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Christianity Revealed

Christianity and the Essenes

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Christianity Revealed

Essene Life and Beliefs

Dr M D Magee

According to Josephus, the Essenes were one of three major Jewish philosophies. The other two were the Pharisees, who were mostly lay people, and the Sadducees, the aristocratic and powerful priestly class of Jerusalem. Josephus says there were six thousand Pharisees and four thousand Essenes in Judaea. Pharisees were less radical than the Essenes and were ready to compromise with the Sadducees and, to some extent, co-operate with the Romans. The contemporaneous Jewish philosopher and exegete Philo of Alexandria gives the same number of Essenes. Josephus and Philo report that the Essenes live “together in large communities in several cities of Judaea and in many villages”.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Shortly after the second World War ancient scrolls were found in caves at Qumran near the Dead Sea. Even in the dry climate of the Judaeian wilderness the scrolls had mainly crumbled to powder. But, amazingly, several were found essentially complete, and there were thousands of fragments, mainly small, some of which could be pieced together. Every book of the Jewish scriptures except for Esther and Nehemiah have been found at the caves of Qumran, often in multiple copies. Is it merely coincidence that the three most popular books in the Qumran collection (Psalms, Deuteronomy and Isaiah) were also the three books of the Jewish scriptures most often cited in the New Testament?

Parts of eleven copies of the Book of Enoch, known before 1947 as five linked booklets by different authors, were found at Qumran, but no fragments of the Parables or Similitudes (Book II, En 37-71). The likely explanation is that this part of Enoch was a later work. Its importance is that it features a “Son of Man” and seemed to be confirmation of a “Son of Man” figure in Jewish mythology. Now it looks likely to be a first century Christian substitute for the book that appears in its stead among the scrolls, the Book of Giants, which previously was known in a revised form as part of the Manichaean bible. Even more popular was the Book of Jubilees, an account of the Exodus up to the meeting of Moses with God at Sinai, present in about 15 copies.

Complete scrolls—the Community Rule, known in the USA as the Manual of Discipline, the Damascus Document, the Rule of the Congregation, the Habakkuk Commentary, the War Scroll, the Temple Scroll—have been translated but scholars' comparative work has been hindered by restrictions on access to the fragments. Only John Marco Allegro had published his full quota by 1968. Allegro was the only one of the international team who was an independent scholar, if indeed the others can be called scholars, for scholarship is more than erudition, being also a moral responsibility for truth. The other members were Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant. Allegro thought they were deliberately withholding publication until public interest waned. The scandal of such restrictions on scholarship has forced more openness and now two US scholars, Eisenman and Wise, have published translations of 50 Qumran fragmentary texts not previously open to public scrutiny. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls we have, according to Eisenman and Wise, “nothing less than a picture of the movement from which Christianity sprang in Palestine”.

Allegro published a text in 1956 which showed that the Essenes had a “Teacher of Righteousness” who was crucified, c 88 BC, one of eight hundred revolutionary conspirators crucified by Alexander Jannaeus, a Jewish king of the Maccabean family, after he had suppressed an attempted revolt, and also showed that the Teacher of Righteousness had the name “Jesus.” The international team accused Allegro of “recklessness” in publishing such a text. They ostracized him and they denied him

access to other scrolls. Christianity was never interested in contrary opinion let alone truth.

Ruins near the caves of the scrolls, and in just the place described by Pliny as the home of the Essenes, apparently were the headquarters of the community that had hidden the scrolls. Excavations seemed to confirm that the ruins had housed a monastic religious order similar to that of the Essenes described by Pliny, Philo and Josephus. The Damascus Document however refers to marriage and children—showing that Essenes in general were not celibate monks—and to other affiliated communities in Palestine, showing that the Qumran Community was not the only Essene settlement.

US professor, Norman Golb, thinks the scrolls had nothing to do with any sectarian community, yet to dismiss them as typically Jewish is nonsense. Many of them indeed are merely versions of the Jewish scriptures, and others are paraphrases of them, but the sectarian documents were unexpected and match nothing that anyone previously expected of Jewish literature of the time. Yet the “sectarian documents” can be nothing other than what they are—sectarian! Even if the nearby site of Khirbit Qumran had nothing to do with them, these documents prove that there were strange aspects to the Jewish religion of the time, and that these people were extremely anti-gentile.

The Damascus Document, copies of which had amazingly already been found in 1897 in a Cairo synagogue, was plainly important to the sect because portions of as many as nine copies were found in the caves. In part it tells the story of a group of Jews who with their “Teacher of Righteousness” went to a place in the wilderness—which they seemed to call Damascus—to uphold the Law. They became *barjonim*: outsiders. Lawrence Schiffman, a respected Jewish scholar writes:

“We know that the sectarians, especially in the Zadokite Fragments, often spoke in code words. We find all kinds of pseudonyms for actual personages, yet almost never a personal name that would allow a definite identification. The Jewish sects of the day are never mentioned by name even though we see numerous references to them designated with code words in the sectarian texts. Why then should we fall into the trap of taking place names literally? Rather it is more likely that ‘Damascus’ is a code word for Qumran.”

The sectarians had entered into a New Covenant with God. “Damascus” seems to be Qumran, the name of Qumran at that time being otherwise unknown to us. With this knowledge Paul's trip to Damascus in the New Testament takes on a new meaning and several problems can be explained. The New Covenanters called it Damascus after a staging post of the Jews “returning” from “exile” in Harran in Mesopotamia.

Cyrus the Persian allowed the Jews to “return” to Palestine. The “returners” painted the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BC, when Jews were deported to Babylon, as a divine punishment for laxity in observing the proper worship of Yehouah. The people settling in Palestine resolved to follow the Law to the letter. Since the Jewish religion was based on the Persian worship of Ahuramazda and the Babylonian worship of

Marduk, Jews always saw Babylonia as their second home and ever after it had a high Jewish population.

The Damascus Document tells us of those who had returned from exile in “the land of Damascus” having gone “out of the land of Judah” and with whom:

“God established his Covenant with Israel forever, revealing to them the hidden things in which all Israel had strayed,”

where “all Israel” means the whole nation whereas “Israel” means the select few who are pure enough and observant enough—the sectarians themselves. Here the reference to the “Land of Damascus” cannot be to Qumran because the Damascus Document clearly says it was “out of the land of Judah” whereas Qumran is only a few miles from Jerusalem. The Damascus Document explicitly quotes, apparently by way of explanation, Amos 5:26-27 which describes the place of exile as beyond Damascus. Babylon is, of course, beyond Damascus, but Babylon had been destroyed 300 years earlier by the Persian King, Xerxes. Perhaps some Jews, heading to Israel, had found Damascus comfortable. It seems quite likely, that having settled at Qumran the former exiles nick-named it Damascus after their place of origin. The exilic origin of the group is supported by many rules which pertain to life among the gentiles, a situation that scarcely applied in Judaea despite it being under foreign rule, but obviously would apply to Jews living in a foreign country.

This interpretation is confirmed from an unusual source. The Damascus Document implies that not all the New Covenanters in the land of Damascus returned when the Jewish free state was set up. What happened to them? There was always a large Jewish population in Mesopotamia, and among them evidently were some of the New Covenanters.

Around 800 AD a Mesopotamian Jewish reformer, Anan ben David, called for a return to the basics of Judaism and a rejection of the Talmud. He wanted, like the Essenes, a literal interpretation of the Mosaic Law, and he founded a sect called the Karaites. Scholars had noticed the astonishing similarities of the Karaites and the Essenes, separated as they were by almost a millennium. However, the discovery of the Cairo Damascus Document in 1897 seemed to them the source of Karaite beliefs. Evidently the Cairo Damascus Document was a holy book of the mediaeval Karaites who were strong in Egypt around 1000 AD when that version was transcribed. The Karaites opposed Rabbinic Judaism and proved to be very successful in the near and Middle East in mediaeval times. Now only a few thousand remain. The New Covenanters must have maintained their identity for over a thousand years in Mesopotamia before emerging as the Karaites.

The New Covenant

The history of the Essenes is not properly known. If Pliny's guess that the name Essene derives from hesed then they probably evolved from the Judaeans Hasidim of pre-Hasmonean times who aligned with Judas Maccabee against Antiochus Epiphanes IV about 160 BC. Some might have been part of the priesthood who broke away from the Sadducees. Their relationship with the temple is plainly hostile, yet the village Essenes continued to sacrifice there unlike the monastic members. They continued through the Herodian age and were not mentioned again much after the Jewish War.

The New Covenant evidently was founded by Jews in exile. According to the first ten lines of the Damascus Document, a remnant (Isa 37:31, 46:3, Ezra 14:22, Zech 8:12, etc) who were righteous were visited by God, 390 years after the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar and He...

"...caused them to sprout from Israel and from Aaron a shoot of the planting, in order to possess his land (Isa 60:21) and to become fat with the good things of the soil."

While the interval of 390 years is unlikely to be precise, it seems to be meant to be historic and not just symbolic, so corresponds to a date of about 196 BC. Another 20 years of uncertainty follows before the remnant is led back to the land. The year is about 176 BC. God has raised a Teacher of Righteousness but he is opposed by a Scoffer.

The High priest at this time was Onias III, a saintly man who was deposed by his brother, Jason, through the support of the new Greek king, Antiochus Epiphanes whom he had bribed with the promise of a mass of money. Were these brothers kinsfolk or were they brothers in an order? Was Onias the Righteous Teacher and Jason the Scoffer, or Wicked Priest? We seem to have here a split in the Zadokite priesthood into Sadducees and Hasidim. Onias seems to have been the priest for the traditionalists, the Persian faction of Hasids, nicknamed the Pharisees for supporting the Persian religion.

The time of priestly power and particularly that of the High Priest had been in the Persian and early Hellenistic periods from about 500—170 BC. To limit opposition, the Persians exercised control through the priesthood which enjoyed political as well as religious power as agents or collaborators.

Under the Ptolemies, the traditional priesthood had been supported by the kings even though they were Greeks. The Ptolemies had accepted Egyptian ceremonial and seemed disinclined to interfere with traditional religion. The northern Greeks, the Seleucids, who took the Levant from the Ptolemies in 200 BC, were much more inclined to allow Hellenization to proceed apace. Antiochus Epiphanes was opposed to the Jewish religion and wanted to Hellenize it. So he had his own reasons for supporting Jason, the leader of the Hellenistic faction of the Jerusalem priesthood.

Jason will have been the founder of the Sadducees who were intent on adapting the temple to the Greek model. That was an abomination to the traditionalists. The conservative Hasids had to withdraw leaving the temple to the unclean Sadducees, but a few decades later they split yet again into progressives and conservatives, the progressive conservatives retaining the name Pharisees, the conservative conservatives being the Essenes. The Pharisees claimed to be just as traditional as the Essenes, but a whole lot more pragmatic.

The Maccabees in the second century BC were to regain power for the Jews and become priest-kings bolstered by the political doctrine that the Levites had assumed the mantle of David. The Essenes had expected the purity of the Temple to be restored by the Maccabees. When it was not they decided to withdraw into the wilderness, to set up a pure people ready for the Judgement of God.

The earliest reported date for the Essenes is in Josephus, writing about the death of Antigonus in 103 BC. Josephus tells us that Essenes were noted for predicting the future. An Essene prophet called Judas, never known to be mistaken, foresees the murder of Antigonus by his brother, Aristobulus, king of Judaea. The point about Josephus's tale is that at first Judas seems to get the prophecy wrong but actually has merely mixed up two places of the same name. Judas was teaching his scholars one afternoon near the temple when the victim, Aristobulus, passes by, though Judas had just explained to his students that he would die that very day 600 furlongs away—an impossible distance to travel before night, thus apparently rendering the prediction false. Judas felt humiliated since it was his first mistake but soon the news comes that Aristobulus had indeed just been murdered in some subterranean chambers beneath the temple, having the same name as the predicted murder spot by the sea. If Josephus is to be believed then, the leading Essenes were respectable and acceptable citizens of the city of Jerusalem at this time. They were not apparently monks living in the wilderness at Qumran by the Dead Sea.

In the following 30 years another Jewish party that struggled in Jerusalem against Alexander Jannaeus, grew into great power with the ascendancy of his widow, Alexandra in 76 BC. This, of course was the Pharisees, whom Josephus indicates at that time was 'a Jewish sect that appeared more pious than the rest and stricter in the interpretation of the Law.'

One fragment is a short poem dedicated to a King Jonathan. The brother of Judas Maccabee (155 BC) was called Jonathan but he was never recognised as a true king. However Alexander Jannaeus (d 76 BC) was known as King Jonathan. Alexander Jannaeus spent time in the wilderness in guerrilla warfare against the Syrian Hellenistic King, Demetrius, who had been invited into the country by the Pharisees. In 88 BC Alexander Jannaeus crucified 800 Pharisees. The Essenes seemed to admire him for this and the Pharisees and Essenes were no longer fond of each other.

From this time on the Essenes seemed to have been living often at their wilderness retreat. It is possible that Herod called them back into respectability for awhile but then

offended them again. Thereafter Qumran does not seem to have been abandoned until the Jewish War of 66-70 AD.

“The Qumranites and the early Christians, both of whom considered themselves members of a New Covenant (2 Cor 3:6; CD 20:2), were children of a common parent tradition in Judaism.” (J C VanderKam)

It was with those who had gone out of the land of Judah into the land of Damascus that God established his covenant with Israel forever, revealing to them the hidden things in which all Israel had strayed, where all Israel—meaning the whole nation—is deliberately distinguished from Israel—meaning the remnant who were pure enough and observant enough, the sectarians themselves. The new covenanters had returned from exile in about 160 BC expecting the purity of the temple to be restored by the Maccabees, the rebellious family of Jewish nationalists. When it was not, they decided to withdraw into the wilderness, to set up a pure people ready for the judgement of God.

A group of Jews went with their righteous teacher to a place in the wilderness to uphold the law. The Community Rule, following Isaiah, commands:

“They shall be separated from the midst of the gatherings of the men of wrongs to go to the wilderness to prepare there the way of the Lord, as it is written: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a high way for God. This is the study of the Law, as he commanded them through Moses to do all that has been revealed from age to age, and, by his Holy Spirit, as the prophets revealed.”

God's covenant with Israel in the desert brought down by Moses had been replaced by the new covenant with God's elect in the desert, because of the backsliding of the children. The military preparations the children of Israel made to enter the promised land were now being made by God's elect to enter the kingdom of God. Many Qumran sectarian documents are aggressive in their phraseology and content. When Josephus wrote that the Essenes were pacifists, it must have been for Roman consumption. He himself tells us of a John the Essene who was a general in the Jewish war. God's soldiers had to be pure, whence the Essene's celibate regime, baptism and exemplary lifestyle.

Oddly, nowhere in the scrolls are their owners called Essenes but, since the Qumran caves and ruins are just where Pliny said they were, there is no doubt who they are. The source of the word Essene is a mystery. Scroll scholar, Dupont-Sommer, proposed that the word comes from the word 'esah meaning council or party and the phrase esath ha yahad, meaning the council of the community, which occurs often in the scrolls. Philo derived his word for Essene from hosio, which he thought was a Greek version of the Hebrew word, for holiness, hesed, often translated as piety, grace or saintliness. In fact hosio seems more likely to be from the semitic root, os, meaning a place of refuge and therefore salvation, the meaning of the name of the prophet, Hosea. Then Essenoi or Essaioi is from the Semitic, osim, meaning the saviours.

The Hebrew word “hozeh” means seer or prophet, from the word for a vision. Essenes were noted prophets and evidently considered themselves to be prophets. If this were the root of the word Essene then its occurrence in the in the prophetic books of the Jewish scriptures—Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Amos, Micah and Habakkuk—would tie in with their fondness of these scriptures. Prophecy was less the ability to see the future, as simple Christians think, but more interpreting God's law. For Essenes this was its real purpose, though they were interested in judging the signs of the times to anticipate the End Time too.

These derivations of the word Essene and more are probably all true. Just as Christians are fond of pious lying, the Essenes were fond of pious punning. John Allegro explains in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Reappraisal* that the Qumran sectaries knew themselves as the Covenant (berith), and particularly the New Covenant (berith ha dashah), the Congregation (edah), the Assembly (qahal), the Party or Council ('esah), the Community (yahad) and the Party of the Community (esath ha yahad). They were the Keepers of the Covenant, Joiners for War, Holy Ones or Saints, the New Covenanters, the Perfect of the Way, the Sons of Zadok, the Sons of Light, the Poor Men, the Righteous and the Doers of the Law. They loved multiple names especially if they sounded similar. We find exactly the same in the meaning of the word Nazarene.

The word yahad, which is central to the Scroll writers, though translated community is more emphatic of unity than our word. The community meant by yahad is better rendered as the United Ones. Unity was vitally important to the Essenes as it must be to any subversive or revolutionary organisation. The way such movements are broken today is to infiltrate them and create disunity—divide and rule. The Romans knew all about this principle and so did Herod the Great. Both had extensive networks of spies and provocateurs. In the gospels, Jesus has trouble keeping his flock united. After his death it is even more difficult and up pops Paul the apostle promoting disunity in the church. He has every characteristic of a provocateur.

The believers refer to themselves as the church over 100 times in the New Testament but never in Mark, Luke or John, and only three times in Matthew! Any or all of the Aramaic words edah, qahal, 'esah, and yahad might have been translated into the Greek as church (ekklesia.) Indeed in translating ekklesia into English from the Greek, the words assembly and congregation are used as well as church according to the context or the whim of the translator. Incidentally, the root of the Greek word ekklesia means to shut out or to break off, echoing exactly the exclusive and separatist nature of the Essenes and indeed the converts of Paul the apostle if Romans is to be believed—the emphasis on separation in the first seven verses is striking.

Many of the scrolls are holy orders for the various classes of Essene initiates. Among the complete scrolls found by the Dead Sea were four books of regulations for Essene communities: the Community Rule, the Damascus Rule, the War Scroll and the Rule of the Congregation. The Damascus Rule refers to marriage and children and to other affiliated communities in Palestine, showing that the Qumran Community was not the only Essene settlement. They were organised into at least two branches: celibate monks

at Qumran and lay members in all the villages and towns, just as Josephus said.

Two Cave 4 manuscripts of the Damascus Document (4Q266/4QDa and 4Q270/4QDe), include a penal code which is clearly based on the same text as the one in 1QS 7. Either the writers of the Community Rule and those of the Damascus Document used the same source, or one of the codes is directly dependent on the other. The point is the two rule books were connected somehow, and were not quite independent works as some have suggested. J. Baumgarten comments:

“It thus appears that the penal code, which in the Community Rule seems to reflect the discipline of an all male order, was capable of being also applied to a society in which both men and women took part in communal life.”

Each different rule book provided for different circumstances and therefore differed in many ways from others but the underlying common values remained and they are plainly rules for a single organization.

Books like the Community Rule were common in Christian communities of the early centuries as exemplified by the Didache. Geza Vermes, an Emeritus Professor of Jewish Studies, assures us that there are no precedents in ancient Jewish literature for the lists of social rules given in the Qumran documents—the law of Moses sufficed. This cannot be coincidence and adds to the proof that Christianity stemmed from one particular type of Judaism, the Essenes, and not Judaism in general. The Qumran books reveal the tap root of Christianity in Palestine.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are clear that the purpose of the Essenes was to keep themselves spiritually and ritually pure because they were expecting the apocalypse when God would endow a messiah to purge and judge the world. Josephus said the Essenes rejected the temple as unclean and offered their sacrifices by themselves. The communities of the Essenes were the true Israel and the priesthood they maintained in the wilderness, the true Zadokite priesthood. Not that they could have restored the hereditary line of priests but they expected to restore purity in sacerdotal practice. They objected to the debasement of the temple and the venality of the Sadducees. They scorned the illegal priests of Jerusalem, and had rejected them to adopt a largely frugal and monastic life uncorrupted by the scandal of pollution and collaboration.

They were opposed to foreign invaders, and their expected war between good and evil was largely a conflict between the Jews and the gentiles. Despite Philo and Josephus, they were not peace-loving monks. Hippolytus, writing about 230 AD, said Zealots were a branch of the Essenes.

The Essenes saw the history of the chosen people as a succession of God's covenants with respectively Noah, Abraham, Moses and Joshua. Jews were the Chosen People with whom God had made his Covenant. In the covenant God made with Abraham, if a male Jew was circumcised at eight days old, then he became one of the Chosen, and this was considered sufficient by most Jews. The sect of the scrolls however was

exclusive. They believed, following God's announcement in Jeremiah 31:31,33 in a new covenant between God and the remnant of Israel that was righteous.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

Only the Essenes were writing the law in their hearts and only they—the remnant of Israel—were God's people. It was with the remnant of Israel that God made his new covenant—it excluded all but those who, after the age of twenty, undertook the solemn vows of the sect not to depart from any command of God. Most Jews were not righteous and were excluded but herein lies the distinction of the Nazarenes from the Essenes. Nazarenes were Essenes who regarded the new covenant as the saviour of the old covenant of Abraham. The Essenes kept perfect so that they could bring back into the flock the lost sheep of the house of Israel in the last days before the end time when God would right the wrongs of the world.

