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# **Christianity Revealed**

## **Judaism and the Jewish Sects**

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**AskWhy! Publications**  
**Frome UK**

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# **Christianity Revealed**

## **The Judaism of Jesus**

**Dr M D Magee**

## Persians and Greeks

We do not have to conjecture about what the early Israelite religion consisted of, and we need not depend upon the tendentious descriptions of the bible. It is described in documents (A E Cowley, Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century BC) from the Jewish colony at Elephantine, an island in the Nile below the First Cataract—now submerged by the Aswan Dam—dated towards the end of the fifth century BC, just at the time the Persians were setting up their temple state in Yehud. The Jews of that colony happily worshipped five deities, including Yah's consort, Anath. The Persians eliminated the Israelites' goddess and their gods, and recognized Yah (or Yao), a god known to the Canaanites, as the patron god of their temple.

Persia was an empire extending in time for 200 years and in space from India to Libya and Turkestan to Ethiopia, and comprising one hundred and twenty-seven provinces. Yet, its influence on the Jewish scriptures is carefully ignored, even in basic ways such as the references to Persia in them:

- Persia (Esth 1:1; Dan 6:1),
- Government of, restricted by law (Esth 8:8; Dan. 6:8-12),
- Municipal governments in, provided with dual governors (Neh 3:9, 12, 16-18),
- The princes, advisory in matters of administration (Dan 6:1-7),
- Status of women in, queen sat on the throne with the king (Neh 2:6),
- Vashti divorced for refusing to appear before the king's courtiers (Esth 1:10-22; 2:4),
- Israel captive in (2 Chr 36:20),
- Captivity foretold (Hos 13:16),
- Men of, in the Tyrian army (Ezek 27:10),
- Rulers of:
  - ✧—Ahasuerus (Xerxes?) (Esth 1:3),
  - ✧—Darius (Dan 5:31; 6; 9:1),
  - ✧—Artaxerxes I (Ezra 4:7-24),
  - ✧—Artaxerxes II (Ezra 7; Neh 2; 5:14),
  - ✧—Cyrus (2 Chr 36:22, 23; Ezra 1; 3:7; 4:3; 5:13, 14, 17; 6:3; Isa 41:2, 3; 44:28; 45:1-4, 13; 46:11; 48:14, 15),
- Princes of (Esth 1:14),
- System of justice (Ezra 7:25),
- Prophecies concerning (Isa 13: 17; 21:1-10; Jer 49:34-39; 51:11-64; Ezek 32:24, 25; 38:5; Dan 2:31-45; 5:28; 7; 8; 11:1-4,)

The Persians sought to convert Yehouah from a tribal deity, who fought for his people and overcame the gods of other nations, into the unique and supreme god of the universe. But they had just got the new god, Yehouah, accepted when their empire collapsed, and faced with Greek gods, some Jews began to reclaim Yehouah as a tribal god.

In Palestine, the Israelites adopted Canaanite or Old Phoenician, otherwise called Hebrew, the language of Abarnahara, although the Jews called it correctly “the language of Canaan”. Aramaic was already the commercial and diplomatic language of the ancient near east in Assyrian times, whence it was often called Assyrian, and also became the administrative language during the Persian period. The Jews therefore used it, and Hebrew became a holy language known only to holy men.

The Hellenistic Age extends from the conquests of Alexander to the defeat of Bar Kosiba. After Alexander’s death, Alexander’s Greek generals had carved out two main kingdoms from his empire, the Ptolemies took Egypt and the Seleucids Syria and the east. The Jews of Palestine were caught up in the rivalry between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms. Palestine itself was a disputed territory, initially in the possession of the Ptolemies before 200 BC but claimed by the Seleucids and held by them until the Maccabean revolution succeeded about 140 BC.

Under these large Greek kingdoms, Asia Minor, Egypt, the Levant, Syria and Mesopotamia all were subject to the Hellenistic world. All Eastern peoples, the Jews included, were a part of this world. “Greek” ceased to be just an ethnic description and became one of culture. Hellenization concerned many different areas of life: language, custom, religion, commerce, architecture, dress, government, literary and philosophical ideals. Only the life of the poor peasant in the Near East did not alter—nor did it much until the nineteenth century. Under the Greeks, they continued to work the land, as they had under the Persians and Assyrians. Only the recipient of their rents and taxes had changed.

International trade was a feature of the Hellenistic world. Even in the Persian period, widely travelled merchants, soldiers and administrators often knew Greek. Trade with the Aegean had already brought Greek influence to the coasts of the Levant before Alexander.

In the century after Alexander’s death, things gradually changed. Everyone above the peasantry imitated the Greeks, attending athletic contests and games. The Greeks built cities that were the focus of a great and rational culture. The conquered populations hastened to learn as much Greek as they could. Aramaic declined in these Hellenistic times to be the dialect of the most ignorant classes.

Alexander’s successors were Greeks who became intent on spreading Greek culture. Pride of place in society was to go to “Greeks”, at first Greek settlers but within a few generations, mixed races and the wealthier conquered people. Alexander had encouraged his men to marry women of the Persian aristocracy. Initially, Greek ideals were preserved in the Greek foundations, with citizenship and membership of the gymnasium the privileges of the Greek settlers. Orientals might live in the Greek cities but they were not citizens.

The Jews learned Greek and changed their Canaanite names for distinctively Greek names. A man named Joshua called himself Jason, by allusion to the famous Argonaut,

and Matthew became Menelaus, in honor of the celebrated husband of Helen. The names of cities were likewise changed. Amorah became Ariopolis, and Akko became Ptolemais. In the temple at Jerusalem, the signs regulating admission to the sanctuary were written in Greek. The Jews continued to enjoy, under Alexander and the Diadochi who succeeded him, the privileges they had been given by the Persians. The Jewish Encyclopaedia admits (sub voce 'Hellenism'):

Alexander... and the first Ptolemies and Seleucids... treated their Jewish subjects with much benevolence.

After Alexander, the language of trade and administration was Greek. Greek became a lingua franca in many parts of the Hellenistic East, as Aramaic had been under the Assyrian, neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid empires. The Ptolemaic and Seleucid kings appointed local officers, who had Greek secretaries. Such favoured natives gave their children a Greek education, and early in the Greek period, educated Orientals spoke Greek, read the classics, dressed as Greeks and were called Greeks. Manetho in Egypt and Berosus in Babylon were writing treatises in Greek in the early part of the 3rd century, and its direct influence on the Jews can be deduced from a variety of sources.

Palestine was an important crossroads in the trade between north and south and between Egypt and Arabia. In the Tobiad romance, Joseph and later his son Hyrcanus (second half of the 3rd century) dealt with the Ptolemaic court on an equal footing (Josephus, Ant 12:4:2-11). They apparently did not need an interpreter, nor were they considered inferior. Long distance merchants will have used Greek for dealing with officialdom and to be understood in different countries, but local trade would be negotiated in Aramaic rather than Greek.

An ostrakon in Aramaic from about the middle of the 3rd century BC already contains two Greek words. Another ostrakon from Khirbet el-Kom in the Idumean area, dated about 275 BC, is a bilingual in both Greek and Aramaic. Yet, only one formal bilingual inscription is known in the whole of Syria—that from Tel Dan about 200 BC. The widespread use of Greek cannot be doubted but to the time of the Maccabees it was confined to the educated upper-class. The number of Jews outside the Greek cities fluent in Greek was probably small, though a greater number must have had a smattering of Greek. A few hundred years later, at the time of Jesus, Greek would have been more common, but the Hasmonaean influence would have polarized society so that some were thoroughly anti-Greek and others favoured it as more modern and progressive.

The Jewish scriptures, originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic, had to be translated into Greek, including books and parts of books that are omitted in most Christian bibles, for the benefit of Jews who could no longer read Aramaic. The Greek translation was the Septuagint, which takes its name from a letter concocted in the name of Aristeas, which claimed that seventy-two learned rabbis independently translated the Jewish scriptures into Greek copies. Yehouah saw to it that the seventy-two independent translations were identical, even to the smallest jot or tittle.

Judaism and Hellenism were not mutually exclusive at first. The Jews of Palestine did not stay aloof from Greek culture. From the middle of the third century BC Judaism was “Hellenistic Judaism”. Under the Assyrians, the Persians and then the Greeks, the Jews had shown themselves loyal supporters of the colonial rulers. Though some Jews came to rebel against the Seleucid Greeks, they had previously shown no strong resistance to Hellenistic culture, and after a few generations of Greek occupation, it is a moot point whether many could clearly distinguish between what was Greek and what was Jewish.

The Greeks were good administrators and Ptolemaic and later Seleucid officialdom reached to the lowest levels of Jewish society. Every village was supervised by the Greek administration and had its officials seeing that taxes were paid. Although Aramaic speakers were delegated as supervisors at the lower levels, Greeks and Greek-speaking natives were preferred, especially at the higher levels.

Greek education had its influence on Jews and Jewish education. Greek influence on Jewish literature is documented as early as Alexander’s conquest and can be illustrated from literature in Hebrew and Aramaic as well as those works composed directly in Greek. Evidence of the influence of Greek philosophy occurs in such Jewish circles as Qumran and writings such as 1 Enoch.

Against this, critics say that almost no information about education in Judaea at this time exists much less education in Greek, and Greek influence on literature in Hebrew and Aramaic is less clear than it plainly is in Greek writing. Apparent Greek parallels and influence cannot be shown not to be from other possible sources. Some Jews had a reasonable knowledge of Greek and many more had a smattering, but the actual number of Jews who could be considered to have spoken Greek in Palestine was probably not many—the evidence is not conclusive for a pervasive use of Greek throughout Jewish society in Palestine.

Was Galilee bilingual? Evidently not, if it means that Greek was widely used everywhere. Martin Hengel thinks that because it was completely encircled by Hellenized cities, it will have been largely bilingual. But, others find almost no evidence of Greek in Upper Galilee. Doubtless Greek had its place in Galilee but was not dominant. Aramaic was the colloquial language, as it was in most of the Near East. Royal inscriptions and many other sorts of documents were issued in Greek, but no law imposed it as the sole language of administration.

## Hellenization

Critics say there is not much evidence of Hellenization before 175 BC in Palestine and in the Diaspora. Hellenization took longer than historians have allowed and only reached the lowest levels of Jewish society under the Romans. Fergus Millar concludes that “the evidence shows how un-Greek in structure, customs, observance, literary culture, language and historical outlook the Jewish community had remained down to the earlier second century, and how basic to it the rules imposed by Ezra and Nehemiah had remained”. Millar however regards a Hellenized Jew as not being Jewish and uses extreme interpretations such as that the Qumranites were not Essenes. For Millar, Jews would not attend the amphitheaters, gymnasia and sports stadia set up by the Greeks and Hellenized rulers like Herod.

The Hellenized countries were neither purely Greek nor purely Oriental. Some Orientals, including Jews, might be more Hellenized than others. The changes in Near Eastern culture instituted by the conquests of Alexander had not reached an equilibrium—the process was still evolving. Some places were strongly Greek, some remained strongly Oriental, and others were mixtures of various degrees. Anyone could be said to be “Hellenized” if they accepted some Greek ideals and customs.

Jews had kept intact aspects of their own culture while progressively adopting the Greek culture. Hellenized Jews began saying that sons of Abraham had been companions of Hercules, and descendants of Isaac had sailed with the Argonauts. Later, they identified Moses with Musaeus, the mythical son of Orpheus, who putatively lived long before Homer, wrote didactic verse and hymns, and, being a divinely gifted seer, like Tiresias, left a collection of oracular utterances. The link is not as absurd as it first looks since the name Orpheus might itself be a version of Ahuramazda, and have meant originally the same thing, “Shining Lord”.

There were educated and enlightened Jews who saw that they had to jettison the Persian cult, and to adopt at least the trappings of Greek civilization. That is what incensed the Maccabees. The process of Hellenization by adoption had reached the stage where strongly traditional Jews felt threatened. The reactions against Hellenization were complex and diverse, but the Jews were by no means the only people to fight it. Anti-Hellenism spread among Near Eastern peoples, including armed rebellion. The Maccabees were unusual in succeeding.

The Seleucid kings were not as oppressive as Maccabaeen propaganda makes out. Were the Syrian Greeks worse than the Ptolemies? Although Egypt is famous for its finds of papyri in Greek, as much material was produced in Demotic in this period. Much of the work of the bureaucracy was bilingual. The Egyptian literary tradition flourished, and Demotic documents recorded bureaucratic and legal activity. Business and everyday transactions were still effected in the Egyptian language by Egyptians at all levels of society.



If Greek was imposed in Syria as the official language of the conquered territories and, for example, slave sale documents were issued only in Greek after 275 BC, the Seleucid kings made little attempt to enforce the law and the Greek Syrian kingdom continued to allow local languages to be used in official documents.

A Jew named Jesus, who had adopted the Greek name, Jason, became the high priest in Jerusalem, about 173 BC, representing those who wanted to introduce Greek culture. He cleared an area in the city and founded a gymnasium, a Greek institution that served both for athletics, which Jews abominated, and as an open club in which educated men could meet for intelligent, and often philosophical discussion, and where books were kept for consultation. The author of 2 Maccabees opposed the Hellenizing faction.

The main concern for Jews was the extent to which the adoption of some Greek culture implied religious apostasy. The propagandists for the Maccabees depicted the crisis in Judaea not as one of Hellenizing but one of religious suppression. In this sense, it is possible to speak of a clear distinction between the Hellenized Jews and the traditional ones. The Jewish state successfully gained independence when anti-Hellenizing—Judaizing—Jews, helped by the Hellenized Romans through their Hellenized Egyptian allies, rebelled against their Hellenized rulers. The Romans were simply fomenting dissension to undermine the declining Greek state. A few years later they annexed it.

Anti-Greek reaction stimulated the writing of literary propaganda against the Greeks. In Egypt, prophecies of the overthrow of Greek rule were made, including the Oracle of Bocchoris or the Lamb, the Potter's Oracle, and the Demotic Chronicle. From Persia came the Oracle of Hystaspes. The Jews produced fake Sibylline Oracles, the Book of Daniel and rewrote the scriptures emphasising foreign influences in which the Greeks were disguised as Canaanites and Philistines. This literature itself was a way of kindling hope and venting frustration. It served to inspire the native peoples to active resistance and revolt and fed the apocalyptic religious mood.

Martin Hengel says talk of Judaism versus Hellenism or of Palestinian versus Hellenistic Judaism is wrong because it reduces a complex society to black and white, and treats a process as if it were static. The criticism doubtless has some truth, but depends on when and what is being referred to. Hellenization was a process, but the stories of the Maccabees and the gospels show that Jews themselves saw themselves as divided into Greeks and Hebrews. It is therefore perfectly valid to use Hellenization to represent this split. Hellenized Jews were therefore "Greeks" and those who resisted Hellenization in favour of traditional ways were "Hebrews". Some scholars complain about this, as though historians who make these distinctions are somehow anti-Semitic.

Lester L Grabbe of the University of Hull, England, says in *Ioudaios*:

The stark dichotomy of "Hellenizers" and "Judaizers" of 1 Maccabees has been used too simplistically and thus has caused gross distortion. It assumes a narrow, prejudicial definition of what it means to be a loyal Jew with no allowance made for those of a

different opinion. It is as if, to take a modern analogy, the only form of Judaism allowed to be “Jewish” were Orthodox Judaism. This may indeed be the view of some Orthodox Jews, but it is hardly the perspective of Conservative, Reform, Liberal, Karaite, Falasha, and other forms of Judaism. It is not the job of the historian to take sides or adopt the denominational prejudice of the sources.

While we can accept the point that matters are never distinctly black or white, Grabbe is effectively saying that historians should ignore their sources in favour of the enlightened ideas of today. Warfare, and particularly civil war, polarizes opinion, and the sources, even if they seem opposite extremes have to be respected unless we have other reasons to think they are propaganda. That is how the historian finds out why history happened. Other scholars tell us we must learn how to think like the people of old, but Grabbe seems to think they should think like him.

If Hellenism was a culture and Judaism a religion (in itself a questionable assertion), many aspects of Hellenism were not only irrelevant to the Jewish religion, but could be beneficial to Jews whether in religion or society at large. A Jewish philosopher, Aristobulus, in c 150 BC, claimed that the philosophy of Aristotle and the whole of Greek culture was derived from the scriptures!

But the historian wants to know what motivated the Jews in the 300 years from the Maccabaeen rebellion through the events of the gospels to the rebellion of bar Kosiba. The main motivation they had was that many Jews saw Hellenization as pollution! They seemed still to think in the Persian mode of good and evil creations, and the traditional Persian religion was naturally the good one. We can disapprove of such a position, but we cannot ignore it on the grounds that “it is hardly the perspective of Conservative, Reform, Liberal, Karaite, Falasha, and other forms of Judaism”.

## The Maccabees

In 171 BC, Jason was succeeded as high priest by a man whose name “after” was Menelaus. Josephus says that he was Onias, the brother of Onias, showing that these were not blood brothers but members of a brotherhood. These were Essenes or their precursors.

Menelaus was depicted as a wicked Jew. He became the instrument of the Pagan king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who allegedly persecuted the Jews and suppressed worship of Yehouah. It is absurd. The Seleucids were descendants of one of Alexander’s generals and were cultivated men with the same ambition as Alexander. They wanted Greek as the dominant civilization of their multi-racial subjects, but knew it could be achieved only by peace and good sense. Antiochus particularly wanted peace in Judaea, where normal communications along the major trade routes were made difficult by Jews perpetually rioting and using religious pretexts to justify a perpetual succession of petty but destructive civil wars. Antiochus had ambitions against Egypt which also required security in the rear.

Menelaus was a cultivated and highly intelligent Jew who saw that the future was with Greek culture, and that modernization meant the Jews had to change their Persian religion. That attitude won him the sympathy of Antiochus and a measure of support that was soon greatly increased. Menelaus offered Antiochus a large sum of money, which was doubtless welcome to finance his armies.

Antiochus was at war with Ptolemaic Egypt, and invaded that country. In 168 BC, a rumour reached Palestine that Antiochus had been defeated and killed. Menelaus was expelled by Jason and his faction, who had been engaged in treasonable intrigues with the Egyptians, in preparation for an Egyptian occupation of Jerusalem.

What had really happened was that Antiochus had won what should have been a decisive victory, but had been prevented from following it up by the intervention of an envoy from the Roman Senate, Popillius Laenas, who, in effect, made Egypt a Roman protectorate. As soon as the truth was known, Jason fled and Menelaus was restored to his priestly dignity. Both Hellenizers had large popular followings.

The net effect of this was to make Antiochus, who had been humiliated by the Romans and prevented from ending the menace to his kingdom from Egypt, willing to use his army to support Menelaus, who, officially the high priest of the Jews, proceeded to abolish all the innumerable and vulgar regulations of the law, the superstition about the sabbath, and circumcision. Menelaus was undoubtedly supported by a sizeable minority of educated Jews, many of whom engaged surgeons to uncircumcize them, the operation hitherto being nothing more than a nick in the foreskin.

A member of the family of Hasmonaeus murdered a priest who was about to perform a sacrifice in accordance with the new rule, and fled to the wilderness, where he organized gangs of bandits who flourished by raiding towns, slaying wealthy educated Jews, and grabbing their property. They won the support of the Aramaic speaking classes. Antiochus's governor, Lysias, underestimated the difficulty and made ineffectual attempts to suppress them, which Jewish writers magnified into great victories for Yehouah's resistance. These Hasmonaeans, now more commonly known as Maccabees from the epithet given them, derived from an Aramaic word meaning "hammer", were terrorists.

Antiochus was now prepared to give Menelaus full support, and would have prevailed against the Maccabees, despite their Roman support, with his army still organized with Macedonian tactics and discipline. But he had to protect his eastern borders against the Parthians, and died, either poisoned or from a chronic fever at Gabae in Afghanistan.

Lysias, Antiochus's governor of Syria, compromised and gave the terrorists an amnesty. The Hasmonaeans were admitted to the city and the traditional rites of Yehouah restored. The Hasmonaeans used their new position for aggression on the Hellenizing faction everywhere. Lysias saw his error and acted. He mobilized his army, occupied Jerusalem and other cities, and restored order. Lurid accounts of the thousands and thousands of martyrs slain by the Greeks were published, but the Jewish rebels were again saved.

Antiochus's heir was a boy of ten, who had been left in the care of Lysias, but Antiochus, shortly before his death, discontented with Lysias's blundering, named one of his friends, Philip, the regent for the boy and governor of Syria. The boy's uncle, Demetrius, also claimed the throne with Roman support, thus initiating a series of civil wars that weakened the Seleucid Empire and led to its downfall, as the Romans had planned. The news of Philip's advent reached Lysias in Jerusalem and, in a panic, he negotiated another compromise with the Hasmonaeans, sacrificing even Menelaus.

The Hasmonaeans profited from the weakening of the Seleucid Empire to make their country independent, ruled Judaea, and occupied themselves with wars of aggression against their neighbours to increase the territory under their rule. Yet they soon proved that they too were Hellenizing opportunists, and assumed Greek names, from Hyrcanus and Aristobulus to the last of the line, Antiochus. They soon offended the puritans, the Hasidim, who split into Pharisees and Essenes. The Hellenizing Sadducees, accepted the five Mosaic books only, and were granted the priesthood. The Essenes withdrew to the desert in disgust. Surviving Hellenizers either escaped from Judaea or became Sadducees.

We do not need to be told that all Jews were not opposed to all aspects of Hellenistic culture. The various Jewish revolutions were obviously not supported unquestioningly by all Jews, but the ones who did not give unquestioning support would have been classified by the Hebrews as "Greeks".

The “anti-Greek” forces which followed on the Maccabean crisis did not try to erase the Greek influence of the previous century and a half, and Jewish Palestine even as it gained independence under the Hasmoneans remained a part of the Hellenistic world. Even gaining independence from Greek rule did not necessarily mean the overthrow of Hellenistic culture or the rooting out of all Greek elements or influences.

The Maccabees and their supporters supposedly reacted against the colonial powers because of oppression, yet retained much of the foreign culture that had become their normal way of life. The Hasmonean state threw off the Seleucid yoke but did not eliminate Greek culture from Judaea. Judaea under Hasmonean rule was typical of Hellenistic kingdoms. Indeed the Maccabees caused distress to their supporters by openly allying with Rome and refusing to turn the priesthood over to the Zadokites.

Philo Judaeus (c 20 BC-c 50 AD) was a well-educated and learned man, versed in Greek literature and philosophy, a model of a Hellenized Jew, those he described as the *Letzim*. He knew only the Septuagint. Wherever Philo wrote Jesus, the name is dishonestly changed to Joshua, to prevent Christian sheep from wondering about their Old Testament. Philo admits that the tale in the Old Testament about an armed conquest of Palestine led by Jesus or Joshua is preposterous.

Philo affirmed that the Divine Plan arranges the rise and fall of nations “to the end that the whole of our world should be as a single state, enjoying that best of constitutions, democracy”.

Truth is something that can and must be objectively determined—the opposite of lying, facts not fancies, reality not illusion. Truth for Philo is not what is, but what ought to be—it is what Yehouah commanded in the scriptures. It is the Jewish religion, as he understands it, after revising it with allegorical interpretations. It is faith and therefore irrational—the “truth of unreason”, as Bertrand Russell described faith in religions. Rational and objective truth is the antithesis of faith. The Jewish scriptures are fictions about a monstrous God giving human wimps the third degree, alternately bullying them into fear, then comforting them with love—scaring then soothing cissies unable to face the real world.

Philo was not interested in truth as the Greeks and all rational men conceive it. Philo tried to equate his religion to Stoicism, but no Stoic would ever have countenanced his faith in the “truth of unreason”. Philo even adapted to his religion the famous Stoic paradox that the vast majority of men are slaves, since they are enslaved by their desire for such things as pleasure, wealth, or glory, and that only a wise man (the Stoic sage) is free, because, even if he is in chains and being tortured, he retains command of his own mind and his moral integrity. Philo substitutes righteousness for Stoic wisdom.

Judaism in the first century was not a unified set of doctrines, but included many groups of Jews who were heretics according to the standards of the others. The real centre of Jewish power was not in Alexandria or Judaea, but still in Babylon, reflecting the invention of Judaism by the Persians. The wealthy Jews of Babylon in the fifth

century BC had never thought of emigrating to Judaea, and their opulent descendants later continued to flourish in the city. Except for a brief time, Babylon was outside the borders of the Graeco-Roman world, increasingly centered in Rome.

With the fall of the Persian empire, the Zoroastrian Magi had spallated. By the first century BC and the following century, Egypt, Palestine, and adjacent parts of the Near East swarmed with itinerant mountebanks who practiced thaumaturgy, performing tricks of magic to make the yokels gawk and part with their money. They evolved a variety of speculations from the original Zoroastrianism, fusing with Greek and Jewish ideas but retaining a redeeming figure—the original Saoshyant.

They would validate his existence with “prophecies” culled from the sacred writings of the Jews, and they would promise to open the temples of holiness to everyone, including the unholy—thereby providing the masses with a broader-based creed than any existing in western Asia. They were in the salvation-business and promised some sort of posthumous happiness to generous contributors in the name of whatever deities the given set of dupes venerated. The more talented ones often succeeded in setting themselves up in a first-class business with numerous adherents. Many were Jews.

Jews were scattered throughout the ancient world long before 70 AD. The Hellenized aliens from the East spoke Greek and were the Graeculi of Cicero’s sarcasms and Juvenal’s satires. In 179 BC, P Cornelius Scipio Hispalus, the Urban Praetor, tried to expel Jews from Rome, who had not become Roman citizens, because of their numbers and because they were a bad influence—they were Syrians and Levantines—Canaanites in short—who could have been expected to favour the Carthaginians in the Punic wars. After his year of office, the decree was revoked. In Cicero’s time, Jews in Rome were taking advantage of economic crises and were influential enough to campaign effectively against provincial governors who tried to take action against them. They favoured Julius Caesar, whose revolution destroyed the Republic, but who had given the Jews privileges, and bewailed his death as a calamity. Strabo, writing in c 35 BC, stated that by 87 BC, the habitable world—the œcumene—was “full of Jews” who had “penetrated every city” and become so ubiquitous that:

“It is hard to find a place in the œcumene that has not admitted this tribe of men and has not been possessed by them.”

He also noted that they had privileges and were allowed to function as an enclave largely independent of the local government. Josephus in *Antiquities* was proud of the universal success of his fellow Jews.

By the time of the events of the gospels, some Jews welcomed the Roman invaders and others resented them. Collaborators in Judaea were called “publicans and sinners”, Hellenized apostates were called “Greeks” and pious Jews were called “Hebrews”, though all were Jews.

Were the “Hebrews” correct to regard all Hellenized Jews as apostates? Again, “Hellenized Jews” means here the ones that the traditional Jews opposed, and that is what is important for understanding the Jewish rebellions. Many of the militant Jews had Greek names, so were already participants in one aspect of Hellenization, but they were concerned that, if it went too far, even the remnant might disappear. The militants were themselves diverse, including the Hasidim, the Maccabees, the partisans of Onias, the Essenes, the Galilaeans and, evidently, the Nazarenes.

