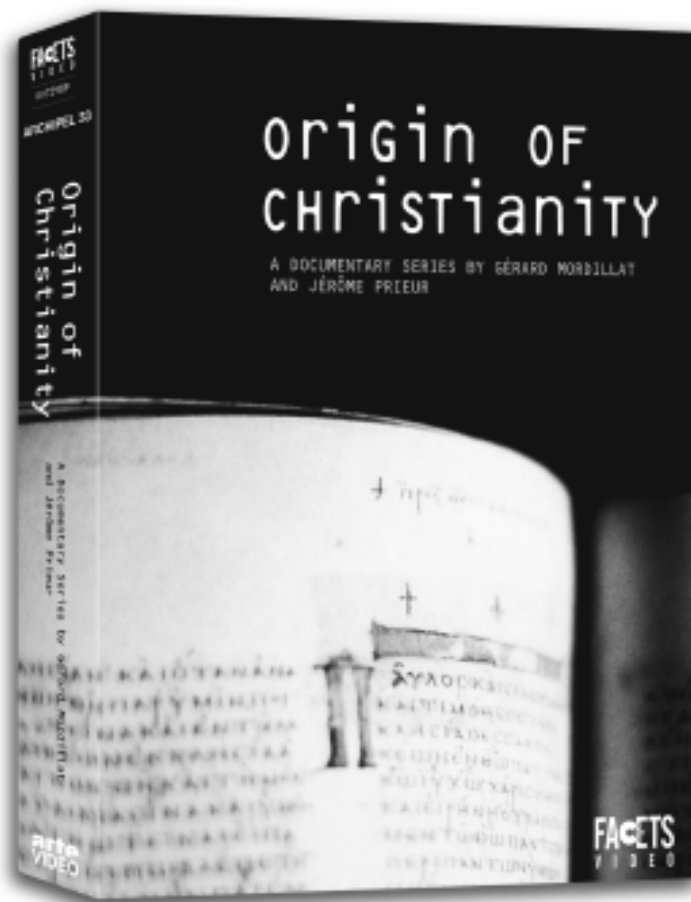


FACTS
VIDEO

Announces the release of:

origin OF CHRISTIANITY

A Documentary Series by Gérard Mordillat and Jérôme Prieur



A Special Edition 4-DVD Set with 10 One-Hour Episodes
Also Includes an Informative Booklet with Historical Information

“...a grand moment in culture.” – BIBLIA

PREBOOK DATE: October 5, 2004 STREET DATE: October 26, 2004

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATELY (8/19/04)

CONTACT: Jill Goldstein
Daniela Markoska
JGoldsteinPR
212-580-4600
screener@jgoldsteinpr.com



Presents

A CONTROVERSIAL INVESTIGATION OF THE

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

4-DVD SET TO BE RELEASED IN U.S.

OCTOBER 26

Chicago, IL – This October, **Facets Video** presents an extensive, 10-hour investigation of the birth of the Christian faith and its development with the DVD release of *Origin of Christianity*. The 4-disc special edition sparked a storm of controversy when it was originally released in France by **Arte Video**. Featured on the covers of national magazines and the subject of intense debate, *Origin of Christianity* quickly became Arte's best-selling DVD title of all time. The program, produced by filmmakers-scholars Gérard Mordillat and Jérôme Prieur, is being released on the heels of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* and Dan Brown's best-selling book *The Da Vinci Code*, which repositioned questions of interpretation of the New Testament as critical issues of our time. *Origin of Christianity* will be available in the U.S. as a 4-DVD set on October 26, 2004, for a suggested retail price of \$99.95.

The DVD set comes with an informative booklet featuring biblical references, a glossary, and historical timeline. The 10 episodes in *Origin of Christianity* are also chapterized by key historical questions for easy access to the material.

Prieur and Mordillat, authors of *Jesus after Jesus* (#5 on the French national bestseller list), spent almost four years assembling research and interviewing 23 of the world's most astute historians,

archeologists, and writers on religion to probe the emergence of Christianity. In their investigation, they demonstrate how the death and crucifixion of Jesus by the Romans set into motion an irreversible division of Jews and Christians. They bring to their lucid discussions state-of-the-art research into the most explosive issues in the Christian world, including: Did Jesus found the Church? Is Jesus God? Did Jesus have siblings? What is the relationship between Judaism and Christianity? And who was the Apostle Paul, and was he the true founder of the Church?