All men were formed at birth with fixed amounts of good and ill in their dispositions. Only perfectly good people would be saved at the judgement day—evil people would be scourged for eternity. The Essenes could assay the degree of goodness of a person from his characteristics, but all was not lost for those who were not born perfectly good. All men had free will to be good despite their disposition at birth and could benefit from the grace of God. Even men born evil could submit themselves humbly to the precepts of God, and through self-discipline offer their souls for salvation, but the final decision was God's.

Like Paul, the sectaries made salvation depend ultimately on the grace of God, but the sectaries saw a clear role for works. For them a life devoted to achieving perfection—or alternatively sincere repentance of sins—was a necessary condition for salvation, but it was not sufficient because God had the final say. But God was not whimsical, he was just—so Essenes believed that their own righteous deeds submitted humbly to God could gain them salvation. What they did not know was how God considered their various iniquities in coming to His judgement, and this uncertainty kept them constantly striving for humility and perfect holiness in all respects.

The Master

The monks of the headquarters at Qumran were the men of perfect holiness also known as saints, the word used of Christians by Paul in his epistles and often in Revelation. The practical head of the monastery and of the movement as a whole was the Mebaqquer, the Guardian or Bishop, also called the Master (Maskil). There was also a bursar and a titular head, nominally above the Mebaqquer. Each of the camps of village Essenes had a Mebaqquer as well. Jesus was called master in the gospels and Judas was the bursar of the Nazarenes, showing that they organized on Essene lines.

The Master or Mebaqquer was a Righteous Teacher to whom the community listened to as a prophet, an interpreter of the prophets (QpHab 2:7). The Community Rule, an instruction manual for the Master, directs him to teach the saints the ways of perfection and it agrees remarkably with Josephus. The Master had to instruct the community in the dualistic theology of the Essenes and show them how to interpret the scriptures correctly, not just the law but the prophets also, and to act in judgement over infringements of the rules.

“The Master shall teach the saints:

- To seek God with a whole heart and soul, and do what is good and right before him as he commanded through Moses and through all his servants, the prophets.
- To love all that he has chosen and hate all that he has rejected.
- To put away all evil and hold fast to all good.
- To practise truth, righteousness and justice upon earth.
- To walk no longer in the stubbornness of a wicked heart and eyes of fornication, doing all evil.
- To bring all those that have offered themselves to do God's precepts into a covenant of lovingkindness.
- To be joined to God's scheme of things.
- To walk before him perfectly according to all the things that have been revealed of the appointed times of their testimonies.
- To love all the sons of light, each according to his lot in God's scheme of things.
- And to hate all the sons of Darkness, each according to his guilt in the vengeance of God.” (1QS 1:1)

Whoever disobeyed his “word” were unfaithful and were condemned. Matthew depicts the word of Jesus as having the same effects (Mt 7:24-27) where the reference is to a “house” (an Essene metaphor for the kingdom of God).

In the Damascus Rule the Master instructs everyone in the congregation, examines them in counsel with the assembly to assess and grade them and inscribes them each year in their rank. The Damascus Rule specifically orders: He shall not rebuke the men of the pit nor dispute with them, meaning those outside the community, especially the wealthy—the Sadducees—and orders him not to give them any doctrine:

“He shall conceal the teaching of the law from men of deceit, but shall impart a knowledge of truth and righteous judgement to those who have chosen the way.”

These restrictions are qualified by the Master's song of blessing to God which contains the line: I will not grapple with the men of perdition until the day of vengeance, evidently permitting disputation on that day if no other. The scenes in the gospels of Jesus disputing with Sadducees and Pharisees are false except those in the temple after he has captured it. Jesus then thought the day of vengeance had come and that he was allowed to tell the men of the pit what he thought of them. Previous disputes featured in the gospels arose within the Nazarene community, with Jesus in his role as Master instructing novitiates, except those where he taught in parables which were intended to enlighten those who had ears to hear but, as Mark says, conceal doctrine from others, and so must have been spoken in public.

The Master is the one who had to keep God's appointed times and watch for the signs of the coming visitation by God:

“He shall be zealous for God's appointed time for His Day of Vengeance... He shall constantly watch for the judgement of god.”

The sectaries took literally God's prescription in Joshua 1:8:

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.”

The oft mentioned Book of Meditations of the scroll texts is revealed as the books of Moses, the Pentateuch or Torah. The Essenes had to recite from the book of the law continuously, by day and by night. To keep the recitations going by night, the congregation had to watch together in a rosta for a third of every night of the year, and the Master had to lead prayers...

“...at dawn and at dusk and at the various watches of the night and the days of the new moon.”

And, finally:

“He shall perform the will of God in all his works and shall freely delight in ought that befalls him.”

Jesus warned that the day of vengeance was nigh. When he decided it had arrived he entered Jerusalem as a king. He watched and prayed throughout the night for God's judgement in the Garden of Gethsemane. At the end he admitted he was a failed prophet and stoically accepted his fate.

Essene Monastic Life

From the Community Rule we discover the rules the members of the Monastic Community were required to live by and they agree remarkably with Josephus. Monastic Essenes were to...

- be admitted to the Community only after a lengthy procedure;
- obey the Laws of Moses—indeed vow to be ‘Zealous for the Law’ ... ‘until there shall come the prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel’ (apparently suggesting that three people were expected, the prophet, the Priestly Messiah and the Kingly Messiah, but it seems the two Messiahs at least were the same person);
- hold their property in common under the control of a “custodian of property”;
- bathe daily in holy water;
- eat each day a sacred meal and pray together;
- be ruled by a Community Council which shall ‘preserve the faith in the land with steadfastness and meekness and shall atone for sin by the practice of justice and by suffering the sorrows of affliction’;
- maintain total self-control—members were fined if they showed anger;
- organise themselves in a strict hierarchy of members and speak only in order, keeping silent when others are speaking and respecting the wishes of the majority;
- follow meticulously the appointed times which is to say the official schedules and solar calendar;
- separate from the ungodly;
- follow liturgy precisely.

The complicated procedure for admission was as follows.

- Appear before the full congregation to be examined by the Master of the whole sect for suitability; on acceptance swear to follow the Community's interpretation of the Law of Moses—any transgression to be punished by expulsion; enter a long period of instruction by the Master in the rules of the community;
- appear for a second time before the congregation for acceptance as a novice; on

acceptance spend a year as a novice regarded by members still as impure and not worthy of the sacred meal;

- appear for the third time before the congregation; on acceptance leave all possessions with the bursar who would keep them distinct from the possessions of the Community; complete a second year as a novice still unable to partake of the drink of the congregation;
- submit yet again for examination and if accepted enter fully the congregation allowing all possessions to be taken into the Community and partaking fully of the sacred meal;
- love God and each other and hate the wicked (but leave it to God to punish them).

The last of these rules was really the most important one. In Mark 12.28 – 12:34 a scribe asks Jesus to say what was the greatest commandment. For all Jews the greatest commandment is to love God, and Jesus's answer is in the Shemah (Deut 6:4–5) which pious Jews recite every day:

“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”

Note that The Lord is one, denies the Trinity. Since he was asked for one only, Jesus curiously gives a second commandment, to love your neighbour, from Leviticus 19:18—exactly matching the Essene rule except that the part about hating enemies is omitted. The Damascus Rule has:

“They shall love each man his brother as himself; they shall succour the poor, the sick and the needy.”

The Essenes were a brotherhood, so the meaning here is that they should love those who were members of it, and care for the weak. Gentiles are excluded. The quotation from Leviticus 19:18 in full reads:

“Thou shalt not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people but shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,”

showing that it applies to Jews specifically. The children of thy people are the Jews. Neighbour is not used in the sense of any neighbour and once it is recognized that Jesus was an Essene it is plain that he could only have meant a Jewish neighbour.

And Rabbi Hillel, when challenged to teach the Torah as succinctly as possible, offers it in the form:

“What is hateful to thee, do not unto thy fellow: this is the whole law.”

Hillel called it the great practical principle.

Jesus gives both commandments together as if they were one. Josephus in *Antiquities* says John the Baptist taught righteousness toward men and piety towards God, bracketing the two together and also notes this as Essene practice. In the scroll fragments we find that the community's notion of piety meant loving God's name—piety towards God is another way of saying loving God. Essene teaching, the teaching of the Baptist and the teaching of Jesus are the same. Both the Epistle of James and the Qumran texts associate piety with poorness and meekness and they and the gospels declare that wealth is not compatible with righteousness.

Jesus's Pharisaic inquisitor agrees that these principles are more important than burnt offerings, an expression of Pharisaic opposition to the Sadducees whose emphasis was on ritual rather than piety. Pharisees accepted sacrifice only as a token of sincere repentance. The Damascus Rule quotes Proverbs 15:8 as Essene belief:

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, but the prayer of the just is as an agreeable offering.”

The agreement over the burnt offerings is significant in that both Pharisees and Essenes consider temple ritual alone is insufficient for entry to God's kingdom. Pharisee and Essene have united against the Sadducees.

Jesus concludes by telling the scribe that he is not far from the kingdom of God. The scribe was righteous but not an Essene. He had to repent sincerely and be baptized to be one of the elect. Mark normally runs down Pharisees yet here he leaves a good impression. It all leads you to think it must come from genuine tradition. Because Mark was the first gospel, written while the church was still evolving, the treatment of the story is liberal. It was edited in later gospels to temper this praise and leave no credit to the Pharisee.

However the way it is presented in Luke 10:25–28 sounds more authentic in that it is all in the mouth of the Pharisee. The Pharisee does not ask Jesus what the first commandment is, but asked him how he could inherit eternal life—meaning enter the kingdom. Jesus did not tell him but asked the scribe to explain what was written in the law. It is the scribe that answers Jesus's question in the rabbinic fashion to be expected and Jesus compliments him. It all fits in better, which might be Luke's literary skill, but the original question is better in this context than Mark's rather phony sounding one. Thus it avoids the problem of getting two answers from one question, because the question was not simply what was the first commandment, the answer to which any Jew would know, as we noted above.

In Luke the phrase about burnt offerings is missing, possibly because Luke is not using the incident to run down the Sadducees but as a link to the likable but bogus parable of

the good Samaritan which continues the theme of neighbourliness. The parable is bogus because the hero is made into a Samaritan to represent gentiles, fulfilling one of Luke's aims—to render Jewish teaching suitable for non-Jews. The original story might have been a genuine parable but we shall dismiss it as uncertain. The logic of the sequence of priest then Levite is that the next along the road should be an Israelite, a lay Jew, not a Samaritan, the castes of society in the Jewish theocracy below Levite being Israelites and proselytes. In this context, the lay Jew implies an unpious Jew, a publican, a man of the land, a backslider. The parable depicted the layman, the simple of Ephraim as more neighbourly to the downtrodden and more righteous than the priesthood, the acknowledged rulers of God's kingdom. It could have been a Nazarene parable directed at the Jewish nobility, the Sadducees. Luke's extension of the story into the tale of the good Samaritan was a distortion of the evangelist to prove that one's best neighbour need not be a Jew for Christianity to prosper.

Essenes were to be admitted to the Community only after a lengthy procedure, but evidently Jesus, and before him John the Baptist, had decided there was not enough time for a probation period because of the imminence of God's visitation. Normally initiation was at least three years but the day of vengeance could happen at any time, such were the portents. So Jesus would have started his ministry believing that the kingdom was due within three years.

When admitted fully into the new covenant, the priests blessed the elect with a prayer for God to preserve the new sectaries from evil:

“May God bless you with all good and preserve you from all evil. May God lighten your heart with life-giving wisdom and grant you eternal knowledge. May God raise his merciful face towards you for everlasting bliss.”

All priestly blessings were concluded with calls of Amen, Aramaic for quite so or truly or verily, as it is often translated in the gospels. The curses of Satan and apostates by the Levites which followed were similarly concluded with cries of Amen, Amen. In John's gospel Jesus is depicted idiosyncratically saying: Verily, Verily, just as the Essene liturgy required.

This liturgy was probably observed each year at the annual renewal of the covenant held at Pentacost. On that occasion, the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 2:19) tell us that the wilderness chaste brotherhood (called “priests” and “levites”) and the village Essenes (called “people” and “Israelites”) congregated in the desert for a covenant renewal ceremony. New members were admitted to be instructed by the Master (1QS 1:7) when they would hear the Essene interpretation of the law of Moses and commit themselves to it. They were taught they were living in the last days (End Time) (4Q174 1:2,12,15,19) and that strict adherence to the law was essential to enter God's kingdom or, as the Scrolls more often called it, “house” or “sanctuary.” Those who were saved were those who held fast to the community's rules, followed the law, listened to the righteous teacher and confessed before God.

The various rules of the community prescribe punishments for infringements of the rules. Essenes were to be truthful, righteous and just that they might do as Jeremiah had commanded—seek God with their entire heart and soul. The Community Rule declares that the men of perfect holiness, each with his neighbour, shall walk according to these rules. They had to practise what was good and what was just, love one another, and share with each other their knowledge, powers and possessions.

The constant emphasis Essenes placed on being Righteous or Just leads one to believe that the title Just or Righteous actually denotes an Essene just as a Sikh is customarily called Singh. There were other men among the Jews who were good men, but it was the prime objective of the Essenes, so their leading men were often given that title. In studying the New Testament, it is a fair bet that anyone described as righteous or just, or given one of those titles is an Essene. Hebrew scholar, Millar Burrows, one of the translators of the sectarian Scrolls of Qumran, believes that the saintly Onias the Rainmaker, also called Onias the Just, who was stoned to death in about 65 BC was an Essene. The leader of the Jerusalem Church, James the Just, so-called the brother of the Lord, seems on this basis also to have been an Essene. Essenes were respected as righteous men up until the war with Rome, but their righteousness was not merely exemplary behaviour but taking the right attitude toward the land of Judaea. They were righteous because they were uncompromising in their disapproval of foreign rule!

Essenes could not transgress one word of the law of Moses—Jesus said not one jot or tittle (Mt 5:18). The punishment was expulsion and shunning by every member unless the transgression was inadvertent when the member could be readmitted after two years.

They had to live, eat and pray together and own only limited personal possessions, everything else being held by the community under the control of a custodian of property. This reflects Nazarene practice as we know from Acts. Lying in matters of property such as concealment of personal possessions was punished by partial expulsion for a year and a cut in rations. But in Acts 5:1–10 two converts are apparently killed for doing this, showing that their true crime was far worse. Expulsion was the punishment for rebelling against the leadership of the community or for slandering them. The Community Rule has:

“Whoever has slandered the congregation shall return no more. Whoever has murmured against the authority of the Community shall be expelled and shall not return.”

Expulsion was death as far as the sectaries were concerned. Their oath was to do only what their Mebaqqer permitted. A conscientious Essene would die if expelled. The deaths in Acts however are quick ones, carried out by God in the presence of Peter—in short, by Peter! The two in Acts probably committed treason, betraying the sect to the authorities for money. Neither the Essenes nor the Nazarenes could have had any legal powers of execution. That is not to say that they would not have killed, but they would only have done it according to the rule of God as they perceived it. The scrolls state

that no one was allowed to condemn a fellow according to the law of the gentiles—the punishment being death. Ananias and Sapphira must have tried to betray the community to the gentiles and this is why Peter struck them down.

Monastic Essenes had to bathe daily in holy water and eat each day a sacred meal of bread and wine. They were to keep meticulously the appointed times of the solar calendar prescribed in the Book of Jubilees. They had to maintain total self-control—members were fined if they showed anger toward each other (unless it was ritualized). No one was allowed to be ill-tempered or stubbornly obtuse and could not bear malice from one day to the next. Disagreements between the sectaries were to be expressed truthfully and openly, and heard humbly and charitably. If a disagreement were serious then the plaintiff had to publicly rebuke his tormentor before he could take his complaint before the full congregation to be judged. To indicate correct procedure the Damascus Rule quotes Leviticus 19:18 and 19:17:

“You shall not take vengeance against the children of your people, nor bear rancour against them... You shall rebuke your companion and not be burdened by sin because of him.”

Jesus teaches the same (Mt 18:15–17).

The monks had to organize themselves in a strict hierarchy of members and speak only in order, keeping silent when others were speaking and respecting the wishes of the majority. They had to follow liturgy precisely.

Above we saw the Community Rule's instruction that members had to swear to hate the Sons of darkness for all eternity. Rich people were regarded as deceitful and wicked, and the Essenes were to keep apart from ungodly and wicked men whom they were obliged to hate with everlasting hatred. The Damascus Rule specifies that they should...

“...separate from the sons of the pit and shall keep away from the unclean riches of wickedness acquired by vow or anathema or from Temple treasure; they shall not rob the poor of His people, make of widows their prey and of the fatherless their victim... They shall love each man his brother as himself and succour the poor, the needy and the stranger.”

They were to love their brother Essenes as themselves but not all men—most of them they hated as wicked. Riches are wicked, the poor are venerated, widows should not be robbed of their mites nor orphans exploited. The language is very much the language of Jesus, but Christians in setting up a universal religion, omitted the qualifications—a brother was not any man. The pit is one of the three snares of Belial discussed below and represents riches, so the sons of the pit are the wealthy—mainly Sadducees. The poor are subtly distinguished from the poor of His people. The poor is a name for themselves, whereas the poor of His people are the poor of the children of Israel—God's children. In the final sentence the poor, the needy and the stranger all stand for fellow Essenes, brothers who they have to love as themselves.

The Community Rule also emphasizes separation from the wicked, citing Exodus 23:7: Keep thou far from a false thing. The verse continues: and the innocent and righteous slay thou not, for I will not justify the wicked. Isaiah 2:22 is also quoted: Cease ye from man, whose breathe is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of. This is in a passage in which God is saying what punishments he will mete out to wicked men. Yet Essenes were not to take it upon themselves to punish the ungodly. That was God's job and, in the Community Rule, the blessing of God, which the Master has to recite at the various watches, says:

“I will pay no man the reward of evil; I will pursue him with goodness. For judgement of all the living is with God and it is he who will render to man his reward.”

In practice this is stronger than turning the other cheek. It was not for men to punish anyone who had wronged them for it is up to God alone to punish; but nor was the recommended course as indifferent as simply turning another cheek—pursuit with goodness was needed. Hatred of the ungodly was required but no one could judge another man with a view to handing out punishment. He had to pursue him with goodness.

All this sounds odd in the light of the War Scroll and many other texts but it was a command which applied only until God set about purging the world of the wicked on the day of vengeance when the perfect would become agents of God's vengeance, and it was a rule which would not have applied to gentiles in any case—it applied only to Jews. The gentiles had to be driven from the land irrespective of individual personal qualities. The net effect was that initiates of the Essene order had to hate the wicked but could do nothing about it until God indicated the appointed time.

The Essene language of extremes of love and hate is partly caused by the absence of comparative elements in Aramaic. Comparatives needed circumlocutions and so were not often used and shades of grey or degrees tended to be viewed as opposite poles. With inadequate ways of expressing ideas, ideas and thoughts similarly become polarised—love the righteous, hate the sinners! Jesus said no man can serve two masters (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13) but must love one and hate the other. This is hardly practical advice, but is typically Essene, and doubtless partly conditioned by the practicalities of Aramaic speech and thought.

The temple of Herod with its unclean Sadducaic priests was disregarded by the sectaries living in separation in the monastery at Qumran, though the village Essenes still used the Jerusalem temple in the normal way. The Community Rule commands that:

“The men of the community shall be set apart as a house of holiness for Aaron and those who walk in perfection shall be joined as a holy of holies and as a house of community for Israel. The council of the community will be established in the truth as

an eternal planting—a holy house for Israel and a foundation of the holy of holies for Aaron. It shall be a witness to truth at the judgement, when the Elect, by God's will, shall atone for the land and pay to the wicked their recompense.”

Note here that the elect were to atone for the land, and pay the wicked their recompense at the judgement day. Atoning for the land refers to the occupation of Judaea by the gentiles, and of other Jewish lands by the puppet Herodians, who were all to receive retribution. Essenes were not just pacifist monks as Josephus implied.

A house for Aaron is, of course, a temple, Aaron being Moses's brother and priest of Israel who might enter the holy of holies. Since the community was a temple and the temple was the most substantial building in the land, the sectaries were fond of solid architectural metaphors like: It shall be the tested wall; the precious cornerstone; its foundation will not shake or become displaced. In the Master's song blessing God of the Community Rule we find:

“He has joined their assembly to the sons of heaven, to be a council for the community, a foundation for the building of holiness, and eternal plantation throughout all ages to come.”