Hellenizers were doubtless equally diverse and certainly included the Sadducees and Herodians. Philo of Alexandria was a Hellenized Jew that considered himself to be doing the world a service by uniting Greek and Jewish cultures. The Jason who became high priest (2 Macc 4:13); considered himself a full and faithful Jew, but obtained permission for Jerusalem to become a Greek foundation. Grabbe says that because “some Jews may have judged him an apostate is irrelevant to the question of his own self designation or Jewish identity”. Too true, but the relevant point is that Jason was thought by his opponents to have been an apostate and evidently the Sadducees that followed him were all thought of in the same way, even though they were administering the temple! It was the cause of the war as far as the Maccabees were concerned.

## Christians

What is more to the point, by the time of the gospel events, is to what extent were Hellenized Jews considered as apostates by the “Hebrews?” Grabbe insists that “in accommodating to Hellenistic culture the Jews always maintained one area which could not be compromised without affecting their Judaism, that of religion”, yet, if Hellenization is a process, it must have at one extreme the purely Greek culture, religion and all. Palestinian Jews must have had good reason for concern when they saw their temple taken over by Greeks. It was only a question of time before Yehouah became Zeus, and surely that is the point about the “Abomination of Desolation”. It is simplistic to say that “Jews were unique and did not lose their identity”. The early success of Christianity was surely precisely because it appealed to those Hellenized Jews that were crossing the boundary from Judaism.

Jews seemed only to mix with gentiles for commercial reasons and even these were restricted by the purity laws. The pious Jew could not dine at the table of a gentile or receive a gentile as a dinner guest. They were not allowed to visit the theatre, the circus, the gymnasium or even to read a non-Jewish book, except at twilight, when it was obviously not easy to do. As the Persian administrators, like Ezra, following the Persian precedent had prescribed, mixed marriages were forbidden and were severely penalized. They sound so strict as to have been Essenes rather than typical Jews, and it is true that we know the Essenes had strict rules for managing the relations between their members and gentiles.

Diaspora Jews lived apart, in separate quarters grouped around their synagogues. The synagogue is described by Philo as a great centre of religious teaching, and there were many of them in Egypt. What is remarkable, and never commented on by Christian or Jewish commentators, is that Philo, writing about the Essenes, refers to a “sacred spot” called a “synagogue” that he describes as “their name” for “their institution!” For the prayer houses of the Therapeutae Philo uses the word “semneion” and in other cases, words like “proseuche” were used, but—muddying the water as ever—Christian and Jewish translators have rendered this quite different word also as “synagogue”. If we are to believe Philo, then, the synagogue was not any place where Jews met, but a place organized by Essenes for Jews to meet.

If, “Jews alone in the Greco-Roman world refused honor to gods, shrines, and cults other than their own”, they were only a subset of Jews—the Jews who refused to be Hellenized in matters of religion because they had simple but specific rules against it and overseers to impose them. Grabbe says the majority would not cross the final barrier from Judaism and says we know only a handful of examples from antiquity in which Jews abandoned their Judaism. Can he tell us how many examples we should expect? And what of the chances that Jewish congregations absorbed Hellenization?



Archaeological excavations have shown that opulent synagogues in Asia outside Judaea took their orthodoxy lightly, ignoring even the injunction about not worshipping other deities before Yehouah. If Greek gods were not worshipped in those synagogues, and there is at least one example of a prayer to Helios, composed in Greek but written in the Hebrew alphabet, they were at least sufficiently venerated to be given iconic representation. Everyone was astonished when the excavations at Dura-Europos reached the remains of a monumental third century AD synagogue in which at least two Greek deities were portrayed on the walls.

More recently and more astonishingly, a synagogue built, regardless of cost, in the fourth century AD at Tiberias, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and hence in Judaea itself, had a finely-wrought central mosaic, in which Helios is encircled by the zodiac, with its constellations represented by the customary figures. Three of the four corners of the mosaic are preserved. In one corner is the head of a woman wearing a radiant crown, a goddess, holding a sickle. In the opposite corner a maiden with the white headdress of a virgin is pouring water from an ewer. In the third corner, a woman, perhaps garlanded, seems to be holding up a bowl of some fruit. Each figure is identified by a word in an alphabet similar to Hebrew.

Undoubtedly proselytizing went on in synagogues, but there is no suggestion that Essenes refused to accept non-Jews, despite their exclusivity. Synagogues attracted god-fearers, and, if potential converts agreed to accept the law and the Essenic special rules, then they were admitted to the order. One of the four castes of the Essenes was that of proselyte. This admits of the possibility of diaspora synagogues melting into a Hellenistic form of Judaism. Surely that is what we read in the letters of Paul and is the way Christianity began.

Millions of diaspora Jews eventually abandoned their old religion to fit into the Roman world. Many of them were called Christians. Because they had been caught up in the process of Hellenization and had gone beyond the point of return, they can have thought of it as no big deal. It would have seemed as natural, banal and unnoteworthy as abandoning Christianity has been to the 90 per cent of secular Britons and many Americans today.

## Bultmann

Professor Rudolf Bultmann of Marburg is a notable Christian scholar who established “form criticism” as a way of understanding the New Testament documents. He also wrote a well known essay called *The New Testament and Mythology* which Christians of a different kind from Bultmann reject along with their own brains as the work of Satan. In another notable book, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting* (1956), Bultmann tried to do what most Baptists and Fundamentalists would also consider as Satanic—to put Christianity into the real world in which it developed, not a fantasy world of saintly rabbinic apostles, but one in which the Jewish and Greek cultures were in conflict, sectarianism was rife and Gnosticism was to be a major influence and a rival of Christianity.

Unlike the dishonest evangelicals of today, Bultmann had no doubt that social phenomena were influenced by the society in which they arose, and considered it almost axiomatic that Christianity was influenced by Hellenism from the outset. Since the Judaism from which it branched was itself already influenced by Hellenism, it is hardly surprising, though many modern Christians, wanting to see God acting linearly through the history of the Jews alone, for fear of admitting any Pagan influence on their fetish, deny any contemporary influences on Christianity except some idealized form of Judaism.

Bultmann not only accepts the influence of Paganism but, unlike the puerile view of most Christians that Paganism was only an excuse for sexual orgies, Bultmann recognized Paganism as itself immensely complex. Within the milieu of Judaism, Hellenistic Magic and Eastern Mysteries, Christianity arose as a movement which accepted certain outlooks as basic while being critical of others, and in addressing questions which other religions inevitably were addressing at the same time, found itself in rivalry with those that also gave answers to these questions.

Bultmann is clear that Christianity was not an inevitable consequence of contemporary events, and that scholars had to study these contemporary phenomena objectively to seek what Christianity had in common with its rivals, if its differences from them were to be appreciated. Bultmann saw with the utmost clarity that Christian scholars had no business trying to prove that Christianity was true, or that it was a natural pinnacle of religious understanding through its superiority over other religions. Christian theologians, not Christian historians had that job. The historians had to describe what they had discovered to clarify the issues, and seek to understand human existence through history, and show its relevance to the present situation.

Historians present evidence as honestly as possible, and try to show how the people of the time saw things. Rarely will that be how modern people see them, especially in religion, but modern people will make up their own mind what they believe whether it is based on an earnest attempt to understand what happened, or on some deep seated

emotional need. The outcomes rarely coincide.

Bultmann rejects the idea that the Jewish scriptures have any pseudo-scientific speculation about the origin of the cosmos. The first chapters of Genesis depict God as the Creator to show that the universe is His, not to explain it. The idea of a creation by an act of God is itself another act of faith. Believers in God will believe in Creation because it justifies their belief in God acting in the world. Life is owed to God in this faith, and humanity therefore owes God obedience. It follows that those who try to uphold Creation as scientific,

- are being stupid, and,
- are trying to justify their faith, the opposite of the intention.

Nor was there only one god. Bultmann points out what is obvious to everyone except the average Christian from a reading of the scriptures—different people had their own gods which the scriptures did not deny but treated as irrelevant to the Jews whose own god was Yehouah! Though Bultmann did not realize it, the Persians conditioned the Jews to think of Jehouah as a universal god, and this universalism shines through many of the prophetic writings, but when Judaea became an independent country under the Maccabees, Yehouah was proclaimed the Jewish national god—the universal god still but also the special god of the people he had chosen. These people called Him “Lord”, just as other people in the Ancient Near East called their god, “Lord”. Each of these people had a “Lord” who was exclusively their own. And for each of them, their own “Lord” was the “one true god”.

The Persian God was transcendent before the Jewish one, but he had also created all that was good and therefore harmonious—what the Greeks called the cosmos. The Greek mind saw the harmony as important and realized that what was harmonious could be worked out and understood. The Jews had no interest in the harmony of God’s creation, only the awe of it. God was awesome. The prime meaning of “awe” is “fear”!

Both “harmony” and “awe” are natural phenomena. They are aspects of Nature. A god creating and controlling Nature is an unnecessary male construct, a male vanity preserved only by male propaganda, possible because males exclusively controlled patriarchal religions.

In fact, the Jewish concept of God eschewed any rationality in God’s Creation, emphasizing only its awe. The reason was that the Persians imposed the Jewish notion of God because they wanted their subject people to be intimidated. The Greeks, however, although they took their cues from the Persian cosmogony, did it independently, free to develop their ideas as they wished. This struggle between freedom and coercion has been central to western religion, and from it, politics, ever since. Rarely has institutional Christianity been on the side of freedom.

So, the doctrine of Creation expressed humanity's utter dependence on God and therefore His holy institutions on earth. The original one was the Persian Shahanshah—king of kings—God's earthly regent and the original messiah of the Jews. After the collapse of the Persian empire, priests and parsons were free to assign the power of God to whoever they favoured—that is whoever favoured them.

“Woe unto him that striveth with his maker... Shall the clay say to Him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?” (Isaiah 45:9)

Whatever God did was not to be questioned by a lump of animated clay. This is the diametric opposite of the Greek sense of inquiry, but it is the very attitude of modern Christians.

“Will ye command me regarding the work of my hands? I have made the earth and created man upon it. I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens and all their host have I commanded.” (Isaiah 45:12)

This is demonstrably a paraphrase of passages in Zoroaster's Gathas. Bultmann recognizes that the Canaanite Yehouah was not a god of the world but, became one under the influence of the prophets. Perhaps he suspected that the prophets had been anachronistically set in the time of the Assyrians, when they were really from the time of their cultural protégés, the Persians.

The Persians introduced the notion of linear history—a journey in time from Creation to Eschaton. Earlier religions had seen history as an annual cycle, gods and goddesses being originally vegetation and fertility principles, participating in an annual drama of renewal or revivification. Zoroaster first expressed the idea of history as a way of distinguishing good and bad, so that the righteous could feel justified in their righteousness and the wicked, however successful in life, could be condemned to an ultimate judgement or punishment. History was therefore the theatre of the battle of Good and Evil, and required everyone to play a part on one side or the other. Good would ultimately triumph but only by good people playing a greater part than wicked people. There was no point in studying history. Acting in it was all that was important to the future outcome.

What happened in the Jewish scriptures is that God was elevated even above the height He occupied in Zoroastrianism. The war of Good and Evil was played down and Evil attributed to God's punishment. This change was surely effected even in Persian times. The vassals of the Persians were being depicted as being punished for their disobedience by the Good God. God had to struggle to achieve His own purpose contrary to the rebellions of His own people. They had to realize they were being punished for what they did—to face their responsibilities for the future and act accordingly. Thus they were intimidated into doing what the ruling power wanted.

Bultmann knows the truth, or gets remarkably close to it:

“The writing of history was the direct outcome of historical experience—with the Greeks, their wars of liberation against the Persians, in Israel, the victorious struggle against the Philistines and the conquest of the cities of Canaan.”

Bultmann notes that both began with an interest in myth and folklore but only the Greeks evolved into the scientific study of history. Now we know that the Israelites did not conquer Canaan, and the Philistines settled or were allowed to settle by the Egyptians on the coast of Palestine and assimilated mainly peacefully with the native Semitic speaking population. The truth in the conquest myth is that it was an allegory of the settlement of Yehud by the Persian colonists in the fifth century. The Philistines and Canaanites were names given to those who opposed the Persian colonists.

The Persians were the instigators of the evolution of both cultures, directly in the case of the Jews and indirectly in the case of the Greeks. The direct influence on the Jews put God at the source of history, but for the Greeks it was the response of the people to the situations they met in the world. Both interpretations looked to the future, but the Jewish one was eschatological, God’s judgement, whereas the Greek one was didactic, to teach the practical consequences of failure of duty.

The Jewish god was invisible but could be heard. Hearing was more important than seeing, but the Jewish god was not only invisible, He could not be known. God put words into people’s ears to tell them what to do. In modern society such people would be cracking up! But in Jewish mythology such words were the “Word of God” and the only way He could be known. To know God was therefore to know His will not to know His nature. Many prophets, ancient and modern have claimed to know God’s will, and it is astonishing how easily people believe them. It has been a cause of perpetual trouble in the world.

Truth is not, in the Judaeo-Christian scheme, anything that can be proved to be true, anything that can be verified in the real world and therefore be real itself. Truth is the will of God. And who knows the will of God? Those, mainly men, who can hear God talking to them! Bultmann comes close to admitting that Patriarchal religions are the religions of the insane, yet billions of people put their trusts in one or another Patriarchal prophets. The reason they do is that the prophets inculcate in their followers a profound fear of God. For those who believe in the scriptural God, wisdom is not knowledge, experience or sagacity. It is “fear of God”.

“The fear of Yehouah is the beginning of wisdom but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Prov 1:7)

“The fear of Yehouah is the instruction of wisdom.” (Prov 15:33)

The prophet Isaiah tells the Israelites that they should fear and dread Yehouah Sebaoth (Isa 8:13), this being the Persian name of Yehouah—Yehouah of hosts. It was a natural emotion to give to subject people to keep them in order. This fear of God stems from

Deuteronomy which, far from being the second law, is the original law given to the Jews by Ezra, the Persian official:

“Ye shall walk after Yehouah Elohim, and fear Him and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and ye shall serve Him and cleave unto Him.” (Dt 13:4)

Jeremiah says that God put fear in the people’s hearts that they would not depart from Him and they would fear Him forever (Jer 32:39)! This fear of God was just what the Persians intended, but it would not do for Christians, even Bultmann, so he immediately tells us it is not really fear at all! That is God’s Truth! Christians were to be Moslems for this “fear” was really “submission” to God’s will and “awe” at His power. Bultmann is doubtless correct that submission and awe it was meant to be, but the inducement to submit and be obedient was fear—fear of God’s retribution. Who though would procure this retribution on God’s behalf if His Chosen did not submit? The imperial authorities of Persia acting on the instructions of the Shah. In practice, it was the Shah’s word not God’s that was law, but how was an ignorant peasant to know?

This God controls the world, but never directly. He controls Nature and can effect retribution that way, or He controls people like the Shah, and can effect retribution that way. He does everything at second hand and rules by fiat. He is an eastern potentate writ large—the Shah of Heaven! Misfortune and suffering are God’s punishments for disobedience, and there is no rule that He has made that He will not violate to wreak His punishments.

There is no need to try to fit suffering into an overall scheme of Nature in a sense like “one man’s meat is another man’s poison” or “what is good for some is bad for others”, as the Greeks and Stoics did. People had to bear their suffering all right but because it had been imposed by God as a punishment. Whether you were a Stoic or a Yehouist, you had to put up with it. Christians, however, through the more Persianized version of Judaism preserved by the Essenes and rejected by the Rabbis, could blame suffering on to an Evil Spirit, Satan, and could fight against Evil and not merely suffer it—unless, of course, you were a Christian designated as evil by the power faction in which case you had to suffer the consequences of your Christian brothers’ fight against the evil you represented. This they have done diligently ever since, quite contrary to the ostensible emphasis placed on love in their belief.

The Stoic was assisted in bearing the burden of life in knowing that they were a part of the whole, and each piece in the structure of the cosmos had its part to play. The suffering endured by a Stoic is an altruistic act for the benefit of the rest of life. Marcus Aurelius told Stoics they had to consider everything not just themselves. Stoicism is primarily concerned with real life, and does not shrug off the duty involved for empty supernatural promises. In the Jewish scripture, much of Wisdom (Qoheleth) is atheistic. It is closer to Stoicism than to Yehouism. Supernatural rewards are rejected in:

“There is nothing better for man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour.” (Ecc 2:24)

This is man's portion, and the punishment of God elsewhere is the gift of God here! God gives Job no answer to his sufferings, though the author is apparently cynical. God's wisdom so surpasses man's that even God's sadistic torture of a righteous man has a proper reason. Injustices like this are resolved in the future Eschaton, so the Jewish God can have a bit of fun at the expense of a loyal devotee, because he will be rewarded in the end!

## The Hebrew God and Festivals

The message of the prophets was that God was not one of the old fertility gods, the power of fertility, but was a god with a much grander scope. The Hebrew God was their god because he had specially chosen them but was a universal god. As the god of the Hebrews, he was like the god of any Greek polis, except that the polis expressed the will of the people, whereas the Hebrew God expressed an alien will, that of the Persian kings. The deity of the Greek polis was the expression of the will of the community and therefore the guardian of it. This is democracy. The Hebrew God was never democratic and expressed no communal will even in Hasmonaean times.

The Hebrew God always looked to the history of His people—how they had been privileged but constantly reneged on the covenants they had made with Him. The trouble was the history was mainly bogus—a present of those imposing the religion to keep the people compliant. It began as an authoritarian religion, saying: “You never do as you are told, so you deserve to be punished”, and so it has remained in its various epiphanies. The Persians promised to make their colonists in Yehud rich, but the Jews had to remember it was a gift, not an ability:

“And say thou not in thine heart: My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth.” (Dt 8:17)

It was given to them by God—the Persian king, in practice. The real act of creation was the creation of the temple state by the Persians. The scriptures show throughout that the Hebrews never did anything for themselves. Whenever they did, it was wrong and failed or was punished. What succeeded was God’s work. God saved them from the Egyptians and gave them a covenant. God gave them a land that was said to have been the land of their fathers.

The native Canaanite feasts on traditional seasonal occasions, and these occasions in the vegetation cycle were transformed into celebrations of mystical historic events. Who could have made a people do this except a powerful conqueror? The Passover was when the sun passed over the celestial equator signalling the barley harvest. It was the start of the religious year when the kind winter sun that brought the rains to fertilize the crops was crucified and the cruel summer sun that shrivelled up the crops rose into the heavens—in Persian interpretation.

In the summer heat, the harvests had to be gathered before they were scorched. The feast of Booths in the month of Tishri was probably introduced by Ezra, on the occasion when he read the law to the Jews, as a Persian custom signalling the crucifixion of the cruel sun and the coming of the first rains, the beginning of the civil year, but, in the older seasonal interpretation, celebrated the end of the harvest season.



The Persian interpretations were given their present “historical” meanings when the story of Moses was invented in the third century BC. Passover was excused as a celebration of a murderous angel passing over Egypt killing innocent Egyptian kids but sparing Hebrew ones. The myth is tacked on to the older seasonal myth with crude stitches. Shavuot, the feast of Weeks, another harvest festival was excused as a celebration of God’s covenant. Booths was excused as a memorial of the time the Israelites lived in the desert in crude shelters. Yehud was created artificially and the Jewish religion was similarly artificial, though it took over older Canaanite festivals.

Deuteronomy 26:5-9 seems to be a basic rendering of the what became the sagas of Abraham and Moses:

“An Aramaean ready to perish was my father, and he went down to Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. And when we cried unto Yehouah the God of our fathers, Yehouah heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression. And Yehouah brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders. And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey.”

Now since Aram was in the north, the area near the Euphrates river about the towns of Haran and Urfa, the Aramaean could go down into Canaan and be in Egypt, since Canaan was an Egyptian colony. Equally the great nation could have been brought out of Egypt because the Egyptians were forced to give up their Canaanite colony. God had indeed brought them into a land of milk and honey, which was their own, as soon as the Egyptians were forced to give it up. This story, in other words does not imply any Exodus, but a liberation of Canaan from Egyptian rule. This will have been the Persian propaganda put over to persuade the people that they had been slaves of the Egyptians in their own land. This basic tale was expanded in the time of the Ptolemies into the full blown Joseph and Moses sagas.

The bond of God and the nation is depicted as marriage, while disloyalty to Yehouah is depicted as fornication and adultery. Loyalty means obedience to the law. The Persians, through their propagandists, the prophets, emphasized that God could exercise His power against Israel. He was not obliged to stand up for people who refused to accept His laws. The laws were Persian laws and the implied threat was that the Persians who set up the colony could destroy it, acting for God, of course. The failings of the people constantly emphasized by the prophets and the Deuteronomistic Historian meant that the covenant had never been fulfilled except by a remnant of the people. The promise that it would be fulfilled was a future promise always. The occasion would be the End of the World. As Bultmann puts it:

“The covenant is not capable of realization in actual history. Its realization is only conceivable in some mythical future of redemption.”

Semitic people regarded their god as their real king, their king merely being their god's approved minister on earth. This is the belief that the Persians were taking advantage of. By ensuring that the god was the sort of God that reflected the policies they professed, the Persians knew they could use religion as a political tool. It was not a new policy but it was put into effect particularly well.

The king, Yehouah, was acclaimed at the New Year ceremony with the cry: "Yehouah is king". The Persian king was similarly renewed as king at the Persian New Year ceremony, in which he acted the part of God slaying the Dragon of Chaos. For both, the New Year ceremonies were not held in the middle of winter as we do, but on the occasions when the sun crosses the celestial equator, as we have seen. Ceremonial hymns praise Yehouah as god of the universe, the equivalent of Ahuramazda. But prophetic propaganda could not condone a Jewish king to act as God's regent. There was only one king—in Susa, Persepolis or Babylon.

Any clamour for a local king was countered in the mythological history. God did not want the people to have their own king, and, when he yielded to their demands, the kings proved to be flawed. So, no one at the time when the Persians invented this propaganda could have called for a local king without appearing to deny the sacred history. The prophet, Hosea, blamed the wickedness of the people in the sacred history to the crowning of Saul at Gilgal (Hos 9:15). The glory of David and Solomon, running counter to the rest of the prophetic propaganda against kings, was mainly a later invention, probably by the Maccabees, whose purpose it served, written about a briefer Persian core, just as the Moses saga was.

God anointed His kings but God's anointed was a term that came to stand for the eschatological king who would act as God's judge at the end of the world. Thus the full realization of the temple state of Yehud came in the future. Setting up Yehud and its temple were therefore eschatological steps. The Persian colonists who took on the task were particularly holy people helping God to defeat Evil. From the outset they were given this purpose as their destiny and were called a nation of priests. They had been specially chosen and would come to consider themselves the holy people of God.

Bultmann notes that after the "exile" the nation of Israel was reconstituted as a "church":

"Israel ceased to be a nation and became a church. All the foundations of government, except the administration of justice, which remained in the hands of the priests, were managed by the foreign power. Cyrus was hailed by the Jews as the Lord's anointed."

What nation would reconstitute itself as a church? The people of Yehud were constituted as a church because the Persians set them up as a temple state—a trouble free way of collecting taxes voluntarily.

## Righteousness

Much of the litany of things absent from the scriptures are things that show it is not a natural compilation of literature. Most secular songs, poems and legends of the Levant did not find their way into the Jewish scriptures. This is literature put together with a narrow purpose in mind, and although later additions admitted some more popular genres than the original, the purpose was not forgotten. It was to denigrate the Israelites as incorrigible apostates from God. The Jews came to believe it themselves, and only in Chronicles does it seem that the Deuteronomic tone is weakening.

The rules of the religion are restrictive and negative. The assumption is that the people will not obey God and would turn to practices He would not like. The law is dominant in this religion because it expressed a law imposed, and an order imposed by the Persians. Much of the law is negative. The Decalogue tells mainly what must not be done. By accepting these restrictions, people could be considered “righteous” by their fellows, and that would please God. Greek concepts like Virtue and Duty are mainly absent because the prime concern of the legislators was obedience and order. Righteousness served to encompass qualities encouraged by the Greeks like Virtue and Duty.

Bultmann rather over eggs his own pudding in seeing nothing in the Jewish scriptures comparable with qualities admired by the Greeks. It seems that he cannot recognize them if they are not as they ought to be in a Greek work, but this is not a Greek work, and what was written after Alexander was written consciously aware of its differences from Greek forms and expressions. There was a battle going on between modernizers and traditionalists, and so far as the sacred writings were concerned, the traditionalists predominated. Whatever additions were made in Hellenistic times tend to conform with tradition, and that was what had already been laid down by the Deuteronomists.

Of course, it is impossible to stop time, and eventually the Greek books were considered sufficiently holy to be admitted to the Jewish scripture, but, by then the bulk of scripture had been stabilized. This is about the end of the second century BC. The two main periods of Hellenistic revision will have been under the third century Ptolemies, and then after the victory of the Maccabees. Whatever obvious Greek influence was introduced in Ptolemaic times will have been edited out by the Maccabaeen editors, but by then there was no stopping the admission of new Hellenized books like ben Sirach.

The prophets who were propagating the Persian innovations had God disapproving of the feasts of the fertility gods of Canaan, and demanding instead “righteousness”—obedience to God’s law. The cultic practices that they seemed to rail against did not stop. Sacrificing, burning offerings and burning incenses continued, so cannot have been seen as a problem. The point was all of this was vanity unless the people were righteous! The animals brought as offerings had to be perfect, unblemished, and the worshippers were told it stood for their own righteousness.

They too had to be perfect. The criterion of perfection and righteousness was obedience to the law! Not to obey them was sin. Bultmann said:

“All particular transgressions are expressions of the same underlying spirit, man’s rebellion against lawfully constituted authority, his desire to be his own master. It is a rebellion against God.”

Here is a Greek concept clearly enough, that Bultmann did not notice—hubris.

Scribes were a combination of lawyer and theologian because the Persians had made obedience of the law into an act of piety before God. Thus religion and morality were combined in jurisprudence, and civil and criminal law were considered to be divine. One trouble was that the law as prescribed by the Persians and modified by the Ptolemies and perhaps the Maccabees was fixed as God’s law. As circumstances changed and some laws became obsolete, the people were still obliged by the scribes to obey them!

The other side of this coin was that new circumstances that had arisen went unregulated by law. It meant that schools of interpretation arose in which the new circumstances were interpreted in terms of outmoded law. These schools effectively became the equivalent of political parties, as the Python team show excellently in *Life of Brian*, and the Sadducees and Pharisees were the main two. Any interpretations were set down as equals. No one had the thought of testing them to see which was true, or practicable, because it was God’s law and God was not to be tested. The result was the growth of vast volumes of commentary and interpretation, all pointless. Teaching was taught by rote learning, the teacher pointing out the various opinions that were relevant in each lesson.

The motive of ethics was obedience. The law was given as commandments, and commandments had to be obeyed.

“The Holy one says: I have prescribed a statute for you, I have issued a decree for you. You have no right to transgress my decree, for it is written: This is the statute of my law.” (Johanan ben Zaccai)

Johanan ben Zaccai said men were made to practice the law! Enforcement was fear. Jews had to fear God. There is no escaping this plain fact even though the Rabbis try to tell us fear was really love of God. Failure to obey a command required a punishment. It was called divine retribution. Some sinners seemed to do very well in life but it was only an earthly illusion. They would suffer divine retribution after death. Meanwhile the righteous suffered in this life to be rewarded in the next. What more effective scam—sorry—scheme could have been invented?

In Judaism, the loss of Persia and the changed circumstances under the Greeks meant that many of the precepts had become unintelligible or seemed trivial. They no longer

served the purpose for which they were written. Obedience of them became a religious formalism serving to distinguish the pious from the impious.

