covering the three years of the public life of Jesus, confirm their coherence. As for the lunar descriptions, their perfect chronological concordance requires a level of competence that few amateur astronomers possess...

This chronology, which sometimes differs from those that we see today, perfectly takes into account:

1. The integral content of the evangelical writings, as well as numerous Old and New Testament passages.
2. Historical, archaeological, climactic and geographical data.
3. A wealth of first century information transmitted via Christian, Jewish and Roman writings.
4. The most recent exegetical discoveries.

The subject is sufficiently developed.

This is a monumental, 6,000 page work. This is even the principal criticism levelled at it by some of its detractors.

³⁸ For further details, see the chapter "*There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation*".

The causes and consequences of the facts are clearly presented.

As Gabriel Allegra remarked, in *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*, “the inter-connection of facts is spontaneous, natural, flowing logically from the circumstances. This is particularly true of the conversation with Nicodemus, the speech about the Bread of Life, or the polemical theological speeches given in Jerusalem, on which subject the well-known efforts of the greatest exegetes to situate and explain them in context remain fruitless” (...) “But it is also the case for apparently “unimportant” facts, briefly mentioned in the Gospels, as for example, the evangelization of Judea at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus (John 3, 22), the invectives against the lakeside towns (Matthew 11, 20), or the secret meeting at Chouza’s house to proclaim Jesus king (John 6, 15). Minor facts that exegetes, novelists or apocryphal writers have never thought of analyzing or of replacing in their context”.

Gabriel Allegra further stated: “There is a series of visions in which the mysteries of the birth of Jesus, His agony, His passion and His resurrection are described with celestial words and images, with angelic eloquence, while at the same time, such great light is shed on the mystery of Judas, on the attempt to proclaim Jesus king, on His two brothers/cousins who do not believe in Him, on the awakened impression of the Gentiles towards Him, on His love for lepers, for the poor, for the elderly, for children, for the Samaritans and especially on the depth of His ardent and delicate love for His Immaculate Mother”.

The author holds the reader’s interest.

On this point, we need only mention some of the innumerable testimonies of readers that demonstrate their interest in the work. Whether it be Wayne Weible, an

international reporter and Christian preacher from South Carolina (1987)³⁹, Sister Monica Foltier of Cincinnati (1987)⁴⁰, John M. Haffert, an editor and author (1955)⁴¹, or the missionary A.S. Rosso, OFM, a professor and editor who said in 1974: “*I always find something new in it, even after my eighth reading*”.

3 / Period and Place

The story contains precise information.

The anonymous author of the article in *L'Osservatore Romano* criticizing the work took the liberty of writing: “*specialists in biblical studies will certainly find many errors, historical, geographical and others*”. He would no doubt have been well advised to start by re-reading the old adage “*Sutor, ne supra crepidam*”⁴², given the numerous attestations by specialists categorically contesting his affirmations.

Not only is the work full of precise information, be it historical, topographical, architectural, geographical, cultural, etc., but it also very often provides precisions known only to a few specialists, or even totally unknown at the time of writing and which have since been confirmed by archaeology. I will give several examples later...

³⁹ “*I must say that I consider these to be the most beautiful books that I have ever read, excepting the Holy Scriptures... I shall be eternally grateful to Maria Valtorta for this monumental work. I recommend it wherever I speak*”.

⁴⁰ “*It's fantastic. I couldn't put it down. As soon as I had finished my first reading, I started reading it all over again...*”

⁴¹ John Mathias Haffert (1915 – 2001) was the co-founder of “*The Blue Army of Fatima*” movement and the author of many books. “*I have all 10 volumes of The Gospel as Revealed to Me in Italian and in French. It is the most beautiful work that I have ever read and I consider it a benediction from God. I'm 70-odd and of all the books that I have ever read in my whole life, The Gospel as Revealed to Me is among those that have been of the most precious aid to my spiritual life*”.

⁴² “*Shoemaker, not beyond the shoe.*” The Greek painter Apelles of Kos had listened to the advice of a shoemaker about a shoe that he had just painted. When the shoemaker advised him to correct the leg too, Apelles gently reminded him that he was judging beyond his expertise. (Reported by Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, XXXV).

Let us just listen to Father François Paul Dreyfus (1918 – 1999), a specialist at the Biblical and Archaeological School in Jerusalem: *“I was very impressed when I found in Maria Valtorta’s work the names of at least six or seven towns that are not mentioned in the Old or New Testaments. These names are known only to a few rare specialists, and are unknown to non-biblical sources (...) How, then, could she have known these names if not by the revelations that she claims to have received?”* (Letter to the CVE, 1986).

The author succeeds in transporting us to the precise time and place of the novel.

Here is some more from the biblical scholar Gabriel Allegra ⁴³: *“If Mary of Magdala or Joanna of Chouza had been able during their life to see what Maria Valtorta sees, and had written it down, I believe that their testimony would not differ much from that of the Poem. Valtorta observed with such intensity the place and personages of her visions that anyone who has been in the Holy Land for studies and has repeatedly read the Gospels, need make no excessive effort to reconstruct the scene”* (...) *“One might say that in this Work the Palestinian world of the time of Jesus comes back to life before our eyes; and the best and worst elements of the characters of the chosen People--a people of extremes and enslaved by every mediocrity--leaps alive before us”*.

The author credibly describes the place where the story unfolds.

Plausibility is one of the essential characteristics of a good historical novel. And Maria Valtorta describes towns, monuments, reliefs, the type of soil, forks in the roads, milestones, varieties of crops, (corresponding to the type of

⁴³ Excerpt from his message given in Macao in 1970.

soil), Roman bridges, aqueducts, springs (flowing in certain seasons, dried-up in others) and a wealth of other elements, which turn out to be astonishingly precise when verified by specialists. In several cases, recent archaeological digs have shown the accuracy of the places that were as yet undiscovered in Maria Valtorta's lifetime⁴⁴.

The Sardinian geologist and mineralogist Vittorio Tredici wrote in 1952: *"I would like to stress the author's precise and inexplicable knowledge of panoramic, topographic, geological and mineralogical aspects of Palestine"*. And Hans J. Hopfen, an agronomic engineer at the FAO, published a detailed map of first century Palestine in which he included the greater part of the hundreds of geographical data contained in the work⁴⁵. Note too, the testimony of Mgr Alfonso Carinci (1862 – 1963), the Secretary to the Holy Congregation of Rites, who stated: *"The topography of Palestine conforms to its reality to the point that even those who have lived there for many years would probably not be able to describe it with such precision and in such minute detail"*.

As for anachronism, that other trap that unfailingly lies in wait for the historical novelist in his quest for credibility, it is extremely rare in Maria Valtorta's work⁴⁶.

The author renders local colour and traditions faithfully.

By *local colour* (or *historical colour*) we mean the description of clothes, gestures, stylistic formulas, habits, everyday objects, architecture and furniture, in short, everything that gives the story the appearance of authenticity. Maria Valtorta excels in the detailed description of daily tasks, such as

⁴⁴ See several examples in particular in the chapter *"The equal of the greatest geographers?"* »

⁴⁵ J. Hopfen, *Indice e Carta della Palestina per L'Evangelo come mi é stato rivelato* 1987 ed. CEV 2003.

⁴⁶ On this subject, see the paragraph *"Errare humanum est"*.

the drawing of water from the fountain, ploughing, harvests, grape-picking... She *infuses life* into the long lines of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, the insecurity in the mountain regions, the colourful, noisy crowds on market days, fishing techniques, or the manoeuvres of the Roman galleys coming alongside the military ports of Caesarea, Ptolemais and Alexandrosene. Her descriptions of the high priest's vestments, the Pharisees and the women are perfect. She even notes the differences in pronunciation between the inhabitants of the different regions of Palestine! The depiction of *customs* is more concerned with characters in depth, their behaviour, their prejudices, their different ways of expressing themselves, of admitting or hiding their eternal passions, from themselves or from others. Customs are shown in this work principally through the characters' subjects of conversation. In fact, these conversations reveal the peoples and the mentalities of the times. So in Caesarea, the epicurean Romans are concerned with the quality of the wines and the organizations of their orgies to come. The soldiers swear "*by Minerva*" or "*by Jupiter*". They often talk about dreams or presages. The Pharisees never miss an opportunity to remind all and sundry of the observance of the precepts of law, whereas for the humblest, food and health occupy, as might be expected, a prominent place in their daily lives. Maria Valtorta describes the disgust of the Jews for certain *impure* animals (pigs, dogs...), and she also mentions the animal sacrifices from which our civilization recoils, but which was a part of the daily life of the times.

4 / The Characters

The story features known as well as imaginary characters

The work does indeed feature many principal and secondary characters⁴⁷, many of whom really existed. Many are the figures who made up the circle of those close to Jesus, of whom the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, History or Tradition tell. Maria Valtorta omits none of them, from the most famous to the least familiar. She even mentions certain people known only through the epistles of St. Paul. But it is no easy task to find the members of the Sanhedrin at the time of Jesus in the writings of Flavius Josephus, the Talmud and other documents. The most important study on this subject is the one which enabled Auguste Lémann in 1877⁴⁸, to establish a list of fifty names (out of a total of 72). Yet, Maria Valtorta mentions them all (in addition to others as yet unidentified by historians)⁴⁹, sometimes, truth to tell, with purely phonetic spelling!

Equally surprising is her inclusion in the work of characters known principally to Byzantine tradition, such as Phostine the Samaritan, or Eucheria, the mother of Lazarus, Martha and Mary or their father, Theophilus the Syrian, as well as Timon of Aera, one of the first 7 deacons, or even Porphyria, Peter's wife, mentioned only by the Byzantine hagiographer St. Symeon Metaphrastes. Here is what Bishop Roman Danylak said about it in 1992: *"I find significant confirmation of the many characters of apostles, disciples, penitents, etc., mentioned not only in Scripture, but in the liturgical and patristic tradition of the Church in the Byzantine tradition. Her characters are not*

⁴⁷ Close to 800 people, named or anonymous, have been counted.

⁴⁸ His work, *"Valeur de l'Assemblée qui prononça la peine de mort contre Jésus Christ"*, met with the approval of Pope Pius IX.

⁴⁹ See the chapter *"The eye witnesses"*.

imaginary... but real people, whose identity is confirmed by the Fathers and the liturgical feasts of the Byzantine Church..." (See his Internet site <http://www.heartofjesus.ca/>.) What is there to say about the presence in the work of *pagan women* like Thusnelda, wife of Arminius, who was delivered up to Germanicus as a slave, and who we later find freed, at the side of Valeria? Or again, women like Albula Domitilla, the confident of Claudia Procula in the work, *historically* known through a single, 3-word mention by Suetonius and who turns out to be the mother of Flavia Domitilla, future wife of Vespasien and great grandmother of Saint Domitille! Even more surprising is the case of Caecilius Maximus⁵⁰, an officer in the Roman army, simply mentioned by Maria Valtorta in a brief dialogue between two Roman soldiers. He has no role in the work. And yet, his historical reality can today be considered as proven, thanks to the fortuitous discovery of 127 clay slabs during works on the motorway near Pompeii in 1966!

The author's depiction of his characters is realistic.

Here's what the renowned mariologist, Gabriel Maria Roschini (1972)⁵¹ has to say on the Virgin Mary: "*I feel compelled to confess frankly that the Mariology that emerges from Maria Valtorta's writings (...) was a real discovery for me. No other text on the subject, not even the sum of all that I have read and studied, has ever given me such a clear, vivid, complete, luminous, fascinating idea, at the same time simple and sublime, of Mary, that Masterpiece of God's*".

Gabriel Allegra was also surprised, as were most of the readers of the work, by the exceptional coherence of all the

⁵⁰ These cases and others are mentioned in detail in the chapter "*The eye witnesses*"

⁵¹ OSM 1900-1977. He was also a professor at the *Pontifical University of Latran* (Faculty of Theology), a philosopher, a theologian, a hagiographer, advisor to the *Sacred Congregation for the doctrine of faith*, and advisor to *The Sacred Congregation for the causes of Saints*. He is the author of 130 books and a great number of articles.

characters. He wrote this about it: *“That a novelist or a playwright of genius may create unforgettable characters is a known fact; but of the numerous novelists or playwrights who have approached the Gospel in order to use it in their creations, I do not know of one who has drawn from it such richness and sketched with such force and so pleasingly the figures of Peter, of John, Mary Magdalene, Lazarus, Judas -especially of Judas and his tragic and pitiful mother, Mary of Simon- and of so many, many others (and I omit for now Jesus and Mary), as does Valtorta so very naturally and without the least effort”*.

The characters come to life before the reader

In order for life to be infused into characters, they should be made both credible and coherent. And it is true that one of the most remarkable qualities of this work is the coherence of the individual personalities of each and every character, how they evolve and how they react in the most unforeseen situations, Gabriel Roschini added this remark about Mary: *“From this Mariology there emerges the living and active Virgin Mary who thinks, meditates, speaks and acts in the most diverse situations”*⁵². Everything is true-to-life and bears the mark of authenticity, the inexorable worsening of Lazarus’s health, Mary Magdalene’s slow conversion, Judas’s fatal decline, or the unease of the Pharisees, developing into their growing hatred of Jesus... Every single detail rings true in the work: the sweat-soaked faces and the dust-covered clothes after a long walk, the fig-smearing face of a child, Gamaliel’s perplexity faced with the Rabbi of Nazareth, the incredulity of some and the exuberant enthusiasm of others at a miracle. It is as if Maria Valtorta herself is there, present in the midst of each scene. She smells the smells, feels the heat or the cold, hears the background noise and turns round to see others arriving.

⁵² Gabriel M. Roschini *La Vierge Marie dans l’œuvre de Maria Valtorta*. CEV 1973, page 40.

The characters' psychological universe is restored.

Re-creating what historians call *the mental tools* of the era is probably the most difficult concept, as much for the author as for the reader. In the work, the psychology of the characters is extremely rich, so that we can see and observe the diversity of the apostles. Peter appears exactly as Benedict XVI⁵³ described him: “*a resolute and impulsive nature, imposing his views, if necessary by force ... But sometimes he is also timorous and naïve, but an honest person, capable of sincere repentance*”. How different he is from his brother, the shy, but effective Andrew, the totally pure, shy John, the jovial, meticulous Thomas, the wise and conciliating Simon the Zealot, or the down-to-earth Matthew. Each one thinks and acts in accordance with his temperament. The personal character of each apostle “*imprints itself indelibly on the heart of the attentive reader*”. Throughout the work we follow the efforts that Jesus makes for Judas and meditate on Mary's role. The attitudes of diverse Jewish groups (Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenians) or those of the pagans, is in perfect conformity with what we know of them from the few contemporary testimonies, especially those of Flavius Josephus, the historian. Maria Valtorta excels in her descriptions of ambition, anguish, fear, shame, love, hatred and all the other emotions inherent to human nature. Featuring the characters, she seems to touch what is *authentic* to this era more accurately than any historian before her.

⁵³ Benedict XVI *Catechesis on the apostolic ministry*, Wednesday, May 17th 2006.

5 / The text

The choice of the title is judicious.

The present title, *The Gospel as revealed to me*, perfectly reflects the content of the work.

The quality of the language used in the dialogues and descriptions is adapted to the historical context.

The author of a historical novel faces many difficulties, the worst of which are not, as one might think, those of historical truth, but rather of the writing of it. How to transpose original dialogues in Aramaic, Latin or Greek into modern language while remaining true to the spirit? Today's sentences are short, clear and to the point, whereas the Ancients were given to long, explanatory phraseology. And as H. Daniel-Rops⁵⁴ : noted: "*The Hebrew art of speaking had nothing in common with the Greek and Roman ideas of eloquence... The (Israelite) art of speaking was not so much to convince by reason, as to establish contact with the sensitivity of the audience*". This was not the eminent linguist Gabriel Allegra's least surprise when he noted that "*In the Dialogues and Discourses which form the structure of the Work there is, in addition to an inimitable spontaneity (the Dialogues), something of the ancient and at times the hieratic (the Discourses). In sum, one hears a very good translation of an Aramaic or Hebraic manner of speaking, in a vigorous, multiform, robust Italian. It is again to be noted that in the structure of these Discourses, Jesus either moves in the wake of the great Prophets, or adapts Himself to the method of the great rabbis who explain the Old Testament by applying it to contemporary circumstances. Let us recall the Peshet ["Interpretation"] of Habakkuk found in Qumran and compare it (passing over the word itself) with the "peshet" which Jesus*

⁵⁴ In *La vie quotidienne en Palestine au temps de Jésus*, Hachette 1961, p324 onwards.

gives us of it. We may also compare other explanations which the Lord gave for other passages of the Old Testament and for which we possess, in whole or in part, the commentaries of the rabbis of the 3rd or 4th Century B.C., but which obviously follow a traditional style of composition much more ancient, and probably also contemporaneous, with Jesus. Besides an external similarity of form, we will perceive such superiority of depth, of substance, that we will finally understand fully why the crowd said: "No one has spoken like this Man". But he also refutes any objections from those who might consider the teachings of Jesus to be too modern: "There is in the Poem, therefore, a transposition, a translation of the Good News announced by Jesus into the tongue of His Church of today, a transposition willed by Him, since the Visionary was deprived of any technical theological formation. And this is, I think, in order to make us understand that the Gospel message announced today by His Church of today, and with today's language, is substantially identical with His Own preaching of twenty centuries ago".

The use of appropriate words reproduces the atmosphere of the time and the place.

Although the work contains an exceptional wealth of erudition, the management of this erudition goes almost totally unnoticed because it is so naturally integrated into the story. Here are some examples, among thousands. Only the informed readers of the Talmud of Babylon will notice the use of the nickname "Faba" (bean) given in the work to *Nathanael ben Phiabi*: this evokes a historical, but little-known Roman pun, difficult to translate today, about the appetite of one of the members of this illustrious family of Sanhedrists⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ Yevamos 63a and Gemara (Yoma 39b) relate that this nickname was given to the descendants of Yishmael ben Phiabi because of their arrogance and because they took goods that did not belong to
(continued on following page...)

And who can say today (without solid knowledge of the Judaism or the Bible), that on the High Priest's *Rational* the words "*Doctrine and Truth*"⁵⁶, were written, or that the Pascal lamb was eaten with *charoset*, or that the stone that sealed the tombs was called a *golal*? Who can describe the role of the *paranymph* today, as Maria Valtorta does?

Who still remembers that *fouace* was a very popular dish in Antiquity and that *muslum*, *sicera* or *Falerne* were drinks that the Romans loved? Who can unerringly name the animals that were immolated during the *Ludi Ceriales*^{167.7}? That is, a pig, a ewe and a bull.

How many present-day readers fully appreciate the meaning of Latin expressions like "*to wear the virile toga*" or "*Libitina's embrace*"? How many know that "*the fable of the stones changed into men*" is an allusion to Pyrrha and Deucalion who, in Greek mythology, roamed the world after the Deluge, throwing stones over their shoulders. These stones were changed into men and women and repopulated the earth in this way.

How credible it seems to hear someone walking along a Roman Via talking about "*six stadiums*" to designate the sabbatical distance, which is rigorously precise⁵⁷. What is more natural than that a reveller should say of his expenses: "*It's twenty thousand sesterces, or if you prefer, two hundred gold pieces*", which is correct, as one hundred sesterces made up an aureus. And what is more natural than to hear in mid-August: "*The sun is still in Leo, for a little while*" at a time when the observation of the sky was the best way to determine the

them. Instead of calling them *ben Phiabi*, they were given the derisive nickname *ben Faba* or *ben ha 'Afun*, a pun on the Latin word *fabā* meaning *bean*

⁵⁶ This is confirmed by Saint Jerome in the *Epistle to Fabiola*.

⁵⁷ The specialists in general only speak of the *amots* (cubits), the *mil*, or today, the *kilometer* for this distance.

(continued on following page...)

passage of time? These are, clearly, only a few examples⁵⁸ taken at random among the thousands that figure in the work. And this erudition, always extremely discreet and integrated naturally into the dialogues, goes unnoticed at first sight.

When all is said and done, isn't the essential quality of a *good historical novel* to bring to life, to literally *resuscitate* the characters, their thoughts and emotions, their joys, their fears, their worries, their troubles, so that everything *rings true* and the reader can literally *see* them living in front of him, without any *improbable* detail intruding to spoil his jubilation. This is an extremely difficult task when it comes to an evocation of the life of Jesus and His teachings. Extremely rare is the author who can achieve this. And it is exactly in this that *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* excels, if its enthusiastic readers are to be believed. A work of great scope, a conclusive result, a gripping read: this is the successful historical novel type *par excellence*.

To declare that *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* is nothing more than a “*Clumsily romanticised life of Jesus*” appears therefore to be a purely arbitrary opinion that does not stand up to analysis. This opinion even becomes unjustifiable when we base it, as we have just done, on objective and widely accepted criteria. Considering the extremely wide variety of Maria Valtorta's readers of all origins, nations, cultures and levels of education, I recall this opinion of Tolstoï's: “*Great works of art are great because they are accessible and comprehensible to all*”⁵⁹. Thus, it seems legitimate to ask the following question: Shouldn't Maria Valtorta's “novel” be placed on the same level as the works of Dante, Shakespeare and Manzoni or Hugo,

⁵⁸ On average, we find one example of this kind on each page of the work, but they are so discretely integrated into the context that only a closely attentive reader can pick them out.

⁵⁹ Leon Tolstoï (1828 – 1910), *What is art?*

Cervantes and Goethe as an authentic literary masterpiece? When, in addition, we recall that Maria Valtorta composed these thousands of hand-written pages in barely four years, crossing out practically nothing, immobilised on a sickbed, and with only a few, very summary, documents at her disposal and that *“although her intelligence was lively and her memory excellent, she had not even finished secondary school”*, we can legitimately wonder how she could have written such a work.

We are thus faced with what must now be called *“the Valtorta enigma”*...

THE QUEST FOR PRECIOUS PEARLS

“... *There is a treasure hidden inside. I don't know where, but a little courage will lead you to it, you will find it...*”

Jean de la Fontaine, *the Ploughman and the Children*

“*If you look for it as though for silver, search for it as though for buried treasure, then you will... discover the knowledge of God*”. Proverbs 2, 1 – 9

“*Seek and you shall find*”. Luke, 11, 9

“*There are treasures everywhere, but you have to look for them... This requires fatigue, work and audacity. And, above all, there should be no bias*” 221.3

In 1978 the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith recommended for private revelations, “*base discernment less on the fruits attributed to the private revelation, than on the reality of the fact*”. To this end, its advice was to answer a few questions in succession:

- Does the message conform to Revelation and Church Tradition?
- Does it agree with “Faith and morals”?
- Is the visionary credible?
- What are the fruits of this revelation?

Before we started seeking rare gems in Maria Valtorta’s text, we made sure we were not *treading on mined ground*: the testimonies of Church authorities confirmed that Maria Valtorta’s text is faithful to the Evangelical Message and to Tradition, and that it contains nothing contrary to the Doctrine of Faith or Morals. The first two questions proposed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith were thus answered in the affirmative.

Furthermore, it is surely not a *bad* novel, as some claim after a superficial or incomplete reading. Anyone, after a

slightly more attentive examination, will see that it is, on the contrary, an authentic masterpiece.

We will therefore base this work on the examination of the third point “*Is the visionary credible?*” as we can now submit the text to the judgement of reason alone in order to test its degree of credibility. In so doing, we will follow the observation of St. Thomas Aquinas: “*Introducing reason is not mixing water with the pure wine of the Word of God; it is converting water into wine*”.

Mushroom-picker or archaeologist?

In order to seek precious pearls in Maria Valtorta’s text, there are, in theory, two possible methods:

The first is like the person who goes looking for mushrooms, armed only with his instinct for finding them. The gems are so numerous that whoever looks for them, here and there in the work, will find them regularly and each new find will be a source of enchantment for the seeker.

The second method is the archaeologist’s. This is to mark the land into squares and meticulously search the smallest piece. Every gem is then taken, without any preconceived idea as to its value, listed, numbered and carefully put away... Who knows whether this stone will not later fit into a splendid set of jewels, or whether that insignificant tessera will not one day complete a superb mosaic?

First and foremost, order and method.

Although from my earliest years I’ve always loved mushroom-picking, my scientific training led me to choose this second method of systematic research. All the material details

present in the text were accordingly listed, classified and put into a database. To do this, I adapted the classifying methods for books on technical norms to the data contained in Maria Valtorta's books.

As I had no reason to prefer any particular classification, and I remembered what Pascal wrote: "*The last thing that you find as you create a work, is to know what you should put first*", I have indicated this classification "*in alphabetical order of merit*"⁶⁰:

ARTS and FINE ARTS: architecture (monuments, town-planning), music literature, sculpture...

ASTRONOMY: Lunar phases, the sun, planets, stars and astrological data.

BOTANY and ZOOLOGY: fauna, flora, agriculture, animal husbandry.

EDUCATION: teaching, training, leisure activities, games...

ETHNOLOGY: traditions, social life, habits and customs, folklore, family, everyday objects, food, lodging...

GEOGRAPHY: place names, reliefs, landscapes and settings, sites, rivers...

GEOLOGY: geophysics, mineralogy, chemistry, crystallography

GEOPOLITICS: nations, regions, communication routes, commerce, transport...

HISTORY: events, feasts, cults, biographies, genealogy, groups, institutions...

INDUSTRY and TECHNIQUES in all their diversity, crafts, metallurgy...

MEDECINE: health, biology, hygiene, pharmacy, illnesses, epidemics, symptoms, treatments...

⁶⁰ According to a sally by Jules Renard.

METEOROLOGY: seasons, climate, (winds, rain, temperature...), earthquakes, floods, vegetation cycles...

METROLOGY: units of length, weight, time, currencies and also chronological milestones (events, ages, anniversaries, commemorations...) and space-time indications (distances travelled, movements...)

RELIGIONS and BELIEFS: pagan divinities, demons, oracles, superstitions, precepts...

SOCIAL SCIENCES: Politics, Law, Legislation, Justice, Administration, Military Affairs...

STATISTICS: demography, population, mortality...

This classification alone gives us an idea of the variety of subjects treated in *The Gospel as revealed to me*. In addition, as we went on, these headings, although somewhat arbitrary, enabled us to classify the wealth of details excerpted from the work and, above all, to find them later without undue difficulty.

How can the credibility level of the work be objectively estimated?

Test everything, keep what is good" 1 Ts 5, 21

Over ten thousand details (two per page on average!) were listed, analysed and, whenever possible, verified. Theoretically, this is easy: the details are simply examined one by one and the four criteria of historicity generally accepted by contemporary exegetes, applied. These are:

The multiple attestations criterion: when the same information is repeated by different, independent sources.

The convergence criterion: when the reported events are coherent with others (date, progression or localisation, compatibility and the absence of anachronisms).

The dissemblance criterion: (that of discontinuity or dissimilarity): when the facts reported do not fully conform to the image that its partisans would have conveyed spontaneously⁶¹.

The plausibility criterion: that analyses the events reported according to the historical milieu in which they take place.

This, in fact, requires time, but the means at the disposal of present-day researchers are far more sophisticated than those of previous decades. Internet has made it possible (on condition that the sources are carefully compared!) to assemble data difficult to find until now, or else dispersed the world over, which would formerly have been inaccessible to a lone researcher. Each detail studied can be qualified by one of the eight following attributes:

Correct: (true, verified, sure, proven, attested, incontestable, indisputable).

Coherent: (concordant, justifiable, harmonious, logical, rational, ordered, compatible, correct).

Decisive: (capital, crucial, determining). This particularly concerns details crucial to the verification of time-space coherence, such as chronological dating and geographical localisation.

Possible: (credible, plausible, convincing, probable).

Improbable: (unreal, unconvincing, doubtful, surprising)

Illogical: (contradictory, anachronistic, incoherent, confused, imprecise).

False: (absurd, erroneous, impossible, incorrect)

Unclear: (unverifiable, ambiguous, vague, insoluble) for whatever does not fit any other category.

⁶¹ When, for example, Maria Valtorta shows the relapse of certain people possessed by the devil that Jesus had previously cured, or the desertion of some disciples.

It should also be made clear that the means to simply verify (and confirm almost every time!) the veracity of all these details were enormous and far beyond Maria Valtorta's reach. Many, indeed, most of them, did not even exist in her time: astronomy software, access to Israeli, Syrian, Lebanese or Jordanian archaeological databases, archives from biblical institutes, a plethora of scanned ancient works, notably the stories of pilgrims' journeys to the Holy Land, maps and satellite photos of Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, the consultation of numerous writings from the earliest centuries that have come down to us, etc. The extreme abundance of apparently insignificant details should normally expose the author to imprecision, errors or contradictions that could result in the discrediting of the work as a whole. However, in Maria Valtorta's case precision and coherence are so high that in order to examine each instance, a book per theme would not be enough⁶² !

This harmony of celestial things.

Chateaubriand⁶³

The case of the *coherences* deserves an explanation. First of all, their number is truly exceptional in the work. I have compiled and verified close to five thousand, and cannot pretend to have detected them all. The whole forms an intricate web which, at first sight, appears inextricable until it has been sorted, classified and listed. If it is relatively easy to verify that the different descriptions of a monument or a landscape are mutually coherent, or that this character has already come across Jesus on the road, an allusion to a piece of advice, a teaching, or a past discussion is quite another thing. As the context of these

⁶² Some examples may be found in each of the following chapters of the present work.

⁶³ F. René de Chateaubriand, *Le Génie du Christianisme* 1803, t.1, p. 384.

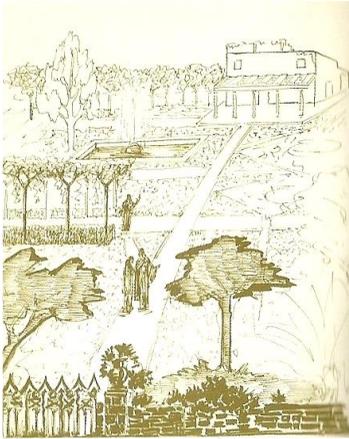
discussions is rarely provided, only attentive reading, method, a good memory and a little luck can find the link between two sentences that are sometimes thousands of pages apart in the work!

The promise to teach them the Our Father is one of the simplest illustrations of this. At the very beginning of His public life, Jesus announces His intention: *“I will also teach you to pray. I will teach you the most holy prayer, but so that it will not be a vain formula that you recite, I want your heart to already be steeped in a minimum of saintliness, light and wisdom... I will teach you the holy prayer later”*^{62.2}. Further on, it is Peter who brings up the subject again: *“Master, said Peter, one day you said to John, James, Andrew and me that you would teach us to pray...”* *“I also answered then: When you are sufficiently prepared, I will teach you the sublime prayer...”*^{119.10} Then it’s John’s turn: *“You promised us that you would teach us your prayers. Will you do it this year? I will do it”*^{149.3} But only after one year does Jesus remind them and keep His promise: *“One day, and not only one day, you said to me, Teach us to pray as You pray...”*^{203.2}. And Jesus says this of the Our Father: *“It is such a perfect prayer that the waves of heresies and the course of centuries will not alter it.”*^{203.5}

Maria Valtorta also mentions, page after page, over two hundred promises made by Jesus, ranging from simple projects like, *“I will come here often”*^{49.7}; *“for Pentecost. If you are at the Temple, you will see Me”*^{54.3}; *“You will come, Master? I will come”*^{67.6}; *“We will go to his house one day”*^{71.4}, or more formal promises: *“You will see Her. You will come to My house one day. Mary will greet you.”*^{76.6}; *“I will come back again to thank you... and to ask you again for bread and rest”*^{83.2}, up to the promise made to Gamaliel by the Child Jesus and recalled, time

and again, before its accomplishment: “*You want this sign and you will have it! I repeat the long-ago words: ‘The bricks of the Lord’s Temple will tremble at My last words’*” 114.9.

I analysed these 200 promises made by Jesus, and all of them, without exception, find their accomplishment somewhere in the work, if one only pays a little attention. Personally, I know of no literary work (nor do I think that another such exists) in which *the author* has so *intertwined* into her text 200 promises



which were kept further on in the work, sometimes thousands of pages later! There are other examples that can be provided by the numerous descriptions of the house in Nazareth, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, of Joanna’s palace in Tiberias, the house of the Clear Water, those of Lazarus or Simon the Zealot in Bethany, etc. There is such an abundance of detail throughout the work that little by

little the reader gets a precise mental picture of these places. Lorenzo Ferri, an Italian artist, in collaboration with Maria Valtorta, even attempted the delicate task of illustrating some of the scenes that she describes⁶⁴.

But the coherences arise from numerous other causes: the reminders that Jesus gives of His tireless, patient teaching, the protagonists’ comments, their memories of places already visited, of words spoken or events witnessed, and even Valtorta’s personal memories. We should also mention all the

⁶⁴ See the work *Valtorta and Ferri*. Centro Editoriale Valtortiano 2006. Cf above the illustration of the house and gardens of Lazarus of Bethany (with the kind authorization of the editor).

details concerning the psychological coherence of each character, but I lack the competence to treat this subject, which alone, would keep specialists busy for days on end.

Finally, every coherence, whether immediately noticeable or not, contributes massively to the irresistible impression of harmony, of true-to-life reality and personal experience that the majority of Valtorta's readers feel. This level of coherence should dissipate the doubts and the reticence of the most sceptical of them. I cannot imagine that a human being, however great his genius, however methodical his work, could invent and memorise, without the smallest error, a storyline of such extreme complexity in which the actions, words, memories, projects or promises of over seven hundred characters are so harmoniously interwoven!

However, I have not yet mentioned what, to my mind, are the most surprising instances of coherence, that is to say, those which spring from the random order in which Maria Valtorta received certain visions. For example, in Book 4: "*a portly, ageing man arrives at the door and hurries towards Jesus*"^{298.2}. Maria Valtorta has never seen him, nor has she ever seen the place she describes in this vision of August 20th 1944. And yet, the readers will *recognise* Jacob and his house, because Jesus was already there a year earlier, as described in a vision in Book 2: "*the place with the well and the oven at the back, and the apple tree to one side, and here's the kitchen door, wide open*"^{110.5}, but it was a vision that Maria Valtorta received much later, on February 17th 1945, and which was then *put into its place* in the work at the final compilation.

These visions, which were not all received in chronological order, are not the least mysterious facet of this

work. When replaced in their context, they fit in perfectly and easily. So it is with the visit to the house of Ismaël the Pharisee and the curing of the man with dropsy (Luke 14, 1-6), received on September 11th 1944 and described in winter: “*a wide road, swept and hardened by the cold wind of a wintry morning... a timid covering of harvests just peeping out... this winter morning...*”^{335.1}. It fits perfectly into the work, just between two visions received a year before, on November 19th and 20th 1945, describing the same winter period!

*

In the myriad of details tested, the level of credibility for a work of this type is absolutely unique and exceptional: over 99.6% of these details are classed as exact, coherent, decisive, credible or possible. It is also noteworthy that in the remaining 0.4%, over 0.3% are classed as *unresolved*, a circumstance which in no way indicates that these details are erroneous!

Hence, the *mathematical credibility*, if I may say so, of what is verifiable in this work, approaches 100%. There is obviously nothing in common here with anything that can be analysed in other, previous mystical works. I have even wondered whether all these authentic details were given precisely to our incredulous times, yet another gift for all those who humbly and sincerely seek the Truth.

Errare humanum est...

Seneca

Even if the *material* errors remain exceptional, the work is, *fortunately*, not totally exempt of errors. Jesus Himself gives Maria Valtorta the reason for this: “*Human descriptions of places, as well as facts and feelings, are ‘translations’, and for this very reason they are always incomplete, inexact, in feelings if not in words and deeds*⁶⁵ ».

This is consistently true of all private revelations. The revelations of many saints, such as Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Sienna⁶⁶, Maria of Agreda, Catherine Emmerich, Catherine Labouré, Mechtilde of Helfta, Anne-Marie Taïgi, Vincent Ferrer, or closer to us, Saint Maximilian Kolbe, etc. all contained errors. This should not shock us, as they are human testimonies into which illusions of the imagination, or personal interpretations, intrude.

When the Church canonises someone, it canonises his heroic virtues, never the veracity of his revelations! “*And though I have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge, and though I have all the faith necessary to move mountains... if I am without love, I am nothing.*” (1 Co 13, 2). And what counts in revelations of course, is the message and its conformity with the teachings of the Church rather than the precision of details. But what is perhaps the most remarkable thing about Maria Valtorta’s text is that on the one hand its coherence highlights certain instances of incoherence in other,

⁶⁵ *The 1944 notebooks*, Friday March 3rd, page 193.

⁶⁶ G.Roschini (op. cit.) reports that Benedict XIV analysed one of the extasies during which the Virgin reputedly said that She had not been conceived without the stain of original sin (according to the thomistic theory).

previous texts (those of Maria of Agreda or C. Emmerich, for example), and on the other hand, her errors, seen up close, (and although this might seem paradoxical at first) tend to reinforce the credibility of the whole.

The inaccuracies are, in fact, almost exclusively due to Maria Valtorta's *personal interpretations*. It is easy to distinguish between the words of Jesus, always precise and coherent⁶⁷ even when they are simple observations (like "*the moon in the last quarter*"), and Maria's *impressions* or *initiatives*, whose descriptions can sometimes be inaccurate or approximate, as when she writes: "*I see the moon rising*", when the context and other details supplied show, on the contrary, that it is setting. Or again, when she experiences "*a beautiful summer's morning*", while the scene that she describes is clearly set in spring.

Elsewhere, Maria Valtorta writes "*a screwdriver (I think) that falls twice from the workbench*"^{42.2}, immediately neutralising the finicky critics ready to pounce on a possible anachronism... And again, when she does not differentiate a papyrus from a parchment, all that she proves is that her personal knowledge, like that of so many other people, is not infallible. In all humility, she repeatedly informs her readers of her own limits, as for example, when she says "*a length of about 30 metres*" or "*a volume of 10 litres*", her advice to her readers is "*not to take my indications as articles of faith*"^{118.1}.

The advice that Jesus gave her after she had made a mistake was undoubtedly ever-present in her mind: "*Just notice how only one sentence omitted or one word miscopied can change everything. And you, who are alive, can correct the*

⁶⁷ The very rare cases that can be problematical are honestly indicated by the editor's notes in the Italian version.

mistake immediately as you write. Think about it and you will understand to what extent twenty centuries have deprived the Apostolic Gospel of certain parts. This in no way alters the doctrine, but it does make the Gospel more difficult to understand. This explains many things. If we go back to the origins, we will find yet another of Disorder's manoeuvres and many more can be attributed to the sons of Disorder. You see how easy it is to make transcription errors”^{165.11}.

The fact is that Maria Valtorta wrote down the descriptions of her *visions*, as well as the dialogues of her *dictations*, immediately and *as they arrived*, with extreme care and attention. Eliminate the few imprecise details and the rare personal errors that she makes and you are amazed to find that you are left with fewer than ten indications among all the verified points in the work that can still appear to the present-day researcher as improbable, illogical or false. Fewer than ten indications analysed as improbable out of a whole of over ten thousand material data gathered and verified! This is clearly an extraordinarily low level of error in comparison with any other similar work! This *a priori* unimaginable and totally unexpected result constitutes, if not proof, at least a strong indication of credibility for the work as a whole⁶⁸. And this, without doubt, contributes to the multiple and mysterious aspects of *the Valtorta enigma...*

*

⁶⁸ Of course, the essential indication of authenticity remains its full and total conformity with the dogmas and teachings of the Church.

**“THERE IS A SEASON FOR EVERYTHING, A TIME FOR
EVERY OCCUPATION...”**

Ecclesiastics, 3, 1

Historians and exegetes have for centuries tried in vain to reconstitute the existence of Jesus precisely, in a logical, chronological sequence. For Chronology is indispensable to the comprehension of History, as the historian Théodore Mémain⁶⁹ : reminded us: “*Chronology and geography are like the two eyes of history. Without them, everything that has come down to us, facts and knowledge, is nothing but murky chaos that overburdens the memory without enlightening the mind*”.

The historicity of the time Jesus spent on earth has never been seriously contested by historians. But after centuries of more or less sterile debates and research, their certainties about His time on earth finally come down to very little: “*Jesus, born in Bethlehem in about 4, 5 or 6 AD, was crucified and died, probably on April 7th in the year 30 AD, after having taught publicly for about three years*”. And even this *consensus minimum* is not unanimous today!

It has reached the point that, following the studies carried out from 1950 to 1970 by exegetes, theologians or historians⁷⁰, many people thought that it was impossible to establish a biography, a life of Jesus and arrived at this peremptory, supposedly *definitive*, opinion: “*The historian now knows that it is impossible to reconstitute the existence of Jesus precisely and in detail, apart from His life in Galilee and His death around*

⁶⁹ Th. Mémain, *Etudes chronologiques pour l'histoire de N.S. Jésus-Christ*, 1867, chap. 1, P. 2.

⁷⁰ For example: Rudolph Bultmann, *Jésus*, Seuil 1968; Ernst Käsemann, *Le problème du Jésus historique*, Essais Exégétiques, Delachaux et Niestlé 1972 ; E. Trocme, *Jésus de Nazareth vu par les témoins de sa vie*, Delachaux et Niestlé 1971 ; Ch. Perrot, *Jésus et l'histoire*, Desclée 1979.

(continued on following page...)

the thirties AD. As for situating any of His words within the framework of His life on earth, it is definitively impossible⁷¹”.

The dating of the important events of the life of Jesus.

Fortunately for us, Maria Valtorta did not know that *it was impossible!* So she transmitted to us such a coherent chronology of the time Jesus spent on earth that Jean Aulagnier⁷², after long and scrupulous studies⁷³, managed to date *day by day* all of the details of the life of Jesus as reported by the four evangelists. Having thus accomplished what the historians of his time considered impossible, he thought that in the same way that we “*judge the tree by its fruits*”, his study would be judged by its results, without his having to justify every last detail of it. As I belong to the generation of the anti-establishment protesters of May '68, I started by doubting his analysis as “*too good to be true*”. Despite the excellent relations I enjoyed with Jean Aulagnier, he could not totally convince me. *Just to make sure*, I decided to go over his work systematically, using the powerful modern-day IT tools⁷⁴ at my disposal. I was thus able not only to verify the validity of his conclusions, but also to reinforce, and in some cases, refine them by taking into account over 5,000 new details, which had been considered unimportant or simply not exploitable in his time⁷⁵.

⁷¹ Quoted by the historian Elian Cuvillier, *Regards sur l'histoire de la Recherche du Jésus historique..*

⁷² Jean Aulagnier, *Avec Jésus au jour le jour*, Edition JA, 1985.

⁷³ For 5 years he analysed over 4,000 reference marks scattered throughout the 6000 pages and explains his methodology on page 11 of his book..

⁷⁴ Astronomy software, ephemeris by NASA, calendar converters, Excel spreadsheets.

⁷⁵ For example, all the details indicating the position of the moon at different hours of the night.

A little bit of maths...

To try to explain the extreme precision of some instances of dating in an understandable way, we might need to briefly resort to mathematics.

A lunar phase (for example “*the full moon*”) is *visible* for, let us say, three days every month. Hence, the probability that a description of the moon will coincide with a Sabbath (one day out of seven) is $(3/30) \times (1/7)$, or about 1.5 percent. But when Maria Valtorta adds for example that the olive trees are in flower, or that the wheat is ripe, occurrences which last less than 30 days a year, this gives us $(1.5/100) \times (30/365)$, or one chance in a thousand that this information can provide a date that is coherent with the rest of the chronology. If, in addition, the event described is identified with a Jewish feast day, as for example “*Eight days before the Passover*”, then we are faced with $(1/1000) \times (1/365)$, that is, barely three chances in a million that these independent details will make up an accurate whole!

But what is there left to say when we notice that there are several dozen of these *key dates*⁷⁶ that can be established by crosschecks with at least three or four other criteria of this kind, and sometimes more! What is even more unsettling is the fact that these criteria are more often than not scattered, *apparently at random*, throughout the work, sometimes separated by hundreds of pages and can go completely unnoticed without a systematic search and meticulous data collection!

In addition, hundreds of other dates appear to be attached to these key dates by decisive details⁷⁷, as for example “*the next*

⁷⁶ In fact, at least two key dates per month during the three years of the public life of Jesus!

⁷⁷ Jean Aulagnier spoke of “*trains of events*” that he likened to carriages behind a locomotive

day”, or “*Three days after our departure*”, or “*the following Sabbath*”, or again “*today after the Sabbath and two days*”, or also “*Friday evening one day, the evening of the Sabbath two days, this evening three days...*” A systematic study of all these *decisive details* then shows that the dating of events is thus totally interlocking, forming a whole that is unimaginably homogeneous, humanly inconceivable and almost incalculable.

What is even more remarkable and paradoxical is that Maria Valtorta does not for one moment appear to be aware that the precision of her descriptions will make it possible to establish this “*exceptional calendar of the life of Jesus*”, and that in fact, she **does not provide a single date**, *stricto sensu*, from start to finish throughout the six thousand pages of her work! In addition, if you think about it, chronology, (the knowledge and the order of events in the course of history) seems richer in what it teaches and more useful than mere dating (determining the date of events). But what historian, once he has painstakingly reconstituted the chronology of his story, could resist the temptation to provide a few dates to support his hypothesis? Furthermore, if, as I have already indicated, you add that Maria Valtorta did not receive all these visions *in the right order*, then the mystery thickens even more!

A good sketch is worth a thousand words

Napoleon

For lack of a good sketch, here are some examples to illustrate this saying:

The first meeting with Peter and Andrew

The clues: The meeting takes place on a Saturday, in front of the synagogue in Capernaum, just as they are leaving after the Sabbath service. The day before, at the dawn of Friday, James and John, returning from their nocturnal fishing, came to tell Peter and Andrew that they had met the Messiah. They had spent the whole day listening to Jesus – “*We stayed with Him all day until late into the night*”^{48.3}, – and had not been able to go fishing with Peter and Andrew that night, “*a night when the fishing is so good*”, because the moon was “*high in the sky*”^{48.6}. A few days previously⁷⁸, John and James had met Jesus on the banks of the Jordan, on “*a cool Adar morning*”^{597.3}.

The analysis: In March 27 AD, the moon was full on the 9th. On Thursday 11th, it went into the zenith at midnight and it was the only Thursday in that month on which the moon was high at sunset. So the meeting with Peter and Andrew took place on Saturday March 13th 27 AD⁷⁹.

Commentary: This example shows how patient the reading must be... Indeed, in book 9 Peter, remembering his first meeting with Jesus, mentions this apparently insignificant detail of an “*Adar morning*”, firmly and irrefutably placing in time a scene described in book 2!

⁷⁸ Dated elsewhere as the beginning of March 27 AD thanks to other clues.

⁷⁹ All dates were transposed to the “*Gregorian calendar*”. The lunar positions and phases were checked using several types of astronomic software (among them, the Redsift software) and ephemeris published by NASA.

The appointment with the Roman women in Tiberias

The clues: The scene is set in 28 AD, just after the apostolic group's retreat "*for a week*"^{164.4} in the Arbel gorges, "*at the end of the shevat moon*"^{165.10}, and just before the five days of the Sermon on the Mount^{170.14; 171.6; 173.2} which ends on a Saturday^{176.6}. About 20 days before, Jesus had said to Joanna: "*at the end of the shevat moon, I will be at your house*"^{158.4}. When He arrives late for the appointment, the porter at the house of Joanna, wife of Chouza, tells Him: "*They've been waiting for You for three days, because they didn't want to be late*". Afterwards, Jesus joins His Apostles at sunset, "*a ray from the new moon coming right down to His level, a little comma in the sky, a blade of light*"^{169.4}

The analysis:

1/ The meeting took place after a complete week, ending with the sabbatical rest and the eve of another complete week: it was therefore a Sunday. In the year 28 AD, astronomy indicates that the end of the Shevat moon falls on February 11th 28 AD. Consequently, only Sunday, February 13th 28 AD fits the bill here.

2/ The new moon (Adar) having appeared on Saturday, February 12th 28 AD, the end of the Shevat moon, (the date of the appointment) was thus on Friday 11th. The Roman women waited for three days, which is another way of confirming that the meeting took place on a Sunday. This can only be Sunday, February 13th 28 AD.

3/ On February 13th 28 AD it is possible to establish by astronomy that the moon, a very slim comma, low on the horizon, set barely one hour after the sun, at 6.30 p.m. at nightfall. This is the only possible evening that corresponds to this lunar description in the whole month!

Commentary: In this example, the surprise is born of the abundance of decisive clues (no fewer, in fact, than a total of 25!), scattered between chapters 158.4 and 174.17 in book 3, all of them in perfect concordance. These numerous clues enable us to pinpoint **the same date** via three different reasonings. This is wholly unexpected and totally stupefying!

The death of Uncle Alpheus

The clues: Throughout the year 27 AD, Alpheus's health was declining. At the beginning of September, when Jesus had been travelling for two weeks and was in Ptolemais, He received a letter from His Mother, brought by the shepherd Joseph, informing Him that "*Alpheus returned to the bosom of Abraham at the last full moon*" with the advice "*not to come to Nazareth before the end of the period of mourning*"^{104.6}. But Jesus decides to return immediately to "*weep with them before the end of the period of mourning*"^{104.8}. The very next day, they arrive in Nazareth as "*evening is falling and the arc of the rising moon (...) is already going into its second quarter*"^{105.1}.

The analysis: Alpheus died at the full moon, between the 1st and the 3rd of September, (the full moon having been on Thursday, 2nd September 27 AD). Mary advises Jesus not to return before the end of the period of mourning, on account of the atmosphere in Nazareth. She tries to inform Jesus as quickly as possible in order to prevent an unexpected return on His part. As the 4th was the Sabbath, the messenger (Joseph the shepherd) could not have left until the 5th and could only have arrived in Ptolemais, (30 km from Nazareth) that evening. So Jesus could not have reached Nazareth until the next day, Monday 6th in the evening, (that is, between the 4th and the 6th day of mourning). But the 6th is the last day in September on which the moon still rises as the first stars appear "*in the deep cobalt of the sky, just where the orient advances progressively with its stars*"^{105.1}. Once again, this is the only compatible day!

Commentary: In this example, the motivations and movements of the characters must be analysed and the Sabbath, as well as the duration of the Jewish period of mourning (7 days), taken into account. We should also refer to the precision of the Italian text "*arco di luna crescente*" as the vaguer French translation "*le croissant de la lune*" (the crescent moon) would have made it impossible to pinpoint the date with such precision.

In ten days at the Fish Gate

The clues: In the evening of Wednesday 25th June 27 AD (a known date thanks to several decisive clues) Jesus gives the shepherds an appointment "*in ten days near the Fish Gate in Jerusalem, at the first hour*"^{82.5}. On the following Friday, July 2nd, Judas and John leave for Jerusalem in the morning and Jesus gives John this appointment: "*In four days, we'll meet again*", then He specifies to Judas: "*At sunrise in four days at the Fish Gate*"^{83.3}. On Monday, July 5th in the morning, Jesus says to Simon: "*Tomorrow at dawn is the appointment at the Fish Gate*"^{85.1}, then He decides to meet John at Gethsemani: "*at this hot hour, he'll be at the Olive Grove House*", and we find John's remark surprising: "*You, Master? I was expecting You **this evening***"^{85.6}, whereas it is Monday and the appointment appears to have been fixed for Monday morning with the shepherds and Tuesday with John!

The analysis: This appears to be a double incoherence... **except** if we remember that the day begins at sunset for the Jews. The appointment with the shepherds was made for Friday evening (to our way of thinking), but, in fact, the Sabbath had already begun. So, "*in ten days*" means Tuesday morning and not Monday, as we might have thought. Also, the appointment given to John "*at the beginning of the fourth day*" was on Monday evening, according to the Oriental way of counting days, and not Tuesday morning!

Commentary: There are many other instances in the work in which this Jewish way of counting days is naturally taken into account in the dialogues between the characters (for example in chapters 82.5; 260.9...), whereas in her personal descriptions, Maria Valtorta always describes days in the western way. This example appears as a very clear indication of the authenticity of these visions.

The miraculous healing of Joanna, wife of Chouza

The clues: At the beginning of August 27, Jesus, who was passing through Tiberias to meet Jonathas the shepherd, learns that he has just taken Joanna toward the mountains of Lebanon. He tells the old nurse: *“If Jonathas comes back within six days, send him to Nazareth to Jesus, Son of Joseph”*^{99.4}. *“I am going to Nazareth now for a few days...”* The following week, Jesus is about to leave Nazareth: *“I waited for the five days I spoke of and, to be on the safe side, I added today...”* Night has fallen: *“As soon as the moon rises, we’ll leave”*^{102.1} and *“The sun is still in Leo for a little while”*^{102.1}. Then Jonathas arrives and describes his journey: *“On the third morning, seven days ago, she sent for me”*^{102.4} and he tells them about Joanna’s dream. Then they leave: *“Night has fallen and the moon, in its first quarter, is rising at this moment”*^{102.6}. Further on, we read: *“In the moonlight, we left Cana behind... Quite a long walk again in the moonlight”*^{102.7}.

The analysis: In Antiquity, an easy way to estimate the passing of the seasons was to observe, just before dawn, which constellation was in the place where the sun was going to rise. As the months go by, each of the 12 constellations of the zodiac seems to replace the preceding one in a slow, ascending movement. This cycle is renewed every year in exactly the same way. So, when Jesus says that *“The sun is still in Leo for a little while”*, astronomy tells us that it’s exactly as if He was saying *“it’s almost the 18th-20th of August”*. Now, if we observe, as Maria Valtorta does in this episode, that the moon rises at the

beginning of the night and continues to light the night, we can immediately deduce that this phase is close to the last quarter, which took place on Thursday, 12th August 27. On the following days the moon rises late in the night and the crescent moon is waning, which would tend to invalidate Maria Valtorta's description. Now, if we consider that Jonathas left 10 days before on a long journey, it was probably at the beginning of the week, on Sunday 1st or Monday 2nd of August, just before the full moon that is so propitious for night-time journeys in summer. So we can conclude, with remarkable precision, (more or less one day) that the healing of Joanna occurred during the night of August 12th – 13th in 27 AD.

Commentary: We note here that Maria Valtorta is mistaken when she indicates "*the first*" quarter, but as she stipulates that the moon rises after nightfall, then lights the night, this clearly proves that it is "*the last*" quarter. (No human being is infallible when he relies on his knowledge or impressions).

The raising of Jairus's daughter and the banquet at Simon's house

Now, here is another example which fits into a sequence of about sixty consecutive days, all perfectly defined⁸⁰ by no fewer than seventy nine decisive details!

The clues: This period, beginning at the Passover in 28 (the end of March), takes us, day by day, with a multitude of clues, to the end of May in 28 AD.

-Two days before the meal, just after the raising of Jairus's daughter, Jesus says to Simon the Pharisee, who is inviting Him: "*Tomorrow, I can't come. It will be in two days' time*"^{232.4}. It is

⁸⁰ After the Passover of the year 28 AD, a period described "*day by day*" from 30th March 28 to 8th June 28!

evening and the witnesses say, “*In a moment, when the moon is high*”^{232.8}. (Vision dated July 28th, 1945)

-The day before the meal, “*It’s evening... but the moon is already rising*”^{233.1}, and a little later “*the moon, now high*”^{233.5} (Vision dated August 12th, 1944, a year before the previous one!).

- The following Friday “*Go back to your houses before the Sabbath arrives*”^{237.4} in the afternoon, Jesus mentions the meal at the house of Simon the Pharisee “*five days ago now*”^{237.3}, and later in the evening, “*when it’s already dark*”^{237.5} the conversion of Mary Magdalen: “*Mary came to Me three evenings ago*”^{237.6}.

The analysis: The raising of Jairus’s daughter thus took place on Monday, May 29th, 28 AD, just after the full moon on May 25th, 28 AD, (the only Monday in that month on which the moon rises just after dusk, as it does the next day, Tuesday). On the Tuesday, Jesus relates the parable of the Lost Sheep. It touches Mary Magdalen so deeply that she decides to convert. Then the dinner with Simon is on Wednesday, May 31st, 28 AD, (vision received on January 21st, 1944!) as is the anointing by the repentant Mary Magdalen.

Commentary: From Chapter 200 to chapter 245, there is an uninterrupted sequence of events. The coherence seems even more remarkable here, as the different visions describing this sequence were not all received in the right order, but in fact cover a period of almost two years, between January 1944 and September 1945, which in no way affects their space-time coherence!

And to round it off, here are two final examples illustrating the degree of extreme precision of certain descriptions by Maria Valtorta.