Evidently the new covenanters considered themselves to be joined to heaven already—the foundation of heaven on earth: God's bridgehead for the coming kingdom.

Daniel tells us that there is a god that revealeth secrets, who maketh known what is to come to pass. In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, a stone destroys the four great kingdoms of the dream. Later in Daniel the four kings are replaced by the saints of the Most High, an Essene name for themselves, who take the kingdom and possess it for ever, even for ever and ever. The everlasting kingdom therefore replaces the earlier four earthly kingdoms and must therefore be on earth. Essenes expected heaven and earth to unite to form a perfect and incorruptible earth.

The Qumran Community regarded itself as a living temple, an image found in John 2:21: He spake of the temple of his body, and used by Paul (1 Cor 3:16–17). In 1 Peter 2:5 the Christian church was to be a spiritual temple in which spiritual sacrifices are made. Each believer is described as a living stone in this spiritual temple and the chief corner stone is Jesus (Eph 2:20), the whole growing to become a living temple to the Lord—purely Essene.

If the community council was a holy of holies for Aaron and a temple for Israel, it seems that the council at Qumran was an alternative temple for all Essenes. The monastic Essenes did not live in the buildings of Qumran but in caves nearby and a tented city which would have provided for a transient as well as a permanent population. The Essenes of the villages had cause to visit as pilgrims.

The Essenes aimed to be perfect. Yet they could not be sanctimonious about it. An absolute requirement was to be meek and humble. Their hymns and writings reminded

them constantly that they were wicked and sinners, that they had disobeyed God and strayed from his precepts. They were unworthy and must try constantly to be perfect—by the grace of God they would succeed. The Community Rule orders: None of the saints shall lean upon works of vanity, and, as if to counter any grand ideas the sectaries might get from hearing the Master's blessing of God several times a day the Master goes on to say:

“I belong to wicked mankind, to the company of ungodly flesh. Mankind has no way, since judgement is with God and perfection of way is out of His hand. All things come to pass by His knowledge and He establishes things by His design and without Him nothing is done.”

If they showed any such failings, they fell down the rankings at their yearly assessment and might be expelled altogether. These requirements of humility are the origin of the humble and gentle Jesus, meek and mild. For those who tried with all their heart, God was bountifully merciful. Note that in the preface of John we find: All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (Jn 1:3), an identical sentiment to the final sentence above. The author of the fourth gospel is using an Essene song without even mentioning the Essenes—unless they were the Nazarenes.

Furthermore in Numbers 12:3: the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth. For the Essenes Moses was the priest, prince and prophet, the first messiah sent by God—and they were sure that the expected messiah could be no less. Thus all Essenes had to be meek toward each other—but not toward the men of darkness.

Essenes vowed to be zealous for the law until there shall come the prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel, apparently suggesting that three people were expected, the prophet, the priestly messiah and the princely messiah. In fact, they expected one man to embody all three roles like Moses.

Village Essenes

For a village Essene matters were less rigid but many requirements were the same as those for the monastic order. Both branches...

- considered themselves the true Israel;
- followed the Zadokite priesthood—every group of ten or more had to include a priest;
- partook of a common meal;
- arranged themselves in a strict hierarchy;
- insisted on a correct interpretation and strict adherence to the Laws of Moses;
- swore to uphold the New Covenant;
- followed a solar calendar precisely so as not to deviate from his appointed times, including holding an annual congregation.

The children of any Jew (those who had entered the covenant granted to all Israel forever) could become an Essene by swearing an oath on their reaching twenty—the age of enrolment. Before then nothing of the statutes was to be revealed to them. Particular rules for village Essenes were given in the Damascus Rule and the Rule of the Congregation, or the Messianic Rule as Vermes has renamed it.

- Members had to cleave to the laws of Moses;
- the Mebaqqer of the camp or village community was its head, its teacher and its director; he allowed commerce with the impure and the imperfect but had absolute power over it, permitting no casual contacts;
- temple sacrifice was permitted and demanded absolute ritual purity;
- full maturity was reached according to the Rule of the Congregation only at the age of 30;
- observance of the sabbath was strict, the rule expressly forbidding the picking and eating of fruits from the fields;
- members were not allowed to bear witness in the courts of the gentiles—the Romans. The punishment was death but since the Community had no powers of capital punishment it is plain that expulsion was meant. Expulsion was eternal death, but for a strict Essene was often physical death too.

Note that village Essenes brought up in an Essene community were not considered mature until the age of thirty, the age at which Jesus was baptized. No Jewish priest was allowed to enter office until he was thirty years old and the Essenes were a priestly sect.

Village Essenes, unlike the monastic variety, owned their own property. Instead of holding goods in common they donated two days' wages a month into a common fund to provide for orphans, the old and needy and widows. The Community whether in the monastery or the camps was bonded by a common meal. Only the perfect were allowed to partake of it and in particular to partake of the "new wine" which is to say the unfermented grape juice of the congregation.

The Damascus Rule requires that the village Mebaqqer love his people as a father loves his children and shall carry them in all their distress like a shepherd his sheep—two metaphors, children and sheep, used by Jesus for his followers tumbling out of one scroll sentence. He had to ensure that there was no friendly contact with those outside the sect, the sons of the pit. The Mebaqqer would allow commerce but not friendship. Transactions must have been very abrupt and matter-of-fact.

Essenes in Jerusalem

Evidence that Essenes lived not only at Qumran, near the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, but also in Jerusalem comes from several sources, including the scrolls themselves, assuming the scrolls constitute an Essene library. The famous War Scroll, which describes an apocalyptic battle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, refers to the sounding of trumpets when the victorious forces of light return from battle against the enemy when they journey to the congregation or community, *ha-edah*, “in Jerusalem”.

Josephus mentions a certain Essene teacher named Judas living in Jerusalem in 104 BC. Later, Josephus reports, the youthful Herod the Great met an Essene named Menahem. He describes three walls that surrounded Jerusalem during the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (66-70 AD) and refers to a “Gate of the Essenes”.

The nucleus of the Essene movement was made up of Zadokite kohanim, or priests. The Temple’s high priests claimed descent from the house of Zadok, a son of Aaron, in the time of Solomon. The founders of the Essenes apparently claimed the same descent, though they might have called themselves Zadokites because they were the perfect priests of Ezekiel’s perfect Temple.

Anyway, scholars surmise that, after the successful second-century BC revolt of the Maccabees and the re-establishment of an independent Jewish state, the Maccabean kings, of the Hasmonean family, assumed not only the kingship but also the high priesthood. The king and high priest were one. Some Zadokites considered the non-Zadokite priests usurpers and declared their Temple sacrifices illegal. They joined the Essenes and refused to take part in Hasmonean sacrificial offerings, sticking to far stricter purity rules than those the Temple authorities were enforcing.

City gates are often called after locations to which their streets lead. The Damascus Gate leads from Jerusalem to Damascus and The Jaffa Gate to Jaffa, to name two of the gates in the present Old City wall. Sometimes the name indicates the function of the gate. Dung Gate probably served as the exit for garbage. The Gate in Jerusalem called the Gate of the Essenes must have been named after the people who lived there and used the gate to go in and out of Jerusalem.

An excavation to the south west of the city revealed a gateway with three distinct sills, the remains of three gates that had been built on the same spot over several hundred years. Some ceramic sherds from beneath the lowest, and earliest, of the three sills, coming from a sealed-off, undisturbed location, provided a reliable indication of the date of the first gate at the site. This pottery predated 70 AD, the year of the destruction of Jerusalem by the troops of the Roman general Titus, son of Emperor Vespasian. This seemed to be the gate Josephus called the Gate of the Essenes.

Because of the Essenes' strict purity rules, among other things, sexual intercourse was forbidden in Jerusalem, they will have lived in their own section of the city. The earliest gate on this site, the Gate of the Essenes, therefore led into the Essene quarter of Jerusalem.

Adjacent to the Essene gate, on the southeast, are the remains of a tower. On the northwestern side of the tower, at bedrock is a finely hewn rock scarp, nearly 5 feet high. On top of the scarp was a wall built of medium-sized field stones, slightly worked into nearly rectangular shapes. Nearby to the north was the inner face. The wall was nearly 8 feet wide. Additional soundings about 65 feet to the east revealed further sections of the inner face of this wall. Pottery sherds from within the core of the wall, both north and east of the tower, dated from the eighth to seventh century BC. This might have been Hezekiah's wall mentioned in 2 Chronicles 32:5:

“And outside it [the ancient enclosure] he [Hezekiah] built another wall.”

There may have been an earlier gate a few hundred meters to the east, since there is a large accumulation of debris there, perhaps corresponding to Jeremiah's Gate of Sherds, or the Gate of the Potter (Jeremiah 19:2), and the Dung Gate (Neh 3:13).

The Gate of the Essenes was the earliest gate in the wall at this point. To construct the gate, builders made a breach in the existing wall. Then they dug a sewage channel that ran along a street leading from the interior of the city and emptied into the Hinnom Valley, south of Mount Zion. Limestone slabs of fine workmanship cover the channel as it passes beneath the gateway. Only the workmen of Herod the Great were likely to have achieved such stonecutting perfection.

The unit of measurement used at the gate was the Roman foot (11.64 inches). The outer width of the gate is exactly 9 Roman feet (105 inches). A stonemason carved the Roman letters H IIII into this stone pilaster. Since the mason's mark is in Latin and not in Greek or Hebrew, as one might expect in Jerusalem, and since we know Herod often used Roman engineers, the “H” could stand for Herod, who probably commissioned the construction, though arguably the circumstances better suit Hadrian who built the Temple to Jupiter on this site. H IIII indicates that this was the fourth pilaster section supporting the lintel and arch of the gate. The socket, in which the wings of the gate turned, remains in situ, perfectly round and smooth, suggesting that the bottom of the hinge was made of metal. The Gate of the Essenes was destroyed in 70 AD, when Titus's Roman legionaries razed Jerusalem. Hadrian perhaps rebuilt it.

Who would have originally built a gate at this unlikely location, on the shoulder of a ravine descending into the Hinnom Valley, atop a hill so steep that the gate could only be reached on foot?

About 50 Essene kohanim may have lived in the southwestern quarter of Jerusalem between 30 BC and 70 AD. Celibate, the kohanim adhered to purity laws far stricter than those followed by Jerusalem Temple priests. The Gate of the Essenes gave the community access to their ritual baths, or miqva'ot (singular, miqveh) and latrines, which stood outside the city wall.

This conclusion is supported by the discovery of another previously unknown landmark mentioned in Josephus's description of the First Wall—the place of the Bethso. According to Josephus, the Bethso lay between Hippicus Tower, near the modern Jaffa Gate, and the Gate of the Essenes.

Since the 19th century, most scholars have agreed that the term “Bethso” derives from the Hebrew beth-soa, or latrines. According to the longest Dead Sea Scroll, the Temple Scroll, the Essenes did build such a structure-outside their city, to the northwest—precisely where Josephus locates the Bethso.

The Temple Scroll specifies:

“And you shall make them a place for a hand, outside the city, to which they shall go out, to the northwest of the city, [where they shall make] roofed buildings with pits within them, into which the excrement will descend [so that] it will [not] be visible at any distance from the city, three thousand cubits.”

The Essene law is evidently a strict interpretation of Deuteronomy 23:13:

“There shall be a place for you outside the camp, where you may relieve yourself.”

The route described in the Temple Scroll matches the topographical situation around the Essene quarter. An Essene leaving Jerusalem through the Gate of the Essenes would turn to the northwest and follow the path between the city wall and the ravine descending into the Hinnom Valley and reach his destination at a bend in the wall near the former Bishop Gobat School. Josephus, too, notes that the Essenes selected “more retired spots” to defecate. The resulting frequent foot traffic through the Gate of the Essenes surely explains why its sills were so well worn.

The remains of the Bethso appear in an 1875 diagram of the scarp of Mount Zion by Palestine Exploration Fund archaeologist Claude R Conder. This drawing shows a platform with two converging sewage channels running parallel to the rock scarp. A military man, Captain Conder suggested that the platform might have been a horse stable that served as a hiding place from which city defenders could ambush enemy attackers. Today, a terrace is built over the platform and only the eastern corner remains visible.

The discovery of several miqva'ot or ritual baths just outside the gate further supports the identification of this area as an Essene quarter.

There was a double miqveh about 160 feet from the gate. Originally discovered more than a hundred years ago by Claude Conder, these miqva'ot were just outside the ancient city wall and were situated on top of a rock shelf, from which one could descend 36 steps to a garden level with the Gate of the Essenes. One of the two baths had a divider between the steps of descent and the steps of ascent, as also appears in the Qumran miqva'ot. Presumably, the steps of ascent were for the purified bather to emerge without recontamination.

That these Jerusalem miqva'ot are outside the wall is significant. Deuteronomy 23:11-12 states that when someone contracts impurity because of a nocturnal emission, and Essene leaders were celibate:

“He must go outside the camp; he must not come within the camp. When evening comes, he must wash himself with water. When the sun has set, he may come back into the camp.”

The Essenes regarded the entire city of Jerusalem as equivalent to the camp. One scroll reads

“Jerusalem is the camp of holiness.”

They must have purified themselves in these miqva'ot before re-entering their quarter of the city. The Essenes interpreted these laws of purity very strictly. The Pharisees regarded purification from a variety of causes as effective immediately upon emergence from the miqveh. But the Essenes insisted on waiting until sunset in strict accordance with the instruction in Deuteronomy.

A small secret entrance to the city via a postern gate barely 4 feet wide was adjacent to the miqva'ot on the rock platform out of which they were carved. Once the sun set, the purified bathers could reenter the Essene quarter quietly and privately.

The rules concerning the ritual water of purity were very strict. Essene miqva'ot required water that no non-Essene had come in contact with. Therefore the water had to originate in the Essene quarter. A small channel hewn in the rock conducted water from the Essene quarter inside the city to the miqva'ot outside the wall, excellent proof that the Essenes lived in this corner of Jerusalem.

In the Greek Garden attached to the Greek Orthodox seminary, were two ancient ritual baths. One has been covered up but the other remains open. Ritual baths are common in excavations all over Jerusalem. Those for families are comparatively small, while those that served the public, like the baths found in the Temple compound, are much larger. These baths were large and comparable with those in Qumran. The one that is still open in the Greek Garden is 35 feet long and nearly 14 feet wide. Not even in Qumran is there such a large miqveh. These miqva'ot were not meant for family use but served a community.

The middle sill is part of the second gate at the site, which was built directly on the ruins of the Gate of the Essenes. It gives us a glimpse into an obscure period in Jerusalem's history, the remains of which are very scant and thus highly prized. The pottery scraped out from under this sill belongs to the second to fourth century AD.

This sill consists of two limestone slabs bonded together with cement plaster. Apparently, this second gate had a stepped sill. The lower slab is broken off at a slant, indicating that the gate was made of material gathered at random. In the corner of the lower slab is a rather shapeless hinge socket, indicating that the gate hinge also was not well formed. The socket is clearly more primitive than the one on the earlier gate. We found two coins, one outside and one inside the gate, of the Emperor Heliogabalus (218-222 AD). Repair work may have been done on the gate or the sewage channel during his reign.

After the Romans suppressed the Second Jewish Revolt (132-135 AD), Jews were banned from the city. The Romans rebuilt Jerusalem as their own, renaming it Aelia Capitolina to remove any association with the Jews. They settled primarily in the present-day Old City. The southern end of Mount Zion lay outside Aelia Capitolina.

The middle sill, built directly on top of the Gate of the Essenes, could be part of a gate in a makeshift wall built by Jewish Christians who remained on Mount Zion even though the hill was outside the Roman city. Since they had not taken part in the Second Jewish Revolt against the Romans, the Bar-Kosiba Revolt, these Jewish Christians were allowed to drift back to Jerusalem after Hadrian's expulsion of the Jews, especially during the beneficent reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161 AD). In the early third century, the Jewish Christian residents of Mount Zion appear to have erected some kind of a wall around their quarter and their synagogue.

At this time Mount Zion was rarely visited by gentile Christians, who rather looked down on it. Around it were "cucumber fields", as observed by several church fathers, such as Eusebius, Epiphanius and Hieronymus. Nevertheless, in 333 AD the anonymous Pilgrim of Bordeaux visited this area, as noted in his Itinerary, which has survived. He relates that after leaving the Temple area he descended to the Pool of Siloam and then ascended from there, passing through the ruins of the Palace of Caiaphas, to Mount Zion.

Christianity Revealed

Essenes as proto-Christians

Dr M D Magee

Ministers preach in their pulpits every Sunday that the religion and morality taught and practised by Jesus Christ was without a parallel or precursor because it was divinely inspired and unique to Jesus. None of these claims is well founded.

The Same Religion

Christianity is not unique when compared with Essenism and, though the origin of the Essenes is still not certain, they existed in BC 150, in the days of Jonathan Maccabaeus, thus pre-dating Christianity by some two hundred years at least. With the Pharisees and Sadducees they made up the three main Jewish sects written about by Josephus. There are differences between the Essenes and Christians but they have arisen because Christianity evolved beyond the point reached by the Essenes of the Scrolls and the classic writers.

Nevertheless so much remained the same that the identity of the two sects at root cannot be denied by rational people. Essenism was the same system in spirit and essence as the Judaeian Christianity of the Jerusalem Church which therefore taught the doctrines and moral precepts of the Essenes. Inevitably Christianity growing in a gentile rather than a Jewish medium later came to differ from its parent.

Christian writers said quite clearly that Essenism and Christianity were the same religion, the former name being used at an earlier period. Eusebius, a standard ecclesiastical writer of the fourth century, asserts in his History of the Church:

“Those ancient Therapeuts (Essenes) were Christians, and their ancient writings were our gospels.”

A father of the church asserts the Essenes originated the Christian religion. Ask why then our modern day clerics vehemently deny it.

In Matthew 18:17, Jesus clearly says, “tell it to the church” before Christians claim there was a church. The Essenes, held assemblies and congregations, words translated as church, leaving us to infer that Jesus and his disciples were Essenes. Essenes had not only churches, but bishops, deacons, elders, priests, disciples, scriptures, gospels, epistles, psalms, hymns, mystery, allegory, and so on, long before Christianity. Christ and his apostles had nothing to originate, either with respect to doctrines, precepts, church polity, or ecclesiastical terms—all being established for them long before. The Essenes and Christians could not have existed at the same time as separate institutions—they were too similar. The latter must have emerged from the former.

Josephus says, the Essenes were scattered far and wide, and were in every city, being quite numerous in Judaea in his time, but he makes no reference to any sect or religious order by the title of Christian. Christianity not yet have been called by that name, or Josephus was still unaware of the change.

He and the other classic writers tell us Essenes had a high appreciation of the inspired law of God, an apparent difference from Christianity explained by the transfer of Essenism to gentiles. The highest aim of their lives was to become fit temples of the

Holy Ghost (1 Cor 6:19), to perform cures especially spiritual cures and to be spiritually qualified as forerunners of the Messiah. They strove to be like the angels of heaven. They taught the duty of mortifying the flesh and the lusts thereof. They avoided impure contact with the heathen and the world's people and lived apart from the world, being in numbers about four thousand. There were no rich and poor or masters and servants amongst them. They lived peaceably with all men, until they became convinced that God wanted them to fight for His kingdom. Total silence was observed while eating. A solemn oath was required on becoming a member of the secret order, whereupon they scrupulously avoided oaths. Admission to the order required three things:

1. Love of God;
2. Merciful justice to all Jews, avoidance of the wicked, and assistance to the righteous;
3. Purity of character, which implied love of truth, hatred of falsehood, and strict observance of "the mysteries of godliness" to outsiders—heathens and publicans.

They endured suffering for righteousness' sake, with rejoicings, and even sought it. Josephus says they regarded the body as a prison for the soul and desired the time to come to escape from it. In this Josephus was either wrong or was deliberately misleading or Christian editors had altered the original because the Essenes believed in bodily resurrection into God's kingdom. However, the body was a purified uncorruptible body and evidently they believed the soul was alive somewhere until it could rejoin its body in the everlasting kingdom. They recognized eight different stages of spiritual growth and perfection:

1. Bodily purity;
2. Celibacy;
3. Spiritual purity;
4. The suppression of anger and malice, and the cultivation of a meek, lowly spirit;
5. The attainment of perfect holiness;
6. Becoming fit temples for the Holy Ghost;
7. The ability to heal physically but especially spiritually and raise the dead, meaning saving the lost sheep of the Jewish people from eternal death outside God's kingdom;
8. Becoming forerunners of the Messiah.