When the law had no provision for a circumstance, people were free to decide for themselves what to do. Righteous people knew from Zoroastrianism that good deeds made up for deficiencies of observance of the law. A final judgement and suitable punishment was expected for evil deeds while good deeds could make up for bad deeds. Good and bad deeds were weighed in the balance at the end, an idea that ignorant Christians got rid of. Rabbi Hillel saw a skull floating down a river and observed:

“Because they drowned thee, thou art drowned, but they that drowned thee shall themselves be drowned at the last.”

People were never sure that they had been good enough for salvation. Pious people felt uneasy and guilty, and ben Zaccai wept on his sick bed, unsure that he had been righteous enough if he should die. Penitential prayers, in which God’s forgiveness was implored were constantly on the lips of the devout. “Forgive us for we have sinned!” Repentance became a way of life, apparently meritorious in itself. Some modern Christians are the same.

## Jesus

Jesus proclaimed nothing new. He was not a Christian but a devout Jew, albeit certainly an Essene rather than a Pharisee or Sadducee. The Christian gospels are explicit that Jesus had no intention of criticizing the Jewish law. Whatever there is in the mythology of Jesus that is interpreted as being abrogation of the law was introduced by those who did not care for it and wanted shot of it as an unnecessary burden—the gentile bishops! Jesus taught obedience to God, and the law was God’s law, not a jot or tittle of which could be altered.

The source of apparent differences with Judaism were:

- He was an Essene not a Pharisee.
- Even Pharisaism was not then what Rabbinic Judaism became.
- Jesus was expecting the imminent End of the World, which meant that the most important thing was to save sinners.

Bultmann tries to maintain that Jesus introduced the idea of inner motivation, but he must know that Jeremiah was the originator of it. Jesus restates that people are abject slaves before God. They can make no demands of God, but must dedicate their whole person to Him. It sounds just what the Persians wanted to inculcate almost 500 years before, when they started Judaism. It seems no coincidence that the Essenes, from the Dead Sea Scrolls, still strongly adhered to the Persian norms of the religion, unlike the pragmatic Pharisees and the Hellenistic Sadducees. But Bultmann misunderstands Jesus’s motivation, as all Christians who ignore his apocalypticism do. Jesus was expecting the world to end, of that there is no doubt.

Life is entirely a vital conception not one dependent on a spiritual background or framework. Bultmann denies that the scriptural view of the soul is opposed to the flesh. Man is indifferently called flesh or soul in the scriptures. So, the scriptural soul does not belong intrinsically to a higher plane, but is the energy which gives life to the flesh. It resides in the blood or in the breath. Soul was then just a synonym for life. Yet, the sinner is punished with a premature death and it could not merely be ordinary death. Bultmann says:

“Palestinian Judaism... adopted the Iranian conception of the resurrection of the body.”

Here are distinctions that are not easily understood at this distance, but it seems that the belief in resurrection was that physical death was not really death. Death was what God had ordained for sinners. But if there were no higher planes, restored life was in this world not in some other. The righteous must therefore have been resurrected into life again—in this world! The difference was this world had become the “World to Come”,

a world identical to this one except free of sin and corruption. The world, in Zoroastrian terms, was returned to its original state of perfection when it was first made by God. This was the kingdom of God that Jesus was expecting.

Bultmann says that Jesus was opposed to the idea of trying to accumulate merit through good works, making all reward the gift of God. He cites the parable of the labourer who laboured on for the last hour but had the same reward for his endeavours as those who had laboured all day. Jesus is not laying down any principle of worldly remuneration, or saying that God is arbitrary. His clear point is eschatological. Those who have had a lifetime of righteousness can receive no greater reward than those who have repented just in time to be forgiven and baptized. The reward is to enter God's kingdom.

God is not capricious. Only righteous people can be thus rewarded. Not crooks, confidence tricksters, liars or clergymen. Righteous people only, but so long as they are righteous, they can expect to enter the kingdom. It might be God's own gift, but God is just, and rewards goodness, not the opposite. Certainly, the point of the parable is that sinners can be saved, but not as long as they are sinners. Christians have always fooled themselves into thinking that sinners were welcomed with open arms and pints of wine by Jesus. He accepted only those who had repented. Repentance had to be sincere and followed by righteous living until the kingdom came. Jesus repeatedly warned that the least backsliding could mean the gates of heaven could be slammed in the face of the backslider. The man who laboured only at the end of the day was a penitent Jew, the very people that Jesus thought he was sent to save. The gospels have the same parable in different forms, the lost sheep and the widow's missing coin being two.

Many of the apparently non-Jewish teachings of Jesus have turned out to be Jewish all right but Essenic, not Rabbinic. Besides that, the Rabbis purged apocalyptic from Judaism, except in a mystic expectation of a world to come. Few commentators of today seem to realize that Judaism of the time of Jesus was not the Judaism of the modern synagogue. Humility, poverty and meekness were Essene characteristics, not generally Jewish. Most Jews thought wealth showed God's favour, but Jesus certainly thought the precise opposite, in numerous passages utterly ignored by every modern Christian.

Much of the Essenic criticism of the Pharisees was that they were compliant with the Romans over the occupation. They followed the commandments of men not God. They did not agree with the Roman occupation, but consented to it as a practical matter. To Essenes, like Jesus, it was a major violation of the Persian law to accept that anyone other than God ruled Judah. Even in the original gospels, the Christian evangelists had set up legal straw dolls to prove that Jesus was abrogating the law when he was not. Mainly they were practical measures for people unable to practice the law fully in their constrained positions.

The Jews had more than once been slaughtered by enemies taking advantage of the sabbath restrictions. Pious Jews would rather die than work by lifting a sword on the sabbath. Jesus taught that God did not expect every detail of the law to be observed

when it was not possible, because people were forced by their enemies to bear arms or eat from impure vessels, or flee on the sabbath. His message was that God knew of the purity in the heart, so in peculiar circumstances the law need not be closely observed. He was not abrogating it.

Nor was Jesus ever “a glutton and a winebibber”. Introducing this was an attempt by the evangelists to cover up the truth that Jesus frequently offered penitents the messianic meal of bread and wine. This was the Essene holy meal and was the same as the Christian eucharist, but the Christians had to make out that Jesus had started it in commemoration of himself. It meant that the other instances just became feasts, making Jesus appear a glutton and a winebibber. The feeding miracles were large scale examples of the same phenomenon, but the wine has been deliberately dropped out. It was, in any case, water, not wine.

Loving your neighbour did not mean loving the Roman occupiers, although that was quickly a convenient interpretation for gentile Christians. Jews were neighbours of the Jews. Even Samaritans were, but not Greeks and Romans.

Bultmann says Jesus has no easy recipes for salvation such as appear in the Jewish scriptures, but this is incredible nonsense. Jesus taught the same as John the Baptist—repent! Those who repented and were baptized were saved. Sure, they had to be sincere, but few Christians know what sincerity means, so they felt secure that baptism was sufficient.

People should fear God because He could destroy the soul. Jesus was certain that Judgement would come upon his generation, meaning that the world would end. Bultmann concludes:

“Jesus’s teaching of God was no different from that which he had been taught.”

Bultmann admits that the hope of Israel was nationalistic in character and that a series of messianic pretenders appeared between the time of the death of Herod and the Jewish War. Jesus was not, of course, one of them, even for Bultmann.



# Christianity Revealed

## Jewish Sects

**Dr M D Magee**

## Four Philosophies

The gospels show Jesus as an independent healer and preacher fervently opposed by the Pharisees, a sect of pious Jews. It seems immediately unfair that a well-organised group should pick on a solitary teacher and a few of his innocent followers. But the Pharisees were not the only sect of the Jewish religion. Jesus himself belonged to another sect.

Encouraged by the occupying forces Jews had split into several sects each believing its approach was the right one—the four philosophies of the Jews described by Josephus. Although they doubtless were the main sects, Josephus's listing of the four philosophies—the Pharisees (Paroshim), the Sadducees (Zadokim), the Essenes and the Zealots—is far from the whole story. The Christian gospels introduce us only to some of them. The four philosophies were religious, but equally important to understanding them was their political dimension—their attitude to the Roman invaders and their Greek culture. Jews did not distinguish religion from politics because their state was a theocracy—it was to be ruled by God through His priesthood—but the Romans had usurped God's position. Educated Jews associated with one or other of these sects just as today people usually identify themselves with a political party, for in many ways that is what they were, and a proper understanding of Jesus and the gospel stories requires an awareness of the Jewish sects and Jesus's relationship to them.

Though Josephus, in describing the four philosophies of the Jews, gives the impression that the divisions of society were quite simple, the truth is otherwise. There was a diversity of social divisions. The Clementine Recognitions says the people divided into many sects from the days of John the Baptist and the Talmud says, poetically rather than historically, there were 24 varieties of sectarianism at the end of the Jewish War. Not only was Judaism sectarian, there was no such concept as mainstream Judaism during New Testament period. Views were so diverse as to be different forms of Judaism, albeit with accepted points in common, not just sects of Judaism. The old idea of a monolithic Judaism during the Second Temple (516 BC–70 AD) is no longer believed even by Jews. The religion and its temple were imposed and so began in conflict and never united. As God's chosen people pious Jews were set on obeying His commandments to the letter, but the commandments were not always clear or applicable to changed circumstances. They had to be interpreted and with it came further disagreement and sectarianism.

By New Testament times Jews had divided themselves into many parties, sects and brotherhoods. Jewish society was divided into four castes, Priests, Levites, Israelites and Proselytes. Proselytes were of course converts to Judaism and were generally the lowest class. Israel was the class of ordinary people. The Levites and the Priests were the upper classes associated with temple service.

Besides these castes, though there were the brotherhoods described by Josephus, the

Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes and the Galilaeans or Zealots, there were also rich Herodians and poor Am ha-Eretz, the Men of the Land, Samaritans and Dositheans. And apocalyptic dreams had become popular under the yoke of foreign oppression and many cults preached of the End Time. The Church Fathers describe Hemerobaptists, Masbutheans, Samaritans, Grecians or Hellenised Jews and Hebrews or traditional Jews. Like the Galilaeans, the Samaritans were not necessarily from Samaria because the Samaritans were a sect of Judaism rather than a national type, although the centre of Samaritanism was Samaria because that is where the Samaritan temple was, on Mount Gerizim. Hemerobaptists, Masbutheans and Galilaeans were probably later sub-sects of the Essenes, as, we suspect and shall develop shortly, were the Nazarenes and therefore the Christians. There were probably more. Even those not voluntarily in groups could not avoid being characterised as in some social or economic group.

Particularly prominent in the gospels are the Pharisees who are depicted as the arch enemies of the Son of God. They were the popular party, according to Josephus and even they were split into two wings, a conservative wing and a liberal wing. Pharisees even admitted they were classifiable into seven types, though they are psychological types rather than social groups. Sadducees, the Herodians, and the Zealots are mentioned with decreasing levels of interest. Indeed the Zealots are effectively not mentioned because they are introduced only as an appellation of disciples, notably Simon the Zealot but also Judas the Zealot in some old MSS, meaning Judas Iscariot. Indirectly, what the rabbis called the Am ha-Eretz also appear. These, the common folk, often untrained in the schools and unobservant in ceremonial details, were the the multitude, followers of Jesus—Christians believe. The Nazarenes, the sect considered to have been founded by Jesus, the hero of the gospel stories, are mentioned once only in Acts.

But we do not meet the Essenes or, in effect, the Zealots, a curious omission because these last two were as important as the others, and they must have been a major influence on the lives of people living in small towns and villages, the Am ha-Eretz, apparently preferred by Jesus and his disciples. Nor do the writers of epistles in the New Testament mention the Essenes. They might as well have not existed, but we know they did from Josephus, Pliny and Philo. Now that we can add to these classic authors the evidence of the excavations at Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls, a clear understanding of the Essenes and their connexion with Christianity is beginning to emerge.

Under the eye of the Romans, Josephus and the gospel writers had to be cagey and were less than truthful. The sectarian scrolls are also not open, being couched in arcane codes and interpretations to hide their true objectives lest the invader should ever get hold of them. Even the early Christians sought to defend their religion by censorship to hide its original anti-Roman nature and so alter or omit vital facts.

We can deduce from the sources:

- The Sadducees were wealthy families, mainly of priests, who were blatant collaborators, fearful of their position if there should be any unrest. The Boethusians of the Rabbinical literature were the family and descendants of one Boethus, the Egyptian, who had assumed the role of High Priest under Herod the Great. They might have been the Herodians of the gospels of Mark and Matthew, Herod having rebuilt the Jerusalem Temple, the source of their influence.
- The Pharisees were not active collaborators in general but on several previous occasions they had invited foreign powers into Israel to quell civil war and they were unwilling to risk reprisals against Israel by organising against Rome. However the Pharisees were not monolithic and the pragmatists were opposed by more nationalistic factions.
- The Dead Sea Essenes were opposed to the invader and spent time preparing themselves for an apocalyptic bust-up but believed god would only support them if they were absolutely ritually pure, hence this became their main interest. Village Essenes had a similar apocalyptic outlook but lived more practical lives in the community at large. It is inconceivable that these latter communities did not have some impact on the events of the gospels. Here is another mystery—why are they not mentioned by the gospel writers?

Curiously Josephus in Antiquities goes on to tell, having described the Essenes, of a fourth sect, the Galilaeans, though he does not name it as such, merely saying it was founded by Judas the Galilaean. The versions of Antiquities we now have say these Galilaeans accepted Pharisaic notions but differed in that they accepted only God as their Lord. They were founded by Judas of Galilee and the implication of describing them after the third of the supposedly three orders of Jewish religion, the Essenes, is surely that they were actually a branch of the latter. The omission of the name Galilaeans and the attributing to them of Pharisaic notions will have been the work of Christian editors who wanted to divorce these Galilaeans from the Galilaean followers of Jesus and instead associate them with Jesus's enemies.

Scholars generally regard these men as Zealots, firebrands incensed by the Greek and Roman invaders, who had usurped God's rule, and ready to join in armed struggle against them. The Sicarii were a branch of the Zealots whose aim was political assassination.

#### JOSEPHUS: JEWISH WAR (WHISTON) 2:8:2

For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Sadducees; and the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essens.

#### ANTIQUITIES (WHISTON) 18:1:2

The Jews had for a great while had three sects of philosophy peculiar to themselves.

The sect of the Essens, and the sect of the Sadducees, and the third sort of opinions was that of those called Pharisees. Of which sects, although I have already spoken in the second book of the Jewish War, yet will I a little touch upon them now.

## The Aramaic Language

Semitic languages are known almost from the beginning of human history. Among them are Aramaic, Arabic, Hebrew, Ethiopic, and Akkadian or ancient Babylonian and Assyrian. Aramaic is closest to Hebrew, and was written in various scripts including “Hebrew” script, which is really an Aramaic script.

Aramaic first appears in a small number of ancient royal inscriptions from 900-700 BC. Dedications to the gods, international treaties, and memorial stelae reveal to us the history of the first small Aramean kingdoms, in the territories of modern Syria and Southeast Turkey, living under the shadow of the rising Assyrian empire.

From about 700–320 BC, the conquering Assyrians, and following them the Babylonian and Persian empires, used Aramaic as their lingua franca, so it became known from India to Ethiopia. The Persian officials sent to set up the temple of Jerusalem spoke Aramaic as we know from the Jewish scriptures where parts of Ezra and Daniel are in Aramaic. Some of the best known stories in the Old Testament, including that of Belshazzar’s feast with the famous “handwriting on the wall” are in Aramaic. For the Jews, under Persian influence, Aramaic displaced Hebrew.

Aramaic remained a dominant language for Jewish worship, scholarship, and everyday life for centuries in both the land of Israel and in the diaspora, especially in Babylon. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the remains of the library of a Jewish sect from around the turn of the Era, are many compositions in Aramaic. These new texts also provide the best evidence for Palestinian Aramaic of the sort used by Jesus and his disciples.

Since the Jews spoke Aramaic, and knowledge of Hebrew was no longer widespread, the practice arose in the synagogue of providing the reading of the sacred Hebrew scriptures with an Aramaic translation or paraphrase, a “Targum” In the course of time a whole array of targums for the Law and other parts of the Bible were composed. More than translations, they incorporated much of traditional Jewish scriptural interpretation.

In their academies the rabbis and their disciples transmitted, commented, and debated Jewish law. The records of their deliberations constitute the two talmuds: the Palestinian and the much larger Babylonian Talmuds. Although the talmuds contain much material in Hebrew, the basic language of these vast compilations is Aramaic, in Western and Eastern dialects.

Although Jesus spoke Aramaic, the gospels are in Greek, and only rarely quote actual Aramaic words. Reconstruction of the Aramaic background of the gospels remains a fascinating, but inordinately difficult area of modern scholarly research. Christians in Palestine eventually rendered parts of the New Testament into their dialect of Aramaic. These translations and related writings are “Christian Palestinian Aramaic”.

A much larger body of Christian Aramaic is known as Syriac. Syriac writings surpass in quantity all other Aramaic combined. It began as the literary language of the city of Edessa, now Urfa in Turkey. It became the language of the eastern church, from about the third century AD until into the Moslem conquest. Syriac writings include numerous Bible translations, the most important being the so-called Peshitta (simple) translation, and countless devotional, dogmatic, exegetical, liturgical, and historical works. Almost all of the Greek philosophical and scientific tradition was eventually translated into Syriac, and it was through this channel that most found their way into the Islamic World and thence, into post-Dark Ages Europe.

There are many other branches of Aramaic literature, including the substantial literature of the Mandaeans, a Gnostic religious group, and the Bible translation, liturgy, and doctrinal works of the Samaritans. Aramaic survives as a spoken language in small communities in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran.

## The Pharisees

The word Pharisee is thought to be from the Aramaic word *pharosh*, which implies separation. Ultimately the Pharisees were to become the Jewish mainstream, but even in the New Testament times they were not separate from Judaism as a whole—not in the sense that the Essenes were. Possibly, the separating happened at an earlier period. Some say that both the Pharisees and the Essenes were branches of the earlier Hasidim, and both separated in their different ways. The Essenes might have been the Hasidic mainstream, the direct line of the earlier Hasidim, but the Pharisees were dissenters who had separated from them. Some suggest that the word Pharisee has nothing to do with separating out but is related to the word *Parsee* meaning Persian. They are then the Jews who have retained Persian beliefs, like the belief in angels and the belief in a messiah. However the Essenes also had Persian beliefs, and held them probably more strongly.

Rabbinical literature depicts Jesus's apparent main enemies, the Pharisees, as just, humane and adaptable. "Well it would, wouldn't it?" you might say. After all, the Jewish religion that survived the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD was the religion of the Pharisees. It metamorphosed into Rabbinical Judaism. But the tradition of the rabbis is confirmed by Flavius Josephus.

Josephus, who spent time among the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes before joining a Pharisaic *havura* or brotherhood gives as the distinguishing features of the Pharisees:

1. they were meticulous about observing the law, both in its written and oral forms;
2. they affirmed the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body;
3. they had a greater influence on the common people than did the other sects.

Pharisees were far from being the jealous hypocrites of the gospels. Pharisee sages came from all levels of society including the poorest, unlike the hereditary priesthood. They were not paid but, like Jesus the carpenter, had to develop a practical skill with which to earn a living. Shammai was a surveyor who, as like as not, worked on Herod's temple. They were admired for their fairness as judges of the law, their legal knowledge and the originality of their religious interpretation. Though they practised temple worship, the centre of their lives was the synagogue.

The sages and later, the rabbis, thought of themselves as heirs to the prophets, who also came from the people rather than from dynasties, and especially Moses, though they claimed no prophetic abilities themselves unlike the Essenes. For them prophecy had ceased with the biblical prophets and would start again only with the age of the Messiah. Theirs was an interpretive and analytical role not a sacerdotal one—that was the priests' role. The Pharisees regarded the priests only as functionaries with no authority to speak on the Law or religion—that was their own role. The sages were progressive whilst the Sadducees were conservative.



The Pharisees arose in the period of about 160 BC when the Jews were rebelling against the Seleucid Greeks. They opposed the imposed priesthood for political as well as religious reasons. They wanted to get rid of foreign oppressors and their agents and to return the priesthood to its simple function of being ritual officials in the temple rather than political quislings. When the Jews did succeed in throwing off the foreigners it was to set up the Hasmonaean dynasty which combined the roles of High Priests and monarchs. Naturally the Pharisees' opposition continued. Thus the Pharisees opposed the oppressors, the sacrilegious and collaborationist Sadducees. But they were pragmatic. If they believed hostility was futile they would not advocate it.

Pharisees were often associated with the scribes, apparently professional scholars in the Torah, but sometimes were distinguished from them. The Pharisees accepted the Torah as inspired by God but, unlike the Sadducees, were not fundamentalists. They believed that the body of oral interpretation, carefully recorded by the scribes, was more immediate, pertinent and alive than the ancient law. They point out that the Torah itself says:

“The Torah is not in Heaven.”

It is therefore not perfect and needs interpretation by men. This oral tradition was immensely flexible. The age of the Prophets had long gone so no one could claim to know God's will—it could be expressed through anyone. No one could be certain that their own interpretation was what God intended and so everyone's views and interpretations were respected.

Humanity and understanding were built into their system. Perhaps this was just as well because the Pharisees were far from a homogeneous body. They certainly divided into a Left Wing and a Right Wing, and perhaps there were finer subdivisions. The famous disputes between the Rabbis Hillel and Shammai in the century before the crucifixion testify to this.

These two famous Pharisees led famous schools in Jerusalem called the Beth Hillel and the Beth Shammai by the Rabbis. They were respectively the liberal and the conservative wings of Pharisaism. Shammai advocated a more stringent and literal interpretation of the law, while Hillel expounded its more flexible application.

The Talmud illustrates their personality differences. A gentile asked Shammai to teach him the entire Torah in the time he could stand on one foot! Shammai, a surveyor, chased away the impudent man with a measuring rod. The gentile asked Hillel the same question. Hillel answered:

“What is hateful to you, do not to your fellowman. This is the entire Torah. All the rest is commentary—now go and study.”

The parallels with Hillel's statement are readily recognized in Jesus's version (Mt 7:12):

“All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets,”

and Paul’s (Gal 5:14):

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

It was the Hillel form of Pharisaism that was adopted in the academies at Javneh and in Galilee during the second and third centuries, to become the Judaism of today.

Pharisees were democratic. In matters of law where a clear cut decision was needed, they took a vote and dissenting rabbis were obliged to hold to the view of the majority until the matter was raised again. A change of vote did not perturb the assembly because changes of circumstances were recognised as part of life—decisions would change as the circumstances did. Dissenting views as well as majority decisions were recorded for future reference thus becoming akin to precedent so that when changes occurred a new generation of scholars could refer back to the dissenting views of their predecessors. Decisions were not divine but human and were therefore fallible—rejected views might turn out to be more correct. This was how God wanted it: the work required in considering, reasoning and interpreting was necessary to the seeking of truth:

“According to the effort is the reward.”

This effort of reasoning was good for the soul and necessary to the finding of truth.

So, Pharisees had no need to quarrel when they disagreed, nor to persecute dissenters. Disciplinary action only came when someone refused to abide by the majority decision, and even then on matters of the Law not on matters of theology. Punishment was simply a period of ostracism. Different views on the Messiah could be and were voiced perfectly acceptably including the one that there could be no Messiah because he had already been manifest as the virtuous king, Hezekiah. The Pharisees did regard as heretical refusal to accept oral law.

So Pharisees themselves were remarkably tolerant. They were so tolerant that they were actually a widely diverse group of people. This is confirmed by what the Pharisees thought of themselves. Descriptions of the Pharisees exist in both the the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds and they substantially agree. There were seven different types of Pharisees, described in paraphrase thus:

1. Counting Pharisees were always adding up their good deeds.
2. Procrastinating Pharisees kicked their heels while finding excuses for delaying a good deed.

3. Bloodied Pharisees shut their eyes so as not to look on a woman and so walked into walls, bloodying themselves.
4. Pestle Pharisees walked bent forward at an angle, in false humility, like a pestle leaning in a mortar.
5. Duty Pharisees constantly asked what more they could do to be dutiful, they were already so good.
6. The Pharisee from fear quaked in fear of the wrath of God.
7. The Pharisee from love of God, like Abraham, loved God and lived in faith and charity.

So even the Pharisees themselves saw that in the diversity of their own ranks that many fell short of the ideal behaviour which is that of the seventh Pharisee, love of God. Jesus was no more critical of Pharisees than they were of themselves. Conspicuous piety could be foolish and hypocritical.

What then was the reason for Jesus's bitterness toward the Pharisees? Despite this generally favourable picture of the Pharisees, in the New Testament, the most barbed rebukes Jesus issued were for the Pharisees. The most severe attack on them is in Matthew (Mt 23) where Jesus condemned them seven times in these words:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”

But did Jesus and the early Church unjustly caricature the Pharisees in his denunciations? Jews say the gospels unfairly maligned the Pharisees, accusing them of rigid formalism, self-righteousness, hypocrisy, and externalism. They say the Pharisees stressed devotion of the heart, worship of God for its own sake, and the obligation to go beyond the letter of the law. Yet Christianity has made Pharisee a pejorative word.

One of the reasons is that Judaism after the first century was Pharisaic Judaism. Scholars agree that Jewish life today—the synagogue, the rabbi, forms of prayer, Torah study, and belief in the oral law—stems from the Pharisaic tradition and derives its religious character from it. The first Christian bishops knew they were indebted to Judaism. After all they had laid claim to its scriptures! But Jews were unpopular and so they had to distance themselves from them. The most clear evidence of Jews in the empire was its religion which was established before Christianity and had won over many gentile proselytes, especially women. It was therefore in the bishops' own interest to denigrate their rival religion. After the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the Jewish religion was a Pharisaic religion. So much of the polemic against the Pharisees in the New Testament is really a reflexion of this first century religious battle.

Nevertheless, if Jesus belonged to the sect of the Essenes, he would not have respected

the Pharisees, so the gospels had a genuine anti-Pharisaic tradition to build on. There were two. One was the Pharisaic emphasis on the oral law, called the traditions of the Jews in the gospels, with which Jesus had the greatest conflict (Mt 15:1-9). The ordinances of the scribes were more important than the Torah itself. They and not the written Torah, were the final authority. Such liberality in treating the Torah would have been quite alien to Essenes, although, in fact, they no less than the Pharisees interpreted the law.

Surely the main reason was that most Pharisees were pragmatists who believed hostility to the invader was futile, though there were more nationalistic factions. Most would not advocate dissension, being unwilling to risk reprisals against Israel by organizing against Rome. And though Pharisees rarely actively collaborated like the Sadducees, in earlier times they had invited foreign powers into Israel to quell civil war which they considered the greater evil. Indeed they distrusted Jewish princes having suffered at their hands in the previous century. For Jesus this was hypocrisy. They had betrayed God by inviting gentiles into God's land and condoned their continued presence as rulers. That was why he opposed them, and they him, and why he called them hypocrites.

The Pharisees were not monolithic, as even the Talmud admits, and Jesus knew that some Pharisees were like himself Jewish nationalists, despite their history of compromise. Even in the New Testament there were Pharisees who lived up to their own ideals as loving God. In Luke 13:31, we read:

“The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get out and depart from here; for Herod will kill you.”