The departure from Sycaminon towards Dora and Caesarea

The clues: This scene can be situated, thanks to the preceding information, on one Monday evening early in the month of June 28. Jesus is on the beach at Sycaminon, “*at the extremity of the gulf*”^{250.1}, at “*the farthest point of the bay, which reaches out into the sea like a bent arm*”^{250.3}. The description is even detailed enough for us to pinpoint, give or take 50 metres, the place on the coast where they are resting, leaning back on Mount Carmel, which looks as if it is going to fall into the sea here! First of all, Maria Valtorta explains: “*still no moon in the night...*”^{250.3}, then she indicates a little further on: “*The moon is rising higher and higher... The moon makes a silvery path on the water...*”^{250.9}, and again: “*in this tranquil moonlight... the resplendent whiteness of the moonlight...*”^{250.11}. A few days later, in the following Thursday night to Friday morning, the Apostolic group is getting ready to leave Sycaminon, a little before dawn, for a very long stage towards Caesarea... “*a very beautiful setting moon... the moon that’s about to set*”^{253.1} then they all set off on their walk “*in the silence of the nascent dawn*”^{253.5}.

The analysis: On the Monday, the “rising” of the moon during the night, then its setting on the Thursday, just after the nascent dawn, confirm a period between the first quarter and the full moon, which dates the stay in Sycaminon unambiguously between Monday June 19th, 28 and Thursday June 22nd, 28 AD. But on Monday June 19th, 28 AD, the moon has already risen at sunset and Maria Valtorta’s first remark “*still no moon in the night*” could thus seem erroneous...

Commentary: In truth, the moon in its first quarter has already risen. But a rigorous topographical plan proves that the beach, at sea level and the nearby spurs of Mount Carmel, 185 metres high, are in fact blocking the view to the east. So, seen from the beach, the moon will only *appear* about two hours after sunset (at about 11

pm) in the south west, in the spot where Mount Carmel no longer blocks the view of people sitting on the beach. **Maria Valtorta's description of this scene is thus perfectly compatible with the topography of the place, which is the only thing that can justify it!**

The announcement of the death of the Baptist and the multiplication of the breads

The clues: One Wednesday evening in August 28 AD, Jesus is in Capernaum a town lit by *“the red light of torches and the silvery light of the almost full moon”*^{269.12}. The following Friday, *“it's the eve of the Sabbath”*^{270.7}, towards the end of August *“The grape harvest will soon begin”*^{270.1}. John the Baptist's three disciples come to tell Jesus of John's death^{270.3}. While *“it is dark”*^{271.1}, Jesus decides to leave at once by boat, *“in the pallor of the full moon”*^{271.1} in order to be far from Capernaum during the Sabbath⁸¹. *“They go down to the lake... the moon is **at its zenith**”*^{271.5}, and Peter, a good seaman, adds: *“We can leave the boats at Tarichea. **We'll arrive there at dawn**”*^{271.5}. When they arrive, *“a good mile, perhaps more, from the little peninsula of Tarichea”*^{271.1} (...) *“the moonlight declines as the moon sets and sinks behind a hill”*^{271.5}.

The analysis: In August 28 AD, the full moon was on the 22nd/ 23rd. So the only two possible days are Friday, August 18th, (just four days before the full moon), combined with Friday, August 25th, (two days after the full moon). On that night, we know from astronomy that the moon is at its zenith between midnight and 1 a.m. So we know that the departure time is 1 a.m. They have to sail 19 km, going south, which, with a light breeze, (about 4 km per hour), will take them 5 hours. So they arrive within sight of Tarichea at dawn. The boat docks at the mouth of the Jordan. The hills, situated seven to eight kilometres

⁸¹ N.B. Journeys by *sailboat* were allowed during the Sabbath but not by *rowboat*, which would have constituted forbidden work on that day.

south west of Tarichea (Har Adami and Har Yaveel), are over 500 metres above the level of the lake, or at an angle of almost 5° above the horizon. Astronomy software shows that the moon, at the first signs of dawn, is 20° above the horizon. As dawn arrives, the moon is only at 15° . It disappears (at 5°) at 5.50 a.m. exactly at the time of the arrival in Tarichea according to Peter's estimate!

Commentary: The five lunar descriptions are so precise here that not only can we fix the date with absolute certainty, but we can even pinpoint the time of their departure from Capernaum as well as that of their arrival in Tarichea! The level of the lake (- 300m) must be taken into account, as well as the height of the mountains south-west of Tarichea, where the moon sets at this season, to understand that on that day, (and only on that day), the moon sets exactly as dawn appears, just as Maria Valtorta says! **The precision of this description is astounding!**

These few examples were chosen from among dozens of other possible ones. We could quote numerous other examples, every bit as remarkable, but it would take a whole book on the subject to describe them all. As I have already said, the dating of events in Maria Valtorta's work is based on thousands of crosschecks of clues, and the *degree of reliability* so obtained in the reconstitution of the chronology of this period is totally unrivalled even by that of historians! May we just point out, for example, that as far as the death of Herod the Great is concerned, there are two main theories⁸², based principally on clues provided by Flavius Josephus. These two theories have been battling for supremacy for decades. One theory dates it on April 3rd, 4 BC, while the other opts for January 26th, 1 BC. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus is the almost undisputed benchmark as far as historical dating goes and we have to be

⁸² See the paragraph *The birth of Jesus and the death of Herod*.
(continued on following page...)

content with that, even though his works contain many instances of incoherence, imprecision or flagrant chronology errors⁸³ !

Let us just remark in passing that this does not, however, prevent a number of authors from granting Flavius Josephus, who wrote over a hundred years after the events, greater credit than they generally grant the historical data reported by the evangelists, especially the Gospel according to Saint Luke, who culled his information from contemporary eye witnesses. Here, concerning the public life of Jesus, it is not only some events, but all of them, as reported by the four evangelists, that can be pinpointed to the precise day on which they occurred! Such a level of precision and coherence is practically inexplicable... But it becomes *even more inexplicable*, if we may say so, when we remember, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that the visions were not transcribed (or transmitted?) in chronological order. *“In the contemplations, I will not follow a chronological order corresponding to that of the Gospels. I will take the points that I consider to be the most useful on a particular day, for you or for others, following my own order of teaching and of goodness”*^{44.8}.

Before Maria Valtorta, no human brain had ever been able to imagine such a coherent chronology of the life of Jesus, based on thousands of concordant details. Could it be that Maria Valtorta, by a mystery that science cannot explain today, simply described, in one way or another, and to the best of her ability, *what she saw and heard*? It is easier to understand the enthusiasm of Jean Aulagnier, who concluded his study⁸⁴ : in this way: *“No, these texts in no way resemble what an*

⁸³ For example, as Andrew E. Steinmann (Concordia University, River Forest, IL) demonstrates in his study on the reign of Herod the Great.

⁸⁴ J. Aulagnier, op. cit. page 303.

imaginative mystic might write, nothing that the genius of a forger can imagine. They are truly, in their precision, in their coherence and in their expression, the description of the very words and the authentic scenes that Maria Valtorta received the extraordinary grace to hear and see". The work transmitted by Maria Valtorta today enables anyone who is curious, honest and impartial, to find an answer to the question that seems to have bothered generations of historians for centuries, in vain:

Exactly when did all of this take place?

But we shall now see that even chronology is far from the unique, mysterious wonder of this work...

THE EQUAL OF THE GREATEST GEOGRAPHERS?

The renowned German historian and philologist, Ulrich von Wilamowitz⁸⁵ appreciated both the work and the literary talents of the geographer Strabo⁸⁶ “*which enabled him to describe a place that he had never been to, better than Pausanias⁸⁷ who had been there*”. What would he have said, we wonder, about Maria Valtorta, who, without ever having left her room, and practically with no documents, gave a precise and exact description of hundreds of places in ancient Palestine? She provides a wealth of totally new information, unknown during her lifetime, much of which was confirmed only after her death. But she also describes the climate, the relief, the geology, the hydrography and the communication routes. She also shows how the elements affect the way of life of the populations.

If, as has been said, “*the role of geography is to locate what happens on the surface of the earth⁸⁸ »*, and if its object is “*the description and interpretation of the distribution of men and things on the surface of the earth⁸⁹ »*, then it is certain that Maria Valtorta has left us a magnificent work of Palestinian geography in the times of Jesus. One of the first to have realised this seems to be Hans J. Hopfen, who, as early as 1987, assembled a large number of the geographical data found in the

⁸⁵ Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1848 – 1931, a recognised expert in Greek literature.

⁸⁶ Strabo of Amaseia (57 BC – 25 AD), one of the most renowned geographers of Antiquity.

⁸⁷ Pausanias, known as the Periegete (115 – about 180), a renowned geographer and traveller of Antiquity.

⁸⁸ Paul Claval, *Histoire de la géographie*. Nathan 1998. (Paul Claval is a French geographer and professor at the University of Paris-Sorbonne).

⁸⁹ Armand Frémont, *Aimez-vous la géographie?* Flammarion. 2005. (Armand Frémont is a French geographer, who was the scientific director at the CNRS, secretary of State for Universities, rector of academies, and president of the scientific council of the DATAR).

(continued on following page...)

work on a detailed map of Palestine⁹⁰. I also mentioned earlier⁹¹ the astonished admiration of reputed Biblicists, such as G. Allegra or Father François Paul Dreyfus, of Monseigneur Alfonso Carinci, or the Sardinian geologist Vittorio Tredici, for the precision of the geographical details. At the end of the 1990s, David J. Webster⁹² indicated that he had undertaken a six-year study of the information on 255 sites mentioned in the work. In the account that he gave of his work, circulated in 2004 (30 typewritten pages) he counted and classed 79 sites that were still unknown in the 1939 edition of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Of these 79 sites, 62 are not even mentioned in the 1968 *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, and 52 are not even to be found in the Bible. However, 29 have since been authenticated by the study of ancient sources and now appear in the 1989 edition of *The Harper Collins Atlas of the Bible*.

To this we must add that the most recent archaeological research has already confirmed the locations, as indicated by Maria Valtorta, of more than ten sites or so. These locations were either contested, or else totally unknown, at the time she was writing her work!

From the year 2000 onwards, thanks to researchers, we have had access to maps of Israel, on a scale of 1:50,000⁹³ and much more precise satellite views⁹⁴ offering hitherto unimaginable possibilities of investigation. Since then, with the advent of internet, we can now consult hundreds of maps of

⁹⁰ Hans J Hopfen, *Indice e carta della Palestina per l'Evangelo come mi é stato rivelato* 1987, ed. CEV 2003.

⁹¹ See the paragraph "*The author describes the place in which the story unfolds in a credible way*".

⁹² An American Baptist Pastor, who tells of his conversion to Catholicism after reading *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*.

⁹³ For example the maps circulated by Berkeley University

⁹⁴ Especially the internet sites such as Google Earth or Géoportail.

Palestine of all eras, as well as a great number of ancient accounts of pilgrims or travellers.

As we now have easy access to the tools to check Maria Valtorta's geographical descriptions and names, it was very tempting to use them. I must admit that I did not long resist this temptation, any more than I can now resist the pleasure of sharing with you some of the innumerable gems I discovered here and there in the work...

The Khafre and Menkaure pyramids have disappeared!

When Maria Valtorta describes the Holy Family's stay in Egypt, she does not at first seem to know the exact location. She writes: *"It's in Egypt. No doubt about that, because I can see the desert and **one pyramid...**"*^{36.1}, then further on, "The sun is going down on the bare sands and a veritable fire sets the sky alight behind **the far-away pyramid**^{36.3} (...) ***The pyramid seems darker***"^{36.4}. Only in book two do we learn that the flight ended at Matarea: *"He who had fled farther than Matarea* ^{119.1} *... it will be sadder than your first birthday in Matarea..."*^{133.4}, and again in book 4: *"Although the goodness of the Lord has made our exile in Matarea less difficult in a thousand ways"*^{247.8}.

Matarea⁹⁵ is a district of the ancient city of Heliopolis, 20 km north east of the three pyramids of Giza. It was a hospitable land for persecuted Hebrews and a large Jewish colony lived there in the time of Jesus. The most ancient mention of Matarea as the Holy Family's refuge seems to come from the childhood Gospel, (Arabic apocrypha, also known as the *Gospel of Thomas*) relating a tradition attested since the 2nd century. Since then, and up to the present day, the *fountain of the Virgin* and the *Tree of Mary* are venerated in this place, both mentioned,

⁹⁵ Today, El Matariya. Coordinates: 30° 07' N / 31° 16' E / Altitude +25m.

moreover, in Maria Valtorta's text. Henri de Beauveau, in *Voyage au Levant* (1615), calls this place "*La Méterée, the place to which the Virgin ran away with her beloved Son, fleeing the persecution of Herod*".



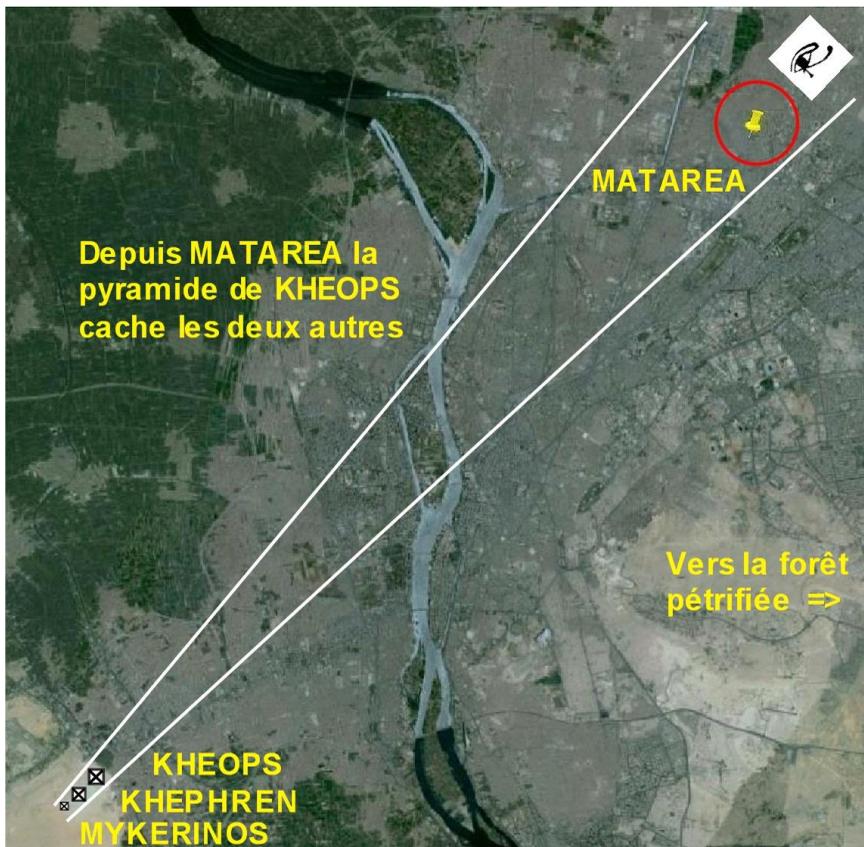
Later, Cornelis de Bruyn (1623 – 1683) passed through Matarea and explains in his *Voyage au Levant*: "*This is the place where it is believed that Joseph and Mary chose to reside when they left for Egypt*". Why does Maria Valtorta see **only one** of

the three pyramids from this place?

We notice that the orientation of the Giza pyramids is south-west / north-east and Matarea is **exactly** in their axis. Consequently, and only in this sector (on a swathe of about two or three kilometres wide), the Cheops pyramid effectively hides the Khafre and Menkaure pyramids, situated just behind it! The drawing above, done in 1850, is a view of the north of Giza, seen from Heliopolis.

It is conceivable that, going east, we would see only one "*far-away pyramid*". We need only look at the photograph above – (taken between 1875 and 1925, from the north-east in relation to the pyramids, as the





Geneva Museum specifies) – to clarify this explanation.

As this is not a particularly spectacular viewpoint, it is, unsurprisingly, not mentioned by any of the innumerable travelers to Cairo over the centuries.

So, Maria Valtorta’s use of a simple singular, “the **pyramid**”, is a strong signal of the authenticity of this vision on this scene.

Note: It was precisely in the close vicinity of Matarea, in the Coptic Zeitoun church, that the Virgin appeared several times, in 1968, as witnessed by tens of thousands of people.

The petrified forest of Cairo

In book 4, Jesus remembers His early childhood in Egypt. *“I could compare a large part of Israel to the petrified forests seen here and there in the Nile valley and in the Egyptian desert. They were woods upon woods of living plants... for reasons unknown, like accursed things, they not only dried up, as do trees, which, although dead, can still be used as firewood in homes... But these trees were not used as firewood. They turned to stone. Stone. **The silica in the ground seems, as if by enchantment, to have risen through the roots to the trunk, to the branches and up to the leaves**⁹⁶. The winds then broke the weakest branches that **became like alabaster**, both hard and soft. But the biggest branches are there, on their powerful trunks, to deceive tired caravans of people, who, in the dazzling reflections of the sun or by the spectral light of the moon, see the silhouetted shadows of trunks rising from the plains or in the depths of the valleys. (...) Real ghosts! Illusory appearances of living things, true presence of dead things. I saw them. Although I was only a toddler, I remember them as one of the saddest things on Earth”*^{248.13 / 14}.



⁹⁶ This hypothesis of silica substitution is one of two theories put forward today by scientists to explain the formation of this forest. (See www.bezra.com/en/mota7agera.asp).

(continued on following page...)

There are several sites of fossilized forests in Egypt. The El Maadi⁹⁷, site, about 15km east of the historical centre of Cairo, could be the site referred to here. Indeed, this site is 17 km south-east of Matarea, not very far from the place of exile in Egypt. This forest was already mentioned in 1840⁹⁸. Endangered by urban development today, the remaining 7 square kilometre zone was classed as a protected site in 1989 and subsequently classed as a UNESCO heritage centre in 2003.

It is quite remarkable to find a description of this site in a 1945 text, a time when it was still almost unknown in Europe.

Bethsaida, a landlocked fishing village!

In June 1945, Maria Valtorta reports a vision: *“Jesus tells me, showing me the river Jordan, or rather the point at which it flows into Lake Tiberias and where the city of Bethsaida lies, on the right bank of the river, looking northwards: ‘Now, the town no longer seems to be on the banks of the lake but **slightly inland** and this disconcerts the specialists. The explanation can be found in the fact that this side of the lake was filled up by twenty centuries of alluvium deposited by the river and by rock slides from the hills of Bethsaida. The town was then exactly at the mouth of the river, where it flowed into the lake, and even the smallest boats, in the seasons when the waters of the river were at their highest, could navigate quite a long way, as far as Korazim. However, the river itself was still used as a port and a shelter for boats from Bethsaida during storms on the lake. This is not meant for you, but for the fastidious, nitpicking doctors...’*”^{179.1.}

⁹⁷ Coordonnées 29° 59' 10" N / 31° 22' 45" E / Altitude +178m.

⁹⁸ *Notice on the petrified forest near Cairo*, Geography Society Bulletin, 2nd series, t. 13.



The location of Bethsaida was sought in vain for almost 1,500 years, the town having disappeared in about 324 AD, after an earthquake. The archaeologist E. Robinson's hypothesis in 1839 was that the mound known as *e-Tell* was perhaps a vestige of Bethsaida, but this hypothesis was not accepted by the majority of the researchers of the time. It was only from 1987 that it was confirmed by

archaeological digs.

It is today accepted that the lake was larger in the time of Jesus. So the fishing village of Peter, Andrew and Philip is 1.5 km north of the present-day mouth of the river Jordan, north of Lake Tiberias, exactly on the latitude of Korazim, as those who read Maria Valtorta's manuscript in 1947 learned forty years earlier!

Enquiry in Phoenecia

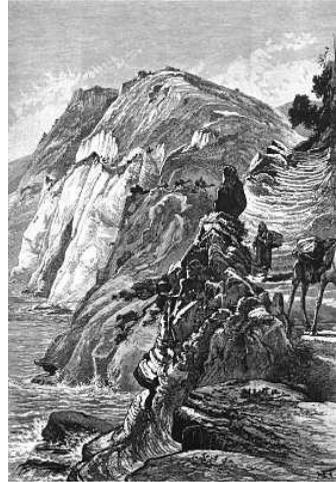
In her work, Maria Valtorta several times mentions Alexandroscene, an ancient city, almost unknown today. She gives precise and detailed descriptions of its location: *“according to the indication on the Roman milestone: Alexandroscene - m. V (...) a real stairway in the steep, rocky mountain, its nose plunging into the Mediterranean. It comes into sight progressively as you go up. This road, one might say, these terraces, can only be travelled on foot or by donkey. But the road is still very busy, perhaps because it is a good shortcut... “That must be the storm cape”, says Matthew, pointing to the headland coming out into the sea (...) “From the summit we’ll see Alexandroscene and beyond it is the White Cape. My John, you’re going to see a large extent of sea!” says Jesus (...) But it will soon be dark. Where shall we sleep? In Alexandroscene. You see? The road is starting to go down and there’s a plain below, right up to the town that you see over there (...) The town of Alexandroscene is more military than civilian. It might some have strategic importance that I don’t know of. It nestles between the two headlands and looks like a sentinel guarding this part of the sea. Now that both capes are visible, we see a large number of fortified towers forming a chain with those on the plain and in the town, where, towards the coast, the imposing Camp dominates...”* 328.12.

Later, there is another mention of the strategic road: *“trying to reach the road going from the sea inland. It must be the same one, that forks at the base of the headland, leading to Alexandroscene...”* 330.8. And again in Book 7: *“on the terraced road hewn out of the rock, that they took to go to the last village on the border between Syro-Phoenecia and Gallilee – and it*

must be the one I saw when they were going to Alexandroscene"^{474.8}

All these descriptions are perfectly correct and verifiable. *Roch Hanikra*⁹⁹ (the Cape of the Grotto) is situated in the extreme north of Israel, on the Lebanese frontier, where its white chalk cliffs meet the Mediterranean Sea. The Arabs called this site *Ras el-Nakoura*, the Jews *Sulam Tsur* and the Christian pilgrims *Scala Tyrorium* (*the ladders of Tyre*). In about 333 BC, Alexander the Great is thought to have had these ladders (or steps) hewn out for his soldiers and their horses. They were later used by the Roman legions and the Crusaders.

This is a little-known site today, but some drawings from 1836 remain, like this one... As Maria Valtorta seems *to have read* on the Roman milestone, *Alexandroscene*⁹⁹ was indeed situated 5 Roman miles ("m V") from the place where the ladders of Tyre begin. That is, exactly 7.5 km further north.



⁹⁹ Coordinates 33° 05' 34" N / 35° 06' 14" E / Altitude +55 m.



Ras en Naqoura “*a mountain spur reaching out into the sea (...) its nose plunging into the Mediterranean*” seen from Aczib

Here is what a modern tourist guide says of Tyre¹⁰⁰:
“*Between two headlands on the Phoenician coast, the Ras el Bayada¹⁰¹ and the Ras en Naqoura¹⁰² are the ruins of a considerable town whose only claim to fame is the fact that Alexander the Great stayed there after the capture of Tyre. The town was built and named Alexandrosce in his honour*”.

¹⁰⁰ On the internet site www.lifeintheholylnd.com.

¹⁰¹ In 1884 Victor Guérin op. cit. said that this headland was then called the *Ras el Abyad* (Pliny’s *Promontorium Album*), i.e. the “**White Cape**” the exact name that Maria Valtorta gives it!

¹⁰² Also called *Rock Hanikra*, that Matthew identifies as the *Storm Cape*, as that was where the Apostles encountered a storm on their way to Tyre. A photograph of *Rock Hanikra* justifies this other description “*a boat spur (...) with its rocky veins whitening in the sun*”^{325.1}.



The El Bayada Cape (Promontorium Album or *White Cape*) and the view towards Tyre on the horizon

This town still existed in the time of Jesus, as *le pèlerin de Bordeaux* (333) mentions having stopped there. And a 14th century legend (by Nicephorus Callistus) reports that Zosimus, renowned for his miracles in the reign of Justinian, came to Alexandrosène from Tyre on his way to Ptolemais. “*There, a lion devoured the donkey that was carrying his baggage. Zosimus then ordered the lion to carry the baggage!*”



But in the 19th century, all that remained of this formerly flourishing city, today totally non-existent,¹⁰³ were a few stones!

Note: The U.N. blue helmets have now installed a large military base right next to the archaeological site of Alexandrosène (3 or 4 km away, in Naqoura).

¹⁰³ Victor Guérin, *Terre Sainte*, vol 2 page 143.

The cyclopean ruins of the ancient city of Hazor

Coming from Gerghesa on His way to Meron and Giscala, Jesus meets Rabbi Gamaliel, and speaks of the ruins of Hazor



that He has just passed: *“no flowers bloom there, it is a desert land that the work of men and nature cannot make fertile. All human work comes to nothing there, as does the work of the wind that transports the seeds, because **the cyclopean***

ruins of ancient Hazor are everywhere, and only nettles and brambles can grow in these fields of stone, where only snakes live” 160.4.

This is the only reference to Hazor in the whole work. These ruins were discovered in 1870, but the immensity of the site was only revealed when archaeological digs began in 1955, (they were still ongoing in 2008). No one had ever mentioned the “cyclopean ruins” prior to 1955, except Maria Valtorta in 1945!

The town covers an area of 80 hectares, (or 10 times the size of Jerusalem at that time!), so immense that the archaeologists did not at first think that the whole area was just one city. But this is now proven and the site, still a total desert today, constitutes the greatest excavation site in the whole of Israel. This immense city, mentioned several times in the Bible, was definitively destroyed by an earthquake in 732 BC.

Did Maria Valtorta visit Antioch?

Perhaps Maria Valtorta went to Antioch... in the time of Jesus? This question can legitimately be asked when the numerous details that she provides on Antioch and its region, in those times, are analysed.

The Cretan navigator, Nicomede points out: “*the real port of Antioch is Seleucia on sea, at the mouth of the Orontes*”^{321.3}.

Correct: Port of Antioch, north of the mouth of the Orontes, a site studied in 1907 by V. Chapot.

He adds: “*The town that you see, the biggest one, is Seleucia. The other, towards the south, is not a town, but the ruins of a devastated place*”.

Correct: It is the old Greek colony of Posideion (today Al Mina, which means *the port* in Arabic). This ancient Greek colony, known to mythology and mentioned by a few Greek authors (including Strabon), was destroyed in 413 BC and abandoned. In the time of Jesus, it was a field of ruins. When Maria Valtorta mentioned it in 1944, only a few archaeologists knew it, as is still the case today!

Nicomede continues his explanation: “*That range is the Pierios, which gives the town of Seleucia the name of Pieria*”.

Correct: Pieria is the name of the mountain range situated in the north of Seleucia.

“*This peak, towards the interior, beyond the plain, is Mount Casio, dominating the Antioch plain like a giant*”.

Correct: Mount Cassius, height 1,739 m, is so called by Pliny and Strabo. But today it is known as *Djebel-Akra, the bald mountain*.

“*The other range in the north is the Aman range*”.

Correct: It is Mount Amanus, which separates Syria from Cilicia.

“Oh! In Antioch and Seleucia you will see the works that the Romans did! They could not have made anything bigger. It is one of the best ports, with three docks, and canals and jetties and dykes”.

Possible: The site of Seleucia is today completely silted up, but some archaeological soundings would seem to indicate the great size of the dykes, walls and canals. Will a future excavation one day bear out this description?

In the following chapter, the Apostles leave Seleucia on their way to Antioch: *“They take a road close to the walls until they leave via a gate, walking along a deep canal at first and then along the river itself”*^{322.4}.

Correct: The vestiges of this canal, later enlarged by Titus, are today still visible.

Syntyche marvels: *“All those myrtles!”* and Matthew echoes: *“And laurels!”*

Correct: See Ovid’s *The Metamorphoses*, book 1, for example.

“Near Antioch, there’s a place dedicated to Apollo” reports John of Endor. Simon the Zealot, who knows the place, having already been there, adds: *“You’ll see one of the most beautiful valleys in the world. Apart from the obscene cult that has degenerated into even more disgusting orgies, it is a valley of the earthly paradise.”* A little further on, he adds: *“Daphne, her temple and her corses are also in this poetic valley”*^{322.6}.

Correct: The geographer Strabo¹⁰⁴ declares: *The Antiochians hold their panegyrics there.* And Nonnos of Panopolis, a 5th century Greek poet tells of Daphne’s *Phrygian orgies*¹⁰⁵

They are approaching Antioch, as the Zealot explains: *“Here’s Antioch with its towers and ramparts. We’ll enter it by the gate*

¹⁰⁴ Strabo, *Geography*, book XVI, 2, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Nonnos of Panopolis, *Dionysiaques* Song 40.

near the river". And in answer to Peter's question: "*This town is heavily fortified, isn't it?*" he says: "*Heavily. With walls of grandiose height and thickness, in addition to the hundred towers that, as you see, look like giants standing on the walls, with impassable ditches at their feet*".

Correct: In 1861, Emile Isambert¹⁰⁶ wrote that of the 130 original towers, 50 remained, in mute testimony to the military genius of the Romans.



Antioch circa 1785 by Louis-François Cassas

Simon gives more details: "*And even the Silpio's summits contribute to defence*".

Correct: Nothing remains today of these ruins at the summit of the Silpius, but Louis-François Cassas made a few sketches in the 18th century.

A thousand pages later in the work, a letter from Syntyche provides more, profuse, details on Antioch, which was then the third city of the Empire, after Rome and Alexandria: "*As I write,*

¹⁰⁶ Adolphe Laurent Joanne, Ad. Chauvet, Emile Isambert, *Itinéraire descriptif, historique et archéologique de l'Orient*. Hachette, 1861, page 618.

from one of the terraces of the house, I can see (...) the palace of the Legate in the island” 461.4.

Correct: Libanius of Antioch (314 – 394) wrote that the governor’s palace occupied a quarter of the island¹⁰⁷.

“its royal streets, its walls with hundreds of strong towers and, as I turn around, I can see the summit of the Sulpius above me with its caserns and the second palace of the Legate”.

Correct: This is exactly the description that Libanius gives. Later, the Crusaders built a citadel with the vestiges of this second fortified palace.

Further on in her letter, Syntyche continues: *“A Roman lady wanted to invite me to her splendid house near the colonnades of Herod”* 461.19.

Correct: History and Archaeology attest this colonnade, later extended by Tiberius.

“A proselyte, a widow living near the Seleucia bridge”

Correct: This bridge, rebuilt several times, was still there in 1785.

“A Greco-Assyrian family who owns shops in a street near the Circus”.

Correct: The ruins of the Circus were found near the governor’s palace

“And here I am in the house of Xenon, on the slopes of the Sulpius near the caserns. The citadel looms menacingly from its summit. However, unappealing as it is in appearance, it is better than the rich palaces of the Onpholus”.

Correct: The word is, of course, the Omphalos, *the city centre*, where a remarkable statue of Apollo once stood.

“and of the Nimpheus”.

¹⁰⁷ Libanius of Antioch, *Oraison IX*.

Correct: Also in the Omphalos, the city centre, stood the grandiose *Nymphaeum* of Antioch, which supplied the whole city with water. It was destroyed by an earthquake that ravaged the city¹⁰⁸ .

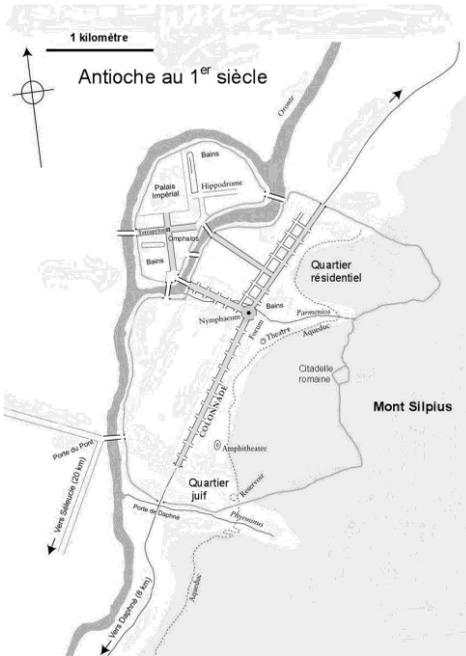
Mention should also be made of the city of Antigonea³²³, and the gardens of Lazarus... Archaeologists are today still searching for this city, a contemporary of Antioch, but which had already started to decline at the time of the Roman conquest¹⁰⁹ .



Photo of the vestiges of the Nymphaeum of Antioch today

¹⁰⁸ Reported by Evagrius Scholasticus (534 – 549), *Ecclesiastical History*, L3 c. 12.

¹⁰⁹ Isambert (op. cit. p.619) situates Antigonea north-east of Daphne, near Antioch, just as Maria Valtorta describes, whereas archaeologists are today searching for it a little further east.



The map of 1st century Antioch here opposite was established according to Glanville Downey (Ancient Antioch, 1963). It corresponds perfectly to Maria Valtorta's descriptions. And yet, these were written 20 years previously, before the publication of this map

So, all this information is correct, even if verification often turns out to be long and arduous. Indeed, this information can be found here and there in several books. But, of all the numerous books that I consulted for this study, I have found none which

contain all the data transmitted by Maria Valtorta. Concerning Antioch and its surrounding region, she provides over twenty pertinent details, some of which are known only to a few people. The quality of the description of Antioch and of the surrounding region is undoubtedly yet another document to add to the *Valtorta enigma* file...



Antioch today and mount Silpius

A beautiful panorama in the centre of Judea

Jesus and His friends are approaching a village, on their way to Ascalon from Bether, for the first apostolic journey, just after the Passover in 27 AD...

“The place is very mountainous, but its vegetation is still very rich in conifer woods, or rather, pine trees. The air is redolent with the balsamic and invigorating aroma of resin. And Jesus walks with His friends through the lush greenery of these mountains, with His back to the Orient (...) ‘When we reach the top of that mountain, I will show you all the regions that interest you from up there’ ”^{215.1}.

About one kilometer away, south-east of Beth Jimmal, a hill rising to a height of 410 metres towers over its surroundings, offering an exceptional panorama.

*“We have reached the top of the mountain. A **wide panorama** opens up here and in the shade of the leafy trees crowning the summit, a beautiful vista appears in a tangle of mountain ranges, varied and sun-drenched, stretching in all directions, like the petrified waves of an ocean battered by violent gales and then, as in a calm bay, everything quietens down in a limitless splendour of light before **a vast plain**, where **a little mountain rises**, like a solitary lighthouse at the entrance to a harbour...”*^{215.2}.

The only possible place that corresponds to this little mountain in the Philistine plain is the Tell as-Safi, as we shall soon see...

*“This country, stretching out over the crest, as if to fully enjoy the sunshine, and where we will stay, is like **the pivotal point of a range of historical places**¹¹⁰. Come here. There’s **Gerimoth***

¹¹⁰ We learn further on that that it is the village of Betginna.

(in the north). Do you remember Joshua? And the defeat of the kings who tried to attack the Israeli camp, strengthened by the alliance with the Gabonites”

Jerimoth or **Jarmouth**, or **Yarmouth**¹¹¹, is situated nearby, north-west of where they are on the mountain. Joshua’s victory over Piram is mentioned in Joshua 10, 1–5. Recent archaeological digs have found vestiges of fortifications at Khirbit el Yarmuk. Yet, in Maria Valtorta’s lifetime, Jerimoth was thought to be located 3 km further east¹¹² !

“And nearby **Bethshemesh**, the priestly city of Judah, where the Philistines returned the Ark of God with the golden votive offerings, imposed on the people by the soothsayers and priests, in order to be released from the scourges that tormented the guilty Philistines”.

Beth Shemesh¹¹³ is abundantly mentioned in the Bible. This episode, “recalled by Jesus”, comes from 1 Samuel 6, 10–15.

“And over there, in the sunshine, is **Saraa**, Samson’s birthplace”.

Sar’a, or **Tzora**, on the north bank of the al Saar Wadi, the biblical Sorec valley and the town of the tribe of Dan, the homeland of Manue, father of Samson and the birthplace of Samson (Judges 13, 2)

Eusebius places it 10 miles from Eleutheropolis, towards Nicopolis not far from Kaphar-Sorec. Fortified by Roboam, Saraa was once again inhabited by the children of the tribe of Judah on their return from captivity. (Joshua,

¹¹¹ The town still existed in the time of Eusebius, who calls it *Iermoxous*.

¹¹² See, for example, the Osty Bible, p.463.

¹¹³ 31° 45' 5" N / 34° 58' 35" E.

19, 41). The Saraites (1 Chronicles 2, 53) are probably the inhabitants of Saraa.

*“And slightly more eastward, is **Timnata**, where he took a wife, performed great feats and did many foolish things”.*

Historians are more inclined to place **Timnatah**, or Tibney, 3 or 4 kilometres away, west-south-west of Beth Shemesh, but without decisive proof. Will the future bear Maria Valtorta out, as was the case for Jerimoth, mentioned above? (Judges 14, 1)

*“And there you see **Azeco** and **Soco**, a Philistine camp then”.*

Soko : a town of the low country of Judah. As the Israelites always lived in the mountains and the Philistines on the coastal plain, the low country between the two was always a bone of contention between them. (Joshua, 15, 35). The fight between David and Goliath took place between Soko and Azeco. During the reign of King Achaz, the town fell to the Philistines (2 Chronicles 28, 18). In the time of Eusebius, it was called Socchoth.

Azeco : This is where Joshua vanquished the Canaan kings. (Joshua 10, 10-11). It was a town of the low country of Judah (Joshua 15, 35), occupied by the Philistines, fortified by Roboam, Solomon’s successor (2 Chronicles 11, 9), the town suffered a siege by order of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, circa 590 B.C. (Jeremy 34, 7). It would later be occupied once again by the Judeans returning from exile circa 530 B.C. (Nehemiah 11, 30). The site is today known as Tell Zachariah.

*“lower down, that’s **Szanoe**, one of the cities of Judea ».*

This is modern-day **Zenoah**, north-east of Azeco and Soko, about 2 km from the point in the panorama where Jesus and His friends are.

*“Now, **turn around** and here’s **the Terebinth Valley**, where David defeated Goliath”*

The **Valley of Terebinth** (1 Chronicles 11, 13; 2 Samuel 23, 9) from east to west, then in the north-west is the modern-day Wadi es Sant. It is just south-west of their vantage point. So they do indeed have to turn around to see it, as it is in the opposite direction from Zenoah!

*“And there’s **Maceda**, where Joshua defeated the Amorrheans”.*

Makkeda, or Maqqeda, mentioned in Joshua (10, 10-51). This is a memorable place in the annals of the Canaan conquest, as it is where Joshua executed the five kings of the coalition, who had hidden in the caves. The exact location has only recently been discovered¹¹⁴.

*“Turn around again. Do you see **that solitary mountain in the middle of the plain** which used to belong to the Philistines? There’s **Get**, the birthplace of Goliath and the place where David, fleeing from Saul’s mad fury, took refuge with Achis and where the wise king pretended to be mad, because the world defends the mad against the wise”.*

David twice took refuge there with king Achis, to escape from Saul. Following its destruction in about the middle of the 8th century B.C., the location of this site was lost through the centuries.

Most archaeologists today identify Geth or Gath ¹¹⁵ with Tell es-Safi, *“the white mound”*.

¹¹⁴ D. A. Dorsey, *Location of the biblical Makkedah*, Tel Aviv 1980.

¹¹⁵ Gath was surrounded by walls (2 Chronicles 26, 6) and was not conquered by Joshua. Although many wars broke out between the Israelites and the Philistines, it seems that it did not fall before the time of David (1 Chronicles 18, 1). It acquired fame through the presence of Goliath (1 Samuel 17, 4) and other giants (2 Samuel 21, 18-22). It was from here that the Ashodites took the Ark during the leprosy epidemic. (1 Samuel 5, 8-9).



The Tell es-Safi, and the ruins of Gath (seen from Azekah).

The site was identified in 1887, but only the recent excavations of 2001 confirmed the previous hypotheses. This hill, the only one in this sector, corresponds in every way to Maria Valtorta's description of it in 1945!

*“These are the **plains of the fertile land of the Philistines** in this open horizon. We will go there, as far as Ramleh”.*

Ramleh, or **Ramla**¹¹⁶ : According to History, the city was completely *built* circa 705-715 A.D. by the Caliph Suleyman ibn Abed al Malik. The fact that *Jesus mentions this name* would therefore tend to suggest that it existed before 705 A.D.

“Let's go into Betginna now”.

Beth Jimmal, or **Beit Gemal** : this is where the relics of St. Stephen, Nicodemus, Gamaliel and his son Abibas were found, circa 415/417. The site was then known as

¹¹⁶ Situated at 31° 55' 38" N / 34° 52' 30" E, Ramla is sometimes presented as the only city in Palestine founded by the Arabs.

Kfar Gamla. A byzantine monastery was built there in the 6th century. The site today bears its original name and the monastery has become a pilgrimage site.

A detailed topographical study of this region is necessary to observe that only from the hill situated one kilometre south-west of Beth Jimal can we see all the places described here. And only after positioning all the places mentioned in this short paragraph on a map can we appreciate the amazing quality of



this description.

Commentaries :

1/ If only in order to confirm the validity of the fifteen or so details given here, we need a minutely detailed map of the region and *a certain amount of time* to devote to these relatively complex verifications.

2/ Maria Valtorta very often writes down proper names with approximate, even phonetic, spelling. This, in itself, is a strong indication that she neither read nor checked these names in any hypothetical documents that in all probability, she did not even possess in the first place.

3/ She does not hesitate to transmit this information in contradiction with the affirmations or hypotheses of her contemporaries, assuming that she was, in fact, aware of them. (Jerimoth, Timmatah, Ramla ...) at least one of which, following recent discoveries, has turned out to be true today (Jerimoth). The exact locations of Timmatah and Ramla were still not “proven” in 2010.

4/ She even provides information that was practically unknown, or else contested, in her time and that Archaeology or History have since confirmed (Gath, Makkedah...)

How did Maria Valtorta do this?

The Arbela gorges and the Horns of Hattin

Almost a year after He chose His first disciples, Jesus gathered the Twelve for a retreat in an isolated place, behind Tiberias. Maria Valtorta gives a long description of the place where the twelve Apostles were chosen¹¹⁷ : *“Jesus, His back to the lake, is walking, going unhesitatingly towards a gorge between the hills stretching from the lake towards the west in almost parallel lines, I would say. Between two rocky, rugged hills, with a steep drop like a fjord, a foaming little stream tumbles down noisily and, above it is the steep slope of the wild mountain with plants that have grown everywhere, as best they could, in the crevices between the stones”*^{164.3}, then a little further on, *“There are caves here that men used to use (...) Here, the waters are cool and plentiful, although the land is dry”*^{164.4}. Then Maria Valtorta describes Jesus coming down *“because His is the highest cave. And, going from one cave to another”*^{165.3}. The description is so explicit that it is not very difficult to locate these caves before discovering, a thousand pages later, that this is the site of *“the Caves of Arbela”*^{360.6}. The valley of the Arbela Gorges, and their many caves, was a refuge in the times of the Maccabees, two centuries before Christ, and again during the Jewish revolt in the time of Herod¹¹⁸, in 39 B.C. The waters mentioned are those of the Wady el-Hamam.

¹¹⁷ Matthew 10, 1-4; Mark 3, 13-19; Luke 6, 13-16.

¹¹⁸ Flavius Josephus relates that soldiers were lowered in cages suspended from the top of the cliff and that the caves were smoked out.



“The valley with its steep, wild slopes”^{241.15} with the caves of Arbela halfway down the slope. The Horns of Hattin are on the horizon, on the left.

“Let us go. Let us go and meet the others, the crowds who are waiting for Me. Then I’ll go to Tiberias for a few hours, while you go to the foot of the mountain on the direct road from Tiberias to the sea. Speak publicly of Me, and wait for Me there. I will come and I will climb up higher to preach”^{165.10}.

Jesus gives His Apostles an appointment at the foot of the place today called the Horns of Hattin. There, Simon the Zealot starts to preach. *“You see, what we glimpse here looks like the aqueduct (...) The arcade would not exist if its base were not on the road”*^{165.5}. The presence of an aqueduct in this place was unknown until 1989, when the discovery of vestiges¹¹⁹ proved

¹¹⁹ Amit, Y. Hirschfeld, and J. Patrich, *The Aqueducts of Ancient Palestine*, 1989; Zalman S. Winogradov, *The Ancient Aqueduct of Tiberias*, 2004.

(continued on following page...)

its existence near Kafr Sabt¹²⁰ exactly in the place of the scene described by Maria Valtorta more than 40 years before this find! So the abundant waters of the Wady Fidjdjas were carried in Ancient times to Tiberias via this aqueduct, whose very existence seems to have been forgotten by History and Archaeology. Jesus meets His Apostles as arranged “*towards a mountain rising up near the main road and going west from the lake*”. An important Roman road, the *via Maris*, going from Maritime Caesarea to Tiberias, did, in fact, pass nearby, “*the mountain rises more steeply up to the peak, then goes down, then up again, forming a second peak, like the first one, and together they form a sort of saddle*”^{169.1}. It is the mountain of the Sermon on the Mount, (165. to 174.) described in minute detail: “*the valley between two summits*”^{170.1}. “*The top of the hill that looks like a yoke, or rather like a camel’s hump (...) is a natural amphitheatre, where the voice resounds clearly*”^{174.11}. “*We were higher up, where the summit appears to be forked, like a great two-pronged pitchfork, about to skewer the clouds*”^{244.2-4...} “*from this summit the saddle of the mount of the Beatitudes can be seen. At its foot is the main road going from the Mediterranean to Tiberias*”^{276.1} etc. All of this perfectly describes and unambiguously designates the place known since the Crusades as The Horns of Hattin¹²¹.

Commentary: In describing the site of The Horns of Hattin as the place of the Sermon on the Mount, Maria Valtorta appears to be totally unaware of the fact that *the official place of the Mount of the Beatitudes* is situated far from there, about three kilometres away, inland from Capernaum. But this allegedly *official* site seems to have been chosen essentially for motives of tourism and has never really been unanimously

¹²⁰ Situated 10.5 km south-west of Tiberias.

¹²¹ This is where, on July 4th 1187, Saladin’s troops routed Guy of Lusignan’s crusaders.
(continued on following page...)

agreed upon, far from it¹²² ! The isolated site of the Horns of Hattin turns out to be more probable¹²³, combining both Matthew's mountain (5, 1) and Luke's plateau (6, 17).



The mountain or the plateau of the Beatitudes “At its foot is the main road that goes from the Mediterranean to Tiberias”^{276.1}

Maria Valtorta's description of these sites, completely forgotten in her time, is stupefying today, now that they can be compared with the photographs taken by tourists.

And so many, so many other *forgotten* sites...

The mention, or description by Maria Valtorta of numerous places in Palestine, known in 1944 to only a few rare, erudite scholars, was one of the surprises of the eminent specialist Father François Paul Dreyfus, already mentioned at the beginning of this book. Here are some of the data that provoked this astonishment:

¹²² S. Munk, *Palestine*, 1845, describes the Horns of Hattin and adds on p. 5: “Christians call it the Mountain of the Beatitudes, because, according to tradition, that is where Jesus gave His speech, known as the Sermon on the Mount”. And Baedeker, *Palestine and Syria*, 1898, p 247 even adds that this tradition (the Hattin site as the site of the Beatitudes) goes back to the end of the crusades.

¹²³ This localisation is attested by Brocardus (or Burchardus), *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae*, 1283, caput 4. It is also the place that members of a Napoleonic expedition chose to situate the Sermon on the Mount.
(continued on following page...)

Jotapate^{315.1} (present-day Tel Yodfat) is perfectly located and described by Maria Valtorta, whereas the site was only “rediscovered” by archaeologists¹²⁴ in 1992-1994.

Magdalgad “*this little place on the hill*”^{220.1} is mentioned only once in the Bible¹²⁵. In Maria Valtorta’s time, its location was still controversial.¹²⁶ Now identified with modern Al-Majdal, approximately 4.8 km north-east of Ascalon, (and conforming perfectly to Maria Valtorta’s description!), the site today is part of the suburbs of Ascalon.

Lesendam : Laishem Dan, the city of Laish, is only mentioned once by this name in the Bible¹²⁷. Maria Valtorta mentions Jesus passing nearby (330.1 and 331.8). Yet, the ancient town of Tel Dan (Tell el Qadi), the modern name of ancient Laish, was only rediscovered in 1966, thanks to Israeli excavations.

Rohob : The ancient capital of the Aramean Kingdom a city hostile to David. The Bible¹²⁸ places it in the Laish region, but the exact location remains unknown to this day. Some think that it might be present-day Hunin, about 10 km west of Banias¹²⁹, which corresponds closely to the context described by Maria Valtorta “*I let my flocks graze between Rohob and Lesendam, just on the frontier road between here and Nephtali*”^{330.5}.

Doco : Here is a city that has completely disappeared and is totally forgotten today. And yet Maria Valtorta mentions it about fifteen times in her work as a meeting point, or a point of

¹²⁴ *Israel Antiquities Authority and the University of Rochester, New York* directed by M. Aviam and W. S. Green.

¹²⁵ Joshua 15, 37.

¹²⁶ See for example *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* 1913, which suggests two sites: *El-Mejdel*, near Ascalon, or *El-Mejeleh*, south of Beit Jibrin.

¹²⁷ Joshua 19, 47.

¹²⁸ Judges 18, 28.

¹²⁹ A. Lemaire, *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 7/1/1999.

(continued on following page...)

passage for people who walk along the river Jordan from north to south, cross Judea from Bethel to Jericho, or go towards the Decapolis on their way from Jerusalem. It is, beyond doubt, Aim Duk, situated at the north-west base of the Jebel Karantal¹³⁰. In the time of Jesus, there was a fortress there, that the Romans called Docus, where Simon Maccabeus was invited to a banquet by his son-in-law Ptolemy, then massacred there in 135 B.C. (1 M 16, 11-17).

Ramot: Ramoth in Galaad or Ramoth-Gilead was one of the three towns of refuge in Transjordan given to the Levites (along with Betser and Golan). Very often mentioned in the Bible, the exact location of this city has always been disputed... Three main sites have been proposed: Tell er-Rumeith, excavated in the 1960s and containing vestiges of the Iron Age. There are, however, those who think that the site is too small to correspond to the Biblical description. Another possible site is Tell el-Husn, but a Muslim cemetery above it precludes excavation. The third likely site is Ar-Ramtha, but here again, excavation is impossible because of the modern town built over it.

In Maria Valtorta's work, Jesus stops at Ramoth on His way to Gerasa from Jericho. "*Can you see that country, Woman? It is Ramot. We will stop there.*"^{286.2} Judging from her description of it^{287.1}, and from the adjoining sketch, Maria Valtorta situated Ramoth in the place of present-day Es Salt¹³¹, exactly halfway between Jericho and Gerasa, dividing this journey into two long stretches of 33 km each. This is even more remarkable when we discover that Es Salt has lately been

¹³⁰ The mount of Temptation 31° 54' N / 35° 24' 30" E, 7 or 8 km north-west of Jericho, at the entrance to the Accor Valley.

¹³¹ 32° 02' 21" N / 35° 43' 38" E / Altitude + 758m

recognised by archaeologists as the most likely site of Ramoth! I could, of course, provide a multitude of such examples, but there are still so many other *astounding* subjects in this work, that we must move on from these geographical examples. Suffice it to say that Maria Valtorta mentions by name over three hundred localities, mounts, rivers, regions and other geographical data, locating them with a precision that is, in itself, remarkable. A more complete analysis of all the geographical data would fill a voluminous book

Here is one last example. Jesus, referring to John of Endor's departure: "*I will never send you to Bithynia or to Mysia¹³² on the desolate heights where you lived as a galley slave (...) to the lead mines and the marble quarries*"^{312.4}. It is rigorously correct that Anatolia was already famous at that time for its white marble (in Dokimeion) as well as for its silver-bearing lead mines (in Gümüşhane and Karasu).

I would now like to repeat a specificity of Maria Valtorta's revelations. As she did not receive all her revelations in strictly chronological order, in some chapters she *recognises* some places that she has already *seen* in visions and that will later fit neatly into her account. So it is, for example, in the very first pages, describing the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple. The attentive reader might well be surprised when Maria Valtorta makes this *strange* remark: "***I don't know whether I have ever mentioned it, the Temple is not on the same level, but goes up higher and higher in successive stages***"^{6.3}. Note that this vision was received on August 28th 1944 after many other scenes unfolding within the Temple boundaries.

¹³² Jesus even explains for Maria Valtorta, "*simple and humble people will understand Anatolia better than Bithynia or Mysia*"^{312.14}.

When Jesus first visited Emmaus, Maria Valtorta writes: “*I recognise the house that the two men from Emmaus went into with the Risen Jesus.*”^{140.1}, because she had the vision on April 5th 1945, two weeks before this one, received on April 18th 1945! Another typical example is when she says: “*I recognise Jacob the peasant, the Jacob of Mathias and Mary, the two orphans in the vision of the month of August, I think*”^{110.4}, and when she remembers “*the place with the well and the oven at the back, and the apple tree to one side, and here’s the kitchen door, wide open*”^{110.5}. Maria Valtorta in fact recognises places seen in a vision on August 20th 1944, but only described much further in the chapter^{298.2}.

Yet again, in a vision on February 15th 1946, when Jesus draws near the ferryman Solomon’s house for the first time, Maria Valtorta makes this quite unexpected remark: “*Solomon’s little house, the one that I saw in March 1944, without knowing who it belonged to, in the vision of the raising of Lazarus*”^{348.1}.

Even more surprising for French readers is this remark that Maria Valtorta makes the first time that Jesus goes to Jutta: “*I recognise the place. It’s impossible not to, it is the one in the vision of Jesus and the children that I had last spring*”^{76.8}, (vision of January 12th 1945). She alludes here to a vision received on February 7th 1944, given in chapter 396 of the Italian version of 2004, but not included in the French version of 1985! There is an abundance of such examples in the work, strong indications of the authenticity of these visions. I, personally, have never come across a similar situation in any other book that I have ever read.

But, before closing this chapter on geography in *The Gospel as Revealed to me*, I would like to draw my readers’

attention to something that is, in my opinion, even more unexpected. A closer study of the text reveals very many other insignificant, overlooked places, whose names Maria Valtorta does not even know. These places, unknown to Biblical encyclopaedias, simply because of their *anonymity*, cannot therefore appear in any research based on simple text indexation... And yet, these anonymous places turn out to be absolutely correct each time that our modern knowledge enables their identification, be they rivers, Roman roads, mounts, the humblest of little hills, or the tiniest of little villages. Maria Valtorta very often adds a sketch to her manuscript¹³³ when she cannot quite find the words to describe what she *sees*. These sketches, although technically quite clumsy, are nonetheless extremely helpful to clarify and flesh out some far too rudimentary descriptions. Maria Valtorta thus attains a general degree of precision and accuracy that I, for one, have never found in the books of the many authors of travel accounts of visitors to the Holy Land that I consulted during this study¹³⁴. Here, then, are a few examples to illustrate these statements.

¹³³ These sketches, which do not appear in the 1985 French edition, have been included in the 3rd Italian edition of 2004.

¹³⁴ K. Baedeker, J.T. Bannister, L. de Bazelaire, Beauvau, Burckhardt, A. Egron, V. Guérin, T. H. Horne, E. Isambert, J. W. McGarvey, S. Munch, R. Pococke, E. Robinson, Louis Segond, F. de Saulcy, to name but a few.

Distant view of Jerusalem and the Temple

In the spring of the second year, Jesus and His friends are going on a pilgrimage to the Temple for Marjiam's Bar Mitzvah and the Passover. They are approaching Bethel, on their way from Sichem. *"Here's a new, much steeper, slope. The group of Apostles, leaving the dusty, overcrowded main road, has taken this shortcut through the woods. When they arrive at the top, a sea of light shines in the distance giving a clear bird's eye view of a white town, perhaps with whitewashed houses"*^{194.2}. Then Jesus says to Marjiam: *"Do you see that dot shining like gold? It's the House of the Lord. That is where you will swear to obey the law"*. As they are still 25 km from Jerusalem, we might find this remark surprising. But, according to the accounts of several pilgrims of bygone centuries, Jerusalem, (and consequently the Temple) was visible from very far away to those coming from the north. However, Leonie de Bazelaire's testimony¹³⁵ leaves no room for doubt. In fact, on her way from Naplouse, she says that she saw Jerusalem in the distance, *"a whitish mass in the distance"* from a hill before Bethel¹³⁶, exactly coinciding with the description transmitted by Maria Valtorta. As for the *"shining dot"*, one need only read Flavius Josephus¹³⁷: to be convinced: *"Covered all over with pure gold plate, the Temple shone"*.