Finally they took a solemn vow to exercise piety toward God and justice toward all men, to hate the wicked, assist the good to keep clear of theft and unrighteous gains, to

conceal none of their mysteries of godliness from each other, or disclose them to others. They were to walk humbly with God, shun bad society, forgive their enemies, sacrifice their passions, and crucify the lusts of the flesh. They disregarded bodily suffering and even gloried in martyrdom, preaching and singing to God amid their sufferings. They wore their clothes until they became ragged. Their food consisted of bread and water, and wild roots and fruits of the palm tree. They enjoined their duty, not only of forgiving their enemies, but of seeking to benefit them, and of even blessing the destroyer who took life and property. Such was the religion, such the moral system, such the devout piety and such the practical lives of the Essenian Jews, a religious sect which flourished in Alexandria and Judaea before the birth of Christ and was plainly replaced in history by Christianity.

Clearly Essenism and Christianity are strikingly alike in their essential features. The former system contains nearly every important doctrine and precept of the Christian religion. Ask why these two religions should be of such similar character. Ask why it should not be quite simply that Christianity is an outgrowth of Judaeon Essenism. Indeed, ask why we are not driven to that conclusion. Both:

- are alike, and Essenism is much the older system;
- religions are an outgrowth of Judaism;
- were known and taught in Judaea and in Alexandria.

Neither Josephus living in Judaea nor Philo in Alexandria speak of Christianity, yet both describe a remarkably similar religion in doctrines and moral precepts which they call Essenism. The gospel writers, claiming to describe the events which led to the foundation of Christianity, tell us of two of the three main sects of Judaism, the one which they miss out being the Essenes. Yet they describe a sect which Josephus does not mention called the Nazarenes, the very sect which later became called the Christians.

Does this not suggest that Essenism was another name for Christianity but that it had not yet changed its name—an event which happened, not in Judaea so much as when the sect escaped into the Roman Empire at large? Gibbon in *Decline and Fall* thought so.

We are driven to the conclusion that Christianity was derived from Essenism. What then was the significant difference? It was that Christianity grew among gentiles while Jewish Christians remained Essenes. Tacitus in 104 AD is the first of the three hundred writers of that era that makes any mention of Christianity, Christ, or a Christian. This was a decade after Josephus' last book. Until then the name Christianity had not yet been widely recognised as something different from the Jewish original. Around 100 AD the new name, Christianity, which had been coined a few decades earlier, came into widespread use to distinguish gentile Essenes from Jewish Essenes.

We still find Christians desperately denying the obvious:

“The Essenes did not believe in the resurrection of the physical body but believed in a spiritual resurrection, and omit from their creed the Trinity and Incarnation doctrine, and therefore they could not have been the originators of the Christian religion.”

Philo seemed to be expecting a messiah and he spoke of the incarnate word. As for the doctrine of the Trinity, we have the authority of Eusebius that they taught this doctrine too. So that it is not true that they did not recognise these two prime articles of the Christian faith, the Incarnation and Trinity doctrines.

Some modern Christians assert that the Essenes not only omitted to teach these doctrines, but that, on the other hand, they taught other doctrines not taught in the Christian New Testament. This is not unlikely. The Christian religion frequently changed its doctrines to fit the circumstances throughout its history. How this fits with the doctrine of an infallible word of God, is anybody's guess but Christians have never been inquisitive types.

Christians followed in the tradition of Judaism, which changed even the name of its God from Elohim to Jehovah. Its leader and founder Abram was changed to Abraham, and his grandson and successor from Jacob to Israel. Jews most often changed their religions doctrines when they came in contact with nations teaching a different religion. They were inclined to imitate and borrow and thus effected important changes in their religion. For example, they never had a doctrine of future punishment till after they were brought in contact with the Persians in Babylon who had long taught these doctrines. Even their national title was afterwards changed from Israelites to Jews.

The name of the Essenes had been changed previously from Hassidim to Essenes. Philo calls them Therapeutae, and Eusebins says the Therapentae were Christians. Doesn't this settle the matter?

Essenes had their Exoteric and their Esoteric doctrines. The latter, which seems to have included the incarnation, atonement, trinity, and all the other standard eastern doctrines now included in the term Christianity, they never published to the world. Hence only their Exoteric doctrines have been noted. Christianity is merely a continuation of eastern beliefs as taught by the Essenian sect.

In summary, Christianity and the Essene sect have too many features in common for it to be chance.

- They both believe in baptism. Vermes tells us the Community Rule ordained that the initiate “shall be made clean by the humble submission of his soul to all the precepts of God” but only after “his flesh is sprinkled with purifying water and sanctified by cleansing water”.
- The earliest Christians “held all things common”—they were primitive communists.

Yet the Community Rule states that all shall bring their “knowledge, powers and possessions” into the Community, that they shall “eat in common and pray in common” and that a new member’s property shall be “merged...to the Community”.

- The early church in Jerusalem was led by the twelve Apostles (still twelve even after Judas had died showing that the Apostles were not particular persons but positions to be filled when vacant—fourteen or possibly fifteen Apostles are mentioned in the gospels) of whom Peter, James and John had special responsibility. The Community was led by a Council of 12 people, apparently with three priests having special responsibility.
- Both the Community and the first Christians were messianic: the Christians regarded Jesus as the Messiah; the Community had their “Teacher of Righteousness” with a similar history.
- Both communities also use the same phraseology. Jesus said: “blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth”, an exact expression of the Community’s beliefs about itself for they called themselves “the Poor” and “the Meek” and they were preparing themselves to inherit the earth when God’s kingdom on Earth was created. Many other instances can be quoted especially from Matthew which was the one closest in language to the Aramaic.
- Both communities originally cleaved rigidly to the Law of Moses and so, evidently did Jesus because he says in the Sermon on the Mount that he has not come to destroy the Law but to fulfil it and that “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the Law till all things be accomplished”.
- If the confusion of the timing of the Last Supper in the Bible is anything to go by the calendar used by Jesus did not match the official Jewish one. The Community used a solar rather than the official lunar calendar which might have allowed Jesus and his disciples to have had their Passover meal a day earlier so that he was crucified before Passover started.
- Both communities had an identical ritual meal. The Christian one supposedly specially instituted by Jesus at the last supper, the Community one laid down in the Community Rule in which the priest shall “bless the first fruits of the bread and new wine” after which the Messiah, who is present in spirit, or the Nasi, who is really present, extends his hand over the bread that they might begin.
- Both communities referred to their leader as “Master”.
- Both communities held an important gathering at Pentecost.

New Testament scholars believed John was the last of the gospels written and was strongly influenced by Persian religion and Platonic philosophy. From the scrolls however some scholars now take a different view—John follows the tradition of the

Essenes. John has the conflict of Light and Darkness and expressions like, “the light of life”, “children of light”, “walking in darkness”, “the spirit of truth” and “eternal life” all of which occur in the Community Rule. John has:

“And all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”

The Community Rule has the following:

“And by his knowledge everything has been brought into being. And everything that is, he established for his purpose; and apart from him nothing is done.”

The scroll fragments prove to be messianic, make use of the same frequent scriptural quotations used in the New Testament books, have similar concepts of Righteousness, Piety, Truth, Justification, Works, the Poor, the Meek and use similar vocabulary. The Hebrew word “hesed” in the Qumran fragments is translated by traditional Qumran scholars as “Piety” but it can also be rendered as “Grace” which is the translation used in Paul’s epistles. Scroll words are Christian words.

Scroll Language in Early Christian Documents

We noted above that Jewish scholar, Geza Vermes, finds no parallels in traditional Jewish literature with the Qumran Rules but several with early Christian literature. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs is a non-canonical work which in its philosophy and expression seems to be a bridge between Christianity and the community of Qumran. Dr R H Charles, who translated the Testaments and dated them as early as 100 BC, thought there were many echoes of the Testaments in the gospels and even more in the Epistles of Paul—over 70 words are common to Paul's writings and the Testaments which do not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. The words "meekness" and "mercy" occur often.

At one point the Testaments speak of "a man who reneweth the Law in the power of the Most High" being called a deceiver and "not knowing his dignity" slain thereby "taking innocent blood through wickedness". It goes on to say...

"...your holy places shall be laid waste even to the ground because of him. And ye shall have no place that is clean; but ye shall be among the gentiles a curse and a dispersion until he shall again visit you and in pity shall receive you through faith and water."

These sound like references to Jesus, the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews in 70 AD but it could perhaps refer to the Teacher of Righteousness and the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 BC. The Testaments repeatedly uses the Greek word Christos which of course could refer to Jesus but equally could simply mean Messiah. Particularly impressive is the similarity of Matthew 25:35-36 with a passage from the Testament of Joseph. The latter has lines like:

"I was beset by hunger and the Lord himself nourished me. I was sick and the Lord visited me. I was alone and God comforted me..."

While Matthew has:

"I was hungry and you gave me food. I was sick and you visited me. I was a stranger and you welcomed me..."

Passages of the Sermon on the Mount are also anticipated. It promises that the poor shall be made rich. The reader is urged to love God and "to love your neighbour as thyself". This doctrine seems to have become popular around that time. It appears in the Book of Jubilees and in the Zadokite documents—The Damascus Document has:

"They shall love each man his brother as himself; they shall succour the poor, the sick and the needy."

And it was offered by Rabbi Hillel, when challenged to teach the Torah as succinctly as possible, in the form:

“What is hateful to thee, do not unto thy fellow: this is the whole Law.”

Another early work was the Two Ways which also was not included in the canon and subsequently was lost. Later scholars found a Greek manuscript called the Didache or the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. It began “There are two ways...” and appeared to be the missing document. It was manifestly a Christian work but portions of a Latin version were also found with scarcely any Christian references. Though Jesus is mentioned there is no indication of atonement indicating its very early date. Besides doctrines like the Way of Light and the Way of Darkness and the sacrament of baptism, it refers to the sacred meal of bread and wine and looks very much like a Christian adaptation of an early, presumably Essene, work.

Interestingly, a work that was regarded as canonical in the first few centuries of the Christian era is the Shepherd of Hermas where a Son of God features but is never referred to as Jesus or Christ. Furthermore the church spoken of by Hermas has a long history before the Son of God was sent to purify it and to recall it to God’s commandments: it was not founded by the Son of God. Hermas also mentions the Didache and the Two Ways confirming our deduction above. Atonement was by baptism. This sounds very much like a Nazarene or an Essene text.

The conclusion from the body of evidence presented here must be that the Nazarenes and the Essenes had almost everything in common. Certainly there are differences, particularly those indicated in Christian documents. Some are differences that are phoney because they have been introduced by the gentile Church; the others are genuine differences because the Nazarenes were a branch of the Essenes. Mainly these all come to a relaxation of the exclusiveness of the Essenes. Yet even this might have been a part of the Essene philosophy in the sense that it allowed for the recruitment of the Simple of Ephraim to the Elect as described in the Nahum Peshar. When the diviners considered the time right a Nasi was sent out into the community to test the mettle of the Simple. This safeguarded the Essenes as a whole while allowing God to show whether the auguries were correct or not. John the Baptist was one such; Jesus was his heir. Jesus’s success led him to think God was with him but then he failed in the north. He concluded he had not been positive enough and captured Zion itself. He was mistaken or forsaken—but his effort did not pass unnoticed.

The word Christianity was not used until about 50 AD in Antioch (Acts 11:26). The original movement was mutating into the Christianity we now know, but the foundations in the manuscripts of Qumran seem clear. The change was from a narrowly Jewish, nationalistic, xenophobic and apocalyptic sect attached to the Mosaic Law, to one which was cosmopolitan, free of legal obligations, dependent only on faith and pacifist. It was not a simple change and required the talents of an exceptional man to effect it. But in the wider Empire the soil was fertile and ready to yield to a vigorous plant. The Nazarene movement became Paulinised.

Christian Language in the Scrolls

Some Scroll fragments are of hymns to the poor. The Qumran literature frequently refers to the Community as the Poor, the Meek and the Downtrodden, words all used frequently in the gospels. Like English, Hebrew has different words for them but in the scrolls they seem to be used interchangeably. One of the Community's names for itself was the "Poor Ones". The Star prophecy of the War Scroll reads that:

"By the hand of the Poor Ones whom you have redeemed by Your Power and the peace of Your Mighty Wonders... by the hand of the Poor Ones and those bent in the dust, You will deliver the enemies of all the lands and humble the mighty of the peoples to bring upon their heads the reward of the Wicked and justify the Judgement of Your Truth on all the sons of men..."

Can it be coincidence that the Poor Ones was a name of the followers of James in the Jerusalem Church (Gal 2:10 and Jas 2:3-5)? Paul claims the only condition James imposed upon him in his missions to the gentiles was to remember the poor. It sounds patronising, as though James is reminding Paul that motherhood is a good thing. In fact he is reminding him to send money for the Poor Ones in Jerusalem, the Nazarenes who still had a lot of widows to support.

In his Ecclesiastical History written in the fourth century, Eusebius describes a deviant Christian sect, the Ebionites, who held the brother of Jesus, James the Just, in special regard. They refused to accept that Jesus was divine but thought of him as an ordinary man, naturally conceived and notable for his righteousness but having no divine aspects. They did not accept that faith was sufficient to save and were therefore careful to observe the Law in addition—"...they evinced great zeal to observe the literal sense of the Law". They had no regard at all for Paul. Eusebius thought their name came from their "low and mean opinions" of Christ—Ebionites comes from the word Ebionim meaning the Poor Ones. They could have been none other than the remnants of the Jerusalem Church of James the Just perpetuating the name used by the Nazarenes, the Essenes and James himself.

The Scrolls also use the same curious expression that Jesus the Nazarene uses in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3) but has never before been found in any ancient work and was long thought to have been a mistranslation—"the poor in spirit". It appears in the War Scroll and in the Community Rule.

Other Scroll fragments are replete with Christian imagery. One focuses on the Righteous, the Pious, the Meek and the Faithful, all synonyms for those who follow the Way of the Community. Echoing the Damascus Document, it says God visits the Meek and calls the Righteous by name. God's spirit hovers over the Meek announcing to them "Glad tidings" and He makes the Root of Planting grow. The Messiah "shepherds the holy ones" and he commands the "heavens and the earth" including the "Heavenly

Host". The fragments contain references to "making the blind see", "raising up the downtrodden" and "resurrecting the dead". The Pious (Hasidim) are glorified on the Throne of the Eternal Kingdom. In some of the fragments the bones passage of Ezekiel is used to promise resurrection for the Pious and the Righteous.

Jesus taught "love thy neighbour as thyself" (cf. James 2:8) and "love the Lord thy God". Josephus in Antiquities says John the Baptist taught "Righteousness toward men and Piety towards God" and also notes this as Essene practice. Scroll fragments tell us the Community's notion of Piety meant "loving God's name". Thus Essene teaching and the teaching of Jesus amount to the same thing. Both the Epistle of James and the Qumran texts associate piety with poorness and meekness and they and the gospels declare that wealth is not compatible with righteousness.

Isaiah 11.2 has:

"The Spirit of the Lord would settle on him,"

the origin of the imagery at Jesus's baptism. The scrolls have the same but expressed even more explicitly:

"The Holy Spirit settled on His Messiah."

Here the Spirit of the Lord becomes the Holy Spirit and the recipient of it, His Messiah, is explicit.

Other fragmentary texts convey to us that "Perfection" language is important to the Community. Thus the scrolls and fragments have "the Perfect of the Way", "Perfection of the Way", "walking in Perfection" and "perfect Holiness" (cf. 2Cor 7:1). This may be compared with the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:48):

"Be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect."

"The Way" terminology also illustrated in these expressions and very common in the scrolls is similarly echoed in Acts (see 16:16, 18:24f, 24:22). The Epistle of Barnabas is a second century Christian but non-canonical work full of Qumran expressions such as The Way of Light, the Way of Darkness, the Way of Holiness, the Way of Death, keeping the Law, Righteousness, the Last Judgement, Uncircumcised Heart, Dark Lord and such.

Paul is very fond of Essene words. 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 is purely Essene even to the use of the word Belial, the Essene word for Satan, the only place it ever appears in the New Testament.

The "many" or the "majority" are common New Testament expressions usually for groups of Christians. An equivalent expression occurs in the sectarian documents and is often translated "congregation". Equally the Essene documents refer to people in some

sort of official role translated as “overseer” or “guardian”. It is the word which was rendered into Greek as “bishop”.

In Daniel 2:44 (possibly related to Luke 21:20) Daniel prophesies that God will set up a kingdom which will last forever. Qumran scroll fragments speak of an Eternal Kingdom ruled by a Messiah, the Son of God or the Son of the Most High, whose “rule will be an eternal rule”. Compare this with Luke 1:32-35:

“He will be great and will be called the son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the Throne of his father David... for that reason the Holy offspring will be called the Son of God.”

We have seen that, in the Bible, Son of God is a designation of a great king like David (Ps 2:7, Ps 89:27 and 2 Sam 7:14 and also Heb 1:5 and 5:5). From some scroll fragments we find the Eternal Kingdom will be an earthly one and that the Son of God will judge the earth and bring peace by subjugating all other kingdom’s and peoples. The people of God will make “everyone to rest from the sword” so there will be peace on earth. The “sword of God” is a phrase met in the War Scroll. This imagery recalls that of Matthew,

“I come not to send peace but a sword.”

Besides the sword of war there is also the sword of judgement but here its contrast with peace makes the meaning clear. The sword of war is necessary to initiate the kingdom which then brings the sword of judgement and finally peace.

In parts of another document there is a set of beatitudes like those of the Sermon on the Mount. Indeed the Sermon on the Mount is remarkably reminiscent of Qumran. Some similarities have been noted. Remarkable also is the set of assertions in the Sermon on the Mount introduced by “You have heard it was said?” and linked to their rebuttal by “...but I say to you...” One Qumran document, apparently a letter, lays out a set of 22 false interpretations of Law and their rebuttal. The interesting thing about it is that it uses almost the same language as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. A series of assertions are prefaced “You say...” and are answered by arguments preceded by “But we think?” in essence the same as Jesus does on the Mount.

We have seen the concern of the community for truth. Jesus teaches that oaths are unnecessary because no one should ever tell lies (Mt 5:33-37). The Community Rule calls the group “the community of Truth”; they rail against “The lie”; Josephus says they refused to swear on oath and were excused from taking the oath of loyalty to Herod. The Sermon on the Mount includes the duty to turn the other cheek towards an aggressor and this too is an Essene precept, as we have noted.

These are not cranky or irreligious observations. James C VanderKam, a Catholic scholar, has seen these similarities too in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, where he writes almost identically:

“Another section that offers several Qumran-sounding words and phrases is the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. One of these expressions is ‘poor in spirit’ (Mt 5:3; War Rule 14.7). Among the attitudes encouraged in the Sermon are avoiding the use of oaths (5:33-37), which, according to Josephus in Antiquities was an Essene trait, and the duty to turn the other cheek (5:38-39; Manual of Discipline 10.17-18). Moreover, the antitheses in the Sermon (‘you have heard that it was said... but I say to you...’) remind one of the way in which the still-unpublished legal ‘letter’ (Some of the Works of the Torah = 4QMMT) introduces disagreements between the sect and its opponents: ‘you know... we think/say’.”

Jesus and the Righteous One

Jesus was a highly respected man whose prophecy that the kingdom of God was nigh kept his followers agog and expectant for many years after his death. As the immediacy of the kingdom receded, a corpus of teaching and narrative lore was needed to retain the interest of those who were still loyal and to attract new converts. Where did this all come from? Jesus the Nazarene has remarkable similarities with the Essene Teacher of Righteousness. Did some confusion arise between the two?

The Teacher of Righteousness is referred to in the Manual of Discipline and the Damascus Document. In the Manual of Discipline the Teacher is associated with “the time of the preparation of the Way in the wilderness” by “the teaching of the miraculous Mysteries” (cf. Isa 40:1-3 which is used in the description of John the Baptist). He is commanded to be “zealous for the Law and the day of vengeance” conjuring up explicit images of the Zealots. In John 2:27 Jesus has “zeal” and in Acts 21:20 James’ followers are “zealous for the Law”. In the Damascus Document the Teacher is to “walk in the Laws” until the “standing up of the Messiah of Aaron and Israel in the Last days” where standing up can be synonymous with coming, return, rising or even resurrection. In the Damascus Document the Messiah (singular) of Aaron and Israel will (or did) “atone for their sins” (cf. Hebrews).

There is a reference in a scroll fragment to the “putting to death of the Righteous One”. Compare this with the passage in James (5:6) which says:

“Ye condemned the Righteous One; ye put him to death though he doth not resist you.”

This fragment echoes other themes of, and the style of, James’s epistle calling for patience and restraint. Even the language including the use of words like tongue and vipers are closely similar. Indeed the “tongue” imagery of James 3 is used to attack lying adversaries and the tongue is described by the identical, though common enough, expression, “the stumbling block”, both in James and in the scroll fragment. This is beyond coincidence. In James 2:20-24 the “Man of Emptiness” knows not that “a man was justified by his works” and “faith without works is dead”, a plain contradiction of Paul’s message that faith alone brings salvation, now considered to be the essence of Christianity. James is an Essene document only slightly edited by a Christian.