And elsewhere Jesus had friendly contacts with Pharisees (Lk 7:36ff; 11:37; 13:31-33; 14:1; Mk 12:28-34; Mt 23:1,2).

#### JOSEPHUS JEWISH WAR (WHISTON) 2:8:14

14. ...the Pharisees are those who are esteemed most skillful in the exact explication of their laws, and introduce the first sect. These ascribe all to fate [or providence], and to God, and yet allow, that to act what is right, or the contrary, is principally in the power of men, although fate does co-operate in every action. They say that all souls are incorruptible, but that the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies—but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment... Moreover, the Pharisees are friendly to one another, and are for the exercise of concord, and regard for the public.

#### JOSEPHUS ANTIQUITIES(WHISTON) 18:1:3

3. Now, for the Pharisees, they live meanly, and despise delicacies in diet; and they follow the conduct of reason; What that prescribes to them as good for them, they do; and they think they ought earnestly to strive to observe reason's dictates for practice.

They also pay a respect to such as are in years; nor are they so bold as to contradict them in any thing which they have introduced; and, when they determine that all things are done by fate, they do not take away the freedom from men of acting as they think fit; since their notion is, that it hath pleased God to make a temperament, whereby what he wills is done, but so that the will of man can act virtuously or viciously. They also believe that souls have an immortal rigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but that the former shall have power to revive and live again; on account of which doctrines they are able greatly to persuade the body of the people; and whatsoever they do about divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, they perform them according to their direction; insomuch that the cities give great attestations to them on account of their entire virtuous conduct, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also.

## The Sadducees

Sadducee is a Greek rendering of the Hebrew Zadok, the Arabic, Siddiq, meaning righteous or just or, as the Arabs also put it true, words ideally suited to the Essenes and, indeed used frequently by them. Plainly, there must have been a link.

Sadducees are first reported in Josephus's history of John Hyrcanus (Ant 13:10:6) as a political group subordinate to the Pharisees, until the Sadducee Jonathan persuades the ruler to support their cause—an unpopular move. Otherwise, they feature little in Josephus except in his descriptions of the three philosophies.

Sadducees were families of vast wealth and power and their hangers on. They were a caste similar to the Brahmins of India who provided the priesthood and allied with the ruling power to retain their wealth. They collaborated openly, fearful of losing their riches and social position if there were any sedition. The Romans appointed the High Priest, as did Herod before them, making his selection from the priestly families. Failing to understand the diffuse nature of Judaism, Romans thought that control of the temple would control the people, but the separation of the sacerdotal and the teaching functions in the Jewish religion is one reason why it has survived. Destruction of the ceremonial centre never affected the religion as a whole.

The priesthood supposedly comprised a caste notionally descended from Aaron, Moses's brother, according to the Jewish legends that the Persian functionaries accompanying the "returning" Babylonian exiles had rewritten. Yet the Sadducees stemmed only from the time of the successors of Alexander the Great. Under Alexander's successors, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, the priestly line was broken and the Chief Priests established as agents of foreign rule. And so they remained under the Romans. An Egyptian had assumed the role of High Priest under Herod the Great, and his descendants constituted the priestly family of the Boethusians in the rabbinical literature. They might have been the Herodians of Mark and Matthew, Herod having rebuilt the Jerusalem temple, the source of their influence.

Josephus contrasts the Sadducees with the Pharisees and Essenes and depicts them as rather sensibly denying divine action in the world, affirming human freedom, and believing that the soul perishes along with the body. All our sources agree that the Sadducees rejected beliefs in afterlife, resurrection and a judgement of the dead. They rejected the oral law. They needed no interpretation of the Torah and therefore no scholars. Atonement through temple ritual was sufficient. Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed over the resurrection of the dead, the Sadducees—influenced by the Greeks for whom it was a disgusting thought—denied it and the Pharisees—loyal to the Persian tradition—accepted it. In the Christian New Testament the Son of God takes the view of the Pharisees but the Essenes too believed in resurrection. More surprising is their rejection of the immortal soul, but Josephus suggests that they were inconsistent and argued with each other.

Many Jews were distressed because the administrators of the temple were corrupt, but tolerated it as God's will. Not so the Essenes. To judge by the Dead Sea Scrolls, they were training a pure priesthood in waiting ready to replace the unclean upstarts in the temple. In the meantime the Chief Priests and their Sadducaean supporters serviced the temple financed by supposedly voluntary tithes that were often extorted.

In the Gospels, they appear only once in Mark (Mk 12:18) and Luke (Lk 20:27) with their question about the resurrection (paralleled in Mt 22:23). Matthew adds them into two other narratives (Mt 3:7; 16:1-12). In Acts, their concerns are again the question of resurrection (Acts 4:2; 23:6-8). They are the party of the high priest in Acts 5:17, and they were represented in the Sanhedrin in Acts 23:6.

Jesus and the Essenes hated the Sadducees because they openly collaborated with the Romans and because they had gained riches by extortion—riches were ill-gotten by wicked people who gathered where they had not sowed. Sadducees pretended to be God's servants while robbing Him and His children of their birthright.

#### JOSEPHUS JEWISH WAR (WHISTON) 2:8:14

14. ...but the Sadducees are those that compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to every one, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades... But the behaviour of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degree wild; and their conversation with those that are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them.

#### JOSEPHUS ANTIQUITIES(WHISTON) 18:1:4

4. The doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of any thing besides what the law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent; but this doctrine is received but by a few, yet by those still of the greatest dignity; but they are able to do almost nothing of themselves; for when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly and by force sometimes obliged to be, they addict themselves to the notions of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear them.

## Hasidim

Biblical scholar, Geza Vermes believes Jesus was one of the Hasidim, The Pious or Devout Ones, whose prayers made miracles occur. He was a charismatic whose powers derived not from magical formulae but from contact with God. Vermes sounds as though he really believes this!

An earlier example was Honi the Circle Drawer, or Onias, the Righteous, in Josephus. In a period of drought about 63 BC just before Jerusalem fell to Pompey, Honi effected a rain miracle by drawing a circle. When he refused to favour either side in a dispute between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus he was stoned to death by Hyrcanus's followers. Another Hasid contemporaneous with Jesus was Hanina ben Dosa, a Galilaean who was very similar to Jesus. His devotion at prayer was so intense he did not notice a snake bite him, and as a healer he could even cure at a distance.

Vermes tells us the main characteristic of the Hasidim besides their working miracles was that they were poor. They lived according to the principle:

“What is mine is yours and what is yours is your own.”

They were not interested in legal matters and matters of ritual but were concerned with moral matters. They were respected for their love and kindness but they were renowned for their miracles. They were men of deeds respected as forming a link between heaven and earth by their closeness to God. The Hasidim were often Galilaeans perhaps because they began as fierce fighters against the Greeks and later joined equivalent freedom fighters like the band of Judas the Galilaean. Their individual teachings often offended the orthodox such as the Pharisees who respected these men for their devoutness but disliked their individuality, disapproving of the Hasidic disregard for the minutiae of the Law and fearing for the religious order which they had established. The Pharisees did not like the Hasidim's apparent closeness to God and, at the time of Honi, the leader of the Pharisees wanted to have the Hasid excommunicated but dare not. However the organisation of the orthodox eventually prevailed over the individuality and popular appeal of the Hasidim and established Rabbinic Judaism.

Vermes concludes that Jesus was:

“The just man, the zaddik, the helper and the healer, the teacher and leader, venerated by his intimates and less committed admirers alike as prophet, lord and son of God.”

One has to say that these men sound just like Essenes. The Essenes were accorded "Just" or "Righteous" as an honorific title.



Two hundred years before Barabbas the Hasidim had been the movement from which sprang other Jewish parties including the Pharisees and the Essenes. Were the Galilean Hasidim an offshoot of the Essenes? Did they have a militant wing? Were they the Galileans—the supporters of Judas—of Josephus? Were they the Nazarenes?

# Christianity Revealed

## The Essenes

**Dr M D Magee**

## Pliny on the Essenes

Why are the gospels silent about the Essenes and the Zealots, though they introduce us to the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Herodians? Could it be that the people at the centre of the story were Essenes? Neither Paul nor any of the other writers of epistles in the New Testament mentions the Essenes—they might as well have not existed. But we know they did. Three writers from the first century AD describe the Essenes—Pliny, Josephus and Philo. We now also have the evidence of the excavations at Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The clue that the Qumran might have been a home of the Essenes is in Pliny's *Natural History*. Pliny was a Roman naturalist who wrote in about 70 AD, after the destruction of Judaea by the Romans putting down the four year uprising they called the Jewish War. Pliny is describing the region around the Dead Sea and says that on the western shore, where they had been for thousands of centuries, live the Essenes, a solitary people who renounce women and money. They maintain their numbers by accepting those driven by the vicissitudes of fortune and weariness of life. "Below" them are the ruins of En Gedi and "beyond" is the fortress of Masada.

"By the western shores [of the Dead Sea], but away from their harmful effects, live a solitary people, the Essenes, wonderful besides all others in the world, being without any women and renouncing all sexual desire, having no money, and with only palm trees as companions. Their assembly is born again day by day from the multitudes, tired of life and the vicissitudes of fortune, that crowd thither for their manner of living. So, for thousands of ages—strange to say—a people, in which no one is born, is eternal, so fruitful for them is the repentance of others for their life! Lying below (*infra*) these was the town of En Gedi, once second only to Jerusalem in fertility and groves of palm trees, but now like the other, a ruin. After that (*inde*), Masada, a castle on a crag, itself not far from the Dead Sea, is the end of Judaea." (*Natural History* 5:18:73)

Pliny's statement that the Essenes existed so long because they benefited from "the repentance of others for their life", links them directly with Jesus and John the Baptist who required people's repentance.

Pliny's comparison of En Gedi with Jerusalem is a mistake, suggesting that he was working from sources that he either misunderstood or were not quite accurate. Steven Gorenson of Duke University suggests Pliny's source was Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, a governor of Syria and a friend of Herod the Great, who described Qumran and other sites, including En Gedi, in c 15 BC while making a military survey. Recent archaeology, contrary to de Vaux, shows Qumran was occupied at the time of M. Agrippa, who died in 12 BC. Jerusalem is on the top of a range of hills, and though it is not infertile, mountains are not noted for fertility. Not far from En Gedi is Jericho, a fertile oasis and the comparison of the oasis of En Gedi with that of Jericho is surely intended. However, the area was wetter then than now, as de Vaux and other

excavators more recently have noted from the presence of date palm wood, palm leaves, and date pits at Qumran.

Pliny's "thousands of ages" is an exaggeration but one which might suggest an association between this community and a much older one. Josephus, who gives us the most complete account of the Essenes, puts the rise of the community in the previous century, during the first century BC. It might also however come from a misunderstanding of his source. Thus, Pliny's choice of words is noteworthy because he uses expressions typical of an Essene or proto-Christian community like "assembly", "born again" and "repentance", and even speaks of them being "eternal", a likely misunderstanding by Pliny of a source which said their expectation was eternal life. This might have led to the confusion about the "thousands of ages". Joseph Amusin thinks the reference to an eternal people comes from descriptions of themselves (CD 7:6;19:1-2;20:22) as people who "live for a thousand generations". Joseph M Baumgarten has also noted, in 4Q502, blessings "in the midst of an eternal people." Otherwise, most translators astonishingly do not make anything of these obvious parallels in their ignorance, their search for literary variation or their deliberate attempts to mislead.

If the words "below" and "beyond" or "after that" imply direction towards the south as they must, since it is only by looking south that Masada lies "beyond" or "after" En Gedi, then the Essenes lived at the most northerly of the three sites mentioned. There is a ruin and caves just at this spot, where the scrolls were found, and although nowhere in the Dead Sea discoveries are the curators of the scrolls called Essenes, from the content of their manuals, there is no doubt who they are. In the Dead Sea Scrolls they know themselves variously as the the righteous, the elect, the poor, the holy or the saints, the keepers of the covenant, the new covenanters, the remnant of Israel, the perfect of the way and the sons of light. If Pliny indicated relative altitude when he wrote "below", the Essene community was in the hills behind En Gedi from the Dead Sea but there is no sign of any such community there, other than traces of about twenty simple huts dicovered early in 1998.

Yizhar Hirschfeld, an Israeli archaeologist, found in these hills, twenty small plain rectangular huts, each large enough to house one man, which had been inhabited in the first and second centuries. The huts were too small to be houses and were realy simple monk's cells. Their situation fits Pliny's geographical description, but Pliny's description of the numbers of people crowding to the site prove that it is too small to be the one he is describing. This will have been one of the wilderness camps of the Essenes, alone too small to have been a community worth noting by Pliny.

## Philo on the Essenes

Another account of the Essenes by Philo of Alexandria (born in Alexandria in 20 BC and died about 60 AD; probably an Essenian Jew himself) written about 20 AD broadly matches Josephus's but sometimes he disagrees and occasionally adds something new. Thus he says that only mature men were admitted. He agrees with Josephus that the Essenes lived all over Judaea but maintains that they preferred to live in villages not towns. They avoided towns because of the contagion of evils rife within them. The sick and elderly were cared for—the scrolls tell us that the infirm and the sick were already spiritually saved under the guardianship of the angels of holiness.

Josephus tells us they practise husbandry but Philo enlarges saying they are farmers, shepherds, cowherds, beekeepers, artisans and craftsmen, but they did not make weapons, would not engage in commerce and were no sailors. They rejected slavery, believing brotherhood to be the natural relationship of men but that it had been spoiled by covetousness. Though they read a great deal they were not interested in philosophy in general but only morals. They ignored the weather and never used it as an excuse not to work. They returned from work rejoicing, as if they had been partying all day.

Contentment of mind they regarded as the greatest of riches. They make no instruments of war. They repudiate every inducement to covetousness. None are held as slaves, but all are free, and serve each other. They are instructed in piety and holiness, righteousness, economy, etc. They are guided by a threefold rule: love of God, love of virtue, and love of mankind. Of their love of God they give innumerable demonstrations, which is found in their constant and unalterable holiness throughout the whole of their lives, their avoidance of oaths and falsehoods, and their firm belief that God is the source of all good, but of nothing evil. Of their love of virtue they give proof in their contempt for money, fame, and pleasures, their continence, easy satisfying of their wants, their simplicity, modesty, etc. Their love of man is proved by their benevolence and equality, and their having all things in common, which is beyond all deception. They reverence and take care of the aged, as children do their parents. They do not lay up treasures of gold or silver but provide themselves only with the necessities of life.

Paul afterwards, in the same spirit, advises: Having food and raiment, therewith be content. Note also the threefold rule of the Essenes. Christians like to think that the great revelation that came to the world via Christ was love but here we find it is the central belief of an old Jewish sect, and curiously, one which Jesus shows every indication of having been a member of. Funny or what?

**PHILO: EVERY VIRTUOUS MAN IS FREE 12:75**

“Palestine and Syria too are not barren of exemplary wisdom and virtue, which countries no slight portion of that most populous nation of the Jews inhabits. There is a

portion of those people called Essenes, in number somewhat more than four thousand in my opinion, who derive their name from their piety, though not according to any accurate form of the Greek dialect, because they are above all men devoted to the service of God, not sacrificing living animals, but studying rather to preserve their own minds in a state of holiness and purity.

“These men, in the first place, live in villages, avoiding all cities on account of the habitual lawlessness of those who inhabit them, well knowing that such a moral disease is contracted from the associations with wicked men, just as a real disease might be from an impure atmosphere, and that this would stamp an incurable evil on their souls. Of these men, some cultivating the earth, and others devoting themselves to those arts which are the result of peace, benefit both themselves and all those who come into contact with them, not storing up treasures of silver and of gold, nor acquiring vast sections of the earth out of a desire for ample revenues, but providing all things which are requisite for the natural purpose of life.

“For they alone of almost all men having been originally poor and destitute, and that too rather from their own habits and ways of life than from any real deficiency of good fortune, are nevertheless accounted very rich, judging contentment and frugality to be in great abundance, as in truth they are.

“Among those men you will find no makers of arrows, or javelins, or swords, or helmets, or breastplates, or shields, no makers of arms or any employment whatever connected with war, or even to any of those occupations even in peace which are easily perverted to wicked purposes, for they are utterly ignorant of all traffic, and of all commercial dealings, and of all navigation, but they repudiate and keep aloof from everything which can possibly afford any inducement to covetousness.

“Least of all is a single slave found among them, but they are all free, aiding one another with a reciprocal interchange of good offices, and they condemn masters, not only as unjust, inasmuch as they corrupt the very principles of equality, but likewise as impious, because they destroy the laws of nature, which generated them all equally, and brought them up like a mother, as if they were legitimate brethren, not in name only, but in reality and truth. But in their view this natural relationship of all men to one another has been thrown into disorder by designing covetousness, continually wishing to surpass others in good fortune, and which has therefore engendered alienation instead of affection, and hatred instead of friendship.

“And leaving the logical part of philosophy, as in no respect necessary for the acquisition of virtue, to the word-catchers, and the natural part, as being too sublime for human nature to master, to those who love to converse about high objects (except indeed so far as such a study takes in the contemplation of the existence of God and of the creation of the universe), they devote all their attention to the moral part of philosophy, using as instructors the laws of their country which it would have been impossible for human mind to devise without divine inspiration.

“Now these laws they are taught at other times, indeed, but most especially on the seventh day, for the seventh day is accounted sacred, on which they abstain from all other employments, and frequent their synagogues, as they called these places, and there they sit according to their age in classes, the younger sitting under the elder, and listening with eager attention in becoming order.

“Then one, indeed, takes up the holy volume and reads from it, and another of the men of the greatest experience comes forward and explains what is not very intelligible, for a great many precepts are delivered in enigmatical modes of expression, and allegorically, as the old fashion was, and thus the people are taught piety, and holiness, and justice and economy, and the science of regulating the state, and the knowledge of such things as are naturally good, or bad, or indifferent, and to choose what is right and to avoid what is wrong, using a threefold variety of definitions, and rules, and criteria, namely, love of God, love of virtue, and love of mankind.

“Accordingly, the sacred volumes present an infinite number of instances of the disposition devoted to the love of God, and of a continued and uninterrupted purity throughout the whole life, of a careful avoidance of oaths and of falsehood, and of a strict adherence to the principle of looking on the Deity as the cause of everything which is good and nothing of which is evil. They also furnish us with many proofs of a love of virtue, such as abstinence from all covetousness of money, from ambition, from indulgence of pleasures, temperance, endurance, and also moderation, simplicity, good temper, the absence of pride, obedience to the laws, steadiness, and everything of that kind; and, lastly, they bring forward as proofs of the love of mankind, goodwill, equality beyond all power of description, and fellowship, about which it is not unreasonable to say a few words.

“In the first place, then, there is no one who has a house so absolutely his own private property, that it does not in some sense also belong to everyone. For besides that they all dwell together in companies, the house is open to all those of the same notions, who come to them from other quarters. Then there is one magazine among them all, their expenses are all in common, since they all eat in messes, for there is no other people among which you can find a common use for the same house, a common adoption of one mode of living, and a common use of the same table more thoroughly established in fact than among this tribe—and is not this very natural?

“For whatever they, after having been working during the day, receive for their wages, that they do not retain as their own, but bring it into a common stock, and give any advantage that is to be derived from it to all who desire to avail themselves of it. And those who are sick are not neglected because they are unable to contribute to the common stock, inasmuch as the tribe have in their public stock a means of supplying their necessities and aiding their weakness, so that from their ample means they support them liberally and abundantly, and they cherish respect for their elders, and honour them and care for them, just as parents are honoured and cared for by their loving children, being supported by them in all abundance both by their personal exertions and by innumerable contrivances.

“13. Such diligent practices of virtue does philosophy, unconnected with any superfluous care of examining into Greek names render men, proposing to them as necessary exercises to train them towards its attainment, all praiseworthy actions by which a freedom, which can never be enslaved, is firmly established.

“And a proof of this is that, though at different times a great number of chiefs of every variety of disposition and character, have occupied their country, some of whom have endeavoured to surpass even ferocious wild animals in cruelty, leaving no sort of inhumanity unpractised, and have never ceased to murder their subjects in whole troops, and have even torn them to pieces while living, like cooks cutting them limb from limb, till they themselves, being overtaken by the vengeance of divine justice, have at last experienced the same miseries in their turn.

“Others again having converted their barbarous frenzy into another kind of wickedness, practising an ineffable degree of savageness, talking with the people quietly, but through the hypocrisy of a more gentle voice, betraying the ferocity of their real disposition, fawning upon their victims like treacherous dogs, and becoming the causes of irremediable miseries to them, have left in all their cities monuments of their impiety, and hatred of all mankind, in the never to be forgotten miseries endured by those whom they oppressed.

“And yet no one, not even of those immoderately cruel tyrants, nor of the more treacherous and hypocritical oppressors was ever able to bring any real accusation against the multitude of those called Essenes (Essaion) or Holy (Hosion). But everyone being subdued by the virtue of these men, looked up to them as free by nature, and not subject to the frown of any human being, and have celebrated their manner of messing together, and their fellowship with one another beyond all description in respect of its mutual good faith, which is ample proof of a perfect and very happy life.” (Philo, Every Good Man is Free, 12:75-91, Trans C.D.Yonge)

#### PHILO: HYPOTHETICA 11:1

“1. Multitudes of his disciples has the lawgiver trained for the life of fellowship. These people are called Essenes, a name awarded to them doubtless in recognition of their holiness. They live in many cities of Judea and in many villages and grouped in great societies of many members.

“2. Their persuasion is not based on birth, for birth is not a descriptive mark of voluntary associations, but on their zeal for virtue and desire to promote brotherly love.

“3. Thus no Essene is a mere child nor even a stripling or newly bearded, since the characters of such are unstable with a waywardness corresponding to the immaturity of their age, but full grown and already verging on old age, no longer carried under by the tide of the body nor led by the passions, but enjoying the veritable, the only real freedom.



“4. This freedom is attested by their life. None of them allows himself to have any private property, either house or slave or estate or cattle or any of the other things which are amassed and abundantly procured by wealth, but they put everything together into the public stock and enjoy the benefit of them all in common.

“5. They live together formed into clubs, bands of comradeship with common meals, and never cease to conduct all their affairs to serve the general weal.

“6. But they have various occupations at which they labour with untiring application and never plead cold or heat or any of the violent changes in the atmosphere as an excuse. Before the sun is risen they betake themselves to their familiar tasks and only when it sets force themselves to return, for they delight in them as much as do those who are entered for gymnastic competitions.

“7. For they consider that the exercises which they practice whatever they may be are more valuable to life, more pleasant to soul and body and more lasting than those of the athlete in as much as they can still be plied with vigour when that of the body is past its prime.

“8. Some of them labour on the land skilled in sowing and planting, some as herdsmen taking charge of every kind of cattle and some superintend the swarms of bees.

“9. Others work at the handicrafts to avoid the sufferings which are forced upon us by our indispensable requirements and shrink from no innocent way of getting a livelihood.

“10. Each branch when it has received the wages of these so different occupations give it to one person who has been appointed the treasurer. He takes it and at once buys what is necessary and provides food in abundance and anything else which human life requires.

“11. Thus having each day a common life and a common table they are content with the same conditions, lovers of frugality who shun expensive luxury as a disease of both body and soul.

“12. And not only is their table in common but their clothing also. For in winter they have a stock of stout coats ready and in summer cheap vests, so that he who wishes may easily take any garment he likes, since what one has is held to belong to all and conversely what all have one has.

“13. Again if anyone is sick he is nursed at the common expense and tended with care and thoughtfulness by all. The old men too even if they are childless are treated as parents of a not merely numerous but very filial family and regularly close their life with an exceedingly prosperous and comfortable old age; so many are those who give them precedence and honour as their due and minister to them as a duty voluntarily and deliberately accepted rather than enforced by nature.

“14. Furthermore they eschew marriage because they clearly discern it to be the sole or the principal danger to the maintenance of the communal life, as well as because they particularly practice continence. For no Essene takes a wife, because a wife is a selfish creature, excessively jealous and an adept at beguiling the morals of her husband and seducing him by her continued impostures.

“15. For by the fawning talk which she practises and the other ways in which she plays her part like an actress on the stage she first ensnares the sight and hearing, and when these subjects as it were have been duped she cajoles the sovereign mind.

“16. And if children come, filled with the spirit of arrogance and bold speaking she gives utterance with more audacious hardihood to things which before she hinted covertly and under disguise, and casting off all shame she compels him to commit actions which are all hostile to the life of fellowship.

“17. For he who is either fast bound in the love lures of his wife or under the stress of nature makes his children his first care ceases to be the same to others and unconsciously has become a different man and has passed from freedom into slavery.

“18. Such then is the life of the Essenes, a life so highly to be prized that not only commoners but also great kings look upon them with admiration and amazement, and the approbation and honours which they give add further veneration to their venerable name.”

## Philo on the Therapeutae

This selection from Philo describes the pre-Christian ascetics of Egypt. It is important because it shows that asceticism was common in the deserts of Egypt even before the Christian monks and thus by no means peculiarly Christian—unless they were Christians!

The “Therapeutae”, described by Philo of Alexandria in his tract, *De Vita Contemplativa* (On the Contemplative Life), sought to deny the senses to find a pure spirituality. Ascetics like this, he said, could be found throughout the Greek world, but he says they abounded in Egypt. The name, “Therapeutae”, was a Greek cultic term for worshippers, particularly of an Hellenistic Egyptian god, Serapis. An association of this god, on an inscription in Delos, calls its members Therapeutae. Another sanctuary of Therapeutae to Serapis has been found in Magnesia. This will explain the emperor Hadrian’s odd remark: “The Christians and the worshippers of Serapis are the same. Those devoted to Serapis call themselves the bishops of Christ”. Eusebius, in the fourth century AD, concurred, regarding Philo’s book as referring to a Christian order, and it certainly influenced Christianity. According to Moshe Weinfeld, the rules regulating the Essene community and its admission of new members are essentially those found in Hellenistic and Roman religious groups, though later attempts were made to find scriptural justification for them.

Philo describes them as a wealthy people who gave up their property to relatives and lived, in a lonely country retreat outside Alexandria, a life of rigid asceticism. They refused to drink alcohol and, for six days a week, meditated upon God in solitary confinement, interpreted the scriptures and composed and read their own sectarian writings. Also “they composed songs and hymns to God”. Every seventh day they assembled together in worship for an hortation, men and women, most of whom were aged virgins, separated by a wall. They held the Jewish feast of Pentecost, not Passover, as their chief feast. Then they gathered together again for an hortation, to sing songs, old and new, and dance in worship.

Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*, J S Arkenberg’s adaptation of Oliver J Thatcher’s edition in the *Library of Original Sources*, online in Fordham’s *Ancient History Sourcebook*

“1. The deliberate intention of the philosopher is at once displayed from the appellation given to them: for with strict regard to etymology, they are called therapeutae and therapeutrides, either because they profess an art of medicine more excellent than that in general use in cities (for that only heals bodies, but the other heals souls which are under the mastery of terrible and almost incurable diseases, which pleasures and appetites, fears and griefs, and covetousness, and follies, and injustice, and all the rest of the innumerable multitude of other passions and vices, have inflicted upon them), or else because they have been instructed by nature and the sacred laws to serve the living

God, who is superior to the good, and more simple than the one, and more ancient than the unity with whom, however, who is there of those who profess piety that we can possibly compare? Can we compare those who honor the elements, earth, water, air, and fire? to whom different nations have given names, calling fire Hephaestus, I imagine because of its kindling, and the air Hera, I imagine because of its being raised up, and raised aloft to a great height, and water Poseidon, probably because of its being drinkable, and the earth Demeter because it appears to be the mother of all plants and of all animals.