On the Way to Sycaminon

Jesus is walking westward along the Esdremon Plain from Bethlehem, going towards Sycaminon with the Apostles and a few female disciples. Halfway through, He suggests a stop on a

¹³⁵ Léonie de Bazelaire, *Chevauchée en Palestine*, 1899, p 93.

¹³⁶ 7 km north east of Bethel (31° 59' 57" N; 35° 15' 57" E) a 950 metre high mount is the highest summit in the region. It is situated 25 km from Jerusalem as the bird flies.

¹³⁷ Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 5, 6, 222.

hill where “we’re going to find a sea breeze”^{249.1}. Maria Valtorta depicts “the summit or rather a ledge of the summit jutting out as if it were trying to run towards the pleasant blue of the limitless sea. (...) on this charming, airy mountain crest, opening onto the nearby coast, opposite the majestic Mount Carmel range”^{249.5}. There is, in fact, a high point (105 m.), the only one on this plain¹³⁸ 2 km east of modern-day Qiryat Motzkin. However, this can only be verified on recent maps of Israel, and even then, only the most precise ones! How could Maria Valtorta have known this, other than through her revelations?

The hot springs of Hamat Gader

On another occasion, Jesus and His friends disembark at the south-east point of Lake Tiberias, to go to the town of Gadara. “You know the shortest way to Gadara, don’t you? Do you remember? Jesus asks. “I should just think so! When we reach the **hot springs** above Yarmoc, all we have to do is follow the road”, replies Peter.”^{356.1}. This is the Yarmoc, these buildings are the **Roman Spas** and further along, there is a very good paved road leading to Gadara”^{365.2}.



The **Yarmoc**: In fact the Yarmouk is an “*insignificant*” affluent of the left bank of the River Jordan, 6 km south of Lake Tiberias, barely 80 km long. Its name does not even appear in the Bible, but is found only in the Talmud. Several hot springs, (sometimes over 50° C), are situated in the Yarmouk valley. The

¹³⁸ 32°48'18" N and 35°08'22" E, 10 km from Bethlehem and 15 km from Sycaminon.

ancient Greek name for the site is preserved in Arabic: *Tel Hammi*. This is, in fact, the Arabic corruption of the word *bath* in Greek. The vestiges of Hamat Gader were partially excavated and investigated in 1932, but it was only from 1979 that several years of excavations revealed the entire site¹³⁹.

It is today a very popular tourist site for the Israelis. Maria Valtorta even *smells* “*the unpleasant odours of the sulphurous waters*”^{356.3}, exactly as modern tourist guides



describe this particularity of these waters. But this fact was totally unknown in 1945! The ancient, little-known name of the



site¹⁴⁰ is even mentioned later in a short dialogue: “*The Lake had become hotter than the Hamatha waters*”^{450.2}.

So it is really not at all surprising when the apostolic group goes along “*a beautiful road with very large cobblestones and leading to the*

¹³⁹ Source: Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry.

¹⁴⁰ Eusebius Onomasticon (Aemath Gadara) and the Talmud of Jerusalem (Kiddouschuin 3, 14, mention Hamtha, near Gadara. Christoph Cellarius (1638-1707) in Geographia Antiqua Liber III, chapter 13 (quoting St. Jerome), indicates: “Est et alia villa in vicinia Gadarae nomine Amatha, ubi calidae aquae erumpunt”

superb town at the top of the hill, surrounded by walls”^{356.3}, as the Roman road leading to Gadara is, in fact, superb, with its large paving stones, just as the town perched on the hill must have been and which the many photographs of the archaeological site of Gadara today attest!

Photo above, a view of the Gadara Cardo Magnus, “a beautiful road with very large cobblestones”

Jesus and His apostles enter the town and Maria Valtorta adds this detail: “*The road becomes a thoroughfare, decorated with porticos and fountains. There are ornate squares, each more beautiful than the other. It cuts across a similar thoroughfare and there is probably an amphitheatre below*”^{356.7}. The ruins of Gadara (modern-day Umm Qais) do, in fact, show a flourishing Greek city, with three basalt theatres, Roman baths, a temple, cobbled roads, shops etc...



“A considerable city, the capital of Perea”, according to the historian Flavius Josephus.

There are still scores of other sites that I could mention, all perfectly described by Maria Valtorta, but not designated by name, such as that “*creek between two low hills*” into which flows “*a capricious little stream*”^{94.2}, to describe the Korazim mountain stream, the Wady Kerazeh, which flows into Lake Tiberias, or this road “*that goes alongside the stream towards the north-east, in a cultivated and wonderfully fertile*

region”^{287.4}, when Jesus is on His way to Gerasa. The river that *does* go down north-east to south-west from Gerasa is the Chyrsorrhoeas, the golden river, its name indicating the role that this river has always played in the exceptional fertility of this valley. Or again, this other river (the Wadi Amud, between Capernaum and Gennesaret) beside which Jesus and His friends break their journey from Capernaum to Magdala: “*There’s a stream, we’ll eat there...*”^{182.6} & ^{183.1}

And who would leave out “*this tiny little village, a few houses, a hamlet as we would call it today. It is **higher** than Nazareth, which we can see down below, a few kilometres away.*”^{106.5}. Jesus finds refuge there after the Nazarenes try to throw him off a high embankment (Luke 4, 29). He passes there again in the opposite direction, coming this time from Cana: “*the cool shortcut that leads to Nazareth... When we reach the top of a hill*”^{244.1}, Mary recalls: “*I came to this little place halfway up the hill with my nephews when Jesus was chased out of Nazareth*”^{244.2}.

Halfway between Cana and Nazareth is Mount Har Yona (a hill 550 metres high)¹⁴¹ and 4.5 km north-east of Nazareth. It is the only point that is higher than Nazareth in the region, as Maria Valtorta remarks! And yet, this indication appeared on no maps in 1945!

Then too, there is the Wady Nimrim Shu’eib that Maria Valtorta describes as follows: “*a mountain torrent that probably goes to the Jordan River, an abundant flow of water coming down from I know not what summit*”^{286.1} when Jesus is on His way to Ramoth from Jericho. Today, this Wady Nimrim Shu’eib is classed (along with the Zarqa and the Yarmouk) as

¹⁴¹ 32° 43’ 35” N / 35° 20’ 28” E, west of the modern village of Ein Mahil

one of Jordan's main fresh water sources. The etymological meaning of the present-day name of this torrent is precisely "*abundant waters*"! Could Maria Valtorta have been inspired by chance?

On another occasion, when Jesus is waiting for the apostles near Achzib, Maria Valtorta gives a precise description of the surroundings, adding: "*On the highest peak of a small mountain upon which there is also a village*"^{325.1}, one can but note that it is precisely there that the ruins of a very ancient village have recently been discovered: the village of Khirbat Humsin (at Tell Hammoudout)¹⁴² which was completely unknown at the time that Maria Valtorta wrote these lines.

So we can say today, backed up by cast-iron proof, that the geographical descriptions that Maria Valtorta gives in her work are in no way the fruit of her poetical imagination, but most truly the meticulous and methodical description of real places which, by a phenomenon that science cannot explain, she appears to have *truly* seen.

These few examples will, I hope, enable us to understand the wonder of those readers with excellent knowledge of the Holy Land and this remark made by Jesus to Maria: "*A few days ago you said that you were going to die without having satisfied your yearning to see the Holy Places. You are seeing them, and what is more, you are seeing them as they were when I sanctified them by My presence. Now, after twenty centuries of profanations perpetrated through hatred or through love, they are no longer as they were then. So, at present, you see them and those who*

¹⁴² 33°3' 0" N / 35° 9' 0" E.

go to Palestine do not see them". (The 1944 notebooks, March 3rd).

Geographers and archaeologists will, of course, note that the information given in Maria Valtorta's work corresponds to the most recent archaeological observations, discoveries and reconstructions. Therefore, the accuracy of these details will clearly reinforce the credibility of the whole. In addition, there is little doubt that Maria Valtorta's work may even give rise to new archaeological discoveries, when the specialists in this field become more fully aware of the relevance and richness of these descriptions.

Note: The attentive reader will have noticed that the descriptions are very meticulous in the first volumes, becoming somewhat more sober in the last ones, in accordance with these words of Jesus to Maria: *"I authorise you to omit the descriptions of places. We have given so much to curious researchers. And they will always be 'curious researchers'. Nothing else. That is enough now. Your strength is going. Save it for the Word. Just as I noted that much of my fatigue was unnecessary, I note that much of yours is unnecessary. And so I tell you: 'Keep yourself for the Word'"*^{297.5}

AND JESUS MADE HIS WAY THROUGH TOWNS AND VILLAGES

“Teaching in their synagogues” Matthew 9, 35

“He made His way through towns and villages preaching and proclaiming the good news”... Luke 8, 1

“Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns... And He went all through Galilee”... Mark 1, 38

“He went back again to the far side of the Jordan”... John 10, 40

The unanimous testimony of the four evangelists informs us that during the three years of His public life, Jesus and His friends went from town to town throughout Palestine, but also in Phoenicia, Decapolis, Perea and the entire Philippi tetrarchy.

We have already seen that in Maria Valtorta’s work, the whole evangelical message as it appears in the four canonical Gospels can be resituated in time, more often than not, to the precise day. As Maria Valtorta informs us of *where* every event takes place; it seems theoretically easy to reconstruct the comings and goings of Jesus and His friends throughout the Holy Land, especially as in almost every case, she also gives the times of departure and arrival, as well as descriptions of the halts.

Overland Travel.

But how can the coherence of these movements be analysed today, when motorways have covered paths and Roman roads, when cars have replaced horses and bullock carts and towns have invaded previously deserted countrysides? Trying to reconstruct these movements today by going to the Holy Land is not a convincing exercise. But fortunately, we have a mass of historical information on the movements of troops in Antiquity, thanks to Herodotus, Xenophon, Caesar, Tacitus or Seneca, to name only the best-known among them.

In addition, innumerable travellers throughout the centuries, especially the nineteenth century, have written minutely detailed accounts of their pilgrimages to the Holy Land. In France alone, the data provided by François-René de Chateaubriand, Albert de Luynes, Léon de Laborde, Félicien de Saulcy, Victor Guérin, Melchior de Vogüé, Charles Clermont-Ganneau and so many others, provide important details. Finally, there are the modern-day testimonies of pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela to complete this data.

Based on the synthesis of all these elements, it can be established that a journey on foot of 20 to 25 km per day was the norm in the time of Jesus and travellers were sure to reach the halts (*mansiones*) or the inns (*mutationes*). Seasons permitting, it was not a rare occurrence for a healthy traveller to do 200 stadiums per day, (35km)¹⁴³, or even 40 km if necessary. Philip even accustomed his troops to 55km marches per day, carrying arms and baggage¹⁴⁴.

With a four-wheeled combat wagon (*carrus*) the normal daily distance was 30 km for merchandise and 50 to 60 km for the transport of people (covered wagons in which 8 to 10 people could travel and sleep). The *cursus publicus*, the imperial postal service, did 70 to 100 km in a day, changing horses four times. A troop of Roman horsemen could normally travel 50 km per day¹⁴⁵, and Julius Caesar even covered an average of 150 km per day to go from Rome with his escort on horseback and by horse-drawn wagon.

¹⁴³ Herodotus, *Histories*, Book V, 53.

¹⁴⁴ Reported by Victor Duruy, *Histoire des Grecs*, 31,2.

¹⁴⁵ René Rebuffat, *Au-delà des camps romains d'Afrique mineure*, ANRW, II 10.2, 1982, p 486.

Travel by water.

Paradoxically, it is almost easier to have a clear idea of the average distances covered by water in Antiquity, given the amount of data on the subject. It seems to be an accepted fact¹⁴⁶ that in excellent conditions, a sailboat could cover a maximum of 2,000 stadiums, or 360 km per 24 hours. But covering 1,000 to 1,300 stadiums, or 225 km, per day was good navigation. Herodotus gives these details: *A boat covers 700 stadiums a day and 600 a night, or 1,300 per 24 hours*¹⁴⁷, whereas Aristide prefers a figure between 1,000 and 1,200 stadiums¹⁴⁸. As for navigation in a fishing boat on the lake, it could hardly have been more than 4 to 5 km per hour rowing and 7 to 9 km per hour with the help of a sail. The precision of these figures is more than enough to undertake the verification of Maria Valtorta's text.

A few details on the method used.

In order to analyse each journey, I used a voluminous table in which each line represents one day. The columns indicate successively: the Gregorian date; the date in the Hebrew calendar; the day of the week; the lunar phase corresponding to that date; the participants in the journey; then a column for each two-hour period, a total of twelve columns for the whole day. According to the season and the date, the boxes corresponding to *night* hours are in grey. In the box corresponding to the time of departure, I indicate the place of departure. The same is done for the time and place of arrival at the destination, with the kilometres covered. The boxes corresponding to walking periods are in green, those corresponding to navigation periods,

¹⁴⁶ Data supplied by Polybius, Strabo, Eratosthenes, Pliny, etc.

¹⁴⁷ Hérodote, *Histoires*, book IV, 83.

¹⁴⁸ Aelius Aristides (117-189), *Orationes*. XLVIII, (by Samuel Jebb, Oxford 1722, p. 360).

in blue; those indicating rest periods in red and the uncertain ones (not described by Maria Valtorta) in orange. This compilation is user-friendly and when the 1,250 lines of the table (corresponding to the three years and more of the public life) are filled in, according to Maria Valtorta's descriptions, it is a simple matter to analyse all the journeys undertaken by Jesus and His followers...

A totally unexpected result.

I might as well say it at once: the result of this analysis surpassed everything I expected. First of all, every journey without exception is plausible, as much from the point of view of its duration as from that of the distance covered. Of itself, this result is already exceptional, especially in view of the fact that in 1944 Maria Valtorta could not possibly have had access to a map of Palestine precise enough for her to *imagine* itineraries such as the ones she describes. A quick glance at the whole table shows very few days in orange, i.e. not mentioned by Maria Valtorta. These are, more often than not, days of rest at home or with disciple friends, at the end of a long journey.

But a closer analysis of these journeys reveals that other things are also perfectly taken into account, such as the difficulties attributable to the seasons, like the state of the roads, flooded rivers, rain, wind, excessive heat or cold, etc. For example, the stages are never longer than 20 to 22 km in bad atmospheric conditions, as is often the case in autumn and winter. The same goes for the daily amount of sunshine and the presence or absence of the moon in the night skies, both of which influence the course of the journey and are effortlessly incorporated into the story. Naturally, the greatest distance covered, (by day or by night, according to the phases of the moon) is in spring. In summer, owing to the excessive heat,

journeys become rare. These occur almost exclusively by night, avoiding the new moon phases.

The *long* journeys¹⁴⁹ almost always start on the day after the Sabbath or even just at the end of the Sabbath when the moon is favourable to a nocturnal departure. Jesus, an indefatigable pilgrim, does not often spare His apostles, regularly imposing stages of over thirty kilometres on them. But, when women disciples accompany them, the daily distance covered will then only exceptionally exceed twenty kilometres. So, each trip takes the participants (men, women, or children) into account, as well as their ages and the state of their health.

The slightest detail in all these journeys *screams* authenticity: the halts in the shade of the trees during the hottest hours of the day; the clothes, damp with sweat; the dusty, tired feet bathed in a river; the days of rest that they allow themselves after two or three particularly trying stages; the hurrying to reach shelter before a storm breaks or before nightfall... The exigencies of the Sabbath are also taken into account and woven into the story in fine detail. I will come back to this later.

I have closely examined over eight hundred stages describing the journeys of Jesus and His disciples during the three years of His public life. To my great astonishment, I have found absolutely nothing impossible, anachronistic or incoherent, even in the most complex situations, in which, for example, different groups of disciples are entrusted with different missions. They then undertake different trips of unequal lengths before arriving at the convened meeting-point. As in previous chapters, here are a few examples now, gleaned here and there, to illustrate these assertions.

¹⁴⁹ More precisely, all those of 100 km or more.

Transportation of the dying Jonas on his pallet.

This brief sequence clearly shows how unforeseen difficulties are taken into account. When Jesus comes to Esdrelon to extricate poor Jonas from the claws of Doras on September 19th, 27AD, it is a dying man that they must transport to Nazareth on his pallet. The stage is short: barely 12 to 15 km, and yet, having left just after 12 noon and passed “*along the great road*” (the famous *via Maris*), “*the little cortege arrives in Nazareth, almost deserted, at nightfall*”^{109.15}. Maria Valtorta had made this remark: “*They can’t go very fast with their pitiful burden*”^{109.13}. As night fell at 6.15 p.m. on that day, they must have walked for over five hours, an average slightly below 3 km per hour, a totally credible figure under those conditions.

On the way from Bethsaida to Cana.

This journey illustrates to what extent each journey can be reconstructed in minute detail from Maria Valtorta’s text. The announcement of their departure is made in Capernaum on Tuesday June 6th, 28 AD, barely a week after Mary Magdalene’s conversion: “*we shall all go together through Galilee and we shall accompany our sisters to the safest road*¹⁵⁰. *So, Porphyria, Susanna, your wives and daughters, Philip and Bartholomew will meet them*” (...) “*Where shall we go first, Master?*” “*To Bethsaida. Afterwards, we shall go to Nazareth, via Magdala, Tiberias and Cana. From there, we shall proceed to Bethlehem in Galilee, via Japhia and Shimron, and then to Sycaminon and Caesarea*¹⁵¹ (...) *At Caesarea you will find your wagon. That is the instruction I gave the servant*”^{239.3}.

¹⁵⁰ The road from Caesarea to Jerusalem, used daily by Roman patrols was definitely “*the safest road*” to go on to Jerusalem and Bethany.

¹⁵¹ The itinerary is perfectly coherent, including villages that are more or less forgotten today

The next morning, Wednesday 7th, “*as dawn is breaking*” they go to Bethsaida by boat: “*They are sailing towards Bethsaida. A short voyage... (barely 5 to 7 km)... We are staying only until sunset*”^{240.1}.

On Thursday 8th they are “*sailing along the coast from Capernaum to Magdala*”^{241.1} early in the morning “*with the rising sun opposite and mount Arbela. They cross the whole town of Magdala*”^{241.6}, where Jesus tells the parable of the lost drachma (Luke 15, 8-10). Then they cross Tiberias and “*the west part of the town (...)* *Beyond it, there is the dusty road that leads to Cana*”^{242.7}. There, Jesus orders a midday stop near a well. “*While we are resting, let us have something to eat*” then He responds to what the old epicurean Crispus is waiting for: “*to find the Truth, you must join intellect to love (...)* *He who loves will always find a path leading to the Truth*”^{242.8}. “*This evening we will go to Cana*”^{242.11}. And they do indeed arrive¹⁵² “*in the redness of the sunset*”^{243.1}. They go to Susanna’s house to rest and she accompanies them on the rest of the journey. In the evening, Jesus thanks Susanna for her hospitality and they talk for a moment “*in the serene, but still moonless*¹⁵³*night*”^{243.6}. They are going to spend the week in Cana before going to Nazareth, 8 km from there, on Friday June 16th.

¹⁵² After finishing the remaining 16 km, a 4 to 5 hour walk.

¹⁵³ Yet another of those details that might seem *superfluous* but turns out to be absolutely accurate, as on June 8th, the moon is in its last quarter and rises at about 2 a.m.!

Voyage from Nazareth to Maritime Caesarea

Let us now take a closer look during the rest of this journey at how Jesus spares his female disciples as much as He can. They left just after the Sabbath, on Sunday June 18th very early in the morning, in order to have a whole week, and start with what we would call today *a little leg-stretching stage* of about fifteen kilometres. Jesus says, moreover, *“We, the men, could have walked further, but we have female disciples with us”*^{247.1}. *“They have reached, crossed and passed the town of Japhia”*¹⁵⁴, and make a stop during the hottest hours *“on the mountain that overlooks Meraba”*¹⁵⁵^{247.1} *“The hours go by in the rustling shade of the airy wood”*^{247.3}. *“It is evening when they arrive in Bethlehem in Galilee”*^{248.1}. The next day, Monday 19th, they continue their journey: *“The calm, sunny morning helps the apostolic group to climb some hills stretching westward, that is to say, towards the sea. We were right to reach the hills early in the morning. We could not have stayed on the plain in this heat. But here it’s cool and shady”*^{249.1} Matthew remarks. As on the previous day they rest during the hottest hours after a 10 kilometre walk, on *“the charming, airy mountain crest, opening on to the nearby coast, opposite the majestic Mount Carmel range”*^{249.5}. At the end of the afternoon they walk the other dozen kilometres to Sycaminon¹⁵⁶ where they meet a group of disciples.

The female disciples stay in the fishermen’s huts to rest for two days, while Jesus and His apostles make a quick return trip

¹⁵⁴ Japhia or Yâfâ, about 3 km south west of Nazareth, today a suburb of Nazareth

¹⁵⁵ Read Merala or Marala, then Mahaloul, a town of Zebulun, 6 km SW of Nazareth. The description of the panorama seen from the top of Meraba hill is rigorously correct. Today, Meraba hill is still covered with oaks and the panorama appears on Google Earth.

¹⁵⁶ Sycaminos, modern Tel Siqmonia. The archaeological site was authenticated by excavations in 1964-1965, then again in 2003.

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to Sidon by boat. On Wednesday 21st they all meet on the beach at Sycaminon in the evening.

Then on Thursday 22nd, just before dawn¹⁵⁷, “*Light, in the transition from night to day, has faded, because the moon has set, but day has not yet dawned... it is a short twilight interlude*”^{253.7}. This is the departure for the longest stage of the journey: 25 km up to Dora, then another 13 or 14 to reach Caesarea, so a very long stage of almost 40 km. Jesus explains: “*We shall arrive in Dora before the heat of the day and leave at sunset*”^{253.7}. We understand that they left before dawn, at about 2.30 or 3 a.m., so as to be in Dora at about 8.30 or 9 a.m., before the heat set in. They left Dora at 5 - 6 p.m., reaching Caesarea just before nightfall, as Maria Valtorta describes in the following chapter! And, addressing the female disciples, Jesus concludes: “*Sisters, your wearying journey will end tomorrow, in Caesarea.*”^{253.7}. So, this impressive 40 km stage was done in two reasonable stages of 20 km each, separated by a long, eight-hour rest period.

A cruise along the Phoenician and Syrian coasts

At the beginning of this chapter, we mentioned the average speed of sailboats in the early first century AD. We will now analyse how this data is taken into account in *The Gospel as revealed to me*.

The apostles go along the Mediterranean coast twice in this work. The first time, Jesus accompanies them, and a little flotilla¹⁵⁸ of “*five boats that left at dawn*”^{252.3} leaves Sycaminon

¹⁵⁷ The very precise description is rigorously correct, for that day alone!

¹⁵⁸ Jesus and the twelve apostles, plus “*the four pilots, followed by the other apostles or disciples who were with them*”^{252.4}. In all, about 30 people, 5 or 6 to a boat.
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one beautiful June morning for Sidon, 90 km¹⁵⁹ further north. The next day, on the way back, they are approaching Tyre “*early in the morning*” 251.1, at about 9 o’clock (35 km at a speed of about 10 km per hour). “*There are two harbours, one on each side of the isthmus: one, to the north, is wider and full of small boats; in the other, to the south, which is more sheltered, there are large ships arriving or departing*” 251.1. Maria Valtorta gives a detailed and perfectly correct description¹⁶⁰ : of Tyre: “*I can see that the isthmus is artificial, a sort of Cyclopean dyke, linking the island to the mainland.*” 251.1.

They stop in a creek, silted up today, where Jesus speaks of “*The Book of Kings*”, and “*How the Lord ordered Elijah to go to Zarephath of Sidon*” 251.3. (1 Kings 17). Then hoisting the sail in mid-afternoon, “*evening is falling*” 251.2, they do the remaining 55 km in 4 to 5 hours “*the five boats sailing fast (...)* as a light northern breeze fills the sails¹⁶¹ and is thus favourable” 252.3, reaching Sycaminon at nightfall.

So everything, absolutely everything in the description of this brief boat trip is perfectly credible and coherent! Let us now take a look at the second journey along the coast.

From Ptolemais to Antioch

The second time, it is a long voyage that takes a few apostles to Seleucia and Antioch to accompany John of Endor and Syntyche. It is at the end of December, one “*dull winter’s*

¹⁵⁹ 90 km or 500 stadiams, totally compatible with the 700 stadiams mentioned by Herodotus for commercial ships! (See the beginning of this chapter).

¹⁶⁰ The vestiges of the initial Egyptian port, situated in the south of the peninsula, were explored by the Institut Français d’Archaeologie du Moyen-Orient. The immense, 60 metre long dyke, was built to the order of Alexander the Great. Today this site is silted up and completely transformed.

¹⁶¹ The wind statistics on the Lebanese and Israeli coasts show that this is, in fact, a frequent direction of the wind in June today. (Source: <http://www.windfinder.com>)

morning”^{366.7}, that the little group of eight people embarks at Ptolemais in “*dead calm*”^{318.1}. “*Sails are useless today. You will have to row*”^{318.3}. So Peter “*sits on the first bench at the prow, with his back to the bows and Andrew sits beside him. James and John of Zebedee are sitting in front of them and are rowing with strong, regular strokes*”^{318.4}. At about 12 noon, half way through the journey, they pass the cape (Roch Hanikra) with some difficulty. “*We can’t disembark here. There’s no bottom*”^{318.5} grumbles Peter. We need only look at the photograph of this coast (below, seen from the top of the cape) to understand!



Fortunately for them after all these efforts, Andrew observes: “*There is a good wind now and we’ll go faster*”. They finally arrive “*in Tyre at night (...) while the sea is illuminated by placid moonlight*”^{318.6}, at the end of this first 45 km stage, logically done in 10 to 12 hours, half by oar, half by sail. In Tyre the next day, at the end of the morning, they embark as planned on a Cretan merchant ship bound for Antioch. “*They lift anchor before the sixth hour*”^{319.2}.

But the sea is not good: “*Yesterday it was too calm, today too rough*”^{319.2} Peter remarks. With a contrary and “*violent*

wind”¹⁶², the boat hardly moves all day. They have only done half the daily journey (80 – 90 km) in twenty-odd hours. We will come across them again, in the middle of a storm, off Beirut. “*But where are we now, exactly? In the Cyprus Channel?*” « *I wish we were! I would sail to the island and wait for the elements to calm down. We are just off Colonia Julius or Beritus, if you prefer. Now we will get the worst of it. Those are the Lebanese mountains*”. “*Could you not go there, where the village is?*” “*It’s not a good port. Reefs and rocks. It’s not possible!*”^{320.2}. All this information is correct¹⁶³. The port of Beirut, small and shallow, always had a bad reputation in Antiquity. Finally, after a day of anguished prayer, the storm calms down. They see an island: “*Yes, it’s Cyprus... And the sea is even calmer in its canal*”^{320.6}. From then on, a “*moderate wind, favourable to navigation*”^{320.7} will enable them, after another, final day of navigation¹⁶⁴, to reach their goal. “*The town of Seleucia appears in a beautiful sunset*”^{321.1}

Let us recap this long, 400-kilometre voyage from Nazareth to Antioch to appreciate its coherence. Having left Nazareth just after the end of the Sabbath “*We will leave this evening, halfway through the first watch*”^{313.8}, they stop at a friendly farm near Sefhoris. The next day, despite the bad weather, they travel 22 km “*we absolutely must reach Jiphtael before dusk*”^{313.8}. By Monday evening, they are in Ptolemais (another 20 km of muddy roads) and reach Tyre on the Tuesday evening, from where they embark at noon on the Wednesday for Seleucia. They are delayed by contrary winds and they finally

¹⁶² A north wind that Maria Valtorta calls mistral (*maestrale*) and translates by tramontane in the French version.

¹⁶³ The urban development works undertaken by Agrippa I and Agrippa II in the 1st century slowly made Beirut into one of the most important cities of Phoenicia. But in the time of Christ, it was still only a simple and insignificant transit port.

¹⁶⁴ They still have 170 stadiums to do in 24 hours, which is well “*within the norm*”.

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pass in front of Beirut on the Thursday morning. The storm is raging and only calms down in the evening, with the Cyprus coasts in view. Finally, the ship docks at its destination, in the port of Seleucia on the Friday evening, after 370 kilometres¹⁶⁵ of navigation.

Roman bridges, milestones, farriers

Because she describes all the journeys of Jesus and His friends across Judaea and Galilee in minute detail, Maria Valtorta's work provides us with innumerable indications on the road network in early first century Palestine. I have already mentioned the work of Hans J. Hopfen on this subject. He was able to place on a detailed map the different communication routes, as they appear from the descriptions in *The Gospel as revealed to me*. Comparing this network with the most recent research and discoveries in this field, and in particular the recent work of the specialist in this field, Israel Roll¹⁶⁶ it really does seem as if Maria Valtorta *saw and travelled along* these ancient roads! As for example, when she describes "*The road coming from Phoenicia towards Ptolemais is a lovely road which cuts straight across the plain between the sea and the mountains. Because it is well kept, it is very busy. There are various junctions with secondary roads running from inland towns to coastal ones, and at the numerous crossroads there is generally a house, a well and a rudimentary forge for quadrupeds that might need shoes... without Rome, they would not have that bridge and when the torrent is in flood I do not know how they would be able to cross it*"^{327.1}.

¹⁶⁵ That is, some 2,000 stadiums travelled in 60 hours, at a credible average of 800 stadiums per day, if we are to believe the testimonies of the time.

¹⁶⁶ Israel Roll, *The Roman Road System in Judaea* 1983; *A Map of Roman Imperial Roads in the Land of Israel* 1995. See also on the site of l'Institut biblique franciscain de Jérusalem: <http://198.62.75.1/www1/ofm/mad/articles/RollRoads.html>.

Such farriers were placed every 10 km or so by the Romans and served as relays (*mutationes*). Matthew remarks: “Almost all the farriers along the roads are Romans. Soldiers who remained here when they finished their service. And they earn a lot of money... Nothing ever stops them from curing animals... and a donkey could lose a shoe before sunset on a Sabbath, or at the time of the Dedication...”^{327.2}.



In the southern suburbs of Nazareth, will we one day find that military “milestone on the opposite sides of which is inscribed: Japhia¹⁶⁷ Simonia¹⁶⁸ Bethlehem¹⁶⁹ Carmel” to the west, and “Xalot¹⁷⁰ -Naim Syctopolis-Engannim” to the east”^{478.1} and near which Jesus meets His cousins, Joseph and Simon? In any case, archaeologists have found the Roman road going from Nazareth to Simonia! The military milestones along the Roman roads, apart from the indication of the number of thousands of steps (1,482 metres), are often dedicated to the reigning emperor. We read on some milestones indications of multiple distances, for different destinations, as for example, the one that Maria Valtorta observes near Sefhoris: “The consular milestone bears the triple indication: Ptolemais, Sycaminon, Jotapate”^{315.4}.

Bridges are often mentioned too, as they were often passages showing the road to take. Note this remark in sight of Jutta: “We’re going to cross the torrent. There is a ford that can be used in summer, rather than going to the bridge. It would

¹⁶⁷ Now Yafa an-Naseriyye 32° 41' 27" N / 35° 16' 28" E.

¹⁶⁸ Now Tel Shimron ou Semeron, 32° 42' 15" N / 35° 12' 54" E.

¹⁶⁹ It is, of course, Bethlehem in Galilee, Beit Lechem Haglilit, 32° 44' 9" N / 35° 11' 33" E.

¹⁷⁰ It is Caslot, a village near Mount Tabor. Flavius Josephus briefly mentions “the town of Xaloth, situated on the great plain” (*Jewish Wars* 3.3.1).

have been shorter to come from Hebron"^{76.1}. This is still true today. The modern road from Hebron to Jutta does, in fact, cross this torrent over a bridge 2 km south-west of the ford mentioned here. Only a few vestiges of the innumerable Roman bridges remain, but modern bridges are very often built in the same places or very near them.

Leaving Doras's lands on their way to Mageddo, just before the Passover of the year 28, Jesus and His apostles had to cross the Kison. "*Pierre comes running up and says: 'The bridge is further upstream, where the Ptolemais-Engannim road passes'*. *Jesus docilely turns back and crosses the river over a strong brick bridge*"^{192.2}. There is no doubt that such a bridge existed on this strategic axis between Mageddo and Naim, just as the existence of the one on the river Nahr el Zerka "*halfway between the hills and the sea (...) an arched bridge across a little river (...) the bridge, with one very high arch*"^{254.2} is proved. Its vestiges, that have disappeared today, were still visible in 1880¹⁷¹.

The same goes for the one across the Jordan that they crossed several times, just south of Lake Merom, on the direct Damascus - Ptolemais road. It was the only known bridge at that time between Lake Tiberias and Lake Merom. And, sure enough, when the apostolic group goes from Bethsaida to Korazim, as there was no bridge there, they cross by boat and Jesus asks Peter to "*Go as far up as you can and moor on the other side*"^{179.9}.

The same is true again in the southern part of Lake Tiberias, near Tarichea, where the vestiges of Roman bridges on the Jordan and the Yarmouk are known to archaeologists. Jesus

¹⁷¹ J.W. McGarvey mentions the vestiges of this bridge, 1.5 km from the mouth of the river in *Lands of the Bible* 1881 chapter IV.

and Chouza pass there “*at the end of the bridge, a covered wagon is already waiting*”^{464.1} at the secret meeting with the notables who wanted to elect Jesus king.

The vestiges of a Roman bridge, south of the Lake, between Tarichea and Bethseam, are still visible today, near Gesher (see the photo below).



A total of no fewer than seven roman bridges are identified on the River Jordan between the lake and the Dead Sea¹⁷², and in the work, Jésus and His friends cross several of them... It is even possible that He may once or twice have crossed the one in the photograph above, situated a few kilometers south of Lake Tiberias!

¹⁷² According to the Jordan River Foundation: <http://www.jordanriver.jo/articles/pdf.pdf> and unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001500/150032e.pdf

Jesus's movements in Palestine

It is thus possible to reconstruct Jesus's movements all over Palestine on a map, to date them on a daily basis, as we have already seen, and to situate everything that the four evangelists reported! Here, for example, month by month, is the total of His movements during the first year of His public life:

January Departure from Nazareth; the Valley of the Jordan; Baptism in the Betharaba ford; Fasting in the desert of Judea.

February Fasting in the desert of Judea.

March Betharaba, the meeting with the first disciples ; the Valley of the Jordan; Tarichea; Capernaum; Bethsaida, Capernaum; departure for Jerusalem for the Passover with the first disciples; Gethsemane.

April The Passover in Jerusalem, (merchants chased away from the temple); Gethsemane (meeting with Simon, Thomas, Judas); Docco; Return to Nazareth via the Jordan Valley; stay in Nazareth with Mary; Capernaum.

May Teaching in Galilee around Capernaum; curing of Peter's mother-in-law in Capernaum; Miraculous catch of fish; Korazim; Merom; Jesus leaves alone for Jerusalem for Pentecost.

June Jerusalem, (John comes to join Jesus); Gethsemane; Pilgrimage to Bethlehem with John, Simon and Judas; Hebron; meeting with the shepherds; Jutta; Hebron; Kerioth; Jerusalem; Eschol Valley; Jericho, Mount of Temptation; three days in

the desert; oasis north of the Dead Sea; Jericho (sale of Aglae's jewelry); return to Jerusalem; Bethpage.

July Bethany (first visit to Lazarus); Jerusalem; Jericho; Docco; return to Galilee; Esdrelon Plain; (meeting with Jonas the shepherd); Nazareth; (Instruction to the apostles); Capernaum; Korazim (healing of the Korazim Beauty); Capernaum; Bethsaida; Capernaum.

August Tiberias; Capernaum; Cana; Nazareth; Tiberias; Naim; Nazareth; Cana; Tiberias, Lebanon Plain, Hermon; Teaching in Upper Galilee; Nazareth.

September Nazareth; Ptolemais; Nazareth; (death of Alpheus); Tiberias; Nazareth; Tiberias; Capernaum; Lake Merom (grape harvest); Nazareth; Esdrelon Plain; Nazareth (death of Jonas); Capernaum; Lake Merom; Tiberias; Departure by wagon for Jerusalem (Tabernacles); Jabok; Jordan ford; Jericho; Bethany; Gethsemane; Jerusalem.

October Bethany; Arimathea; Teaching in Judea around Jerusalem.

November Gethsemane; Bethany; The Clear Water Refuge, north of Jericho; Teaching at the Clear Water.

December Teaching at the Clear Water; Docco; Bethany; Encenies (feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah, festival of light) at the home of Lazarus; Return to the Clear Water.

*

We now know that in the public life of Jesus, Maria Valtorta's work answers the questions **Where?** and **When?** Let us now see whether it also answers the question **Who?**

THE EYE WITNESSES

“The Apostles were twelve in number; the disciples, the first Gospel ministers, numbered seventy two, but the other disciples, or primary witnesses, were innumerable!”

Nicephorus Callistus, *Ecclesiastical History* I, II c. 45.

“People from every town [were] finding their way to Him...” Luke 8, 4

Even the most superficial reader cannot escape the impression of life that emanates from Maria Valtorta’s work throughout its six thousand pages. This is partly due to the multitude of characters that Jesus met during his innumerable journeys, these *crowds* to whom the Evangelists continually bear witness.

The work describes over five hundred *principal characters*, designated nominally, whose words and actions are detailed enough to establish the *psychological profile*, as we would say today, of each one. To these main roles, must still be added some two or three hundred secondary characters, designated simply by their names or their statuses, such as *the mother-in-law, a neighbour, a peasant, an old woman, the servant, a blind man*, etc. This crowd of eye witnesses to the life of Jesus on earth has been analysed in minute detail by History and Tradition. A systematic study has enabled me to identify over two hundred people, the memory of whom has come down to us through age-old testimonies. Not only does Maria Valtorta bring them to life in their historical context, but for each of them she describes the circumstances that determined their decisive choices for or against Jesus, leading some to martyrdom, others to deicide. Once again, it is of course impossible to give an exhaustive view here of all these destinies¹⁷³. As in previous chapters, I will limit these to a few examples, taken here and there.

¹⁷³ This study is the object of the *Dictionary of the New Testament characters*, a work in collaboration with F-M Debroise and Mgr R. Laurentin, 2012 Ed. Salvator.

The twelve Apostles

The apostolic college, made up of the first twelve disciples of Jesus, is known to us through several evangelical testimonies¹⁷⁴. *“Here are the names of the twelve Apostles. The first, Simon, known as Peter, and Andrew, his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James, son of Alpheus and Thaddeus; Simon the Zealot (or the Canaanite), and Judas Iscariot, who was also His betrayer”*¹⁷⁵.

There are, however, a few variants in the different texts that mention the Apostles, which have given rise to diverse hypotheses and debates over the centuries. In Maria Valtorta’s work, the group of the Twelve is perfectly defined, without the least ambiguity and the details that she gives reconcile the different New Testament texts easily and naturally:

Simon-Peter and his brother, **Andrew** are the sons of Jonah. **James** and his brother **John** are the sons of Zebedee and Mary Salome. **James** and his brother **Judas** are the sons of Alpheus and Mary of Cleophas. They are first cousins, *brothers* of Jesus. **Matthew**, the son of Levi; **Philip**; **Nathanael**, *son of Tholmai* (hence his other designation *Bar Tholmai*: Bartholomew); **Thomas Didymus** (who has a twin sister); **Simon** called the Zealot or the Canaanite, (which distinguishes him from Simon Peter); and finally, **Judas** of Kerioth, complete the group.

Among these first twelve privileged witnesses there are two in particular on whom Maria Valtorta’s account sheds some very convincing light: Judas and Simon.

¹⁷⁴ Particularly Matthew 10, 1-4; Mark 3, 13-19; Luke 6, 12-16; Acts 1, 13

¹⁷⁵ Matthew 10, 1-4; Mark 3, 13-19; Luke 6, 12-16; Acts 1, 13.

(continued on following page...)

As this is Simon the Zealot, some people, following the example of Hegesippus¹⁷⁶, identified him as the brother of James (Christ's cousin). Maria Valtorta totally debunks this dubious hypothesis¹⁷⁷, showing him as the leper¹⁷⁸ healed by Jesus at the very beginning of His public life. He owned a house in Bethany¹⁷⁹, and was the one who introduced Jesus to Lazarus. Neither is he to be confused with Simon, the Pharisee of Capernaum (Luke 7, 36-50), as others also thought, apparently confusing the anointing by Mary Magdalene, *the repentant sinner*, at the house of Simon the Pharisee of Capernaum and that of Mary Magdalene, by then *the disciple*, anointing Jesus again at the house of Simon the Zealot, in Bethany (John 12, 1-8, and cf. Matthew, Mark and John).

As for Judas, some translations refer to him as *the son of James*, interpreting the expression *Iudas Iacobi*, used by Saint Jerome when he wrote the Vulgate. But this expression can also be translated as *Judas, the one of James*, or literally, *Judas of James*¹⁸⁰. This precision, joined to Judas's name, distinguishes him from Judas of Kerioth. Indeed, to name him simply *Judas*, would have been to risk confusion with *Judas the traitor*, which is perhaps also the reason why, elsewhere, Judas is designated by his nicknames Thaddeus (Mark 3, 16-19; Matthew 10, 2-4) or Lebbeus, as indicated in some ancient Greek manuscripts. In addition, John also stipulates: "*Judas, not the Iscariot*" (John 14, 22) and Judas himself says in his work: "*And let us*

¹⁷⁶ Quoted by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III, 2.

¹⁷⁷ Simon the Apostle must have been born about the year 20 BC, as he participated in the revolt against Judas the Gaulonite, in 6 AD, earning himself the nickname "*Zealot*". The other Simon, cousin of Jesus, succeeded his brother James as Bishop of Jerusalem and died at the very end of the first century.

¹⁷⁸ Simon even says that what he had was in fact hereditary serpigio.

¹⁷⁹ See Matthew 26, 3; Mark 14, 3.

¹⁸⁰ This is the translation adopted by the Osty Bible, or the Chouraki Bible, according to the Greek version of the Codex Bezae Cantabrigensis (καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰακώβου).

remember my namesake only as one who is in need of prayer”^{203.4}.

“Then the Lord designated seventy two others”

Luke 10, 1

“Everyone is perfectly aware of the names of the Saviour’s Apostles according to the Gospel. As for the list of the seventy disciples, it does not exist anywhere”. This is what Eusebius of Caesarea wrote in Book 1, 12 of his *Ecclesiastical History*. It should not then come as a surprise to us to read the impressive list of first-century saints counted among the seventy two disciples¹⁸¹ by diverse hagiographers, starting with Dorothea of Tyre, each one attempting to fill in this blank. It does seem impossible today to prove the historical authenticity of one list or another. But, whether through the indications of the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, or other first-century authors, many are the eye-witnesses to the life of Jesus on earth whose names have come down to us, names that Tradition *unanimously* places within the ranks of the seventy two disciples.

So, for example, Luke (Acts 6, 1-16) nominally designates the first seven deacons chosen shortly after the Resurrection. Of these seven, Maria Valtorta brings at least four to life for us: Stephen, Philip, Timoneus and Nicolaus. St. Stephen, the first martyr is well-known, but this is not the case for the three others. Yet, what she says of them is in line with the most ancient traditions...

¹⁸¹ Or *seventy*, according to the manuscripts of the tradition of Alexandria (cf. the Sinai Codex) and the tradition of Caesarea.

Timoneus, head of the synagogue in the Jordan valley

We learn from Catholic, Orthodox, Coptic and Greek Orthodox¹⁸² traditions that Timoneus the deacon evangelised the Corinth region, where he was martyred. Saint Dimitri of Rostov says that he was thrust into a blazing oven, came out unscathed, then died. He is said to have evangelised Cyprus, Phoenicia and Arabia. He was successively, Bishop of Tyre, then of Bosra, where he baptised many Greeks and Jews. In *The Gospel as revealed to me*, he discovers the teachings of Jesus at the Clear Water, at the end of the first year of the public life. As the young head of the synagogue¹⁸³, he refused to give in to pressure from the Scribes and Pharisees, who had come to have Aglae, a repentant sinner, cursed and stoned. He is then dismissed from his post by the Sanhedrin and becomes a disciple of Jesus. He returns for a while to his *“mother, who comes from Aera, where she has a little house”*^{138.3}. The fact that Aera is less than 40 km from Bosra, where Timoneus was bishop, reinforces the plausibility of these indications! And when Jesus praises him in this way: *“Timoneus, a wise head of the synagogue of the old Law, who is now most wise because he renews it in the light of the new Law”*^{297.1}, it becomes clear why the Apostles later retained him as one of the seven deacons.

Philip, the bad son, who became an evangeliser

Philip the deacon must be distinguished from Philip the Apostle. Catholics celebrate his feast day on June 6th, Orthodox Christians on October 11th. He was married and the father of four virgins, who were prophets. He died around 70 AD, on the 8th day of the ides of July, according to St. Jerome, who adds

¹⁸² Who celebrate Timon's feast day respectively on April 19th, November 5th and on July 28th and December 30th.

¹⁸³ Perhaps in the village of Naarath, near the Clear Water, 10 km north of Jericho.

that three of his daughters are buried with him and the fourth is buried in Ephesus. He is said to have evangelised Samaria (hence his nickname, The Evangelist). He is also believed to have converted Simon the Magician and an Ethiopian eunuch of Queen Candace at Gaza on the road to Jerusalem. In about 58 AD Paul of Tarsus and Luke the Evangelist stayed at his home, where the incident with Agabus (Agapè) took place (Acts 21, 10-14). A later tradition designates him as bishop of Lydia, in Tralles (modern-day Aydin). He is thought to have translated the Hebrew or Aramaic version of the Gospel according to Matthew. In Maria Valtorta's account, his mother comes to beg Jesus to help her, as he was then a cruel son. He converted and became one of the seventy two disciples. Fara, the proprietor of the Bozrah hotel, praises the zeal of the new disciple: *"If this region ever becomes holy, Philip, son of Jacob will have the merit of having sanctified it. And if there is anyone who believes in You in Bozrah, it is thanks to him."*^{292.4} Jesus stays at his house in Arbela for five days: *"Bless the rain! It also helped to keep You in my house for five days"*^{296.1} he says happily.

Nicolaus, Deacon of Antioch rehabilitated?

Nicolaus, a Greek convert from Antioch (Acts 6, 5) is a controversial figure. According to Eusebius of Caesarea¹⁸⁴ *"He practised asceticism, considering bodily desires as unimportant and preached community life"*, which is quite a favourable remark. It seems, however, that his disciples, the Nicolaitans, used the prestige of his name to pervert his ideas. Apocalypse 2, 6 declares: *"You loathe, as I do, the way the Nicolaitans are behaving"*. Irenaeus of Lyons¹⁸⁵ also denounces the licentiousness and loose morals of the Nicolaitans. They

¹⁸⁴ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3, 3, 29, quoting Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3, 4, 25 f.

¹⁸⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.26.3 ; 3.10.6.

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promoted the marriage of priests¹⁸⁶, became heretics and are thought to have originated a Gnostic branch, the Arcontes. In 1054, Cardinal Humbert da Silva Candida, in a letter addressed to an Oriental monk, Nicetas, reproaches him for promoting the marriage of priests. He accuses Nicolaus personally, but not the Nicolaitans: *“The accursed deacon Nicolaus, the prince of this heresy, came straight out of hell”*.

In Maria Valtorta’s work, the first contact with Nicolaus occurs during a journey with the Apostles to Antioch: *“Nicolaus is a Nazirite”*^{323.7}, which is exactly what Eusebius says of him. He comes to meet Jesus in Capernaum, just when many people, scandalized by the speech about the Bread of Life, are leaving Him, which earns him this praise from Jesus: *“A man who becomes a disciple because he knows that My human cause is already lost, can only be a righteous spirit”*. He adds, for John’s sake: *“I solemnly tell you that the Apostle Judas of Simon, an Israelite and Judean, will never go as far as Nicolaus, a disciple and proselyte”*^{355.8}. Can we read into this statement a rehabilitation of the deacon Nicolaus, a misunderstood ascetic, betrayed by his disciples?

They drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias

Acts 1, 26

Matthias, designated by lot to replace Judas as an Apostle, followed Jesus from the first days, as Peter says in the Acts (1, 21): *“He is one of those who have been with us the whole time that the Lord Jesus was living with us”*. Clement of Alexandria¹⁸⁷ presents him as a preacher of penitence waging war against the flesh, and quotes him: *“Develop your soul by faith and reason”*. Origen mentions a Gospel written by

¹⁸⁶ Epiphanius of Salamis (3rd century), *Panarion* cap 25.

¹⁸⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3, 4.

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Matthias¹⁸⁸ as well as Eusebius of Caesarea¹⁸⁹ but Pope Innocent I condemned this text as apocryphal. It seems that Matthias followed Jesus from the day of His baptism by John the Baptist. According to *The Golden Legend* by Jacques de Voragine, (circa 1260) Matthias, who came from a tribe of Juda, was born in Bethlehem. “*He quickly learned the science of the Law and the Prophets and led a virtuous life*”. The renowned Dr. Sepp¹⁹⁰ states that “*Matthias, born in Bethlehem, was one of the young shepherds who witnessed the Nativity*”, but does not give his sources. According to Nicephorus Callistus¹⁹¹, when the Apostles dispersed to go and preach the Gospel, Matthias went to Egypt, then to Ethiopia, where he remained for almost thirty three years. He came back to Jerusalem and was denounced to the High Priest Ananias, who had him stoned and beheaded in front of the Temple in 63 or 64 AD¹⁹².

Once again, Maria Valtorta’s text is perfectly coherent with all these traditions. The young shepherd, Tobias, aged about fifteen¹⁹³, lives in Bethlehem and was there for the birth of Jesus^{30.9}. The meeting with Jesus as an adult takes place in June, in the year 27 AD “*Tobias, who now wants to be called Matthias in memory of his father*”^{75.4}. Jesus is quick to praise his qualities: “*You are right, Matthias, Wisdom is with you*”^{127.3}. Before he died, John the Baptist, to whom he remained faithful to the end, said to Jesus: “*Matthias really possesses Wisdom*”^{148.2}. From then on, the Apostles were often with Matthias. They thought so

¹⁸⁸ Origen, *Sermon to Luke*, I.

¹⁸⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3, 25.

¹⁹⁰ Dr. J.N. Sepp, *Vie de N.S. Jésus*, Flatau, 1866 (vol 1, p. 179).

¹⁹¹ A monk and Byzantine historian (circa 1350), *Ecclesiastical History*, 2, 40.

¹⁹² If these figures are correct, this would indicate that he left Judea in 30 AD, which would be yet another argument against the theory of those who date the Crucifixion in 33 AD.

¹⁹³ Martyred in 63 AD, so aged about 80, which is plausible.

highly of him that they made him a candidate to fill the vacant place left by the death of Judas.

Marjiam, the Evangeliser of Aquitaine.

Among the many disciples of Jesus that Maria Valtorta brings to life for us, who can forget the lovable figure of young Jabez (Yabesh)? Shortly before his twelfth birthday, all the members of his family have died tragically and he tries to survive for a whole winter hidden in the woods. Taken in by Jesus at the beginning of the year 28, he slowly regains confidence, becomes the adopted son of Peter and Porphyria and is given the name Marjiam by Mary at his Bar Mitzvah, when he becomes a *Son of the Law*. Jesus already prophesies his destiny: *“When you are big, you will be a holy man of God, like a doctor, you will preach Jesus, Who has given you a new mother here and Who will open the gates of heaven to your dead mother and to your father and will open them also to you, when your hour comes. You will not even need to climb the long ladder of Heaven when you die, because you will have climbed it during your lifetime by being a good disciple”*^{194.2}. Very receptive to the teachings of Jesus, he is even one of the first to whom Jesus reveals his future Passion so that he will not be revolted: - *“Let me die in Your place...”* *“You are to preach Me all over the world. That is settled. But listen. I will die happy because I know that you love Me. Then I will rise from the dead (...) And I will come to you at once and I will say to you: ‘Little Marjiam, your tears quenched My thirst. Your love kept Me company in the Sepulchre. I have now come to say to you: Be my Priest’ ”*^{291.5}. He quickly becomes an example to all, and Jesus declares: *“You are the head of the boy disciples. When you are a man, remember that you were as good a disciple as men, and so open your arms to all the children who come to you*

seeking Me and saying: 'I want to be a disciple of Christ' ”^{308.5}. As Marjiam encourages the new disciple Anastasica, Jesus makes this new prediction, difficult to grasp fully at the time:

“*Marjiam is good company for anybody. It is a difficult virtue and so necessary for his future mission. I am taking care to foster this happy disposition in him, because it will be very useful to him*”^{366.2}. But only at the end of the work do these words become clear, several thousand pages later, when the Risen Christ entrusts this mission to him: “*And you, Marjiam, My child, from now on **you will be called Martial...** and may this name, Oh Martial, show you your future destiny: **be the apostle in barbarian countries** and conquer them to your Lord*”^{638.20}. Some of the numerous details that Maria Valtorta gives on the future Saint Martial deserve a closer look.

His place of birth

Maria Valtorta locates Marjiam’s birthplace between Siloh and Bethel, in the north of the territory of Benjamin^{194,1-2}. This is exactly what is indicated in Fortunat’s¹⁹⁴, *Ode to Saint Martial*, very ancient manuscripts¹⁹⁵, three of which still exist. In the sixteenth century, A. Thévet¹⁹⁶ Chaplain to Catherine of Medicis, even indicates that three leagues from Rama¹⁹⁷, in the village of Arouha, there was an old church, restored by order of Charlemagne in 810, in honour of St. Martial, “*a native of this place*”. How could Maria Valtorta have had any knowledge of this information, which appears only in ancient and extremely rare French documents?

¹⁹⁴ Venance Fortunat (530 – 609), Bishop of Poitiers circa 600..

¹⁹⁵ Apart from the fact that it confirms Martial as a contemporary of Peter’s, the text says “*Benjamita tribus te gessit*” (*The tribe of Benjamins saw your birth*).

¹⁹⁶ Brother André Thévet (1516 – 1690) *Cosmographie Universelle* 1575 (Book VI Chap. VII, page 169)

¹⁹⁷ Three leagues: about 15 km, which situates the village halfway between Siloh and Bethel.

His strange name of Marjiam

This curious name, given to little Jabez by the Virgin Mary, gives rise to some comments in the work: “Yes, Jabez wants a name meaning that I have saved him. You will find one for him, Mother. A name of love and of salvation”.

*Mary is pensive... then she says: Marjiam (Maarhgziam). You are **the little drop in the sea**¹⁹⁸ of those saved by Jesus. Do you like it? This name of Salvation will also remind you of Me.” “It is beautiful”, says the boy joyfully. “But, isn’t it a woman’s name?” asks Bartholomew. “With an L at the end instead of an M, when this tiny drop of mankind grows up, you can change his name into a man’s name. For the time being, he has the name that his Mother has given him. Isn’t that so?”^{198.8}*

Then, further on: “What’s your name?” “Marjiam”. “Of course! But my Blessed Mary could have given you an easier name!” “It’s almost Hers!” exclaims Salome. “Yes, but Hers is simpler. There aren’t all those consonants in the middle of it... There are too many of them...” The Iscariot, who has just come in, says: “She chose the precise name, for what it means, according to the ancient language”^{199.2}

These conversations should surely be studied by linguists. It seems that *Mariam* is the Aramaic variant of the Hebrew *Myriam*, whereas *Mar-yam* would appear to be the Chaldean variant^{199?} But, I confess, I am out of my depth here!

Peter’s adopted son

It seems that there are no traditions mentioning Martial as Peter’s adopted son. However, the fact that he was a contemporary of Peter’s and that he followed him from

¹⁹⁸ This etymological explanation by the Hebrew *mar yam* = *drop from the sea*, “affirmed” by this dialogue, is still considered by certain people as “purely poetical”

¹⁹⁹ See, for example, Dr. Sepp, *Jésus-Christ, Etudes sur sa vie et sa doctrine*, 1866, page 19.

(continued on following page...)

Jerusalem to Antioch, then to Rome is now historically attested²⁰⁰.

The young boy at the Multiplication of the Loaves

Adémar de Chabannes, a monk at the St. Martial Abbey in Limoges (*Vita prolixior* in the 9th century) identifies him with the young boy who gave the loaves and the fish to Jesus for their multiplication. Maria Valtorta's text *confirms* this tradition, even showing that Martial was the first person to believe in the miracle: "*Oh! How heavy it is!*" says Marjiam, lifting his basket and going straight towards his little friends. He walks as if he were carrying a heavy burden. The Apostles, the disciples and Manaen, the scribe, watch him go and do not know what to think" ^{273.4}.