The program has a running time of 520 minutes and contains both English and French language versions. More information on *Origin of Christianity* may be found at www.facets.org/origin.

Arte France, the creators of *Origin of Christianity*, is one of the leading DVD producers and distributors in the world. *Origin of Christianity* is being exclusively distributed in the United States by **Facets Video**. Facets licenses and distributes world and independent cinema on its own video/DVD label and distributes DVD product for other labels including **Cinemateca**, **Accent Cinema**, **Polart**, and **Ron Knight Media**. The over 400 works on the **Facets Video** label include other works produced collaboratively with **Arte** including William Klein's *Muhammad Ali the Greatest*, *Melies the Magician*, a series of DVDs on architecture, and the upcoming DVD version of Peter Brook's *Hamlet*.

###

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

SUMMARY OF THE TEN EPISODES

1. “Jesus After Jesus”

Around the year 30, Jesus was crucified by the Romans in Jerusalem. Three and a half centuries later, Christianity became the official religion of the Empire. This episode explores Jesus as the founder of the Church and the role of Peter.

Talking Points:

- Is Jesus the founder of Christianity?
- What happened after his death?
- What signifies the term “church”?
- Is Peter the successor of Jesus?
- Is Peter the first to see the reincarnated image?
- What determines what the disciples saw when the reincarnated image appeared to them?
- What does the idea of resurrection mean to you?
- How does the New Testament depict Peter?
- Does Peter exert power over a primitive community, or does he play a symbolic role in the system?

2. “James, Jesus’ Brother”

In the first years, why did James, referred to as the “brother of the Lord,” appear to be the veritable successor to Jesus? Did Jesus have brothers? Why do some of the Gospels proclaim the virginity of Mary, Jesus’ mother? This episode discusses Jesus’ family.

Talking Points:

- How do you explain the arrival of Jesus’ family in the first chapters?
- Why do the gospels give this family such a negative image?
- Does Jesus have brothers?
- Which obstacle perpetuates the dogma of Mary’s perpetual virginity?
- How did the Catholic Church try to challenge the gospels’ testimony about Jesus’ brothers?
- Why did James, Jesus’ brother, become the dominant figure of the first community so quickly?
- Is James the true heir to Jesus?

3. “The Kingdom That Doesn’t Come”

Instead of hiding or escaping to Galilee, Jesus’ disciples gathered in Jerusalem. Why did they take such a risk? What did the disciples expect from Jesus while he was living? What was it that they hoped for after their Master’s Death? This episode explores the relationship between Jesus and his disciples.

Talking Points:

- What were Jesus’ disciples waiting for while he was alive?
- What were they waiting for after his death?
- Does Jesus prophesize a kingdom in which the Israelis are liberated from the impious occupation of the Romans?
- Who are the twelve? Why this number?
- Is the Israeli kingdom that Jesus proposes different from what the zealots hope for?
- Does Jesus offer another horizon besides Israel?
- Is the awaited kingdom an earthly or heavenly kingdom?
- How does the death of Jesus force his disciples to reformulate their concept of what they are waiting for?
- Does the second resurrection meet the expectations that had been preconceived by the kingdom?
- Was the spiritualization of the kingdom inevitable?

4. “Family Quarrel”

In Jerusalem, the community became organized while awaiting the End of Time. What conflict tore apart the group and pitted Hebrews against Hellenists? Who was Stephen, the first martyr to die after Jesus? Why did his execution provoke such a decisive rupture inside the movement and instigate its expansion outside the frontiers of Judea? This episode discusses the many questions revolving around the first community and the martyr Stephen.

Talking Points:

- How is the first community organized and why?
- Why does it remain in Jerusalem, and is the community open or closed?
- What are the first disciples waiting for?
- Since the return of the risen Christ has not yet occurred, and there is no actual end to time, how do they organize time?
- Who are the Hellenists? Who are the Hebrews?
- Are there one or two communities in Jerusalem?
- Can one find the true history of the conflict that Luke solved?
- Who is Stephen, and is it possible to draw a parallel between Stephen and Jesus?
- Why are only the Hellenists persecuted?
- How does the Hellenists’ mission to escape Palestine develop?
- Are the Hellenists the first to spread the gospel?

5. “Paul, the Apostate”

According to Acts, Paul participated in the death of Stephen, then in the persecution of the first Christian Jews. Did Paul convert on the road to Damascus? Who was the apostle Paul, the only character in the New Testament to both author a Gospel that carries his name and to figure as the hero of the Book of Acts? Paul is the subject of this important episode.