Other fragments also suggest that the Nasi, the Prince, of the Community was put to death, though it could be interpreted that the Nasi put someone else to death. The context is that of that revered quotation from Isaiah—“a rod shall rise from the stem of Jesse and a branch shall grow from his roots” referring to the Messiah. Elsewhere a messianic figure will overthrow the evil generation. This fragment possibly refers to a crucifixion. Though the word is not complete the meaning seems to be confirmed by a subsequent command “Let not the nail touch him”. If these fragments are not referring to Jesus but to a leader of the Essenes who was crucified on an earlier occasion the

whole of the gospel story is cast into doubt as a rehash of the earlier event.

The Scroll scholar, A Dupont-Sommer, has summarised the remarkable similarities between the Teacher of Righteousness and Jesus Christ.

- Both were martyred prophets subsequently revered by their followers as the Suffering Servant.
- Both preached penitence, poverty, humility, love of one's neighbour and chastity.
- Both prescribed observance of the Law of Moses.
- Both were the Elect of God and the Messiah, the redeemer of the world.
- Both were opposed by the priests, the Sadducees; were condemned and murdered.
- Both seemed to found a church whose believers thought he would return in glory, whose central rite was a sacred meal presided over by priests and whose members held goods in common and believed in brotherhood.
- Both will be the supreme judge at the Last Judgement.
- Both apparently predicted the fall of Jerusalem.

Did the Essene Teacher of Righteousness who died over a hundred years earlier become the model for Jesus Christ after the crucifixion of Barabbas?

Dupont-Sommer examines the second part of Isaiah, often termed Deutero-Isaiah, which was long believed to have been written during the Babylonian exile 200 years after the first part. Here appears the account of the "Suffering Servant despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows" who has "been wounded for our transgressions" yet by whose "stripes we are healed". Christians have taken this as prophesying Jesus, but Dupont-Sommer argues that it is a direct reference to the Teacher of Righteousness added to Isaiah as late as the intertestamental period. Dupont-Sommer urges a re-examination of other Old Testament passages in Daniel, Zechariah, Psalms and the Songs of the Servant of Yahweh in Deutero-Isaiah believing them to be all possibly inserted references to the Teacher of Righteousness.

If this is true it is easy to see how the followers of Barabbas transformed him into a reflection of the Teacher of Righteousness after his crucifixion.

Theodor H Gaster, one of the original editors of the Dead Sea Scrolls offers us this warning:

"In order to get this whole question into the right perspective, it should be observed that just as many ideas and phrases in the Dead Sea Scrolls as can be paralleled from the

New Testament can be paralleled equally well from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament—that is, from the non-canonical Jewish ‘scriptures’ that were circulating between 200 BC and 100 AD—and from the earlier strata of the Talmud. Moreover, many of them find place also in the ancient doctrines of such sects as the Mandaean of Iraq and Iran and the Samaritans, so that even if they have not come down to us through Jewish channels, we can still recognize in them part of the common Palestinian thought and folklore of the time. Accordingly, to draw from the New Testament parallels any inference of special relationship is misleading.”

Now Gaster might have been a leading scroll scholar but this warning is baloney. He is trying to do what Jews and Christians usually do—deflect attention from the huge similarities between the Essenes and the Nazarenes, that are unquestionable for any objective viewer. He is hoping to give the impression that there are no special common features between the Essenes and the Nazarenes, by suggesting that these features were common everywhere, so the Christians were no different from the rest and had nothing unusual in common with the Essenes.

Many particular examples have been given here and there are more. If we were to take Gaster literally, the Jews of the time were much more Christian than Jewish, and modern Judaism is not Judaism. If that is indeed the case—and it might be—the conclusion must be that the Essenes were much more typical of the Judaism of the time than the Rabbis have subsequently cared to admit, and they were instrumental in spinning off much of the Apocrypha, Pseudepigraphy, and the beliefs of the Mandaean, Samaritans and the early Talmudists. It is far from impossible that much of this is true.

The Essenes had a much greater influence on the world than has ever been acknowledged because they were forced to spallate into many factions that went under different names and evolved on different routes until their common origins were lost, the original sect having gone extinct. Gaster’s warning actually highlights the remarkable truth. The Essenes made an astonishing impact on the world, and they were the direct inheritors of the religion given to the Jews by the Persians in the fifth century BC!

Some Criticisms Answered

Entering the new millennium, the idea that Qumran had nothing to do with Essenes seems to be reviving in popularity. One set of arguments, and the basis of the following list, can be found at a contrary but interesting and well presented website run by Ian Hutcheson.

- The Essenes are located in the Dead Sea region by Pliny who relates them to being in the vicinity of Engedi. Why would he make that connexion when Qumran was much closer to the better known Jericho?

Who says that Pliny was talking only about Qumran? He speaks of the Essenes being on the western littoral of the Dead Sea and “below” them was Engedi, and “beyond” or “next” was Masada. He is therefore defining the part of the Western littoral that they occupied—that north of Engedi, or from Engedi to roughly Qumran, or the mouth of the Jordan. The Essenes were not only at Qumran but were also at Ain Feshka, confirming that they occupied this region of the wilderness of Judaea.

- Philo tells us the Essenes were held as exemplary and had no clashes with any of the rulers of Palestine. The DSS however shows a central episode in the history of the Qumran Sect as being a conflict with authorities in Jerusalem.

No allowance is made for propaganda purposes here, or for the time factor. Philo, like Josephus wants to paint them as exemplary, and doubtless in normal behaviour, they were. If I declared that the presidency of the USA was corrupt and should be abolished, would it necessarily mean that I do not lead an exemplary life?

- The Essenes of the classic authors, Pliny, Philo and Josephus, were pacific, whereas some of the scrolls, especially the War Scroll sound militant.

Critical emphasis has traditionally been put on the direct statements of the classic authors that the Essenes were peaceful, and so the DS Scrolls have been accused of not being Essene. Yet, Josephus speaks of an Essene that fought in the Jewish War. One could say that the orders of monks in the Middle Ages were pacific, but there were some decidedly militant orders, like the Templars. Josephus assures us there were at least two types of Essenes, so some Essenes might not have been pacific. Furthermore, Josephus might have been deliberately coy about the nature of the Essenes to avoid any further punitive or suppressive action by the Romans.

Besides that, it could be valid to call Essenes pacific in general, even though they were preparing for what they considered as a Holy War. Pliny will therefore have seen them as simple monks or communal farmers but, when they thought the time was ready for the Holy War to commence, they abandoned their farming and pacifism believing that they were soldiers of God, just as Christians did. They certainly cannot have been

openly training as liberation troops in an occupied and subject country, so they had to have a pacific face to survive at all.

- There were only 4000 Essenes all together, according to Josephus, and they lived in all the cities of Judaea. They must therefore have been thinly spread and few of them can have lived near Qumran.

It is a silly argument that takes no account of whether the 4000 were only males or men women and children. If they were only males as seems likely then the total of men, women and children might have been around 25,000 (the celibate Essenes being only the most devout, leading members of the sect, the equivalent of catholic priests).

It also ignores the total population of Judaea. Even in 1960, the population of Israel was only 2 million, and it seems likely it was much less in the year dot, so 4000 active men would have been significant.

Finally, when Josephus speaks, almost as an afterthought about the Essenes who married, did he include these married ones within his 4000 or were they in addition to them. If the latter, the 4000 were most significant, because they were the celibate leadership and we can guess that the “lay” Essenes, if that is what they were, were far more numerous. Who is to say that the Essenes were not the main sect of the time, taking into account the diaspora, and not the Pharisees as the Rabbis claim.

- Why were the Essenes only mentioned explicitly in three authors' works, if they were a major part of Judaism, or even the main part of it.

The answer surely is precisely that. The gentile authors knew only of the Jewish cult of the temple and were not interested in internal disagreements between the Jewish parties, which doubtless seemed like nit-picking to observers.

- The Qumran sect is said not to have been celibate, on the ground that graves of women were found at the ruined site, and provisions were made for marriage in some of the scrolls.

A bit flimsy, this! The classic authors all said the Essenes were celibate, though Josephus distinguishes a class of Essenes that was not. Again, we could look at the monks of the Middle Ages and, from them alone, claim that Catholic Christians were celibate. Josephus seems to be telling us that there were monkish Essenes and there were more pragmatic Essenes. Furthermore, some of the graves at Qumran might have been those of visitors, especially if the buildings were a centre of an annual renewal ceremony.

- The Essenes disapproved of slavery: the Qumran Sect tolerated it.

So disapproval and toleration are incompatible? Cults with rules peculiar to themselves often have to live in a world that operates on the basis of different laws—laws of which

they might disapprove but which they have to tolerate. A recently discovered ostrakon at Qumran speaks of the transfer of the property of a neophyte to the community and includes a slave, but there is no necessity to believe that having been so transferred, he remained a slave of the community. He probably joined too.

- The Essenes disapproved of animal sacrifices: the Qumran Sect admitted it and paid special deference to priests.

The same comment, and which priests did they defer to? The scroll authors claimed they were priests, but they still disapproved of the temple as polluted. In fact the scroll authors preferred a sweet savour to offer to God not sacrifice, as they say several times.

The Essenes avoided oaths: the Qumran sect prescribed them, on certain occasions.

The same comment, avoidance is not proscription, so they could avoid them but prescribe them. They prescribed them when they entered the order and thereafter proscribed them, just as Josephus says.

- “Baptism” among the Essenes had a regenerative power: there is no evidence in the voluminous Dead Sea literature that this was the case in the Qumran Sect.

So the Qumran sectaries, in an arid and waterless region, were just being hygienic in insisting on immersing their whole body before eating each meal. The Community Rule forbids the unjust from entering “the water to partake of the pure meal of the men of holiness.” Josephus also says the Essenes bathed before their meals twice a day.

- The Essenes practised community of property: the Qumran Sect did so, if at all, in only a restricted degree.

If a community of property is practised even in a restricted way, it is practised. But, what was the restriction? The Community Rule 6:20-21 is clear that the novice must hand over all property to the bursar on acceptance, and line 25 says the punishment for deception in regard to property is severe—exclusion for a year and partial starvation. The ostrakon found at Qumran seems to be an account of a novitate handing over his possessions, a house, orchards and a slave, to the bursar.

This also shows how the order of Essenes could have been extremely rich while the initiates practiced the spirit of poverty. Their successors, the Christian churches, are precisely the same, though their officials have shown more inclination to make a personal use of the institution's wealth.

- Whoever occupied the site before it was abandoned about 37 BC would have reoccupied the site after the earthquake and not waited another 33 years to do so. If Essenes were there before 37 BC, they are not likely to have reoccupied the site.

Why indeed should an earthquake have made them abandon the site, when they would

have been expected to set to work immediately to repair the damage? Since they, or someone else, lived there later, it was not irreparable. This is not evidence but an opinion. Another opinion is that the Essenes were wooed by Herod in this intervening period because he wanted to rebuild the temple, and wanted the support of Essenes, not their disapprobation. Herod later welched on the Essenes and they left Jerusalem to return to their old wilderness base.

- Pliny's account, and indirectly Josephus's account as well, describe the “Essenes as flourishing undisturbed after the hostilities”, the Jewish War.

Who says they flourished in the same place as before? If the Romans had seen Qumran as a fortress they would have been obliged to “flourish” elsewhere. The scrolls say they lived in camps, imitating the Israelites in the desert. They doubtless did this again, and those who lived in the cities could have flourished anyway, but later many would have abandoned apocalyptic for Rabbinism or for Christianity, notably after the Bar Kosiba war.

- If the Essenes “were held up as models of behaviour by the Romanophile Josephus” and so admired by Pliny, why was their centre destroyed by the Romans?

Is this serious? Both were writing after the War, and Josephus had political and probably personal reasons for painting the Essenes as innocents. After the failure of the Jewish uprising, the Essenes would have returned to passivity for practical reasons and to revise their cosmic schemata.

- The sheer number of scribal hands, of up to 800, seen in the scrolls tells against them all being written by a local sect at Qumran.

The fallacy here is the assumption that this was only a local sect. The Essenes, as Josephus says were represented throughout Judaea. Furthermore, they might have been accumulating the library for some considerable time, perhaps 200 years. If the centre of the sect was at Qumran as Pliny implies, then books collected throughout Judaea for this long period of time would have been deposited at Qumran.

Critics of the Essene hypothesis try to make a lot of arguments like Norman Golb's that the scrolls actually were brought from Jerusalem to Qumran for safekeeping (during the war) or to deposit in a geniza of old sacred texts. If books were brought from Jerusalem at the time of the Jewish war for safekeeping, the collection was still a library of a sect, rather than a general library.

Nor would owners of a library in Jerusalem have gone so far as Qumran to find caves to deposit the books into—there were suitable inaccessible caves closer to Jerusalem. The caves at Qumran were not particularly inaccessible for some of them have been used as dwellings. In other words, the books were most likely to have been deposited by the locals but, if the books came from elsewhere, they were brought to Qumran because the sect dwelling there were of the same persuasion.

Wherever the scrolls came from, some of them are plainly sectarian in being markedly eschatological and militant, and these are the books that are kept in multiple copies. It would be impossible to claim that mainstream Judaism as defined by the temple organization fitted into the category indicated by the sectarian works, and most Jewish scholars would add that they are also not the source of Rabbinism. They are therefore describing Essenes or some related sect.

Yet for Josephus there were only three sects he thought worthy of note, and the prevalence of the sectarian material among the scrolls shows that this was important enough to be one of them. Two of Josephus's sects were Sadducees and Pharisees, and the other was the Essenes. Only the Galilaeans, the followers of Judas of Gamala, or Judas the Galilaeen, are mentioned besides these three. This sect, Josephus implies became the Zealots, but he also implies by association that they were a type of Essene. Admittedly, against this, he says they held the ideas of the Pharisees, but such ideas as he describes fit the scrolls and not the Pharisaic ideas, if the gospel descriptions of them are true.

Many of these criticisms are those of Cecil Roth who thought that the Qumran Sect were Zealots. Quite so. The Essenes were Zealots, and so was Jesus.

Differences between the scrolls and the descriptions of the classic writers, particularly Josephus, are often cited, but the astonishing agreements indicate that Josephus was accurately describing the sectaries identified in the scroll manuals and pesharim—Josephus called them Essenes! As to the differences, they might easily have been because the sect evolved between the time the sectarian manuals were written and Josephus learnt what he knew about them, or Josephus's recollection might have been faulty, or he might have been altering some things for his own reasons such as to mitigate possible Roman relation, or Essenism was already split into factions such as Hemerobaptists, Galilaeans, Nazarenes and so on. Obviously, the details of all of this cannot now be clearly seen, but a coherent outline certainly can.

- A criticism of Jesus that he is too often depicted as angry is used by non-Christians to show that Jesus was not good enough to be God incarnate.

It seems a silly argument when Jesus's anger is compared with that of the Old Testament God, but more realistically it has been argued as proof that Jesus was not an Essene. It is true that the rules of conduct in the scrolls have strong penalties for members of the brotherhood who show anger to each other, but scrolls like the War Scroll show that the Essenes were exceedingly angry with other people. Jesus was angry with unrepentant cities, for example, and his Pharisaic opponents, and even sometimes with his own converts, but he was not angry with John the Baptist when he criticised him in Matthew, and the Essenes had no rule against damning even a brother with faint praise!

- Another criticism is that Jesus unreasonably demands that his followers should choose to live in poverty and yet still love other people—a hard requirement.

This is simply a failure to understand from the gospels what we now know from the scrolls—that Jesus meant by the “Poor” his own sect of the Essenes, the Ebionites (the Poor Men). The Ebionites valued poverty for its spiritual value, but it did not mean that the Ebionites were destitute or in any way economically insecure. When they joined the order, they gave it all their possessions except for certain personal items, so each individual Essene was impoverished but the order was not, and it had bursars who dealt with purchasing, from the common purse, anything the brothers could not produce themselves. The village Essenes, who must have been the large majority of them, had quite a different system, that adopted by the modern Mormons—they gave a proportion of their income to the order, but otherwise their earnings were their own. Either way, Essenes were not destitute and so were free to concentrate on matters of God, whether it was loving fellow Essenes or preparing for a holy war.

- Jesus also is criticised for asking the impossible of his followers in wanting them to be perfect even as his Father was perfect.

There is little doubt that the Essenes knew just as any modern Jew knows that there is no perfection outside of heaven, so to demand perfection seems to ask too much. But Jesus was expecting the world to end and the renewed world to be part of heaven and therefore, like heaven, perfect. He asked Jews to repent—thus absolving them of all previous sins—and then to practise perfection for the short time he expected before the kingdom came—not such an onerous task, for as Christians still tell us, it was to be “soon”.

Professor John Knox raised this issue in the context of the man whose brother had stolen his inheritance. Knox points out that Jesus had no useful advice, telling the man effectively not to bother. The man however was concerned with the injustice of it—he did bother. For Jesus, if the world was going to end soon, there was no point in getting angry about such matters and risking an adverse judgement that meant no eternal life. His message was to renounce covetousness to enter the kingdom. It was a minor sacrifice by comparison but the man was not convinced. Jesus therefore had no general advice about injustice in this world, because it was only temporary and its end was nigh!

- J J Cadbury points out that nowhere is Jesus interested in the rights or needs of another party or in society as a whole.

He was interested only in securing Jewish sinners—apostates from the faith—for God's kingdom through repentance. Third parties like the gentiles and unrepentant Jews were of no interest to him, though righteous gentiles might be considered for God's kingdom if they came in supplication. John Bowden put it succinctly when he said: “His aim was personal repentance not structural reform.” What is the point of reforming what will be destroyed?

- Jesus is absolutely positive in Mark's gospel in his teaching on divorce—it is impossible (Mk 10:1-12).

The underlying reason was that God was betrothed to Israel—the land and people personified as a woman—and God would not abandon her however wayward she was. Matthew (Mt 19:1-9) defeats the entire point, bringing back as a practical reason for divorce the very failing that Jesus was forbidding—adultery. If this were the law of God, then God would have been justified in abandoning his faithless spouse. Matthew's author either did not understand this or, since the Jews had indeed been abandoned by God with the crucifixion of their apocalyptic leader, he decided the practical law could be restored!

Essenes and the Bible

German scholars have shown that there are a huge number of detailed parallels between the scrolls and the bible. Here is a selection of them.

- The Essenes believed and were taught “to choose what is right and to avoid what is wrong” (Philo). “They exceed all other men that addict themselves to virtue, and this in righteousness” (Josephus).

“Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all else shall be added.” (Mt 6:33; Lk 12:31)

- They abjured all amusements, all elegances, and all pleasures of the senses (Philo).

“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col 3:2)

- They lay up nothing on earth—“not storing up treasures of silver and of gold, nor acquiring vast sections of the earth out of a desire for ample revenues” (Philo)—but fix their minds solely on heaven (the kingdom of God).

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.” (Mt 6:19)

- “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” (Philo).

“Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.” (Mk 6:31)

“They wander in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth.” (Heb 11:38)

- “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” (Josephus).

“And parted them (their goods) to all men as every man had need.” (Acts 2:45).

- They were wont to sell their possessions and their substance, and divide among all according as any one had need so that there was not one among them in want, even as it is related in the Acts of the Apostles (Eusebius).

“For whoever, of Christ’s disciples, were owners of estates or houses, sold them, and

brought the price thereof, and laid them at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made as every one had need. So Philo relates things exactly similar of the Essenes."

"Neither was their any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold." (Acts 4:34)

- "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" (Philo).

"Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Lk 14:33, cf Mk 10:30)

- They being sometimes called monks was owing to their abstraction from the world (Eusebius).

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (Jn 17:16).

- They were called Ascetics because of their rigid discipline, their prayers, fasting, self-mortification, as they made themselves eunuchs (that is, remained chaste).

"There be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." (Mt 19:12)

- "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." "They do not retain as their own, but bring it into a common stock" (Philo). They "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" (Josephus).

"And had all things in common." (Acts 2:44; Acts 4:32)

- "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" (Philo). "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" (Josephus).

"Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast." (Jn 13:29)

- They "shun expensive luxury as a disease of both body and soul" (Philo).

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, and putting on of apparel.” (1 Peter 3:3)

- “Nor do they allow of the change of clothing or of shoes till be first torn to pieces, or worn out by time” (Josephus).

“No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.” (Mk 2:21)

- “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” (Philo).

“Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” (Mt 20:27)

“Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.” (Mt 23:8)

- “The laws of nature, which generated them all equally... such a study takes in the contemplation of the existence of God and of the creation of the universe” (Philo).

“God that made the world and all things therein... And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” (Acts 17:24-26)

- “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” (Josephus).

“Swear not at all.” (Mt 5:34)

- “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” (Hippolytus). “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” (Philo).

