“Are you considering writing a Gospel?” That is the question posed by Menachem and Elisheva Korn in closing their searching and encouraging letter about *Rabbi Jesus*. As they acknowledge, the proposal might offend conventional opinion (whether Christian or non-Christian), but would enable me to provide “the correct chronology, the correct Jewish religious and cultural context,” while “eliminating anti-Jewish wording and/or passages.”

The idea is attractive, and I would be happy to deal with the controversy that would come my way in producing a new Gospel. In fact, however, another dimension of background work would be necessary in order to complete the task. The framework of Jesus’ development, woven into the events and conditions of his time, was my particular concern in *Rabbi Jesus*. But what about Jesus’ own thinking, as reflected in what he taught? Although *Rabbi Jesus* obvious often quotes Jesus, his theology as a whole is only sporadically reflected there.

When I translated Jesus’ teaching in the book, I did so in terms of his own language, Aramaic, which lies behind the Gospels in Greek. In doing so, I was drawing on a larger, and as yet unpublished project: to render all of Jesus’ teaching that can be shown to have originated in Aramaic back into his original language. As it happens, I have now completed the work for the Gospel according to Mark. Because much of Mark is repeated in Matthew and Luke, and because my Aramaic has improved during the course of this research, I
hope that the remainder of the work will proceed at an even pace.

Rendering Jesus’ teaching back into his original language has proven a pleasure, and it is a task that only recently could have been undertaken. The discovery of Aramaic at Qumran permits us, for the first time in the history of scholarship, to know precisely how Aramaic of the first century differed from more ancient and more modern examples. (Most efforts to put Jesus’ teaching into its original are still based on Syriac, quite a later form of the language.) I am delighted to live at a time when scholarship can accomplish a long awaited task, and when I can be a part of the effort.

Sometimes, even humble linguistic observations add depth to seemingly familiar facts about Jesus’ theology. For example, in Aramaic the term for “my father” is the same as saying “the father,” both being represented by ‘abba’ (in what is known as a determined form of the noun). So when Jesus taught his disciples to pray, it was to a shared ‘abba’, and all the more so because the word in Aramaic means “source,” or “origin,” as well as “father.” I deal with the prayer as a whole, and its Aramaic original, in *Jesus’ Prayer and Jesus’ Eucharist His Personal Practice of Spirituality* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997).

Several of the questions from Menachem and Elisheva Korn turn on the difference between Hebrew and Aramaic,
which would best be dealt with in detail in a published form of the scholarship that I describe. I thank them for their letter. Although I have not answered all of their questions, I hope they will see how the principles I have referred to apply to what they asked. Those principles might give them some hope that perhaps they will indeed see the fruit of my work in the form of a new Gospel.