Talking Points:

- Is Paul the first and only Christian missionary?
- Is the Paul that is described in Acts the same Paul that arises from the biblical letters?
- Does Luke know the biblical letters of Paul?
- How does Luke portray Paul in the Acts?
- How historically reliable are the Acts?
- Is the biography of Paul credible?
- How does Paul portray himself in the biblical letters?
- What event – according to him – melts his authority?
- What does Paul know about Jesus?
- Is it a handicap or advantage for Paul that he did not know Jesus when Jesus was alive?

6. “Council of Jerusalem”

The movement of Jesus’ partisans spread across the Jewish diaspora after the year 40. At Antioch, as elsewhere, a community assembled of Jews, but also of pagans. Were they able to live together? In 49 or 50, an assembly was held in Jerusalem to resolve the crucial question: Must one be Jewish to become a Christian.

Talking Points:

- Did Jesus intend his message for the pagans, or only for Israel?
- Why did Jesus’ disciples decide on their own to open up to the pagans?
- To become Christian, must one first become Jewish, that is to say, circumcised?
- Do the Acts of the Apostles and the biblical letters of Paul inform us in the same manner of the debate raised by this question?
- What is the group that is named the “Jerusalem Council?”
- What is it about Paul’s position that so radically distinguishes it from the positions of James, Peter, and the church members of Jerusalem?
- What covers the division of territories between Paul (towards the pagans) and Peter (towards to Jews)?

7. “Days of Wrath”

In 50 or 51, Paul sent his instructions from Corinth to the Christian community in Thessalonica. This is the most ancient text in the New Testament. Why did Paul denounce Jews as “the enemy of all men?” Is he the instigator of Christian anti-Semitism? Could the apostle have been the author of these sentences? This episode explores these controversial questions.

Talking Points:

- Is Paul’s writing in the New Testament the only writing that Paul has done?
- Considering how the text is older than the New Testament, what do verses 14 and 16 mean in the first writing of Thessaloniciens?
- Who are the Thessaloniciens?
- How do you interpret the accusation against the Jews that they intended to have the Lord Jesus and his prophets killed?
- Why would the Jews be “enemies of all men?”
- Does the “anger” that fell upon the Jews “at the end” refer to the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in the year 70?
- Can one call a passage “anti-Semitic” if it was supposed to have been written by the hand of a Jew (Paul) in the era of the 50’s?
- In this case, would this passage be an interpolation, or an ulterior explanation introduced by a Christian writer?

8. “The Book of Origins”

At the end of the first century, the author of the Gospel according to Luke wrote a second book, the Acts of the Apostles, which recounted the birth of the Christian movement. Is the narrative of Acts an archival document, or is it a heroic epic, revised and edited by a clever theologian? The book of Acts provides the subject for this episode.

Talking Points:

- Does the Acts of the Apostles deliver a historical testimonial or a literary opening?
- What image of the primitive Christian movement does it give?
- What is known about the recipients at the time of his writing and composition?
- According to Luke and Acts, would the gospel form the same original work?
- Was the author of Acts a traveling companion of Paul?
- Why does the character of Paul appear in Acts and only in this book, as though he is a roman citizen?
- What has the book of Acts taught us about the state of the separation between the Jews and Christians at the end of the first century?

9. “Breaking with Judaism”

As the propagandist of faith in Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul passes for the founder of Christianity. Did he betray Jesus? Did he provoke the rupture with Judaism? In the years 50 to 60, did his Epistles resonate as they would later? Learn about Paul’s Epistles in this thoroughly researched episode.

Talking Points:

- Is Paul the founder of the Christian religion?
- Or, was his intention to be a schematic reformer of Judaism?
- What was it about Paul in the 50’s that provided the foundation for the rupture of Judaism?
- How did the figure of Paul take his rise?
- What is the history of the reunion of the circulation of the biblical letters of Paul?
- Why did Paul fail to be annexed by the first Christian heretics?
- Was the heretic Marcion the first editor of Paul?

10. “Verus Israel”

In 70, Jerusalem was captured by the Roman legions. The Temple was destroyed. In 135, the Jewish nation was crushed. What were the consequences of the failure of two Jewish revolts? Why did Judaism proclaim the exclusion of Christians? And why was it that Christians refused to create a separate religion? Why, in the year 150, did Christianity declare itself to be “verus Israel,” or “the real Israel?” Discover the answers to these questions in this all-important final episode.