“That ye abstain from meat offered to idols, and from blood.” (Acts 15:29)

- “Being without any women and renouncing all sexual desire, having no money” (Pliny). “They carry nothing at all with them when they travel into remote parts” (Josephus).

Christians held all things in common, travelled without money, and the leading Christians eschewed marriage.

“The love of money is the root of all evil.” (1 Tim 6:10)

“And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse.” (Mk 6:8)

- They gave a mystical sense to the Scriptures, disregarding the letter. “A great many precepts are delivered in enigmatical modes of expression, and allegorically.” (Philo)

“Which things are an allegory.” (Gal 4:24)

“The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” (2 Cor 3:6).

- They taught by metaphors, symbols, and parables.

“Without a parable spake he not unto them.” (Mt 13:34)

- They abjured the pleasures of the body, not desiring mortal offspring—“no Essene is a mere child nor even a stripling or newly bearded”, and “they eschew marriage”, believing it to be detrimental to a holy life. “They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued” (Josephus).

The career of Jesus did not begin until he was about 30. (Lk 3:23). Neither Jesus nor Paul ever married, and they discouraged marriage.

“But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.” (Lk 20:35)

“He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord.” (1 Cor 7:32).

- “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” (Philo).

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15)

- “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” (Philo). They gave blessings to God day and night (1QS).

“He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray.” (Lk 18:1).

“Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thess 5:17).

- “These men are despisers of riches” (Josephus).

“Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” (Mt 19:23-24)

- “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” (Philo).

“Blessed be ye poor.” (Luke 6:20)

“Hath not God chosen the poor?” (James 2:5).

“If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.” (Mt 19:21)

- “The interval between morning and evening, they devote wholly to meditation on and to practice virtue” (Philo).

“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them.” (1 Tim 4:13,15).

- “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” (Philo).

Paul fasted often, and enjoined his disciples to fast and pray. (2 Cor 11:27; 1 Cor 7:5). “The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.” (Mk 2:20)

- “Not sacrificing living animals, but studying rather to preserve their own minds in a state of holiness and purity.” (Philo). “They do not offer sacrifices because they have more pure lustrations of their own.” (Josephus)

“There is no more offering for sin.” (Heb 10:18).

- They “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” (Josephus).

“To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom; to them it is not given.” (Mt 13:11) “Great is the mystery of godliness.” (1 Tim 3:6)

- They had in their churches, bishops, elders, deacons, and priests.

“When they had ordained them elders in every church.” (Acts 14:23) “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.” (Phil 1:1)

- “They compose psalms and hymns to God in every kind of meter and melody imaginable, which they of necessity arrange in more dignified rhythm” (Philo).

“Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Col 3:16).

- “If anyone is sick he is nursed at the common expense and tended with care and thoughtfulness by all” (Philo). “They inquire after such roots and medicinal stones as may cure their distempers” Josephus.

“Healing all manner of sickness.” (Mt 4:23).

- They practiced certain ceremonial purifications by water.

Matthew 28:19 shows that the early Christians were still baptizing. Paul underwent purification.

“The accomplishment of the days of purification.” (Acts 21:26)

- “They have clothed themselves in white veils” (Josephus). “They do also to be clothed in white garments” (Josephus).

“They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.” (Rev 3:4).

- Josephus said they had Greek ideas about the relationship of the body and the spirit—“they teach the immortality of souls;” “bodies are corruptible... the matter they are made of is not permanent, but... souls are immortal, and continue for ever”—apparently refuting resurrection. Paul seems to have similar ideas, but the truth is ambiguous, for Essenes seemed to consider the world—into which the body was, in fact, resurrected—would become a spiritual world, the kingdom of God, in the sense that everything was pure and incorruptible, but otherwise seemed much like this one—just perfect! So the resurrected body was a spiritual body, and, being incorruptible, was immortal.

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” (1 Cor 15:42-44)

- “There are also those among them who undertake to foretell things to come... and it is but seldom that they miss in their predictions.”

“Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Acts 2:17)

- They believed in a paradise, and in a place of never- ending lamentations.

“To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” (Lk 23:43)

“And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” (Mt 13:42)

- They affirmed, says Josephus, that God foreordained all the events of human life.

“Christ... verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world.” (1 Peter 1:19-20).

“God ordained before the world unto our glory.” (1 Cor 2:7)

- They believed in Mediators between God and the souls of men.

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim 2:5).

- They practiced the pantomimic representation of the death, burial, and resurrection of God.

This might be what the whole of the passion of Christ was. (1 Cor 15:4)

- They inculcated the forgiveness of injuries.

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Lk 23:34)

- They disapproved of antagonism between brothers.

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” (1 Peter 1:22)

- They retired within themselves to receive interior revelations of divine truth.

“Every one of you hath a... revelation.” (1 Cor 14:26).

- “He will be perpetually a lover of truth, and propose to himself to reprove those that tell lies” (Josephus).

“Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth.” (Mt 22:16)

“Truth came by Jesus Christ.” (Jn 1:17)

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (Jn 4:24)

“Sanctify them through thy truth.” (Jn 17:17)

- They put all members on the same level, forbidding the exercise of authority of one over another.

“Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” Mt 20:27)

“If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.” (Mk 9:35)

- They “communicate their doctrines to no one any otherwise than as he received them himself... and will equally preserve the books belonging to their sect” (Josephus).

“If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.” (Revelation 22:18)

- They laid the greatest stress on being meek and lowly in spirit.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” (Mt 5:5)

- They commended the poor in spirit, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and the merciful, and the pure in heart.

The sermon on the mount in Matthew is purely Essenic.

- They sacrificed the lusts of the flesh to gain spiritual happiness.

“Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” (1 Peter 2:11)

- They broke bread as a ritual. “The Messiah of Israel shall extend his hand over the bread” (1QSa).

“Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them.” (Mk 14:22)

- They enjoined the loving of enemies (Philo).

“Love your enemies.” (Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27)

Christianity Revealed

Jesus and the Essenes

Dr M D Magee

The notable student of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Professor Bent Scholar, in a book called *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, has compiled a list of comparisons between Jesus and the Essenes, which is “not a non-debatable consensus”, but is his own selection, based on insights developed and defended in lengthy monographs by international experts. It is “the consensus among the most prestigious Qumran specialists”. He means, all his best friends agree on it. Bent explains that experts are not embroiled in controversy over the discoveries in the Judean desert. Curious then that many people have the impression they are hiding something.

Similarities and Differences

Anyway, we are to believe there is a consensus, it is among the best specialists, and nothing is being concealed. Bent Scholar refers to eleven of the best specialists, and guess what? Eight of them are professional Christians! One other was a professional Jew. The other two had non-religious professions but we are not told whether they held religious views. Professional devotees of the modern Hebraic religions are hardly likely to get themselves sacked by saying that their discoveries render their professional beliefs untenable. Even they are not stupid enough to saw off the branch which supports them.

Professor Scholar tries to be a liberal in his interpretations of the discoveries but, though he disparages both ends of the spectrum of opinions about Jesus's relationship to the Essenes, the Christian fundamentalists at one end and absolute skeptics like myself at the other, he betrays his own prejudices in many ways.

Why should institutions for men to live devout lives essentially segregated from the world, and particularly from the other sex, not be called monasteries? Bent Scholar objects to Qumran being called a monastery because it "transports Christian ideas" to pre-70s Judaism. Does he object to Tibetan monasteries being given the same name because it "transports Christian ideas" to a distant Asian plateau? His real fear is that it might seem to be admitting more about the Essenes than the best specialists want to concede—that Qumran was the first Christian monastery, as could arguably be the case, if Jesus were shown to have been an Essene.

We shall see similar dishonesty in the following discussion of Bent Scholar's lists of similarities and dissimilarities between Jesus and the Essenes.

SUMMARY OF FUNDAMENTAL SIMILARITIES

Scholar begins with a summary of the "numerous fundamental ways" in which Jesus and the Essenes were similar.

- They were in the same small country, Judaea, about as big as Delaware or Devonshire.
- They were Jews.
- They were seriously religious.
- They were deeply conservative, basing their beliefs on ancient scriptures not the world as it was.
- They disliked non-Jews.

- They resented the temple priesthood, the Sadducees.
- They disliked another Jewish sect, the Pharisees, but saw some good in some of them.
- They expected God to change the world and destroy the wicked soon—they were apocalyptic and eschological.
- They were disliked by the Romans and Jesus and many Essenes were killed by them.

If we were not talking about someone believed by Christians to be the son of God, this list of identities would be sufficient to categorise Jesus as an Essene, the Essenes having existed at least 100 years before Jesus was born. It is not sufficient for Christians, who prefer to believe unbelievable myths rather than obvious truths, out of ignorance or greed. They hope to find relief from their possible discomfiture in the detail.

The scholarly consensus are fairly blind about the list of detailed similarities but over the list of detailed dissimilarities they really show their absurd prejudices. Their trouble is they are determined not to let Jesus be an Essene at any cost to truth and scholarly values. If Jesus is to be God's revelation, he has to be unique. Professor Scholar tries to reassure doubters that if Jesus is not quite unique, it is no bad thing for it combats the worst Christian heresy—docetism, but he is still intent on stopping Jesus from being recognised as an Essene. In desperation, in the face of insurmountable odds, he will concede a marginal influence of the Essenes on Jesus, but not close association and certainly not membership, God Forbid!

It is not hard to find differences between what we know of the teachings of Jesus and what we know of the teachings of the Essenes. Both are incomplete, so, when we find something missing on either side and present on the other, the Christians thank God and chalk it up as a difference. We cannot be sure that all the documents at Qumran are Essene, and we might be reading some as Essene when they are simply a book in the library for reference or a book given to them for safekeeping by someone else. In the New Testament, we cannot know what Jesus actually taught because he did not write it down or dictate it, and tradition might have inadvertantly or deliberately distorted it. In my view most of the narrative of the gospels has been shaded to make it appear innocent. Some, at least, of the sayings will have similarly been altered or omitted because they were too obvious.

But the main reason for the differences is precisely to do with the great concern of Essenes—the Day of God's Vengeance. Essenes knew they were in the Last Days, but they did not know precisely when the great event would happen. At the start of the gospels, John the Baptist and Jesus knew they were in the Last Days and urged people to repent, but they also did not know precisely when the occasion would be. Jesus himself explains it in Mark 13. For reasons that are not clear, Jesus comes to think that the Last Days really are at hand. In other words, they were literally down to days, not years. The last voluntary act of his life was to go to the Mount of Olives and watch for

God's miracle. He literally thought it would happen on the night of the Last Supper. It did not! Jesus was caught and crucified.

Bent Scholar concludes that Jesus was not an Essene. This, he declares, is the consensus among scholars. He means by scholars those who are members of the consensus! His attitude to anyone else who dares to venture an opinion is an absolute delight. Since the 1950s, many people have written that Jesus was an Essene but they were "journalists seeking attention" or "scholars who have become confused or even insane".

Bent Scholar is certain that Jesus did not even have any tuition from an Essene, though how he knows is anybody's guess—revelation, I suppose. (Christian scholars have such advantages over we skeptics.) Jesus was influenced by the Essenes in only "minor ways". In truth, there are so many points of coincidence in the list below that, if Jesus was not an Essene, he was brought up in an Essene school and by an Essene mum and dad.

Some scholars explain some of the points of similarity—of Christianity, not Jesus—to the Essenes, by Essenes joining the new movement after 70 AD, but this is hardly any easier to take if Jesus and the Essenes were so disalike as Bent Scholar thinks. The Hellenists among the Nazarenes will have taken advantage of an Essene network across the Empire, and doubtless densest in the eastern provinces in which Christianity began to thrive. That many Jews did not like them is shown in Paul's epistles and Acts.

Jewish Christians in the Jerusalem Church will have fought alongside the Essenes and militant Pharisees against the Romans. At this point any Essenes in the wider church would surely have left to support the freedom fighters. If many Essenes died fighting the Romans in the Jewish War, it seems unlikely that the survivors would have joined what had by then become largely a gentile church. After 70 AD any remaining will have joined the rabbis rather than Christianity. The sects that did join the Christians after 70 AD were the sadducees and the Herodians. History and logic point to Essenes leaving the Christian Church, if they had ever joined it.

But Bent Scholar claims to have shown that the church became more influenced by Essenes after the crucifixion for several generations. The later epistles like Ephesians are more Essenic than earlier ones like Galatians and Romans. The gospels of John and Matthew are more Essenic than Mark.

The dating of Paul's letters is sorcery not scholarship, so nothing can be said about them except that they are plainly indebted to the Essenes. The question of the gospels is straightforward to explain. Mark was not a Jew, or he was a highly Hellenised and apostate Jew, and he deliberately wrote to hide the truth not to reveal it. That in itself might show Essene influence but the gentile Christians could not be seen as associated with a rebel nation and particularly with a militant sect. Mark wrote his gospel deliberately to depict it as anodyne.

Essenes fought bitterly in the Jewish War, a war that they considered a holy war against the men of darkness, and any scholarly consideration has to take this irrefutable fact of the first century into account. Bent Scholar quotes F J Murphy as properly insisting:

“Any reconstruction that does not see Jesus within first century Jewish society is unacceptable.”

It is unacceptable to ignore the huge tensions in Jewish society that led up to that ferocious war, and their effects upon the embryonic Christian religion that was rooted in a hated nation.

A glimmer enters the dark recesses of Bent Scholar’s partiality. Jesus was closer to the village Essenes than to the monastic ones.

Jesus was desperately trying to convert the sinners of Israel, expecting ha-Megiddo at any minute. What has come to us of his attempt has come from some of those converts. He was a professional Essene, we would say today, but preaching to the masses. He did not try to explain to them the finer points of theology. His object was to have them repent and be ritually purified by baptism, ready for God’s Appointed Time. So, the people who told us the story were more like village Essenes. For all we know, earlier Essenes had thought the big one was coming and had made recruits before and nothing happened. The repentant converts might well have formed themselves into the body of lay-Essenes of Palestine. We don’t know, but the objective of Jesus as the head of the Essene Church was exactly what Christians have always said. Bent Scholar tells us himself:

“He moves and begins to call Jews to follow him and restore the Covenant loyalty of Israel.”

Bent Scholar fails to comprehend the urgency of it all—God’s Appointed Time is here—and the fact that, if God sent Jesus, he sent him as head of the Essenes! The consensoids cannot even let these possibilities enter their heads, but they are virtually the complete explanation of the differences between the Essenes of the Scrolls and the Essenism of Jesus. Let them think the unthinkable. Jesus was an Essene and try to explain the differences from;

- the urgency of his situation;
- the desire of gentile Christians to obscure the truth;
- the possibility that sufficient is missing from both sets of records, or has been sufficiently obscured, that small irreconcilable differences might still remain.

What appears will be an overwhelming argument for Jesus as a man of his time.

Bent Scholar, expert as he is, choses to try to distinguish Jesus from Christians in what

follows. It is absurd to anyone rational. All we know about Jesus has been filtered through the beliefs of a Church at least forty years old when the first gospel was written and twice that age when Christians tried to improve it. It is useful for Bent Scholar to do this because he can ignore many signs of Essenism in the early church as importations when he wants to suggest that Jesus was not influenced by Essenism.

This ignorant non-scholar, drawing on the scholarly work of scholars but not their ludicrously childish attitudes or their piously distorted faith-conditioned opinions, maintains that Jesus can be thoroughly understood. We only need to read the gospels with some insight and empathy for the people and the time and the story can be reconstructed with some veracity.

I know full well that this will be ignored by the Christians and probably by the Jews too. But is much more likely to be true than infantile and unhistorical beliefs about demi-gods and miracles.

Similarities

- Both Jesus and the Essenes believed in the traditional God of Second Temple Judaism

For all Jews who were not apostates, Yehouah was considered the Most High God as the creator of the universe (Mk 10:18; 12:29, 32; 13:19; 1Q S3:15-20). This belief is always described as monotheistic, but it is hard to know what it means since the Hebrew God has an enemy who is just as powerful, judging by his inability to subdue him, he has his own lesser gods as messengers and lackeys (angels) and they all have to contend with the lackeys of his enemy (demons). At the same time various humans like Moses, Enoch, the Essene and Christian saints and Jesus can take on god-like qualities, although only Jesus officially becomes one.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes believed in a powerful enemy of God, the Evil One

He was called Satan by the New Testament writers and Belial by the New Covenanters. God, being all-powerful, would eventually win the struggle, although what reason he could possibly have for not ending it immediately thereby saving a lot of pain is not apparent. Jesus actually never explicitly says Satan will be defeated but the sectarians do. The nearest is Mark 3:26 when he says Satan would have an end, if he is divided, and Luke 10:18 where Jesus had a vision of Satan falling from heaven like lightning. Nevertheless, the gist of the kingdom parables is that evil will be defeated in order to create the kingdom of God. All of this is code for the defeat of the Romans and the establishment of a theocracy in Israel.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes believed in the Torah or Law of Moses

It was the will of God gifted to mankind and which they devoted themselves to, absolutely. Not even Christian scholars try to pretend any more that Jesus had abrogated the Torah.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes believed in the Jewish scriptures

They particularly believed the Torah, but also the Prophets as their holy guide to behaviour and expectations. Few practising Jews other than the Sadducees would have demurred, the Sadducees, however, accepting only the Torah. The big question here is: What were the Jewish scriptures in the first century? The Jewish canon was not set until later by the Rabbis whose outlook was that of the Pharisees. It is quite plain that the Essenes regarded 1 Enoch, Jubilees, Tobit, the Testament of Levi and the Testament of Naphtali all as "scripture". Jesus seems only to quote from the canonical Old Testament but some of the epistles quote other works.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes had the same particular books of scripture as favourites: Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Psalms

If this could be shown with some certainty it would be powerful confirmation that Jesus was an Essene, but the Christians will give thanks that we have such an incomplete record of what Jesus said that a proper assessment will be impossible. Our record of Essene practices are also, of course, highly incomplete, but at least what we have is probably their own. What we have about Jesus has been highly coloured by the gentile bishops.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes believed in the importance of Isaiah 40:3

“A voice crying, In the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

Jesus's followers wrote this into the gospels, saying it meant John the Baptist. Oddly, John baptised in places that could not have been wilderness themselves because there was fresh water available—oases or the Jordan river, albeit often surrounded by wilderness, whereas Qumran and its caves were unquestionably wilderness and the sectaries had to build elaborate channels and cisterns to capture the seasonal rains.

This passage in Isaiah was so important to the Essenes that in their copies of the text of Isaiah they lifted it out of its context, effectively boxing it out, as we might do in a book today. Equally, it is written in the core of their own rules, the Community Rule (1QS 8:13-14). It appears in the third verse of the earliest Christian gospel, the first being the book's original title, and the next introducing the prophecy of God's messiah, although Christians pretend it is the messiah's messenger, John the Baptist. Of the myriads of verses in the Jewish scriptures Christians could have chosen to begin their own gospel, they chose the very verse that defined the place and purpose of the Essene community. If Jesus was not an Essene, do not the Christians have to admit that the Holy Ghost was doing its best to make him look like one? Bent Scholar urges us to “ponder” whether Jesus's followers might have been influenced by the Essenes!

- Both Jesus and the Essenes believed in the institution of a New Covenant

In the synoptic gospels, the Last Supper is where Jesus starts this New Covenant (Luke (Lk 22:20) and some manuscripts of Mark and Matthew) or Covenant (Mk 14:24; Mt 26:28). It is noteworthy that even when “new” is omitted by the manuscripts, the reading becomes “the” Covenant, implying that it was a covenant that they all already knew about and not really one that was newly instituted then. In short, it was the New Covenant of the Essenes, one that was “new” relative to the Old Covenants and for the Essenes when they founded it but not “new” at the Last Supper. The Qumran sectarians called themselves the New Covenanters, entering into the New Covenant when they joined ((CD 6:19) and regarding their community as the Everlasting Covenant (1QS 3:16).

Of course, the idea of a New Covenant comes from Jeremiah 31:31-34 where the prophet speaks of a new covenant which God writes on men's hearts. The Essenes were the people who developed the idea of a New Covenant into a living community of New Covenanters long before the putative Last Supper. Yet Bent Scholar again ponders

whether Jesus was influenced by the Essenes. Fatuously, he concludes it unlikely because this passage influenced many New Testament writers, proving that it was a popular idea at the time.