“2. The therapeutic sect of mankind, being continually taught to see without interruption, may well aim at obtaining a sight of the living God, and may pass by the sun, which is visible to the outward sense, and never leave this order which conducts to perfect happiness. But they who apply themselves to this kind of worship, not because they are influenced to do so by custom, nor by the advice or recommendation of any particular persons, but because they are carried away by a certain heavenly love, give way to enthusiasm, behaving like so many revelers in bacchanalian or corybantian mysteries, until they see the object which they have been earnestly desiring.

“Then, because of their anxious desire for an immortal and blessed existence, thinking that their mortal life has already come to an end, they leave their possessions to their sons or daughters, or perhaps to other relations, giving them up their inheritance with willing cheerfulness. Those with no relations give their property to their companions or friends, for it followed of necessity that those who have acquired the wealth which sees, as if ready prepared for them, should be willing to surrender that wealth which is blind to those who themselves also are still blind in their minds.

“These men abandon their property without being influenced by any predominant attraction, and flee without even turning their heads back again, deserting their brethren, their children, their wives, their parents, their numerous families, their affectionate bands of companions, their native lands in which they have been born and brought up, despite the strong allure and attraction of a long familiarity. They depart, not to another city as those do who entreat to be purchased from those who at present possess them, being either unfortunate or worthless slaves seeking a change of masters rather than endeavoring to procure freedom (for every city, even that which is under the happiest laws, is full of indescribable tumults, and disorders, and calamities, which no one would submit to who had been even for a moment under the influence of wisdom). They take up their abode outside of walls, or gardens, or solitary lands, seeking for a desert place, not because of any ill-natured misanthropy to which they have learned to devote themselves, but because of the associations with people of wholly dissimilar dispositions to which they would otherwise be compelled, and which they know to be unprofitable and mischievous.

“3. Now this class of persons may be met with in many places, for both Greece and barbarian countries want to enjoy whatever is perfectly good. The greatest number of these men is in Egypt, in every one of the districts, or nomes, as they are called, and especially around Alexandria. From all quarters those who are the best of these

therapeutae proceed on their pilgrimage to some most suitable place as if it were their country, which is beyond the Maereotic lake, lying in a somewhat level plain a little raised above the rest, being suitable for their purpose because of its safety and the fine temperature of the air.

“For the houses built in the fields and the villages which surround it on all sides give it safety. The admirable temperature of the air proceeds from the continual breezes which come from the lake which falls into the sea, and also from the sea itself in the neighborhood, the breezes from the sea being light, and those which proceed from the lake which falls into the sea being heavy, the mixture of which produces a most healthy atmosphere.

“The houses of these men thus congregated together are plain, just giving shelter in respect of the two things most important to be provided against, the heat of the sun, and the cold from the open air. They do not live near to one another as men do in cities, for immediate neighborhood to others would be a troublesome and unpleasant thing to men who desire and intend to pursue solitude. Neither do they live far from one another because of the fellowship which they desire to cultivate, and because of their wish to be able to assist one another if they should be attacked by robbers.

“In every house there is a sacred shrine which is called the holy place, and the house in which they retire by themselves and perform all the mysteries of a holy life, bringing in nothing, neither meat, nor drink, nor anything else which is indispensable towards supplying the necessities of the body, but studying in that place the laws and the sacred oracles of God enunciated by the holy prophets, and hymns, and psalms, and all kinds of other things by reason of which knowledge and piety are increased and brought to perfection.

“Therefore they always retain an imperishable recollection of God, so that not even in their dreams is any other subject ever presented to their eyes except the beauty of the divine virtues and of the divine powers. Therefore many persons speak in their sleep, divulging and publishing the celebrated doctrines of the sacred philosophy. And they are accustomed to pray twice a day, at morning and at evening. When the sun is rising entreating God that the happiness of the coming day may be real happiness, so that their minds may be filled with heavenly light. And when the sun is setting they pray that their soul, being entirely lightened and relieved of the burden of the outward senses, and of the appropriate object of these outward senses, may be able to trace out trust existing in its own consistory and council chamber. The interval between morning and evening, they devote wholly to meditation on and to practice virtue, for they take up the sacred scriptures and philosophy concerning them, investigating the allegories as symbols of some secret meaning of nature, intended to be conveyed in those figurative expressions.

“They have also writings of ancient men, who having been the founders of one sect or another, have left behind them many memorials of the allegorical system of writing and explanation, whom they take as a kind of model, and imitate the general fashion of

their sect. They do not occupy themselves solely in contemplation, but they compose psalms and hymns to God in every kind of meter and melody imaginable, which they of necessity arrange in more dignified rhythm. Therefore, during six days, each of these individuals, retiring into solitude by himself, philosophizes by himself in one of the places called monasteries, never going outside the threshold of the outer court, and indeed never even looking out.

“On the seventh day they all come together to meet in a sacred assembly, and sit according to their ages with a grave demeanour, keeping their hands inside their garments, having their right hand between their chest and their dress, and the left hand down by their side, close to their flank. Then the eldest of them who has the most profound learning in their doctrines comes forward and speaks with steadfast look and with steadfast voice, with great powers of reasoning, and great prudence, not making an exhibition of his oratorical powers like the rhetoricians of old, or the sophists of the present day, but investigating with great pains, and explaining with minute accuracy the precise meaning of the laws, which sits, not indeed at the tips of their ears, but penetrates through their hearing into the soul, and remains there lastingly. All listen in silence to the praises which he bestows upon the law, showing their assent only by nods of the head, or the eager look of the eyes.

“This common holy place to which they all come together on the seventh day is a twofold circuit, being separated partly into the apartment of the men, and partly into a chamber for the women, for women also, in accordance with the usual fashion there, form a part of the audience, having the same feelings of admiration as the men, and having adopted the same sect with equal deliberation and decision. The wall which is between the houses rises from the ground three or four cubits upwards, like a battlement, and the upper portion rises upwards to the roof without any opening, on two accounts. First so that the modesty which is so becoming to the female sex may be preserved, and second, that the women may be easily able to comprehend what is said, being seated within earshot, since there is then nothing which can possibly intercept the voice of him who is speaking.

“4. These expounders of the law, having first of all laid down temperance as a sort of foundation for the soul to rest upon, proceed to build up other virtues on this foundation, and no one of them may take any meat or drink before the setting of the sun, since they judge that the work of philosophizing is one which is worthy of the light, but that the care of the necessities of the body is suitable only to darkness, on which account they appropriate the day to the one occupation, and a brief portion of the night to the other. And some men, in whom there is implanted a more fervent desire of knowledge, can endure to cherish a recollection of their food for three days without even tasting it, and some men are so delighted, and enjoy themselves so exceedingly when regaled by wisdom which supplies them with her doctrines in all possible wealth and abundance, that they can even hold out twice as great a length of time, and will scarcely at the end of six days taste even necessary food, being accustomed, as they say that grasshoppers are, to feed on air, their song as I imagine, making their scarcity tolerable to them.

“Looking upon the seventh day as one of perfect holiness and a most complete festival, they have thought it worthy of a most special honor, and on it, after taking due care of their soul, they tend their bodies also, giving them, just as they do to their cattle, a complete rest from their continual labors. They eat nothing of a costly character, but plain bread and a seasoning of salt, which the more luxurious of them do further season with hyssop. Their drink is water from the spring for they oppose those feelings which nature has made mistresses of the human race, namely, hunger and thirst, giving them nothing to flatter or humor them, but only such useful things as it is not possible to exist without. On this account they eat only so far as not to be hungry, and they drink just enough to escape from thirst, avoiding all satiety, as an enemy of and a plotter against both soul and body.

“There are two kinds of covering, one raiment and the other a house. Their houses are not decorated with any ornaments, but are run up in a hurry, being only made to answer such purposes as are absolutely necessary. Likewise, their raiment is of the most ordinary description, just stout enough to ward off cold and heat, being a cloak of some shaggy hide for winter, and a thin mantle or linen shawl in the summer. They practice entire simplicity, looking upon falsehood as the foundation of pride, but truth is the origin of simplicity, and upon truth and falsehood as standing in the light of fountains, for from falsehood proceeds every variety of evil and wickedness, and from truth there flows every imaginable abundance of good things both human and divine.”

## Josephus on The Essenes

Josephus suggests he was initiated into the Essene brotherhood so one assumes he knows what he is talking about. In his two famous books the Jewish War and the Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus, describes in some detail the cult ignored in the gospels—the Essenes.

He agreed that the Essenes, all Jews by birth, did not marry though they were not against marriage in principle—they realized it was necessary for the continuation of mankind—but propagated the sect by adopting other people's children. Another order of Essenes accepted marriage though maintaining strict rules about intercourse. There were about 4000 Essenes altogether, constituting a closely knit brotherhood with similarities to the Pythagoreans, devotees of Orpheus. They regarded pleasure as evil and disciplined themselves in continence and self control. They wore white garments just as did the priests.

In the Quran the followers of Jesus—the Nasrani—were called the people in white. The Manichaeans who derived from the Mandaeans—or Nasoraeans—followers of John the Baptist were called white robes. All took their habit of wearing white from their ultimate founders, the Essenes, who called themselves Lebanon, which means white, because they habitually wore sparkingly white robes of fine linen.

Essenes loved each other more than others, renounced riches (they were the Poor) and kept no servants, ministering to one another, eating only the simplest food and wearing their clothes and shoes to shreds. They held their goods in common yielding their possessions to the order when they joined and contributing all their earnings. Failure to do this was a grave dishonesty and was severely punished. In return they received all that they needed. Their lives were fully regulated by guardians or bishops who directed their daily duties leaving them able to do only two things of their own free will—to assist those in need and to show mercy, the pre-eminent characteristics of the Nazarenes of the gospels.

They settled in all towns in Palestine living apart in organized communities based on a centre where they congregated for meals. When travelling, they never needed to carry anything with them except weapons to protect themselves against robbers because wherever they lived someone was appointed to look after visitors—they offered hospitality to any visiting brother Essene just as if he were part of the family. There was no commerce between them, everything being given willingly to brothers who had need, once the guardian approved.

Their first act in the morning, before dawn, was to pray as if in supplication for the sun's rising. They took to their tasks until the fifth hour (11 am) whereupon they returned, clothed themselves in delicate white raiments, bathed in cold water and assembled in a room into which only the initiates were allowed for a sacred meal.



Following grace said by the priest they partook of bread and a single type of food and concluded with another prayer in praise of God as the provider of the food. They then changed back into their working clothes and resumed their labours until the evening. Sweating through exertion was not considered impure and they would not sanitize themselves by using fragrant oil as a cosmetic—oil was a defilement used other than functionally, for medicine or cooking. Philo adds they never used the weather as an excuse not to work and each day they returned from work rejoicing, as if it had been a great pleasure. Then they repeated the cleansing ritual in preparation for the evening meal after the same manner. Conversation at the meal was orderly, each speaking in turn, otherwise silence prevailed, and they ate and drank only what they needed thus maintaining their “perpetual sobriety”.

Having sworn the solemn ritual oaths of their initiation they were bound then no longer to swear oaths believing that those who were untruthful were condemned by God. Thus they were faithful, peaceful and restrained. They spent much time studying the writings of the ancients, the scriptures, taking from them what was good for their body and soul including medicinal knowledge based on roots and stones.

To be admitted, a proselyte had to first live in the manner of an Essene for a year to prove he was capable of it. Then he was baptized but was still not admitted to the order—he had to continue to live in their fashion for two more years to prove his worthiness. It was at this stage that he took solemn oaths to become a full member and participated in the sacred meal. He had to swear piety toward God, justice toward men, not to harm anyone of his own accord or at the command of another, to hate the wicked and assist the righteous, to show faith to all men especially those in authority but not to abuse his own authority or try to outshine others in garments or other finery, to love truth and reprove those who lie, not to steal or covet, not to conceal from others in the sect nor divulge their doctrines to others on pain of death, to pass on the rules to proselytes just as he received them, and to preserve the books of the sect and the names of the angels.

Having discovered the scrolls after almost 2000 years we know they successfully preserved their books, but the names of the angels? The scrolls show us that they were a secretive community. Evidently the allusion is to the mysteries which they were taught and had to keep.

Their judgements were just, not being passed by a court of less than a hundred, and usually permanent. If anyone was guilty of sin he was cast out eating only grass since he could accept no succour from anyone without the permission of the guardian and thus he wasted away to die of starvation. Excommunication therefore meant death because no Essene would forgo his vows even though excommunicated. In practice the community accepted them again when they felt they had been punished enough. They obeyed their elders and accepted majority decisions.

Josephus writes that, after God, they revered most the name of their legislator, it being a capital offence to blaspheme him. Scholars naturally have assumed this to be Moses

but, since all Jews revere Moses, it is tempting, in the light of the scrolls, to wonder whether Qumran's Teacher of Righteousness was meant. They avoided spitting in public and were stricter than other Jews in observing the sabbath, preparing all their food on the day before and not even defaecating on the sabbath. On workdays they carried with them a small hatchet to dig a pit as a latrine which they refilled when they had finished. While in the act of defaecating they wrapped themselves with their white robe so that they did not offend, not simply other people because their toilets were well away from habitation, but the divine rays of light. Afterwards they washed themselves thoroughly.

The full members were split into four classes. Seniors considered junior members to be as unclean as a gentile and had to undergo purification if they touched one. Their regular and simple lifestyle and diet made them long lived, often living to over a hundred years old.

They believed in an immortal soul locked in a corruptible body. The body was a prison for the soul which rejoiced when freed of it. This sounds like a contradiction of the Pharisaic, and presumably Christian ideas, of resurrection—the resurrection of the physical body. However some scroll fragments use the bones passage of Ezekiel to signify resurrection which seems to imply physical resurrection.

The Essene view sounds contradictory but we cannot assume that it seemed so to them. Essenes believed that the righteous would be resurrected in the kingdom of God on the third day of the kingdom (Hosea 6:2). Essenes were to be resurrected into an ideal world because they were God's perfect. Everything would seem as it was, but things would be perfect—the kingdom would be on earth but it would be free of sin. Since sin and corruption were synonymous, the kingdom was free of corruption. They would live for ever in incorruptible bodies—the same bodies that they had always lived in but rendered free of corruption by God, their reward for being righteous.

The significance of the Christian myth of the resurrection of Jesus is that it proved the kingdom of God had arrived. Modern Christians believe in a spiritual resurrection of the soul in heaven rather than a physical resurrection of the body, but the point about the Essene kingdom of God was that it was a coming together of heaven and earth—the physical body was resurrected on earth, but only when it had become part of heaven.

For the Essenes, heaven had no storms, snow or intense heat but was refreshed by a cool breeze always blowing gently from the ocean. Hell was a dark and stormy pit full of torments. These were inducements to men to be good in life for fear of being punished after death. Unlike other Jewish sects they did not offer sacrifices at the temple, indeed were excluded from it contradicting Josephus's statement that they were favoured by Herod. Some Essenes foretold the future and were rarely wrong.

JOSEPHUS: ANTIQUITIES (WHISTON) 18:1:2

“2. The Jews had for a great while had three sects of philosophy peculiar to themselves,

the sect of the Essens, and the sect of the Sadducees, and the third sort of opinions was that of those called Pharisees, of which sects, although I have already spoken in the second book of the Jewish War, yet will I a little touch upon them now.

“5. The doctrine of the Essens is this: That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for. And when they send what they have dedicated to God into the temple, they do not offer sacrifices because they have more pure lustrations of their own. On which account they are excluded from the common court of the temple, but offer their sacrifices themselves. Yet is their course of life better than that of other men, and they entirely addict themselves to husbandry. It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men that addict themselves to virtue, and this in righteousness, and indeed to such a degree, that as it hath never appeared among any other men, neither Greeks nor barbarians, no, not for a little time, so hath it endured a long while among them. This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs, which will not suffer any thing to hinder them from having all things in common, so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who hath nothing at all. There are about four thousand men that live in this way, and neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep servants, as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels, but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another. They also appoint certain stewards to receive the incomes of their revenues, and of the fruits of the ground; such as are good men and priests, who are to get their corn and their food ready for them. They none of them differ from others of the Essens in their way of living, but do the most resemble those Dacae who are called Polistae.”

Polistae are those who dwell in cities. It is interesting that, as Whiston himself points out, Josephus's Polistae are called Christae by Strabo. The Dacae were Pythagoreans, many of whom lived alone like ascetics in tents or caves but others lived together like monks in purpose built “cities” like monasteries and therefore might have been called Polistae. The discovery of the ruins at Qumran are just the sort of city meant, but the Essenes who dwelt there actually lived in the surrounding caves or in a tented city. The ruins were functional not dormitory.

#### JOSEPHUS: JEWISH WAR (WHISTON) 2:8:2-13

“2. For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees, of the second, the Sadducees, and the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essens. These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have. These Essens reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning, and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued, but they guard against the lascivious behavior of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man.

“3. These men are despisers of riches, and so very communicative as raises our admiration. Nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order, — insomuch that among them all there is no appearance of poverty, or excess of riches, but every one’s possessions are intermingled with every other’s possessions, and so there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren. They think that oil is a defilement, and if any one of them be anointed without his own approbation, it is wiped off his body, for they think to be sweaty is a good thing, as they do also to be clothed in white garments. They also have stewards appointed to take care of their common affairs, who every one of them have no separate business for any, but what is for the uses of them all.

“4. They have no one certain city, but many of them dwell in every city and if any of their sect come from other places, what they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own, and they go in to such as they never knew before, as if they had been ever so long acquainted with them. For which reason they carry nothing at all with them when they travel into remote parts, though still they take their weapons with them, for fear of thieves. Accordingly, there is, in every city where they live, one appointed particularly to take care of strangers, and to provide garments and other necessities for them. But the habit and management of their bodies is such as children use who are in fear of their masters. Nor do they allow of the change of clothing or of shoes till be first torn to pieces, or worn out by time. Nor do they either buy or sell any thing to one another, but every one of them gives what he hath to him that wanteth it, and receives from him again in lieu of it what may be convenient for himself, and although there be no requital made, they are fully allowed to take what they want of whomsoever they please.

“5. And as for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary for before sun-rising they speak not a word about profane matters, but put up certain prayers which they have received from their forefathers, as if they made a supplication for its rising. After this every one of them are sent away by their curators, to exercise some of those arts wherein they are skilled, in which they labour with great diligence till the fifth hour. After which they assemble themselves together again into one place and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water. And after this purification is over, they every one meet together in an apartment of their own, into which it is not permitted to any of another sect to enter, while they go, after a pure manner, into the dining-room, as into a certain holy temple, and quietly set themselves down. Upon which the baker lays them loaves in order, the cook also brings a single plate of one sort of food, and sets it before every one of them but a priest says grace before meat and it is unlawful for any one to taste of the food before grace be said. The same priest, when he hath dined, says grace again after meat and when they begin, and when they end, they praise God, as he that bestows their food upon them. After which they lay aside their garments, and betake themselves to their labors again till the evening; then they return home to supper, after the same manner; and if there be any strangers there, they sit down with them. Nor is there ever any clamour or disturbance to pollute their house, but they give every one leave to speak in their turn,

which silence thus kept in their house appears to foreigners like some tremendous mystery, the cause of which is that perpetual sobriety they exercise, and the same settled measure of meat and drink that is allotted them, and that such as is abundantly sufficient for them.

“6. And truly, as for other things, they do nothing but according to the injunctions of their curators. Only these two things are done among them at everyone’s own free-will, which are to assist those that want it, and to show mercy, for they are permitted of their own accord to afford succor to such as deserve it, when they stand in need of it, and to bestow food on those that are in distress but they cannot give any thing to their kindred without the curators. They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion. They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace. Whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury for they say that he who cannot be believed without God is already condemned. They also take great pains in studying the writings of the ancients, and choose out of them what is most for the advantage of their soul and body; and they inquire after such roots and medicinal stones as may cure their distempers.

“7. But now if any one hath a mind to come over to their sect, he is not immediately admitted, but he is prescribed the same method of living which they use for a year, while he continues excluded, and they give him also a small hatchet, and the fore-mentioned girdle, and the white garment. And when he hath given evidence, during that time, that he can observe their continence, he approaches nearer to their way of living, and is made a partaker of the waters of purification. Yet is he not even now admitted to live with them, for after this demonstration of his fortitude, his temper is tried two more years, and if he appear to be worthy, they then admit him into their society. And before he is allowed to touch their common food, he is obliged to take tremendous oaths, that, in the first place, he will exercise piety towards God, and then that he will observe justice towards men, and that he will do no harm to any one, either of his own accord, or by the command of others, that he will always hate the wicked, and be assistant to the righteous, that he will ever show fidelity to all men, and especially to those in authority, because no one obtains the government without God’s assistance, and that if he be in authority, he will at no time whatever abuse his authority, nor endeavour to outshine his subjects either in his garments, or any other finery, that he will be perpetually a lover of truth, and propose to himself to reprove those that tell lies, that he will keep his hands clear from theft, and his soul from unlawful gains, and that he will neither conceal any thing from those of his own sect, nor discover any of their doctrines to others, no, not though anyone should compel him so to do at the hazard of his life. Moreover, he swears to communicate their doctrines to no one any otherwise than as he received them himself, that he will abstain from robbery, and will equally preserve the books belonging to their sect, and the names of the angels. These are the oaths by which they secure their proselytes to themselves.

“8. But for those that are caught in any heinous sins, they cast them out of their society, and he who is thus separated from them does often die after a miserable manner, for as he is bound by the oath he hath taken, and by the customs he hath been engaged in, he

is not at liberty to partake of that food that he meets with elsewhere, but is forced to eat grass, and to famish his body with hunger, till he perish. For which reason they receive many of them again when they are at their last gasp, out of compassion to them, as thinking the miseries they have endured till they came to the very brink of death to be a sufficient punishment for the sins they had been guilty of.

“9. But in the judgments they exercise they are most accurate and just, nor do they pass sentence by the votes of a court that is fewer than a hundred. And as to what is once determined by that number, it is unalterable. What they most of all honour, after God himself, is the name of their legislator, whom if any one blaspheme he is punished capitally. They also think it a good thing to obey their elders, and the major part. Accordingly, if ten of them be sitting together, no one of them will speak while the other nine are against it. They also avoid spitting in the midst of them, or on the right side. Moreover, they are stricter than any other of the Jews in resting from their labours on the seventh day, for they not only get their food ready the day before, that they may not be obliged to kindle a fire on that day, but they will not remove any vessel out of its place, nor go to stool thereon. Nay, on other days they dig a small pit, a foot deep, with a paddle (which kind of hatchet is given them when they are first admitted among them) and covering themselves round with their garment, that they may not affront the Divine rays of light, they ease themselves into that pit, after which they put the earth that was dug out again into the pit; and even this they do only in the more lonely places, which they choose out for this purpose, and although this easement of the body be natural, yet it is a rule with them to wash themselves after it, as if it were a defilement to them.

“10. Now after the time of their preparatory trial is over, they are parted into four classes, and so far are the juniors inferior to the seniors, that if the seniors should be touched by the juniors, they must wash themselves, as if they had intermixed themselves with the company of a foreigner. They are long-lived also, insomuch that many of them live above a hundred years, by means of the simplicity of their diet. Nay, as I think, by means of the regular course of life they observe also. They condemn the miseries of life, and are above pain, by the generosity of their mind. And as for death, if it will be for their glory, they esteem it better than living always and indeed our war with the Romans gave abundant evidence what great souls they had in their trials, wherein, although they were tortured and distorted, burnt and torn to pieces, and went through all kinds of instruments of torment, that they might be forced either to blaspheme their legislator, or to eat what was forbidden them, yet could they not be made to do either of them, no, nor once to flatter their tormentors, or to shed a tear; but they smiled in their very pains, and laughed those to scorn who inflicted the torments upon them, and resigned up their souls with great alacrity, as expecting to receive them again.

“11. For their doctrine is this: That bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent, but that the souls are immortal, and continue for ever; and that they come out of the most subtile air, and are united to their bodies as to prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement, but that when they are set

free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward. And this is like the opinions of the Greeks, that good souls have their habitations beyond the ocean, in a region that is neither oppressed with storms of rain or snow, or with intense heat, but that this place is such as is refreshed by the gentle breathing of a west wind, that is perpetually blowing from the ocean; while they allot to bad souls a dark and tempestuous den, full of never-ceasing punishments. And indeed the Greeks seem to me to have followed the same notion, when they allot the islands of the blessed to their brave men, whom they call heroes and demi-gods and to the souls of the wicked, the region of the ungodly, in Hades, where their fables relate that certain persons, such as Sisyphus, and Tantalus, and Ixion, and Tityus, are punished, which is built on this first supposition, that souls are immortal, and thence are those exhortations to virtue and dehortations from wickedness collected whereby good men are bettered in the conduct of their life by the hope they have of reward after their death, and whereby the vehement inclinations of bad men to vice are restrained, by the fear and expectation they are in, that although they should lie concealed in this life, they should suffer immortal punishment after their death. These are the Divine doctrines of the Essens about the soul, which lay an unavoidable bait for such as have once had a taste of their philosophy.

“12. There are also those among them who undertake to foretell things to come, by reading the holy books, and using several sorts of purifications, and being perpetually conversant in the discourses of the prophets and it is but seldom that they miss in their predictions.

“13. Moreover, there is another order of Essens who agree with the rest as to their way of living, and customs, and laws, but differ from them in the point of marriage, as thinking that by not marrying they cut off the principal part of human life, which is the prospect of succession. Nay, rather, that if all men should be of the same opinion, the whole race of mankind would fail. However, they try their spouses for three years, and if they find that they have their natural purgations thrice, as trials that they are likely to be fruitful, they then actually marry them. But they do not use to accompany with their wives when they are with child, as a demonstration that they do not marry out of regard to pleasure, but for the sake of posterity. Now the women go into the baths with some of their garments on, as the men do with somewhat girded about them. And these are the customs of this order of Essens.”

Though the Essenes are admitted by Josephus not to swear vows, they are described as doing so at their initiation. Obviously there is no contradiction, the initial vows being to God are all that are needed. Thereafter the Essene should tell only the truth so no further swearing on oath is necessary. In Matthew's gospel, in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:34-37), Jesus has exactly the same rule for his converts:

“Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your

communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

James in his epistle (Jas 5:12), possibly one of the earliest books of the New Testament, has exactly the same advice:

“But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.”

The Jerusalem Church, of which James, the brother of Jesus, was the head, was an Essene community in Jerusalem. It is natural that both he and Jesus, as Essenes, would teach the same rule on swearing.

Regarding the art of foretelling the future, there is no doubt that the Essenes as shown in the Scrolls thought this their most important function, and considered themselves prophets. They were trying to read from the scriptures clues to the coming End Time. Jesus was convinced that the End was imminent and based his actions upon his judgement, but he was wrong. Josephus, however, gives several examples in ordinary history of Essenes seers being correct. In the Jewish War 1:3:5, the old Essene, Judas, foretold the death of Antigonus at Strato’s tower. In The Jewish War 2:7:3, Simon the Essene foretold from the Ethnarch’s vision of nine ears of corn eaten by oxen, that Archelaus, son of Herod would rule for only nine years. Archelaus had already ruled for nine years and within days was called to trial by the Romans and banished to Vienna. And in Antiquities 15:10:4-5, where we are told that the Essenes live like the Pythagoreans of the Greeks, the Essene, Menehem, told the schoolboy Herod that he would be king of the Jews and would reign for not ten or twenty but thirty years. Josephus tells us that the success of this prophecy is the reason that the Essenes, like the Pharisees whom Herod admired, were relieved of swearing an oath of fealty to him.