Talking Points:

- Can one reconstitute a chronology of the decisive stages of the century that ended after the death of Jesus?
- Can we precisely date the rupture between the Christian and Jewish movements?
- Why do we find traces of the Judeo-Christian movement only at the beginnings of Islam?
- Why did the Christian intellectuals cut their bonds with Judaism and forge the concept of “Verus Israel,” the “True Israel?”
- Is Christianity suitable to Jewish heritage?

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

THE FILMMAKERS



For over ten years, filmmakers and writers Gérard Mordillat and Jérôme Prieur have worked together to investigate the earliest Christian texts and the beginnings of Christianity.

Their most acclaimed effort to date has been the *Corpus Christi* series, broadcast by Arte at Easter in 1997 and 1998. In twelve 52-minute episodes, *Corpus Christi* analyzed the six verses of the narrative of the Passion as it appears in the Gospel according to John. Its success and importance were considerable. The series won two consecutive Clio Awards, in addition to the Yedi Friends medal (Jerusalem) and the Golden Rainbow of the Cambridge Historical Film Festival (Great Britain).

While they were making *Corpus Christi*, the idea for a new series came to Mordillat and Prieur, one that would chronicle the beginnings of the Christian religion. After *Corpus Christi* was completed, the pair grew eager to uncover and explore the true story of the origin of Christianity—the era that begins with the death of Jesus and follows through the division of Christianity and Judaism.

The pair began an extremely long, arduous process of research and preparation. In an interview with Facets Video, Jérôme Prieur recalled that it took four years of intense research to gather the information necessary for this thorough, definitive exploration of the New Testament. The pair studied interpretations of ancient texts, read scholarly tracts, attended lectures, and met with experts. Proud of their level of research, Prieur emphasized the sheer volume of information they collected before beginning the process of organizing it into a clear narrative.

Prieur also recalled the difficulties of such an ambitious project. The two were absolutely dedicated to getting it right. “It had to be accurate,” Prieur stated, noting that it was hard because of the diverse interpretations of the ancient sources. Putting together a consistent, accurate version of events was the most difficult part of the project.

But, the pair felt that a series on the origin of Christianity was important for today’s world. In reflecting on why they wanted to make the series, Prieur declared that the topic “is the most relevant for all of us.” With that in mind, he sought to produce a version of the origins of Christianity that was scientific, objective, and thorough but one not grounded in a specific theology or ideology.

For the future, Jérôme Prieur and Gérard Mordillat hope to explore this subject matter further. After collecting so much research and material about the origins of Christianity, the pair realize that they could pursue this topic “into the next century.” As Prieur noted, with only a hint of exaggeration, “It will never be finished.”

Together, Jérôme Prieur and Gérard Mordillat have published:

Corpus Christi. Mille et une Nuits/Arte, 1997-1998.

Jesus Against Jesus. Le Seuil, 1995, and paperback Points no. 800, 2000.

Jesus: Known and Unknown. Desclée du Brouwer, 2001, and Albin Michel, paperback 2004.

Jesus After Jesus. Le Seuil, 2004.

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

FILMOGRAPHY/BIBLIOGRAPHY

G rard MORDILLAT

Films

- The Voice of its Master* – co-directed with Nicolas Philibert (1978)
Owners/Television –co-directed with Nicolas Philibert (1979)
Live the Socialite! (1983) – Prix Jean Vigo
Not Old Bone (TV) (1985)
Billy-ze Kick (1985)
The Cardinal Son (TV) (1986)
The Deserter (1988)
Dear Frangin (1989)
Shakespeare Sonnets (1990)
Always Only (1991)
Beatrix Beck (TV) (1991)
The True History of Artaud le Momo –co-directed with J r me Prieur (1993)
In the Company of Antonin Artuad (1993)
Jacques Prevel, The Color of Hatred –co-directed with J r me Prieur (1993)
Architruc (TV) (1995)
Body of Christ– co-directed with J r me Prieur (1997-98)
Paddy (1999)
The Training of the City (TV) (2000)
Simon the Just (2001)
Origin of Christianity --co-directed with J r me Prieur (2003)