His mission as an Evangeliser

In *L'Eglise métropolitaine primatiale St André de Bordeaux*²⁰¹, the Canon Hierosme Lopès indicates that the young Martial followed St. Peter and went with him to Antioch, then to Rome. From Rome, Peter sent him to Gaul to preach. Mgr. Cirot de la Ville was even able to establish a map of Saint Martial's itinerary: Rome, Ravenna, Marseille, Bourges, Tours, Limoges, Angoulême, Saintes, Noviomagus (capital of the Médoc region). Declared *Apostle of Aquitaine* by Pierre Roger of Limoges²⁰² (1291-1352) Martial was considered in the Middle

²⁰⁰ See in particular the highly documented studies by the Abbé Arbellot, *Dissertation sur l'apostolat de Saint Martial* 1855; by Mgr Cirot de la Ville, *Origines chrétiennes de Bordeaux* 1867; by the Abbé Gordière *Recherches sur la prédication de l'Évangile dans les Gaules au premier siècle*, 1867, particularly pages 14 and 15; or those by the Abbé Corblet, *Dissertation sur les origines de la foi chrétienne dans les Gaules* which, in 16 pages, (published by les Petits Bollandistes) summarises the situation very well.

²⁰¹ New edition by the Abbé Gallen, published by Feret et fils, 1882 (p. 109), from the original book, published by Lacourt in 1668.

²⁰² Later Pope Clement VI (1342-1352). His papal bull "*Piam Sanctorum memoriam recolendam*" praises St. Martial, mentions his particular devotion to the Apostle and orders his feast day to be placed in the rank of the doubles, like those of the other apostles, and celebrated throughout Aquitaine.

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Ages as the first evangeliser of Limoges²⁰³, Toulouse and Bordeaux²⁰⁴. He was the founder of the Saint-Etienne cathedral, and the first bishop of Toulouse. Immemorial tradition dates this cathedral and the corresponding bishopric from apostolic times. In this evangelisation, he is intimately associated with Saint Veronica and Zacheus (St. Amadour).

A certain Joseph, known as *The Just*

Joseph, known as The Just, is a disciple of whom the Scriptures reveal only his name and the fact that he was presented to the Apostles, with Matthias, as a candidate to succeed Judas. “*Joseph, called Barsabbas*²⁰⁵, *known as Justus*” (Acts of the Apostles 1, 23). We learn from Eusebius²⁰⁶ that he was one of the seventy two disciples mentioned by Luke. He adds²⁰⁷ that Papias, informed by the daughters of the Apostle Philip, affirmed that “*The Just, known as Barsabbas, drank a mortal poison and, by the grace of the Lord, was not harmed by it*”. Persecuted by the Jews for his faith in Christ, he is said to have had a glorious death. Saint Adon, a Benedictine monk and Bishop of Vienna, listed him in his martyrology. His feast day is on July 20th.

Maria Valtorta tells us much more about this little-known disciple: he escaped death as a newborn during the massacre of

²⁰³ It was only from the 17th century that Canon Descordes, Jean de Launoy (1603-1678), (designated by Pope Benedict XIV as “*an impudent liar and a contemptible writer*”), and a few other “*brilliant minds*” attacked the traditions, affirming that the main churches of France did not go back further than the second half of the 3rd century. Although it was never proved – far from it – this hypothesis became widely accepted in so-called intellectual circles of the time

²⁰⁴ The discovery in 1955 of 2nd century “*Christian symbols*” (l’ascia: the axe) on tombs near the church dedicated to Saint Stephen in Bordeaux archaeologically confirms the antiquity of this place of worship.

²⁰⁵ Re: a possible confusion between *Barsabbas* and *Barnabas*, see the chapter “*These words remained hidden from them*”

²⁰⁶ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, I, 12.

²⁰⁷ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 39.

the Holy Innocents, thanks to his father's sacrifice. Jesus meets him at the very beginning of His public life. He is the only disciple who received the same instruction given to the Apostles in Nazareth: *"I am keeping this son (pointing to Joseph) because I will delegate to him the task of spreading My words to his companions, so that a strong nucleus will be formed there. They will announce Me, not only by saying that I exist, but also by the most essential characteristics of My doctrine."*^{91.1}. The Apostles, as well as the disciples, are struck by his wisdom and intelligence. *Thaddeus says: "Joseph. You know that this is a very promising young man? Yes, Isaac is an angel but his strength is wholly spiritual. But Joseph is strong, even physically so. He is our age"*²⁰⁸. *And he learns easily. Did you hear what Hermas said? If he had been educated, he would have been a Rabbi as well as a just man. And Hermas knows what he's talking about"*^{334.2}. He is injured in the Cedron gorge with Elijah (a premise of future persecutions). *"It is glorious for me to shed my blood for You, as my father shed his long ago. I bless you for having made me worthy of this!"*^{418.5} Jesus heals him.

²⁰⁸ According to the information in the work, he is then about thirty, and Judas barely two or three years older.

Full house at the Sanhedrin

The Sanhedrin or great council was the high court of justice, the supreme tribunal of the Jews. Its name²⁰⁹, its role and its organization are known to us through the Bible²¹⁰ and through many Talmudic or historical texts²¹¹. There were theoretically 71 members in the Sanhedrin, including the president. There were three more or less defined groups: the Chief of the priests, the Scribes and the Elders. Each group was made up of 23 members (69 in all), in addition to the president (*nasi*) and his deputy (*ab bet din*).

- The Chamber of the Priests was in charge of the administration of sacrifices... The majority of its members were Sadducees, more or less Herodian allies. They did not believe in resurrection and rigorously applied Mosaic Law.

- The Chamber of the Scribes, or sages, or doctors of the Law, was made up of teachers, mostly Pharisees. Their main accusation against Jesus was that no teacher can teach by his own authority. As jurists, they were to quote at least one authority to justify the laws.

- The Chamber of the Elders, or councillors, was comprised of the richest town worthies and influential people. Many of these were Pharisees, but some disapproved of the rigour of the Scribes. They had no judiciary power.

At the beginning of the first century AD, the Sanhedrin set up preliminary lawsuit enquiries and passed sentences, but only the Roman Procurator²¹² could pronounce the death penalty. This is quite well known and Maria Valtorta's readers will

²⁰⁹ From the Greek *syn* (with) and *hedra* (seat).

²¹⁰ Numbers 11, 16-17; Proverbs 22, 10; 31, 23; Matthew 26, 57-59; Mark 14, 53; Luke 22, 66; John 11, 47; Acts 5, 21; 6, 12, etc.

²¹¹ Mainly Mishna, Sanhedrin and Makkoth; Flavius Josephus.

²¹² The emperor Augustus took away this right (*le jus gladii*) from the Sanhedrin after the destitution of Archelaus, and the nomination of Coponius as Procurator circa 7 AD. (Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities* 17, Chap 13, 1-5, and Talmud, *Sanhedrin* folio 24). Tacitus even added: *The Romans keep the right of the glaive and neglect the rest*. The Sanhedrin still retained the power to excommunicate, to imprison, to scourge; but they no longer had the right to pronounce the death penalty.

hardly be surprised to see that they are part of the story, as witness this discussion with Pilate during the Passion: “*He is liable to death according to our law.*” “*And since when has the “jus gladii et sanguinis” been given back to you?” (...)*” “*We are aware that we do not have that right. We are loyal subjects of Rome...*”^{604.20}. But if it is relatively simple to understand the role and the organisation of the Sanhedrin at the time of Jesus, it is quite a different matter to discover the list of its members.

The most detailed study on this question, as I have already mentioned, is undoubtedly the one published by the Lemann brothers, Augustine and Joseph, in 1877. It is highly improbable that Maria Valtorta could have known this in 1944, and yet, any attentive reader will find innumerable clues, sprinkled throughout the work, enabling the piecemeal reconstruction of the Sanhedrin membership in the year 30 AD. The names of all the former and future high priests who were contemporaries of Jesus can also be found in the work, along with those of many other members, some of whose names only appear once or twice in the whole of the Talmudic literature. Several of these names are phonetically transcribed by Maria Valtorta, which further complicates their identification. So it is when we read: “*this other one is Callascebona the Elder*”^{123.6}, who is clearly the wealthy Jerusalem notable, ben Calba Scheboua, whose daughter, Rachel, later became the wife of the famous Rabbi Akiba. Also when Maria Valtorta hears “*And over there, Doro the Elder and Trison*”^{378.3}, the diminutive of Dorothea ben Nathanael is recognisable, in the company of Tryphon ben Theudion²¹³. Similarly, when Jesus puts the question (cf. Luke 14, 1-6) “*Is it lawful to cure on a Sabbath?*” to the old Scribe

²¹³ They were sent by the Jerusalem Jews as deputies to the Emperor Claudius in 44 – 45 AD under the governor Cuspius Fadus. (Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities* XX, 1, 1, 2.) Elsewhere in the work, Maria Valtorta correctly calls him Trifon

Chanania”^{335.13}, the person that He addresses is incontestably the renowned Scribe Chanania ben Chiskia.

As for “*Giocana, the Pharisee, a relative of Doras*”^{109.2}, with whom Jesus exchanges some heated words, he is Yokhanan ben Zakkai, considered as one of the masters of the Talmud²¹⁴.

Of the twenty members of the Chamber of Priests, known to us through diverse traditions, Maria Valtorta names sixteen, but she also mentions three additional, hitherto *unmentioned*, others. So, twenty three out of twenty four possible members are now *identified*.

Maria Valtorta names twelve of the fourteen *known* members of the Chamber of Scribes, but she mentions ten other names that are not yet identified by other sources, so completing the list of the twenty four members of this Chamber (including the president).

Finally, she mentions eleven of the fourteen known members of the Chamber of Elders, to which she adds 7 new names, bringing the list of this Chamber to twenty one *identified* members.

If we take into account the information provided by Maria Valtorta, there are no fewer than 68 of the members of the Sanhedrin in the year 30 AD who can be designated by their names today, out of 71 possible members!

This result is even more unexpected as the different members of the Sanhedrin appear at random here and there in the work, during different events and often very discreetly, to

²¹⁴ A prestigious synagogue in the old town of Jerusalem bears his name.
(continued on following page...)

the point that only a systematic and meticulous study can establish an inventory of them all²¹⁵.

The Female Roman notables

Among the crowds of those who make friends with Jesus, the case of the female Roman notables deserves particular attention. Whether it be Claudia Procula , Plautina, Valeria or the two Domitillas (Albula, the mother and her daughter Flavia), or even Livia (the only one whose historicity I am still researching), each one played a role within the first Christian communities, as History and Tradition mention or attest in some ancient documents.

“Have nothing to do with that Just Man.”

Mt 27, 19

Matthew is the only Evangelist who mentions Pilate’s wife, in a simple verse, without even naming her. Is she the same *Claudia* that St. Paul mentions in his epistle to Timothy (2 Tm 4, 21) when he writes: “*Eubule, Pudens, Lin et Claudia te saluent*”? There is nothing else on Pilate’s wife in the Holy Scriptures.

However, in *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*, Pilate’s wife plays a major role and often intervenes. Maria Valtorta shows her as present at the miraculous healing of a leper, listening intently to the words of the “*wise Galilean*”, then taking this “*great philosopher*” under her wing. Little by little, she grows in faith, to the point that she declares after the Crucifixion: “*It is better to be persecuted by men than by the Most High, whose Messiah was the Master*”^{630.13}. Throughout the story, the reader

²¹⁵ There is a synthesis of this study on internet at this address: <http://www.maria-valtorta.org/Personnages/Sanhedrin.htm>.

slowly discovers this “*beautiful woman about thirty years old (...) proud to belong to the Claudi family*”^{154.7}. The centurion Publius informs Jesus: “*Claudia speaks of You as of a great philosopher and this is good for You because... she is Claudia the Proconsul*”^{192.5}. When she meets Jesus later, she kneels, saying: “*And with me, Rome prostrates itself at Your feet*”^{370.19}. At the banquet at the house of Joanna, wife of Chouza, she confirms the power that she wields to Judas: “*I belong to the Claudi family. I have greater power than all the great men of Israel, because Rome is behind me*”^{371.3}. She witnesses several miracles, but her faith in Jesus, shaken for a time by the widespread calumny and malicious gossip, only becomes definitively firm when Jesus restores a tongue to Callistus, her mutilated slave, so curing him of his dumbness: “*So you really are the Just Man I foresaw*^{563.5} (...) *no one, that is, only You, can raise the dead and restore sight to the blind*”^{563.6}. And from that day on, her faith is unshakeable.

The tradition according to which she converted is attested from the 2nd century AD²¹⁶. Everything that we find here and there about Claudia Procula from Maria Valtorta’s text is in total harmony, not only with the ancient traditions, but also with the most recent historical hypotheses. The apocryphal *Gospel* said to be *according to Nicodemus* (circa 4th century?); a 1619 text, attributed to Lucius Flavius Dexter²¹⁷, the Greek Menologies and several other ancient authors do, in fact, name her Claudia Procula. The fact that she belonged to the Claudi family gave rise to several hypotheses. The one which seems to be the most plausible today is that she was the illegitimate daughter of Julia.

²¹⁶ Cf. Origene, *Sermons* – Matthew XXXV.

²¹⁷ *Chronicae*. An. 34 n° 2.

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This Julia²¹⁸ was married to Tiberius in 11 BC, at the command of Augustus, her father. Because of her life of debauchery, she was condemned to exile in 2 BC, following her affair with Julius Antonius²¹⁹. A putative adulterine birth with such a father was politically bound to secrecy, but is not at all implausible²²⁰.

According to this hypothesis, Claudia could have been born in 2 or 1 BC, which is fully concordant with Maria Valtorta, who says that she is about thirty years of age in 27 AD. She was sent by her mother to Tiberius, who is thought to have adopted her as his own daughter. By his marriage, Pilate would, in fact, have acquired support in *very high places*, which could explain his exceptional *longevity* in his post in Judaea. Note too that only high-ranking women accompanied their husbands on missions at that time²²¹.

Who was Plautina?

Let us now examine the personality of Plautina, a Patrician Roman lady, an “*intimate friend*” and “*probably a relative of Claudia’s*”^{158.4}. Maria Valtorta is impressed by her noble bearing: “*She reminds me of certain very beautiful statues of Roman Empresses*”. She adds, when she sees the other Roman ladies: “*I think that these ladies are inferior in rank to Plautina*”^{167.3}. A number of clues disseminated throughout the work (but too numerous to mention in this brief article) enable her immediate identification as the wife of Aulus Plautius (or

²¹⁸ The historical testimonies about Julia are many (Dion Cassius Roman History, LV, 10; Velleius Paterculus, *Roman Histories*, II, 100; Tacitus, *Annals* IV, 44; Macrobe, *Saturnales* 2, 5; etc.).

²¹⁹ The last living son of Mark Anthony, Julius was put to death for this reason.

²²⁰ This was the opinion of Giovanni Rosadi, *Il Processo di Gesù*, 1908.

²²¹ The ancient Oppia law forbade proconsuls to take their wives into the provinces that they governed. Although mitigated by a senates-consult, in the 1st century BC, it remained theoretically in force. Magistrates sometimes obtained derogations, but they had to take full responsibility for any misdemeanours that their wives might commit

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Plautinus), one of the leading figures of the Empire at that time, and the future conqueror of Great Britain between 43 and 47 AD. The historical testimonies concerning her are many and particularly concordant²²², unlike those referring to Claudia. Plautina, (also known as “*Plautiana*” or “*Plautilla*”) belonged to the Julio-Claudia family, (so she was, in fact, a relative of Claudia Procula’s!) and was called Pomponia Græcina before her marriage. She was the daughter of the consul Gaius Pomponius Græcinus²²³. Her uncle, the consul Lucius Pomponius Flaccus²²⁴ was also the governor of Syria in 35 AD.

Converted to Christianity

The life that she led in Rome from the year 43, was “*an austere and worthy existence*” that she “*officially*” explained away as mourning for her cousin Julia, daughter of Drusus, executed because of Messalina’s jealousy. After fourteen years of a life of retirement, she was accused of “*foreign superstition*” and “*unauthorised religious occupations*”. At that time, this almost exclusively meant “*conversion to Christianity*”, as the Jewish faith was tolerated in Rome, and the pagan rites of Egypt or Syria were not compatible with Plautina’s way of life. Given her husband’s rank, he himself had to decide her fate, according to Roman law and she was acquitted²²⁵.

²²² Dion Cassius, *Roman History* LX 19-21, 30; Suetonius, *Life of the Caesars* (Claudius²⁴ and Vespasian 4); Tacitus, *Agricola* 14; *Annals* 13, 32.

²²³ Suffect Consul in 16 AD.

²²⁴ Dom Guéranger, *Sainte Cécile et la Société romaine aux deux premiers siècles* 1879, chap. 4, p. 87 even puts forward the hypothesis that his son Flaccus is the young man who wanted to marry Flavia Petronilla (Saint Petronilla), Plautina’s protégée!

²²⁵ Note in passing that Henryk Sienkiewicz, in his historical novel *Quo Vadis?* 1895, makes Plautina the adoptive mother of his heroine, Ligia.

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Plautina and Saint Lucina

Paul Allard²²⁶ wondered whether “*Pomponia Græcina should not be identified with the great lady, whom we know only by her agnomen, probably symbolic and baptismal: Lucina*”. The illustrious archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi, and later Dom Guéranger came to the same conclusion, and identified Pomponia Græcina Plautiana with Saint Lucina, a donator who opened one of the most ancient Christian hypogeums, (underground burial vaults) in a property on the Via Apia, situated under land that had once belonged to the Pomponias. Saint Lucina is associated with the martyrs Processus and Martinian, two Roman officers, guards at the Mamertine prison, who were converted by their prisoner, Saint Peter (according to an attested 6th century legend). She is said to have visited them in prison and buried them after their execution in one of her properties on the Via Aurelia²²⁷. She is also thought to have buried the body of Saint Paul. Her feast day is on June 30th. The Greek Orthodox Church did not canonise her but considers her “*a pious woman and one of the first Roman noblewomen Christian converts*”. In *The 1944 notebooks* (on February 29th), Maria Valtorta gives us a version that is slightly different, but not necessarily incompatible. She mentions the martyrdom of one Lucina, “*the daughter of Faustus and Cecilia. She was not yet fourteen years old*”, while Plautina supports the first Roman martyrs along with Paul. It is not inconceivable that she took the name of Lucina²²⁸, at that time in memory of the young saint whose martyrdom had touched

²²⁶ Paul Allard, *Histoire des persécutions pendant les deux premiers siècles* 1884, chap. 2.

²²⁷ Source: *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 1904.

²²⁸ Dom Guéranger, op. cit. Ch 5, p.103, is categorical. Pomponia Plautina, wife of Plautius, did in fact take a baptismal cognomen: “*The noblewoman bore a name before which, in her eyes, that of the Pomponii was eliminated: she was called Lucina*”.

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her so deeply. However that may be, after assisting the faithful with her possessions, it would really seem to be Plautina who visited the Christian prisoners, and undertook the burial of the martyrs. She died a very old woman. Tacitus²²⁹ states that she lived 40 years after the death of Julia in 37 AD. So she probably died in about 77 AD. Maria Valtorta also illustrates throughout her work, that a Roman Patrician Lady, brought up in luxury and opulence, was the eye witness of the miracles of Christ. And History teaches that it had such a profound effect on her that she dedicated her life and her fortune in support of the budding Church in Rome.

A mother called Albula and her daughter Flavia

Albula, “*a buxom matron about fifty years old*”^{370.19} is Claudia’s confidante. Claudia says this to Judas about her: “*Always ask for Albula Domitilla. That is another name that I use*”^{371.3}. But for this fleeting remark, it is highly probable that “*Claudia’s freed woman*”^{604.34} would have entirely escaped our notice in the work. But when we discover that her daughter’s name is Flavia, that same Flavia who takes notes for her mistress: “*Flavia has written what you said. Claudia wants to know. Have you written everything? ‘I have written everything most accurately’, replies the woman, handing over the wax-covered tablets*”^{204.9}, then we sit up and pay attention. Could there be any connection with Saint Domitille, whose property in Rome concealed the famous catacombs? Thanks to Suetonius²³⁰ we can reconstruct the story of the “Domitillas”:

Albula Domitilla, whom Suetonius simply calls Domitilla, “*was not a Roman citizen*” and was married to Flavius Liberalis,

²²⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 13, 32.

²³⁰ See Suetonius, *Life of Vespasian*.

“a simple questor’s clerk of the X Ferentis legion”. (Precisely the legion in charge of Syria and Palestine!)

Their daughter, Flavia Domitilla, at her father’s request, was declared born free and a citizen of Rome by judgement of the Recuperators (a tribunal ruling on questions of property rights and civil status). She married Vespasian in 39/40. She was the mother of Titus, Domitian and Domitilla. She died in 69 AD. She is the person who appears beside Claudia and Plautina, taking notes on tablets²³¹.

Their granddaughter, Flavia Domitilla also died in 69 AD after giving birth to a daughter who was her namesake.

Their great-granddaughter, Flavia Domitilla (so, the granddaughter of the Emperor Vespasian) married Flavius Clemens, a consul. In 95 AD in the reign of Domitian, they were both accused of atheism, because they were Christians. Clemens was condemned to death and Domitilla exiled. She is venerated as Saint Domitilla.

So, Albula Domitilla was the mother-in-law of the Emperor Vespasian and the great-great-grandmother of Saint Domitilla. Her daughter Flavia’s future husband, Vespasian²³² (aged 19 in 28 AD) fought in Brittany under the orders of Aulus Plautius, Plautina’s husband! Flavia and Vespasian had three children: Titus, Domitian and Domitilla. Titus²³³ the eldest, married Plautilla, daughter of Plautius and Plautina! So Flavia’s presence beside Plautina and Claudia in Maria Valtorta’s work is totally supported by historical data. Also, to find them portrayed in the work as attentive disciples of Jesus sheds some light on the considerable support that these women brought to the early Church in Rome. Moreover, as Dom Guéranger²³⁴ already underlined in his time: “*The new archaeological*

²³¹ She is even thought to be the person who took the message to Pontius Pilate from Claudia, asking him to release Jesus. Does she take notes for Claudia because she was taught by her father, a clerk?

²³² Titus Flavius Vespasianus.

²³³ Titus Flavius Sabinus.

²³⁴ Dom Guéranger op. cit. *Introduction*, page X.

discoveries show clearly and beyond doubt that, from its beginnings in Rome, Christianity counted the elite of Polite Society within its ranks”.

The Jewish friends of Jesus

The Evangelists transmitted the names of some influential friends who supported Jesus during His brief public life: Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Joanna wife of Chouza, Lazarus, Manaen, Martha, and Mary Magdalene. These names are relatively familiar to us, but we must admit that we really know very few *facts* about them, that is, if we just confine ourselves to those provided in the Gospels. Maria Valtorta fills in these blanks admirably. Through their words and actions, we often see them working in favour of Jesus, listening to His teachings, asking His advice... So numerous are these occasions that I cannot condense them all here, under pain of giving too simplistic a view. I will therefore limit myself to a very brief account.

Joanna, Princess of Bether

Joanna is a young Jewish princess, the wife of Chouza, Herod’s steward. Miraculously cured of consumption by Jesus ²³⁵, she shows herself to be a grateful disciple, zealous and faithful. *“Do as You please, Lord. I leave everything to You: my past, my present and my future. I owe You everything and I give You everything. Give Your servant what You know is best”*^{102.7}. It is Joanna who introduces the notable Roman ladies to Jesus. *“When I lost my child and I was ill, they were very good to me, although I did not seek them. And afterwards, we remained friends. But if You tell me that it is wrong, I will put an end to*

²³⁵ Luke (8, 3) simply indicates *“and who had been cured of their illnesses”*, referring to Joanna and Suzanna.

it”^{158.3}. Her indefectible support of the Lord (Jesus said that “*she never tires of being good*”^{309.4}) earns her the right to be one of the first witnesses of the Resurrection

Joseph the Elder

Joseph of Arimathea, “*Counsellor of the Sanhedrin*”^{74.9}, is a friend of Nicodemus, but also of Lazarus (despite the misconduct of his sister). A very early disciple, he testifies: “*He who works miracles has God with Him. He who has God cannot be in sin. Indeed, He can only be one who is loved by God*”^{113.3} A prudent man, he decides, with Nicodemus, not to show himself openly as a disciple of Jesus, not out of cowardice, but in order to inform the Master of the threats coming from the Sanhedrin: “*It is better that way. If they know that we are His disciples, they will keep us in the dark about their thoughts and decisions, and will be able to harm Him and us. If instead they think that we are only enquiring into His life, they will not resort to subterfuges with us*”^{116.5}. True to his convictions, he boldly stands up to the enemies of Christ, when most of the others shy away: “*in a meeting, Joseph spoke heatedly to the Sanhedrin, calling them murderers because they wanted to kill an innocent, and he said: ‘Everything is illegal in here. He is right when He says that there is abomination in the house of the Lord. This altar is to be destroyed because it has been profaned’. They did not stone him, because he is **Joseph**. But since then, they have kept him in the dark about everything*”^{602.7}. Even at the Crucifixion, his courage does not fail him: “*Those who side with murderers are murderers, Eleazar of Annas. I have lived as a just man. And now, I am old and close to death. I do not want to become unjust now that Heaven is already descending upon me, and with it, the eternal Judge*”^{609.16}.

Nicodemus, Prince of the Jews

We know from Saint John that Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a Master in Israel and a member of the Sanhedrin. According to the Gospel and the Talmud²³⁶ he possessed a great fortune. He it was who used about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloe at the burial of Jesus Christ, which earned him this disdainful reply: *“And you too, are you a Galilean?”*²³⁷. A disciple he certainly was, but in secret, like his friend, Joseph the Elder: *“I am not acting entirely out of cowardice. It is also prudence and the desire to be of greater assistance to You than if I belonged to You openly. You have many enemies. I am one of the few **here** who admire You”*^{116.4}. Just before the Ascension, Jesus thanks His disciples: *“You, Joseph, and you, Nicodemus, who took pity on the Christ when to do so might have been very dangerous”*^{638.19}

After the Passion, Nicodemus proposes: *“Then, with regard to the Shrouds, since I am no longer a Hebrew and consequently no longer subject to the prohibition of Deuteronomy concerning carved images and castings, I was thinking of making a **statue of Jesus crucified** as best I can – I will use one of my gigantic cedars of Lebanon – and **of concealing one of the Shrouds inside it**, the first one, if You, Mother, will give it back to us”*^{644.6}.

²³⁶ Talmud of Babylon, *Gitlin* treaty or treaty of Divorces, chap. V, 56.

²³⁷ John 3, 1-21 ; 7, 45-52 ; 19, 39-42.

These words take on a whole new meaning for pilgrims who have visited Lucca in Tuscany. In the San Martino cathedral a crucifix, the *Volto Santo* (or the Holy Visage), the image of Christ, said to have been sculpted by Nicodemus at Ramla, is venerated²³⁸. This cathedral has been a place of pilgrimage for over a thousand years, and the fame of the *Volto Santo* was immense.



Saint Gemma Galgani herself often visited this relic during her lifetime. The crucifix, sculpted in a cedar, is thought to have arrived in Lucca in 742.

Manaen, a Herodian Notable

Manaen, a foster-brother of Herod Antipas, is summarily known to us through Saint Luke²³⁹ and Flavius Josephus²⁴⁰. We learn from the latter that his father was an Essenian who earned the favour of Herod the Great for having predicted that he would be king. He is even thought to have been president of the Sanhedrin for a certain time before Hillel. He later left the Essenians to become a Herodian and Herod had his son raised with his own son, Antipas. We later learn from History that Manaen went to Antioch. According to Baronius, he is said to have *consecrated* and subsequently sent St. Paul and Barnaby on their first missionary voyages (circa 45 AD). Some²⁴¹ think

²³⁸ See for exemple Victor Guérin, *Terre Sainte* 1850, t2, page 217.

²³⁹ Luke 8, 3; Acts 13, 1.

²⁴⁰ Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XV, 10, 5.

²⁴¹ See the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* in particular.

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that he is also the person who gave Luke²⁴² many details about Herod's family. This would also explain why Luke spoke to Chouza and to Joanna. The Roman martyrology indicates that Manaen died in Antioch. He is celebrated on May 24th as a Saint Confessor. In Maria Valtorta's work, the first encounter between Manaen and Jesus was at the Clear Water. Jesus reassures his uneasy Apostles: "*Can a **relative of Herod** not thirst for the true God? Are you afraid for Me? No, do not be afraid. Have faith in My word. That man has come with honest intentions.*" - "*Why did he not make himself known then?*" ask the Apostles. - "*Precisely because he comes as a 'soul' and not as **Herod's foster-brother**. He has kept silence because he thinks that the relationship with a king is nothing before the word of God... We shall respect his silence.*" - "*How does he know about You?*" - "*Through **my cousin John** himself. Do you think that he did not preach about Me when he was in jail? But he also knows Me **through Chouza**, through the voice of the crowds, and even through the hatred of the Pharisees*"^{121.3}. From then on, he is ready to do anything for Jesus: "*I would defy the whole world for You! I would do anything!*" [And to Judas, who doubts this, he retorts:] "*No, man, these are not just 'words'. I ask the Master to put my sincerity to the test!*"^{364.4}. He proves it at the Passion, when all by himself, braving the Temple guards, he tries a desperate manoeuvre to save the Master: "*Stand back! he shouts. This Man... Let me see Him. Stand aside, or I will call the guards...*" *The people, because of the hail of blows with the flat of the sword, the shying of the horse and the threats of the rider, stand aside and Manaen can reach the group of the Temple guards who are holding Jesus. 'Let me through! The Tetrarch is more important than you... Stand back! I want to speak to Him' "* And he succeeds,

²⁴² Luke 3, 1, 19, 20; 8, 3; 9, 7-9; 13, 31, 32; 23, 8-12; Acts 12.

charging the most ruthless jailer with his sword drawn. Master!”^{604.18}. Despite a wounded arm, he is the first to go to Mary to offer his help: *“There was nothing to be done, that is true, but at least we should have given Him the comfort of seeing us. I... I greeted Him at the Sixtus*²⁴³ *and then, I was no longer able to, because... but enough of that. That too, was willed by Satan. Now I am free and I have come to place myself at Your service. Give me your orders, Lady.”*^{614.2}. He deserves this last homage from Christ: *“You, Manaen, who despised the sordid favours of an unclean man to follow Me on My way”*^{638.19}.

Lazarus, the faithful and devoted friend

Lazarus, the brother of Mary of Magdala and Martha, has an important and well-deserved place in this work. One of the wealthiest men in Jerusalem, *“powerfully rich. A great part of the town belongs to him, as well as extensive lands in Palestine”*^{116.6}, he was forced to leave for Bethany because of the intransigence of the Pharisees, as Doras informs Jesus: *“Lazarus is Your friend? But You mustn’t! Don’t You know that he is anathema because his sister Mary is a prostitute?”*^{109.9}. In Jesus, Lazarus immediately sees the Messiah that Israel was expecting: *“Whoever does God’s work must be a Man of God. And You do it, in such a way that it proclaims You a Man of God”*^{84.3}. An erudite man, he asks Jesus about his interest in profane readings. Jesus replies: *“continue to read... it will help you to understand the pagan world... Continue. You may continue. There is no ferment of evil or of spiritual gangrene in you, so you may read without fear. The true love that you bear your God neutralises the profane germs that such reading might instil in you. In everything that men do, there is the possibility*

²⁴³ The Xyste is a large place with columns in Jerusalem. It is mentioned by Flavius Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* XX, 8. 11). It was situated between the Temple and Herod’s palace, near Sion.

of good or evil, depending on how it is done. Love is not sinful if one loves in a holy way. Work is not sinful, if one works when it is the right time to work. Earning money is not sinful, if one is satisfied with honest wages. Educating oneself is not sinful, providing the education does not kill the idea of God in us.”^{84.6}. It is not surprising that Lazarus should have asked Jesus this question when we read in the Talmud (*Bara Kama* f 82 b): “*He who teaches his son the science of the Greeks is like a man who raises pigs*”. Similarly, the Menachoth treaty (fol. 90) reports that when Ben Domah asked his uncle, Rabbi Ishmael, whether he could study Greek science after he had finished studying the Law, Ishmael answered: “*You will meditate on the Law day and night. Find me an hour which belongs neither to the day nor to the night and I will allow you to use it to study Greek science*”. When the conversion of his sister, Mary Magdalene, is slow in coming, and sadness submerges Lazarus, Jesus comforts him with the parable of the Prodigal Son, then tells him: “*This is how it will be with the beloved soul that you are waiting for, Lazarus... God’s mercy surpasses all measure*”^{205.7}. To those who are astonished to see Jesus frequent the wealthy Lazarus, Jesus replies: “*Lazarus is an exception among the wealthy. Lazarus has attained that virtue that is very difficult to find on earth and even more difficult to practice in order to teach it to others; It is the virtue of freedom with regard to wealth. Lazarus is righteous*”^{206.10}. Some might also wonder why Lazarus, raised from the dead by Jesus a few weeks before His Passion, is absent from the Gospels at this crucial time. Could he have abandoned his Benefactor, as so many others did? On the contrary! Maria Valtorta says that Jesus, well aware of his ardent zeal, explicitly forbids him to leave Bethany at the hour of torment, but rather to offer His disoriented Apostles a place to stay and to comfort them. “*I do not doubt your love for Me. I doubt it so little that you are the one to whom I entrust my requests... Lazarus,*

faithful friend. I request certain things of you. You have never refused Me anything. You will stay here and wait” “No. Not that. Why Mary and Martha and not me?” “Because I do not want you to be corrupted, like all men. In the coming days, Jerusalem will be corrupted, like the air around rotting carrion, which bursts open without warning from the careless nudge of a passerby’s heel. Infected and spreading infection, its fetid odours will drive even the least cruel among them mad, even my disciples. They will run away. And where will they go in their confusion? To Lazarus. How often, over these last three years, have they come for bread, a bed, protection, shelter, and the Master! ... Now, they will come back. Like sheep scattered by the wolf that has caught the shepherd, they will run back to a sheepfold. Re-assemble them. Hearten them again. Tell them that I have forgiven them. I entrust my forgiveness to you for them. They will know no peace because they ran away. Tell them not to fall into greater sin by despairing of My forgiveness”^{587.2.4.9}. These hitherto unknown facts are no less totally compatible with all the rest of the work. They shed new, very original and credible light on a page of the history of the Apostles that has remained obscure until now.

And all the others, known or unknown

I have already briefly mentioned, a few *historical* characters at the beginning of this book, mentioned by Maria Valtorta, more or less unexpectedly: Thusnelda, Marcus Caecilius Maximus, or Photinai. Here is some complementary information concerning them.

The astonishing destiny of Thusnelda, *the Barbarian*

On different occasions, Maria Valtorta mentions the presence of a strange freedwoman beside Valeria, the Roman lady. “*The door opens and Valeria, with her slave or freedwoman, is about to enter... Valeria looks at the two women wrapped in very simple Jewish cloaks hiding most of their faces and she takes them for beggars. She orders: **Barbara**, give them some money!*” A little later, she explains: “*My freedwoman Thusnilde, twice a barbarian, Lord. She comes from the Teutoburger Wald²⁴⁴. A prey of those rash advances that have cost so much bloodshed²⁴⁵. My father gave her to my mother, who gave her to me as a wedding present. She passed from her gods to ours and from ours to You, because she does what I do. She is so good”, says Valeria to Jesus in front of the Synagogue of the freed slaves that she now attends.*”^{534.1}. As the Passion draws near, Valeria sends her to Bether, with her daughter, Faustina, to the castle of her friend, Joanna, wife of Chouza. She mentions her freedwoman one last time: “*I will stay here with Thusnilde. I am free, I am rich, I can do as I please*”^{583.12} (...) *I will send Fausta to Bether with Thusnilde, before the appointed time. They were to go after the Feast.*”^{583.14}. It appears however, that this Thusnilde is not a simple literary creation, but really and truly a historical character. Here is more or less what the historian Tacitus²⁴⁶ says of her. In the year 15, Germanicus carried out raids against the Germanics, sacking their villages. They captured Thusnelda, the wife of Arminius, who was delivered up to them by her own father, Segestes, to avenge himself on Arminius. In fact, he had promised his daughter to

²⁴⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, Book 1, chap 60, writes: “*not far from the Teutbourg forest*”, today known as the Teutobourg or Teutoburger.

²⁴⁵ An allusion to the defeat of Varus and his three legions in 9 AD.

²⁴⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, Book 1 chap. 58 and following chapters.

another man, she had run away with Arminius and married him after the victory of Teutoberg. Segestes and his clan were allies of Rome and opposed the politics of Arminius, as did Flavius, brother of Arminius. Thusnelda was taken to Rome to be exhibited at the triumph of Germanicus²⁴⁷. She never saw her native land again and disappeared from the pages of History. All of this is confirmed by Strabo²⁴⁸: “*We saw the triumphant Germanicus dragging in his wake the most illustrious figures, men and women, of the Cherusque nation: that is, the chief Segismund, son of Segeste, with his three-year-old son Thumelic, and his sister Thusnelda, wife of Arminius*”. Gaius Julius Caesar (known as Germanicus after the victory over the Germans) was the son of Drusus and the eldest son of Claudius. Appointed governor of Syria in the year 17, he was assassinated in Antioch in the year 19. It is therefore perfectly plausible that Thusnelda, an enslaved princess, was forced to accompany him to Antioch. At the death of Germanicus, she was taken over by a notable²⁴⁹, from the close circle of the late governor, which would explain how, a few years later, she came to be in Palestine, with Valeria, the daughter of this man. What author, unless he was inspired, could have imagined such a plausible incursion of this Thusnelda, a little-known historical character, into his story?

A very strange discovery near Pompeii

As Jesus passes by the garrison at Alexandrosene in January 29 AD, Maria Valtorta relates this unremarkable dialogue between two Roman soldiers: “*Prochorius is not coming. He’s sending the triarius Aquila... Well, well! Better him than Caecilius Maximus himself*”^{329.6}. During the fifteen

²⁴⁷ “*On the 7th day of the Calendes of June*”, in the year 16

²⁴⁸ Strabo, *Geography*, Book 7, 1 Germania, 4.

²⁴⁹ According to Maria Valtorta’s text, this would be the father of Valeria, wife of Valerian.

years that followed the writing of this dialogue in November 1945, the existence of this heartily disliked Roman officer could have seemed to be nothing more than pure invention. Then came the chance discovery of twenty seven clay tablets during public works on a motorway near Pompeii in 1959. One of these tablets²⁵⁰, studied in 1966, reveals, textually: “*On the Ides of July*²⁵¹ *Marcus Caecilius Maximus received 3,000 sesterces from Gaius Sulpicius Faustus for the sale of verdigris. Done in Puteoli*”. Promotions, leaves and transfers in the Roman army were given mainly at the end of June, every year or two. As verdigris (or vert de Grèce), a highly sought-after commodity in Antiquity²⁵², was obtained from copper leaves macerated in brandy, it was mainly produced in grape-growing zones. So it is quite plausible that an officer returning from Palestine would have been tempted to take some back with him to make a little money on the side! Given the date and the name, it is extremely likely that this is the same officer mentioned by Maria Valtorta.

“Lord, give me some of that water so that I may never be thirsty again”.

Jn 4, 15

When St. John relates the episode of the Samaritan at Jacob’s well (John 4, 4-42), he does not name this woman, who, to this day, remains almost unknown in the west. So, when Maria Valtorta transmits this dialogue to us: “*What is your name?*” – “*Photinai*”^{143.3} this information may seem insignificant. But, on the very evening of The Last Supper, Jesus confides to His Apostles: “*I am thinking of the woman who will be revealed only in Heaven... and of Photinai... They found Me and have never since left My way. To one I pointed out the*

²⁵⁰ The *Tabulae Pompeianae Sulpiciorum* n°66.

²⁵¹ Or exactly on July 14th of the year 29.

²⁵² The use of verdigris (aerugo) was widespread in the paint powders of the frescoes at Pompeii.

Father as the true God and the Spirit as a Levite in this individual adoration. To the other, who did not even know she had a soul, I said: 'My name is Saviour, I save whoever has the goodwill to be saved. I am the One Who looks for those who are lost, I give Life, Truth and Purity. Those who look for Me will find Me.' And they both found God... I bless you, weak Eves, who have both become stronger than Judith”^{600.25}. Now, we sit up and take notice. Is there any trace of this Photinai elsewhere other than in Maris Valtorta’s text? The Greeks²⁵³ are the ones who confirm her name: Photina or Photine. After the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul under the Neronian persecution, she successfully preached the faith in Carthage, with her son José (or Joseph). She was martyred with her two sons and her four sisters (or cousins). Her veneration is attested in 11th century Constantinople and her feast day is on March 20th in the Catholic Church²⁵⁴ and February 26th in the Orthodox Church.

*

As I really cannot go into detail concerning the seven or eight hundred characters mentioned in the books, my only option is to stop here. But before I close this chapter on the eye witnesses, here is another surprise for the researcher: it is the way in which Maria Valtorta, quite unexpectedly, *discovers*, *recognises* or *forgets* some characters.

1/ “**Discovers**”. In most cases, Maria does not notice the first encounter. She describes a passerby, a sick person or a child as she sees them in a scene, but is unable to name them. More often than not, she recognises them and *learns* their names on the second or third occasion and then designates them by name.

²⁵³ Menology of Basil, emperor of Constantinople and the Greek Syntaxaries.

²⁵⁴ Baronius affirms in his notes that she is, in fact, the Samaritan mentioned by John.

Here is an example of a child encountered in Capernaum: *“The child wriggles away from Jesus and runs to his mother”*^{49.4}. Later, Maria Valtorta sees him again and remembers: *“a little child... one of those that I saw in the first visions of Capernaum”*^{60.7} but we have to read a few more lines to hear Jesus call him *“James”*. On the same day, Jesus heals an anonymous humpback at this moment: *“Save me! Heal your servant!” ‘I wish you to be healed.’ The man straightens up, agile and whole”*^{61.3}. The following week, we find him at Korazim: *“The man, none other than the poor humpback, healed and treated kindly by Jesus”*^{63.2}. His companion then names him: *“Is it really you, Samuel?”*^{63.3}. Towards the end of the first year of His public life, The fame of Jesus has spread throughout the region and people flock from far away to beg Him, as this poor mother does: *“Master, a woman, the one who was in tears, is asking for You. She says that she has to leave and that she must speak to You”*^{122.13}. She finally plucks up the courage to confide in Jesus in a long, pathetic monologue. Here are some extracts: *“Master, it seems that your words were spoken for me. You said that Satan is in every illness, physical or moral... I have a son whose heart is sick... he has got into bad company and he is... he is exactly as You say... a thief... he likes fights... he is dominating... Young as he is, he is destroying himself with lust and gluttony... I... I am his mother and I am suffering to death. For a mother to say: ‘I have a cruel son!’ is so painful. And she ends with this insignificant detail: “I have come **from Upper Perea** to beg You for him”*^{122.3}. Who could imagine then that this insignificant detail, as well as the promise made by Jesus: *“One day, I will pass through your region and you, proud of your boy, will come to meet Me with him”* will enable us to find this son, two books further on, *“a young man, whose name I do not know”*^{282.1} who declares to Jesus: *“I looked for You after my mother’s pardon”*. Only much further along is

the name of this future zealous disciple spoken by the shopkeeper, Misace: “*A disciple himself, he came with Your disciples and he is waiting for you in Arbela to honour You with his father and mother. Philip, son of Jacob*²⁵⁵, *if ever this region becomes holy, his will be the merit of having sanctified it*”^{292.4}.

2/ “**Recognises**”. When a character, already encountered in a previous scene, comes across the Lord again, it frequently happens that Maria Valtorta says that she *recognises* him, exactly as anyone might in everyday life. So this should not surprise us. There are, however, some reunions that are, to say the least, astonishing... So it is when the patrician lady, Plautina, appears for the first time in the work in an episode written on May 5th, 1945. Maria Valtorta makes this *impossible* remark for an *author* who presumably writes his book day by day: “*Plautina, we already know her*”^{167.3}. The fact is that because she did not receive the visions in their *chronological* order, she *recognises* Plautina from the visions of the Passion that she *received before*, like this one, for example, received on February 10th, 1944, but that the reader will, of course, only find at the end of the work⁶⁰¹! This particularity, as I have already explained, in the chapter on geography, seems to me to be specific to Maria Valtorta’s visions and occurs on many occasions. For example, the first encounter with Mary Magdalene in the work occurs when Peter’s boat draws near to hers on the lake in August 27 AD. And yet, Maria Valtorta immediately recognises her and says, perfectly naturally: “*I see that the Magdalene has stood up (...) she turns her beautiful eyes towards the serene face of Jesus, Whose mind is so far away*”^{98.3}. For, in fact, she has already appeared to her in visions

²⁵⁵ See the paragraph: “*Philip, the bad son who became an Evangeliser*”

received before this one on February 5th, 1945, but that the reader will, once again, only discover many pages later!

In a vision on January 31st, 1946, she writes: *“a woman who seems to be very like the one called Nike, who wiped the face of Jesus on the way to Golgotha and received the Shroud. But these Palestinian women resemble each other closely and, a few months after this vision, I might be mistaken”*^{373.4}, referring to a vision of the Passion, received on March 26th, 1945, but reported at the end of the work, in chapter 608.9. The account of the Sermon on the Mount also contains this type of disconcerting remark. When, at that date, Jesus has already assembled the apostolic college several times, Maria Valtorta, in a vision received on August 12th, 1944, writes: *“I see Peter and Andrew, John and James and I hear them calling the other two Nathanael and Philip”*^{174.11}. Well, John, James, Peter and Andrew have already been seen six months before, on February 25th, 1944, whereas the vision of the encounter with Nathanael and Philip only came two months later, on October 13th, 1944. Clearly, on this same day, August 12th 1944, Maria Valtorta does not appear to recognise Simon the Zealot: *“There is another one who may, or may not belong to the group. Perhaps he is the last to arrive. They call him Simon”*^{174.11}. On closer inspection, this is perfectly logical, since the vision of the first encounter between Jesus and Simon took place on October 26th, 1944. In a vision of September 3rd, 1946, Maria recognises the face of Nicolaus of Antioch, but seems to have forgotten his name: *“new faces, all of them unknown, except the delicate one of the Greek from Antioch. He speaks with the others, perhaps Gentiles like himself”*^{386.1}. Yet again, in Maritime Caesarea, the *“first time”* that Jesus meets Valeria, Maria Valtorta confides: *“The young Roman lady, unless this is a chance resemblance, is one of those Romans who were with Joanna, wife of Chouza on the way to*

Calvary. As no-one has spoken her name, I am not sure"^{155.10} (vision of May 5th, 1945). She did, in fact, see her in the visions of the Passion in 1944 and on March 26th, 1945. Jesus then names Valeria (chap. 608), among seven other disciples. I do not think I need give any more examples of this type... But what forger of genius could have been so brilliant, meticulous, not to say a trifle Machiavellian, as to have scrambled his book in this way? We have here, beyond any doubt, a very strong indication of the authenticity of Maria Valtorta's revelations.

3/ "**Forgets**" I have already said that this work numbers over 750 characters with whom Jesus or His followers have more or less *detailed* dialogues. So it is not difficult to understand that, as the story unfolds, Maria Valtorta confesses, with increasing regularity, that she vaguely recognises one or the other of these characters, but that she has forgotten their names or the circumstances under which she has already seen them. When Jesus meets many disciples in Sycaminon, Maria Valtorta names some of them, then adds: "*and others, still others, others that I recognise, but whose names, or the places where I saw them, I absolutely cannot recall. Familiar faces, and there are now so many, all of them known to me as the faces of disciples. And still more others, won over by Isaac, or by the disciples themselves, that I have just named, who follow the main group, hoping to find Jesus*"^{250.1}. From the third year of the public life this phenomenon is amplified: "*there are many disciples... among whom are Stephen, Hermas, John the priest and John the scribe and many others. (What confusion to remember them all now! There are so many of them)*"^{347.5}. In Capernaum, at the speech about the Bread of Life... "*Among those left there are the Apostles, John the priest and John the scribe, Stephen, Hermas, Timoneus, Ermasteus, Agapo, Joseph, Solomon, Abel of Bethlehem in Galilee, and Abel the leper of Korazim with his*

friend Samuel, Elias, (the one who did not go back to bury his father, in order to follow Jesus), Philip of Arbela, Aser and Ishmael of Nazareth **and others whose names I do not know**”^{354.15}. Later, at the Passover, in front of the Temple, she sees “many more, whose faces are not new to me, but **whose names I cannot remember**”^{354.11}. And so it goes on, until the last meeting with the disciples on Mount Tabor, shortly before the Ascension: “The Apostles and the disciples form a compact group with Marjiam, Manaen, Stephen, Nicolaus, John of Ephesus, Hermas and some of the more faithful disciples, whose names I do not remember”^{634.1}. And when Jesus calls one of them to His side: “Elisha of Engedi, come here. I have something to tell you”, Maria Valtorta confesses: “I had not recognised the former leper, the son of old Abraham”^{634.13}. All of these repeated *confidential* remarks bear the indelible mark of sincerity and consequently, that of authenticity.

How were people named in Israel?

In ancient times, surnames did not exist as such. At birth, each child received a first name given by its father and mother. To designate someone unambiguously, this first name was then followed by *ben* (son of... or its Aramaic equivalent, *bar*) and the father’s first name (the patronymic). Sometimes the person was given a nickname by others²⁵⁶. In *The Gospel as revealed to me*, the designation of the characters who are natives of Palestine totally conforms to this rule. So, in accordance with this principle, many characters are designated either by their first names, followed or not by the patronymic, or by their nicknames. Simon is also *Simon, son of Jonah*, or even *Simon-Peter*; Judas is *the Iscariot*, or *the man from Kerioth*, or again *Judas, son of Simon*; James and John are also *the sons of*

²⁵⁶ Midrash Rabbah, *Commentary on the Ecclesiast 7, 3*.

Zebedee, just as James and Judah are *the sons of Alpheus*; or *cousins*; Lazarus occasionally becomes *Lazarus, son of Theophilus*, or simply *the son of Theophilus*, etc. Here is an example of a complete appellation, with the first name, the patronymic and the nickname, which deserves our attention. It concerns a member of the Sanhedrin: “*Be quiet, Joel called Alamoth, son of Abijah! Only an ill-bred man like you can say such words*”, *say the others angrily*”²⁵⁷. Abijah was the patronymic of the chief of the 8th class of priests²⁵⁷, and Alamoth²⁵⁸, which means “*in a maiden’s voice*”, is a nickname indicating that Joel had a high-pitched voice, or a somewhat effeminate appearance... His dignified reply therefore makes perfect sense: “*If Nature has been hostile to my person, that has not impaired my intellect. Nay, by forbidding me many pleasures, it has made me a sage. And if you were holy people, you would not humiliate the man, but you would respect the sage*”²⁵⁷. As often happens in similar cases, Maria Valtorta’s spelling is phonetic, but how could she have invented such a name and such a credible and pertinent dialogue all by herself?

²⁵⁷ See 1 Chronicles 24, 10; Nehemiah 12, 4; Luke 1.

²⁵⁸ A musical term. (1 Chronicles 15, 20) indicating a psalm (Psalm 46) which should be sung by a soprano or a female voice.

The identity of Roman citizens

Roman names are characterized by the use of a system of three names, first used by the patricians, then by the plebeians, as they slowly acquired rights under the Republic. The complete name consists up of the prænomen, (our first name) followed by the nomen (the name of the *gens*, generally ending in –us or –ius), and finally, the cognomen (a nickname, personal at first, but which came to distinguish a branch of the *gens*). For example, Valerian, the licentious husband of Valeria²⁵⁹, known to History by the name *Decimus Valerius Asiaticus*, or again Pilate, whose complete name was *Lucius Pontius Pilatus*, or *Publius Sulpicius Quirinius*, or *Caius Sentius Saturninus*, all of them mentioned by Maria Valtorta. In general, Roman women were designated (on tombs and in literary or historical works) only by a feminised form of the nomen of the *gens*. Claudius: Claudia, Cornelius: Cornelia, etc. Each woman was then distinguished from her sisters by a qualifier, for example: *maior* (the elder) or *minor* (the younger)

On the correct use of I.T

Finally, to close this chapter, here is one last remark. Computer research based on the given name of a character gives an idea of the value of the information concerning him. This view, however, is only partial, because the same character is not always referred to by his first name alone. Suppose that we are looking for everything concerning the character John of Endor in this work. The first time that he meets Jesus, he tells Him all about his life, a long series of misfortunes, and begs: “*Take me with You. My name was Felix! What irony!*”²⁶⁰ *But give me another name, so that my past will really be dead. I will follow*

²⁵⁹ See the paragraph further on: *Valerius, Valeria a divided Roman couple*.

²⁶⁰ Felix, a Latin first name meaning “Happy”

you like a stray dog that finally finds a master. I will be your slave, if you wish it. But do not leave me alone.” “Yes, my friend”. “What name will You give me?” “One that is dear to Me: John. Because you are grace²⁶¹ granted by God”^{188.7}. Felix, John, yes indeed, but later he is also referred to by other names: the man of Endor; Cyclops or Diogenes; the former pedagogue of Cintium; the one-eyed man; the former galley-slave. So, every I.T. request based only on the name John of Endor will ignore a wealth of pertinent information. Consequently, it is only by thorough and attentive reading, and not by computer research alone, that we can really grasp all the information concerning each character...

²⁶¹ John, in Hebrew, *Johan*, does in fact mean “*God grants grace*”.

TWENTY TALENTS TO FREE JOHN THE BAPTIST...

They brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents... Mt 18, 24

If there is a field in which first century historians seem to *flounder*, it is certainly that of the value of currencies in the time of Jesus. There has been a wealth of erudite research throughout the centuries attempting to clarify the complex system of weights and currencies used in Antiquity. To try to estimate the cost of living in times so distant from our present-day criteria is a perilous exercise, and most of the authors who ventured to do so ended up with somewhat incoherent results. Yet, in Maria Valtorta's work, there are numerous references to currencies and the uses to which they were put in the time of Jesus. So it might be interesting to study these references more closely and to compare them with the first century historical data at our disposal.

The value of currency in the reign of Tiberius

What exactly do we know about the cost of living in the early first century? The information is not as rare as might sometimes be said, whether it be data provided by Tacitus, Plutarch, Pliny and a few others, of graffiti found at Pompeii, of various tablets, or of certain indications found in the Gospels, etc. At the end of the reign of Augustus, a free worker earned 16 ases per day, or 4 sesterces and 1 denier. The basic wage was thus about 300 deniers a year. A legionary earned between 225 and 300 deniers a year, about one gold piece per month, along with certain perquisites (*perks*, as we would say today), such as food and clothing.

In 14 AD, the legionaries demanded a wage of one denier a day²⁶². A Praetorian (an élite soldier, charged with the

²⁶² Tacitus, *Annals*, I, 17.

protection of the Emperor) earned 400 to 750 deniers a year. A Centurion earned 950 deniers and a Decurion 1,125. The annual salary of the first centurion, the *primum pilium*, was 3,375 deniers, while that of a tribune of the legion was closer to 3,700 deniers.

At that time, a pair of shoes cost about 2 deniers; a coat 25 deniers; a pig 60 deniers; a donkey or mule, 100 to 200 deniers. To “*obtain*” a domestic slave of either sex entailed a disbursement of 500 to 1,500 deniers²⁶³, a “*particularly pretty*” luxury slave was priced at 1,500 to 2,000 deniers, while the rent for a “*luxury*” apartment was about 1,500 deniers.

A little later, in 60 AD, a family of modest means spent about 8 aces (half a denier) per day and per person on food. In Pompeii, in the time of Plutarch²⁶⁴, around the year 75 the purchase of a goblet, a small oil lamp, or a plate cost 1 ace. Still for 1 ace, one could buy 325 g. of bread or half a litre of ordinary wine in a tavern (*popina*); a bowl of soup for 2 aces and a girl (sic!) for 2 to 8 aces. The price of half a litre of oil, or the same quantity of quality wine was 4 aces. A tunic was worth 4 deniers, it cost 1 denier to have it cleaned, and 2 deniers could buy 6 or 7 kg of wheat.

This data is sufficient to give an idea of the cost of living for the contemporaries of Jesus. If I absolutely had to give an equivalent, and even though this comparison is not particularly pertinent today, I would say that the silver denier could have

²⁶³ Papinian puts the legal price of a slave at 20 aurei or 500 deniers. (*Digest*, IV, 31, and XL, 4, 47). But Plutarch *Cato Major*, C, 4 and Columella, *De re rustica*, III, iii, 8, fixed it at 1,500 to 2,000 deniers.