This is scholarship? The New Testament writers he refers to were, amazingly, all Christians and therefore all New Covenanters, if that is what Jesus was. The very word translated Testament in New Testament can equally be translated as Covenant and in the light of the Scrolls, one might conclude it should be translated as Covenant. If Jeremiah's passage was popular at the time it was because the Essenes made it popular and though there was no copyright law in the Torah, it seems unlikely that anyone could come along, take all the main doctrines of another group and pretend to be something else. The Christians were only able to do it because they took Essene doctrines into the Roman Empire and subsequently the true Essenes were wiped out in revolutionary defeats by the Romans.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes called themselves the Poor

In the sermon to the multitude, in Matthew (Mt 5:3) and Luke (Lk 6:20), the Poor are offered the kingdom of God (or heaven). In Matthew, they are even called the Poor in Spirit, not those suffering from depression but those with the Spirit of Poorness—they see a spiritual benefit in poverty. This expression baffled everyone until it was found in the War Scroll (1QM 14:7). In the War Scroll the Poor win the cosmic battle at God's intervention. Bent Scholar acknowledges the "uniqueness" of the term the Poor Ones and so thinks it conceivable that Jesus "inherited" it from the Essenes. In fact, this is an astonishing and quite conclusive agreement especially since Paul the apostle to the gentiles collected money for the Poor Ones in Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Church, and the Jewish Christians written of by the Church Fathers as heretics from Christianity called themselves the Poor Ones (Ebionim).

- Both Jesus and the Essenes held their property in common

Judas was in charge of a money bag (Jn 12:6; 13:29) from which the followers of Jesus bought their needs. Though Jesus was called a carpenter, he never does any work in the gospels. He and his group seem to travel around while getting invisible support. In Acts 2:44 the Nazarenes held everything in common and to withhold from the common purse was a mortal crime. The Essenes held all they had in a common pool (1QS 6:22) with a bursar in charge. They provided succour to other travelling Essenes, so that no one needed anything except a staff when they travelled.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes believed in a cosmic battle between good and evil

The forces of good are angels and the forces of evil are demons. Bent Scholar tries to deflect us by saying that many Jews accepted this in the first century, which is true, but he cites as evidence the very books that the Essenes themselves held dear, but that were rejected by the Rabbis when they selected the Jewish canon. Again, therefore, sharing a doctrine of cosmic battle is evidence of Jesus and the Essenes having common beliefs.

By itself it would be inconclusive but, it cannot be divorced from everything else they have in common.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes expected the present age to end

Bent Scholar for once gets sensible, but he still cannot reach a conclusion. Jesus was closer to the End Time than the Essenes because he spoke of the “hour” whereas the Essenes spoke of the “last days”. He cites Mark 13:32 where Jesus warns his disciples that no one knows the day or the hour when heaven and earth will pass away; Matthew 24:44 which is part of a similar warning for them to watch for the day (Mt 24:42) or the hour (Mt 24:44); Matthew 26:40 when Jesus is plainly expecting God’s miracles at any moment and is berating the weary trio because they could not watch with him for an hour; Luke 12:40, where Jesus is not really saying that the son of man is due in an hour but simply that they would not know which hour he would come—it could be anytime; John 4:23; 5:25,28 are other references simply to the hour of the event, not that it is expected in an hour, but showing that there was some urgency about it all—he was counting in hours.

If you are waiting for a momentous event, like the birth of a child, say, you begin by calculating in months, then weeks, then days, then hours. If Jesus was thinking in terms of hours rather than days, it does not distinguish him from the Essenes who thought in terms of days. He is simply an Essene who thought himself closer to the event than the ones writing in the Scrolls. If the end of the world could be prophesied, eventually some prophet will be talking in terms of hours. But his beliefs are no different from those that went before. Jesus did expect the world to end while he watched in Gethsemane (Mt 26:40), but it didn’t.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes believed in prophecy

Once again this is a correspondence of major importance, because the other important Jewish parties believed that the succession of prophets had been lost (Josephus, *Against Apion*), so even if a prophet appeared, no one would know whether he was genuine or a faker. However, there was a scriptural test (Deut 18:18-22) which is simply that a prophet is false if his prophecies are wrong. Sadducees and Pharisees evidently had decided that they had seen enough wrong prophets for the whole profession of prophecy to have been thoroughly discredited, but Essenes still valued prophecy and, if 4Q375 is anything to go by, they had a ceremonial test for it.

The Righteous Teacher was a prophet to whom had been revealed the mysteries of the Last Days (1QpHab 7:4-8). Was Jesus a prophet? All Christians would say he was and here the Moslems would agree. What then did he prophesy? Not much except his own death, according to the gospels and, since Jesus was dead when the gospels were written, it wasn’t hard for the evangelists to get correct. He did get one important prophecy wrong! He said the kingdom of God would appear within a generation. The start of the kingdom of God is, of course, the end of the present time and the beginning of a new one. In short, it is the same eschatological moment in time that interested the

Essenes. So, by the criterion of Deuteronomy, Jesus was a false prophet! In my view he knew this and provided for his own dispatch should his prophesy fail (The Hidden Jesus) but in fact was arrested first.

Really, for anyone impartial, the case is already answered—Jesus was an Essene who turned out to be a false prophet. Not so for the Christian. There is room for “further exploration”.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes regarded God as a king ruling a kingdom

Both Jesus and the Essenes believed in the expression Lord of heaven and earth (Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21). Otherwise unsuspected in Palestine writings, it has appeared in the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen 22:16,21).

God was a king of heaven and earth (Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21, where Jesus even uses the introductory formula, “I thank thee, O Lord” used in the Thanksgiving Hymns), and they prayed that God’s will be done in earth. In the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q400-407), God is continually called a king. Anyone reading a translation of the scrolls meeting the phrase “God’s dominion” can be sure that in the New Testament it would have appeared as “the kingdom of God”.

Bent Scholar considers this like the expression the Poor Ones. Jesus, “could well have discussed” the kingdom of God with the Essenes. Is this hilarious or sad?

- Both the Essenes and Jesus expected an earthly messiah

Indeed the Essenes expected two messiahs, a priestly messiah and a kingly messiah. Jesus is mainly seen as a kingly messiah, being a supposed son of David, but Luke tries to show him as a descendent of priests through Mary. Bent Scholar often refuses to accept what is written by the gospel writers if the words are not attributed to Jesus, again a stupid, certainly far from scholarly, procedure. None of the words were written by Jesus. All of the gospels were written by his followers. To imagine that there is some spurious validity in the words of Jesus repeated in more than one gospel is nonsense.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes revered the Holy City of Jerusalem but despised the froward priests of its temple

The Essenes only made the minimum contribution to the temple required by law (All-DSS 164), a half shekel once in a lifetime, but Jesus is depicted paying the tax in Matthew. In fact, the Christian interpretation of this incident in Matthew is diametrically wrong (The Hidden Jesus). Some Essenes did attend the temple at certain times as Josephus attests (Josephus Antiquities), however, the assumption that Jesus is simply going to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover in the gospels on the only occasion he definitely goes there, is silly. Essentially the gospels depicts Jesus as having nothing to do with the defiled temple until he cleanses it.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes saw God's people, the Jews, as being sinful and in need of God's forgiveness and were sure God would grant it

It was a general tenet of Judaism that God was merciful to those who tried to live by His law, even if they stumbled, but would burn up the wicked. Essenes considered that flesh and blood people were all wicked, and only God was perfect and righteous, but that God was merciful to those who sought righteousness, and pardoned their sins (1QS 11:12-14). Though Christians have taken it that any sinner would be forgiven by God, this was never the belief of either Jesus or the Essenes.

Essenes were the "children of God's truth" and they were the ones who God would forgive—the point being that they were trying to be righteous. John the Baptist and Jesus both wanted people to repent of their wickedness to obtain God's acceptance. Without sincere repentance they were not going to be forgiven. In Mark 3:28-29, the "sons of men" referred to were his supporters whom he was addressing, not any riff-raff. (Note that a "son of man" is simply a man, not a messiah!) Admittedly, God was almighty and could do what he wanted, which is why forgiveness was thought by both groups as God's gift, but neither Jesus or the Essenes thought God was capricious. God was just, and believers of either sect could be certain He would forgive all deserving people. Neither Jesus nor the Essenes were concerned about gentiles (a feature added to Christianity when it entered the gentile world, and not based on any message of Jesus).

- Both Jesus and the Essenes put especial emphasis on prayer

Sometimes Jesus prayed all night (Lk 6:12), and the Essene Master apparently almost continuously (1QS 10:10, 13-16).

- Both Jesus and the Essenes considered sacrifice in the temple of no importance

Their aim was inward purity and devotion to God and righteousness (Mk 12:33-34; 1QS 9:4-5).

- Both Jesus and the Essenes, and John the Baptist, emphasised the purifying power of water

In the fourth gospel Jesus even identifies water with eternal life—salvation. Jesus began his career baptising (Jn 3:22; 4:1—the parenthesis in 4:2 being a blatant insertion intended to distinguish Jesus from John, though his message in Mark 1:15 was also the same as John's in Mark 1:4). Christians like to find a marked difference here between the Essenes whose lustrations were repeated and the followers of Jesus and the Baptist for whom baptism was a single act. As usual, they deliberately put their microscopes to their blind eye. Baptism was an expedient of urgency.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes condemned divorce

This is a major identification of Jesus and the Essenes. A Jew was permitted to divorce his wife, according to the Mosaic law (Deut 24:1) simply by writing a bill of divorce. Jesus taught divorce was not allowed (Mk 10:2-9). The Damascus Rule criticises the Pharisees for allowing remarriage while the first wife was alive, making a man into a double fornicator. The rule forbids polygamy and divorce. The Essenes cite “Male and female, created he them” (Gen 1:27) as scriptural authority, the very passage quoted by Jesus (Mk 10:6). Both Jesus and the Essenes support this, their main authority, with others, different in each case, but the coincidence of the principle argument is devastating. Bent Scholar therefore does not use this item but chooses a less convincing one from the Temple Scroll that applied apparently only to the king anyway. Here we have in a nation which had clearly laid out in its law a permit for divorce, yet two groups, unconnected, Christians try to argue, used the same scriptural authority to deny the common practice. This is quite beyond coincidence.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes used the terms “Sons of Light”—no one else did in Palestine at the time

Once again, Bent Scholar believes he can tell what Jesus believed solely from what he is reported to have said. He said nothing much about Sons of Light or Sons of Darkness, yet his followers were very fond of this light and darkness metaphor. Was it another of the strange coincidences that beset Christianity? Bent Scholar will tell us that Essenes who joined the Christian movement introduced it after the crucifixion. Perhaps so, or the Master introduced it himself and that is why his followers used it. The Christian explanation is special pleading to keep their God unique. It is not scholarship.

Bent denies that Jesus was a dualist. Why then did he believe that God had a most dangerous enemy in Satan, the God of Evil, who aimed to stop Yehouah in everything he did? The central pivot of dualism is this conflict, and Christianity is dualistic until this day. If the reply is: Good will eventually win with God on its side, then Christian dualism differs not a whit from Essene dualism and Persian dualism.

The expression “Sons of Light” is common in the scrolls (1QS 3:3) and appears (Lk 16:8) on Jesus’s tongue in the parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke (Lk 16:1-9).

“There was a certain rich man, which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship. I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended

the unjust steward, because he had done wisely. For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”

It seems disparaging. Luke has Jesus saying that anyone of this world is wiser than the sons of light. If the Sons of Light meant the Essenes, Jesus evidently did not think much of them and cannot have been one of them.

The parable has always been a difficult one for Christians to explain—it seems to commend dishonesty, and the conclusion seems to say be friendly with thieves as an insurance policy. Luke obviously had the same trouble understanding the parable as later clerics. A Jewish friend of Bent Scholar seems to think the parable is meant to run down the Children (Sons) of Light as stupid, which would require the followers of Jesus to be identified with the crooked Children of this World in their generation. On this basis, the silly conclusion by Luke is correct. Naturally, it is not. A close look at the parable shows it to be entirely in the line of the teaching of Jesus and the Essenes.

Jesus and the Essenes were The Poor who could not have been admiring grasping people or their servants who handled their affairs for them. What then had the steward done that Jesus might commend? He had been clever in devising a way of providing for himself in the unknown circumstances that would arise when he was sacked. The steward and his employer were the children of this world, as ought to be plain. This world and its generation were, for Essenes and for Jesus, wicked. The children of it therefore behave in the parable as might be expected of them. Yet they are cleverer than the Children of Light, the name that everywhere it appears means the Essenes. Plainly it is a warning to the Children of Light to be smarter. Jesus is saying that even the sinners of this wicked world look to their future and pursue it with guile. The Children of Light ought to take a leaf out of their book in this respect. They too should prepare for the future, the coming kingdom, by being on their guard to be constantly righteous, making sure they are not deflected from their goal by the wicked of the world. Note a similar warning in Matthew (Mt 10:16):

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”

The context of both gospels when these instances occur is that of Jesus explaining the kingdom and who God would welcome. The only future there was was that in the kingdom of God. The sinners would have no future, unless it was one of Hell fire. But the kingdom would come when God was ready. There was time to be guileless and be tempted in this world, and at that instance, the kingdom might come with fearful consequences, for one slip. The message to the Children of Light was to be cleverer than the Children of this World. So, Children or Sons of Light meant those expecting the kingdom—the followers of Jesus and the Essenes. The Bent Scholarly consensus are prevaricating yet again.

The followers of Jesus also said they followed “the Way”, notably in Acts. Bent Scholar has to concede that this expression was highly likely to have come from the Essenes but prefers to believe it was the gullible followers of Jesus who took up Essene terminology. We simply do not know what Jesus called his followers, except disciples or Children of Light! But since the church from very early times tried to make out it was the result of a revelation of God, it had extremely good motives for excising all references to the predecessors of Jesus in the gospels. Fortunately for truth, they were inept and have left fossils of the Essenes throughout.

- Both Christians and the Essenes had a charismatic leader, Jesus and the Righteous Teacher

From the earliest days of Scroll research, Christians have been defensive about the Essene Righteous Teacher as the model upon which Jesus was built, if not Jesus himself, they had such similar characteristics and history. A Righteous Teacher led the sectaries into the wilderness in protest at the corruption of the Jerusalem Temple, but this seems to have been long before Jesus. Unless there has been some sort of confusion of chronology, the two could not be identified. What is not certain is whether the leader of the Essenes, their Master or Mebaqquer, held the honorific title of Righteous Teacher. The Essene leader was chosen because he behaved like their founder. If so, Jesus might well have been a Righteous Teacher, though not the Righteous Teacher.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes did not marry

Jews had been commanded by God to be fruitful and multiply the seed of Adam (Gen 1:28). The only celibate party known in first century Judaism were the Essenes. Would a devout man like Jesus have defied God’s commandment to have children unless he had the authority of a devout community? The Essenes were the Elect, God’s warriors in the cosmic battle to come. They had been forbidden to join God’s army if they had wife (Deut 24:5) and so they remained celibate. The Essenes justified this by regarding women as temptresses. In the passage in Matthew 19:11-12, Bent Scholar asserts, with no argument, that Jesus was not praising celibacy, but might have been praising the Essenes for their celibacy. So, here Jesus is just making an observation? Nonsense, he concludes saying, There are eunuchs which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it. Anyone who cannot see that this is a recommendation of chastity does not deserve to be considered a scholar.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes believed there was a power called the Holy Spirit

Bent Scholar admits at the outset that Jesus may have had this from the Essenes. The reason is that it is not a concept important in the Jewish scriptures, where it occurs only twice (Ps 51:11; Isa 63:10-11). Yet it appears almost a hundred times in the New Testament and frequently in the Scrolls. In both writings, it has the same personality, that of an entity separate from God. It is quite impossible to believe that the identical

concept could have arisen independently in the same community. It is not a strong concept for the Rabbis who believed it was associated with the Prophets and ceased when prophecy ceased, so it cannot have been simply a popular fad of the time. It is proof that the Christians were Essenes. The Essenes developed the idea when they left Jerusalem and the temple for the wilderness believing that they had God's commission to uphold the true second-temple tradition. God was always with his people in the years in the wilderness with Moses, though he had no house to live in, and the outcast Essenes believed the Shekinah or Presence of God went with them. This was the meaning of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah and the Essenes grasped it and personified it as the Will of God.

- Both Jesus and the Essenes believed in the guidance of the Holy Spirit in reading the scriptures

Neither was concerned about interpreting the scriptures in peculiar ways—guided by the Holy Ghost! Both felt they had the secrets of correct interpretation (prophecy, in its Jewish sense). Christians call it “revelation”, the Qumran sectaries tended to call it “knowledge of the mysteries of God” (1QS 11:3-4,15-17). Both concluded that God's promises to Israel were about to be fulfilled in the end of the age, the End Time or Last Days (1QSa 1:1; Jn 6:39f). Essenes granted guidance by the Holy Ghost is a severe blow to Christians who thought it reserved its incompetence for them. They wriggle visibly trying to find weeding ways out.

“He [Jesus] offered a new way of reading the Torah against the background of specific ideas of the Qumran Community” (Stegemann).

“Jesus may have been influenced by Essene exegesis, but if so he reshaped it in the light of his own claims of direct revelation”, and

“Any Essene exegetical influence on Jesus would have been reshaped creatively by his own revelatory experiences and claims and understanding of his mission” (Bent Scholar).

Yes, this is the scholarship of the same Professor Bent Scholar who is disparaging about writers who are not scholars!

Supposed Differences

- Jesus's group was open while the Essenes were exclusive

Jesus taught publicly while the Essene teachings were secret. Bent Scholar considers this a major difference between the two societies, yet it is simply explained, and in a way that is Christian. Jesus and John the Baptist, as Essenes thought the Last Days were upon them. What were Essenes to do when they were convinced the Last Days were not just a theoretical concept in their arcane interpretations but had actually arrived? The portions of the book called by Vermes, the Messianic Rule (1QSa) gives the precise answer. All Israel had to be summoned to those offering atonement for the Land (the Promised Land, the country of Israel) and told the precepts of the Covenant! The Essenes would become the salvation of Israel. Plainly Jesus and John the Baptist were following this rule and summoning All Israel. All Israel meant all Jews including sinners and apostates. As for secrecy, Jesus deliberately taught in parables, remember, you Christians.

- Jesus taught love while the Essenes taught hatred

Bigoted as cardinals to a man, they cannot see that the two groups were identical. It is simply that Jesus addressed his message only to Jews and did not succinctly express hatred of gentiles while the Essenes did. Both believed in turning the other cheek to enemies, as long as they were Jews. Bent Scholar quotes Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:44), a composed speech. Jesus was only addressing Jews because he tells them he came to fulfil the law and the prophets—gentiles had no knowledge of these matters and were not subject to them. So, when he says love your enemies, he meant love your Jewish enemies because you are Jews and hope to be saved. He did not mean love your gentile enemies because he plainly does not love them. He tells the Syro-Phoenician woman he would not throw the children's bread (salvation) to the dogs (gentiles).

This outlook is exactly that of the Essenes in the Last Days. They hated the wicked and kept separated from them but accepted that God had chosen the Jewish people and they had God's promise of salvation when the time came. They had to be told, even though normally Essenes were extremely secretive. Bent Scholar blithely ignores the Messianic Rule and quotes the everyday rules that the New Covenanters lived by in the Community Rule. No one denies that Essenes normally separated themselves from the ungodly. Yes, and they prayed that God would destroy the followers of the Devil. Do Christians differ? The wicked will burn in everlasting torture in Hell, according to them. What is the difference? It is just what Jesus taught, yet Bent Scholar tries to pick it out as a difference.

Bent Scholar harps on about the Sermon on the Mount pretending that it showed a lenient attitude by Jesus to Romans, presumably because Jesus's message was for

gentiles too. It is nonsense. It is pure expediency. His followers were in no position to refuse a Roman who made him carry his backpack. If it meant anything, it simply meant, Don't do anything silly. Bide your time. A simple understanding of the situation of the Jews and Jesus's expectations explains it as not inviting premature trouble, not as being extra matey with fascistic oppressors. Bent Scholar highlights a very similar situation in the writings of Philo, who claimed that the Essenes were pacific, possessing no weapons. For that matter, Josephus also said Essenes were peaceful.

Does any pattern occur to Bent Scholar or his consensoids? No? Then let me suggest that all these writers and the Christian ones were being careful so as not to invite Roman retribution on the Essenes, or in the case of Christian writers themselves because they were still close enough to be regarded by the Roman authorities as the same (see Acts, where a centurion considered Paul a seditionist).

Bent Scholar favours the interpretation that those who hate their enemies (Mt 5:43) were the Essenes. It is surely so, but the explanation is the same. The Essenes in normal times hated their apostate and sinning fellow nationals. I conjecture that the Sermon in Matthew is exactly that mentioned in the Messianic Rule when the precepts and statutes of the Covenant are read to the Called of Israel. Jesus is saying that no Essene should any longer hate the sinners and publicans but should love them as fellow Jews of God's promise who, if repentant, might be with them in Paradise in a few days time. He is certainly not referring to gentiles who had to approach God's kingdom cap-in-hand.