Books

- Live the Socialite!* (1981)
Long Live the Socialite! Re-examined and Corrected (1987)
What Does Walter Think? (1987)
The Five Parts of the World (1984)
Celebrities Poldeves (1984)
The Gravitation (1990)
Zartmo (1994)
Bethany (1996)
Body of Christ, Inquiry of the Gospels--in collaboration with J r me Prieur (1997)
The Return of the Person on Leave (1999)
The Grand Black Mare – The Railway Men in the Adventure of the Century (2000)
Jesus, Famous and Unknown – in collaboration with J r me Prieur (2000)
Jesus Against Jesus (in collaboration with J r me Prieur) (1999)
Vichy Mint (2001)
The Fat Man (2002)
Mrs. Gore (2002) -- Grand Prix of Black Humor

Street of the Drains (2002)
The Rudiments of the World (2003)
Yorick (2003)
How to Calm Mr. Bracke (2003)
It's My Turn (2003)
Jesus After Jesus, under Origin of Christianity (in collaboration with Jérôme Prieur) – March 2004.

Mordillat is the President of the Altermedia Association in Ile-de-France, a group of directors who advise students in cinema studies.

Jérôme PRIEUR

Documentary Films

The True History of Artaud le Momo –co-directed with Gérard Mordillat (1993)
Jacques Prevel, the Color of Hate –co-directed with Gérard Mordillat (1993)
Francois Mauriac –co-directed with Olivier Guiton for “A Century of Writers” (1995)
Léon-Paul Fargue, Memories of a Ghost –“A Century of Writers” (1997)
Body of Christ – co-directed with Gérard Mordillat (1997-98)
Jean Paulhan, The Gift of Ubiquity –“A Century of Writers” (1998)
Proust Alive (2000)
The Forgotten Men in the Valley of Kings (2002)
Deir el-Medineh (2002)
Origin of Christianity –co-directed with Gérard Mordillat (2000)
Appolon's Alarm Clock – 2003/2004 (in progress)
As director of Portraits of Contemporary Writers: L-R des Forets, Henri Thomas, Claude Simon, Maurice Roche, Beatrix Beck, Jean Grosjean, Georges Haldas, Philippe Jaccottet, Georges Borgeaud, Edouard Glissant, Albert Cossery, Jude Stefan, André Frénaud, Jean Starobinski, Michel Butor, etc. (1987 – 2002)

As Scriptwriter

The North Bridge (Jacques Rivette) (1983)
Hotel in the Park (Pierre Beuchot) (1991)
In the Company of Antonin Artaud (Gérard Mordillat) (1993)
Secret Companions (Pierre Beuchot) (1996)
Paddy (1999)
The Training of the Village (2000)

Books

Sleepless Nights, Tests on the Cinema – (1980)
Meeting of Magic Lantern – (1985)
The Nocturnal Spectator – (1993)
In the Company of Antonin Artaud—in collaboration with Gerard Mordillat-- a follow-up to *Poems* (1994)
Jacques Audiberti, The Wall of the Bottom, Writings on the Cinema– in collaboration with Michel Giroud (1996)
Lightning War – (1997)
Jesus Against Jesus – in collaboration with Gérard Mordillat – (1999)
Little Tomb of Marcel Proust – (2000)
Jesus, Famous and Unknown – in collaboration with Gérard Mordillat – (2000)
Ghost Proust – (2001) – Prix Céleste
All the Objects are Sphynx – (2002)

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

THE SCHOLARS

1. **Christian-Bernard Amphoux** is a specialist in the history of the texts and language of the New Testament. He is a researcher at the CNRS.
2. **Pier Franco Beatrice** is a professor at the University of Padua where he teaches the origins of Christianity. He is the author of numerous studies, focusing on the history of theology, the liturgy, and Christian doctrine.
3. **Pierre-Antoine Bernheim** lives and works in London. He is the author of *James, Brother of Jesus* (SCM Press, 1997) and is preparing an essay on Paul.
4. **Francois Bovon** is a professor at the Divinity School of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A specialist on the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, he is the author of *Luke, the Theologian* (Pickwick Publications, 1987), among other works.
5. **Francois Blanchetière** is Professor Emeritus of Human Sciences at the Marc Bloch University, Strasbourg. He has published two important books on Jewish Christianity.
6. **Paula Fredrikson** is a professor in the Religions Department of Boston University and a historian of early Christianity. She has published *From Jesus to Christ* (Yale University Press), *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life*, and *The Emergence of Christianity* (Random House).
7. **Pierre Geoltrain**, a director of studies at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes-Etudes in Paris, specializes in the history of Christian ideas and the origins of Christianity. Together with Francois Bovon, he edited the first global French edition of Christian apocryphal books.
8. **Christian Grappe** is a professor of the New Testament at the School of Protestant Theology at the University of Strasbourg who works primarily on the original Christianity of the Church of Jerusalem and Peter.
9. **Martin Hengel** is Professor Emeritus of the New Testament and Jewish Antiquities at the University of Tübingen. After his classic text *The Zealots* in 1961, his books have been translated into nine languages. His work includes *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (1977) and *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch* (1997).
10. **Moshe David Herr** is a professor of Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the author of several studies about Judaism in the first century.