²⁶⁴ See the pricelists found at Pompeii: CIL IV 1678; 4227 and following; 4000; 4888.

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been the equivalent of approximately 5€²⁶⁵ of ours, the sesterce 1.25 €, the ace 0.30€, and a gold piece, the aureus, 125 €.

Judas sells Aglae's jewellery

“Eleven talents, there you are. That is what I would pay if I had to buy that gold from someone who was starving. Not a penny less... You can have it for eleven talents... And I sealed the bargain at ten and a half”^{82.3}. When Judas tells Jesus what a good price he obtained for the sale of Aglae's jewellery, he is very proud of himself and how he tricked the merchant from



Jericho. As he tells it, we can estimate that this solid gold jewellery weighed 1 to 2 kg of gold, the monetary equivalent of 12 to 25 kg of silver²⁶⁶.

Celtic solid gold bracelet from the Tayac treasure (1893): weight 726g

But if Judas obtained 10.5 silver talents, this would mean that in 27 AD, the word *“talent”* could designate the value of 1.2 to 2.5 kg of silver. That is, 10 to 20 times less than the generally accepted *“official”* value!

Was Maria Valtorta mistaken? Did she not *hear* correctly, or should we envisage the fact that the word *talent* could have had a particular meaning at that time? This question deserves a closer look, as it has been the subject of debate among biblical exegetes for almost two millennia!

²⁶⁵ The denier was the basic Roman currency (3.45 g of silver at the time of Jesus). One had to give 25 silver deniers for a *“gold denier”*, or aureus (7.8g of gold at the time of Augustus or Tiberius). This *“estimation”* fixes the aureus (or the stater) at $25 \times 5\text{€} = 125\text{€}$, thus giving $125/7.8 = 15.6\text{€}$ per gram of gold. This was almost the legal price of a gram of gold in 2006 – 2007! So, why not?

²⁶⁶ Or a silver / gold ratio of approximately 1 to 12.

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All about talents

The talent was a Greek unit of weight (*talanton*) for heavy loads²⁶⁷. It was also a unit of monetary conversion corresponding in money to the weight of 6,000 Athenian drachmas (or $4.32 \text{ g} \times 6,000 = 26\text{kg}$). It was also 6,000 deniers or 24,000 sesterces, as Seneca the Rhetorician²⁶⁸ confirms. This conversion seems to be universally accepted. The Romans used the word talent with some reticence, mainly in treaties and to measure large sums of money, because the Roman unit of weight was the pound (*libra*). The Euboic talent, then the Attic talent corresponded to 80 Roman pounds²⁶⁹. In the reign of Tiberius, one pound of gold gave 42 Aurei, weighing 7.8 grams apiece²⁷⁰.

But the talent did not consistently designate the value of 26kg of silver throughout the centuries. Many commentators²⁷¹ noted that the word *talent* (literally *what one carries*) was also frequently used to designate quite variable weights, ranging from about 15 grams²⁷² (money *carried* on one's person?) to several dozen kilos.

When we convert the weight in silver of the fortunes of Roman notables, (knights, prefects, senators, or consuls)

²⁶⁷ Or the burden that a man could carry: 26kg (gold talent) and 33kg (silver talent) according to Th. Mommsen, *History of Roman currency* 1868 vol 1, page 28; and Garnier, *History of the money of ancient peoples* 1819, vol 1 page 220 onwards..

²⁶⁸ Seneca the Rhetorician, *Controversy* 34 (called *The Prometheus of Parrhasius*)

²⁶⁹ Titus Livius, *History of Rome*, Book 38, chap. 38, v. 13.

²⁷⁰ Instead of 40 pieces, weighing 8.1 g in the reign of Caesar or Augustus, as Pliny confirms *Natural History*, Book 33, 13. Concerning the Aurei, numismatic studies prove that they did, in fact, go progressively from 40 to 45 pieces per pound of gold between the reigns of Augustus and Nero.

²⁷¹ See Daremberg and Saglio, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, in the *Mina* and *Talentum* rubrics.

²⁷² Julius Pollux, *Onomasticon* Book 9, chap 6, segm 54, indicates for example that a Macedonian gold talent was worth 60 deniers, or two gold pieces.

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generally in deniers, and compare them to Herod's revenue and expenditure, in talents, (using the conversion 1 talent = 26 kg of silver), we obtain a lifestyle for Herod by far superior to that of the wealthiest Roman citizens²⁷³ !

And when, at the death of Caesar²⁷⁴ or Augustus²⁷⁵ the Roman Treasury distributed a very generous bonus to some 250,000 Roman Legionaries (1 triple aureus, or 75 deniers per soldier, almost 3 months' wages), how could it be possible that this fortune, accumulated over several years by the Emperor, only represented one or two years of Herod's revenues? Is it really credible that a vassal could have flaunted, with impunity and over a period of forty years, a fortune that was such a provocation for Rome?

An audacious hypothesis

We know that the talent, the 26 kg silver weight standard, represented 6,000 silver deniers, was the equivalent in value to 240 gold pieces²⁷⁶. These 240 gold pieces (weighing almost 6 Roman pounds) thus represented the *value* of 1 talent-weight converted into gold²⁷⁷. The Greeks and Hebrews may simply

²⁷³ At the top of the salary scale (as we would say today), a prefect earned 75,000 deniers annually (260 kg of silver per year). The fortune required to belong to an order of knights (100,000 deniers, or 345 kg of silver), or to the senatorial class (250,000 deniers, or 860 kg of silver) can be used as references for large sums. If we consider the talent as 25 kg, we obtain, respectively, 10, 14, and 22 talents, while Flavius Josephus indicates 1,050 talents as Herod's annual revenue!

²⁷⁴ Suetonius, *The life of the twelve Caesars*, Caesar, 83.

²⁷⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* Book 1, 8 and Suetonius, *The life of the twelve Caesars*, Augustus, 101.

²⁷⁶ Remember that 1 gold piece (stater or aureus) was worth 25 silver pieces (drachmas or deniers).

²⁷⁷ As early as 1730, Dom Augustin Calmet, the famous Biblicalist, put forward this hypothesis, commenting on the Biblical passage (1 Chronicles 20, 2 and Samuel 12, 13) in which David seized the golden crown of the Ammonite king, weighing one gold talent, and placed it on his head! In his *Dictionnaire Historique, critique, chronologique, géographique et littéral de la bible*, vol III, page 314, Dom Calmet writes: "*We believe that the talent that the Gospels speak of does not mark the weight, but the value*". Did he hesitate to carry his reasoning further?

have got into the habit of referring to this set of 240 gold pieces as a “*gold talent*”.

240 gold pieces = 1 gold talent (value) = 6,000 silver pieces



Now, if we balance the weight of this gold talent with an equal weight of silver pieces, we obtain a set of approximately 500 silver deniers, representing the value *in silver* of the weight of one *gold talent*. So, in everyday language, this sum could naturally have been called a *silver talent*, or even in currency exchanges, simply a *talent*.

500 silver pieces = 1 silver talent (value) = 20 gold pieces

This explanation might seem somewhat complicated at first. But this is what most European countries²⁷⁸ that inherited the Roman monetary system did, using the word *pound* for a *weight* (400 to 500 g), but also for *the monetary value* of that weight in currency (£ Sterling, Livre, Lira, Mark...). Accordingly, a weight of 6 Roman pounds could have meant, in everyday language, (referring to currency exchange), either 240 aurei (*one gold talent*) or 500 silver deniers (*one silver talent*). And people had to give 12 of these *silver talents* (12 x 500 =

²⁷⁸ Particularly England, France, Italy and Germany...
(continued on following page...)

6,000) in exchange for a *gold talent*²⁷⁹. Conversely, one of these silver talents (500 deniers) could be exchanged for 20 gold pieces²⁸⁰. Note too that throughout the course of History, the weight in gold has been immutably exchanged for 12 or 15 times its weight in silver. Let us now look at how this simple conjecture could fit into some *disconcerting* historical data of this period:

Caesar fell into the hands of the soldiers of Sylla at night. He gave their captain Cornelius, **2 talents**, a sum that enabled him to escape²⁸¹. According to our hypothesis, Caesar gave him the value of two silver talents, or 40 gold pieces, which seems a highly plausible bribe. But, considering that a talent weight was worth 6,000 deniers, he should have given him 4 kg of gold, quite difficult to carry around with him!

Taken prisoner on another occasion, he made fun of the pirates who demanded a ransom of **twenty talents** and promised them **fifty**²⁸². If Caesar thought, again according to our hypothesis, that he was worth more than 400 gold pieces, and that he offered 1,000... why not? But if a talent was worth 6,000 deniers here, could Caesar have been such a megalomaniac as to spontaneously offer 12,000 aurei, (more than his weight in gold!) when they were already demanding 4,800 (37 kg) of gold?

²⁷⁹ In everyday language the word *talent* referred either to a weight (about 26 kg) or a monetary value 500 silver pieces (= 20 gold pieces). And the expression “*gold talent*” the monetary value in gold of one *talent weight* of 26 kg or 240 gold pieces.

²⁸⁰ Is it just by chance that in the Middle Ages a pound (currency) was worth 20 French sous, 20 English shillings, 20 German schillinge or 20 Italian soldi, or is this an echo of the system inherited from the Greeks and Romans?

²⁸¹ Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*, 1, 8.

²⁸² Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*, 2, 1; Velleius Paterculus II, 41 -53; Suetonius, *Life of the Caesars*, Caesar.
(continued on following page...)

It appears that in ancient texts, this subtle notion of talents, familiar to both the Greeks and the Hebrews²⁸³ was not widely used by the Romans, who had their own system of measurement and did not particularly favour the one inherited from the Greeks. For example, when Pliny²⁸⁴ mentions “*The Semiramis chalice, which weighed fifteen talents*”, he adds: “*now, according to Varron, the Egyptian talent weighs eighty pounds*”, he is clearly perplexed by a chalice presumably weighing almost four hundred kilos of pure gold (0.327 x 80 x 15). It seems much more *reasonable* to me to estimate the worth of this chalice at 7,500 deniers (15 of *my* talents at 500 deniers) or 300 gold pieces. Its weight would then be 2.4 kg of pure gold...

We know from Flavius Josephus that Herod’s annual revenue was 1,050 talents. This sum of 6,300,000 deniers (1,050 x 6,000) seems highly improbable, whereas 525,000 deniers (1,050 x 500), although still an enormous sum, becomes more plausible. Similarly, when Flavius Josephus speaks of the sacred Temple treasure, amounting to approximately two thousand talents, it is difficult to believe that it was 50,000 kilos of gold, rather than 3,750 kilos of gold.

When, in 67 AD, the Jews of Caesarea paid Florus 8 talents to cease the work that was blocking the access to their synagogue, 48,000 deniers, (8 x 6,000, enough to pay the annual salary of 480 workers) seems a totally disproportionate sum for what was at stake. But 4,000 deniers (8 x 500 according to my hypothesis), would have been a reasonable, and far from negligible, “*compensation*”.

²⁸³ Cf. Herodotus, Aristotle, Plutarch, Biblical texts, etc.

²⁸⁴ Pliny, *Histories*, Book 33, chap 15.

The sum of 10,000 talents mentioned by Matthew (18, 24) would be a gigantic and totally unrealistic sum for the debt of a slave, even a royal slave, if we estimate it at sixty million drachmas (10,000 x 6,000)! In contrast, five million drachmas (1,000x500), although still a considerable sum, is comparable to the fortune that Tacitus attributes to Antonia's very wealthy freed slaves: Felix, Narcissus or Pallas²⁸⁵. Here is a brief extract of this parable as it appears in Maria Valtorta's work: "*A king wanted to draw up the accounts with his servants. He called them one by one, beginning with those who were in the highest positions. There was one who owed the king ten thousand talents. But the servant could not pay back the loan that the king had given him to build his houses and purchase all kinds of goods*"^{278.4}. Doesn't the parable, reported like this by Maria Valtorta, seem to refer to those *servants of the king*, whose excesses in the year 28 could already have been known throughout the empire?

Back to the sale of Aglae's jewellery

So, as we see, this evaluation of the monetary value of talents, which comes directly from Maria Valtorta's account, makes many *surprising* historical figures more *credible*, whether they come from Roman literature, from Flavius Josephus, or from the Bible. Unable to explain these figures and so many others in the same vein, many commentators interpreted them as errors made by copyists or as literary hyperbole.

Let us now return to Maria Valtorta's text. The shepherds have just told Jesus about the arrest of John the Baptist: "*It would be easy to free him if we had a lot of money. But ... but*

²⁸⁵ Three million sesterces or 750,000 deniers.

although there is a large sum of money given by friends, there's still a lot missing... We have even found someone who would let the Baptist out for a large sum of money.” “And how much does that person want?” “**Twenty silver talents**²⁸⁶ and we only have twelve and a half”^{81.4} (about ten of which were probably given by Manaen. That is, 5,000 deniers or 200 gold pieces according to our reasoning). “This is very beautiful jewellery... Beautiful and very valuable”. “How much might it be worth?” “Properly sold, at least... at least six talents”^{81.5}. If Judas estimates the weight in gold of this jewellery at 1.5 kg, exchanged with a 20% depreciation, he can hope to get 150 gold pieces for it, or 3,750 deniers, or 7.5 talents... hence his prudent estimate. “The thick, heavy necklace alone is worth at least **three talents**”^{81.5}. The necklace could well weigh some 600 g of gold. With the same 20% depreciation, Judas can hope to obtain 60 gold pieces for it, or 1,500 deniers, again three of *our* talents. So Judas had good reason to boast about the sale of this jewellery “Having sold it above my estimate”, he specifies. Taking slightly under two kilos of gold in jewellery to the money changer: “a necklace more or less like Aglae’s, and then hair pins, rings, bracelets... all similar to what I had in my bag and the same quantity”^{82.3}. Today we would say that Judas manages to sell them at the market price of gold. He obtains 5,250 deniers for them: “I sealed the bargain at ten and a half talents”^{82.3} (that is, 18 kg of silver coins). “I had a pile of coins, but I went to the tax-collector and said: ‘Take all this small change and give me the talents that you got from Isaac’ ”. Judas took out “a small sum, a hundred deniers, for our beds and meals”^{82.2}. A hundred deniers out of five thousand, barely 2%. There are eight of them;

²⁸⁶ *Twenty talents*, precisely the ransom demanded 60 years earlier to free Julius Caesar and confirmed by three authors (see one of the preceding footnotes). Moreover, my estimation (20 talents = 10,000 deniers) represents, according to Plutarch, Columella and Tacitus, the price of 4 to 6 slaves, which is plausible.

Jesus, three Apostles and four shepherds. A hundred deniers for board, lodging and an enclosure for the sheep seems credible. So the rest was exchanged for 200 to 210 gold pieces, a sum that is easy to spread out on a table (*“My friends, here are ten and a half talents. Only the hundred deniers that Judas kept back for our lodging expenses are missing”*^{82.5}) and to transport on foot to Macheronte. The highly detailed account of this sale is perfectly coherent and could afford us a promising way of re-reading ancient texts that mention the use of talents.

The adventure of the pigs

Matthew, Mark and Luke²⁸⁷ relate the episode of the demons chased into a herd of pigs. From the details provided by Maria Valtorta’s text, here is a curious monetary verification concerning talents! *“a large herd of pigs..., hundreds of animals... Better two thousand pigs perish than one man”*^{186.6}. Mark also mentions the number of approximately 2,000 pigs, apparently a maximal estimate²⁸⁸ Seeing their herd drowned, the Gerasenian swineherds deplore *“many²⁸⁹ talents’ worth of damages”*^{186.7}. We know from Tacitus, however, that a pig cost 60 deniers in 14 AD. So the 2,000 pigs that drowned were worth 120,000 deniers. With Maria Valtorta’s talent valued at 500 deniers, that comes up to 240 talents, *“molti talenti”* indeed. But with a talent weight of 6,000 deniers, that figure would be about twenty at most, or even less, if the number of pigs was under 2,000.

²⁸⁷ Matthew 8, 28-32; Mark 4, 35-41; Luke 8, 22-25.

²⁸⁸ With only 5 square meters per pig, this would suppose the herd to be spread over one hectare!

²⁸⁹ The French version translates the original Italian text *“molti talenti”* by *“several talents”*.

The bridal dowry

The cortege of the goldsmith Nathanael's bride carries "*the value of many gold talents*" in its coffers^{223,3}. As it would seem unthinkable, as much for its value as for its weight, that 20 to 25 kg of gold, a rich dowry, could be transported by donkey and with no escort, it seems logical, here again, to posit that the weight of a gold talent was 1.87 kg (the value in gold of 6,000 deniers), and assuredly not the 26 kg of gold put forward by biblical commentators.

The parable of the talents

The respective sums of five, two and one talent, given by a master to his servants, that Matthew (25, 15-28) relates are credible sums. The account of this parable, as transmitted by Maria Valtorta, is in perfect harmony with everything that has already been said about talents. But it also sheds new light on a text that exegetes sometimes have trouble commenting on. Jesus is at the Temple for the Feast of the Tabernacles. He has just said that some of His disciples will lose everything that they have received. A Scribe contests: "*What? To whom more has been given, more will remain*". Jesus then relates this parable: "*To one of them he gave five silver talents, to another two silver talents, to a third, only one pure gold talent. To each according to his position and capability*" (...) "*the one to whom the master had given the most, a pure gold talent*"^{281,9}. Jesus finishes the parable: "*He who has and works with what he has will be given more and even in excess. But he who has nothing, because he did not want anything, will also be deprived of what was given to him*". He then stipulates, for the edification of the Scribe: "*As you see, Rabbi, the one who had the most was left with less, because he did not deserve to keep the gift of God*" (...) "*You will see Gentiles reaching eternal life and Samaritans*

possessing Heaven, and you will see pure Israelites and followers of Mine losing Heaven and eternal Life”^{281.9}

Silver talent, gold talent: here is an indication that changes everything for us. But Matthew, a former tax-collector, could have judged the parable clear enough for him not to deem it necessary to stipulate the *nature* of these talents. In the Gospel according to Luke (19, 11- 27) the talents have become mines and this is perhaps another clue that mines and talents had become similar values in the time of Jesus. During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus again speaks of gold and talents in His teaching to the crowds: “*When you give your gold to a banker, why do you do so? So that he will make it grow. You certainly do not deprive yourselves, of it, even momentarily, for him to give it back to you as you gave it to him. But for ten talents you want him to give you back ten plus one, or even more. Then you are happy and you praise the banker*”^{173.2}. If Jesus mentions this sum of ten talents to His audience, we can now understand that He was referring to ten silver talents (10 x 500 deniers), received in exchange for 200 gold pieces, and certainly not to a sum of 60,000 deniers, which would mean little to poor villagers.

Thirty deniers, the price of a common lamb

In *The Gospel as revealed to me*, on the question of currencies, talents are not the only monetary unit referred to. Almost all the currencies in circulation at the time are mentioned and each time the information could arouse the jealousy of any amateur numismatist. So it is when an epicurean comments on his expenses for a coming orgy: “*It’s twenty thousand sesterces, or if you prefer, two hundred gold pieces*”^{425.4}, this *monetary conversion* is correct, as the **sesterce** was worth a quarter of a denier. The **stater** was the Greek equivalent of the Roman aureus. It was therefore a gold piece,

we surmise. So, when Maria Valtorta transmits this dialogue between Jesus and Peter²⁹⁰, the reader might be surprised to hear them talking about silver: *“Simon of Jonah, go to the river bank and cast a line with a strong hook as far as you can. And as soon as a fish bites, draw in the line. It will be a big fish. Open its mouth on the bank and you will find a stater inside. Take it. Go to these others and pay for yourself and for Me. (...) Peter removes the hook from the fleshy lips, thrusts his big finger into its throat and pulls out a large silver piece... ‘Hey! Tax-collectors! Take this! It’s worth four drachmas, isn’t it? Two for the Master and two for me’ ”*^{351.4/6}.

However it may seem, this information is absolutely correct. There were, in fact, silver staters corresponding to four drachmas (tetradrachma) or to a Jewish shekel. And **deniers**, the most usual currency in the Roman Empire, are mentioned several dozen times in the work, always credibly and coherently. *“James and I had only twenty deniers between us”*^{48.7}, John tells Peter, when he returns to Jerusalem. **Drachmas**, equal in value to deniers, were still in circulation throughout the Empire. So this remark of Peter’s is perfectly plausible: *“I’m not going to touch these ten deniers and seven drachmas that we received these last four days”*^{64.1}, and similarly: *“Peter, do you have any money?” “Master, I have forty deniers... Forty deniers and five didrachmas”*^{109.11}. Again, when Peter has just rented a boat in Ptolemais: *“I am going to give you a hundred drachmas more... But mind you, it is a pledge and you will give it back to me when I come back”*^{318.3}. A pledge of a hundred deniers for a boat and: *“a coin a day until you come back”*^{319.2} to guard it in the port, is quite plausible. And how to qualify Judas’ protest when he claims the price of his betrayal²⁹¹: *“Thirty silver pieces to kill a*

²⁹⁰ Matthew recounts this episode (17, 24-27), but does not indicate the metal.

²⁹¹ Matthew, 26, 15, confirms the “derisory” price of 30 deniers.

man and that Man? The price of a common lamb during these festivities?!”^{588.9}. The scribes justify this derisory sum: *“The price is fixed by the prophet²⁹² ! Oh! It’s just a formality! A mere symbol. The rest will come later”*. And what a symbol! Jesus, the Lamb betrayed for the price of a sacrificial lamb...

Hananiah’s shekels

One Sabbath day, while He is the guest of the Pharisee Ishmael ben Phiabi, Jesus is about to heal a man suffering from dropsy. He starts to speak to Hananiah ben Chiskia, the scribe (an episode mentioned in Luke 14, 1 – 6) *“You, old scribe (He addresses the trembling old man who spoke first) tell Me: is it lawful to heal on a Sabbath?”* *“It is not lawful to do any work on the Sabbath.”* *“Not even to save a man from despair? It is not manual work.”* *“The Sabbath is sacred to the Lord.”* While the old scribe remains intransigent, Jesus tells him: *“Hananiah, do you know that your most beautiful wood is on fire at this very moment and the whole Hermon slope is bright red with the flames?”* The old man jumps, as if bitten by an asp: *“Master, are You telling the truth or are You joking?”* *“I am telling the truth. I see and I know.”* *“Oh, poor wretch that I am! My most beautiful wood! **Thousands of shekels reduced to ashes!**”*^{335.13}. This last answer can only be fully appreciated by bearing in mind that it was distasteful to the Pharisees to mention Roman currency. The shekel was a silver Hebrew coin worth two didrachmas. This is the only allusion to this currency in the whole work, and it is mentioned by a Pharisee!

²⁹² As in Zachariah, 11, 12.

The tribute to the Temple paid during the month of Adar

Jesus passes through Capernaum at the beginning of the third year, precisely on the 18th of Adar according to the reconstructed day-by-day chronology. This is when the episode of the tribute to the Temple takes place, as related by Matthew (17, 24-27).

“What do you want?” “Your Master, only because He is such, does He, or does He not, pay the two drachmas due to the Temple?” “Of course He does! Why should He not?” “Well, because He says that He is the Son of God and...” ‘And so He is’, retorts Peter roundly, already flushed with indignation. He adds: ‘But, as He is also a Son of the Law, and the best Son of the Law, He pays His drachmas, like every Israelite...’ ”^{351.3}. Could Maria Valtorta have known that, according to eminent specialists²⁹³ this didrachma was, in fact, paid in Palestine on the 15th day of the month of Adar? As is evident from these few examples, Maria Valtorta’s writings do not only show her perfect mastery of all the subtleties of first-century Greek, Roman and even Hebrew currencies, but also seem to offer a very original solution to the insoluble problem of talents. And yet, monetary conversion is indeed a subject on which even the most erudite can too easily make mistakes, as soon becomes abundantly clear to whoever reads books from past centuries.

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²⁹³ Dr. Sepp, *Jésus Christ, Etudes sur Sa vie et sur Sa doctrine*, 1866, page 317 & E. Stapfer, *La Palestine au temps de Jésus*, 1885.

“A LAND OF WHEAT AND BARLEY, OF VINES OF FIGS”

Deuteronomy 8, 8
A land overflowing with milk and honey” Numbers, 13, 28
“I shall make splendid vegetation grow for them” Ezekiel 34, 29

Since Biblical times the land of Israel has been renowned for its magnificent flora, the abundance and diversity of its flowers and fruits, as well as for the great variety of its fauna. Another field in which Maria Valtorta seems to excel is that of the description of flora and fauna, although here again, the risk of error stalks the *writer* at every line. With about fifty sorts of minerals, around a hundred species of animals and close to a hundred and fifty species of plants, the flora and fauna in Maria Valtorta’s work can easily compete with those of the Bible²⁹⁴ famous as they are! But a closer look at her descriptions clearly shows that they are in no way a simple plagiarism of Biblical descriptions.

Well-stocked kitchen gardens

It seems to be common knowledge that potatoes, tomatoes, peanuts, sweet peppers, chocolate, guavas, avocados and pineapples, all everyday foods today, were unknown in Palestine at the time of Jesus... And they *do not appear* in Maria Valtorta’s text. By these omissions, she avoids the trap of anachronism! Neither is there any mention of carrots. The carrot that we eat today is the product of human intervention in the 16th century, a hybrid of red and white varieties. Another notable *absence* is that of corn, which was, in fact, unknown in Palestine at that time. It originated in the Americas, but was only brought to Europe in the 16th century.

²⁹⁴ Throughout the Bible, there are approximately 110 names of plants and 140 of animals.

Here are a few examples of Maria Valtorta's *horticultural* descriptions: "*It is a garden. There are no lettuces, but there are leeks, garlic, herbs and vegetables. And pumpkins!*"^{384.3}. "*Vegetables, and I have some more melons*"^{496.1}. "*A rope with bunches of garlic and onions hanging from it*"^{531.8}. "*They came for my cucumbers*"^{564.11}. Leeks, garlic, onions, melons, cucumbers did in fact seem to be popular with the Hebrews²⁹⁵. But we also find fennels, "*endives, lettuce, vegetables, young cucurbit plants*", figs, dates, olives, grapes, apples, pomegranates, strawberries, raspberries, etc.

A profusion of flowers

In early spring, Palestine was covered with all kinds of flowers. Maria Valtorta admiringly describes this profusion of colours and aromas: "*At this first appearance of Palestinian springtime, spreading its clouds of **almond trees** in full bloom and laying the pearls of future flowers on **pear** and **apple** trees, on **pomegranate** and **quince** trees, all of them, all the richest and most delightful trees, beautiful with their blossom and their fruit. (...) The banks... are dotted with golden **buttercup** buds, the radiant stars of **daisies** and, near them... the elegant **forget-me-nots**... In this the early spring, the lake has not yet acquired the opulence of the months to come that will transform it into a triumphant splendour. It has yet to acquire that sumptuousness... of thousands upon thousands of rigid or supple **rose bushes**, thousands of corymbs of **cytisi** and **acacias** (...) of alignments of tuberous plants in flower, the thousands and thousands of star-shaped **citrus** flowers, of all the blending of colours and of strong, soft, inebriating aromas*"^{158.1}. "*Smells of **wood**, of **mint**, of **violets**, of the first **lilies of the valley**, of **rose bushes** in ever-abundant flower, and above all, this fresh,*

²⁹⁵ Numbers 11, 5.

slightly bitter, smell of fruit tree blossoms, covering the grass everywhere with the snowfall of their petals"^{348.4}. "*Quantities of lilies of the valley and daffodils*"^{174.12}. "*The clover and cornflowers, the camomile and bindweed flowers*"^{382.4}. "*So many flowers emerging from the land, now bare of wheat, poppies, cornflowers and daisies*"^{411.1}. But also: "*lilies and roses, jasmine and camphor, cinnamon and carnations*"^{300.7}. I could mention dozens of species, so rich and detailed is the flora that Maria Valtorta never tires of holding up to our admiring gaze, flowers that the Master and His disciples come across by chance as they walk through Palestine. Attentive and systematic verification alone will show (but this is no longer surprising) that all these descriptions fit perfectly harmoniously into the chronology, respecting the cycle of the seasons in Palestine, as well as the climate data.

Lazarus's beautiful flax fields

Maria Valtorta mentions the flax fields of Judea on several occasions. "*They are going towards magnificent orchards and flax fields, as tall as a man, ready to be harvested*"^{84.1}. Near Bethany, "*Jesus is resting near a flax field in full bloom that belongs to Lazarus... Although the fully grown flax is very tall, Jesus emerges a good height above the blue-green sea*"^{204.1}. And again, elsewhere, "*Behind the thicket, a flax field, its high stalks, with their first sky-blue flowers, undulating in the breeze*"^{575.2}. Or on another occasion, "*Fluffy tows of linen or hemp look like loose plaits hanging on the whitewashed wall*"^{262.2}. It is an established fact that flax, a widespread crop in Egypt, was also grown in Palestine (as was hemp, and perhaps cotton too) well before the time of Jesus. Gauze, that fine linen and silk cloth, owes its name to the town of Gaza, where it was

first made²⁹⁶. The same goes for byssus or byssos²⁹⁷ well known in Judea. Maria Valtorta often mentions it in her work “*Many small bags of very fine byssus roll out as well... Delicate hues shine through the diaphanous linen cloth*”²⁹⁸ 294.3.

Thoughts on rice, oats and rye

Rice has been the staple food in the Orient and Southern Asia for millennia. However, the Bible makes no mention of rice, unlike the Talmud, in which it is referred to as *orez*. There are no testimonies to its cultivation in first-century Palestine, but rice has been grown on the Hule plain for several centuries now²⁹⁹. The absence of the slightest allusion to rice by Maria Valtorta would tend to lend credit to the authenticity of her revelations. Nor are rye and oats mentioned in the Bible. So if she had used the Bible as the inspiration for her work, she would probably not have mentioned oats several times from the first pages: “*the beautiful pergola that divides the orchard in two, up to where the fields begin, now harvested of their oats*”^{5.1} and up to the very last pages: “*Can straw suffice? It is not even enough for the bellies of the beasts of burden and if their master does not fortify his animals with oats and fresh grass, the animals fed only straw will waste away and eventually die*”^{635.13}. As for rye, she observes in the Kerioth region: “*In quite narrow, but well-tended fields, diverse cereals grow: barley, rye especially, and also beautiful vineyards in the sunnier places*”^{78.1}. Mischna, a Talmud text, confirms that rye (*schiphon*) and oats (*schibboleth schoual*) were known and cultivated in Judea in the

²⁹⁶ *Dictionnaire technologique ... universel des arts et métiers* 1827, Tome X, p118.

²⁹⁷ Byssos was known to most oriental peoples, notably to the Hebrews. Also produced in Greece (in Elide and Patras, the *linnum byssinum* was sold at the price of its weight in gold, according to Pliny.

²⁹⁸ Byssos was the material of the Levites' cloaks. It is mentioned in the Bible: 1 Chronicles 4, 21:15, 27; Esther 1, 6; 8,15; Proverbs 31, 22; Luke 16, 19; Apocalypse 18, 12,16; 19, 8, 14.

²⁹⁹ Salomon Munk, *Palestine, Description géographique, historique et archéologique*, 1845, p. 18.

(continued on following page...)

first century³⁰⁰, or thereabouts, but it is highly improbable that this text could have influenced Maria Valtorta!

Agaves



There are several references in this work to the agave, that astonishing cactus from America that grows wild in Mediterranean areas. Maria Valtorta, having observed them closely, gives this detailed account: *“Thirty years of hope, oh, what a long wait! And now those years have blossomed like the flower of a solitary agave”*^{102.3}. And further on: *“He is like the agave, which, when it is about to die, forms the great candelabrum with its blazing, fragrant, seven-petal flower”*^{127.1}.

Then again: *“Big, agile white goats and black ones, with long, curved horns and bright, soft eyes feed on cacti and attack fleshy agaves, those great paintbrushes of hard, thick leaves, which, like open artichokes, shoot up from the centre of their hearts, their one gigantic seven-branched stalk, like the candelabrum of a cathedral, crowned by a fragrant yellow and red flower”*^{221.1}... *“The agave flower is more beautiful, it is so majestic and imposing”*^{412.1}.



All of these descriptions are correct: after ten or twelve years, a stalk, that can grow as high as 12 metres, shoots up from its centre, bearing bunches of flowers that produce an abundance of fragrant nectar. It only flowers once and the agave

³⁰⁰ See also Constantin François Volney, *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte*, 1787, pages 288-289.

stalk dies shortly afterwards. Do I really have to say that I have found no mention of the agave in the many biblical dictionaries that I have consulted? Here, once again, is an additional indication that the Bible was not Maria Valtorta's source of inspiration.

The prickly pears of Sychar

When Jesus passes through Sychar at the beginning of January 28 AD, Maria Valtorta describes the scene: *“Jesus is walking ahead of the Apostles, alone, close to a hedge of prickly cactus, with its thick leaves shining in the sun, as if mocking all the other plants that have lost their leaves. There are still a few fruits on them that time has turned brick red, or on which the odd early yellow-cinnabar flower already nods happily”*^{147.1}. This is a perfect description of prickly pears, or Barbary figs, dark or light crimson, or sometimes yellowish, with red tones. The flowers of this cactus are yellow and its fruit is harvested up to December or January. Originally from Goa, it is also called the Indian fig tree and was well known to Pliny, Theophrastus and Strabo. (*Dictionnaire universel de Trévoux* 1738, vol 3, p. 815/816). Once again, we note the spontaneity and quality of Maria Valtorta's descriptions: *“At last they find a hedge of*



Indian figs and there, on the topmost leaves, bristling with thorns, are some prickly pears, just ripening. Anything tastes good to hungry people, and pricking their fingers, they pick the ripest ones”^{217.4}. Or again: *“the cacti on the plain or those*

on the lower hillsides are becoming daily more brightly coloured, the coral ovules, placed by a joyful decorator on top of the fleshy spatulas, that look like hands forming thorny cases

as they close, holding up to the sky the fruits that they grew and ripened” 221.1.

The onagers and eagles of the Judean desert

At the beginning of the work, when Jesus speaks to His Apostles about His fast in the Judean desert, He tells them: “*My servants were the onagers that came to sleep in their caves (...) in this one where I, too, took refuge*” 80.2. He speaks about these wild donkeys again a little further on: “*Let your work be constant, confident, peaceful, without sudden starts and stops, as onagers do. But no one, unless they are mad, uses them to travel safely*” 267.7. Is there anyone who would say that Maria Valtorta, as she reported these words, knew that this rare animal from Tibet and Mongolia did, in fact, migrate over millennia towards Iran and Israel? The wild onager lived in Israel until the 18th century³⁰¹. Today, wild onagers are being reintroduced into Israel and out of the 650 onagers still alive in the world, 500 live in Israel and Iran.

Likewise, the least that can be said is that it was *not* common knowledge in 1944 that there were eagles in the Palestinian sky. And yet, these birds of prey are very often mentioned in *The Gospel as revealed to me* as a familiar sight there. In the Judean desert: “*My maidservants were the eagles, whose harsh cries told me ‘It’s daylight’ when they flew away to hunt*” 80.5; but also in Galilee: “*I had the pleasure of passing there to see the beauty of the Gennesaret and Merom lakes, from high above, as the eagles and the angels of the Lord see them*” 160.4; and even on the Phoenician coast: “*Some eagles, I think they are sea-eagles or vultures, are flying in wide circles*

³⁰¹ Dominique Auzias, Patricia Huon, Jean-Paul Labourdette, *Le Petit Futé, Israël*, 2008, page 209 and *International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources*.

over the hilltops, swooping down now and again in search of prey. And a duel begins between two vultures that attack and fight each other, losing feathers in an elegant but ferocious battle, which ends in the flight of the defeated one. Perhaps it withdraws to die on a remote mountain top. At least this is the general opinion, so laborious and exhausted is its flight^{249.2}; and to the ends of Samaria: *“Look at those eagles over there, how they soar away in wide flights in search of prey”*^{560.15}. These numerous references to eagles testify to the fact that they were probably quite a common sight in the mountains of Judea. Ornithologists still come today from all over the world to observe the many species of eagles in Israel³⁰².

Crocodiles on the Sharon plain

The reader will perhaps be even more surprised when the apostolic group, coming from Sycaminon and approaching Caesarea, notices small, lizard-like creatures. Peter asks: *“Oh! What are they? Leviathans?”* *“You are right, Simon. In fact, they are crocodiles. Small ones, it’s true, but capable of maiming you for a while”*. *“And what are they doing there?”* *“They were brought there for religious rites in the Phoenician era and they have remained there. They have become smaller, but no less aggressive and from the temples, they have passed into the sludge of the river. Now they are big lizards, but with vicious teeth!”* (...) *“A large lizard, that’s all it seems to be, but with the head of a crocodile, is lying across the road, pretending to be asleep”*^{254.1.2}. Crocodiles on the Sharon plain are indeed astonishing and could even seem to be an anachronism. However, Pliny, in his *Natural History* mentions the

³⁰² *“Following the eagles is part of our job to preserve and take care of the community of eagles in Israel”*, as Eli Amitai, director of Israel Nature and Natural parks Protection Authority, explained in July 2007.

(continued on following page...)

Crocodilum flumen here, while Strabo the geographer tells of the ruins of a town called *Krokodeilon polis*³⁰³. The existence of these small crocodiles has been confirmed by several pilgrims throughout the centuries. I might mention Jacques de Vitry (1230); R. Pococke (1760) or Joseph Fr. Michaud, who confirmed in 1831: “*These are the smallest species of crocodile*”. Victor Guérin reported in 1883: “*There are small crocodiles in this humble river, and one cannot bathe there without taking precautions. (...) They were small, about 5 or 6 feet long (...) crocodiles are thought to have been transported long ago from Egypt to Palestine*”.

The river and the bridge later described by Maria Valtorta also exist: the river is called the Nahr ez Zerqa³⁰⁴, and in *Lands of the Bible*, (1881) Mc Garvey mentions the remains of an ancient bridge, 1.5 km from the mouth of this river.

So, this dialogue, following an unexpected meeting, might be interesting: “*I would die of fright if I had to go near one*” says Martha. “*Really? But it’s nothing, woman, compared to a real crocodile. It’s at least three times longer and fatter*”. “*And hungry too. That one has had his fill of water snakes and wild rabbits*”. “*Mercy! Water snakes too! Wherever have you brought us, Lord? groans Martha. She is so afraid that everyone has to laugh*”. And to Martha, who wonders: “*Perhaps they are necessary?*” “*Well you’d have to put that question to the One Who made them. But, rest assured that if He made them, it’s a sure sign that they are useful, if only for Martha’s heroism to shine forth*’, says Jesus, with an irresistible twinkle in His eyes”. “*Oh, Lord! You’re joking and you’re right, but I am afraid, and I shall never be able to control it*”. “***We’ll see about that***”^{254.3}.

³⁰³ The archaeologist R. Stieglitz found it in 1999.

³⁰⁴ Not to be confused with the Jabbok, which also bears this name, (“*the blue river*”) but is situated in Jordan.



The Nahr al Zarqa, the Crocodile river, “a river that never dries up, even in summer... a little river with a rather wide bed”^{254.2}

This last remark could easily be overlooked, or seem enigmatic to all except French readers, but takes on its full meaning in France for whoever knows the ancient tradition in Provence of Les Saintes Maries de la Mer. Jacques de Voragine, in *La Légende Dorée*, (1255) relates: “*Martha, conquering her fear, rid the inhabitants of the Rhone downstream from Avignon, of the Tarasque, that long-tailed dragon that devoured men and beasts*”. Many historians think that it was probably a crocodile. This creature could have reached the Rhone after the shipwreck of the vessel that was carrying it to some neighbouring amphitheatre, probably the one in Arles. The *Tarasque* thus became the symbol of the town of Tarascon. Jacob of Voragine³⁰⁵ writes: “*Taking off her belt, she tied it around the monster’s neck, a gesture which instantly made it as gentle as a lamb. It allowed itself to be led docilely to the town, where the*

³⁰⁵ Jacob of Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 1902 edition, part 307, the article about Martha.

inhabitants massacred it". And the commentators wonder: "What is all this about a gesture with a belt and what is there behind it?"

Maria Valtorta's readers will certainly associate the mention of this medieval tradition with what Jesus said to Martha: "Give me this hand that has never sinned, that has been gentle, merciful, active and pious. It has always made gestures of love and prayer. It has never become lazy or corrupt. There, I am holding it in Mine to make it holier still. Raise it against the devil, and he will not be able to bear it. And take this belt which belongs to Me. Keep it always and every time you see it, say to yourself: Even stronger than this belt of Jesus, is the power of Jesus and with it, everything can be conquered: demons and monsters. I must not be afraid." 231.7. In her writings, Maria Valtorta, revealing a curious and little-known historical fact to us, reinforces the credibility of a legend from Provence! Is this no more than the simple inspiration of an author?

When there is also a chameleon in the picture

We wonder, and rightly so, about the pertinence of this remark made by Nicodemus about Judas: "I do not consider it right that among His disciples there should be someone who does not know whether he is for or against Him, who is like a chameleon that takes on the colour and the appearance of its surroundings". Or also when Peter asks: "But that scribe said: "The chameleon is missing from the group". Does the chameleon not change color any time it wants to?" 225.1. Pliny, in his *Natural History*³⁰⁶ gives a precise description of the chameleon, showing that it was well-known to the Romans. And Plutarch confirms: "It is true that the chameleon also changes

³⁰⁶ Pliny, *Natural History*, Book 8, 51.
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*colour*³⁰⁷. Frequently seen in Egypt, it could undoubtedly have also wandered around untrammelled and *free* in Palestine in the time of Jesus, as it does today³⁰⁸. Moreover, some Biblical translations (Leviticus 11, 30) do mention it.

Did you say one dog, or two?

The dog is only mentioned with contempt³⁰⁹ in the New Testament. In first-century Palestine, this animal was not considered to be the companion and friend of man. “*Do not give dogs what is holy*”, says Jesus (Matthew 7, 16) and later “*It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to little dogs*” (Matthew 15, 26). So it is not surprising that the dog should be very seldom mentioned throughout Maria Valtorta’s six thousand pages.

Accordingly, when she notes in an episode at the Clear Water at the end of the first year of the public life: “*a dog, **the second one that has come in my visions***”^{129.1}, the attentive reader is surprised, because for him, it is the first mention of a dog. Is Maria Valtorta mistaken? Great patience and a good memory are required to find the answer to this question. In book 9, during the Passion, three years later, according to the narration, a dog crosses the path of the fleeing Judas: “*In this blind flight, he is going to bump into a stray dog, **the first dog that I’ve seen since I’ve been having the visions, a big, hairy grey dog, which moves aside, snarling, ready to pounce on the person who has disturbed it***”^{605.3}. It all becomes clear when the reader notices that this vision of the Passion took place on March 31st, 1944, and the one at the Clear Water on March 13th 1945, a year later!

³⁰⁷ Plutarch, *Moral works* 978a.

³⁰⁸ As stated on the internet site of the *Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry*, in the Nature section.

³⁰⁹ The word “*cynical*” inherited from the Greek, shows to what extent the contempt for dogs was widespread in Antiquity.

This will, of course, lend further credit to the authenticity of these visions.

Wherever is the cat?

Most of the animals mentioned in the Bible are also present in one way or another in *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*. But among the animals that are familiar to us today, it is surprising to note that Maria Valtorta makes no mention of any cats whatsoever. Yet, this animal could have existed, wild or domesticated, from early Antiquity in Egypt. The mummies found in Thebes, Egyptian statuettes, and the testimony of Herodotus³¹⁰, are all proof of this. Although it was sacred in ancient Egypt, the cat appears to be unknown in the Bible³¹¹. Was it then considered to be an impure or accursed animal by the Israelites? This explanation, given by Jesus, of the terror that seized Judas after his betrayal, could lead us to suppose so: “*You say that he seemed mad and rabid? He was so through satanic fury. His terror at the sight of the dog, a rare animal, particularly in Jerusalem, came from the fact that, from time immemorial, that form has been attributed to Satan as he appears to mortals. In books of magic, it is stated that some of the forms preferred by Satan to appear to men is that of a mysterious dog, or cat, or ram-goat*”^{605.16}.

This subject might perhaps deserve a more in-depth study, as would the absence of certain domestic birds, such as ducks, geese, guinea fowl or turkeys in the work...

³¹⁰ See Herodotus, *Histories*, Book II, chap. 46 and 47.

³¹¹ According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (I.S.B.E.) the word cat is only mentioned once in the whole of the Bible. (Baruch 6, 21). This is also Osty's opinion. (See note 21 of the *letter of Jeremy*).

AN EXHAUSTIVE ARCHITECTURAL INVENTORY

An expert in Jewish, Greek and Roman monuments?

Maria Valtorta, describing an ongoing scene in the Temple in Jerusalem as best she can, confides: “*Were I to see the Temple a thousand times... because of my ignorance of the correct terms and my inability to draw a plan, I should always be remiss in my description of this sumptuous place*”^{115.1}. And, sure enough, while she describes landscapes with astonishing precision, she sometimes seems to have trouble finding the appropriate words for architecture... What a contrast, then, between this sincere confession and the highly *professional* description of Greek temples, given a few pages later, one that Vitruvius³¹²... himself would not have disowned... But it is true that it is Jesus who is speaking there: “*Your really beautiful sacred buildings, whose only imperfection is that they are dedicated to Nothingness... Look. Where are they built? The place is generally spacious, open and elevated... If it is not elevated, they elevate it by means of a **stereobate** higher than the normal **three steps** used for a temple placed on a natural elevation. They are generally surrounded by a sacred enclosure, formed by **colonnades** and **porches**, within which are enclosed the **trees sacred to the gods**, fountains and **altars**, **statues** and **steles**, and are usually preceded by a **propylaeum**, beyond which is the altar, where prayers are said to the deity. Opposite it is the place for the sacrifice, because the sacrifice precedes the prayer. Very often, and particularly in the more magnificent ones, a **peristyle** encircles them with a **garland of precious sorts of marble**. Inside, there is the **front vestibule**, outside or inside the peristyle, the **chamber of the deity** and the **rear vestibule**. Marbles, statues, **pediments**, **acroteria** and gables, all polished,*

³¹² Vitruvius (Marcus Vitruvius Pollio) a Roman architect, who lived circa 90 – 20 B.C.

precious and decorated (...) Is it not so?"^{204.4}. Would the architects Ictinus or Callicrates have described their masterpiece, the Parthenon, any better? Be that as it may, these few lines are a masterly presentation of the Greek temple³¹³. On closer examination, it is clear that all the terms pertaining to ancient architecture in *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* come from dialogues or letters exchanged between the *actors* and not from descriptions by the *author*. When Maria Valtorta describes Tiberias, she simply writes: "*I see the beautiful new city of Tiberias. Its whole layout indicates that it is new and wealthy (...) there are beautiful avenues and straight roads (...) wide squares with large fountains with magnificent marble basins. Roman-style palaces, their doors already open, with spacious arcades*"^{99.1}, while Syntyche, in her letter, writes precisely: "*They spoke at length about Him, in thermal baths, in triclinia, or in gilt peristyles*"^{254.5} And, writing from Antioch, she mentions "*Herod's colonnades, the Nymphaeum*", or "*the rich palaces of the Omphalos*"³¹⁴. But it would be rash judgement of Maria Valtorta's work to let it be supposed that architecture was her Achilles' heel! Because, as Jesus travels tirelessly through Palestine, Maria Valtorta, without seeming to do so, gives a full inventory of the monuments of Palestine...

Jerusalem, its gates, its palaces and its temple

In three years, Jesus stayed for several weeks in Jerusalem or nearby and His parents and grandparents also went there on pilgrimages. Consequently, Maria Valtorta mentions the Holy City on multiple occasions. Altogether, her descriptions of Jerusalem fill dozens upon dozens of pages. As an exhaustive view of the information on Jerusalem and the surrounding

³¹³ These few lines tell us almost as much as a whole chapter taken from a reference work, such as *Histoire de l'art Monumental dans l'Antiquité*, by L. Batissier, 1860, pages 178 to 190..

³¹⁴ See the paragraph "*Did Maria Valtorta visit Antioch?*"

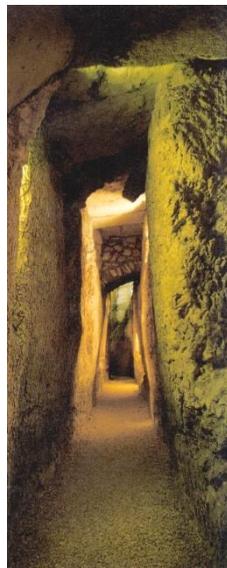
region contained in this work would fill a book, I will simply indicate a few isolated points, in order to illustrate, once again, the remarkable level of precision of Maria Valtorta's descriptions.

For example, when, on several occasions, she mentions "*Bel Nidrasc*" or "*Bel Nisdrasc*"^{67.6, 111.3, 243.3, 492.2}, it is, beyond doubt, the house of studies, or Beth Midrasc, this place "*situated in the courtyard of the Gentiles, where the Sanhedrin met on Sabbaths and on feast days*"³¹⁵, very likely the place where Jesus, at 12, spoke with the Temple doctors and where He later taught (John 10, 23). The exact location of this place reserved for teaching is still not proven, but Maria Valtorta's text seems to indicate Solomon's Porch^{225.5}, east of the Gentiles' square, these "*very large, high porches, crowded with people listening to the lessons of the Rabbis*"^{281.4}, just where Joseph, His cousin, exhorts Jesus to go: "*Go up to the Temple and install Yourself in Solomon's Porch – You are of the stock of David and a prophet, You are entitled to that place, nobody as rightfully so as You are – and speak*"^{478.5}.

One day, to escape the violence unleashed against Him, Jesus has to flee by "*a small, low door, hidden in the wall of the Porch*". He walks along "*a gallery, between the mighty stone walls, I don't know their correct architectural name. The stones are embedded I would say, that is, there are large stones and smaller ones, and on top of the smaller ones, there are large ones and vice versa. I do not know whether I have made myself clear. They are dark and mighty, coarsely chiselled, hardly visible in the dim light coming from narrow openings placed high up at regular intervals to let in air and light, so that the*

³¹⁵ See Dr. Sepp, *Jesus Christ, étude sur sa vie et sa doctrine*, 1866, page 117, who quotes Gemara Sanhedrin, f 88, 2.

place will not be totally dark. It is a narrow tunnel, I do not know what its purpose is, but I am under the impression that it runs right around the porch (...) We go down to the cisterns... and we come out near the Cedron. It is an old way, not always used for a good purpose”^{507.12} .



These are almost the identical words used by commentators to describe the discovery in 1996 of the Hasmonean tunnel under the Temple esplanade. But in this instance, it could be one of the galleries that have since become inaccessible, different from the tunnel of Ezekias, explored by Parker’s clandestine expedition³¹⁶ in 1909 – 1911. Even the apparently least significant details turn out to be true: “*Jesus... enters the enclosure of the Temple and ... stops at a place surrounded by porches, near a large courtyard, paved with multicoloured marble*”^{68.1}. This description corresponds to the square of the Gentiles and the entrance to the women’s courtyard, in front of the Beautiful Gate (see also 85.3) and it is almost the verbatim description of Flavius Josephus: “*The whole part that was open was paved with different stones, of varied colours*³¹⁷”. Still elsewhere, Maria Valtorta admires “*The beautiful Gate of Nicanor, all sculpted in solid, silver-plated bronze*”^{6.3}. The access to the Gate of Nicanor was from the Women’s Courtyard, sixteen steps up a stairway. These bronze gates, brought from Alexandria by Nicanor, were indeed left as they were, as *their bronze shone*

³¹⁶ In 1911 R. Savignac (*Ecole Biblique de Jérusalem*) took photographs of them.

³¹⁷ Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, V, 2, 190.

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like gold³¹⁸ when all the other temple gates were adorned with gold and silver³¹⁹. It does not seem very probable that Maria Valtorta could have had such incisive knowledge of the text of Flavius Josephus as to have noted and reported this apparently insignificant detail. Maria Valtorta's text also contains, as if woven into her narrative, precious information on all of the gates through which Jerusalem could be entered in the time of Jesus, about ten of which she designates by name. It is highly likely that an exhaustive study of all this information, crosschecked with numerous other topographical details, could add considerably to the existing knowledge in this field.

Rachel's tomb

On at least two occasions, Jesus passes in front of Rachel's tomb. *"At the right angle turn of the road, there is a square building surrounded by a small low dome. It is all closed up, as if it were abandoned. 'Here is Rachel's tomb'... They have reached the tomb, an ancient, but well-preserved monument, well whitewashed... Jesus stops to drink at a rustic well nearby"*^{73.1/2}. Then, on another occasion: *"They proceed westward along the cool valley. The road then bends slightly to the north, close by a hill, and here they reach the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, right next to a cube-shaped building, surmounted by a small dome, which is Rachel's tomb. They all go up to it and pray reverently."*^{207.2}.

It is an established fact in the first book of the Bible (Genesis 35, 19-20) that Rachel's tomb is in Bethlehem: *"So Rachel died and was buried on the road to Ephrata, which is*

³¹⁸ Mishnah, *Middot* 2, 3 (Source: *Israël Temple Institute*). Also mentioned by Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah*, Oxford University Press, 1933.

³¹⁹ Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, V, 2, 3

Beth Lehem. Jacob built a monument above her tomb; it is the monument of Rachel's tomb, which still exists today".



The location provided by Maria Valtorta, at the entrance to Bethlehem on the road from Jerusalem, is correct. The Pilgrim of Bordeaux visited this tomb in 333 and Arculfe³²⁰ the Pilgrim said that “*the tomb was devoid of ornaments, apparently a simple monument*”. From the year 333 until the 19th century, several testimonies affirm that the tomb was hewn out of the rock and covered by a dome, supported by four arches. Some of these testimonies also mention a cistern in the near vicinity³²¹.

In 1841, Sir Moses Montefiore obtained the authorisation to restore the tomb. He added a second room (the one on the left of the photograph here, dating from this period) to serve as the entrance and had the space under the dome closed in, so that the pilgrims could shelter there. So we can easily imagine that Maria Valtorta described it as it looked at the beginning of the first century. The site is considered as the third holy place of

³²⁰ At the beginning of the Arab period in the 7th century.

³²¹ See Louis Morand, *La Terre des Patriarches*, 1882, vol. 1, P. 25 – 30.

Judaism, after the Temple Mount and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

Jacob's Well in Sychar

“The disciples leave reluctantly and turn around three or four times to look at Jesus, Who has sat down on a little wall in the sun, near the low, broad edge of a well. It is a big well, so wide that it is almost a cistern. In summer, it must be shaded by tall trees, which are now bare. The water is not visible, but the little puddles and ring marks of wet pitchers on the ground near the well are clear signs that water has been drawn (...) Isn't this Jacob's well?”^{143.1}.



Jacob's well was already embellished in the year 380 by the construction of a cruciform church, mentioned by several pilgrims: Paula, Theodosius, Arculfe³²² (who wrote: *“ecclesiae quadrifidae in cujus medietate fons Jacob”*) and in the 6th – 7th century, the

Venerable Bede.

“But, to come back to the well, yes, it is Jacob's well and its water is so plentiful and clear that we in Sychar prefer it to other fountains. But it is very deep”^{143.2}. A modern Naplouse³²³ tourist guide does indeed mention this great depth: 32 metres

³²² Paul Geyer, *Itinera Hierosolymitana* 1898, p 270 onwards.

³²³ See <http://www.nablusguide.com>, in the section “Places to visit”
(continued on following page...)

and Léonie de Bazelaire³²⁴ notes that the edge of the well was transported to Rome. Maria Valtorta's narration in no way varies from St. John's.

Solomon's Pools

Now here is a very ancient site, only mentioned twice in the Bible (Ecclesiastics 2, 5 – 6; I Chronicles 11, 16 – 19), and even then not very explicitly. Jesus passes here on two occasions and gives His Apostles this very detailed description :



Above, the appearance

of Solomon's pools in 1870.

“From here to Solomon's Pools and thence to Bethzur... There are three large pools hewn out of the rocky mountain, a really grand work and the surface of the most limpid water sparkles, as well as the waterfall, coming down from the first pool into the second, larger, one then into the third one, a real little lake, from where pipelines convey the water to distant towns. The whole mountain, from the spring to the pools and from the pools to the ground, is wonderfully fertile, thanks to the humidity of the soil in this area. The widest variety of wild flowers and rare, fragrant plants transform the green slopes into a delight. (...) This is the place where Solomon's gardens were, and they were famous, like his palaces, throughout the world of

³²⁴ In *Chevauchée en Palestine*, 1899, p 89.

those days. (...) Let us thank Solomon too... The pools that nourish plants and men surely come from him” 208.1/5.