There is a strange imbalance in the space allocated by Josephus to the different sects that is not found in the citations from his works in Porphyry and Eusebius. Furthermore the descriptions of the after-life beliefs of the Pharisees and Essenes are odd. The Pharisees seem to believe in reincarnation and the Essenes in the immortal soul dwelling in bliss in the Islands of the Blessed. If Jesus was an Essene with the belief of those in Josephus, he could never have been resurrected. In the gospels, the Pharisees agree with Jesus on resurrection of the body, so they cannot have believed in reincarnation. Josephus claimed to have been a Pharisee, so quite why he should have spent so much space on Essenes and apparently got the views of the Pharisees wrong is peculiar. Possibly Josephus wrote more about Pharisaic beliefs but Christian editors excised much of the account because they were too favourable to the Pharisees, the arch enemies of the Christians. Alternatively Josephus did not want to admit to his Roman captors that he was really an Essene whom the Romans thought of as the true fanatics, or Zealots and tortured to death after the Jewish war.



Though Josephus and Philo give the impression Essenes were pacifist adherents of the law, Josephus belies it when he says that in the war with the Romans they were above pain and could not be broken though they were racked and twisted, burnt and broke. If they were pacifist why did the Romans need to torture them? Though they were tortured, they did not shed a tear, indeed laughed at their tormentors rather than blaspheme their legislator or eat forbidden food, and gloried in death rather than the misery of life. They sounded tough—more like Zealots!

Much of the account of the Essenes by Josephus has been remarkably confirmed by the discovery in the Judaean wilderness of the Dead Sea Scrolls, nothing less than the library of the Essenes, comprising 600 documents including parts of every book of the Hebrew Bible except the book of Esther. The pots in which the scrolls had been stored were of a type unknown in Palestine but of a recognized Egyptian pattern suggesting a link with Egypt, the home of the Therapeutae, with whom Philo had associated the Essenes. Nearby was a ruin which proved to be the monastic headquarters of the Judaean Essenes during the life of Jesus.

Their priestly caste had the name, the sons of Zadok. Zadok, in Jewish legend, was the noble priest of David and Solomon suggesting they claimed historic credentials, but the sons of Zadok were really the priests of Ezekiel's ideal temple (Ezek 40:46ff)—they were ideal priests, God's own priesthood building the kingdom of God on earth. So, the Essenes were a dissident priestly order. Objecting to the debasement of the Temple and the venality of the Sadducees, they had left them to adopt a largely frugal and monastic life uncorrupted by the scandal of collaboration. Their purpose was to keep themselves ritually pure because they were expecting the apocalypse when God would endow a Messiah to purge and judge the world.

## Josephus on the The Galilaeans or Zealots

Josephus in Antiquities 18:1:1 gives a sort of equivalent of Mark 13, a potted history of the Jews in Jewish apocalyptic style, from about 1 AD to the destruction of the temple by the Romans. Cyrenius is the Quirinius of Luke's gospel who called the census supposedly at Jesus's birth. So Luke is associating Jesus with the census, but is the real association more subtle? The movement founded by Judas of Galilee, the Galilaeans, is plainly identified as the cause of all the troubles of the Jews and the Jewish War. Galilaeans are Zealots, though Josephus calls them neither at this point, restricting himself to saying that they were founded by Judas of Galilee and that they were zealous.

JOSEPHUS: ANTIQUITIES(WHISTON) 18:1:1

“1. Now Cyrenius, a Roman senator, and one who had gone through other magistracies, and had passed through them until he had been consul, and one who, on other accounts, was of great dignity, came at this time into Syria, with a few others, being sent by Caesar to be a judge of that nation, and to take an account of their substance. Coponius also, a man of equestrian order, was sent together with him, to have the supreme power over the Jews. Moreover, Cyrenius came himself into Judea, which was now added to the province of Syria, to take account of their substance, and to dispose of Archelaus's money. But the Jews, although at the beginning they took the report of a taxation heinously, yet did they leave off any farther opposition to it, by the persuasion of Joazar, who was the son of Boethus, and high priest. so they, being over persuaded by Joazar's words, gave an account of their estates, without any dispute about it. Yet there was one Judas, a Gaulanite, of a city whose name was Gamala, who taking with him Sadduc, a Pharisee, became jealous to draw them to a revolt, who said that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty, as if they could procure them happiness and security for what they possessed, and an assured enjoyment of a still greater good, which was that of the honour and glory they would thereby acquire for magnanimity. They also said that God would not otherwise be assisting to them, than upon their joining with one another in such counsels as might be successful, and for their own advantage, and this especially, if they would set about great exploits, and not grow weary in executing the same. So men received what they said with pleasure, and this bold attempt proceeded to a great height. All sorts of misfortune also sprang from these men, and the nation was infested with this doctrine to an incredible degree. One violent war came upon us after another, and we lost our friends, who used to alleviate our pain. There were also very great robberies and murders of our principal men. This was done in pretence indeed for the public welfare, but in reality for the hopes of gain to themselves, whence arose seditions, and from them murders of men, which sometimes fell on those of their own people (by the madness of these men towards one another, while their desire was that none of the adverse party might be left), and sometimes on their enemies. A famine also coming upon us reuced us to the last degree of despair, as did also the taking and demolishing of cities. Nay, the sedition at last increased so high, that the very temple of

God was burned down by their enemy's fire. Such were the consequences of this, that the customs of our fathers were altered, and such a change was made, as added a mighty weight toward bringing all to destruction, which these men occasioned by thus conspiring together. For Judas and Sadduc, who excited a fourth philosophic sect among us, and had a great many followers therein, filled our civil government with tumults at present, and laid the foundations of our future miseries, by this system of philosophy, which we were before unacquainted withal, concerning which I shall discourse a little, and this the rather, because the infection which spread thence among the younger sort, who were zealous for it, brought the public to destruction."

Judas of Galilee and a Pharisee, Sadduc, according to Josephus, combined to resist the numbering of the people by the Romans when they conducted their census of 6 AD. Since the Essenes called themselves "the Sons of Zadok", and Pharisees disdained the priesthood, this association of Galilaean and Zadok in the founding of the Zealots should be noted. (Sadduc and Zadok are the same word rendered respectively the Greek way and the Hebrew way in our alphabet.) Their "zeal for the Law of Moses" and veneration of the Torah led them to hate foreigners, whence their leading role in the war against the Romans.

So, the Galilaeans were obviously not Pharisees as Josephus tells us, but this is either a misunderstanding by the amanuensis or perhaps even more likely, a deliberate alteration by Christians who wanted to associate trouble with the enemies of Jesus, the Pharisees, and remove it from the Essenes who some clever people might have remembered in the fourth century, were the original Christians.

The troubles described here are troubles which occurred decades after Judas founded his movement, which was at first a worthy and pious attempt by righteous Jews to protect their heritage and traditions. Later many other less worthy people joined, as the exploitation got worse and bitterness spread. In the gospels the seditionists were called robbers, because many of them turned to highway robbery to finance their guerilla war and, like many a revolution, it spawned banditry. However, at the time of Jesus there is no reason to think that the motives of the Galilaean sect were any the less grand than those described by Josephus of the original Judas, and the nature of the members were essentially that of his description below.

Further strangeness occurs in Josephus's account in the Jewish War:

JOSEPHUS: JEWISH WAR (WHISTON) 2:8:1-13

"1.And now Archelaus's part of Judaea was reduced into a province, and Coponius, one of the equestrian order among the Romans, was sent as a procurator, having the power of death put into his hands by Caesar. Under his administration it was that a certain Galilaean, whose name was Judas, prevailed with his countrymen to revolt, and said they were cowards if they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans, and would, after God, submit to mortal men as their lords. This man was a teacher of a peculiar sect of his own, and was not at all like thge rest of these leaders."

Curiously at this point, Josephus tells us nothing more about the Galilaeans of Judas but relates in huge detail, as given above, the account of the Essenes, “who pretends to a severer discipline”. Apparently, the Galilaeans were a branch of this “severer discipline”, contradicting Josephus, in Antiquities, saying Galilaeans were Pharisees!

JOSEPHUS: ANTIQUITIES(WHISTON) 18:1:6

“But of the fourth sect of Jewish Philosophy Judas the Galilaean was the author. These men agree in all things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty; and they say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man Lord; and since this immoveable resolution of theirs is well known to a great many, I shall speak no further about that matter; nor am I afraid that any thing I might have said of them should be disbelieved, but rather fear, that what I have said is beneath the resolution they show when they undergo pain; and it was in Gesius Florus’s time that the nation began to grow mad with this distemper, who was our procurator; and occasioned the Jews to go wild with it by the abuse of his authority, and to make them revolt from the Romans.”

These descriptions of how the Galileans were inured to pain match the descriptions given in the Jewish War of the Essene attitude to pain and death. Again we have confirmation that Galilaeans were a branch of the Essenes not the Pharisees.

The Zealots, first mentioned by Josephus as the fighters against the Romans in the Jewish rebellion of 66-73 AD, apparently were of major significance in Palestine during the whole of the period of the gospels so the single reference to them (Simon, the Zealot) looks suspicious. The failure of the gospels to feature either the Zealots or the Essenes while mentioning the other Jewish parties suggests that Essenes and Zealots have deliberately been left out of the story. Is it because the Nazarenes were a branch of the Essenes or the Zealots? Hippolytus, writing about 230 AD, confirms that the Zealots were indeed a branch of the Essenes. The Galilaeans of the gospels were members of the same sect, not just people from Galilee.

Josephus often uses the word “robber” as equivalent to “zealot”. For Josephus, Zealots became gangsters, killing for personal gain, killing Jews rather than gentiles and fighting amongst each other. It transposed, like the Mafia, from a liberation movement into gangs of criminals. Zealots became robbers. John describes Barabbas as a robber. Are the gospels narrating, in a distorted or coded way, a sequence of Zealot incidents! The Zealot leader—none other than Jesus Barabbas!

## Hippolytus on the Essenes

The later books of *The Refutation of all Heresies*, a ten part work, were found in the monastery of Mount Athos, Greece, in 1842—at first thought to be forged, they are now generally accepted. Though these sections from chapter 13 of book 9, relating to Jewish sects, are plainly heavily indebted to Josephus, they contain additional material either from another source or edited out of the copies of Josephus we now have.

### HIPPOLYTUS, THE REFUTATION OF ALL HERESIES, BOOK IX

“13. THE JEWISH SECTS. Originally there prevailed but one usage among the Jews; for one teacher was given unto them by God, namely Moses, and one law by this same Moses. And there was one desert region and one Mount Sinai, for one God it was who legislated for these Jews.

“But, again, after they had crossed the river Jordan, and had inherited by lot the conquered country, they in various ways rent in sunder the law of God, each devising a different interpretation of the declarations made by God. And in this way they raised up for themselves teachers, (and) invented doctrines of an heretical nature, and they continued to advance into (sectarian) divisions. Now it is the diversity of these Jews that I at present propose to explain. But though for even a considerable time they have been rent into very numerous sects, yet I intend to elucidate the more principal of them, while those who are of a studious turn will easily become acquainted with the rest.

“For there is a division amongst them into three sorts; and the adherents of the first are the Pharisees, but of the second the Sadducees, while the rest are Essenes. These practise a more devotional life, being filled with mutual love, and being temperate. And they turn away from every act of inordinate desire, being averse even to hearing of things of the sort. And they renounce matrimony, but they take the boys of others, and thus have an offspring begotten for them. And they lead these adopted children into an observance of their own peculiar customs, and in this way bring them up and impel them to learn the sciences. They do not, however, forbid them to marry, though themselves refraining from matrimony. Women, however, even though they may be disposed to adhere to the same course of life, they do not admit, inasmuch as in no way whatsoever have they confidence in women.

“14. THE TENETS OF THE ESSENI. And they despise wealth, and do not turn away from sharing their goods with those that are destitute. No one amongst them, however, enjoys a greater amount of riches than another. For a regulation with them is, that an individual coming forward to join the sect must sell his possessions, and present the price of them to the community. And on receiving the money, the head of the order distributes it to all according to their necessities. Thus there is no one among them in distress. And they do not use oil, regarding it as a defilement to be anointed. And there

are appointed overseers, who take care of all things that belong to them in common, and they all appear always in white clothing.

“15. THE TENETS OF THE ESSENI CONTINUED. But there is not one city of them, but many of them settle in every city. And if any of the adherents of the sect may be present from a strange place, they consider that all things are in common for him, and those whom they had not previously known they receive as if they belonged to their own household and kindred. And they traverse their native land, and on each occasion that they go on a journey they carry nothing except arms. And they have also in their cities a president, who expends the moneys collected for this purpose in procuring clothing and food for them. And their robe and its shape are modest. And they do not own two cloaks, or a double set of shoes; and when those that are in present use become antiquated, then they adopt others. And they neither buy nor sell anything at all; but whatever any one has he gives to him that has not, and that which one has not he receives.

“16. THE TENETS OF THE ESSENI CONTINUED. And they continue in an orderly manner, and with perseverance pray from early dawn, and they do not speak a word unless they have praised God in a hymn. And in this way they each go forth and engage in whatever employment they please; and after having worked up to the fifth hour they leave off. Then again they come together into one place, and encircle themselves with linen girdles, for the purpose of concealing their private parts. And in this manner they perform ablutions in cold water; and after being thus cleansed, they repair together into one apartment—now no one who entertains a different opinion from themselves assembles in the house—and they proceed to partake of breakfast.

And when they have taken their seats in silence, they set down loaves in order, and next some one sort of food to eat along with the bread, and each receives from these a sufficient portion. No one, however, tastes these before the priest utters a blessing, and prays over the food. And after breakfast, when he has a second time offered up supplication, as at the beginning, so at the conclusion of their meal they praise God in hymns. Next, after they have laid aside as sacred the garments in which they have been clothed while together taking their repast within the house—now these garments are linen—and having resumed the clothes which they had left in the vestibule, they hasten to agreeable occupations until evening. And they partake of supper, doing all things in like manner to those already mentioned.

“And no one will at any time cry aloud, nor will any other tumultuous voice be heard. But they each converse quietly, and with decorum one concedes the conversation to the other, so that the stillness of those within the house appears a sort of mystery to those outside. And they are invariably sober, eating and drinking all things by measure.

“17. THE TENETS OF THE ESSENI CONTINUED. All then pay attention to the president; and whatever injunctions he will issue, they obey as law. For they are anxious that mercy and assistance be extended to those that are burdened with toil. And especially they abstain from wrath and anger, and all such passions, inasmuch as they consider these to be treacherous to man. And no one amongst them is in the habit of

swearing; but whatever any one says, this is regarded more binding than an oath. If, however, one will swear, he is condemned as one unworthy of credence. They are likewise solicitous about the readings of the law and prophets; and moreover also, if there is any treatise of the faithful, about that likewise. And they evince the utmost curiosity concerning plants and stones, rather busying themselves as regards the operative powers of these, saying that these things were not created in vain.

18. THE TENETS OF THE ESSENI CONTINUED. But to those who wish to become disciples of the sect, they do not immediately deliver their rules, unless they have previously tried them. Now for the space of a year they set before (the candidates) the same food, while the latter continue to live in a different house outside the Essenes' own place of meeting. And they give (to the probationists) a hatchet and the linen girdle, and a white robe.

“When, at the expiration of this period, one affords proof of self-control, he approaches nearer to the sect's method of living, and he is washed more purely than before. Not as yet, however, does he partake of food along with the Essenes. For, after having furnished evidence as to whether he is able to acquire self-control—but for two years the habit of a person of this description is on trial—and when he has appeared deserving, he is thus reckoned amongst the members of the sect. Previous, however, to his being allowed to partake of a repast along with them, he is bound under fearful oaths.

“First, that he will worship the Divinity; next, that he will observe just dealings with men, and that he will in no way injure any one, and that he will not hate a person who injures him, or is hostile to him, but pray for them. He likewise swears that he will always aid the just, and keep faith with all, especially those who are rulers. For, they argue, a position of authority does not happen to any one without God. And if the Essene himself be a ruler, he swears that he will not conduct himself at any time arrogantly in the exercise of power, nor be prodigal, nor resort to any adornment, or a greater state of magnificence than the usage permits.

“He likewise swears, however, to be a lover of truth, and to reprove him that is guilty of falsehood, neither to steal, nor pollute his conscience for the sake of iniquitous gain, nor conceal aught from those that are members of his sect, and to divulge nothing to others, though one should be tortured even unto death. And in addition to the foregoing promises, he swears to impart to no one a knowledge of the doctrines in a different manner from that in which he has received them himself.

“19. THE TENETS OF THE ESSENI CONTINUED. With oaths, then, of this description, they bind those who come forward. If, however, any one may be condemned for any sin, he is expelled from the order; but one that has been thus excommunicated sometimes perishes by an awful death. For, inasmuch as he is bound by the oaths and rites of the sect, he is not able to partake of the food in use among other people. Those that are excommunicated, occasionally, therefore, utterly destroy the body through starvation. And so it is, that when it comes to the last the Essenes

sometimes pity many of them who are at the point of dissolution, inasmuch as they deem a punishment even unto death, thus inflicted upon these culprits, a sufficient penalty.

“20. THE TENETS OF THE ESSENI CONCLUDED. But as regards judicial decisions, the Essenes are most accurate and impartial. And they deliver their judgments when they have assembled together, numbering at the very least one hundred; and the sentence delivered by them is irreversible. And they honour the legislator next after God; and if any one is guilty of blasphemy against this framer of laws, he is punished. And they are taught to yield obedience to rulers and elders; and if ten occupy seats in the same room, one of them will not speak unless it will appear expedient to the nine. And they are careful not to spit out into the midst of persons present, and to the right hand.

“They are more solicitous, however, about abstaining from work on the Sabbath-day than all other Jews. For not only do they prepare their victuals for themselves one day previously, so as not (on the Sabbath) to kindle a fire, but not even would they move a utensil from one place to another (on that day), nor ease nature; nay, some would not even rise from a couch. On other days, however, when they wish to relieve nature, they dig a hole a foot long with the mattock—for of this description is the hatchet, which the president in the first instance gives those who come forward to gain admission as disciples—and cover (this cavity) on all sides with their garment, alleging that they do not necessarily insult the sunbeams. They then replace the upturned soil into the pit; and this is their practice, choosing the more lonely spots. But after they have performed this operation, immediately they undergo ablution, as if the excrement pollutes them.

“21. DIFFERENT SECTS OF THE ESSENI. The Essenes have, however, in the lapse of time, undergone divisions, and they do not preserve their system of training after a similar manner, inasmuch as they have been split up into four parties. For some of them discipline themselves above the requisite rules of the order, so that even they would not handle a current coin of the country, saying that they ought not either to carry, or behold, or fashion an image: wherefore no one of those goes into a city, lest (by so doing) he should enter through a gate at which statues are erected, regarding it a violation of law to pass beneath images.

“But the adherents of another party, if they happen to hear any one maintaining a discussion concerning God and His laws—supposing such to be an uncircumcised person, they will closely watch him and when they meet a person of this description in any place alone, they will threaten to slay him if he refuses to undergo the rite of circumcision. Now, if the latter does not wish to comply with this request, an Essene spares not, but even slaughters. And it is from this occurrence that they have received their appellation, being denominated (by some) Zelotae, but by others Sicarii.

“And the adherents of another party call no one Lord except the Deity, even though one should put them to the torture, or even kill them.



“But there are others of a later period, who have to such an extent declined from the discipline (of the order), that, as far as those are concerned who continue in the primitive customs, they would not even touch these. And if they happen to come in contact with them, they immediately resort to ablution, as if they had touched one belonging to an alien tribe. But here also there are very many of them of so great longevity, as even to live longer than a hundred years.

“They assert, therefore, that a cause of this arises from their extreme devotion to religion, and their condemnation of all excess in regard of what is served up (as food), and from their being temperate and incapable of anger. And so it is that they despise death, rejoicing when they can finish their course with a good conscience. If, however, any one would even put to the torture persons of this description, in order to induce any amongst them either to speak evil of the law, or eat what is offered in sacrifice to an idol, he will not effect his purpose; for one of this party submits to death and endures torment rather than violate his conscience.

“22. BELIEF OF THE ESSENI IN THE RESURRECTION; THEIR SYSTEM A SUGGESTIVE ONE. Now the doctrine of the resurrection has also derived support among these; for they acknowledge both that the flesh will rise again, and that it will be immortal, in the same manner as the soul is already imperishable. And they maintain that the soul, when separated in the present life, (departs) into one place, which is well ventilated and lightsome, where, they say, it rests until judgment. And this locality the Greeks were acquainted with by hearsay, and called it ‘Isles of the Blessed’.

“And there are other tenets of these which many of the Greeks have appropriated, and thus have from time to time formed their own opinions. For the disciplinary system in regard of the Divinity, according to these (Jewish sects), is of greater antiquity than that of all nations. And so it is that the proof is at hand, that all those (Greeks) who ventured to make assertions concerning God, or concerning the creation of existing things, derived their principles from no other source than from Jewish legislation. And among these may be particularized Pythagoras especially, and the Stoics, who derived (their systems) while resident among the Egyptians, by having become disciples of these Jews. Now they affirm that there will be both a judgment and a conflagration of the universe, and that the wicked will be eternally punished. And among them is cultivated the practice of prophecy, and the prediction of future events.

“23. ANOTHER SECT OF THE ESSENI AND THE SECT OF THE PHARISEES. There is then another order of the Essenes who use the same customs and prescribed method of living with the foregoing sects, but make an alteration from these in one respect, viz., marriage. Now they maintain that those who have abrogated matrimony commit some terrible offence, which is for the destruction of life, and that they ought not to cut off the succession of children; far, that if all entertained this opinion, the entire race of men would easily be exterminated. However, they make a trial of their betrothed women for a period of three years; and when they have been three times purified, with a view of proving their ability of bringing forth children, so then they wed. They do not, however, cohabit with pregnant women, evincing that they marry

not from sensual motives, but from the advantage of children. And the women likewise undergo ablution in a similar manner (with their husbands), and are themselves also arrayed in a linen garment, after the mode in which the men are with their girdles. These things, then, are the statements which I have to make respecting the Esseni.

“But there are also others who themselves practise the Jewish customs; and these, both in respect of caste and in respect of the laws, are called Pharisees. Now the greatest part of these is to be found in every locality, inasmuch as, though all are styled Jews, yet, on account of the peculiarity of the opinions advanced by them, they have been denominated by titles proper to each. These, then, firmly hold the ancient tradition, and continue to pursue in a disputative spirit a close investigation into the things regarded according to the Law as clean and not clean. And they interpret the regulations of the Law, and put forward teachers, whom they qualify for giving instruction in such things.

“These Pharisees affirm the existence of fate, and that some things are in our power, whereas others are under the control of destiny. In this way they maintain that some actions depend upon ourselves, whereas others upon fate. But (they assert) that God is a cause of all things, and that nothing is managed or happens without His will. These likewise acknowledge that there is a resurrection of flesh, and that soul is immortal, and that there will be a judgment and conflagration, and that the righteous will be imperishable, but that the wicked will endure everlasting punishment in unquenchable fire.

“24. THE SADDUCEES. These, then, are the opinions even of the Pharisees. The Sadducees, however, are for abolishing fate, and they acknowledge that God does nothing that is wicked, nor exercises providence over (earthly concerns); but they contend that the choice between good and evil lies within the power of men. And they deny that there is a resurrection not only of flesh, but also they suppose that the soul does not continue after death. The soul they consider nothing but mere vitality, and that it is on account of this that man has been created.

However, (they maintain) that the notion of the resurrection has been fully realized by the single circumstance, that we close our days after having left children upon earth. But (they still insist) that after death one expects to suffer nothing, either bad or good; for that there will be a dissolution both of soul and body, and that man passes into non-existence, similarly also with the material of the animal creation. But as regards whatever wickedness a man may have committed in life, provided he may have been reconciled to the injured party, he has been a gainer (by transgression), inasmuch as he has escaped the punishment (that otherwise would have been inflicted) by men. And whatever acquisitions a man may have made, and (in whatever respect), by becoming wealthy, he may have acquired distinction, he has so far been a gainer.

But they abide by their assertion, that God has no solicitude about the concerns of an individual here. And while the Pharisees are full of mutual affection, the Sadducees, on the other hand, are actuated by self-love. This sect had its stronghold especially in the region around Samaria. And these also adhere to the customs of the law, saying that

one ought so to live, that he may conduct himself virtuously, and leave children behind him on earth. They do not, however, devote attention to prophets, but neither do they to any other sages, except to the law of Moses only, in regard of which, however, they frame no interpretations. These, then, are the opinions which also the Sadducees choose to teach.

“25. THE JEWISH RELIGION. Since, therefore, we have explained even the diversities among the Jews, it seems expedient likewise not to pass over in silence the system of their religion. The doctrine, therefore, among all Jews on the subject of religion is fourfold-theological, natural, moral, and ceremonial. And they affirm that there is one God, and that He is Creator and Lord of the universe: that He has formed all these glorious works which had no previous existence; and this, too, not out of any coeval substance that lay ready at hand, but His Will—the efficient cause—was to create, and He did create.

“And (they maintain) that there are angels, and that these have been brought into being for ministering unto the creation; but also that there is a sovereign Spirit that always continues beside God, for glory and praise. And that all things in the creation are endued with sensation, and that there is nothing inanimate. And they earnestly aim at serious habits and a temperate life, as one may ascertain from their laws. Now these matters have long ago been strictly defined by those who in ancient times have received the divinely-appointed law; so that the reader will find himself astonished at the amount of temperance, and of diligence, lavished on customs legally enacted in reference to man.

“The ceremonial service, however, which has been adapted to divine worship in a manner befitting the dignity of religion, has been practised amongst them with the highest degree of elaboration. The superiority of their ritualism it is easy for those who wish it to ascertain, provided they read the book which furnishes information on these points. They will thus perceive how that with solemnity and sanctity the Jewish priests offer unto God the first-fruits of the gifts bestowed by Him for the rise and enjoyment of men; how they fulfil their ministrations with regularity and steadfastness, in obedience to His commandments.

“There are, however, some (liturgical usages adopted) by these, which the Sadducees refuse to recognise, for they are not disposed to acquiesce in the existence of angels or spirits. Still all parties alike expect a Messiah, inasmuch as the Law certainly, and the prophets, preached beforehand that He was about to be present on earth. Inasmuch, however, as the Jews were not cognizant of the period of His advent, there remains the supposition that the declarations (of Scripture) concerning His coming have not been fulfilled. And so it is, that up to this day they continue in anticipation of the future coming of the Christ—from the fact of their not discerning Him when He was present in the world.