11. **Simon Legasse** is Professor Emeritus of Biblical Science at the Catholic University of Toulouse who specializes in the trial of Jesus and the letters of Paul.
12. **Jean-Pierre Lemonon** is dean of the theology faculty at the Catholic University of Lyon, specializing in New Testament exegesis and first century history.
13. **Emmanuelle Main** teaches courses on the Mishna of the Talmud in the Department of Jewish People's History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She has published works on Flavius Josephus, Qumran, and the Acts of the Apostles, and she is currently working on her thesis on the Sadducees.
14. **Daniel Marguerat**, the Dean of the Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Lausanne, is the author of several important works about Jesus and the birth of Christianity, including *The First Christian Historian: Writing the "Acts of the Apostles"* (2001).
15. **Etienne Nodet** is a former pupil of the Polytechnique School and a Dominican of the French School of Bible Archeology at Jerusalem. He assumed the translation for *The Commentaries of Flavius Josephus's Jewish Antiquities* for Le Cerf.
16. **Enrico Norelli** teaches at the Faculty of the Free University of Geneva. His publications focus on the apocrypha, the apologists, Marcion, and the exegesis of the ancient Christians.
17. **Serge Ruzer** is a specialist in Judaism of the Second Temple and teaches in the Department of Comparative Religions at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.
18. **Daniel Schwartz** is a professor in the Department of Jewish History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is the author of *Agrippa I: The Last King of Judea* (1990) and *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (1992). He is currently preparing an edition of *Second livre des Macchabees* for which he will also provide the translation.
19. **Graham Stanton**, a professor at the Divinity College of the University of Cambridge (Great Britain), specializes in the New Testament. He has published *Jesus and Gospel* (2004) and is currently investigating the martyr Justin and the first fathers of the church.
20. **Ekkehard W. Stegman**, a professor at the Theological Seminary at the University of Bale, has published mostly in German.
21. **Guy Gedaliahu Stroumsa** founded the Center for the Study of Christianity at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A specialist in Gnosticism, his notable publications include *Secrecy and Concealment* (Brill, 1995) and *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (1996).
22. **David Trobisch**, a professor of the New Testament, is currently teaching at the Theological Seminary of Bangor in Maine, where he is doing work on primitive literature and the history of the Epistles of Paul.
23. **Francois Vouga** is a professor at Kirchliche Hochschule Bethel and is part of the faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Bielefeld, both in Germany. He is a theologian and historian of the first era of Christianity.

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

THE CRITICS

LE MONDE:

“Intelligence as spectacle.”

“With the *Origin of Christianity* [Mordillat and Prieur] take on a century of history beginning in the year 30—the supposed date of Jesus’ death—to the final Jewish revolt in the middle of the 11th century. Their literary materials, which are the Epistles of Saint Paul, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Gospels, are copious but also dubious, embroidered and contradictory....Ten 52-minute episodes about the birth of a religion. What a race and they win it!

While the decision to deconstruct an accepted 2000-year-old tradition may appear surprising it is hard to deny its scientific and pedagogical interest. “The texts,” say Mordillat and Prieur “are our only witnesses and best witnesses. The 27 books of the New Testament are a fantastic legacy. We do not treat these books as history, rather it is through them that we seek history.”

TELERAMA:

“[Mordillat and Prieur bring] the expertise of the most specialized authorities to the screen with a rare intelligence and simply create the most captivating account of historic suspense.”

LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR:

From Gérard Mordillat: “Jesus wrote nothing; he is what others have written about him.”

BIBLIA:

“...a grand moment in culture.”

“...Arte has revived the question of all time: What is it to believe?”

LA VIE:

“Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* and Jérôme Prieur and Gérard Mordillat’s *Origin of Christianity* confirm that the figure of Jesus STILL stimulates the imagination...”

“Arte declares that this documentary is a response to the film by Mel Gibson.”