These ancient, tri-millennial pools are situated south of Bethlehem, near the road leading to Hebron. Since the year 2000, considerable restoration work has been carried out, but few Europeans would have been able to describe them so precisely in 1945.

The tomb of the Maccabees in Modin

On the way to Jerusalem from Azotos, Jesus passes by a place where the tomb of the Maccabees is: “*We are going to Modin. The night is serene, cool and clear. We shall walk while there is moonlight, and then sleep until dawn. I will take the two Judases to venerate the tombs of the Maccabees, whose glorious name they bear.*” “*Only the two of us with You!*” exclaims the *Iscariot happily.* “*No, with everybody. But the visit to the tomb of the Maccabees is for you, that you may imitate them supernaturally, by struggles and victories in a completely spiritual field*”^{222.5}. The archaeological site, known in Arabic as *Seikh el Ghrabawi* and in Hebrew as *Khirbet Hagardi*, is in fact situated just west of Modi’in, and Victor Guérin’s excavations of the site have revealed what could well be the Hasmonean tomb.

Hillel’s tomb in Meiron

Jesus goes to the tomb for the first time at the end of January 28 AD, on His way from Gerghesa to Giscala, via Hatzor. “*I am going to Hillel’s tomb... they go ahead, along a steep road... Hillel is buried over there... They pray near the closed tomb.*”^{160.5/6}

They return a year later, at the beginning of February 29 AD, on the way from Korazim. “So, where are we going?” “To venerate the tombs of the great rabbis and heroes of Israel... I bow before the tombs of the righteous awaiting redemption ^{339.6} (...) They find the village of Meiron... In the afternoon we will leave for Giscala. The great sepulchers are scattered along these slopes awaiting the glorious resurrection”^{339.6}. “From Meiron, Jesus and His disciples take a mountainous road that runs north-west through woods and pastures, always rising. Perhaps they have already venerated some tombs, because I can hear them speaking about them”^{340.1}. “Come, the town is close at hand. We must cross it to reach Hillel’s tomb... Jesus is praying respectfully near Hillel’s whitewashed tomb”^{340.6}. In the region of Meiron and Giscala, the tombs of several sages and Biblical figures³²⁵ are still venerated today. The pilgrimage to Hillel’s tomb³²⁶ is very ancient and one of the most ancient written traces³²⁷ of this was attested by Benjamin de Tuleda in 1165



Are the tombs of Israel’s heroic liberators, General Barac, and Yaël who killed Sisera, (Judges 4, 17 – 22; 5, 6. 24 – 27) near Meiron, as the text suggests? I am still unable to elucidate this point.

There are many other cultural references in this work. Some of them are well known, like the Antonia fortress, Herod’s

³²⁵ Internet source: www.travelnet.co.il/ISRAEL/Tiberias/tib20-MERON.htm..

³²⁶ At Khirbet Shema, 32° 59' N / 35° 28' E.

³²⁷ See E. Robinson, Eli Smith, *Biblical researches in Palestine*, Re edition. 2009, page 334.
(continued on following page...)

palace, etc. Others are less famous. Whether it be Xyste³²⁸, this mi-forum, mi-gymnasium square with colonnades, that Maria Valtorta correctly situates in Jerusalem, but misspells: “*Sixtus*”^{348.3} or “*Sistus*”^{368.5, 372.2}; or the Hippicus³²⁹ : tower: “*The Roman synagogue is exactly opposite the temple, near the Hippic*”^{534.1}; or again the En Rogel fountain and the nearby King’s gardens. Others seem to have completely disappeared, or are yet to be discovered, like the vestiges of the “*Tower of David*”^{207.5}, situated close to the Nativity grotto in Bethlehem. The existence of this Tower appears to be historically attested³³⁰, but no known archaeological trace of it remains. The same can be said of the vestiges of the “*Warm Fountain*”^{266.2} in Korazim, but in this case, we will have to wait for excavations to begin in the part of this city that goes back to the time of Jesus.

*

I cannot, however, close this chapter on architecture without mentioning a very surprising archaeological discovery.

An exceptional discovery in Jerusalem

Maria Valtorta describes several times, and in great detail, the different residences of Lazarus and his sisters in Palestine and Antioch, indicating that Lazarus possessed a luxurious home on Mount Sion, where Jesus and His disciples were his guests on many occasions. As usual, Maria Valtorta gives such

³²⁸ Flavius Josephus mentions it at the time of the procurator, Festus (*Antiquities* XX, 8, 11) on the occasion of the speech of Agrippa II against the Jewish revolt and about the siege of the city by Titus (*Jewish Wars* II, 16, 3).

³²⁹ One of the three towers of Herod’s palace, with the Phasael and Marianne towers.

³³⁰ F. E. Chassay, *Histoire de la Rédemption*, 1850 p 130 tells of it: “*When David came to the throne, he had a palace built in Bethlehem. The neighbouring inhabitants later called it Birath-Ârba, or the king’s old palace. Following the departure of the children of Judah into captivity, it fell into ruins*”. And Dr. Sepp, *Vie de Notre Seigneur J.-C.*, vol 1 page 232, even thought that the Nativity grotto was part of the ruins of David’s palace.

a detailed description of this palatial residence that it is easy to form a precise mental image of it if we remember all the clues disseminated here and there: *“Lazarus’s palace (...) “almost in the centre of the city, slightly south-west (...) in a beautiful street leading to the Sixtus, forming a T with it and overlooking the lower part of the town (...) behind it is Mount Sion, the area to which it belongs”* 372.1/4.

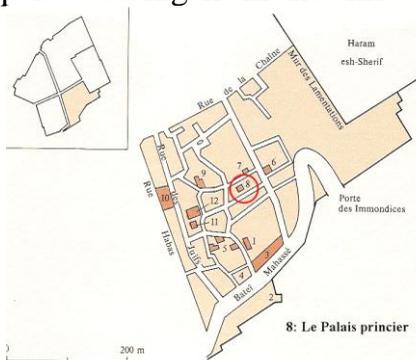
These indications, added to further details in the work, enabled Hans J. Hopfen (*Indice e Carta della Palestina CEV*) to place Lazarus’s palace on a detailed map of Jerusalem. But let us visit the palace, thanks to Maria Valtorta’s



descriptions: *“The cornice juts out, whereas the gate is set back in the thick wall”*. It leads to *“the marble atrium (...) a square, completely white, vestibule (...), opening out into a vast, paved main courtyard. A limpid stream gurgles in its centre”*. Beyond the courtyard *“stairs leading to the upper floors and to the terrace at the top of the house”* 372.1/4 offer a splendid panorama of the whole of Jerusalem. *“There are many halls and rooms [around] “the marble atrium”, “square vestibule”* 375.2, *“a vast reception room, splendid”, “a royal red hall, its archway supported by twin columns of red porphyry (...) which are probably for banquets, with sumptuous walls (...) where “about a hundred people can eat (...) “credenzas all along the walls”*. Then, *“a white hall”, and “the adjoining room, which is perhaps a library”*. The reader slowly discovers other details, such as the existence of *“upper rooms”* in this palace, whose

rooms can hold “two hundred people, in groups of twenty”, as Lazarus explains to Jesus. The narrative could have ended there, and all these descriptions could have been dismissed as nothing but the fruit of Maria Valtorta’s imagination. But that would have been to ignore all the surprises so often contained in this surprising work, or to dismiss them out of hand.

In 1983 a group of archaeologists from the Hebraic University of Jerusalem, led by Professor Nahman Avigad³³¹ announced that they had discovered on the highest point of Mount Sion, the vestiges of a palace dating from the time of Herod. The meticulous excavation that ensued unearthed numerous objects, perfectly preserved: small ovens, tools, earthenware measuring goblets, a Herodian oil lamp, an inkwell and a stone table... Today it is certain that the earth that covered this princely residence for twenty centuries preserved it in the ruined state in which the legionaries of Titus had left it in the year 70. Because of the magnificence of this place, it has since been designated by the name *Palatial Residence*. This *Palatial Mansion* has even become the Wohl Museum of Archaeology of Jerusalem³³² today.

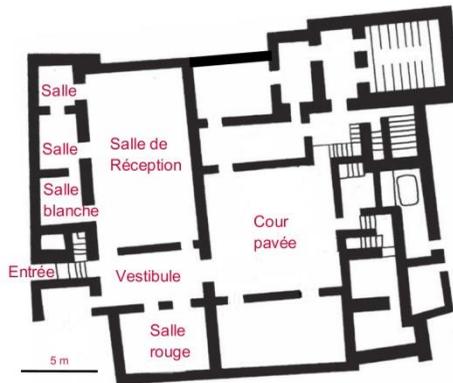


It is situated exactly on the highest point of Mount Sion, 757 metres high, the only place from which the panorama described

³³¹ T. Nelson, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 1983 and *Wohl Archaeological Museum*, Jerusalem, 1989.

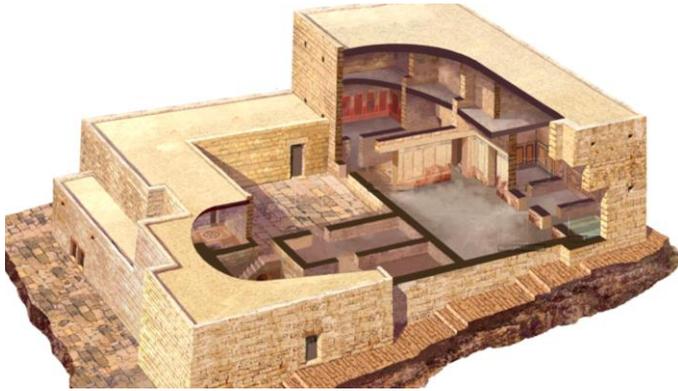
³³² See also, for example, the Site of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* : <http://www.christusrex.org/www1/ofm/sbf/escurs/Ger/05escursEn.html>.

by Maria Valtorta can be seen! And it is 30 metres from the place imagined by H. Hopfen (according to Maria Valtorta's indications) ten years prior to this discovery, as can be seen on this plan³³³ ! The entrance to this 600m² building opens onto a square vestibule, with a mosaic floor. This atrium leads to several halls and a great paved courtyard (8m x 8m) with a central ritual fountain basin. The great reception hall (11m x 6.5m, is decorated with remarkable Greco-Roman frescoes. On the other side of the vestibule is a completely red hall... There is no need to go on. All the details given by Maria Valtorta are there, exactly as shown on this excavation plan.



Extract from the plan of the palace, according to Nahman Avigad.

³³³ According to Ch. Saulnier, *Jérusalem, Guide historique et culturel*, Larousse 1988, page 180.



Model of the palace according to Ritmeyer Archaeological Design

But who did this luxurious, early first century palace belong to? This is the question that has baffled archaeologists for thirty years. Some of them hazard the guess of the family of a high priest, but the refined Greco-Roman style of the decoration hardly evokes the Jewish frescoes of that period. The question remains unanswered...



The fresco in the red hall

I, for one, immediately recognised Lazarus's palace on Mount Sion. And I think that Maria Valtorta's readers can be in no doubt that this princely residence is none other than the one in which the risen Lazarus of Bethany, brother of Mary and Martha, played host to Jesus and His disciples during the Passover in 29 AD. How could Maria Valtorta have seen a monument in 1944 that would only be discovered twenty years after her death?

*

DE RE RUSTICA...

“It is indispensable to have one’s own blacksmiths, carpenters and artisans to work on the barrels and tanks, so that the peasants will not have to leave their everyday work to go into the town” Palladius Rural Economy 1, 6

If there is a field in which it is easy to commit anachronisms, it is certainly that of the description of the techniques, work and human activities of bygone times. However, several authors, such as Cato, Varron, Pliny, Palladius or Columella, for example, provide enough data on certain techniques, such as wine and oil production, farming and even different artisanal applications, to enable us to verify the truth of Maria Valtorta’s abundant descriptions on this vast subject. As the craft industry was closely linked to agriculture in Antiquity, let us first look at work in the fields.

Ploughing, harvesting and threshing

Immediately after the grape harvest and the Feast of the Tabernacles, a new agricultural cycle began. *“In the fields, there are a few yokes of oxen ploughing (...) And what upsets me is to see that in some places it is the men themselves who work as oxen, pulling the ploughshare with all the strength of their arms and even with their chests, bracing themselves in the ploughed soil, toiling like slaves at this hard labour, exhausting even for robust bulls (...) Other peasants are at the ploughs, or bent double, weeding all the loose grass from the furrows” 109.1.8.*

In the time of Christ, the hand plough was normally used for small lots and the poorest properties (one to three acres, or

5,000 to 15,000 m²). The biggest of them had a ploughshare, to which two oxen or two cows³³⁴ were yoked.



“We have seen farmers working in the fields... the soil had already been turned by the ploughshare and stones, brambles and couch-grass had been cleared away by fire and the toil of men”^{111.4}. Virgil³³⁵ confirms this technique.

Then came the sowing season to which Jesus refers in the parable of the sower³³⁶. *“A sower went out to sow (...) So the man took his sack of seed-corn of the best quality and began to sow”*^{179.5}.

After the Passover, the harvest begins, and Maria Valtorta depicts this in detail: *“Farmers are already busy at their work (...) They sing as they cut and laugh happily, competing with one another to cut the fastest with the sickle or to tie the sheaves... Several groups of well-fed peasants (...) At the edges of the fields or behind the reapers, there are children, widows, old people waiting to glean”*^{407.1}. Still elsewhere, *“Some women follow the reapers, tying the sheaves”*^{411.1}. The sheaves are left for a while to dry in the sun. *“A very fertile country, in which the corn is taking its final rest in the bright sunshine that ripened it, lain out in sheaves in the fields”*^{221.1}. *“The sheaves that are already tied in the fields”*^{220.7}.

Then comes the threshing. *“The sheaves from the day before are already piled up on the threshing-floor”*^{405.1}. *“Here too, the reapers are working hard. Nay, they have worked hard, and*

³³⁴ Pliny, *Natural History*, XVIII 48, 2.

³³⁵ Virgil, *The Georgics*, I, 84.

³³⁶ Matthew, 13, 3-9; Mark 4, 3-9; Luke 8, 5-8.

their sickles are now idle, as not a single ear has been left uncut. (...) Its four threshing-floors are being filled with many sheaves, laid out in bundles, as soldiers lay out their arms when they stop at camps"^{408.1}. Page after page, without in the least seeming to do so, Maria Valtorta, by her meticulous descriptions, recreates this whole country life for us, a life always at the mercy of the weather, despite the gentle warmth of the Palestinian climate.

When Jesus repairs a plough

One September evening, when old Jacob has just offered Him hospitality, Jesus asks His host what he is doing: "*I am working at this plough. But the wood is all broken...*" And Jesus says: "*Give Me that hammer. That is not the way to do it. You're breaking the wood. Give Me that spike too, but make it red-hot first. It will be easier to pierce the wood and we will put the peg in with no trouble. Let Me do it. I was a carpenter (...)* And Jesus, wearing only His tunic, works quickly and skilfully at the split beam. He drills holes, fastens and bolts it, tests it until He feels that it is firm. '*It will still work for a long time, until next year*'"^{110.6}.

This is all totally compatible with what we know from Virgil³³⁷ about the details of plough-making in those days. But the credibility of this account is truly reinforced when we learn that St. Justin of Nablus (circa 103 / circa 162) reports that he was told about the ploughs that Jesus is said to have made in Palestine. He specifies: "*Jesus and Joseph made ploughs for oxen*"³³⁸.

³³⁷ Virgil, *The Georgics* 1, 170 – 175.

³³⁸ *Dialogue with Triphon*, reported by the Abbot J. P. Migne in *Hommes illustres de la primitive église*, 1874, p 48; and R. Aron, *En ce temps de la Bible*, n° 83.

An edifying lesson in carpentry

One day, Jesus is instructing Peter on the essential qualities for goodness: order, patience, constancy, humility, charity... Peter is astonished to find *order* in this list. So Jesus explains to him: *“Yes, of course, order, patience, perseverance, humility, charity... I have often said it!”*. *“But not order. What’s order doing here?”* *“Disorder is never a good quality. I have explained this to your companions. They’ll tell you. And I mentioned it first, whereas I mentioned charity last, because those are the two extremities of the straight line of perfection. Now, you know that a straight line on a plane has neither beginning nor end. Each extremity can be the beginning or the end, while in the case of a spiral, or any other design not enclosed in itself, there is always a beginning and an end. Holiness is linear, simple, perfect and has but two extremities, like a straight line”*. *“It’s easy to draw a straight line...”* *“Do you think so? You are mistaken. In a drawing, even a complicated one, some imperfections may not be noticed. But in a straight line, each error is immediately noticeable: either in inclination or uncertainty. When Joseph taught Me the trade, he was adamant that the boards be straight, and rightly so. He would say to Me: ‘See, son? A small imperfection might go unnoticed in a decoration or in a turned work, because the eye, unless it be very experienced, watches one point and does not see another. But if a board is not as straight as it should be, even the simplest job, such as a poor table for a peasant, will be a poor job. It will be slanted, or it will wobble. It will only be good for firewood.’ The same applies to souls. In order to be more than firewood for hell, that is, in order to win Heaven, we must be perfect, like a properly planed and squared board. He who starts his spiritual work in disorder, beginning with useless things, flitting from one thing to another, like a nervous bird,*

will end up unable to assemble the various parts of his work. They will not fit together. Therefore, order and charity. Then, holding these two extremities firm in two vices, so that they cannot move, you can work at everything else, ornaments or sculptures. Do you understand?"^{139.4}. This example clearly shows how Jesus uses his undeniable *professional* knowledge in the service of the edification of the soul.

A lesson in painting

Now, here is a methodical lesson in painting given by Jesus to Simon the Zealot: *“Paint makes wood impermeable and preserves it longer, besides enhancing its beauty. (...) You see, to obtain paint that is both beautiful and really effective, you have to see to many things. First of all, you have to choose carefully everything that you need to make it, that is, a clean recipient, without dirt or any residue of old paint; good oils, and good colours, and then mix them patiently, until you obtain a liquid that is neither too thick nor too runny. Work tirelessly on it until the last little lump is dissolved. When you have done that, you need a brush that doesn’t lose its bristles, which must be neither too hard nor too soft. The brush should be cleaned of all previous paint and before applying the paint, you have to sand the wood, scraping off any old paint, or mud, or anything else. Then, neatly and with a steady hand and great patience, you spread the paint, always in the same direction. In fact, there are different resistances on the same board. On knots, for instance, the paint remains smoother, it is true, but it does not cover them well, as the wood rejects it. In contrast, on the soft parts of the wood, the paint adheres immediately, but these parts are generally not as smooth, so they form blisters or stripes... You must then remedy this by carefully applying your hand to spread the colour. Then, in old furniture, there are new parts, like this*

step, for instance. So, in order not to show that the poor stairway is patched up, but very old, you have to make the new step look like the old ones. There you are, like this! Jesus, bent over at the foot of the stairs, is speaking as He works... Thomas, who has left his burins to come and take a closer look, asks: "Why did You start from the bottom rather than from the top? Wouldn't it have been better to do the opposite?" "It would seem so, but it is not, because the bottom is more worn out and will continue to wear out sooner, as it rests on the ground. So, it needs several coats of paint: a first coat, then a second one and a third, if necessary... and so as not to stand around idly while the lower part dries, before you apply the second coat, you paint the top of the stairs, then the middle". But, in doing that, you can stain your clothes and spoil the parts that are already painted." "If you are clever and skilful, you neither stain your clothes nor spoil anything. You see? This is how you do it. You tuck in your clothes and stand back. Not out of distaste for the paint, but in order not to smudge the delicate wet paint" 434.3/4. Of course, this very pedagogical and technical lesson that no painter would disown, does not stop there. Jesus, as usual, then carries it to a spiritual level, to illustrate the way to treat souls...

Making and working with purple

The first mention of purple occurs in mid-June 28 AD: “*the fishing season for fish to be salted is over and the fishermen have gone to Syro-Phoenicia to fish for murices*”^{250.1}. Later, Jesus asks some fishermen that he meets near Tyr: “*When does the murex fishing-season end?*” “*When the autumn storms begin. The sea is too rough here at that time.*”^{251.4}. So, here is our first piece of information: Murex fishing was done between Tyr and Sidon, from June to September³³⁹. Then Judas shows the disciples how he obtained the precious gift: “*He shows all the offerings given to him by the murex fishermen, and especially a large bundle containing the precious substance. “This is for the Master. If He does not wear it, who else can?”*”^{252.5}.

Later, Mary has received this generous present, but does not know how to use it. She asks Noemi, Mary Magdalene’s nurse, for advice. “*The Virgin Mary shows the precious parcel of purple, asking how the very short threads can be spun, as they **refuse to be moistened** or twisted. “That’s not how it is done, Donna. They are to be **crushed into powder** and then used as any other dye. It’s the **secretion of a shellfish**, not a hair. Do You see how it crumbles, now that it is dry? Pound it into a fine powder and sift it, to remove any long pieces which would stain the yarn or the cloth. It is better to keep the yarn in skeins. When You are sure that it is all reduced to fine powder, dissolve it, like cochineal, or saffron, or indigo powder, or the powder of any other bark, root or fruit, and use it. The last time You rinse it, stabilise the dye with **strong vinegar**”*”^{255.6}.

The specialists are still unsure of the techniques of purple production, lost for centuries. It seems that the molluscs were

³³⁹ In 1864, Gaillardot, a Frenchman, discovered a hillock near Sidon 6.8m high and 120m long, entirely made up of Murex. The shells had all been broken exactly where the gland that secretes the purple is. This hillock of shells confirms the importance of this purple dye industry in Phoenicia in Antiquity.

broken, in order to extract a little gland that was macerated in a basin in the sun for about ten days. The dye floated to the surface and could then be taken off. Inge Boesken Kanold, a specialist on this subject, says that purple can be used in its natural, liquid state, without additives or mordant, *“because it is insoluble in its solid state”*. This is exactly what Mary said: *“it refuses to be moistened”*! Three months later, Mary speaks to Jesus about this precious gift: *“Purple? Who gave it to you?” “Judas of Kerioth. It was given to him by the Sidon fishermen, I believe. He wants me to make You a king’s robe...Of course I will make it, but You do not need purple to be a king”*. *“Judas is more stubborn than a mule”*, is the only comment on the purple gift... He then asks His Mother: *“And can You make a full garment with what he gave You?” “Oh, no, Son. It can be used as a fringe on a tunic, or a mantle, no more.” “Very well. I understand why You are weaving it into narrow strips. Well... Mother, I like the idea. Keep those strips for Me and one day I will tell You to use them for a beautiful tunic. But there is plenty of time for that. Do not wear Yourself out”*^{303.4}.

The fact that Mary could only dye a few fringes with the gift from the fishermen of Sidon is perfectly credible, as purple was one of the dearest and most precious products in Antiquity. And, as the very rich Mary Magdalene herself said, just after the Crucifixion: *“I got the purple for Plautina”*^{612.3}, confirming that this precious merchandise was strictly reserved for the richest Romans.

Wine gladdens human hearts

Psalm 104, 15

Since time immemorial, men have been partial to wine, and more generally, fermented drinks. So it is hardly surprising that it should often be mentioned in the work. However, a few conversations deserve closer attention... First of all, that of the epicurean called Ennius: *“And wines. Ah! Sweet, precious wines from the Roman hills, from my warm shores of Liternum and from your sunny coasts near Aciri! ... And fragrant wines from Chios and from the island, with Cintium, its pearl; and inebriating wines from Iberia, to arouse the senses”*^{425.3}. Although this might go unnoticed, this declaration mentions five regions among the most renowned for their wines in Antiquity:

- **Liternum**, a town in northern Naples and the Campania hills, of which Florus³⁴⁰ said: *“It is the most beautiful region in the world, where Liber (wine) rivals only Ceres”* (harvests). And Pliny³⁴¹ adds: *“this Campania, blessed by the gods. From this gulf the hills begin, covered in vines and the world-renowned inebriation that their illustrious nectar gives us”*.
- The **Acciris** is the ancient, forgotten name of a river (the modern Agri) which flows to the gulf of Taranto. It crosses Calabria, a southern region of Italy renowned for its wines.
- In the island of **Chios**, wines from Arvisia and Mesta, also highly renowned in Antiquity³⁴², were harvested.
- **Cintium**, which is, of course, Kition (modern day Lanarca), on the southern coast of Cyprus, whose wines are among the oldest in the world³⁴³.
- In **Iberia**, Pliny and Strabo praise the Lauro (Lliria) wines in the region of Valencia.

³⁴⁰ Florus, *Epitomae* I, 11.

³⁴¹ Pliny the Elder, *Geography of Italy* III, 60-61.

³⁴² Athenaeus of Naucratis, *The banquet of the Learned*, book I, 28 ; Virgil, *5e Eclogue*, V, 71 ; Silvius Italicus, *Complete Works*, book VII, 210 Firmin Didot 1878, etc.

³⁴³ It seems that Hesiod already praised a mythical wine that he called ‘*nama*’.

Here is another example in which Gentiles are talking about Gamaliel, while waiting for Jesus: *“Is it true that he is the greatest doctor in Israel?” “Yes, but... how pedantic he is! I listened to him one day, but to digest his science, I had to drink many goblets of Falernian wine at Titus’s in Bezetha”* 487.2.

Falerno, a wine from Campania, reputed from Antiquity as the king of wines, was sung by many poets: Petronius, in the *Satyricon*, mentioned the *“hundred year old Falerno Opimien... this wine has lived longer than the frail human!”* and Martial’s *“immortal Falerno”*, or again, Horace’s *“ardens Falernum”*.

The same sort of conversation is heard between two legionaries³⁴⁴ the day after Palm Sunday: *“A god riding a donkey? Ha ha! If He were as drunk as Bacchus, He could be. But He is not drunk. I don’t think He even drinks mulsum. Don’t you see how pale and thin He is?”* 592.2.

Mulsum was a honeyed wine, popular with the Greeks and the Romans. It was praised by Pliny the Elder³⁴⁵ : *“Many are those who have lived to a very old age with no other nourishment than bread dipped in Mulsum”*. It was made by mixing one measure of honey to 4 or 5 measures of wine³⁴⁶.

The same conversation continues: *“And yet, the Hebrews...” “They do drink, although they pretend not to”*³⁴⁷ *And inebriated with the strong wines of this land and with their sicera, they saw a god in a man”* 592.2

³⁴⁴ One of them, who declares: *“I, a peasant from Benevento, did not dare speak to a man Who is said to be God”* later turns out to be the future Saint Vital, husband of Saint Valerie and father of St Protais and St Gervais, martyred in the reign of Nero.

³⁴⁵ Pliny, *Natural History*, Book XXII, Chap. 53, 2.

³⁴⁶ According to a recipe by Columella, *De Re Rustica* Book 15, 41, 1.

³⁴⁷ Several precepts impose in fact *“Not to drink wine poured out in libation to idols”* (Deuteronomy 32, 38); *“You will drink neither wine nor strong drink...”* Leviticus 10, 9. And also Numbers 6, 3.

(continued on following page...)

The **sicera** in question here is cider, a drink known to ancient peoples: the Hebrews³⁴⁸ (*chekar*), the Egyptians, the Greeks (*sikera*) and the Romans (*sicera*) all drank it.

Let us not forget hydromel, mentioned on several occasions, as for instance: “*They filled their goblets with wine, or hydromel, for those who prefer it*”^{160.2}.

Hydromel, a mixture of wine and water, as its name implies, was popular with the Greeks. But under the Roman Empire, it appears to have been considered as an inferior drink. At any rate, Plutarch wrote that it was drunk by primitive men who ate acorns³⁴⁹.

Resin in wine

One Sabbath day, at the very beginning of the third year of the public life, Jesus is in Korazim, where He cures the crippled, bent woman (Luke 13, 10-17). But just before working the miracle, he gives His listeners an unexpected parable about a “*large block of a blond substance, like finest honey*” that a rich man asks an artisan to “*make into an ornate vial*”. He clarifies: “*It is a precious resin and one of my friends has a small amphora in which his wine acquires a precious taste*”^{337.3}

This little sentence, lost in the middle of an animated dialogue, could well go unnoticed, which would be a pity, as it evokes a custom, well known to the Greeks, of incorporating resin into wine. Columella, a famous Roman agronomist and contemporary of Jesus, who had studied wine-making, described how wines were flavoured with resin at that time³⁵⁰. Today, the Greek *retsina*, a souvenir of ancient wines, is still

³⁴⁸ Saint Jerome, in a letter to Nepotian, reports that apple juice was known to the Hebrews. “*The Hebrew text uses the sicera, which means liqueur that inebriates, be it made of wheat, apples, honey or dates*”.

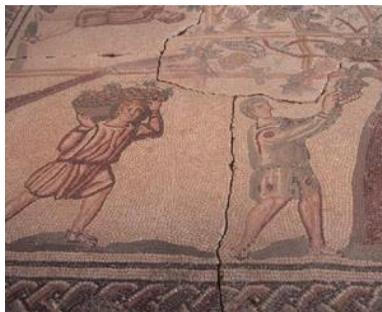
³⁴⁹ Plutarch *Life of Coriolanus*, 1, 4

³⁵⁰ See his work *De Re Rustica*, Book 12, 23, 1: “*Pix corticata appellatur*”

obtained by the addition of small pieces of resin from the Aleppo pine.

Grape-harvesting on a ladder

As might be expected, there are numerous references to vineyards in Maris Valtorta's work, as these were omnipresent in Palestine. As she describes her scenes, the vine appears in every stage of its development. In January, "*the vines, still all barren*"^{156.1}; in March they are "*festoons of vines, still barren, except at the top of the festoons, where there is more sunshine and the first little, innocent, surprised, trembling leaves are beginning to open*"^{14.1}. A little later, in April, "*it must be springtime because the bunches of grapes are quite big, about the size of vetch grains*"^{21.1}. Then in May, "*Grapes in general are swelling, while a few, favourably placed, bunches try to show the transparent topaz and the future ruby of maturity*"^{221.1}. In July, "*under the pergolas laden with grapes*"^{264.1}. Finally, come November, "*a vine pergola, now bare of grapes and leaves.*



Only a few yellow leaves hang"^{298.2}. These remarks are so numerous in the work that they should normally expose the author to some measure of incoherence. But, needless to say, it is exactly the opposite

that happens. They are all in perfect harmony with the chronology established elsewhere, so reinforcing the credibility of the whole. Put all together into an orderly text, I have no

doubt that all of these descriptions would produce an opusculum that would not have been rejected by any of the six main Roman authors who wrote on this subject, i.e. Cato, Varro, Pliny, Columella, Martial or Palladius.

Roman mosaics of grape harvesting

When Maria Valtorta writes: “*the path is a narrow one, running between trees tied to one another by vines*”^{256.4}, and then when she describes a grape harvest, it might be surprising: “*Men on high ladders pick the grapes from pergolas and vines; women, with baskets balanced on their heads, take the golden and ruby grapes to the waiting crushers*”^{108.1}. Yet, it is true. In ancient Rome the normal practice was to lead the vines on to trees³⁵¹, especially olive trees. The Romans thought that this was a real marriage, in which the tree transmitted its strength to the vine.



After so much information on wine and vines, dare I say it: *In vino veritas?*

Mastery of fire in the first century

The mastery of fire has certainly been one of the greatest human achievements in history. Today, with gas lighters or matches, *lighting a fire* is a simple, everyday gesture.

³⁵¹ See in particular Pliny the Elder, *Natural Histories*, Book 17. See also the Hermas' pastor

However, it is the fruit of a slow technological evolution, which seems to have started by rubbing two sticks together, then hitting stone against stone³⁵², then iron against iron. The principle is a simple one: steel hitting flint provokes a spark that sets fire to tinder. And it is this technique that Maria Valtorta



repeatedly observes: *“Joseph pulls out tinder and flint and lights a little lamp that he takes out of the bag slung across his chest”*^{28.4}. This is even the subject that Peter spontaneously mentions when Jesus asks him to teach it: *“When wood is dead it rots and woodworms reduce it to*

powder, but it will not catch fire by itself. And yet, if suitably arranged, and tinder and flint are held close to it, a spark is produced. If it is then helped to catch fire by blowing on twigs to increase the flame, then it becomes beautiful and useful and sets everything on fire, even big logs”^{260.7}. And Jesus, on the day of His Ascension, makes this comparison: *“The contemplation of God is like a spark that flashes from the friction of steel on flint and gives fire and light”*^{638.10}.

It’s market day

There is so much more to say on the life of peasants... But before I close this chapter, let me at least mention the market, this rural activity par excellence. It seems, according to the specialists³⁵³, that as a rule, market days were on the second and fifth days of the week, Mondays and Thursdays, days on which the synagogues were open for prayer. Although it was not an

³⁵² This technique, known to man well before Antiquity, was still in use then, as suggested by Aristotle or Pliny, as well as a few archaeological discoveries.

³⁵³ H. Graetz, *Histoire des Juifs*, Ch. 3 ; E. Stapper, *La Palestine au temps de Jésus*, Book 2, ch. 6.

absolute rule, these are, in fact, the two days that are most often mentioned as market days in Maria Valtorta's work, along with Friday mornings, which, it seems, were essential in large towns like Jericho and Jerusalem. Maria Valtorta excels at reconstructing the colourful, animated atmosphere: *"There is the dust, noise, dirt and confusion of market days"* 387.1. *"It is full of people coming and going, doing their shopping, while outside the main door, in the little square, people are bustling about the noisy Alexandroscene market, buyers and sellers, with braying donkeys, bleating sheep and lambs, cackling hens"* 329.1. *"The square is becoming more and more crowded, the noise ever louder. There are women shopping, cattle dealers, people buying oxen for ploughing, or other animals, peasants bent under the weight of baskets of fruit, all the while praising their goods, cutlers with all their sharp utensils well displayed on mats, making an infernal din by striking axes on stumps to show the hardness of the blade; others are striking scythes suspended from stands to show the perfection of the blade, still others are lifting ploughshares with both hands and driving them into the ground, which bursts open as if wounded, to prove the robustness of the share, which no ground can resist; and coppersmiths, with amphorae and buckets, pans and lamps, striking the sonorous metal to deafening effect, to show that it is solid, or shouting at the top of their voices, offering oil-lamps with one or several flames for the approaching festival of Kislev; and above all this uproar, as monotonous and piercing as the plaintive lament of the night owl, come the cries of beggars, disseminated in the strategic points of the market"* 521.1.

IS IT LAWFUL TO HEAL ON THE SABBATH?...

Luke14, 1-11

“This is what the Lord says: Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed. Blessed is the one who does this – the person who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps their hands from doing any evil”.

Isaiah 56, 1-2

Among the many subjects that have given rise to questions, astonishment or admiration in Maria Valtorta’s readership, her knowledge of Judaism, as it appears in her text, is decidedly not the least. Rare are those born and raised in the Christian culture who, *a priori*, have not studied Judaism, and are yet capable of such a demonstration of erudition. What is more, this erudition concerns the three fields required of every faithful Jew: knowledge of the commandments, laws and precepts, knowledge of the history of the people of Israel, and knowledge of Wisdom.

Phylacteries, fringes and ziziths

We note, for *religious* garments, the same particularity as for architectural terms. Maria Valtorta often seems to be ignorant of the jargon and appears to discover it *with us*, in the dialogues she hears. It is Jesus, not Maria Valtorta, who declares: “*under the tephilim, the fringes and zizith of Jewish garments and particularly under the wide tephilim and the fluffy zizith attached to the ample garments of Pharisees and scribes, to prove their even greater compliance with the Law*”^{461.7}. When Maria Valtorta observes: “*He too is wearing a kind of rectangular veil on his head, secured with a leather band*”^{6.1}, she does not name the talet, which is, however, mentioned several times in the work, either by Peter “*a talet as white as snow*”^{192.4}, or by Mary Magdalene: “*I made the belt, the purse and the talet, embroidering them by night, so as not to be*

seen”^{612.3}. In the practice of Judaism, the talet is a rectangular cloth, the prayer shawl, with which they cover their heads while in relation with God³⁵⁴. The ziziths (fringes) are attached to the four corners of the talet. The talet represents earthly materiality, whereas the ziziths imply a link with God. Note that there is no mention in the work of the *kippa*, which was not in use in the time of Jesus.

The High Priest’s vestment

When Maria Valtorta sees Simeon ben Boethos, then High Priest, at the Temple, she gives an admirable and perfect description of the vestment of this worthy personage. She does not, however, use any specific vocabulary: “*The High Priest... A stately old man, dressed in very fine linen and wearing over his linen dress a short linen tunic and on top of it a kind of chasuble, something multicoloured between a chasuble and a deacon’s vestment: purple and gold, violet and white alternate and sparkle like gems in the sun; two real gems shine more brightly at his shoulders. Perhaps they are buckles with their precious settings. On his breast there is a large metal plate shining with gems and held by a gold chain. Pendants and trimmings gleam on the end of his short tunic and gold shines on his forehead, on the highest part of his headdress which reminds me of the mitre that Orthodox priests wear, a dome-shaped mitre, not pointed, like the Roman Catholic one*”^{8.6}. Only later in the work, as Jesus gives His messages, will the reader learn the terms *ephod*, *rational* and *tiara*

Maria Valtorta does not seem to have been inspired by Exodus chapter 28, which describes the *Ephod*, the noblest insignia of pontiffs, which covers half of the body, a short tunic made of a richly embroidered cloth. The shoulders are indeed

³⁵⁴ The *Shoulkhan Aroukh* (Orah Haïm 91, 3) indicates that they cover their heads as a sign of piety.

decorated by a strikingly large precious stone. In the front of the Ephod, the pectoral is placed, held by four gold chains, and enriched by gold and twelve precious stones upon which appear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. During His trial, Jesus proclaims before Caiaphas: “*I alone wear the true Rational, on which is written: Doctrine and Truth*³⁵⁵”^{604.14}.

The law of the orphan heiress and Mary’s marriage

When Mary reaches the age to leave the Temple, the High Priest Simeon questions Her. Mary places Herself in his hands: “*Priest, please tell me how to behave... I have neither father nor mother. Please be my guide*”^{11.5}

The High Priest then calls possible suitors of the House of David to the Temple. “*Mary, the Virgin married in the Temple by the High Priest, according to the Law of Israel because She was an orphan*”^{68.2}. This law is, in fact, written in the Talmud: “*He who keeps an orphan in his house is considered the father of the orphan*” (Sanhedrin, 19b). So it is legal for the High Priest to organize Mary’s wedding, as the *Apocryphal Gospel of James* attests (2nd century apocryphal) in chapter VIII.3. And when Uncle Alpheus later complains about “*the law of the orphan heiress*”^{100.5}, he is alluding to the Law of Moses: “*If a man dies without a son, then his daughter becomes the heiress*” (Numbers 27, 8). And “*any girl among the tribes of the sons of Israel who possesses an inheritance must marry within one of the clans of her father’s tribe*” (Numbers 36, 8). This is how we understand that Mary and Joseph are both descendants of the House of David, as is repeatedly affirmed in *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*.

³⁵⁵ The two Hebrew terms *Ourim* and *Toummim*, (according to *Exodus* 28, 13), that Biblicists sometimes have difficulty translating. Saint Jerome, in the *Letter to Fabiola*, wrote: “*The two Greek words delocis and aleteia, the first of which means clarification or doctrine, and the other truth, that according to some people were written on the rational*”.

“When He was twelve years old, they went up to the Temple”

Luke 2, 42

The description of the majority examination as Maria Valtorta relates it on two occasions, for Jesus and for young Jabez, deserves particular attention. *“All the people were attentive to the reading of the Law: men, women and all those old enough to understand”* (Nehemiah 8, 3). According to this text, all those old enough to understand the reading of the Law are present. So those who were older than twelve were included, because this was the age at which a male child became a Son of the Law and assumed all the religious obligations of adult men. Today, the Jews celebrate the rite of passage to adulthood of boys of thirteen by a ceremony called the Bar Mitzvah, when the son becomes responsible for his actions: *“The son will not bear the sins of his father, nor the father the faults of his son”* (Ezekiel 18, 20). After his meeting with John of Endor, Jesus asks him *“Did you not come back to the Temple again?”* *“Oh yes, when I was twelve years old and always after that, as long as ... I was able to”*^{197.2}. And at this required age, at the Passover following the age of twelve years, and reaffirmed on several occasions in the work: *“Jesus, Who is now twelve years old, setting out for Jerusalem (...) a handsome young boy, twelve years old”*^{39.4}. And when Marjiam presents himself at the Temple: *“But who can prove that the child is twelve years old and was redeemed from the Temple?”*^{201.4}.

When she describes Jesus’s coming of age examination, Maria Valtorta remarks: *“Joseph presents Jesus. Prior to this, they have both made a low bow before **ten** doctors who, with great dignity, have taken their seats on low wooden stools”*^{40.2}. Then again, at Marjiam’s coming of age: *“Two dour personages, whose haughtiness subsides only in Joseph’s*

presence. *Eight other, less imposing, ones enter from the back. They sit down, leaving the postulants, Joseph of Arimathea included, standing*"^{201.4}. But could she have known that this number of ten witnesses, the *minyan*, is the necessary quorum at the recital of the most important prayers of any office or ceremony, such as circumcision, marriage, bereavement, etc³⁵⁶.

The examination is the occasion on which all sorts of questions are asked, in order to ascertain the maturity of the child. A doctor of the Law asks Jesus: "*If a hen lays an egg on a Sabbath, or a sheep lambs on a Sabbath, will it be legal to use the fruit of its womb, or will it be considered an abomination?*"^{40.5} Some might wonder whether this question is merely the fruit of Maria Valtorta's imagination. It is, however, an established fact that that this subject was, in fact, debated between the Hillel and Shammai³⁵⁷ schools, as attested by Maimonides (who answered in the negative). The examination is also a means to test the postulant's knowledge of the great texts of Judaism: "*Therefore, since He knows the Law in Itself and in its three branches of Halascia, Midrasc and Aggada, He can behave like a man*"^{40.2}. Peter later wonders about Marjiam: "*I do not know how much he knows of the Law, of the Halascia, the Hagadha and of the Midrasciots*"^{197.3}. As we see again, when she transcribes *phonetically*, Maria Valtorta does her best, but it is clear that she does not have the necessary documentation to correct her approximations.

Midrash: the rabbinic interpretation of a verse or a passage from the Bible and, by extension, the book of the compilation of these teachings.

Halakha: the rabbinic commentary on the legal parts of the Bible, to give its profound meaning and provide a rule to live by.

³⁵⁶ Talmud, *Meguilat* treaty, 23b.

³⁵⁷ Talmud, *Edujoth* treaty, IV, 10.

Haggada: the interpretation of the non-legal parts of the Bible, in a moralising or edifying sense.

“He knows the precepts, the traditions, the decisions, the customs of the parchments and the phylacteries”^{40.2}. So the ceremony can come to an end: *“They cut His hair... Then they tighten His red tunic with a long band wrapped several times around His waist. They tie some little strips to His forehead, arm and mantle. They attach them with brooches of some sort”*^{40.7}, and further on, the same ceremonial takes place for Marjiam: *“His hair is cut, from shoulder-length to just below his ears. Peter then opens his little parcel, takes out a beautiful red woollen belt embroidered in gold-yellow and ties it around the boy’s waist. Then, while the priests are tying little strips of leather onto his forehead and arm, Peter is busy attaching the sacred fringes on to the mantle that Marjiam has handed over to him”*^{201.5}, as prescribed by the Law: *“You will tie them as a symbol on your arm and you will wear them on your forehead between your eyes”* (Exodus 13, 9).



The Law and the 613 precepts

During Jesus’s coming of age examination, a Scribe asks Him this question: *“And what about the six hundred and thirteen precepts?”*^{40.6}. Then when Jesus questions Barnabas, the new disciple, he too mentions the 613 precepts: *“As you are the disciple of a great Rabbi, you are certainly aware of the conditions whereby an action becomes a sin.”* *“Everything, Lord, is sin. Man sins continuously because the precepts are more numerous than the moments in a day”*. Barnabas clarifies this: *“When it is not an action of the six hundred and thirteen*

precepts, or of the traditions, decisions, customs, blessings and prayers, besides the ten commandments of the Law, or it does not comply with the teaching of the scribes, then it is a sin"^{471.6}. On another occasion, when a scribe mentions a hypothetical reincarnation, Jesus replies sharply: "*There is no reincarnation of any sort*". "*Some believe in it*". "*They are wrong*". "*Hellenism has also spread such beliefs among us. And learned people feed on them and are proud of them as if they were most noble nourishment*". "*An absurd contradiction in those who cry anathema when one of the minor six hundred and thirteen precepts is neglected*"^{272.3}.

So, what are these 613 precepts? They comprise the list of the prescriptions contained in the Torah: 365 forbidden things and 248 commandments. Moses Maimonides (1138 – 1204) definitively established this count of the 613 mitzvot, subdivided into 248 positive prescriptions (one for each member of the body) and 365 negatives (one for each day of the solar year). But, as it was inherited directly from Mosaic Law, it seems plausible that this list was already in force at the time of Jesus.

The Sabbatical distance

The prescription of the Book of Exodus did not fix a precise distance. It was authorised to go only from "*the Sabbath square to the place where the food was*" in the desert. The Torah fixed this distance at 12 mil (8 miles)³⁵⁸. When towns were built, Jerusalem in particular, the sages reduced this distance to 1 mil, or 2,000 amot³⁵⁹, outside the city walls, considered then as *the Sabbath square (Minchat Chinuch)*. It was Rabbi Gamaliel who

³⁵⁸ Exodus 16, 29.

³⁵⁹ That is, between 0.48*2,000 m. and 0.575*2,000 m. according to whether it was the *natural cubit* or the *royal cubit*, i.e. between 960m and 1150m.

definitively fixed this rule. And this is how we *hear* in the work: “*We walked for a mile and then we stopped, as the Law prescribes, and we drank some water from a stream*”^{217.3}.

But current practice could also very easily express this distance in *stadia*, the system of measurement inherited from the Greeks: “*Tomorrow is Parasceve and we can walk only for six stadia. We are not allowed to go further, because the Sabbath and its rest have begun*”^{194.4}. This distance of six stadia (1,092m.), mentioned several times in the work, is both coherent and more convincing than the diverse *estimations* given by certain exegetes³⁶⁰. Moreover, it also takes the long Greek occupation of Palestine into account.

The ban on work on the Sabbath day gave rise to all sorts of questions. For instance, was it lawful to travel by boat on that day? Jesus and His Apostles answer in the affirmative, as in this embittered remark of Peter’s: “*We have just disembarked at the ‘Fig tree Well’, coming from Bethsaida, to avoid taking one step more than is prescribed... He asked me a question and I replied, adding that we avoided walking to respect the Sabbath*”. “*They will say that we worked in the boat*”. “*They will end up saying that we worked by breathing! Idiot! It’s the boat, the wind and the waves that work, not us when we sail in the boat*”^{263.1}. And in fact, travel by boat seems to have been permitted, on condition that it was exclusively by sail.

Another question was how to *exactly* define the beginning and the end of the Sabbath. This question was debated for centuries. To determine the beginning of the Sabbath, the sages advised the use of a red thread and a blue one, intertwined and held in front of the fading light, in order to determine the time

³⁶⁰ The distances mentioned varied between 900 m and 1500m according to the authors: 900 m for the David Martin Bible in 1744; about 1 km according to the Osty Bible; slightly under 1 km according to the TOB Bible, for example.

of the darkness. When the colours could no longer be distinguished it was the beginning of the Holy Day. The observation of three average-sized stars was also used to determine the beginning of the new day³⁶¹. *“The time between sunset and the moment when the three stars appear, is called Intra soles. Does this time belong to the end of the day or the beginning of the night?”* However, Maimonides³⁶², who asks this question, does not dare solve it. So, the explanation given by the Scribes who meet Jesus one Sabbath evening deserves close examination by specialists: *“And that no one may think that we have infringed the Sabbath, we inform everybody that we covered the road in three different periods of time. The first until the last light of sunset faded, the second, of six stadia, while the moonlight illuminated the paths, and the third ends now and has not exceeded the legal measure”* 472.4.

One day, circumstances force the Sanhedrist, John to depart from the rules: *“John! But... as I know that you are just, I am surprised to see you before sunset...”* *“That is true. I have infringed the Sabbatical Law”* 409.1. He asks the Master to forgive this sin: *“And from one sin to another, I have come to the point of infringing the Sabbatical Law. Absolve me, Master.”* Jesus then puts this prescription into its right place: *“The Sabbatical Law! A great and holy Law! And far be it from Me to consider it unimportant and old-fashioned. But why do you put it before the First Commandment?”* 409.3. And the ban, according to the Shammai School, on even praying for the cure of a sick person during the Sabbath³⁶³ explains why Jesus questions Chananiah the Pharisee so insistently before curing the man with dropsy at Ishmael’s house one Sabbath day 335.5.13.

³⁶¹ Berahhoth, fol. 2, 2.

³⁶² Shabbat treaty, Ch. 5.

³⁶³ Tossefta, *Shabbat* 16, 22.

“You shall be Holy, because I am Holy”

Léviticus 11, 45

This exhortation from Leviticus comes with numerous indications on the quest for holiness, on the prescriptions for sacrifices and the laws of purification. As we have now come to expect from Maria Valtorta’s text, the observance of all these precepts is perfectly taken into account throughout *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*, naturally and discreetly, as a normal part of the ordinary activities of daily life. When a woman gave birth, 40 days later for a boy and 80 for a girl, the mother had to take two offerings to the Temple: a sacrificial lamb as an offering of thanksgiving and a young dove, or a turtledove as an expiatory sacrifice. So it is for Elizabeth, who “*offers the bleating lamb as a burnt offering and the dove for the forgiveness of sin (...)The presentation ceremony of the new Israelite and the purification of the mother is performed with even greater pomp than Mary’s, as the priests celebrate it solemnly, because John is the son of a priest*”^{25.2}. And when John of Endor remembers his mother, he relates: “*We were proselytes and my mother brought me here in her arms, just at Passover, because I was born early in Adar. My mother, who was from Judea, set out as soon as she could to offer her son to the Lord in good time*”^{197.2}. In Caesarea Philippi, Jesus saves a newborn from death. Dorca, the young mother³⁶⁴, has just fainted. “*When she wakes up, tell her to call the child Jesai-Tobias. I will see her at the Temple on the day of her purification*”^{345.5}. And, true to His word, forty days later, Jesus meets Dorca at the Temple, just as she has completed the purification rite.

Any healed leper had to purify himself for eight days. When Jesus related a parable in Nazareth, He recalls the purification process: “*The leper recovered his health (...) he had*

³⁶⁴ She is probably Dorcas the widow, brought back to life by Peter in Acts 9, 36-41.

to show himself to the priest, who, after examining him for some time, had him purified and sacrificed two sparrows. And, after washing his clothes, not only once, but twice, the man returned to the priest with the prescribed spotless lambs, the ewe-lamb, flour and oil. The priest then led him to the door of the Tabernacle. And the man was then religiously admitted among the people of Israel”^{245.5}. One Friday, after healing Anastasica, Jesus decides: *“Give her bread and some food. And you, Matthew, give her a pair of your sandals. I will give her a mantle. She will then be able to go to a priest after she has eaten. Give her the money for the purification too, Judas”*^{360.14}. And the following Friday, so indeed eight days later, they are approaching the Temple: *“‘We should also find the woman who was cured of leprosy’, remarks the Zealot. ‘Yes, she has complied with the precepts faithfully. But now the time of her purification must be over’ ”*^{365.10}. Whoever touched a dead body was impure for seven days. *“He who touches a dead person, any human cadaver, will be impure for seven days”* (Numbers 19, 11). So, following the death of old Saul in his arms at Kerioth, Jesus applies the Law scrupulously: *“I do not change the Law. The Law is the Law and an Israelite obeys it. We are unclean. Between the third and the seventh day, we will purify ourselves. Until then, we are unclean”*^{78.9}.

The Lunar-Solar calendar and the embolismic year

The months of the year are the lunar months of about twenty seven and a half days. The years are solar years of three hundred and sixty five and a quarter days. In a year of twelve solar months, there is a deficit of almost eleven days over the solar year. To avoid this difference, which would throw the feasts and seasons out of synchrony, a thirteenth month is added on to certain years, so that Pessah always falls in the first month of spring. *“You all remember what a harvest there was in that thirteen-month year, like this one”*^{114.8}, Gamaliel reminisces at the banquet at Joseph of Arimathea’s house, referring to embolismic years.

The beginning of the month is designated indifferently in the work by the Greek-derived word: *“for the neomenia of Nisan”*^{566.4}, or by the Latin equivalent: *“her husband died at the calends of Kislev”*^{345.3}. But, as Jean Aulagnier so sapiently remarked, the most decisive indication about calendars is the one that Syntyche transmits when she announces the death of John of Endor: *“John died on the sixth day before the nones of June according to the Romans, at about the new moon of Tammuz for the Hebrews”*^{461.16}. This information, although linguistically incorrect, enables the Julian and Hebraic calendars to coincide for the whole period of the public life of Jesus.

There are, of course, very frequent allusions to the months according to the Hebraic calendar in the work. The following examples give an idea of the pertinence of these remarks: *“The fourteenth day of the month of Abid, that we now call Nisan”*^{413.6}. Nisan is indeed called Aviv or Abid³⁶⁵. Old Joanna’s remark in Nazareth, *“Cursed be the moon of Elul, laden with evil influences”*^{309.1} takes on its meaning when we note that Elul,

³⁶⁵ Exodus 13, 4 ; 23, 15 ; or 34, 18.

the last month of the Jewish *civil* year, (or the 6th of the religious year) is, according to Cabbalistic tradition, the month of repentance, during which penitential prayers (selichot) are recited. It is also the month during which the tombs of loved ones are visited.

The important Jewish festivals

Three of these were originally agricultural and linked to the seasonal cycle. Pesach (the Passover), a spring festival, heralded the beginning of the harvests, while Shavuot (Festival of Weeks or Pentecost), fifty days later, marked their end. At the end of summer, Sukkoth (Festival of Tabernacles) celebrated the grape harvest. These festivals were soon associated with events in the history of Israel. The Passover commemorated the departure from Egypt, (Exodus), Shavuot, the gift of the Torah on Mount Sinai, while the Sukkoth huts, in which the Jews ate ritually during the seven days of the festival, recalled their tents in the desert during the exodus towards the Promised Land.

The first pilgrimage feast, Pessac, is also called the feast of the Unleavened Bread: *“And may the Most High, who guided Israel in the “passage”, guide you too in this Pesac’h, so that you may follow in the wake of the Lamb”*^{354.3} notes Maria Valtorta, characteristically misspelling the Hebrew word. And elsewhere: *“in the days of the great Feast of the Unleavened Bread”*^{373.1}. The Torah prescribed one particular day, a month after Pessac, for those who happened to be unclean during the feast and/or were unable to go to the Temple to present the Paschal sacrifice. This day was a second Pessac (Pessac Sheni). It was on the occasion of this second Passover that Jesus gathered all those that He had kept away from Jerusalem during His Passion. Bartholomew says: *“The Lord will be here on the fourteenth day of the second month”*^{636.2}. And when Jesus appears among them, He tells Matthias: *“Begin the Passover*

banquet” (...) “And the banquet is celebrated with the same ritual as the Last Supper: hymns, questions, libations” 636.8.9.

When Jesus says this prayer to the Father: “*Grant them that for the feast of praise for the fruitful crops next year, they may offer You their living sheaf, their first born, a son sacred to You, Eternal Father*” 104.4, He is evoking Shavuot, the harvest feast, Pentecost. And the *living sheaf* recalls the ceremony of the *offering of the waving sheaf* that took place the day after the Sabbath following the 15th of Nisan. The second pilgrimage to Jerusalem takes place at Pentecost: “*We will come back to Kerieth from Masada and we will go to Juttah, Hebron, Bethzur, Bether, and be back in Jerusalem for Pentecost*” 386.3.