“And (yet there can be little doubt but) that, on beholding the signs of the times of His having been already amongst us, the Jews are troubled; and that they are ashamed to

confess that He has come, since they have with their own hands put Him to death, because they were stung with indignation in being convicted by Himself of not having obeyed the laws. And they affirm that He who was thus sent forth by God is not this Christ (whom they are looking for); but they confess that another Messiah will come, who as yet has no existence; and that he will usher in some of the signs which the law and the prophets have shown beforehand, whereas, regarding the rest (of these indications), they suppose that they have fallen into error. For they say that his generation will be from the stock of David, but not from a virgin and the Holy Spirit, but from a woman and a man, according as it is a rule for all to be procreated from seed.

“And they allege that this Messiah will be King over them—a warlike and powerful individual, who, after having gathered together the entire people of the Jews, and having done battle with all the nations, will restore for them Jerusalem the royal city. And into this city He will collect together the entire Hebrew race, and bring it back once more into the ancient customs, that it may fulfil the regal and sacerdotal functions, and dwell in confidence for periods of time of sufficient duration. After this repose, it is their opinion that war would next be waged against them after being thus congregated; that in this conflict Christ would fall by the edge of the sword; and that, after no long time, would next succeed the termination and conflagration of the universe; and that in this way their opinions concerning the resurrection would receive completion, and a recompense be rendered to each man according to his works.

“26. CONCLUSION TO THE WORK EXPLAINED. It now seems to us that the tenets of both all the Greeks and barbarians have been sufficiently explained by us, and that nothing has remained unrefuted either of the points about which philosophy has been busied, or of the allegations advanced by the heretics. And from these very explanations the condemnation of the heretics is obvious, for having either purloined their doctrines, or derived contributions to them from some of those tenets elaborately worked out by the Greeks, and for having advanced (these opinions) as if they originated from God.

“Since, therefore, we have hurriedly passed through all the systems of these, and with much labour have, in the nine books, proclaimed all their opinions, and have left behind us for all men a small viaticum in life, and to those who are our contemporaries have afforded a desire of learning (with) great joy and delight, we have considered it reasonable, as a crowning stroke to the entire work, to introduce the discourse (already mentioned) concerning the truth, and to furnish our delineation of this in one book, namely the tenth. Our object is, that the reader, not only when made acquainted with the overthrow of those who have presumed to establish heresies, may regard with scorn their idle fancies, but also, when brought to know the power of the truth, may be placed in the way of salvation, by reposing that faith in God which He so worthily deserves.”

# Christianity Revealed

## Judaism to Christianity

**Dr M D Magee**

“There were no Christians, either Gentile or Jewish, living during the first century.”  
Nicholas Carter, The Christ Myth

## The Christ Myth

There is no historically valid evidence for the existence of “Christians” during the first century AD. The arsonists executed by Nero were Jewish messianists who tried to burn Rome to validate one of the prophecies in the Pseudo-Sibylline Oracles. There were many would-be christs. Christianity is an Hellenized form of Judaism. Plying their trade among Jewish peasants, the Jewish Magi often took the logical step of representing themselves as christs (messiahs), divinely ordained to become kings of the Jews and over the whole world that Yehouah had promised his Chosen.

They often took the name YSW, Joshua, popular among Jews because it was the name of the hero of the scriptural stories about the conquest of Canaan and the slaughter of the Canaanites. The name, transmitted through Greek and Latin appears in English as Jesus.

The Christ Myth of the Christians was devised to create a christ (necessarily Jewish) who could be made acceptable to non-Jews, and the Jesus Myth was crudely amended and refashioned for that purpose. What can have been its origins? As shown by the presence of Magi at the birth of the non-Jewish christ, there was an influence of the Zoroastrian cult, which by that time had assimilated both astrology and the notion that a Saviour (Saoshyant) would come to deliver the world from evil, and the shepherds who witnessed the nativity of Jesus were copies of the shepherds who witnessed the earthly birth of the Zoroastrian Son of God, Mithras.

Plainly the Zoroastrian concept of the Saoshyant was at its core, but what generated the specifics? The central character of the folk-tales that comprise the Jesus myth described in *The Hidden Jesus* was an otherwise forgotten man who led a Jewish revolt against Roman rule around 21 AD and was hung for being acclaimed the king of the Jews.

But Legendary figures like King Arthur are rarely single people in history but are coathangers on to which the coats of lesser heroes are hung. Sometimes, as in the Hans Anderson story, there are no coats but tales of various degrees of gaudiness.

Legends attributed to Judas the Gaulanite, to whose sect of Galilaeans Jesus belonged, might have been given to Jesus. The idea of the virgin birth might have come from Jesus ben Pandera, a Jewish magician who won, and then lost, the favour of Queen Alexandra Helene (Salome), the widow of Alexander Jannaeus, c 70 BC. Jesus ben Ananias was dismissed as a madman by the governor of Judaea, but prophesied disaster to Jerusalem for seven years until a Roman missile killed him during the siege of the city in 59-60 AD. Another agitator, whose name may have been Jesus, led his disciples into Jerusalem during the celebration of the Passover and was well received by the populace, but soon suppressed.

One at least of the figures that contributed to the composite hero of the Jesus Myth was an Essene, who denounced the Pharisees—Jesus ben Pandera, a thaumaturge and agitator. The actual biblical Jesus might conceivably have been this man misplaced by a century, though it seems unlikely. He, at first imposed on Alexander Jannaeus's widow, Shelamzion (Salome, Alexandra Helene). Her husband, Alexander Jannaeus (Yannai), had so disliked Pharisees that he crucified 800 of them, but this Jesus then fell out of favor when she switched her allegiance and began to support the Pharisees. In 70 BC, Jesus ben Pandera was hanged.

The hanging of Jesus ben Pandera probably meant he was bound to a stake and left to die slowly by desiccation in the hot sunlight. Conceivably, this Jesus was thought of as a messiah by his supporters after his death and became a model for the myths of Jesus who was crucified about a hundred years later.

The Jewish record of Jesus ben Pandera is hostile to him as are all Jewish accounts of christs who failed. It is preserved in a book called *Sepher Toledoth Yeshu* (Book of the Lineage of Jesus), extant in several recensions, which differ in various details. All versions of the romance affirm that this Jesus really performed miracles, because he had learned the secret name of Yehouah, which enabled him to raise the dead, but he lost his power when he was in some way deprived of either his recollection of the name or of the parchment on which he had laboriously copied its four letters and which he had inserted in an incision in his thigh.

The record of Jesus ben Pandera has mightily embarrassed professionals in the Jesus-business ever since it was rediscovered in the sixteenth century. One expedient is to feign ignorance of it and hope the customers will not have heard of it. The more common expedient is to claim that the story of Jesus ben Pandera was devised by the wicked Jews during the Middle Ages to undermine faith in the Saviour of the New Testament.

No one who intended to contradict a story about a Jesus who flourished when Palestine was a Roman province would transpose the story to an earlier period when Judaea was ruled by an historical Jewish King and Queen. Moreover, the holy men who made that claim were, if at all educated in their profession, consciously lying. One cannot suppose that students of theology would not read so important a Father of the Church as Origen, from whom they would necessarily learn that the story about Jesus ben Pandera was known to Celsus when he wrote, c 170 AD. Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould, composer of *Onward, Christian Soldiers*, a graduate of Cambridge, told everyone the story of Jesus ben Pandera was unknown to Celsus!

That this Jesus might have been the basis of the Jesus myth is suggested by some curious words of Justin Martyr. Justin says:

“For of all races of men there are some who look for him who was crucified in Judaea, and after whose crucifixion the land was straightway surrendered to you as spoil of war.” (1 Apol 32)

The implication is that the Jewish War followed immediately (straightway) after the crucifixion. Conventional chronology places it over thirty years after the crucifixion. More important is that Judaea was not Roman as a spoil of this war. It was already Roman, and the Jewish War was a rebellion against them. So, Justin must have meant the crucifixion was just before the conquest of Judah by Pompey in 63 BC when Judaea really was a spoil of Pompey's conquests. It would thus tie in better with the crucifixion of 70 BC.

Neither Pharisees nor Essenes were keen on women, and could not have been enthusiastic about being ruled by one, but the Pharisees must have favoured Shelamzion because the rabbis' praised the queen in a midrash on Deuteronomy 11: 13-14 (Sifre Deut 42), admittedly composed years after the incident but illustrating a lasting and therefore strong tradition.

The Hosea Peshar was the Essene answer to the Pharisee propaganda, countering the idea of the Pharisees that Shelamzion's reign was idyllic. It denies the queen's reign was prosperous as suggested by Deuteronomy, and implied that the queen was the wanton woman of Hosea. They refer also to the wars between the Queen's sons after her death and to the famine that followed. The Essenes plainly hated her, as did the author of the source used by Josephus—Nicolaus of Damascus, who wrote a long history and might have been an Essene, if Damascus is taken to be code for Qumran, and his dislike of Shelamzion suggests it.

Yet the Essenes and the Pharisees had a common root. Both were concerned with the same problem of purities, a major concern of Zoroastrianism which believed in an evil creation, and differences over it led to their split in the Hasmonean period. Yose ben Yoezer, an early Pharisee, in four of his halakhot in the early Hasmonean period agrees with the interpretations of the Damascus Document, the Temple Scroll and other fragments of the scrolls sect.

So, we come down to the "time of" the Christian Jesus, when it seems another Essene leader was crucified. N T Wright in *Jesus and the Victory of God* writes:

"I have taken it for granted that Jesus of Nazareth existed. Some writers feel a need to justify this assumption at length against people who try from time to time to deny it. It would be easier, frankly, to believe that Tiberius Caesar, Jesus's contemporary, was a figment of the imagination than to believe that there never was such a person as Jesus."

The evidence for Jesus is a set of tendentious books and a movement that they seemed to generate. Jesus has several apparent biographies written by contemporaries or near contemporaries. Do they prove there was a historical man behind them? Was Wright right? He is a Christian, and contrary to his statement of faith, Frank R Zindler in *The American Atheist* argues that this Jesus never existed. Mythical figures obviously did not exist but they still have components. There was indeed probably a component at this time, but Christians have deliberately tried to obscure his real nature.



Of course, it is not up to the skeptical investigator to show Jesus was not historical but the burden of proof of the historicity of Jesus and his godly powers is on the believers. If someone claimed they were able to live far beyond their means because they had a spirit guide who showed them how to find pots of gold at the ends of rainbows, the police, judge and jury would be rightly skeptical. Why should anyone be less skeptical of the Christian claims which are even more astonishing? Unless uncontrovertible evidence for impossible claims are produced, the sensible person will be skeptical and treat the claim as false. No one who is not a fool would do any less.

N T Wright is happy to accept the historicity of Jesus simply because it would be hard for him not to. That is not a sound reason. It is hard to believe that particles can behave like waves and vice versa in modern science but it can be demonstrated to be so by experiment. It might be hard to believe that Santa Claus does not exist, if the thought has never been successfully countered by reason since childhood. Yet no sane person argues that there really is a Santa Claus. It is a child's entertainment and fantasy to amuse them when winter days are short and dark. Jesus is in precisely the same category, and not in the category of being provable by evidence like the wave behaviour of particles.

N T Wright might accept that coins survive from the first century with the image of Tiberius Cæsar on them but none exist with Jesus on them. "Jesus was not an emperor!" we can hear the Christians protesting. Quite so. Tiberius Caesar was an emperor and has all the evidence we can expect from an emperor to prove that he existed—statues, depictions, accounts of his speeches and deeds, biographies, contemporary letters, inscriptions and citations, even his house and gardens. Coins exist showing him as a youth and then gradually getting older until he was succeeded by other figures, Caligula and then Claudius, on subsequent coins. None of the evidence for an historical Jesus is as compelling as this evidence for Tiberius.

Accepting the evidence for Tiberius is better than that of Jesus, would N T Wright accept that the emperor was a god, or became one, like Jesus, after death? During their lifetimes, emperors before the time of Diocletian, no matter how absolute their power, never claimed to be gods, only principes and imperatores—First Citizen and General of the Armies. But the first emperor, Augustus, who preceded Jesus, was deified after his death, amusing educated Romans. Deifying emperors, clever enough to die naturally, became customary. Vespasian died jesting that he was simply becoming a god. So there is contemporary and varied evidence that these men were accepted as gods after they had died. There is no such varied evidence that Jesus did. Were the followers of Jesus copying the Roman emperors in making a god of their own dead leader?

Christians believe the Jewish scriptures prophesy Jesus, whom they call Christ, the Greek word for the Jewish Messiah. It is true that some Jewish prophets thought that a God-sent warrior king would lead the Jews to leadership of the world. The Christian messiah is the very opposite of the Jewish concept, and it is easy to distinguish the Messianic prophecies in the Jewish scriptures as not pertaining to a pacific teacher by reading them in their full context. Some prophecies of the Christian type of messiah are

simply not prophecies at all, but personifications of Israel as in the suffering servant of God, or simply statements of current myth or history, such as the birth of the child called Immanuel. Thomas Paine, the theoretician of the American Revolution, demonstrated the irrelevance of supposed Christian messianic prophecy in his book *An Examination of the Prophecies*.

The titles of the gospels, “According to Matthew”, and so on, were not added until late in the second century. Although Papias c 140 AD knows all the gospels he has only heard of Matthew and Mark, Justin Martyr (c 150 AD) knows of none of the four supposed authors. It is only in 180 AD, with Irenæus of Lyons, that we learn who wrote the four “canonical” gospels and discover that there are exactly four of them because there are four quarters of the earth and four universal winds. Thus, unless one supposes the argument of Irenæus to be other than ridiculous, we come to the conclusion that the gospels are of unknown origin and authorship, and there is no good reason to suppose they are eye-witness accounts of a man named Jesus of Nazareth. At a minimum, this forces us to examine the gospels to see if their contents are even compatible with the notion that they were written by eye-witnesses. We cannot even assume that each of the gospels had but one author or redactor.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke could not possibly have been written by an eye-witness of the tales they tell. Why would eye-witnesses have to plagiarize the essentials of the story, merely adding additional detail and colour, and whatever supported their own spin on the tale, as Matthew and Luke did to Mark’s account? Any eyewitness who used the self same words of someone else would know they were spoiling their eyewitness credibility and would not do it, but Christians are too gullible to realize this. Matthew and Luke plagiarize, largely word-for-word, up to 90% of the gospel of Mark, to which they add sayings of Jesus. These alleged sayings of Jesus were taken from another early document designated as Q. Like the so-called Gospel of Thomas found at Nag Hammadi in Egypt, Q was a list of wisdom sayings that at some point became attributed to Jesus. One of these sayings, “We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced (Mt 17:11; Lk 7:32)” comes from Æsop’s Fables!

The gospel of Mark, the oldest surviving gospel, dating possibly as early as 70 AD, begins the story with John the Baptist, and ends—in the oldest manuscripts—with women running frightened from the empty tomb. The last twelve verses of Mark are not found in the earliest manuscripts, though only they report the supposed post-resurrection appearances. The details Mark gives are unreliable and cannot be confirmed, either because they are misinterpretations of an Essene code, or because, as tradition has it, Mark was not a Palestinian but a Roman translator or interpreter of Peter, and did not really know the details but simply recorded what he thought he had heard Peter say. Both might be true.

Mark shows no first-hand understanding of the social situation in Palestine. He is clearly a foreigner, removed both in space and time from the events he alleges. For example, in Mark 10:12, he has Jesus say that if a woman divorces her husband and

marries another, she commits adultery. As G A Wells, the author of *The Historical Evidence for Jesus* puts it:

“Such an utterance would have been meaningless in Palestine, where only men could obtain divorce. It is a ruling for the Gentile Christian readers... which the evangelist put into Jesus’s mouth in order to give it authority. This tendency to anchor later customs and institutions to Jesus’s supposed lifetime played a considerable role in the building up of his biography.”

The most absurd geographical error Mark commits is when he tells the tall tale about Jesus crossing over the Sea of Galilee and casting demons out of a man (two men in Matthew’s revised version) and making them go into about 2000 pigs which committed suicide in the sea. This marvel occurred in the land of the Gerasenes in the oldest Greek manuscripts of Mark. Luke, who also knew no Palestinian geography, follows Mark. But Matthew, who had some knowledge of Palestine, changed the name to Gadarenes, and this is further improved to Gergesenes in the KJV.

Gerasa, the place mentioned in the oldest manuscripts of Mark, is located about 31 miles from the shore of the Sea of Galilee! The author of Matthew saw the impossibility of Jesus disembarking at Gerasa, which was actually in the country inhabited by Greeks called Decapolis. Since the only town in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee that he knew of that started with “G” was Gadara, he changed Gerasa to Gadara. But even Gadara was five miles from the shore and still in the Greek country. Later copyists of the Greek manuscripts of all three gospels improved Gadara to Gergesa, a region now thought to have once formed part of the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. So much for the trustworthiness of the biblical tradition.

The gospel of John was compiled around the year 110 AD. The author, even assumed to have been a young man when Jesus was crucified, must have been over 90 years old. If this John really had written the book at such an old age, questions arise about his competence at such an old age and why an eyewitness had to leave his evidence so late and subject to the ravages of time and frailties of memory.

More important, John is also composite, comprising a “Signs Gospel” of uncertain antiquity together with additional material. That the author used someone’s else’s material shows again that it is not an eyewitness testimony as Christians always pretend the gospels are. The “Signs Gospel” seems to have been a list of miracles and could have been miracles supposedly done by other gods such as Dionysos and Asklepios, and transferred to Jesus.

Scholars have shown that the gospel originally ended at 20:30-31. It is in John 21:20 that the author writes, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and it is John 21:24 that the author writes:

“This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.”

Since this chapter is an addition, no one knows whether what went before is authentic, or the work of an eye-witness. It looks fraudulent. The testimony is not true. Gospels only carry conviction to adults whose desires they flatter. But gospels persistently administered to children can leave a strong emotional impression that children often cannot overcome when they are adult. That is a crime. It is indoctrination.

### Paul

A book included in the New Testament, Acts (*Acta Apostolorum*), contains stories about a few itinerant evangelists. Many Christian sects produced letters attributed to a Jew named Saul to attest to their orthodoxy. Saul changed his Jewish name to a Roman one, hob-nobbed with kings and Roman governors, was often mysteriously released from jail, and suddenly confessed he was a Roman citizen. It is all suspicious. Paul was most likely a Roman agent, meant to sow doubt and dissension among Jews. Later, unscrupulous men saw a money spinner in incipient Christianity.

Christians do not and cannot bring themselves to consider evidence in a proper fashion—namely in the right order. They believe, then consider the evidence in the light of their belief, and discover that it is sufficient for their already established belief! Thus they will accept that a God—Jesus—can appear to a man—Paul—in the form of a vision because their God can do such things, but no ordinary man can, and, if a man like Paul appeared to any modern Christian and said that he had been commissioned by his God in a dream to do something, and that was proof of the reality of his God, he would be certified.

The point of Paul's evidence is that it is not acceptable, because he did not know Jesus except as a vision. No credible institution could accept such evidence, except the church, and everyone has to suspend their understanding of reality to believe the church. Paul openly declared he never met Jesus "in the flesh." No court of law would accept visions as evidence, and neither should we, whatever the church with its vested interest might want us to think.

Scholars and computer experts have analysed Paul's letters, and only four can be shown to be substantially by the same author, putatively Paul/Saul—Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians. Arguable still are Philemon, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians. The rest are written later, and can be ignored as Pauline letters.

Even the letters supposed to contain authentic writings of Paul are as composite as the gospels. L Gordon Rylands, *A Critical Analysis of the Four Chief Pauline Epistles: Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and Galatians*, showed the Pauline material in these letters is pre-Christian Gnostic. Around this is often contradictory material added by proto-Catholic interpolators and redactors who succeeded thus in claiming a popular proto-Gnostic authority for the Church of Rome. The Greek text of these letters is heavy with terms such as Archon, Æon, and so on, jargon terms popular in Gnostic cosmogonies. It would appear that the Christ of Paul is as astral a being as the Lamb of Revelation. Like the god of Revelation, the god of Paul communicates via visions, not physically, face-to-face.

Paul never alludes to the parents of Jesus, let alone to the virgin birth. His letters never refer to a place of birth, and never refer to Jesus as “of Nazareth.” They give no indication of the time or place of his earthly existence. They do not refer to his trial before a Roman official, nor to Jerusalem as the place of execution. They mention neither John the Baptist, nor Judas, nor Peter’s denial of his master. They mention Peter, but do not imply that he, any more than Paul himself, had known Jesus while he had been alive.

A striking feature of Paul’s letters is that he gives no impression that Jesus was an ethical teacher. Appeals to the authority of Jesus to support an ethical teaching he is giving that the gospels also represent Jesus as having delivered are so infrequent that it seems more likely that they were later additions convenient to the church. Paul’s letters also fail to mention any miracles Jesus is supposed to have worked, an odd omission, since he worked so many, according to the gospels and they are taken as proof of his divinity.

## Recapitulating Non-Christian Evidence

Christians claim that the Jews knew of Jesus and that Jewish writings hostile to Christianity prove the historicity of Jesus. L Gordon Rylands, in his book *Did Jesus Ever Live?* pointed out long ago:

“All the knowledge which the Rabbis had of Jesus was obtained by them from the Gospels. Seeing that Jews, even in the present more critical age, take it for granted that the figure of a real man stands behind the Gospel narrative, one need not be surprised if, in the second century, Jews did not think of questioning that assumption. It is certain, however, that some did question it. For Justin, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, represents the Jew Trypho as saying, ‘ye follow an empty rumour and make a Christ for yourselves’. ‘If he was born and lived somewhere he is entirely unknown’.”

That the writers of the Talmud had no unquestionable independent knowledge of Jesus is proved by the fact that they confounded him with two different men. Evidently no other Jesus with whom they could identify the gospel Jesus was known to them. One of these, Jesus ben Pandera, reputed a wonder-worker, we have met. He was hung on a tree on the eve of a Passover around 70 BC at Jerusalem. The other, Jesus ben Stada, whose date is uncertain, but who may have lived in the first third of the second century AD, is said to have been stoned and hanged on the eve of a Passover, but at Lydda. There is confusion here but the Rabbis seem to have had no certain knowledge of Jesus apart from what they had read in the gospels.

Although Christian apologists have listed a number of ancient historians who allegedly were witnesses to the existence of Jesus, the only two that consistently are cited are Josephus, a Pharisee, and Tacitus, a Pagan. Since Josephus was born in the year 37 AD, and Tacitus was born in 55 AD, neither could have been an eye-witness of Jesus, who supposedly was crucified in 30 AD. These historians might have had access to reliable sources, now lost, which recorded the existence and execution of Jesus.

In the case of Josephus, whose *Antiquities of the Jews* was written in 93 AD, about the same time as the gospels, we find him saying some things quite impossible for a good Pharisee to have said. No loyal Pharisee would say Jesus had been the Messiah as Josephus was made to say. That Josephus could report that Jesus had been restored to life “on the third day” and not be convinced by this astonishing bit of information is beyond belief.

Worse is that the story of Jesus intrudes into Josephus’s narrative and can be seen to be an interpolation even in an English translation of the Greek text. Right after the citation about Jesus, Josephus goes on to say, “About the same time also another sad calamity put the Jews into disorder.” Josephus had no regard for messianic claimants and could hardly have regarded the downfall of one of them a sad calamity. The sad calamity is the unsuccessful revolution that Jesus led and that has been suppressed. The Romans

took awful punitive action. That is when Jesus was crucified, but almost all trace of it has been expunged by the Christian bishops since.

The fact that Josephus was not convinced by this or any other Christian claim is clear from the statement of the church father Origen (c 185-254 AD)—who dealt extensively with Josephus—that Josephus did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Moreover, the disputed passage was never cited by early Christian apologists such as Clement of Alexandria (c 150-215 AD), who certainly would have made use of it if he had it!

The first person to mention this passage was the church father Eusebius, in 324 AD. Eusebius himself probably inserted it. As late as 891 AD, Photius in his *Bibliotheca*, which devoted three codices to the works of Josephus, shows no awareness of the passage even though he reviews the relevant sections of the *Antiquities*. This testimonial cannot have been in his copy of the book.

Apologists point out that Josephus mentions Jesus elsewhere, in a passage which does not intrude into the text like an interpolation. It is a genuine passage but modified. The crucial word in it is the name James (Jacob in Greek and Hebrew) which must have been in Josephus's source. It might have meant James the Just who lived at the time and becomes in the New Testament a "brother of the Lord." "Brother of the Lord" might have been a real title of the Essenes of the Jerusalem church, or other brotherhoods at the time, "the Lord" properly being God himself. Josephus might have spoken of a "James, the Brother of the Lord", and this was changed by Christian copyists to brother of Jesus—adding also "who was called Christ."

Some manuscripts of Josephus contain the passages, but others still exist that do not—showing that the interpolated texts never succeeded in supplanting the original text universally. As late as the sixteenth century, according to Rylands, a scholar named Vossius had a manuscript of Josephus from which the *Testimonium Flavianum* was missing.

Note some of the things Pagan authors should have recorded if the gospel stories are true. One passage from Matthew should suffice to point out the significance of the silence of secular writers:

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour... And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (Mt 27:45,51-53)

Greeks and Romans must have noticed—and recorded—this darkness occurring when a solar eclipse was impossible. They must have recorded such a severe earthquake and signs of it might still be expected to remain. Resurrected dead men walking around the city must be the most astonishing and memorable event of all. Where are these resurrected people? Did they die again? No one can believe any of this. It is mythology,

and only those who believe in myths believe this—the Christians. None of this make belief proves that Jesus is made up, but it shows that from the beginning he was being mythologized. The Christians did not want to remember him for what he was. So they made up something else.

Tacitus, the Roman historian, in 120 AD wrote a passage in his *Annals* (Book 15:44) mentioning “a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians”, after one Christus who had been executed “in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus...” If Tacitus wrote this, he is here simply repeating what Christians had told him and had not consulted the archives. He calls Pilate a procurator but Pilate was not a procurator, a later office held by governors, but a prefect. He calls the leader Christus as if it were a proper name. This honorific title could not have appeared in the archives.

Tacitus never again alludes to the Neronian persecution of Christians in any of his voluminous writings, and no other Pagan authors know anything of the outrage either. No ancient Christian apologists made no use of the story in their propaganda—an unthinkable omission by motivated partisans who were well-read in the works of Tacitus. Clement of Alexandria, who made a profession of collecting just such types of quotations, is ignorant of any Neronian persecution, and even Tertullian, who quotes a great deal from Tacitus, knows nothing of the story.

Robert Taylor says the passage was not known before the fifteenth century, when Tacitus was first published at Venice by Johannes de Spire. The counter argument is that the whole passage matches the distinctive style of Tacitus. A distinctive style can, however, be easily imitated in a short passage, and there is an important lapse from normal Tacitean usage in that these Christians are *humani generis*, haters of the human race. Tacitus universally writes *generis humani*.

All this evidence to support the claim that Jesus was an historical figure is without substance, though it does not prove he did not exist. The burden of proof is always on the one who claims that something exists or that something once happened. The best proof that Jesus did exist is not what Christians want to admit, even today. It is what the gospels tell us. Jesus was a rebel who led a rebellion against the Roman occupation of Judaea and died for it in the way prescribed by Roman law. If the Christians invented the story of Jesus, it is incredible that they would have chosen the figure described in the gospels. Jesus was therefore not invented, but nor is he the Jesus that Christians want.