The third pilgrimage feast, Sukkoth, took place after the grape harvest. When Maria Valtorta *is present* for the first time at the preparations for the feast, she does not seem to understand fully: “*There are coarse wool tents, probably waterproof, stretched over posts driven into the ground, with green branches tied to the posts offering both decoration and coolness. Other tents are made of branches fixed to the ground, making little green galleries*” 3.2. It is only much later, when she comes back to the Camp of the Galileans, that she recognizes then: “*the place where, in a faraway vision, I saw Joachim and Anne camping with Alpheus, who was very little, near other huts made of branches, at the Tabernacles just before the conception of the Virgin*” 297.1 . Joachim’s decision “*Tomorrow is the last day of supplication. All the offerings have already been made, but we will renew them again tomorrow, solemnly*” 3.4 evokes the seventh day of Sukkoth (the 21st of Tishri), called *Hoshana Rabbah*, the Great Salvation. This day is indeed one of particular prayers of supplication during which the people implore God. Comparing the three great pilgrimages, Maria Valtorta makes this pertinent remark: “*In this festival of the*

Tabernacles, the emigration of entire families is more noticeable, not because there are more pilgrims than at Passover and Pentecost, but because, owing to the fact that they have to live in tents for several days, they have to bring household furnishings with them, which they avoid doing for other solemnities” 475.3.

Hanukkah (the Dedication) commemorates the liberation of the Temple by the Maccabees and its new consecration after it was profaned by the Greek king of Syria, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The consecration of the altar has since been joyfully celebrated each year for an eight-day period, starting from the 25th of Kislev. (1 Mac 52-59). Jesus reminds His Apostles of this: *“We read in the Book of Maccabees that Judas and his men, after taking over the Temple and the City, with the protection of the Lord, destroyed the altars and sanctuaries of the foreign gods and purified the Temple once again. He then erected another altar, lit a fire with flints, offered sacrifices, burnt the incense, placed the lights and laid the loaves of the proposition. Then, prostrating themselves, they begged the Lord to keep them from all sin and if, because of their weakness, they should fall into sin again, to be treated with Divine Mercy. And this occurred on the 25th of Kislev”* (December) 132.2.

When Peter remarks that he will not be at home to light the lamps for the feast, Jesus consoles him: *“You are a big baby! Cheer up! We will light the lamps too, and you will be the one who lights them”*. *“Me? Not I, Lord! You are the Head of our family. You are the one who must light them”*. *“I am a lamp that is always lit... and I would like you all to be such. I am the Eternal Purification, Peter”* 132.6. It was the school of Hillel that decided that lamps or candles would be lit gradually, one every evening, until all eight were lit. It is possible that in the time of Christ the celebration differed slightly from today’s practice.

“What is this thing? Sciemanflorasc? What is it?”

At the beginning of October 29, returning from a pilgrimage to Mount Nebo, Jesus passes through Jericho. He is violently accosted by some Sadducees, who question Him aggressively: “Answer, You mad Nazarene. Do You know the *sciemanflorasc*?”^{503.9} And, just like Simon Peter, we ask the same question: What is this *sciemanflorasc*? Here is a word that appears in no dictionary and seems to be unknown today... From context, we can just about suppose that it refers to some magic incantation. Is it a formula of exorcism, or a secret term of cabbalistic magic? Fortunately, Reverend Father Bullet³⁶⁶, in a rare, ancient book, gives us the beginning of an explanation. It appears that we should read here the Hebrew expression *Schem Hamphoras*, that is, *the ineffable name of God* that Maria Valtorta reported with approximate phonetic spelling. At the beginning of the 19th century, another author³⁶⁷ explains, for the edification of Free Masons of the Scottish rite, that *Schem Hammephoras* means *Nomen explicatum, expansum, pronuntiatum*: “*the well-pronounced, well-explained Name*”. This is the name that the High Priest pronounced once a year in the Temple, on the 10th of Thrisi. Any unauthorised person who heard it would immediately have been condemned to death. The High Priest could only transmit it once every seven years, and orally at that, to his disciples. The cabbalists affirmed that the name of God was made up of 72 syllables and 216 letters, and this is what they call the *Schem Hamphoras*. (The name is said to have been built from the verses of 72 letters of the original Hebrew text from the Book of Exodus 14, 19-21). This name

³⁶⁶ Abbé Bullet, *Histoire de l'établissement du Christianisme* 1764, re-edition of 1825, p 140 and following.

³⁶⁷ F.-H. Stanislas de l'Aulnaye, *Thuileur des trente-trois degrés de l'écosisme de rit ancien dit accepté* 1813 page 92.

was later replaced by the Tetragram, the name of 4 letters: Yod, He, Vau, He (Yahvé).

In 1546, Martin Luther published a violent anti-Judaic pamphlet entitled *Vom Schem Hamephoras*. And today, the *schemhamphoras* has become an article of magic, a talisman, sold in shops specializing in magic and esoteric articles. In his book, Father Bullet mentions some very rare Jewish texts that affirm precisely that Jesus performed miracles “because He had discovered the secret name of God”. The question asked by the doctors of the Law, and the reply given by Jesus to Peter: “They confuse Truth with Falsehood, God with Satan, and in their satanic pride they think that God, in order to yield to the will of men, needs to be implored by means of His Tetragramaton”^{503.10}, take on their full meaning, and become very strong arguments in favour of the authenticity of this vision of Maria Valtorta’s.

It does, in fact, seem that the word *sciemanflorasc* meant nothing more to Maria Valtorta than did, in its time, the Virgin Mary’s answer to Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, “*que soy era Immaculada Conception*”.

“ITS MEANING WAS HIDDEN FROM THEM”

Luke 18, 34

God said: “*Let there be light.*” Genesis 1, 3

“*Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us ... and opened the Scriptures to us?*” Luke 24, 32

“*In showing you the Gospel, I am making a greater effort to bring men to Me. I no longer limit Myself to the word... I use vision and explain it to make it clearer and more attractive*” Notebooks, February 4th, 1944

The solution to exegetical *problems*?

Many are the learned exegetical doctors who have argued for centuries about the interpretation of one or another of the passages of the Holy Scriptures. They compare the most ancient manuscripts in order to improve modern translations, solve certain ambiguities and transcription errors, or make them more comprehensible.

Jesus also makes this interesting remark to Maria Valtorta: “*I only wish to point out to you how a sentence omitted, or a word wrongly copied, can alter everything. And you, My writer, are alive and can correct the error at once. So think about it and understand how twenty centuries have deprived the Gospel, the Apostolic Gospel, of certain parts that did no harm to the doctrine, but made the Gospel less comprehensible. This explains many things. If we go back to the origin, we find that it is once more the work of Disorder, and many others are attributed to the sons of Disorder. You see how easy it is to make transcription errors*”^{165.11}.

This delicate analytical work requires both very specific competence and long practice. Consequently, it is not for me to undertake these analyses, under pain of having the *compliment* that I paid the *Osservatore Romano* addressed in turn to me, and rightly so... I will accordingly limit myself here to mentioning some of the *solutions* that Maria Valtorta’s narrative seem to

offer *quite naturally* to innumerable exegetic questions, regularly raised throughout the centuries, and leave a deeper and more thorough analysis to the specialists.

This is also one of the aims of this work, according to this indication given by Jesus in the *farewell to the work*: “*And the purpose of this Work is also to clarify certain points that complex circumstances have covered with darkness, so forming zones of obscurity within the clarity of the evangelical picture, and points which seem to be ruptures between one episode or another, but are only points that have become obscure and undecipherable, which, when clarified, provide the key to the precise comprehension of certain situations that arose and certain strong reactions that I was compelled to adopt, a certain rigidity towards obstinate, unconvertible adversaries, in stark contrast with My continuous exhortations to forgive, to be meek and humble*”⁶⁵². IV.

Bis repetita placent...

Horace³⁶⁸

During the three years of His public life, Jesus sometimes repeated the same teaching several times, worked the same miracle all over again, and found Himself in similar situations. Naturally, the facts are not reported *identically* by the different witnesses, and exegetes are hard put to it to decide whether to distinguish these facts as separate, or merge them into one.

Were the merchants chased away from the Temple once or twice? Were there two multiplications of bread, or only one? Was the question about the greatest commandment asked several times? Was the anointing by the repentant sinner and the anointing at Bethany the work of two different women, or of one and the same woman? These are some of the questions raised.

³⁶⁸ “*Repeated things are pleasing*”. Horace, Poetic Art, v. 365..

To all these questions, Maria Valtorta's text provides a clear and convincing reply and seems, moreover, to reconcile the different evangelical versions perfectly. Let us take a closer look at this.

The merchants chased away from the Temple

Whereas the synoptic Gospels describe Jesus chasing the merchants from the Temple shortly before the Passion³⁶⁹, John's Gospel places a similar event at the beginning of the public life (John 2, 13-22).

Jesus arrives at the Temple for the first Passover, with His disciples: Peter, Andrew, John and James, Philip and Bartholomew and He is scandalised to see a merchant taking advantage of a couple of *“two little, old, half-blind people”*. He tries to make him repair this injustice. *“Jesus turns to the man with the lambs: ‘Exchange this lamb for these pilgrims. It is unworthy of the altar, just as it is unworthy of you to take advantage of two poor old people just because they are weak and defenceless’ ”*^{53.3}. And it is the merchants' intransigence, their provocation and even the threats levelled at these defenceless old people that unleash *“His holy anger”*. *“Who are You? How dare You do that, upsetting the prescribed ceremonies? From which school are You? We do not know who You are”*. *“I am He Who is Mighty. I can do anything”*^{53.5}. This is how Christ's first public manifestation begins. And fifty days later, when He meets Judas at the Temple, Jesus asks him: *“Call the official of the place for Me. I must make Myself known, so that no one may say that I disregard the customs and lack respect”*. *“You did not do that the last time”*. *“The last time I was inflamed by zeal for the House of God that was desecrated by too many things. The last time I was the Son of the Father, the Heir, Who, in the Name of the Father and for the love of My*

³⁶⁹ Matthew 21, 12-13; Mark 11, 15-17; Luke 19, 45-46.

House, acted in His Majesty, which is superior to officials and priests. Now, I am the Master of Israel and I teach Israel that too ” 68.1.

At the third Passover, Maria Valtorta describes a fact that is not reported by the Evangelists: *“They are now in the Temple in the unholy swarm of the first courtyards, where the merchants and money-changers are. Jesus looks and shakes with indignation. He turns pale and seems to grow taller, such is the solemnity of His stately, severe deportment. The Iscariot tempts Him: ‘Why do You not repeat the holy gesture? You see? They have forgotten and there is desecration once again in the House of God. Does this not grieve You? Will You not rise up to defend it?’ ‘This is not the hour. But all of that will be purified, and forever!’ says Jesus resolutely” 364.5*

The second intervention against the merchants takes place after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, just before the last Passover. There is a very different motivation for it that Jesus indicates: *“My anger with the desecrators of the Temple is the logical consequence of My meditation on the forthcoming misfortunes of Jerusalem” 590.9. “The powerful voice of Jesus thunders: ‘Get out of My Father’s House! It is no place for usury or markets... It is written: “My house shall be called a house of prayer”. So why have you made it into a den of thieves, this house in which the Name of the Lord is invoked? Get out! Purify My House. Let it not happen that instead of using ropes, I may strike you with the thunderbolts of heavenly wrath. Get out! Get out, you thieves, swindlers, lewd people, murderers, impious persons, idolaters of the worst idolatry, that of the proud ego, corrupters and liars. Out! Get out! Or the Most High God, so I warn you, will sweep away this place for good and will wreak vengeance upon all the people’ ” 590.19.* And Maria Valtorta adds: *“He does not repeat the lashing of the last time, but seeing that*

the merchants and money-changers are slow to obey, He goes to the first counter and pushes it over, sending scales and coins flying to the ground”^{590.19}. All these precise details are food for thought to whoever might doubt that Jesus chased the merchants away from the Temple on two occasions.

The two multiplications of bread

Maria Valtorta’s text situates the first multiplication just after the announcement of the death of John the Baptist. Jesus leaves Bethsaida by night to be alone with His Apostles south of the lake near Tarichea³⁷⁰. All four Evangelists mention this miracle³⁷¹ and Maria Valtorta’s narrative also shows how this miracle strengthens the uncertain faith of a scribe: “*Jesus looks long and hard at the scribe, who has always remained near Him and asks: “Will you give food to the hungry people too?” “I would like too, but I have none myself”. “Give Mine. You have My permission”. “But... do You intend to satisfy almost five thousand men, besides women and children, with those two fish and the five loaves”?* “*Absolutely. Do not be incredulous. Those who believe will see the miracle accomplished”*^{273.3}. Note in passing that John mentions a young boy, who Maria Valtorta identifies as Marjiam (the future St. Martial), as affirmed by an ancient tradition from Limoges³⁷². (For further details, see the chapter *The Eye Witnesses*.)

The second multiplication is reported only by Matthew (15, 32-38) and Mark (8, 1-9), and is thought to have occurred *at the lakeside and in Decapolis*, which would indicate the Hippo region, according to the clues provided by Maria

³⁷⁰ Only Luke mentions the region of Bethsaida (9, 10), whereas John (6, 1) says: “*Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee*”

³⁷¹ Matthew 14, 13-21; Luke 9, 10-17; Mark 6, 35-44; John 6, 1-13.

³⁷² Adémar de Chabannes (989-1034) in *Vita prolixior sancti Martialis* identifies St Martial with the young boy who gave the bread and the fish to Jesus for their multiplication.

Valtorta. *“I feel sorry for these people. They have followed Me for three days. They have no more food supplies and we are far from any village. I am afraid that the weaker ones would suffer too much if I sent them away without feeding them.”*^{353.2} Many exegetes were inclined to think that the similarities with the first multiplication were sufficient to conclude that Mark and Matthew gave two accounts of the same miracle³⁷³. In *The Gospel as revealed to me*, there is no possible ambiguity: they are, in fact, two different miracles, one in *Jewish* territory, and the other in *pagan* country...

The two questions on the greatest commandment

In the Temple in Jerusalem, during the Feast of the Tabernacles in the second year of His public life, Jesus has just told His listeners the parable of the talents (Matthew 25, 14-30 and Luke 19, 11-27). He says this to conclude: *“The surprises of the Lord are endless because the reactions of man are endless. You will see the Gentiles reaching eternal Life and Samaritans possessing Heaven, and you will see pure Israelites and followers of Mine losing Heaven and eternal Life”*^{281.9}. *“But a Doctor of the Law who had sat down, listening gravely under the porch, gets up, comes forward and asks: ‘Master, what must I do to gain eternal Life? You have replied to others, please reply to me as well’. ‘Why do you want to tempt Me? Why do you want to lie? Are you hoping that I may say something contrary to the Law, because I add more perfect and luminous ideas to it? What is written in the Law? Answer Me! What is the first commandment of the Law?’”*^{281.10}. Luke reports this episode (10, 25-28) just before the parable of the Good Samaritan. Biblical commentators often compare this passage from Luke with an episode from Holy Wednesday, reported by

³⁷³ See, for example, the note Mark 8, 8 in the Osty Bible.

Matthew (22, 34-40) and Mark 12, 28-34) when Jesus is asked the same question, to which He replies by proclaiming the *Schema Israel* prayer (Deuteronomy 6, 4): “*Listen, Oh Israel: The Lord our God is the Only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. That is the first and greatest commandment. The second resembles it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” There are no greater commandments than these two. They comprise all the Law and the prophets.*”^{596.2} As reported by Maria Valtorta, this clearly shows the two different episodes and the fact that the question on the greatest commandment was indeed asked twice.

The sinful woman and the two “Marys”

Here is a question that was the object of many an intense debate among exegetes: were the repentant sinners, Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala, one and the same person, or two, even three, different people? The Gospels might appear to distinguish three people. The four Evangelists differ on certain points but, as these *three* women have points in common (notably a *fiery temperament*), the Church Fathers argued over whether this was a single saint³⁷⁴. It was finally in the early 7th century in the West and about the 9th century in the East that an agreement was reached on the singular status of the woman with the perfume, giving her the name Magdalene or Mary

³⁷⁴ The eminent Biblicist P. Lagrange examined the way this question was treated by ancient ecclesiastic writers. Clement of Alexandria concluded that it was one person for the two anointings. Origen, who thought he saw an allegory, wavered between unity and plurality, while Eusebius is inclined towards unity. Tertullian merges the scenes into one scene. St Hilary distinguishes 2 women. St Ambrosia, like Origen, opts for a nuanced solution: 2 women or one sinner turned saint. St. Jerome hesitates between 2 women. Saints Paulin and Cassian opt for one woman. St Augustine wavers for a time on the side of one woman, and then seems to go in the opposite direction. St Gregory the Great merges the 3 women into one, and from then on, this will be the Western position, although St. Thomas Aquinas noted divergences among the Church Fathers who leave exegesis free. The Syrians were inclined to distinguish the 3 women, like Tatian and St. John Chrysostom.

In Asia Minor, Saint Irenaeus seems to consider Luke’s episode as distinct from others. In short, the exegetes came to no conclusions, or else distinguished different characters, whereas the preachers supposed that it was one person, a hypothesis retained by the Church.

Magdalene. Maria Valtorta leaves no room for uncertainty of any kind: the repentant sinner is Mary of Magdala, sister of Lazarus and Martha. She is said to be *from Magdala* simply because that is where she took refuge in a property belonging to her family near Tiberias, in order to give free rein to her licentious life. Consequently, there is only one person: “*Mary of Magdala, the great sinner of Israel, who had no excuse for her sin, has come back to the Lord*”^{250.5}.

Her conversion is so total that her brother, Lazarus, wonders: “*I... I cannot understand where she finds the wisdom, the words, the actions that edify the whole household. I look at her as at a mystery. But how could so much fire, such gems, be hidden under all that filth, and coexist comfortably with it? Neither Martha nor I can reach the heights that she reaches. How can she do this if her wings were broken by vice? I do not understand...*”^{279.2}. “*And there is no need for you to understand. It is enough that I understand. But I tell you that Mary has turned the powerful energy of her being towards Good. She has directed her character towards Perfection. And as she has an absolutely strong temperament, she goes purposefully and unreservedly along this road. She uses her experience of evil to be as powerful in goodness as she was in evil and, using the same method of giving herself up entirely, as she did in evil, she has given herself up entirely to God. She has understood the law to “love God with your whole being, with your body, your soul and all your strength”. If Israel were made of Mary, if the world were made of Mary, we would have the Kingdom of God on earth, as it will be in the Highest Heavens”. “Oh! Master! Master! And it is Mary of Magdala who deserves these words!*”^{279.3}.

These words, like so many others throughout the work, enable the demystification of certain Gnostic, modernist, or

sometimes even blasphemous, interpretations of *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* and other apocryphal texts. They also clarify why the Apostles, and then the Evangelists, out of respect and admiration for the total conversion of Mary Magdalene, only referred to her sinful past under cover of anonymity, clearly naming only Mary the disciple. And it is because “*Mary knows how to love more than everybody*”^{550.3}, to love “*with seraphic ardour*”^{377.7} that she was given the privilege of being the first to see the Risen Lord.

One Joseph *Barsabbas* and one Joseph *Barnabas*?

When the decision was made to find someone to replace Judas, Luke (Acts 1, 21-23) indicates: “*Two were presented: “Joseph called Barsabbas*³⁷⁵, *known as Justus, and Matthias*”. Then a little further on (Acts 4, 36), he tells of the generous gift of a disciple: “*Joseph also called Barnabas*³⁷⁶ *by the Apostles – interpreted as the son of consolation – Cypriot, a Levite by birth*”. The same first name, two almost identical nicknames, and probably a few unfortunate copyists’ errors were all it took for this question to arise. Are these two different people, or just one disciple? Opinions vary among Biblicists, none of whom has managed to convince the others. There is no question about this for Maria Valtorta. Matthias’s companion, “*one of those men who accompanied the Apostles during the whole time that Jesus walked around with them*” (according to Acts 1, 21), is Joseph the shepherd³⁷⁷, whom Jesus especially chose as a disciple as early as the summer of the year 27, saying: “*I am keeping this son (pointing to Joseph) because I am delegating*

³⁷⁵ The Bezae codex and western manuscripts mention *Barnabbas*, the other manuscripts mention *Barsabbas*.

³⁷⁶ From the Hebrew “*bar navi*”, which means literally “*son of the prophet*, or “*son of consolation*” and becomes *Barnabé* in French, *Barnaby* in English.

³⁷⁷ For further details see the chapter “*The Eye Witnesses*”

to him the task of spreading My words to his companions, so that they will become a strong nucleus, that will announce Me not by simply stating that I exist, but by explaining the most essential characteristics of My doctrine”^{91.1}. He is more precisely named “Joseph, son of Joseph of Saba”^{639.5} when Matthias was elected. In *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*, he is not confused with Joseph Barnaby, the Levite, Gamaliel’s faithful pupil and St. Paul’s future companion, officially received as a disciple at the eleventh hour, just before the Passion: “You, Barnaby, who have left your companions today to follow Me”^{592.20}.

*

Of course, Maria Valtorta’s text does not simply provide a *solution* to these evangelical *doubles*. There are similar clarifications in almost every paragraph that sometimes go unnoticed, so naturally do they blend into the whole. Once again, I can only make an arbitrary choice of one or two among the multitude of them. So here are a few examples to illustrate how *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* can lead to a clearer comprehension of some Biblical or evangelical passages.

A lost Biblical verse...

To begin with, here is a brief subject that might interest some Biblicists. Relating a speech by Jesus in Capernaum, Maria Valtorta writes: “*Jesus concludes His speech by saying: Having meditated together on Solomon’s great pronouncement, “**The greatest strength lies in the abundance of justice**”, I now exhort you to possess such abundance, because it is the price of your entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven*”^{266.1}. This great sentence of Solomon’s figured in the second part of Proverbs 15.5 in the old versions of the Bible, like the one by Louis-Claude Fillion³⁷⁸ 1855 or the great Bible³⁷⁹ of Tours (1866). Yet, curiously, it seems to have completely disappeared from the French version³⁸⁰ as from 1870. Why was it removed? It still figured in the Italian versions in 1940 (with a note indicating its absence from the Hebrew versions). It was removed after the Second Vatican Council.

An apparently problematical translation...

Elsewhere, Maria Valtorta reports this dialogue between Manaen and Jesus: “I would like to have enough true courage to abandon everything to follow You completely, like the disciples that You are expecting. But shall I ever succeed? We who are not of the common people find it more difficult to follow You. Why?” “*Because the tentacles of your poor wealth hold you back*” “*To tell You the truth, I also know that some people who are not exactly rich, but are learned, or on the path to becoming so, who do not come either*”.

³⁷⁸ “*In the abundance of justice lies very great strength*”

³⁷⁹ “*Abundant justice will have great virtue*”

³⁸⁰ This sentence is absent from the following Bibles: Darby, 1872; Neufchatel, 1900; Crampon, 1923; Osty, 1973; The Jerusalem Bible, 1975; Chouraqui 1987; from the TOB. None of these Bibles give the reason for this “*disappearance*”

*“They too are held back by the tentacles of their poor wealth. Money is not the only wealth. Knowledge is also wealth. Few people can say like Solomon, “Vanity of vanities. All is vanity”, taken up again in Qoheleth and amplified, not only in a material sense, but also in depth. Do you remember it? Human science is vanity, because **to increase human knowledge only “is anguish and affliction of the spirit and whoever augments science also augments such anguish”**. I solemnly tell you that it is so. And I also tell you that it would not be so if human science were supported and consolidated by supernatural wisdom and the holy love of God”*^{270.2}. Expressed this way (by Jesus) and in context, this quotation (Ecclesiasts 1, 18) is clear and comprehensible. However, this is not the case when we examine the concise or even laconic translations of this verse by some Biblicists:

The Osty Bible: *“Much wisdom, much sorrow, the more knowledge, the more grief”*;

The Chouraqui Bible: *“Indeed, too much wisdom, too much irritation; who adds to his understanding adds to his pain”*;

The Jerusalem Bible: *“Much wisdom, much sorrow; more knowledge, more pain”*;

The Louis Segond Bible: *“For with great wisdom, one has great sorrow, and he who increases his knowledge increases his pain”*;

OEcumenical Translation of the Bible (OTB): *“For with great wisdom there is much affliction; he who increases his knowledge increases the pain”*.

How could Maria Valtorta *of her own initiative* have interpreted a text which obviously gave the specialists³⁸¹ themselves no little trouble?

³⁸¹ Oddly enough, in a speech on January 17th, 2008, Benedict XVI declared: *“Augustine affirmed reciprocity between “scientia” and “tristitia”*: simple knowledge makes for sadness. And consequently, whoever sees and learns everything that happens in this world and nothing else, ends up by becoming sad”. This seems to be quite an enlightened commentary of this Biblical verse

The adulteress and the mysterious signs on the ground

John (8, 1-11) relates this episode: “*Master, this woman was caught in the act of adultery... she is an adulteress and should be stoned as such. Moses said so... And You, Master, what do You say?*”^{494.1}. In his account, John indicates laconically that in answer, “*Jesus, bending down, wrote with His finger on the ground*”. And what were these signs? Were they simple scribbles, or some mysterious message? John does not say. Many commentators interpret this reaction of Jesus’s as a sign of contempt or disdain towards the Pharisees, adding “*doubtless to indicate that He is taking no part in their tribunal*”. Others think that Jesus “*takes on an air of detachment... scribbling negligently*”³⁸², or even that He is acting “*like a man who is bothered and does not want to answer, or who wants time to think and weigh His answer before replying*”. In his Bible, Osty even affirms that “*Jesus did not write down their sins*”. I cannot find a single one, even among the Church Fathers, unless it be Saint Jerome³⁸³, who gives Maria Valtorta’s interpretation. However, this is the explanation that I, personally, find by far the most convincing.

Let Maria Valtorta describe this scene to us now: “*Jesus is writing. He writes, then erases with His sandaled foot and writes further on, turning around slowly to find more room to write. He looks like a child at play. But what He is writing are not playful words. He has written successively: “Usurer”, “False”, “Irreverent Son” “Fornicator”, “Murderer”, “Desecrator of the Law”, “Thief”, “Libidinous”, “Usurper”, “Unworthy husband and father”, “Blasphemer”, “Rebellious to God”, “Adulterer”. He writes and re-writes as new accusers*

³⁸² Many of these commentaries can be consulted on Internet

³⁸³ Saint Jerome (*Contr. Jovin.*) imagined that Jesus could have written the sins of the cruel accusers: “*Eorum qui accusabant, peccata descripsit*” on the Temple paving.

“Well, Master! Your judgement! The woman must be judged. She cannot be allowed to contaminate the earth with the weight of her sin. Her breath is poison that upsets hearts.” “Jesus stands up. Merciful Heavens! What a face! Lightning bolts fall upon the accusers. He seems even taller with His head held high. His face stern, all trace of a smile wiped away from His lips and His eyes, He fixes His gaze on the crowd that backs off, as if confronted with two sharp blades. He looks fixedly at them, one by one, with a terrifyingly searching intensity. Those that He looks at try to back off and merge with the crowd, and the circle becomes wider and fragmented, as if attacked by an unseen power”. He finally speaks: “He among you who is without sin, let him throw the first stone at her.” And His voice is like thunder, His eyes even more fulgurating. Jesus, His arms folded, waits like this, as straight as a judge. His eyes hold no peace: they search, penetrate and accuse”^{494.2}. After such a brilliant description of this evangelical scene, all further comments are totally superfluous.

John and the attempt to elect Jesus king

“Jesus, as He realised that they were about to come and take Him by force and make Him king, fled back to the hills alone” John 6, 15

The Apostle John is the only one who mentions this attempt to kidnap Jesus to make Him king. Maria Valtorta relates this event in a particularly enlightening episode that is as dramatic as it is palpitating. John observed from afar the secret meeting at Chouza’s house. Jesus escapes, deeply saddened: “You were crying? What did they do to You, my Lord? Did they insult You? Did they strike You?” “No, they wanted to make Me king. A poor King, John! And several of them were in good faith, acting out of love, with good intentions... The majority ...in order to denounce Me and get rid of Me”^{464.15}. There follows a moving dialogue between the Lord and His beloved disciple.

“They wanted to make You king? But they still haven’t understood that Your kingdom is not of this world?” “They have not understood!” “Without mentioning names, tell me about it, Lord...” “But you will not repeat what I tell you?” “If You do not want me to, Lord, I will not repeat it” “You will not mention it except when men want to present Me as a common popular leader. It will happen one day. You will be there and you will say: “He was not an earthly king because He did not want to be one. Because His kingdom was not of this world. He was the Son of God, the Word Incarnate and He could not accept what is earthly. He wanted to come into the world in the flesh to redeem bodies and souls and the world, but He rejected the pomp of the world and sin. There was nothing carnal or worldly in Him. The Light was not enveloped in darkness; the Infinite did not accept finite things, but creatures limited by flesh and sin. He made creatures more like Himself by elevating those who believed in Him to true royalty, and founding His Kingdom in the hearts of men, before founding it in Heaven, where it will be complete and eternal with all those who have been saved. You shall say that, John, to all those who only see a man in Me, and to those who only see a spirit in Me, to those who deny that I suffered temptation... and pain... You will tell men that the Redeemer wept... and that they were also redeemed by My tears...” 464.16.

It seems probable that the exegetes who one day analyse this chapter as a whole will find in it many clarifications on the personality and the testimony of St. John. And historians might also discover some very interesting elements on the political intrigues that agitated Judea in the early first century.

The leaven of the Pharisees

Mark the Evangelist (8, 14-21) relates an episode which would be quite obscure, were it not for Matthew's more explicit version (Matthew 16, 5-12). However, when we read Maria Valtorta's account, it all becomes crystal clear:

“Do you not understand which leaven I am referring to? I mean the leaven that ferments against Me in the hearts of the Pharisees, Sadducees and doctors. It is hatred and heresy. But you are going towards hatred as if some of the Pharisaic leaven had entered your hearts. You should not hate even your enemy. Do not open even a tiny window to anything that is not God. After the first element, others opposed to God would enter. Sometimes, by trying to fight enemies with equal weapons, you end up suffering defeat or even death. And once defeated, you could absorb their doctrines through contact with them. No. Be charitable and reserved. You are not yet capable of fighting such doctrines without becoming infected by them, because some of their elements are also in you. And rancour towards them is one of those elements.

I tell you too that they could also change their methods of seduction to entice you away from Me by a myriad of kindnesses and courtesies, apparent repentance and readiness to make peace with you. You must not avoid them, but when they try to imbue you with their doctrines, you must reject them. That is the leaven that I was referring to: animosity which is the opposite of love; and false doctrines. I tell you this: be prudent” 343.2.

Verse 6, 12 from the Song of Songs interpreted?

On the day of the first multiplication of the loaves, just before the miracle, a Scribe comes to provoke Jesus, telling Him: “*You see? You are running away. But it is useless, because hatred and love know how to find You. In this case, it is love that has found You, as in the Song of Songs. And they come to You as the Shulamite maiden goes to her bridegroom, **braving patrol guards and Amminadib’s quadrigae!***”^{272.2}. This last sentence, perfectly intelligible here, should be of great interest to exegetes, since it appears to allude to verses 3, 3 and 6, 12 of the Song of Songs, considered *incomprehensible* by the majority of Biblical translators:

Louis Segond: “*I do not know, I place myself... chariots of Amminadib*”

The Jerusalem Bible: “*he made of me the chariots of Amminadib*”?

Osty: prefers not to translate and explains why in a long footnote.

OBT: “*he makes me shy although I am the daughter of nobles*”?

Chouraqui: “*I do not know, but my being has put me at the wagons of my prince people*”?

A rather abstruse sentence...

As the apostolic group is crossing Galaad, Thomas makes a remark that is obscure to us all today, with the exception of a few Biblicists:

“*Hmm ! I would not like this village to avenge itself on us for the unpleasant surprise they received from Israel!*”^{359.1}.

Who knows whether Maria Valtorta herself understood the allusion to the surprise victory of Judas Maccabeus over the inhabitants of the Galaad region and their chief Timothy (1 Maccabees 5, 9-55), which was probably very clear to Jesus’s contemporaries?

The parable of the lost drachma

This parable was very briefly reported by Saint Luke alone (15, 8-10). Maria Valtorta gives us two full, superb pages, with the immediate aim of *rehabilitating* the recently converted Mary Magdalene among the inhabitants of Magdala. Here is a brief glimpse: *“Every soul is a treasure and Satan, who hates God, provokes bad movements to make poor souls fall. There are some whose fall stops near the purse, that is, they do not go too far from the Law of God that keeps souls under the protection of the commandments. And there are those who fall further. That is, they go further away from God and His Law. Finally, there are some who roll into the swept-up dirt, the rubbish and the mud. And there, they would end up dying and being burnt in eternal fire, like the trash that is burnt in appropriate places. The Master knows this and tirelessly looks for lost coins. He looks everywhere for them, with love. They are His treasures and He never tires, nor does He let anything disgust Him. He rummages, searches, sifts, sweeps until He finds what He is looking for. And once He has found it, He washes the recovered soul and He calls His friends, saying: “Rejoice with Me, because I have found what was lost and it is now more beautiful than before, because My forgiveness has made it new”. I tell you truly that there is much rejoicing in Heaven and that the angels of God and the good people of the earth rejoice over a repentant sinner. And I tell you solemnly that there is nothing more beautiful than tears of repentance and that only demons cannot rejoice over this conversion, which is a triumph of God’s. I also tell you that the way a man welcomes the conversion of a sinner is the measure of his own goodness and his union with God”* 241.8.

Is this not a new example of the fact that, without changing one iota of Revelation, the Spirit can give new *presentations*, where and when He chooses, especially adapted to times and places, to enlighten minds?

A somewhat obscure verse from Luke

As He draws near to Jerusalem, the Pharisees try to dissuade Jesus from going there. And Luke (13, 32-33) relays Jesus's answer like this: "*Today, tomorrow and the next day I must continue on My way, because it is not fitting for a prophet to die outside of Jerusalem*". Here is how Maria Valtorta transmits this episode. It is in Rama, just before the Passover of the year 29. "*I come expelling demons and healing the sick, openly. And I do and will do it today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, until My time is over. But I must go on until I reach the end. And I must enter Jerusalem today and then again, and again and yet again, because it is impossible for Me to stop before. And it must end with justice, that is, in Jerusalem*"^{363.9}. This, then, is the prophetic announcement of the Passion, after this Passover, the Pentecost, the Tabernacles and the last Passover. Is this not a plausible and illuminating rephrasing of Luke's verse?

Capernaum, Korazim, Bethsaida: the accursed triangle

Jesus's invectives against Capernaum, Korazim and Bethsaida are reported by Matthew (11, 21-24) and Luke (10, 12-15): "*Woe to you, Korazim! Woe to you, Bethsaida!*" But the Evangelists do not say what provoked this sudden and violent outburst, and exegetes can only wonder...

Here is the context in which Maria Valtorta situates this episode. Jesus has just learnt that the inhabitants of Korazim have refused to help a poor widow in their village^{266.1}. Manaen

and two envoys from the Baptist then arrive and Jesus shows them the latest beneficiaries of His good works: “*The deaf hear... the dumb speak... the blind see*”^{266.5}. Jesus praises John the Baptist, then laments the fact that neither He nor the Baptist are recognised for what they are.

Hence Jairus’s intervention: “*You have spoken well, Master, says the head of the synagogue. This is why my daughter, still innocent, sees you as we cannot. And yet, this town and the neighbouring towns have seen Your power, Your wisdom and Your goodness overflowing on to them, and I have to admit that they only progress in wickedness towards You. They do not repent and the good that You give them produces a fermentation of hatred for You. (...) Is this not a transgression in the eyes of God? And will He not punish all this rancour and this stubborn continuation in evil? Speak, Master, You Who know*”^{266.13}. And Jesus’s reply fits naturally into this context: “*Yes, it is a transgression and it will be punished, because the gift of God must never be treated with contempt, nor used for evil purposes. Woe to you, Korazim, woe to you, Bethsaida, you who misuse God’s gifts*”^{266.13}

Remark: Maria Valtorta indicates that the only disciples present then were Matthew and Manaen. So it should not come as a surprise that Matthew mentions it, just after the arrival of the Baptist’s envoys. But *Luke*? Could his testimony be linked to Manaen’s presence on that day? This is a good question. Certain exegetes did, in fact, think that it was Manaen who provided Luke with many details about Herod’s family³⁸⁴. So, as one of the rare witnesses of this episode, why would he not have told Luke about it?

³⁸⁴ Luke 3, 1.19-20; 8, 3; 9, 7-9; 13, 31-32; 23, 8-12; Acts 12.

“My Yoke is light”

Here is a lesson from Jesus that would surely require a commentary. Matthew alone mentions these words from the Master, in a very brief summary. *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* gives us four magnificent pages on Charity, which invite us irresistibly to meditation and would benefit from a thorough exegetic analysis. Jesus has just spent a week helping a poor abandoned widow by doing some carpentry work for her. He explains to His Apostles, who are surprised by His absence: “*I went to Korazim to preach Charity by action*”^{268.4}. Some Apostles are scandalised by the fact that the Master has done manual work, which they deem unworthy of Him. So, as always, and with His infinite patience, Jesus teaches: “*What have I done that should not have been done? Have we understood one another so little as not to understand that hypocrisy is a sin and that words are only wind if action does not give them its strength? What have I always told you? “Love one another. Love is the precept and the secret of glory”. (...) You must be prepared to do what I have done. No work for the sake of your neighbour, or to take a soul to God, must be burdensome to you. No work of any sort is ever humiliating. But base actions, duplicity, false denunciations, harshness, injustice, usury, slander and lust are humiliating. That is what mortifies man. And yet they are done unashamedly, even by those who like to think that they are perfect and who were very probably scandalised to see Me work with a saw and a hammer*”^{268.6}. As He so often does, He comes back to past teachings, developing them in a new way. “*Do you remember when I told you that hope is like the crossbar of the kind yoke supporting Faith and Charity, and that it is the scaffold of mankind and the throne of salvation?*”³⁸⁵ (...) “*It is a yoke, because it compels man to lower*

³⁸⁵ Jesus alludes here to one of His teachings reported by Maria Valtorta in chapter 256.7.

his silly pride under the weight of eternal truths, and it is the scaffold of such pride. The man who hopes in the Lord his God, unavoidably mortifies his pride that would like to proclaim itself “god”, acknowledging that he is nothing and that God is everything, that he can do nothing and God can do everything” (...) Do not reject God, even in the least things. And to refuse to help your neighbour because of heathen pride is to reject God”^{268.7}. “*My doctrine is a yoke that bends guilty mankind; it is a mallet that breaks the hard bark to free its spirit. It is indeed a yoke and a hammer. And yet, he who accepts it does not feel the tiredness that comes with other human doctrines and all other human things*”^{268.8}. And Jesus concludes by this luminous statement: “*Take My yoke upon you. **It is not a burden, it is a support.** (...) Do not be afraid because My yoke is gentle and its weight is light, whereas the glory that you will enjoy if you are faithful to Me is infinitely powerful. Infinite and eternal*”^{268.9}.

The perverse and adulterous generation

When Jesus speaks of “*this perverse and adulterous generation*”³⁸⁶, is it a simple formula, is it “*because they have betrayed the God of Israel*”, or is it “*a metaphor taken from Hosea 1, 2*” etc, as we read in certain biblical commentaries? Let us rather examine the dialogue transmitted to us by Maria Valtorta: “*Why do you say that this generation is adulterous and perverse? It is not any worse than the others. There are the same saints in it as there were in the others. The structure of Israel has not changed. You offend us*”. “*You offend yourselves by injuring your souls, because you separate them from Truth and consequently, from Salvation. But I will answer you nonetheless. This generation is only holy in its garments and outward appearances. It is not inwardly holy. In Israel there are the same*

³⁸⁶ Matthew 12, 39; 16, 4; Mark 8, 38; Luke 11, 29.

names to designate the same things, but there is no reality of things. There are the same customs, garments and rites, but their spirit is missing. You are adulterers because you have rejected the spiritual marriage with the Divine Law and, in a second, adulterous union, you have espoused the law of Satan. You are circumcised only in a frail member. Your hearts are no longer circumcised. And you are wicked and perverse because you have sold yourselves to the Evil One. I have spoken”^{269.11.}

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

Matthew (12, 31), Mark (3, 33) and Luke (12, 10) attest this very clear statement made by Jesus. But not one of these three evangelists provides a commentary. Why, then, will the sin against the Spirit not be forgiven? Here is the answer, provided by Maria Valtorta, in conformity with the teaching of the Church³⁸⁷ : *“And I tell you, men will be forgiven everything, all their sins and all their blasphemy, because God knows that man is not only spirit, but also flesh and his flesh, when tempted, is subject to sudden weaknesses. But blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. He who has spoken against the Son of Man will still be forgiven, because the weight of the flesh enveloping My Person and enveloping the man who speaks against Me, can still mislead. But he who has spoken against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this life, or in the future life, because Truth is what it is: clear, holy, undeniable and manifested in the Spirit in such a way that it cannot mislead, in the sense that only those who deliberately desire the error commit it. To deny the Truth spoken by the Holy Spirit is to deny the Word of God and the Love given by that Word for the love of men. And the sin against Love is not forgiven”^{269.8.}*

³⁸⁷ See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 1,864.

Who is My Mother? Who are My brothers?

Can we still wonder about the meaning of the question “*Who is My Mother? Who are My brothers?*”³⁸⁸ when we read this sentence: “*You are more than relatives to Me because you are My children and My brothers, not according to the blood that is mortal, but according to the will of God and the will of your spirit. I tell you now that I have no closer relative than those who do My Father’s will*”^{54.8}. And when we read Jesus’s answer to the question: “*Isn’t Your Mother the greatest One, Jesus, for having brought You forth?*” “*Great is he who does the will of God, and this is why Mary is great. All other merit comes from God, but this one is entirely Hers, and blessed may She be for it*”^{420.11}.

To hate one’s father and one’s mother with holiness

When Luke (14, 26) reports these words of Jesus’s: “*If somebody comes to Me and does not hate his father and his mother... he cannot be My disciple*”, certain people might find the apparently uncharacteristic tone surprising. But Maria Valtorta sheds new light on these same words and everything becomes clear: “*If someone wants to come to Me and does not hate with holiness father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, even his very life, he cannot be My disciple. I said: “hate with holiness”. In your hearts, you are saying: “Hatred, as He teaches it, is never holy. So He is contradicting Himself.” No. I am not contradicting Myself. I say that you must hate the heaviness of love, the sensual passion of love for your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters and for your life itself. But, on the other hand, I order you to love relatives and life with the light freedom of spirits. Love them in God and for God, never placing God after them, endeavouring and taking*

³⁸⁸ Matthew 12, 46-50; Mark 3, 31-35; Luke 8, 19-21.

care to lead them to where the disciple has already arrived, that is, to God the Truth. You will thus love God and your relatives with holiness, reconciling both loves, transforming family ties from a burden into wings, from a fault into justice”^{281.5}.

Blessed Gabriel M. Allegra’s Testimony

In Maria Valtorta’s work, many are the *evangelical sentences* that acquire their full meaning when placed *in situation* within their context. The reader then understands how difficult their interpretation can be when taken out of context and why this lack of context gave rise to long exegetical debates in the past. I have already mentioned the testimony of Father Allegra³⁸⁹, the reputed Biblicist and theologian. On the subject of several modern exegetic errors, he declared: “*Exegetes today, even Catholics, take the strangest and most audacious liberties with the historicity of the Childhood Gospel and the narrations of the Resurrection...*” Then, noting to what extent Maria Valtorta’s work could clarify so many points, he gave this advice: “*I invite the readers (...) to read the page on the Resurrection, and the reconstruction of the events that took place on Easter Sunday, and they will see how harmoniously linked it all is. This is exactly what so many exegetes, following the critical historical-theological method, have tried to do, with only partial success. These pages are not disturbing, but gladden the hearts of the faithful and reinforce their faith!*”

³⁸⁹ See the chapter “*The judgement of the Church*”, paragraph F.

Father Roschini's testimony

It would be unthinkable not to mention Father Roschini's testimony again, in this chapter on exegetical questions and their *solutions* that *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* can provide. He was the founder and the first rector (for fifteen years) of the Marianum pontifical faculty of theology³⁹⁰. In this work that he wrote in his twilight years³⁹¹, and that he considered “*as the most important of his life*”, he states: “*All the Biblical passages pertaining to Mary in the Old and New Testaments, from the Book of Genesis (3, 15) to the Apocalypse (12), are enhanced in the Valtortian Mariology. The “supposedly anti-marian” passages are all there, but in the light of this interpretation, they dissipate all shadows surrounding the luminous figure of Mary*”, i.e. Matthew 12, 46-50; Luke 11,27-28; Luke 2,33; 41-52 and John 2,2-5. He concludes his analysis³⁹²: “*We might well wonder what “anti-marian elements” these four texts contain... Duly interpreted, they are a veritable hymn of praise to Mary*”

The Bible omnipresent in the teachings of Jesus

This work contains innumerable Biblical references, which have all been verified each time they appeared in the text. But although there are so many of them, they are sometimes so discreetly and logically integrated into the text that they can go quite unnoticed by those who do not possess an excellent level of Biblical erudition.

They are never servile *copies* of texts, but rather rephrased texts, always placed in a coherent context, to illustrate or reinforce a point... These Biblical mentions are never

³⁹⁰ Pontificia Facoltà Teologica «Marianum». Viale Trenta Aprile, 6. 00153 Roma

³⁹¹ *La Madonna negli scritti di Maria Valtorta* Edizioni Pisani 1973.

³⁹² Pages 42 - 47 of the French edition of this book *La Vierge Marie dans l'œuvre de Maria Valtorta*.

quotations, taken from any Bible as if recited by heart. On the contrary, they ring true as verbally formulated improvisations. For instance when Jesus declares,: “Who will not judge by what appears to the eyes, but by the secrets of hearts...Who will side with the humble and judge the poor with righteousness... That is from Isaiah, is it not?”^{155.8}. Is this not a magnificent rewriting of Isaiah’s biblical text (11, 3-4)? “He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what he hears, but he shall judge the poor with justice and decide with equity for the meek and humble”. And it is clear that the Bible is omnipresent in the work to anyone who re-reads, for instance, a passage of the inspired praise of the Virgin Mary by Sabea the prophetess: “She stole the heart of God by only one of her dove-like throbs. The beauty of her spirit fascinated the Most High and of Her He made His throne. Miriam of Aaron sinned because sin was in her. Deborah decided what was to be done, but did not do it with her own hands. Jahel was brave, but she soiled her hands with blood. Judith was righteous and feared the Lord, and God was in her words and allowed her the deed that Israel might be saved, but for the love of her Motherland, she resorted to a murderous ruse. But the Woman who engendered Him exceeds those women, because She is the perfect handmaiden of God and serves Him without sinning. Totally pure, innocent and beautiful, She is the beautiful Star of God, from its rising to its setting. Completely beautiful, resplendent and pure, to be Star and Moon, Light to men for them to find the Lord. She neither precedes nor follows the Holy Ark, like Miriam of Aaron, because She Herself is the Ark. She glides and saves on the muddy water of the earth, submerged by the deluge of sins, because whoever communes with Her finds the Lord. Spotless dove, she goes out and brings the olive branch, the branch of peace to men, because She is the beautiful Olive. She is silent, and in Her silence She speaks and Her works surpass

Deborah's, Jahel's and Judith's. She does not advise fighting, nor does She encourage massacres; She sheds no other blood than Her own most chosen blood, with which She made Her Son. Unhappy Mother! Sublime Mother! Judith feared the Lord, but her flower had belonged to a man"^{525.7}.

Without reading attentively, who would notice that in these few lines there are at least ten Biblical references³⁹³ ? At least those are the ones that were the easiest for me to find. But I have no doubt that Biblicists might find even more in this brief extract! A study published by Edmea Dusio³⁹⁴ shows that in the work there are explicit or implicit mentions from 1,166 of the 1,334 chapters of the books that make up the Bible; in other words, almost the whole Bible! But it is abundantly clear that this is a subject that would occupy researchers for decades. In this way, David Amos, a French researcher, after a rigorous study, found no fewer than 3,133 Biblical mentions in *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*. A great part of his work is on the site www.Maria-Valtorta.org dedicated to the Italian mystic.

It also seems that some American Benedictines, a Belgian team and an Australian group have been working on this study for some years now... And, no doubt some independent researchers, as well as a few members of the Biblical Institute of Jerusalem perhaps.

³⁹³ For example: The Song of Songs 4, 1-9 ; Numbers 12 ; Judges 4 et 5 ; Judith 4, 17-23 ; Judith 5, 24-27 ; Judith 8 à 16 ; Exodus 15, 20 ; Genesis. 8, 6-12; Ecclesiastics 24, 14.

³⁹⁴ Edmea Dusio, *Indice biblico dell'opera "Il poema dell' Uomo-Dio"*, Pisani, 1970.

IF IT'S NOT TRUE... IT'S CLEVERLY MADE UP

An old Italian adage³⁹⁵

“To wait to know enough to act with full knowledge of the facts is to condemn oneself to inaction”.

Jean Rostand

“Audacious ideas are like pawns that you move on a chessboard: you risk losing them, but they might also be the beginnings of a winning strategy”.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe.

When practically everything that can be tested in Maria Valtorta's work turns out to be correct, we can reasonably assume that what is not verifiable today, or is no longer so (for example the description of a lost monument) is highly likely to be true... Similarly, when Maria Valtorta offers us *unverifiable* situations (for example meetings or dialogues between characters) but which nevertheless provide a logical explanation to certain secular enigmas, it would seem legitimate to grant them a certain amount of credit, or even *certain* credit. Now, there are many obscure points in the history of the Christian first century on which *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* sheds new and convincing light, as well as many legends or ancient traditions that Maria Valtorta confirms, (or, on the contrary, debunks) so clearly and so naturally that her presentation appears today to impose itself on our reason as obvious.

Jesus's family ties

The subject of Jesus's family (and particularly the identity of *His brothers and His sisters* mentioned by the Evangelists) has been intensely debated throughout the centuries. So much nonsense has been written on the subject that it was high time that Providence took a hand in sorting it all out.

How modern this thought of Pascal's has remained to this day: *“The truth is so obscured in these times and lies so*

³⁹⁵ *Se non é vero, é ben trovato.*

*established, that unless you love truth, you will not be able to know it*³⁹⁶. Let us simply say that Jesus's family ties, as they appear in Maria Valtorta's text, are in line with the Gospels and with many of the most ancient traditions. The abundant details provided form a whole that is plausible enough for us to reasonably consider this subject as perfectly clarified. As it is impossible to give an exhaustive view in this book, I will limit myself to indicating *the broad outlines* and give some *positions* on certain points that have occasionally been the subject of controversy...

Maria Valtorta confirms that **the Virgin Mary**, Mother of Jesus, was born to **Joachim**, of the house of David, and **Anne** of Aaron, his wife. She was entrusted to the Temple at the age of three, and remained there until She was fourteen. Her parents are thought to have died two or three years before She left the Temple³⁹⁷: *"I no longer have father nor mother... My parents were two just people and God spoke to them deep in their hearts as He speaks to Me. They followed the path of justice and truth. When I think of them, I see them at rest, with the Patriarchs and by my sacrifice I hasten the coming of the Messiah who will open the gates of Heaven for them"*^{10.4}. Consequently, and by applying *"the law of the orphan heiress"*^{100.5}, as Maria Valtorta rightly says, it was the High Priest ³⁹⁸ who chose Joseph to be Her husband.

Joseph, son of Jacob, adoptive father of Jesus, (also of the house of David, like Mary), a carpenter in Nazareth, was chosen to be Mary's husband when he was over thirty. Maria Valtorta

³⁹⁶ Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), *Pensées* LXII

³⁹⁷ Maria Valtorta thus echoes Georges Cedrenus (circa 1050-1100), a Greek monk who affirms in his Chronicle that Joachim and Anne died when Mary was 12 years old.

³⁹⁸ See the chapter *"The law of the orphan heiress and Mary's wedding"*.

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relates the episode of the almond tree branch³⁹⁹ “*that had blossomed in an unusual way*”^{348.11}. Joseph died at about sixty years of age, shortly before Jesus began His public life.

Joseph’s eldest brother was called **Alpheus** and was married to **Mary of Cleophas** (also known as Mary of Alpheus or even simply Mary). So Mary of Alpheus was Jesus’s aunt and the sister-in-law of the Virgin Mary (Her *sister*, in oriental language). The couple had four sons: **Joseph, Simon, James** and **Jude**. Maria Valtorta designates them quite naturally as Jesus’s *cousins*, but in the dialogues, they naturally appear as *brothers* of Jesus. This is a point on which a lot of ink covered many pages, (unnecessarily!) as these *cousins* were also sometimes designated as *brothers* of Jesus in the translations of the Gospels⁴⁰⁰ throughout the centuries. Some scholarly minds saw in this the opportunity to construct all sorts of theories. Consequently, this requires an explanation.

Jesus, His brothers and His sisters

The word for *cousin* did not exist in Hebrew or in Aramaic. In these languages, the words *brothers* and *sisters* designated *close relatives*⁴⁰¹. The oral tradition was first transmitted in Aramaic, which is why the appellation *brothers of Jesus* was fixed as designating His close relatives, before they were written or translated into Greek, then Latin in the Gospels. In Greek, there are two main terms to designate blood relationships:

³⁹⁹ According to an ancient tradition recorded by Saint Jerome (circa 400): “*they placed 24 almond branches in the Temple and the next day Joseph the carpenter’s was covered with leaves and blossom*”. The Apocryphal Gospel of James also reports in VIII.3: « *Let each one bring a branch and the one to whom the Lord sends a miracle, to this one, She will become wife*”. Mary of Agreda also mentions this miracle in *The Mystical City of God*.

⁴⁰⁰ “*That one there, isn’t He the carpenter, the son of Mary, brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? And aren’t His sisters here among us?*” Mark 6, 3 and Matthew 13, 55 -56.

⁴⁰¹ The Aramaic word “*aha*” meant brother, half-brother or cousin.

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Adelphos: blood brother, but often extended in a wider sense in Biblical texts, encompassing cousins among the siblings, (1 Chronicles 23, 22; Tobias 5, 13); or even nephews (Genesis 13.8; 14, 16; Leviticus 10, 4)⁴⁰².

Anepsios: cousin in classical Greek, but used in a vaguer sense in the Bible: cousin (Tobias 7, 2); nephew (Col 4, 10) or uncle (Numbers 36, 11).

The *Septants* also translated from the original Hebrew of the Old Testament exclusively using the Greek term *adelphos* (brother) instead of the more general term *anepsios*, to designate family ties⁴⁰³. Clearly, the translators of the books of the Torah very often used *adelphos* in the wide sense of brothers, cousins and nephews. (The same goes for the feminine form *adelphê*, *sister*, which includes the cousin or the sister-in-law).

Hegesippe (circa 180) was one of the very first whose testimony on Jesus's relatives has come down to us. He views Mary of Cleophas not as the sister, but as the sister-in-law of Mary, the Mother of Jesus and her husband as Joseph's brother. He identifies Simon as "*the son of an uncle of the Lord's*"⁴⁰⁴". After the martyrdom of James, Simon was appointed bishop in Jerusalem "*because he was the Lord's second cousin*".

The family ties reported by Maria Valtorta are thus perfectly coherent within this early tradition⁴⁰⁵. Maria Valtorta also

⁴⁰² In the Greek New Testament text, the word *adelphos* occurs over 100 times : 41 times in the sense of "biological brothers" 42 times as "members of the same community or family" ; 213 times in the sense of "adepts of the same religion"; 22 times as "close collaborators" (In the epistles of Paul and Peter).

⁴⁰³ This usage is attested on numerous occasions. For example, Lot, Abraham's nephew, and Jacob, Laban's nephew, are called "*their brother*" (Genesis 13, 8; 14, 14-16 and Genesis 29, 15).

⁴⁰⁴ Reported by Eusebius, in *Ecclesial History* III, 19-22

⁴⁰⁵ The pseudo tradition of Joseph's sons and daughters from a previous marriage originated with Origen and Epiphanes, (based on the *Apocryphal Gospel of James*, (written around the 2nd century). But the fact that Epiphanes names four "*sons*" (James, Joseph, Simon and Jude) and two "*daughters*" (Salome and Mary), clearly indicates that they are *Joseph's close relatives*, as Maria Valtorta describes them. It was only the clumsy zeal of a copyist or translator that transformed them into Joseph's sons and daughters!

informs us that the cousin Simon was married to **Salome**, (a cousin of Jesus's by marriage, hence one of the *sisters* of Jesus), not to be confused with **Mary-Salome**, wife of Zebedee and mother of the Apostles James and John.

The lightning expansion of Christianity in the Mediterranean area

The Gospel as Revealed to Me, among other things, sheds new and convincing light on the lightning expansion of the budding first-century church all around the Mediterranean and especially in Antioch, in Alexandria, in Ephesus, in Rome, in Provence and the Rhone valley and in Aquitaine, as well as in Spain.

The personality of each of the artisans of this expansion stands out so clearly, that the reader ends up feeling that he *knows* each one of them... and that he is a witness to the events that brought about their conversion forever changing their lives, like Maximin, Marcelle, Sarah, Zacheus, Nike, Barnabas, Hermas and so many others, or again Aurea Galla, the future Saint Christiana: *"I feel that I will remain in Israel, to become better acquainted with this Father of mine... And to be the first disciple of Gaul, Oh my Lord!" "Your faith will be satisfied, because it is good"*^{437.7}.

*

Let me now mention a few elements that I have as yet been unable to prove formally and which remain today simple working hypotheses for me...

One Publius Quinctillianus

The case of Publius Quinctillianus, the centurion turned tribune, deserves our attention. This name immediately evokes the son of the tribune general *Publius Quinctilius Varus*⁴⁰⁶ and a great-niece of Augustus, Claudia Pulchra, married in 14 BC. The diminutive form *Quinctillianus* might indicate that on the death of his father, he was probably *adopted* by his aunt Quinctillia, Varus's sister, according to the current practice of that time.

We learn from Flavius Josephus that when he was barely 20 years old, young Publius seconded his father in restoring order in Judea between the years 4 and 6 AD: “*the son of Varus who commanded some of the troops, took Sephoris and had all the Jews who had dared to resist sold by auction*⁴⁰⁷ ». Tacitus explains that he was later falsely accused by Domitius Afer, “*of having made an illicit fortune in Syria*⁴⁰⁸ ». He inherited from his father and his mother, Claudia Pulchra⁴⁰⁹ who “*died in exile*” in 26 AD. He disappeared from the pages of History in 26/27 AD, except for the mention that Tiberius, “*who was a close relative of his, did nothing to save him*”.

Could he simply have been ordered to *keep a low profile* for some time in Rome, and *discreetly* sent to Pilate and Claudia in Judea on a mission? Be that as it may, the son of Varus was perfectly familiar with the region, where he had been with his father from 7 BC to 6 AD. Everything that we learn from Maria

⁴⁰⁶ Varus was killed in 9 AD in the Teutoburg forest (near Osnabrück) where the three legions under his command were massacred.

⁴⁰⁷ Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 17, 10, 9.

⁴⁰⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4, 66-71. Curiously, this same accusation was levelled at his father by Velleius Paterculus, *Roman History*, 2.117.

⁴⁰⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, Book IV, 52.

Valtorta on Publius Quinctillianus seems to support this hypothesis:

- The date of his presence in Palestine (in 26/27 AD), the same year in which the son of Varus, Publius Quinctilius, *disappeared* from Rome,
- His mission under Pilate: he was Claudia's bodyguard, "*Here is Claudia. We are escorting her*"^{192.5}.
- His approximate age (40-45), compatible with the historical data on the son of Varus.
- His appointment as centurion of the Italic cohort^{109.14} in 27/28, that is, as first centurion (*primus pilus*), then his nomination, in July 29 AD, as "*tribune of Antioch*"^{461.19}, which would prove that he belonged to the equestrian order⁴¹⁰.

As both his father and grandfather committed suicide after a military defeat, it is understandable that he would have omitted the *cognomen* Varus (*knock-kneed*) from his identity. Not very flattering per se, this nickname would have been very difficult to bear after the disaster in Germania!

He is even identifiable as "*the tribune of the people Quinctillianus*" of whom Tacitus⁴¹¹ says that he received "*a light reprimand*" from Tiberius, shortly after the death of Lucius Calpernius Piso in 32 AD. He might even have been quietly instrumental then in the implantation of the Church in Rome.

⁴¹⁰ Only citizens from families belonging to the knighthood (*equester ordo*) could become tribunes.

⁴¹¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, Book VI, 10 – 12.

Valerius and Valeria, a divided Roman couple

Valerian is presented in the work as a “*noble Roman from the proconsul’s entourage. (...) He is one of the richest and the most disgusting Romans that we have here. And he is as cruel as he is disgusting*”^{254.5}. Sintica, his slave girl, ran away to escape the whims of this “*master in the art of the orgy*”.

The Valerii (or Valeria gens) were one of the most important Roman families⁴¹². The Valerian mentioned in M. Valtorta’s work could well be *Decimus Valerius Asiaticus* (5 BC – 47 AD). Born in Vienne in the Rhone valley, nothing is known of the beginning of his career. He moved to Rome in the latter years of the reign of Tiberius, was admitted to the Senate and appointed consul in 35 AD and in 46 AD. He belonged to the inner circle of Claude (born in Lyons) and accompanied him in the campaign of 43 against the Bretons⁴¹³. His wealth and his brilliant career enabled him to buy the villa and the gardens created in Rome circa 60 BC by Lucullus. He was extremely wealthy, very influential in Rome but also in Vienne. He retired to his gardens in Rome and “*mostly occupied with his pleasure, he abandoned himself to a voluptuous life and to Epicurean debauchery*”⁴¹⁴. The object of the jealousy of Messalina (who coveted his luxurious property), he was arrested in Baiae and condemned to suicide by Claudius⁴¹⁵. Like Pilate, he came from the region of Narbonne and his presence in the year 26 in the orbit of Pilate and Plautius, as well as his age (29) at the time of

⁴¹² There were several consuls in the time of Jesus : Marcus Valerius Messalla Messallinus, consul in 3BC; Lucius Valerius Messalla Volesus, consul in 5 AD; Marcus Valerius Messalla Barbatus Messalinus (12 BC – 21AD) consul in 20 AD, father of Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus and of Valeria Messalina (20/48); his half-sister was Claudia Pulchra, widow of Varus. Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus, consul en 58 AD, son of the previous one

⁴¹³ He was a staff officer of Aulus Plautius, who was himself present in Palestine in 26 – 28

⁴¹⁴ This unflattering portrait corresponds perfectly to the one given in Maria Valtorta’s text.

⁴¹⁵ According to Dion Cassius, *Roman History* 59, 30, 60 and Tacitus, *Annals* 9, 1; 13, 43.

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the birth of his daughter Faustina, all coincide. His nickname, Asiaticus, indicates that he performed great deeds in Asia! We learn from his young wife, Valeria in September, 28 AD: “*He had himself sent to Antioch to the Consul, and forbade me to follow him*”^{531.11}. History, however, records that Valerian joined the consul of Syria, Gnaeus Sentius Saturninus the elder, in Antioch precisely in the year 28! Eutropius⁴¹⁶ indicates that the son of this latter⁴¹⁷ was one of the generals who accompanied Claudius on his conquest of Great Britain, as was Valerius Asiaticus, but also Aulus Paulus and Vespasian⁴¹⁸ the future husband of Flavia Domitilla!

As for his young wife, **Valeria**, who had openly become a disciple of Jesus after the healing of her little daughter Fausta, she progressively separated from her husband “*a miserable being, ruled by brutal animalism, licentious, adulterous, thoughtless, indifferent, mocking the feelings and the dignity of his wife*”^{531.10} who had only this to say at the birth of his daughter: “*He laughed when they took our daughter to him and said “I would like to have her laid on the ground. I did not accept the yoke of marriage to have daughters... Name her Libitina⁴¹⁹, and let her be consecrated to the goddess”*”^{531.11}.

Left alone with her daughter, Valeria decides: “*I will not leave this place... I will stay here with Tusnilde⁴²⁰. I am free, I*

⁴¹⁶ Eutropius, *Breviarium historiae Romanae* 7,13,2.

⁴¹⁷ Gnaeus Sentius Saturninus the younger, consul in 41

⁴¹⁸ It would seem then, that several of the notables that comprised Pilate’s entourage in Maria Valtorta’s work, were together ten years later in the service of the Emperor Claudius.

⁴¹⁹ The odious nature of this remark takes on its full meaning when we remember that Libitina was the goddess of death!

⁴²⁰ The fact that the wife of Arminius was left in the care of Valeria’s father at the death of Germanicus, clearly indicates that Valeria came from a great Roman family!

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am rich, I can do as I please. And doing no wrong, I will do what I want"^{583.12}.

It does not seem that Roman historians mention this first wife of Valerian's, probably "forgotten" in Rome, where she did not live. On the other hand, is it possible to find a trace of her in certain rabbinical texts⁴²¹ ? "*A rich woman called Valeria*⁴²², *who had slaves*" is considered here as "*having become a proselyte*". Resident in Jamnia and Lydda after the fall of Jerusalem, she discussed the contradictions in the Bible with the grandson of Gamaliel the Elder and the priest José⁴²³. Many clues suggesting that the Valeria described by Maria Valtorta, whom we see in the Roman synagogue shortly before the Passion, and who announces her intention of remaining where her faith was born, could well be this mysterious Valeria turned *proselyte*. A young bride in the year 28, she could thus very well have lived beyond the decade following the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Ethanim, the seventh or the eighth month?

In Maria Valtorta's work, the month of Ethanim is mentioned several times: "*Salome who saw you, unknown to you, in Tiberias last Ethanim*"^{348.3}; "*I went there when we came to Auranitide with the Master in the month of Ethanim*"^{356.2}: "*the life of her Jesus is like this sky in Ethanim: clouds and rain, sometimes a storm, but there are also sunny days*"^{504.3}; etc. And according to the chronology of the events described, Ethanim unambiguously appears as the month immediately following Tishri, that is, the 8th month of the year since Nisan. It

⁴²¹ *Mekhil*, 12, 48. p18 a; *Yevamot*, 46 a; *Gerim*, II. 4.

⁴²² That some tried to identify as Beruria, daughter of Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion, but this explanation does not seem to be well founded.

⁴²³ The Talmud of Babylon, *Rosh Hashanah*, 17 b, even stipulates "*between Deuteronomy 10, 17 and Numbers 6, 26*".

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corresponds to October/November of the Julian calendar or to Cheshvan (or Marheshvan) of the current Hebraic calendar. Yet, in the Bible, Ethanim is mentioned as being the 7th month, the month of the *Dedication of the Temple* by Solomon. But certain exegetes⁴²⁴ mention an instance of incoherence there: as the Temple was finished in the 8th month, it does not seem very probable that Solomon would have waited for eleven months to dedicate it! In addition, the etymological meaning of *Ethanim* is *powerful rivers*, a term which is more appropriate for our present-day months of October/November. It is highly improbable that the feast of the Tents should be held in the month of *powerful rivers*! It should also be underlined that this single Biblical text, upon which all the others are based to *fix* Ethanim and Boul (*permanent rivers*) “*is full of all sorts of difficulties*”⁴²⁵ and with imprecise indications that have been noted by the exegetes. So, there are several serious reasons to credit the original interpretation of Ethanim as it appears in Maria Valtorta’s text.

The date of the first written Gospels

The question of when the Gospels were written down has been of primary interest to many researchers for several centuries. In truth, as far as Faith is concerned, it is a capital question. If, as some have affirmed, the Gospels are tardy narrations of a long verbal tradition within the first Christian communities, then their fidelity to the life and teachings of Jesus can be called into question at any time, opening the door to doubt and a possible weakening of the Faith. Many studies

⁴²⁴ See for example the notes of the Osty Bible.

⁴²⁵ Osty Bible, 1, Kings 6, 1: explanatory note.
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published since the eighties⁴²⁶ have now shown that the Gospels were written very early (between 40 and 60 AD), formally debunking the hazy theories put forward in the 19th and 20th centuries, dating them 50 or 100 years later. Moreover, simple common sense would make it quite absurd, both psychologically and historically, that of all the numerous disciples who witnessed the miracles and heard the luminous words spoken by Jesus, not one of them noted any of it down *as it happened*. Curiously enough, those same scholars who dated the writing of the Gospels at about 100 or 150 AD never contested the fact that, 450 years previously, Xenophon and Plato wrote down the words of Socrates immediately⁴²⁷.

Strictly speaking *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* does not contain any dated indications as to when the Gospels were written. But it does contain many plausible allusions as to how the disciples memorised and recorded the words and deeds of the Master.

It was Jesus Who first drew John's attention to this: "*John, when the Veil of the Temple is torn, a great truth will shine over all Sion*". "*What truth, my Lord?*" "*That the sons of darkness have been in contact with the Light in vain. Remember that, John*". "*Will I be a son of darkness, Master?*" "*No, not you, but remember it to explain the Crime to the world*"^{92.6}. Or again: "*John, remember these words for when the time comes to write them down*"^{116.10}. Matthew, for his part, reassures Peter, who has doubts about his memory: "*I want to remember all this. But will*

⁴²⁶ See, for example : C. Tresmontant, *Le Christ Hébreu* 1983; Père J. Carmignac, *La naissance des évangiles synoptiques* 1984 ; Robinson, *The priority of John* 1985 ; Carsten P. Thiede, *Les origines de l'Évangile d'après le texte du papyrus*, P 64, 1995.

⁴²⁷ And yet, the most ancient of the 7 existing "manuscripts" of Plato's texts date from the year 900, that is, 1,250 years after the original! Whereas there are 24,000 existing fragments of the New Testament, some of which date from the years 40 to 60! (Source: J. McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 1979).

I be able to?" says Peter. "Don't worry, Simon. Tomorrow I will ask the shepherds to repeat it to me all over again, calmly, in the orchard... once, twice, three times if necessary. I have a good memory. I developed it at my tax counter and I will remember for everybody. I will be able to repeat it all to you whenever you want" ^{136.11}. John of Endor, the former teacher, takes notes to teach Marjiam, and later, the budding community in Antioch. *"John of Endor stands up too. He was taking copious notes while Jesus was speaking"* ^{250.9}. *"Sometimes Old Felix returns with his teacher's reflexes. I am thinking of Marjiam. He has his whole life to preach You, but because of his age, he is not here to listen to Your sermons. I thought of writing down certain teachings that You gave us that the child did not hear(...) There is so much wisdom in your words, even in the least of them! Your familiar conversations are a lesson on everyday matters precisely, and concern every man (...) I have written Your short explanations for Marjiam. And this evening, I wanted to write down Your great teaching. I will leave my work to the child, for him to remember me, the old teacher, and also for him to have these teachings which he would not otherwise have had. Your words. His splendid treasure"* ^{250.11}.

Syntyche, the future evangeliser of Antioch, also takes notes: *"On original sin, Master. I have written down Your Mother's explanation in order to remember it, she adds. John of Endor also says: "I did so too. I think that this is something on which we will be asked many questions, if we go among the Gentiles one day."* ^{307.5}. Then when John has departed, Marjiam picks up the torch: *"Now, I am the one who will write them for You and I will send them to You... won't I, Master? It is possible, isn't it?" "It certainly is. And it will be a great act of charity to do it". "I will do it. And when I am away, I will have Simon the Zealot do it"* ^{312.12}. From then on, that is what he does: *"Master!*

Thank You on John's behalf! I wrote everything down while You were speaking. I just have to add the miracle now"^{364.10}. Elsewhere, he adds: *"I will give him what I have written"*^{465.6}. Wouldn't these notes, taken by the future Saint Martial, have helped the Evangelist Mark to write his Gospel?

Even the great Rabbi Gamaliel, in a conversation with Jesus, confessed: *"Master... some of Your words, spoken at a banquet, have been relayed to me. I disapproved, because I discerned insincerity in what was said to me. I fight, or I do not fight, but I always do it openly. I meditated on these words and compared them with those that have remained in my memory... And I have been waiting for You here, to ask You about them... But first, I wanted to hear You speak... Those others have not understood. I hope that I will be able to understand. I wrote down Your words while You were speaking, not to harm You, but in order to meditate on them,"*^{487.10}. The Roman ladies themselves, through Flavia, the freedwoman, as we have already seen⁴²⁸, transmit what they have heard and witnessed to Claudia: *"Have you written it down?" "Yes, exactly", says the woman, passing the clay tablets to her. "It will remain so that it can be re-read", says Plautina. "It is wax, it can be erased. Write it in your hearts. Those words will never again be erased"*^{204.9}. And finally, here is Mary's advice to John, shortly before Her glorious Assumption: *"Remember everything, the words and actions of My Son. Remember His gentle parables and live them, that is, put them into practice. And write them down so that they will remain for future generations, until the end of time and always serve as a guide for men of goodwill to obtain eternal life and glory. You will probably not be able to repeat all the*

⁴²⁸ See the paragraph *"A mother called Albulia and her daughter, Flavia"*.

luminous words of the Eternal Word of Life and Truth. But write down as many of them as you can"^{649.9}.

All these dialogues contribute to our understanding of the way in which a wealth of notes and memories were built up quite naturally. These were rapidly put into order by the Apostles, at least by John and Matthew, to constitute the basis of their Gospel. Who knows whether one or the other of these innumerable manuscripts will one day come to light during some archaeological discovery?

The Birth of Jesus and the death of Herod

Historians specialised in first-century history have always had great difficulty in establishing a coherent dating of the events that occurred during this important historical period. Not because of a lack of data, but rather because the data is scattered like an immense puzzle, of which only some pieces are still in their place today. Their difficulties increase when they must summon the courage to move a piece that was thought by some to have been put into its correct place. Thus, the date of the birth of Jesus was generally fixed between 2 and 3 BC during the first centuries⁴²⁹. Towards 525, Dionysius Exiguus, at the request of Pope John the first, fixed a new cycle of Easter feast days, which consequently placed March 753 of Rome in 1 BC. In 1613 Kepler laid the basis of a new theory, fixing the date of the birth of Jesus Christ on December 25th, 6 BC (or on January 5th, 5 BC), followed by the death of Herod after a partial eclipse of the moon before the Passover of 4 BC.

Things could have remained unchanged until a new analysis of all the known facts that preceded and followed the death of Herod showed that some of the pieces of the puzzle

⁴²⁹ The 41st year of Augustus, according to Irenaeus (or 3 BC); the year 28 of the reign of Caesar-Augustus according to Clement of Alexandria (or 3 BC); the year 725 of the founding of Rome according to Hyppolitus of Rome (or 2 BC), etc.

were not in their right place. Today, the most compatible date with the dozens of elements known for the period of Herod's death seems to be the date corresponding to the total eclipse of January 9th to 10th in 1 BC⁴³⁰. But we will probably have to wait many years for this new dating to be unanimously accepted by the scientific community... Maria Valtorta's work, which, may I remind you, gives no dates, strictly speaking, resituates all the events in a plausible and coherent sequence. In 5 BC the Annunciation (in Adar), the Census Edict at the end of the year, the Nativity in December, then in 4 BC the presentation in the Temple, the adoration of the Magi (in autumn), the flight into Egypt when Jesus was just one year old and the massacre of the Holy Innocents. In this chronology, Herod's death could very well be situated in January 1 BC and the return of the Holy Family to Nazareth at the beginning of 2 AD.

The fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius

Just as for the date of Herod's death, two main (opposing) theories have been put forward for decades concerning the date of the Passion and two dates are proposed: Friday, April 17th 33 AD, or Friday, April 7th 30 AD. The main argument of the historians opting for the year 33 appears to be Luke's indication, situating the beginning of the public life of Jesus in "*the year 15 of the principate of Tiberius*" (Luke 3, 1-3). History has placed the *reign* of Tiberius either at the death of Augustus on August 19th, 14 AD, or on the day of his investiture by the Senate on September 15th, 14 AD, or even on the day that he was nominated *Princeps*, on Thursday, October 13th, 14 AD. *Mathematically*, his 15th year goes from September 15th, 28 AD to September 15th, 29 AD. But if we consider the Jewish year, then the first year of his reign was from Tishri 1st, 13 AD to

⁴³⁰ The main elements of this theory are given in Annex 1.

Tishri 1st, 14 AD (Gregorian September 11th, 14 AD). Hence, the 15th year of the principate of Tiberius starts on Tishri 1st, 27 AD and thus goes from October 27 AD to October 28 AD. But here again, it is possible to reason in another way⁴³¹: From August 11th, 11 AD, Tiberius was the de facto *colleague* of Augustus, then the triumph of Tiberius, following his victories in Dalmatia⁴³², was celebrated in October 12 AD. And on April 3rd, 13 AD, the dying Augustus placed his last will and testimony, with his funeral details, into the hands of the Vestals. He had a law voted which conferred power equal to his own (*imperium majus*) upon Tiberius. Tiberius began to exercise *de facto* power before receiving the official investiture: “*Although he did not hesitate to grab power or to exercise it; although he took a guard, and consequently the might and the trappings of sovereignty, he refused it for a long time with unparalleled impudence*”⁴³³ ». In May 14 AD, during the closing ceremony of the census, Tiberius is the only one presiding the *lustratio* on the Field of March⁴³⁴. Tacitus openly suspects him⁴³⁵ of having seized power “*even before the death of Augustus*”.

The contemporaries of Tiberius, like St. Luke, thus considered that the government of Tiberius began from the time that he did, in fact, seize power⁴³⁶, a few months before the death of Augustus, at the end of the year 12, or the beginning of the

⁴³¹ According to a hypothesis put forward by Professor Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 387.

⁴³² See F. De Saulcy, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Bibliques*, p. 583.

⁴³³ Suetonius, *Life of the 12 Caesars, Life of Tiberius*, chap. 24.

⁴³⁴ It was in front of Tiberius, the only Prince, that the cortege of animals for ritual sacrifice turned slowly, thus symbolically closing the century of Augustus.

⁴³⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* V and VI. He also suspects him of having instigated the murder of Posthumus, grandson of Augustus.

⁴³⁶ Note too that in numismatics there are coins minted by Pontius Pilate dating from the years 16, 17 and 18 of Tiberius, but none from the year 15. Yet Pilate having taken up his post in Palestine in July 26, he, like all his predecessors, must have begun to mint his first coins in 27 (the first coins should have indicated the year 15). Could this be another clue that the *de facto* years of the accession to power by Tiberius were taken into account at that time?

year 13. In this case, the 15th year of his government would in fact begin at the end of 26 AD, which is coherent with the chronology deduced from Maria Valtorta's work.

On the Primacy of Peter

There are many passages concerning the primacy of Peter in *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* and they all concord perfectly with the testimony of the Evangelists, as well as the teachings of the Church. The following extract seems particularly interesting, as it sheds *original* light on the specificity of Peter's faith, as Matthew testifies (416, 15-19). *"And you, who do you say that I am? Tell me truly, according to your own judgement, without taking My words or those of others into account. If you were compelled to judge Me, who would you say that I am?" "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" exclaims Peter falling to his knees, arms held out towards Jesus, Who looks at him, His face luminous, bends down to raise him up and embrace him, saying: "Blessed are you, Oh Simon, son of Jonah! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you, but my Father in Heaven. Since the first day that you came to Me you have been asking yourself that question, and because you were simple and honest, you were able to understand and accept the reply that came to you from Heaven. You did not see the supernatural manifestations like your brother and John and James. You did not know My holiness as son, workman and citizen, as My brothers Judas and James did. You received no miracles, nor did you see Me work any; I showed you no sign of My power as I did with Philip, Nathanael, Simon the Cananean, Thomas and Judas. You were not subjugated by My will, like Matthew the Publican. And yet you exclaimed: "He is the Christ!" From the first moment that you saw Me, you believed and your faith was never shaken. (...) And now, from this moment, you are the head, to whom obedience and respect are*

due, as to another Myself. And I proclaim him such before all of you”^{343.5}

Blessed Peter who, first among them all, believed without having seen! Should we not also see in this message a magnificent exhortation to all generations, the echo of the reproach addressed to Thomas (John 20, 29): “*You have believed because you have seen Me. Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed!*”

THE FOUR GOSPELS IN ONE?

“...the Apostles, in the memoirs composed by them and that are called Gospels...”⁴³⁷

“The Gospel according to Luke is the third... The fourth Gospel is John’s...”⁴³⁸

From the very first centuries the Church has recognised four Gospels, written by four different authors. Yet the Church often mentions *the Gospel* in the singular, because “*the four are only one, as the three Divine Persons are one God*”⁴³⁹.

It seems that it was Irenaeus of Lyons (circa 135 – 202) who was the first to establish that there were four canonical Gospels. At least it is the most ancient text that attests this. Faced with heretics who wanted only Scripture, Saint Irenaeus insisted on Scripture and Tradition: *The Church is a Tradition* (i.e. a transmission). He refutes the Gnostics, describing their doctrines with precision, based on the Scriptures, showing the criteria of interpretation for an ecclesial reading of the Bible. He affirmed: “*Besides, there cannot be a greater or a smaller number of Gospels (than 4) (...) it appears that the Word, Creator of the Universe, who sits upon the Cherubim and maintains all things, when He manifested Himself to men, gave us a Gospel in quadruple form, although maintained by a one and only Spirit*”⁴⁴⁰ ».

Irenaeus thus took a stance, probably as a reaction to the version of Luke’s Gospel published by Marcion, because the latter affirmed that Luke’s was the only, true Gospel. Irenaeus’s is also the most ancient testimony affirming that John’s Gospel

⁴³⁷ Justin-martyr, as early as the year 144 repeatedly mentions “*the Gospels*” in his *Apology*, then in 167 in his *Dialogue with Tryphon*, and he specifies “*that I say were written by His Apostles (Matthew and John) and by those who accompanied them*” (Mark et Luke).

⁴³⁸ Fragment of a 7th century manuscript, attributed to Muratori, the copy of a Greek text written circa 170 or 180.

⁴³⁹ Quoted by Mgr. R. Laurentin, *Nouveau Diatessaron*, Fayard 2002.

⁴⁴⁰ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Contre les Hérésies* 3.11.8.

was written by the Apostle John and that Luke's gospel was written by Luke, Paul's companion.

At the same period, in the second half of the 2nd century, Tatian the Syrian (circa 120 – 173) wrote the *Diatessaron* (literally, *what is through the four*) which constitutes without doubt the first effort at a harmonious fusion of the four canonical Gospels into one text. Eusebius informs us in this way: “*This Tatian, having composed, I know not how, a certain combination of the Gospels, called it by the name of to dia tessaron*”⁴⁴¹ ». For three centuries this all-encompassing text even became the official liturgical Gospel of several local churches in Syria, until Theodoret, bishop of Cirrus from 423 to 458, put an end to it, apparently because he had noticed the total absence of any mention of Jesus's Davidic descent.

The original text of the *Diatessaron* has almost entirely disappeared⁴⁴², but is partially known to us through St. Ephrem of Nisibis (306 – 373) who made this commentary⁴⁴³ on it: “*The entire Scripture is like a lyre; one chord does not produce a harmonious sound by itself, but in unison with the others*”. The very existence of a work that merges the four Gospels into one text sometimes seems to shock some exegetes, for whom the differences and the specificity of the four Gospels make this *merging into one* utopian and unfeasible. This is the opinion of Irenaeus, who affirmed “*Things being as they are, vain and ignorant, but also very audacious, are all those who would like to alter this figure of the Gospel and give it more than four faces, or else fewer*”⁴⁴⁴.” However, we cannot but notice that *The Gospel*

⁴⁴¹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesial History* IV, 29.

⁴⁴² Unless one *Latin harmony of the Gospels*, unearthed in 1545 by Bishop Victor, turns out to be a later copy.

⁴⁴³ St. Ephrem of Nisibis, *Commentaire de l'Évangile concordant*. Cerf 1996.

⁴⁴⁴ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Contre les Hérésies*, 3. 11.

(continued on following page...)

as Revealed to Me, integrating as it does all the texts transmitted by the four Evangelists into a coherent and harmonious chronological whole, creates a work that could well have deserved the title of *New Diatessaron*. Some years ago the publisher, E. Pisani, published an interesting work⁴⁴⁵ which provides the main correlations between the verses of the canonical Gospels and Maria Valtorta's text. Anyone can easily see that the text of the four Gospels is, in fact, *merged into one*, following a chronological order, in *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*.

Quintilian's hexameter

While teaching at the Clear Water, Jesus replies to a question asked by Cleophas, the old head of the synagogue, concerning a case of murder: "*In order to judge a crime, one must consider the circumstances that precede, prepare, justify and explain the crime itself. (...) Who did I strike? What did I strike? Where did I strike? With what instrument did I strike? Why did I strike? How did I strike? When did I strike?*"^{126.2}

Strangely enough, a few decades later, Quintilian⁴⁴⁶ in a famous verse, announced the same principle that has summarised all criminal investigations since then: "*Quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando*"⁴⁴⁷ .

However, if we apply this principle to each fact reported by the four Evangelists, *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* answers these seven permanent questions:

Who, and how many people, were present, actors, witnesses, spectators? What happened? What did each one do

⁴⁴⁵ *Vangelo unificato sulla traccia dell'opera di Maria Valtorta*, CEV 2003.

⁴⁴⁶ Quintilian, born about 36 AD, could well have received testimonies from the Disciples of Christ!

⁴⁴⁷ This verse has since been known as the "*Mnemonic Hexameter of Quintilian*".

and say? What was it about: a speech, a miracle, a parable, a prophecy, a work of mercy, etc? Where did it take place? How? When? Why? And the place, the circumstances, the time, the motivations; everything is perfectly presented and each element is harmoniously and coherently integrated into a homogeneous and perfectly structured whole!

In order to obtain all these answers (and this is not the only paradox of this work) there is no need for scholarly knowledge. All that is required is to be able to read and to do so assiduously, attentively and completely:

assiduously: to bear in mind images, words, actions and their sequence from one day to the next;

attentively: to register the slightest detail, because each one is important;

completely: because it often happens that an objection or a doubt are dissipated, or the answer to a question is provided much further on in the work, and everything becomes limpid and luminous!

But we have already seen that Maria Valtorta's text does even more than this:

- It highlights the unity of the Old and New Testaments, of the Tradition of the Church Fathers, and even many apocryphal texts. I have given some examples in this book, but this subject alone deserves a specific study.
- It also treats many exegetical problems and very probably solves a great number of them. But this is for the exegetes to demonstrate.

A true evangelical compendium

Seen up close, *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* assembles and summarises all the knowledge concerning Jesus of Nazareth's time on earth: His life, His actions and His teachings. This is exactly what the specialists of yore called a *compendium*, or more simply, a *Sum*.

So, after the *Summa Theologica* of Saint Thomas Aquinas, after Dante's *Divine Comedy*, *Mediaeval Literary and general survey of philosophy*⁴⁴⁸, can we not ask this question: Does *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* not deserve to be passed down to posterity, along with these treasures of world literature, as the *Summa Evangelica of Maria Valtorta*?

*

⁴⁴⁸ Frédéric Ozanam, *Dante et la philosophie catholique du XIIIe siècle*, 1838.

“COME AND SEE...”

John 1, 38-39

“Let him who has found what is true, beautiful and good in his own life, the unique treasure, the precious pearl, run to share it everywhere, in the family, at work, in every field of his existence.”

Benedict XVI, Pentecost 2006

“I do not think that it is wise and just to remain indifferent to such treasures.”

Blessed G. Allegra 9th January, 1970

Here we are at the end of this study, the aim of which, I repeat, was essentially to verify the degree of accuracy and coherence of the wealth of data in the work transmitted by Maria Valtorta. We have assembled over 10,000 scattered pieces... A puzzle of ten thousand pieces in which everything fits together and each element finds its own, unique place.

Let us imagine *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* as the box containing an immense puzzle in which the 10,000 details are scattered pieces. An archaeologist bends down, fits a few pieces together and feels the same joy as if he had put some of the missing tesseras of the Madaba mosaic into their correct place... Then a historian comes along and what joy is his to publish a documented monograph on the Roman occupation of Palestine in the year 30 and onwards. And so it goes, each one, satisfactorily reconstructing a modest piece of the puzzle in his own field of expertise... This is, in fact, what a few *pioneers* started doing over the last three decades.

*“And if it has pleased Me to reconstruct the tableau of My Divine Charity, like the person who restores a mosaic by replacing all the broken or missing tesseras to reconstruct the complete beauty of the mosaic, and if I have chosen to do it in this century in which Humanity is racing to the Abyss of darkness and horror, can you forbid Me to do so?”*⁶⁵². VII is exactly what Jesus says in His Goodbye to the work.

The systematic study of this work by scientists, and more so than any other previous work, would undoubtedly advance our knowledge of the history, geography, architecture, flora and fauna, customs and practices... in a word, on Life in the first two decades of our era in the Mediterranean Basin.

This study would also make it possible to combine History and Tradition in a dazzling way. It would reveal many questions that have made exegetical debates sterile for several centuries. It would shed exceptional light on the motivations, the unfolding and the chronology of the events which, from the birth of Christ to the first persecutions of the nascent Church, indelibly marked the destiny of humanity.

The time for confessions

After about fifteen years of daily research on this exceptional work, I acquired the certainty, as did several other researchers before me, that it contains an almost inexhaustible mine of precise, coherent and verifiable information. There comes a time when, faced with this mass of verified and credible information, faith imposes itself again, and reason must bow to modesty. Why would some rare, unverifiable details (for example, the description of a monument that no longer exists) be false, when all the verifiable ones have proved to be true?

So, I logically come to the same conclusion as Jean Aulagnier⁴⁴⁹ : “...as I followed the progression of my analysis ... I measured; I felt, with extraordinary intensity, the profound, total, divine reality of Maria Valtorta’s writings.”

So where does *The Valtorta Enigma* stand? Have all its facets been revealed? Certainly not! On the contrary, the subject has barely been touched upon... The reader will have

⁴⁴⁹ Jean Aulagnier op. cit. pages 302-303.

understood that it is totally impossible to give an exhaustive view of the extraordinary mass of knowledge contained in Maria Valtorta's text.

I have simply mentioned a few subjects, but so very many others would also have deserved to be mentioned, such as the medical descriptions and treatments (for example, the composition of Mary's ointment), the geological data, the descriptions of Jewish or Roman dwellings. Why was nothing said about mineralogy, astronomy, clothes, utensils or food? Or about groups and their beliefs (Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Essenians...)? It would also have been interesting to mention the Jewish customs and practices, the celebration of feasts, the organization of the Roman army in Palestine, the activity in ports, etc. It was only the fear of never finishing this first book that constrained me to omit thousands of details every bit as interesting as those that I finally selected.

Father Gabriel Allegra had noticed it so well: *“it is a slice of life, and Maria Valtorta masters it as if she possessed the genius of Shakespeare or Manzoni. But, how much study, how many late nights and thought did these great men put into their work! In contrast, Maria Valtorta, even though her intelligence was brilliant, her memory quick and sure, had not even completed secondary school; she suffered from diverse illnesses and was bedridden for many long years; she had few books – they could all fit on to the two shelves of her cupboard – she had never read any of the great Biblical commentaries, which would have explained her astonishing scriptural culture; she used a simple, popular version of the Bible by P. Tintori ofm, and despite all this she wrote ten volumes of The Gospel as revealed to me from 1943 to 1947 in only four years!”* However, even with exceptional biblical knowledge and culture, with unlimited documentation and many long years of preparation, (all of

which Maria Valtorta clearly did not possess), it is inconceivable that any human being, whatever his degree of erudition, could, of his own initiative, write the manuscript that Maria Valtorta has transmitted to us. And yet, despite these acknowledged facts that make of *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* an absolutely exceptional work, all its readers know perfectly well that the true value of this work does not lie in this mass of scientific data.

Many people have already declared that this text is much more than a simple novel, a beautiful history book, or a sort of encyclopaedia of the first century. The few pearls unveiled here and there in this book are “*for the astonishment and admiration of the wise and the learned*”. They could thus be qualified as “*cultured pearls*”. But we all know full well that *The Gospel as revealed to me* also contains *real pearls*, totally different from those that I have tried to show you in this book. Jesus repeatedly declares in the work: “*Eternal truths are like pearls*”^{174.20}. Why are we given all *these little terrestrial truths*, if not to help us to catch a glimpse of these *real pearls* too, these *eternal truths*?

“Do not cast your pearls before swine”

Matthew 7, 6

But, according to the Evangelical Council these holy pearls of Wisdom must not be given to those who are not prepared to receive them: “*No one has ever seen pearls thrown before swine, which prefer acorns and foul dishwater to precious pearls. They would crush them mercilessly and then, furious at having been deceived, they would attack you to tear you to pieces. Do not give holy things to dogs. This is for the present and for the future*”^{174.20}. This advice is repeated on another occasion in the work: “*It is not worth throwing pearls of wisdom to swine*”^{515.1}. Finally, was the initial, and totally unexpected, condemnation of the work not too strict an

application of this call to prudence by Jesus? Didn't Cardinal Ratzinger write in 1985 that this decision had been made "*with the aim of neutralising the damage that such a publication can cause to the least informed among the faithful*"? It is a fact that the Gospels have been enriched throughout the centuries by notes making them easier to understand by greater numbers of people. The text transmitted by Maria Valtorta would certainly deserve copious notes as well and there are a certain number of extremely useful notes in the Italian version of 2004. Perhaps a massive addition of such notes in future versions, while contributing to a better appreciation of the richness of this text, would definitively lift any residual reticence still displayed by certain members of the Church concerning its *massive* diffusion.

It is certainly not easy to combine the advice of caution given by the Church, with the desire to make the discovered treasure known to all. "*The greatest charity that we can show to someone is to lead him from error to the truth*"⁴⁵⁰ ». And Jesus Himself affirms: "*If a reward is granted for a piece of bread given to the languishing body, so that it will not die on that day, what reward will be given to the one who satisfies a spirit with eternal truth, giving it eternal life? Do not be miserly with what you know. It was given to you freely and limitlessly. Give it generously, because it comes from God, like the water from the sky. It must be given in the same way that it was given. Do not be miserly and proud of what you know, but give it with humble generosity*"^{275.13}.

⁴⁵⁰ Commentary on the *De Divinis Nominibus* by Dionysius the Areopagite. Book 13, 4, quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas.

“He who is capable of understanding, let him understand”

Matthew 19, 12

On the subject of revelation and truth-seeking, let us always bear in mind the benediction of Christ: *“I bless You, Father, Lord of Heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the wise and the learned, and revealing them to little children.”* (Matthew 11, 25). The Father reveals everything to little children. So the *true pearls* are for the reader who first agrees to become childlike again. *“If you do not become like children again”* says Jesus, that is, if we do not retrieve the love, obedience and confidence that children give to their parents, *“you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven”* (Matthew 18, 3). So, the secret of the discovery of the holy pearls of Wisdom in *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*, is quite simply the *little way* of Saint Theresa of Lisieux, that *“disposition of the heart that makes us humble and little in God’s arms, aware of our weakness and confident, to the point of audacity, in the goodness of the Father.”*⁴⁵¹. And it is a fact that a vast crowd of *humble and little* readers have been able, without ado and over the past fifty years, to quietly discover the infinite riches of this exceptional text.

Re-reading this praise of Maria of Agreda’s *The Mystical City of God*, written in 1715, on the fiftieth anniversary of her death and fifty five years after the publication of her work⁴⁵², it seems that it can today be applied verbatim to *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*: *“The strong and the weak, the learned and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, the sick and the well, can all receive considerable fruits from this work just by reading it, because the most sublime theology is explained so simply, so*

⁴⁵¹ Theresa of Lisieux, *Novissima Verba*, 3rd August, 1897.

⁴⁵² Maria de Jesús de Agreda, *Vie Divine de la Très Sainte Vierge Marie*, re-edition Téqui, page 9.

easily and clearly that it might be said that all that is required as they read is goodwill and common sense to pierce the intelligence of the mysteries”.

Beauties and unforgettable instructions are there on every page of *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*. These not only convince the mind, but also light a fire in the heart. The more we re-read and meditate on these sublime pages, the more we discover in them *the splendour of Truth*.

For all those who feel capable of reading them, these pages will develop the intelligence of the fundamental mystery of the Christian religion in the soul, that is, the Incarnation of the Word. At the same time, they will contribute to a deeper, all-encompassing understanding of the major, eminent role of Mary, Mother of the Word Incarnate. As they shed divine light on the mystery of Jesus, “*True God and true Man*⁴⁵³”, the *Man-God*, they will reveal all the power of these inspired words: “*Jesus Christ, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Col. 2, 3).

*

In bygone days, God sent prophets to revive the faith and hope of His people. In the same way, Christ regularly calls upon humble and pious women, to whom He entrusts the mission of explaining and revealing the depth and the hidden meaning of His authentic Words to mankind.

On Easter morning, it was to a woman, Mary Magdalene, that He made His request to announce His Glorious Resurrection to the Apostles. Through Saint Juliana of Mount Cornillon He established the feast of Corpus Christi; through

⁴⁵³ According to the constant teaching of the Church, from Saint Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses*, book III, chap 19) to St. Jean-Paul II (Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* § 22), and the councils of Nicaea, Ephesus, Chalcedon and Constantinople.

Saint Margaret-Mary, He developed the devotion to the Sacred Heart; through Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus, He repeated to the world the inestimable value of the state of spiritual childhood, through Sister Josefa, His Goodness; and through Saint Faustina, His infinite Mercy...

We can offer infinite acts of thanksgiving to the Lord for having deigned to “*manifest this hidden treasure*” to our times, as He has continually done throughout human History, very often through the intermediary of a woman⁴⁵⁴.

Our thanks also go to Maria Valtorta, who never considered herself anything more than the “*little voice*”, the “*pen*” or the “*instrument*”. For as Jesus declared in the Goodbye to the Work: “*I tell you truly once again that to be an instrument of Mine is not a tranquil joy: it is constant fatigue and effort, it is pain and sorrow in everything, because the world gives to the Master’s disciples what it gave to the Master: pain and sorrow*”^{652.VII}.

As that tireless promoter of the work, Father André Richard⁴⁵⁵ : wrote so incisively, “*The Holy Spirit inspires writers or prophets to teach us the truths that are useful for our salvation. They are secretaries, or living interpreters, not mere “pen-holders” or mechanical phonographs. They each have their own personality, their sensitivity, their vocabulary, their tone, their era. The Lord chooses them according to their aptitudes to transmit the message to all, through them. As Saint*

⁴⁵⁴ We need only mention Saints Angela of Bohemia, Teresa of Avila, Gertrude of Helfta, Maria Magdalena of Pazzi, Maria de Jesus de Agreda, Bridget of Sweden, Hildegard of Bingen, or, nearer to home, Anne Catherine Emmerich, or Marie Faustine. We might also mention the case of Louisa Picarreta (1865-1947) a part of whose work was placed on the Index from 1938 until 1994, at which date the “*Non Obstare*” was obtained, and the Cause of her beatification begun...

⁴⁵⁵ Theologian, philosopher and writer (1899 – 1993). Co-founder, then director, of the journal *l’Homme Nouveau*. Co-founder, then director, of the movement *Pour l’Unité*. President for France of the international movement *The Blue Army of Fatima*. This quotation is excerpted from his editorial published in the journal *L’Homme Nouveau* on November 7th, 1982.

Thomas said in an extremely dense formula: 'God is the main author of the Scriptures, but man is His instrument'. An instrument that retains its full human dignity".

"Peace to you, My little one, My tireless voice. Peace to you. Peace and blessings.

The Master says: "Thank you".

The Lord says: "Be blessed".

Jesus, your Jesus, tells you: 'I will always be with you, because it is My delight to be with those who love Me'." 652.

*

Epilogue

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life...”

In a speech at the Vatican on January 17th, 2008, Benedict XVI affirmed that it was his duty *“to invite reason to set out ever anew in search of what is true and good, in search of God; to urge reason, in the course of this search, to discern the illuminating lights that have emerged during the history of the Christian faith, and thus to recognise Jesus Christ as the Light that illuminates history and helps us to find the path towards the future”*.

I hope that this book has made a modest contribution to this wish of the Holy Father’s, by inciting readers to read or re-read *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*, this wonderful gift from heaven given to our times.

*

Completed on April 25th on the Feast of Saint Mark.

*

Author’s declaration

I have tried to bring the greatest possible care and attention to the writing of this book. The information contained in it is in good faith and has been meticulously verified. May I say to all those who helped me in one way or another: I cannot thank you enough here.

Nevertheless, like all human works, this book is naturally imperfect and thus necessarily contains imprecisions and errors. My thanks in anticipation go to those readers who will indulgently bring them to my notice. In this way, thanks to their contributions, they will be corrected. In order to do this, please write to the publisher, with the mention “For Jean-François Lavère”.

ANNEXE 1

Considerations on the date of Herod's death

Herod's death in Jericho is established as having taken place in March, 4 BC by many historians who claim to base their affirmations on the indications of Flavius Josephus. In fact, the determination of the date of Herod's death rests exclusively on Kepler's calculations, according to which the Roman year 750 (4 B.C.) is the only one in which a lunar eclipse occurred before the Passover. This eclipse took place on March 13th and the Passover fell on April 11th that year, twenty nine days later. Herod probably died on April 2nd or 3rd, 750. This has been accepted almost as dogma by the majority of researchers since then and copied thousands of times without a second thought, as a well-established fact. "*E cio che fa la prima l'altre fanno. What the first one does, the others also do*", as Dante said in *Purgatory* Song III, 82...

And yet, this hypothesis is not absolutely faultless...

The possible period according to Flavius Josephus

Josephus's chronology contains several "anomalies" which contribute to considerable uncertainty concerning the dates.

1) *Jewish Antiquities* XIV 487, 488: Herod took Jerusalem 27 years after Pompey seized it (in 63 BC), which dates this event in 36 BC. (*Jewish Antiquities* XVI: 190 – 191). Herod died 34 years later **which dates his death as circa 2 BC**. But other sources date the fall of Jerusalem to Herod in 37 BC, and in this case, 34 years later, **Herod could have died in 3 BC**. (This is the hypothesis that certain historians, such as J. Aulagnier retain, eluding the detail of the eclipse...)

2) *Jewish Antiquities* XVII. VIII.1, *Jewish Wars* XXXIII.8: Herod died 37 years after his enthronement by the Romans (in -

40). **So, in 3 or 4 BC** according to the months of the beginning or the end and how the year of enthronement is defined. But if Flavius Josephus counted the reigns of the kings of Judea according to the Jewish method of the years of accession (a habitual method for the kings of Judea) then the year of accession goes from Nisan -39 to Nisan -38 and the 37th year ends in Nisan -1, **or March -1**.

3) *Jewish Antiquities* XVII.148 ; XIV:158. Herod was 15 years old (corrected to 23 by some!?, to 25 by others!?) when he was made governor of Galilee (in -59 for some, in -47 for others!) and he died at the age of seventy, which dates **his death in -2 or -1** according to anniversary dates.

The main difficulty in Flavius Josephus's chronology is the fact that it does not refer to a precise calendar, but to the olympiads; the fact that he sometimes gives contradictory information about the same event and also that his way of counting the years of accession is not precisely determined. From one book to another, he refers to Herod's enthronement by the Romans, or to when he effectively took power after the fall of Jerusalem... So, everyone can find objective arguments to situate Herod's death between -4 and -1, and these two hypotheses have divided historians for several decades.

The facts according to Flavius Josephus

As the historians cannot agree on the dates, we need to examine and analyse the abundant details given by Flavius Josephus...

Herod was in Jericho, **his winter residence**, when the Rabbis were executed. The high priest Matthias (son of Theophilus or of Margolothus) was deposed on a day of fasting and Herod had him burned alive.

Sedition broke out during Herod's last illness, when the false rumour of his death was spread and "*in that same night, there was a lunar eclipse , the moon was blood-red and the Rabbis assassinated*"

The king's illness worsened and he died shortly afterwards, as the Feast of the Passover of that same year drew near.

Commemorative fasting shortly preceded this eclipse.

Herod ate an apple before he died (*Jewish Antiquities* XVII :183).

Herod died and was buried before a Passover.

Jewish tradition (Megillat Ta'anith 23a, 25) specifies that Herod died on the 2nd of Shebat.

The hypothesis of the date of January 26th -1 ("Julian calendar")

1) Of the lunar eclipses of that period, the total eclipse of March 7th - 5 took place too early. The eclipse of March 13th/14th -4 has been retained since Kepler, although it might have gone totally unnoticed, as it was a partial eclipse and occurred late at night (from 11 p.m. to 1.30 a.m.). However, the moon only **turns red** during a total eclipse. The one on January 9th/10th was total and visible throughout the evening, from 9 p.m. (Jerusalem time). As it was a total eclipse, the moon turned red, which probably exercised a more powerful effect on those who witnessed it at the time than a partial and practically invisible eclipse. In any case, this is the only one that corresponds to Flavius Josephus's description. Let us assume that it is the right one...

2) Jewish tradition fixes fasting on Tammuz 17th, Ab 9th, Tishri 3rd, and Tebeth 10th (the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem). (The fast of Adar 13th did not exist in Herod's day. It was only in the 12th century that Maimonides indicated that the commemoration of the fast should precede the feast, which established the "fast of Esther" on Adar 13th, before the feast of Purim on Adar 14th and 15th).

The fast of Tebeth 10th or January 5th -1 did, in fact, precede the total eclipse of Tebeth 14th/15th by a few days, on January 9th/10th -1.

3) Shebat 2nd, the presumed date of Herod's death, corresponds to January 26th, -1, so 16 days after the total, highly visible, eclipse of January 10th, -1 (Tebeth 15th). This date is situated about two months before the Passover (April 17th -1), which leaves room for the numerous events mentioned between Herod's death and the Passover (a week of mourning, the funeral, the succession, etc).

4) Apples were picked at the end of August or the beginning of September in Palestine. The one that was eaten at the end of January, -1, must have been conserved for 4 to 5 months, which is quite plausible. However, in March, -4, this becomes somewhat more problematical, even though it is not an impossible date for later-maturing varieties.

5) Two dates are indisputably known to historians:

- the date on which Herod took Jerusalem after a five-month siege, in June 37 BC and seized power.

- the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem on Av 9th, on the 10 day of the Av moon (the Hebrew year 3830 and the Roman year 823) August 4th, 70.

However, according to Flavius Josephus, the death of Herod the Great took place shortly before the Passover, 37 years after he was made king by the Romans, and 34 years after he killed Antigone (*Jewish Antiquities*, 17.8.1; *Jewish Wars*, 1.33.8).

G. Gertoux carried out a detailed analysis of the "clues" provided by Flavius Josephus. He estimates the "minimal" durations of 18 days between the fast and Herod's death, and 24 days between Herod's death and the Passover. These are incompatible in 4 BC, and thus lead to the conclusion that Herod died in 1 BC.

Facts	Jewish Antiquities	Plausibility in 1 BC
High priest's testimony on a day of fasting	XVII:165	Wednesday 5th January 1 BC
Execution of Matthias then total lunar eclipse	XVII:167	Monday 10th January, 1 BC
Journey to Callirrhoé	XVII:171	Tuesday/Wednesday
Stay in Callirrhoé (Hot bath)	XVII:172	Thursday/Saturday
Return to Jericho	XVII:173	Sunday/Monday
Convening of the judges	XVII:174	18
Meeting of the Assembly in the amphitheatre in Jéricho	XVII:175	19
Posthumous orders of massacres	XVII:178	20
A letter received from Augustus	XVII:182	
Herod's failed suicide	XVII:184	21
Antipater 's rebellion	XVII:185	
Herod's new will	XVII:188	22
Antipater's execution	XVII:191	24
Herod's death in his palace in Jericho	XVII:192	Wednesday 26th January -1
Herod's death is kept secret	XVII:193	
Salome and Alexas free the prisoners	XVII:193	
Herod's death is made public	XVII:194	Friday 28
Salome and Alexas gather the army	XVII:194	Monday, 31st January
Organisation of a grandiose funeral	XVII:196	
A week of mourning	XVII:200	Sunday 6th to Friday 11th
Meeting to organise a revolt	XVII:206	
Talks with Archelaus's general	XVII:209	
Intense negotiations with Archelaus	XVII:212	
Feast of the Passover	XVII:213	7th April, 1 BC

Certain historians object that this date is incompatible with the duration of the reigns of Herod's sons, (especially Archelaus). But it is perfectly possible that his sons had considered themselves as having "legally" received power three years previously (as seems established by numismatics: there are no coins dated from the years 1 to 3 of the reign of these

three monarchs). They appear to have followed their father's example perfectly, based on one of Herod's wills, made at the end of Varus's legation and approved by Augustus (*Jewish Antiquities* XVII, 202-210). (Josephus's precision: "*a new will*" indicates that he must have made others previously, contrary to what these same historians affirm!).

In a well-documented study, Andrew E. Steinmann (Concordia University, River Forest) provides a wealth of arguments in favour of January 26th -1 as the date of Herod's death.

ANNEXE 2

Chronological List

of some authors consulted to verify the pertinence of the data contained in Maria Valtorta's work, *The Gospel as Revealed to me*:

HERODOTUS (-484/-425) Histories.

VARRO (-116/-27) De Re Rustica

VIRGIL (-70/-19) Georgics.

TITUS LIVIUS (59 BC/+17) Roman History

STRABO of Amasya (57 BC /+25) Universal Geography.

SENECA the Rhetorician, Controversy 34 The Prometheus of Parrhasius (circa 25)

VELLEIUS PATERCULLUS (-19/31) Roman History (circa 30)

PHILO of Alexandria (circa 40) De Vita Mosis.

COLUMELLA De Re Rustica (circa 42)

PLINY THE ELDER (23/79) Natural Histories

FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS Jewish Antiquities (circa +80/90) Jewish Wars (circa +107).

TACITUS (+55/+120) Annals (circa 106), Histories.

SUETONIUS (circa 105) Life of the 12 Caesars

PLUTARCH (circa 100/110) Lives/Antony, Caesar; Moral Works

CASSIUS DIO Cocceius (ou Cocceianus) (+155/+230) Roman History, Didache (1st century)

Arabic Childhood Gospel. (Apocryphal, published in 1697, but there exists a 13th century Provençal translation, one version of which was known to Origen, to St Irenaeus or to St Cyril)

PAPINIAN (142/212) Quaestiones

IGNATIUS of Antioch (circa +68/+107) Letters

CLEMENT of Rome (4th Pope from +88/+97) Epistle +96

JUSTIN (+110/+167) Apologies I and II

MARCION (85/165) (whose writings have all disappeared)

QUADRATUS (circa 125?) Apology

IRENÆUS of Lyons (130/203) Contre les hérésies (Adversus Haereses)

ARISTIDES (circa 127) Apology

BASILIDE (120/145) A Gnostic writer who taught in Alexandria at the time of Hadrian and Antonin the Pious. (His writings have been lost)

HEGESIPPE (+115/+185) (author of the first History of the Church, now lost, but quoted by Eusebius)

Gospel according to Jacques Hébreux, or Apocryphal Gospel (a very ancient apocryphal of which a Greek manuscript survives. This text was known to Origen, Epiphanes and Gregory of Nyssa.)

Apocryphal Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew (on Mary's childhood. The version that has come down to us is 6th century, but it is a copy of an earlier version established by St. Jerome.)

TERTULLIAN (+150 or +160/circa +220 or +230) Aux nations : Apologétique

SEXTUS JULIUS Africanus (circa +160/+240) Chronographiæ (It seems that he was the first to indicate the birth of Jesus on December 25th)

HERMAS The Book of the Pastor (Before Diocletian's persecution)

POLYCRATE of Ephesus (130/200) (by the testimony of Eusebius)

CLEMENT of Alexandria (150/220) The Stromata

MELITON (circa 170/175) Apology

APOLLINAIRE Claude (circa 175) (Fragments)

TATIAN (circa 120/173) Apology; The Diatessaron, (He is known through the work of Athenagoras (circa 177/178) Apology)

ORIGEN (185/254) Commentaries on Matthew

EPIPHANIUS of Salamis (circa 230) Panarion

EUSEBIUS of Cæsarea (260/340) Ecclesiastical History

Jerusalem TALMUD

Babylonian TALMUD

POLLUX Julius, Onomasticon

EPHREM of Nisibis (306/373) Commentary on the Fourfold Gospel. (A partial original text still exists.)

The Pilgrim of Bordeaux (333)

CYRIL of Jerusalem (315/386) Catechesis

GREGORY of Nicaea (331/394)

THEODOSIUS (380) Edit Canon 3-4

JEROME (circa 400) Commentary on Ezekiel

DEXTER Lucius Flavius (circa 395/444) Chronicles (some of the writings attributed to him are 16th century apocrypha by Marcus Maximus)

OROSE Paul (circa 382/circa 418) Histories (Spanish priest and apologist)

SPARTIAN (end 4th century). Hist. Augustus

MACROBE Ambrosius (circa 370/430) Saturnalia

MALALAS Jean (490/578) (Chronographia, Corpus Fontium Historiæ Byzantinæ)

De VORAGINE Jacob La légende dorée 1280
 CALLISTUS Nicephorus, Ecclesiastical History 1350
 THEVET André Cosmographie Universelle 1575
 BARONIUS César (1538/1607) Annales ecclésiastiques
 BEAUVAU Relation journalière du Voyage au Levant 1615
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 MURATORI Louis-Antoine (1662/1750) The canon: (6th century fragment. The original would seem to date from 170/180).
 VOLNEY C-F Voyage en Syrie 1787
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 MOMMSEN Théodore Histoire de la monnaie romaine 1868
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