Jesus is called “Jesus of Nazareth”, but Nazareth did not exist in the first centuries BC and AD. Exhaustive archaeological studies have been done by Franciscans to prove the cave they possess was once the home of Jesus’s family, but the site is a necropolis—a city of the dead—used during the first century AD perhaps for the dead of Sepphoris, the Hellenistic city a few miles off. The Franciscans dissent from this conclusion, but they could do nothing else.



If Nazareth was a cemetery at the time, how should the name, Jesus of Nazareth, be interpreted? One wonders whether the rebel Nazarenes used cemeteries to hide in. The Jews considering them unclean and the Romans having immense respect for the dead, a cemetery might have been an excellent hiding place for bandits. A memory of this might have motivated the later Christians of Rome to live in catacombs used normally for burial.

Tertullian, to show that Romans persecuted Christians for their piety, claimed in 197 AD that the younger Pliny had written a letter to Trajan about a Christian sect in Bithynia, c 112 AD, who were suspected of conspiracy, but convinced Pliny they were innocent. Pliny's letter was "discovered" by a Dominican holy man, Iucundus of Verona, at the very end of the fifteenth century AD. It was "lost" a decade later in 1508! What we have of it now are copies made from this uncertain manuscript.

Though the letter is probably a forgery or grossly interpolated by the Christian monks who were famous for such inventions, as scholars concur, the Christians' apologies for their cult are what they would say in such circumstances. If they had secrets, they were able to prevent Pliny from finding them. Gospels cannot have been in general circulation until after this date, unless they were able to keep them from Pliny's policemen. If they were the gospels we now have, they would certainly not have produced them in support of their claim that they were just innocent, law-abiding, innocuous members of the lower classes. Modern Christians see them as utterly innocent, as we know, but they actually tell the story of a rebel against civic order who was crucified for his presumption. Pliny must have taken a dim view of that had he found them.

Pliny was a kindly man, who liked to think the best of everyone, and his Christians succeeded in convincing him they were guilty of nothing but a silly superstition, beneath the notice of a Roman government. These Christians sang hymns to the rising sun, sounding more like Mithraists than Christians, showing perhaps a common root, but also that those Christians were not the same as they now are. He was glad that the cult lost its popularity after he took judicial notice of it. His letter is the earliest historical evidence for the existence of Christians as distinguished from "Christiani", messianic Jews.

In his reply to Pliny's letter, Trajan thinks that the Christian cult is indeed a subversive conspiracy, but that most of the Christians are just ignorant and inoffensive proletarians who will come to their senses and leave the cult, if governmental action is directed only against the leaders, who were the conscious conspirators.

Tertullian also used the trick common among modern conspiracy theorists that certain documents exist in the appropriate archives revealing all. The whistle blower, Tertullian here, claimed that Pilate's records could still be consulted in the Imperial archives, and they proved the story in the gospels. The point of such claims is that when the documents never existed, and so no one could find them, a cover up is proved! Alternatively, the documents are indeed found and tell quite a different tale,

again proving a cover up, and forgery! Among certain gullible personalities, especially where suspicions have been already planted against officialdom, there is no way of convincing such people they are being tricked. On the contrary, every attempt to show they are wrong looks to them like trickery.

Tertullian like Paul had supernatural advisors. The ghost of a woman martyred in the arena advised Tertullian, but she was a male ghost because Jesus had equipped her with masculine organs so that she, for her faith, would be accepted in an all-male heaven.

In 135 AD, Simon Bar Kosiba was brutally defeated as the latest Messiah, after a long rebellion that tied down twelve legions. Many Jews in the empire were killed in mob riots, and the promotion of Christianity seriously began, perhaps because gentiles now had good direct evidence that they had had nothing to do with the insurgent, nor with the Jews because they were a non-Jewish group, a fact that previously had looked unlikely whatever they had pleaded.

Marcion was a wealthy shipowner at Sinope, now the Turkish town of Sinop on the south shore of the Black Sea, but then the largest port and commercial center east of Byzantium. Sinope was founded as a Greek colony and long remained a Greek city, but there had been a continuous influx of other peoples.

When Christian propaganda reached him, he saw, as all reasonable men must, that the ferocious, vindictive, and cruel god of the Jewish scriptures was utterly incompatible with the god of mercy and love of Pauline Christianity, and he accordingly decided that Yehouah was only the Demiurge, creator of the material world, but inferior to the good and supreme god who sent his Son (an avatar of himself) to save mankind from the Demiurge.

A consequence of this theory was a dichotomy between the body (material and therefore subject to the Demiurge) and a soul (purely spiritual and so in the domain of the Supreme God). That led to the asceticism and denial of nature that characterized most of the Christian sects and makes them so repulsive to healthy men.

In Marcion's view, the avatar, Jesus, appeared in the guise of a man of about thirty, but the ignorant apostles mistook him for a Jewish warrior christ, and the Jews showed their irremediable perversity by crucifying a supernatural imitation of him—because a god could not be killed. He had, however, been recognized by Paul. Marcion had a version of the gospel attributed to “a man from Lucania”, “Luke” in English, as though it were a man's name, and a collection of letters attributed to Paul that justified Marcion's theology. He may have had other holy books, and he wrote a work, *Antitheses*, conclusively proving that Yehouah was the antithesis of the Pauline god, and that the Old Testament was incompatible with Christianity.

He went to Rome, then the capital of the civilized world, but found Christians already established there. He founded his own church (c 150 AD), which naturally appealed to those who disliked the Jewish baggage that the religion carried, especially in the

aftermath of the Bar Kosiba rebellion. So, Marcion's Church attracted a good following and it may have been, for a time, the largest Christian sect, with congregations throughout the Empire.

The Fathers of the Church, who were determined to keep the Old Testament as the basis of their cult targeted the Marcionites with bitter animosity, and so they declined in the third and fourth centuries. But they survived even after the Fathers of the Church were at last able to start persecuting with the police powers of the state at their disposal. Why the Church Fathers wanted to burden their cult with the fictions of the Old Testament, which blatantly contradicted their own doctrine, seems peculiar.

The Marcionists were absorbed by the more drastic and ascetic church founded by "Manichaeus, the disciple of Jesus Christ" but Prudentius, a Christian poet, writing at the opening of the fifth century, could lament that the secular powers had not yet killed all the vile heretics who had been trapped by Marcion's evil insanity. Modern holy men like to pretend that Mani was not a Christian, forgetting that he has as much right to the title as they have, especially since many evangelical sects have re-instituted Gnosticism.

## Other Factors

N Carter presents a different theory about the origins of Christianity sometime in the first century. He takes his departure from the Stephen who appears in Acts 6:5-7:60, and is mentioned occasionally in subsequent chapters. The man's Greek name suggests he was a Hellenistic Jew, and since he did great wonders and miracles among the people, he sounds as though he were just another of the *goëtae*, or mountebanks, who swarmed through Asia Minor at that time, according to professor Morton Smith in *Jesus the Magician*.

In Acts, Stephen delivers a summary of the Jewish tradition about Abraham and his successors, and then upbraids the orthodox for their rejection of Jesus. His speech receives divine approval, for, looking up through a rift in the atmosphere, he sees God with Jesus at his right hand. The Sanhedrin, however, condemn him and the mob stones him, the punishment for blasphemy.

Carter dismisses the story in Acts as a Christian concoction. He believes that Stephen and his companions, all of whom bear Greek names, were members of the "New Letzim", who had assimilated the Stoic doctrine with its emphasis on all humanity and wished to bring Judaism into accord with it, insisting that the One God of the Universe is everybody's God.

Carter thinks these Letzim came to see Stephen as a messianic figure, resulting in "the transformation of the martyred Stephen into both a Jesus and a Christ in the minds of his worshippers, by at least the turn of the second century". "Jesus" was not the name of the man, but his title, meaning "savior".

In *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, John Allegro argues Christians made abundant use of *Amanita muscaria*, portrayed in some early Christian frescoes as the Tree of Life. *Amanita muscaria* induces vivid hallucinations. Its psychodelia yielded the images of the supernatural in much of the ancient world, and, according to R Gordon Wasson, inspired the religions of India and Persia. It was most likely the soma of the Vedas and perhaps the haoma of the Persians. The preoccupations of the tripper condition the divine revelations produced by the drug, by recombining and magnifying them in the mind and projecting them into the perceived world. The active principle, muscarine, easily extracted by chemistry, alone is almost always deadly, unless atropine is promptly administered as an antidote. But infusions of the fungus are not lethal even in large doses because they contain both muscarine and atropine.

Ornaments shown as decorating Christmas trees in Bavaria are really pictures of the *Amanita muscaria*, suggesting that some Christians knew why the sacred mushroom was sacred in the Middle Ages. The sacred mushroom is called the flesh of the gods by many primitive peoples. Infusing the eucharistic wine with the sacred mushroom would have given communicants pleasant or monstrous visions that the priests would have

suggested were visions of the communicant's post-mortum fate caused by the flesh of their god, Jesus.

Despite the objections of modern Christians, the Romans of the early empire saw Christians as conspirators who used parables to hide their conspiracies against the Roman Empire. The earliest datable reference to a Christian "love-feast" or agape, was made by Tertullian in his *Apologeticum* written around 197 AD precisely to show that Christians were innocent and not political conspirators, as the Romans suspected. Amanita muscaria was likely to have been used in the love-feasts.

Christianity was spread as a conspiracy against the Roman Empire, as the historical evidence has always indicated. The Romans were a practical people who tried to disturb the native cultures of their subjects as little as possible and were not interested in whatever superstitions the natives believed. They tolerated all sorts of cults as absurd as Christianity and would have tolerated it too, if they had not had good grounds for believing it to be politically subversive. Most of the evidence for the conspiratorial activities of the Christians has been destroyed together with the historical works in which it was recorded, by the Fathers of the Church as soon as they had climbed to political power.

Had Christianity been what it has become, a belief in a personal but invisible friend helping the believer find their way to immortality, when it was being peddled to the proletariat in the Roman Empire, intelligent Greeks and Romans would have been amused by it—a god who stupidly got himself crucified and then arose from the dead and sneaked off to become an invisible companion to everyone who felt they needed one! That is not how the Greek and Roman rulers saw Christianity.

The brand of Christianity that the Fathers put over stole the Old Testament and identified the Christian god as the Jewish god, Yehouah. The first concern of the fathers, as soon as they got their hands on governmental power, was to exterminate the Marcionists, the Manichaeans, and all the Christian sects that refused to accept Yehouah as their god.

After the Christian triumph, its most pervasive arguments became the monuments of Pagan greatness that the sect had not destroyed—feats of engineering like roads, bridges and aqueducts, amphitheatres, baths and other public buildings, sculpture and painting that had escaped proletarian righteousness, delightful literature, sensible laws and social organizations, and the tactics and discipline that made formidable armies of Germanic barbarians. All these achievements the marvelling invaders credited to the Christians, who also adapted ancient showmanship to their own impressive ceremonies.

The Christian bible seemed to be true history, and it referred to places in the real world, such as Rome and Egypt, of which the Germans had heard, and to historical persons, such as Augustus, who had ruled the empire that had once ruled the world. If the terrible god whose deeds were recorded in imperishable writing by eye-witnesses, behaved capriciously, unjustly, and brutally, so, according to traditions that had been

handed down by word of mouth in many versions, had Odin, a god of the northern barbarians before they became Christians.

If the Christians' old god had an eccentric son, who chose to sacrifice himself to himself, why Odin had done that, too—so some verse-singer said, though he did not name a time and place, as the Christian history did so precisely! If this son was born of a virgin, there was nothing unusual in it, for Heimdall had been born of nine virgins, plainly the ennead that represented the original Goddess. Simple-minded people mortgaged their future and never suspected what they had done. Christianity was imposed on the converts gradually. Established customs and conventions were not radically changed but slowly eroded.

It was the new religion that was barbaric. There was no honour in it, merely lies. It hated the mores and standards of civilization itself. Professional holy men appealed to the proletariat of the empire with talk of love and brotherhood, to make “foolish the wisdom of this world”, (1 Cor 1:20), thus negating all learning, all culture, and repudiating reason itself.

Clement in a frank admission, in a letter preserved and discovered in a remote monastery by professor Morton Smith, says that “we holy men have a duty to conceal the facts and lie to our congregations, under oath if necessary, perjuring ourselves to help disseminate the True Faith.” Eusebius was another scoundrel whether he was convinced of his own righteousness or not. Pious dolts think they are faithful servants of a god with cruel fates for unbelievers, who has instructed them to preach the gospel and thus make the whole world conform to their will, which happens to be God's too. Preaching is their way of getting what they want instead of by politics. Since their aims are supposedly the will of god, evangelism is righteous, and resistance to them is Satanic and must be crushed.

The righteousness syndrome is characteristic of Christians. They often describe it in terms of love, supposedly an unnatural fondness for those you would otherwise despise, but nonetheless a holy gift of God. In ordinary non-righteous use, love is a special fondness one person feels for another, usually intimate friend or relative. From an ignorant or wilful disregard for its original meaning, which was to love others of the same persuasion in the small groups Jews had divided themselves into, and hate others, especially the Romans and their collaborators, Christians go about telling us we must love our enemies. No one requires a PhD to recognize that this is not only impossible, but no modern Christian ever seriously practices it.

Those who have been grievously wronged by someone might voice the righteous thought that they forgive their enemies, but they would need a lifetime of Couéism to truly remove any doubt they had about their sincerity. Idiotic falsehoods like love your enemies lead nowhere because few, even Christians, believe it. What we have to do is to live with our enemies as civilized people, each respecting the other and not turning to robbery and murder to solve disputes. It is not love, but a practical rule for living with others. The truth about Christians in practice is that they love their co-religionists

so much that they want to rip the innards from everybody who rejects their odious God and His double standards.

Among the worst of the Christian double standards is the simultaneous acceptance of Jewish scriptures and the New Testament. The Jewish scriptures, supposedly the early part of God's word, showing how he got His plan of salvation all wrong at the start, is filled with the foulest crimes, from treacherous assassinations to insane butchery and rape, repugnant to civilized people, but approved by the Christian god, who commanded much of it. Judging by the record of the Jewish scriptures, S Thomas Aquinas had to admit that it is entirely proper and right to murder innocent people, rob people of their property, and rape women, if God commanded it. William of Occam and the Nominalists could only conclude that, because what God commanded was often manifestly unjust, whatever God commanded must be just however it might seem to us.

This must be the basis of the awful crimes committed by Christians throughout the history of Christendom. Popes and bishops asked themselves, "What would God do here?" They answered, "He would burn them alive in Hell", so they saved God a modicum of the trouble by beginning the process here on earth. The bible has suggested and thus instigated many appalling crimes and is among the most morally corrupting books ever printed.

Christian morality provides a perfect disguise for any scoundrel who simulates belief in the superstition to fleece the sheep. Surrounded by like-minded people, it is usually impossible to determine whether or not he actually believes all or part of the nonsense he professes, but either way the sheep are easily fleeced.

# Christianity Revealed

## AskWhy! Publications

- The Mystery of Barabbas? ISBN 0-9521913-1-8 £9.99 + £1.00 p&p UK (\$20.00 inc shipping US) © Mike Magee. 1995.
- The Hidden Jesus ISBN-0-9521913-2-6 £12.99 + £1.50 p&p UK (\$30.00 inc shipping US). © Mike Magee. 1997.
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## The Mystery of Barabbas

From time to time we read of churchmen scaring us with accounts of the spread of paganism, by which they usually mean worshipping Satan. Pagan religions were really the religions which preceded Christianity in the lives of the citizens of the Roman empire. When Christianity became the state religion all Pagan religions were banned and Pagans were persecuted. So it has been ever since, only in the last few hundred years has Christianity adopted a mask of liberality.

The author decided to explore the origins of Christianity, an exploration that eventually took him into the book, *The Hidden Jesus*, and he found that there is little that can be identified in Christianity that did not have its origin elsewhere. Christianity is itself Pagan insomuch that it has adapted its ceremonies and liturgies from the Pagan precursors that it professes to decry as the work of the Devil. *The Mystery of Barabbas* can be thought of as a companion volume to *The Hidden Jesus*.

“Dr Magee's claims are pure rubbish”. (Mary Whitehouse)

## The Gospel According To Barabbas

“...the God of Israel has called out the sword against all the nations, and He will do mighty deeds by the saints of His people”. (The War Scroll)

Jesus Barabbas had no intention of changing Jewish laws—only expectations. He was a fanatically dedicated Jew of an apocalyptic order, the Nazarenes, who believed that God had begun to create his kingdom on earth. He stoutly defended the Law of Moses as the gospels illogically admit. The Jewish people were fed up and hoping for their enemies to be overcome. Jesus Barabbas was one of many men who thought he could lead his people into the kingdom of God. He could only do this if he believed that he was God sent. He did and accepted the crown of David.

He began by urging people that they should prepare for the coming kingdom just as John the Baptist did. Only the Righteous could enter the kingdom so he invited Jews to sincerely repent and symbolically purify themselves through baptism and prepare themselves for the coming battle. In doing this he was metaphorically casting out evil spirits, making the blind see and healing the sick. Those who were thus purified could enter the kingdom and were the soldiers in the messianic army. He made no claim to be the Messiah.

Jesus believed that God helps those who help themselves. So the kingdom of Heaven has to be won by the Righteous showing that they were ready to take on their enemies, then God would intervene with a miracle. He knew it would not be easy for it was prophesied that those called to the messianic kingdom would have to face the might of the heathen. They had to sustain these tribulations to prove themselves faithful.

Jesus gathered together an army in the desert. He knew that by alerting the faithful and gathering an army he would be also alerting the authorities. He was the Nasi, the Prince, a leader of the Davidic mould who would assert the authority of God's Righteous, and that consequently one “like unto the Son of Man”, who the prophet Daniel told would come on a cloud from God, would arrive to institute the kingdom. After some remarkable successes the uprising was a failure, no “Son of Man” appeared, people asked them to leave them alone and Jesus and the disciples had to flee from Antipas's soldiers to Phoenicia.

Jesus hid, then ventured back into Antipas's country. He had come to believe that his mistakes were that God has ordained him the Messiah, the Melchizedek, and that the kingdom of God required him to capture Jerusalem and the Temple. Then God would intervene with a miracle. He became transfigured—crowned as Melchizedek. His band proceeded to Jerusalem disguised as Pilgrims. No one could address him by any title that might draw attention to the spies of the authorities.

However at the entry into the city he purposely revealed himself by fulfilling the prophesy of Zechariah, captured the city and controlled the Temple. The Roman garrison in the Antonia barracks probably withdrew to await reinforcements from Caesarea.

Pilate's troops counter attack after a few days, kill the Galilaeans in the Temple and batter the Tower of Siloam where some were holding out. The Romans had recaptured the city and still there was no miracle. Jesus and his generals in hiding take a last supper together—a messianic meal of the Essene type. Jesus, convinced that he had done all that God required and that a miracle was still in the offing, says he expects to be eating his next meal in the coming kingdom. He tells his men that they must remain armed. The next day was the Sabbath and also the Passover, a likely occasion for a miracle. They went to the Mount of Olives where, according to prophesy, the miracle would take place and Jesus urged his men to keep watchful—not for the enemy but for signs of God's intervention. It did not occur. A body of the Temple Guard arrived instead and arrested Jesus.

Jesus, the God, and Barabbas, the bandit, were both tried and crucified. Jesus, the God, knew his role in God's plan and as he expired whispered (Jn 19:30):

“It is finished”.

But Barabbas, the bandit, still believed that God would intervene—until, despairing, he called out with his last breath (Mk 15:34):

“My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?”

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e-mail: [staff@askwhy.co.uk](mailto:staff@askwhy.co.uk)

## The Hidden Jesus

- Was Jesus an Essene? Christians deny it. There are some similarities, they say, but too many differences. This book shows Jesus was indeed an Essene, and one of their leaders, and explains why there were differences from the Essenes described by Josephus, the Roman historian.
- What is the meaning of the word, Nazarene? Does it really refer to a previously unknown hamlet, as Christians believe, or was this an invention to hide its real meaning?
- Did Jesus really try to tell every Jew in Palestine at the time to love their Roman oppressors? Why then do even the gospels contradict this? Was his message intended only for Jews and meant to be a rallying cry against gentiles? The Christian universal faith depends on this being untrue.
- Why do demons get driven out of opponents of Jesus when he and his henchmen arrive on the scene? Why are these people torn and left for dead? Was it because the disciples were doing the tearing and beating to silence the opposition?
- Why are Jesus's main apostles given such thuggish nicknames? Could it be that they really were thugs, or zealots as they came to be known? Christians pretend they were pacifists but is that because the early church had to paint such a picture to disguise the opposite, and has done so ever since?
- What did Jesus consider to be God's when he, according to Christians, agreed to pay the tribute money, saying, "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's"? Aren't the only characteristic possessions claimed by God, His Children and the land he promised them? Jesus was refusing to pay tribute when he uttered this famous sentence.
- What was the unbindable, savage demon that Jesus rendered impotent when it revealed itself to be really 2000 Gadarene swine and to have the name Legion? Is Gadarene, an inland town the correct name for these swine?
- What was the Field of Akeldama where guts were spilled, gentiles were supposed to have lain asleep and had the nickname the field of blood? Who were the Galilaeans whose blood was spilt in the temple?
- Why did Jesus curse an innocent fig tree? Could it have had anything to do with the fig tree being a symbol of Rome?

Why have these questions not been adequately answered? Forget the obfuscations of the Jesus Seminar. All these and many more questions are convincingly and controversially answered in "The Hidden Jesus" which can be ordered from good booksellers and libraries (ISBN 0-9521913-2-6).

In this remarkable book Dr Michael D Magee peels off the pious accretions and interpretative wrappings added by the earliest gentile bishops to the story of the exploits of Jesus to make the gospels acceptable to the Romans and the basis of a universal religion. The truth is peculiarly transparent in the bible, although two thousand years of conditioning and the invention of spurious translations of Greek words to suit Christian belief in the so-called New Testament Greek have succeeded in blinding even the most critical of scholars.

The gentile bishops of the embryonic religion were faced with travelers' tales from Palestine that Jesus was not what he seemed. This oral tradition was strong because Jews were already widespread in the Empire and after the defeat of their rebellion in the Jewish War and their dispersion in 70 AD many more arrived from Palestine. Pericopes, individual stories about Jesus, kept coming to the bishops and when they did not match their preferred image of a saintly Son of God, had to be "corrected". The bishops had to say to their flocks, "Ho, Ho, Theophilus, how silly you are. It was not quite like that. No, this is what really happened". Then they would change a few subjects and objects and retell the tale such that a core remained but the sense favoured the view they were propagating rather than the truth.

It still happens today. There never was a gate in Jerusalem called The Eye of a Needle but it was invented by clerics to allow the rich to be saved when the plain sense of Jesus's aside was that it was impossible for the rich to be saved. Dr Magee explains parables and the healing miracles, and such difficulties as the cursing of the fig tree, the meaning of Nazarene, the cleansing of the temple, the release of Barabbas, Peter's triple denial, the tribute money and the Gadarene swine.

This book is a tour de force. For honest reasoning people, though not those who are irrational or emotionally dependent on the traditional image of Jesus, gospel stories will never be the same again-they now make sense. Oddly, the message of many modern Christians is upheld-that God is not an external supernatural entity ready to interfere with the world at a whim or a prayer. Jesus believed an external God was ready to intervene-he was forsaken or rather mistaken-but Christians have made the same mistake ever since, teaching people to blame devils instead of facing up to their own responsibility for their actions. Our gods and devils are within us and there we must seek and come to terms with them.

Available at good bookshops at £14.49 inc p&p (UK) or \$30 inc shipping and dollar conversion (US). Or by mail order (order form online, payment with order): AskWhy! Publications Selwyn 41 The Butts Frome Somerset BA11 4AB.

e-mail: [staff@askwhy.co.uk](mailto:staff@askwhy.co.uk)

## Who Lies Sleeping?

### The Dinosaur Heritage and the Extinction of Man

Mankind seems to suffer from an inability to recognize and understand what it is doing to its own environment. In this book Dr Magee considers the extinction of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago and shows that its symptoms were just the symptoms of the mass extinction which is occurring at present. Is it possible that the dinosaurs developed intelligence and destroyed themselves just as present day humans seem to be doing? The author examines the evidence in detail and shows that the dinosaurs gave every indication of being ready to become intelligent. Some species of dinosaur somewhere had all the attributes considered necessary for intelligence in the intelligent mammal. The latter has used its gift to begin the destruction of the world within 200 years of inventing technology. If the intelligent dinosaur had done the same, all that would remain of it in the fossil record would be an oily smear, polluted with heavy metals and exotic compounds. That is just what we find when the dinosaurs died.

“A book to savour... Deserves all the hype it can get”. UFO Magazine

“Stretches my imagination”. Nick Owen, BBC Good Morning

“Valid and credible theories... An intriguing and compelling read”. Alien Encounters

“More Sensational than Jurassic Park”. Daily Star

“A terrific writer... Compelling as any first rate thriller”. Bath Evening Chronicle.

## Summary And Contents

This book is about the mass extinction of species. One technologically superior species of mammal reached domination over the planet at the end of the 20th century: one species of dinosaur achieved human-like intelligence at the end of the Cretaceous Period. In only a moment in geological time, each destroyed the majority of co-existing higher life forms.

From early days, experts of various persuasions have demonstrated their prejudices and incompetence. A non-expert should not feel obliged to accept an expert's opinion, nor feel inhibited about trespassing on the experts' demesne. Our future might depend upon confronting the experts.

We examine details of the lifestyles and physiology of dinosaurs. Our hypothesis depends on the dinosaurs not being the ponderous, cold-blooded lizards of common belief. The dinosaurs were physiologically sophisticated. Otherwise the suggestion that “reptiles” could achieve intelligence would be rightly laughable.

The growth of intelligence in the mammals, culminating in mankind, highlights features necessary for intelligence to develop in animals.

We seek in dinosaurs the features of the intelligent animal. Dinosaurs often had the necessary features and indeed owed their superiority over the mammals for millions of years to having evolved them.

Similar answers to evolutionary problems arise repeatedly. Convergence suggests that the solution of the problem of the evolution of intelligence in mammals and dinosaurs would yield similar features in both.

By making deductions from convergence we can reveal otherwise unsuspected possibilities. Humans have many characteristics of aquatic animals, pointing to an extended period of partial submergence which could explain a gap of four million years in our fossil record.

Evolution can occur astonishingly quickly. Intelligent dinosaurs could evolve, as *Homo sapiens* did, in a geologically short time. Because evolution and extinction were rapid they left few traces.

We ponder briefly on the possible appearance and nature of the intelligent dinosaurs (called *Anthroposaurus sapiens* to emphasise their similarity to the intelligent mammal).

Puzzles in old rocks could be remains of the dinosaurian civilization. Though this should be the most important evidence, it is poorly documented, having been glossed over or ignored by the experts. But even without it the circumstantial case remains strong.

We review the welter of theories concerning the end of the dinosaurs and from them identify underlying causes.

The destruction of the dinosaurs compares with that going on in the present world. We show how today's extinctions have the same underlying causes and warn of experts who ridicule public fears and distract attention from genuine concerns.

Perhaps we are doomed to self extinction like the anthroposaurs because we have inherited some self destructive traits from them. We attempt an initial diagnosis of the dinosaur heritage in human psychology.

Why are we constantly interested in monsters like dinosaurs? Are the squamous anthropoids that preceded us lying sleeping, awaiting their opportunity to retrieve the world they lost? A subliminal awareness of this might explain our obsession with monsters.

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