In Matthew 5:46, Jesus even says that merely loving those who love you back is no better than publicans (Jewish collaborators), who do the same. He doesn't say no better than gentiles, who do the same, showing that he speaks only of Jews. In the next verse he mentions gentiles but quite disparagingly, even gentiles will say, Hello! Jesus had no thoughts of loving gentiles, despite Christian distortions. No Jew will have thought it wrong to hate gentiles. Leviticus (19:18) had the rule, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self, but gentiles were not the neighbours of the Israelites. In Leviticus God had just thrown out the Canaanites with their idolatrous habits that He hated (or abhorred). If God hated or abhorred them, why shouldn't His people?

- Jesus was not concerned with ritual purity and taboos but Essenes were

Bent Scholar immediately tells us that Jesus declared all foods clean (Mk 7:19) when no honest "scholar" will deny that it is a patent interpolation, irreconcilable with Acts of the Apostles where the apostles know nothing about their Master's famous declaration. In the section of Mark Bent Scholar quotes (Mk 7:1-8;14-23), Jesus appears to be defying the cleanliness taboos of the Jews, but his own explanation proves that they were pursued, presumably by Herod, and he was justifying an expediency, not redefining law.

In contrast, Essenes were obsessive about purity as the Scrolls show extensively. The trouble is that once more, the changed circumstances are not considered. These were

the Last Days when God's soldiers, His Elect, the Essenes, would have to engage the sons of Darkness, the Romans, and their Jewish helpers. The rules of the normal communities did not apply, and Jesus explains it in Mark. Read it, you scholars! Jesus is telling men fleeing their enemies, Don't bother about cleanliness and food taboos as long as you are pure in heart. It is not a permanent abrogation of the law but a practical expedient. Some of his followers were concerned that they were unable to practise the law in the difficult circumstances of being fugitives. Jesus tells them that, when such problems arise, God's righteous do not have need to worry, as long as they stay pure of heart. The scriptural examples he chooses to explain his pragmatic decision show the circumstances the Nazarenes were in (MAG-THJ 192).

Bent Scholar cites a Pseudepigraphic Psalm but it fails to illustrate his point. The psalm says that God would test all and declare the Elect pure but reject the impure hated ones. That is exactly what Jesus was saying to his men because they had been selected already as the pure ones. In the circumstances (but not in general), the need for strict cleaving to the law was lifted.

Bent Scholar asserts with no reasons that Essenes would have been appalled by Jesus's exhortations for people to tear out eyes and limbs (Mk 9:42-47) lest they lead to sin. My own guess is that this is part of an Essene litany akin to those described in the Community Rule. The sequence is certainly bizarre and is conducted as call and response. What views do the "scholars" have? If ever this should turn up in a fragment, they would simply say it had been inserted by an ex-Essene follower. Scholarship? If Bent Scholar is correct that purity demanded stone vessels not pottery ones then the specification of stone vessels in John 2:6 suggests that Jesus's followers at Cana were sticklers for purity, not grubbers in filth, as Christians were for centuries in the mistaken belief that dirt was godly.

- Jesus associated with the unclean but for Essenes it was anathema

Either Bent Scholar is a fool or he is dishonest. Most preaching Christians are one or the other. Since he is a self-proclaimed scholar we cannot assume he is a fool. He cites 4Q174 as proof that the Qumran community hated the unclean. The fragment is talking about the perfect unpolluted sanctuary that God would build for His people in the Last Days. It is heaven on earth. The Essenes, as many of their hymns show were not arrogant, they were extremely humble, knowing that however hard they tried, it would take God to make perfection on earth. Nevertheless they saw it as their destiny to start to make the world a bit more like heaven and eventually, they thought heaven and earth would merge. So, they had to try to be as pure as they could in anticipation of heaven.

It did not mean that when they thought the kingdom was nigh, they would not try to save others of the House of Israel. That was their purpose. Indeed the Qumran Essenes considered people not places as holy. The Holy Spirit resided in the community not in an empty room in the temple. When John's gospel says that Jesus spoke of the temple of his body, it is a clever way of avoiding the charge of threatening to destroy the temple, but it draws upon the Essene idea that people not buildings are holy. Nor did

the Essenes keep themselves isolated in ghettos as, Bent Scholar claims. They explicitly provide for the accommodation of travellers and their provisions are just those that Jesus expects when he sends out his disciples.

- Jesus associated with gentiles but for Essenes it was anathema

Bent Scholar says that Jesus even commended the faith of a centurion, a Roman. The story is quite at odds with Jesus's command to his disciples only to go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Jews), which even Bent Scholar does not dispute as genuine. It is the most substantial of the so-called minor agreements between Matthew and Luke and is altogether so strange few will question it as a late addition to both gospels. In one of his ubiquitous footnotes, Bent Scholar recognises that Jesus may not have included gentiles in his call, so why should he have gone around commending them? In particular why would he have commended one of the occupying soldiers of an unwanted foreign invader?

And how does this centurion, the equivalent of a modern major, approach Jesus, a despised native of a disgusting colony? Beseeching him! Whoever writes it sees it as unconvincing and has the officer giving his own explanation that he is used to giving orders. Quite. And all this for what? His batman! It is farcical. Incidentally, the servant had palsy, showing it is copied from the miracle of the paralysed man in Mark. Palsy or paralysis is Essene code for an apostate from the law of Moses, so the servant must have been a Jew.

Bent Scholar says the Essenes had strict rules which prohibited any commerce with gentiles when their rules were precisely to regulate commerce strictly between the righteous and the Sons of Darkness. The internal evidence of the documents and the known exile of the Jews in Babylonia, together with the existence in Mesopotamia for over a thousand years of a sect closely akin to the Essenes, the Qaraites, suggests that the sect might have been founded in exile, as an alternative, or parallel school to that of Ezra. The purpose of the Damascus Document seems to be to offer ways in which the separated Essenes could live alongside foreigners in an acceptable way, without corruption or pollution. These therefore are not major differences, as Bent Scholar pretends, but explain how Jesus felt able in his mission to mix with unclean people while not getting neurotic about it.

- Jesus mixed with women but for Essenes it was anathema

Essenes were extremely concerned to keep themselves pure but the Messianic Rule required them to summon All Israel when the time came. It meant that, despite their concern for purity, some Essenes had to take it upon themselves to summon them. The Essene absolute requirement for meekness and humility meant that the only man who could do the missionary work was the Master himself. Essene humility was perfectly expressed several times in the gospels as the first shall be last and the last first. It was the first therefore had to become the last. He had to humble himself and suffer the pollution of the ungodly to offer them a last chance of salvation. John the Baptist did it

then Jesus.

Bent Scholar says Jesus and the Essenes were at the opposite ends of the spectrum with regard to women. He cites Luke, the Syro-Phoenician woman and the woman from Samaria. Bent Scholar sees his image of Jesus not the one really present, even in the gospels. In Mark's gospel, the first one, women have no significant role. They could be removed from the story without affecting it. Later gospels import more and more women, Luke's being the women's gospel. It is full of women of no consequence, introduced incidentally. There is a good reason why the gentile evangelists wanted to introduce women into a story about men. The first gentile converts were predominantly women! The gospel writers increasingly pander to the need to have women in the story because the congregations were female. Roman men spent their time in all male groups worshipping Mithras. It simply would not have done for the gentile bishops to try to sell Christianity as another all male brotherhood in origin, even if they had changed the rules to admit women.

The other side of this particular coin is that the Essenes were not implacably opposed to women, any more than Christian monks are. They based themselves on scripture beginning with Eve and so they mistrusted women, but as Josephus said, they realised you had to have them for the procreation of the human race. Josephus tells us that there were two types of Essenes, those who lived apart (like the sectaries at Qumran) and those who had commerce with others on a regular but regulated basis. These were the Village Essenes, who married and even attended the polluted Temple. The chief of the Qumran sectarians was apparently the head of the whole order, so it would be absurd if he did not relate with Village Essenes, including women, if only for the purposes of grading and instruction. Women certainly visited Qumran because their graves have been found there.

Bent Scholar's extreme case simply has no substance, and his quotation that Jesus recognised women as of equal humanity to men is sheer romance—he does not even treat his mother with respect, and is also rude to the Syro-Phoenician woman. As for the Samaritan woman, it appears in John's gospel, a late, highly refined and historically quite untrustworthy work, and the actual relationship of Essenes and Samaritans has yet to be properly understood. It should be noted that Samaritans were a sect of Judaism, a sect disliked by the Pharisees, but possibly of some affinity with the Essenes. The situation is ambiguous, but it cannot be assumed willy-nilly that, if Jesus, were an Essene he would have had nothing to do with a Samaritan woman.

- Jesus had a reputation as a wine bibber and a glutton but Essenes were ascetic

If Jesus had this reputation it is strange that his most devout followers are all killjoys. It is a reputation they forget, if it is true, and Bent Scholar only devotes four lines to it. It is, of course nonsense and built really upon very little evidence (Mt 11:19; Lk7:34). This single passage defines Jesus as a glutton and drunkard out of his own mouth. Plainly it is a distortion of the Eucharistic meals which Jesus offered his converts, the Messianic meal of the Essenes.

Based on the wedding feast at Cana, Bent Scholar also says Jesus loved a good party—presumably because he used his god-given powers to make himself and his pals twelve firkins of wine out of water. Could anything be more puerile? Essenes used symbolic wine called New Wine in their rituals. Really it was blessed water. That was the miracle, a miracle that Essenes probably did on a daily basis.

- Essenes were not interested in missionary work but Jesus was

The Messianic rule tells the sectaries that All Israel had to be summoned. How can anyone summon anyone else without going out to tell them? This part of the rule for the Last Days shows conclusively that the Essenes were interested in getting converts even if it was only in the few months before the destruction of the world. In fact, the exhortation in the Damascus Rule is quite analogous to the Sermon on the Mount (CD 2-6), and obviously served the same purpose. It was an address to new recruits. If we were to believe the classic authors alone, the Essenes only replenished their numbers from misfits fed up with the world. There might have been quite a lot of them but even they probably needed a recruiting sergeant.

Bent Scholar tries a pretty crude distraction by saying that the Essenes only recruited priests—in the early days. The point is that Jesus and his followers thought they were going to be the last of the righteous in this corrupt world. Whatever the first Essenes did is totally irrelevant. It seems that B F Meyer understood the Messianic Rule, being quoted as writing that the Essenes appealed to pious Jews to join Israel, except that the document says All Israel, so includes impious Jews too, though they would not have been saved unless they sincerely repented and were baptised.

Almost certainly Essenes, in normal conditions, would have been happy simply to attract people fed up with life's vicissitudes, and the products of Essene marriage. Essenes saw their duty as a duty to God not some obsession with growth for its own sake. These however were not normal conditions. They had to try to persuade Jews to join the ranks of God's army of saints. This is rather different from normal missionary work. This was the last chance saloon for God's Chosen People. Surely this is what Christians believe except that they take Jesus to be a one off. He was. Roosevelt was the one-off President when the war began and Jesus was the one-off Nasi when the kingdom began—as he thought.

- Jesus spoke simply but the Scrolls are abstruse and sometimes in code

This rather illustrates these Christian scholars' powers of self deception. They seem quite unaware that Jesus also spoke in code called parables. His parables according to the first evangelist in chronological order, Mark, had to be deciphered to his disciples, which necessarily means they were incomprehensible to everyone who heard them. Do these "scholars" ever read their bibles?

The truth is quite evident. Judaea was an occupied country and both Jesus and the Essenes had to be circumspect. They wrote and spoke for the initiated—in the gospels,

those that have ears to hear. Jesus's code was one of allusion that Jews would understand but gentiles or thoroughly apostate Jews would not. Bent Scholar, the scholar who disparages journalists, and even calls other scholars mad or confused, doesn't even realise that the gospel we have has been digested and interpreted several times before it got into English. That is why much of the Nazarene (or Essene) code has, actually, disappeared making the interpretation of the parables seem unnecessary. Besides that, parables have been added that are not Jesus's parables, but merely moral stories and difficult parables have been turned into miracles. What Christians will not accept but which is true is that the gentile bishops deliberately interpreted pericopes about Jesus how they wanted them.

Bent Scholar is naive enough to say that Jesus's message was pellucidly clear. He probably thinks the story of Humpty Dumpty is pellucidly clear. It is pellucidly clearly about a silly fat egg sitting on a wall and getting broken when he fell off. It is, isn't it kiddies? Well, no. It is written in code. It is a parable. But it has been turned into a fairyland fantasy by Christians who found it too offensive for modern children. Originally, the forty doctors and forty wrights couldn't put Humpty Dumpty to rights. Why? She was a little fat thing because she was pregnant! It was a game with a moral for young girls who had to throw themselves over backwards without showing their ankles. The Christian gospels are like this. They have been reduced to nursery tales, and the people, scholars or otherwise, who believe them in this form are thumb-sucking infants. Remember poor Humpty Dumpty when you read your bibles, you Christians. It will remind you that there is something real behind it.

On the other hand to pretend that the Scrolls are all abstruse is propaganda. Bent Scholar, recognises this in a footnote, a popular technique of his. He resolves his sins of omission by using footnotes that will save him from being totally dishonest. Here is an interesting quotation: The Essenes wrote only for the learned and initiated in their own closed group. A bit like Bent Scholar and his consensoids in scholarship.

Bent Scholar ends by telling us that Jesus spoke more like a Rabbi and actually quotes the Golden Rule of Hillel a member of the party Jesus was supposed to have been the enemy of, the Pharisees. Are we to believe that Jesus was a secret Pharisee? Jesus, according to Bent Scholar recommended collaboration with the Romans, just as the Pharisees did. Why don't the Christian churches disband and invite everyone to become Jewish proselytes? Jesus was never plotted against by Pharisees because they were too cautious about what God's intentions might have been, but they still didn't like him. Messiahs were ten a penny and they all caused trouble. The age of prophecy was over. And the Pharisees were correct and Jesus was wrong. We still have no sight of the kingdom of God.

- Jesus, not the Essenes, was famous for healing miracles

The Qumran sectaries were not interested in healing, Professor Scholar says, but he realises he is on tricky ground talking about miraculous healings and has to argue that at least some seem historical. Well, they were and they weren't. They were healings all

right but not healings of physical ailments, but what all Christians should recognise them as, metaphors for spiritual healings.

The Essenes were noted by Josephus as healers and many still say the name Essene comes from a Semitic word for healer (as Bent Scholar notes in a footnote!) Essenes were healers all right, like Jesus, but like him they wanted to heal the spiritual sickness of Israel, ready for entry into God's kingdom. Nevertheless they were noted as doctors of medicine too, using stones and roots, and a fragment from cave four (4QTherapeia) is part of a doctor's report of his rounds at a hospital for guests. Presumably, like medieval monasteries, Qumran had a hospital. If it is fair to surmise that the Feast of the Renewal of the Covenant was held at Qumran, when 4000 Essenes from all over Palestine attended, a hospital would have been essential.

Nevertheless, Jesus cannot have been any more interested in the paralysed or blind than he was in the dead. He was sent to save the living. If any Jew had already died unrighteous, there was no hope for them. He says, Let the dead bury their dead, but there was still hope for the living. Jesus was winning people back to Yehouah from apostasy so that they could repent of their sins and face God's judgement with pure hearts. When he wins people with various ailments back to God, he cures a particular illness depending on the nature of the spiritual crime. The subterfuge was based on scripture and intended to fool Roman spies, who would not have known the real nature of the cure.

- Jesus did not require any prolonged initiation but the Essenes needed three years

As Bent Scholar observes, Jesus invited people to give all they have to the Poor (the Essenes, as we now know), repent and be baptised. Absolutely correct. Essenes had to give all they had to the Poor, commit themselves to daily lustrations and be carefully tested for three years before they participated in the messianic meal. To judge from the gospels, Jesus gave the messianic meal straight after repentance and baptism. Why the difference in time scale? You got it (I hope). Jesus did not think there would be three years before the kingdom started.

All we know about what should be done when the situation became urgent is what is in the Messianic Rule. All Israel had to be called and have the rules read to them. Many scrolls are missing and the relevant bits are probably lost forever, but it is hard to conceive of a sect who held lustrations in such high esteem, not preserving a token of it as an abbreviated initiation. Soldiers going to war were ritually purified, and it is assured that the Essenes regarded themselves as God's Elect—His army. The baptism of Jesus and John is the residual lustration required for the truly repentant, in preparation for God's Day of Vengeance. To ignore the changes necessitated by the imminence of the fateful day, is to walk around with closed eyes.

- Jesus had twelve apostles with three special ones but did not have a clearcut hierarchy

Bent Scholar tells us that no links between the Nazarene structure and the structure of

the Qumran Council have proved fruitful. What sort of links does he mean? My guess is that like all Christians, he will accept nothing to soil the uniqueness of the Jesus movement even if it floated out of heaven on tablets of gold accompanied by a heavenly host.

Here we have two organisations with twelve lesser councillors and three senior councillors and a Chief Officer. It is quite unlike other organisational structures in Jewry at the time. The Sanhedrin had 70 members. The Priesthood had twenty four courses. Jesus followed Essene practice. The only point at issue is whether the twelve included the three or not. At Qumran, it seems the three were separate, but we have no strong evidence that the three were not separate in the Jesus band as well. No interest was shown in most of the apostles and their supposed histories are apocryphal. It is quite likely that the gentile Christians did not realise that the three were separate from the rest and therefore included them in the twelve. The implication of 1 Corinthians 15:5-7 is that there were more than twelve apostles. Peter and James saw Christ individually, but so did the twelve and all the apostles. So, the twelve were not all the apostles, and the implication is that Peter and James were special ones (only John is omitted otherwise the evidence might look better still).

They might not even have known the names of all the twelve, but more than twelve names appear in the four gospels. Christians identify some of them as the same, but only for the purpose of harmonisation. There is no good evidence that there were not twelve besides the three. The mistake will have begun with Mark, who related the experiences of Peter, according to tradition, without properly understanding them. It is also possible, even likely, that some of the twelve were killed. Only the replacement of Judas is mentioned in Acts, but that was merely to explain a bad rumour that was circulating and had nothing to do with organisation or the replacement who is not heard of again. It is not only fruitful to link the two organisational structures, no reasonable man could not do so.

Regarding hierarchy, Bent Scholar cites two verses:

“If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all” (Mk 9:35),

“Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all” (Mk 10:44).

He contrasts this with the Essenes who had strata with rules for advancement and demotion and punishment. We know the rules of the Essenes in some detail because we have some of their most important rule books. We do not have the rule books of the Nazarenes, except whatever we find by accident in the gospels. The Sermon on the Mount is a set of Rules and many of them match Essene ones, but we do not have a Community Rule. Nevertheless, if the post-crucifixion Christians followed the teachings of the Master, they had punishments, as we know from Acts.

Religious experts, depend upon their faithful flocks to be ignorant. Bent Scholar’s book is aimed at all who are interested, really meaning the interested lay-Christian, not a

prelate or theologian who would have a smug chuckle. So, he does what all Christians have done since the movement left Palestine and became gentile—he is economical with the truth. We know little about Christian punishment, partly because the movement under its leader did not last long, but largely because the gentile bishops did not want to discourage people from joining by writing about punishments. The reverse is true of the Essenes. We know nothing about how they actually lived and thought, but know a great deal about their strictness. One thing is certain, they were healthy and happy. Josephus tells us they lived to ripe ages and returned from work every day, joyful.

Josephus tells us the four grades of membership remained strictly segregated and were not allowed contact for fear of spreading pollution. Once again, we are talking about the attempts by men on earth to aspire to be angels. They felt that having advanced a grade they were a step nearer heaven. Their progress should not be hampered by contact with lesser mortals. What Bent Scholar omits is that progress depended on the deepest humility (1Qs 5:4-6; 25-26 and many later rules forbidding anger, obstinacy, lying, insulting, bearing malice, not caring for a fellow, interrupting and slandering). Plainly the Essenes had strict ranks, but by failing in any of these rules they would be set back or even expelled. How does this differ from the gospel saying? Though Consensoids will not accept it, the Community Rule explains precisely what Mark meant by his perverse sounding sayings. So, when Christian scholars tell us that Jesus was warning against the Essenes' rank consciousness in these passages, they are Spouting, to use an appropriate scroll word.

- Jesus did not follow the solar calendar but the Essenes did

There is simply not enough evidence to call this one, but if Jesus did not, he could not have been an Essene. The trouble is that the Essenes used the solar calendar for their own festivals but must have kept the lunar one too. Otherwise they would not have been able to effect any commerce with other Jews. This means that even if there were something in the gospels, say, like the date of Passover, that proved Jesus was using the lunar calendar, it would only prove he was using it to know the date of Passover followed by the Jerusalem temple, which he would have had to know, anyway.

Certain peculiarities might suggest that Jesus used a different calendar, such as the apparent disagreement between John and the synoptics over the date of the Last Supper. Was it a Passover supper or was it the day before? When did the day start for Jesus, in the morning or as the stars came out? Most people seem to think that the day for the first Christians was morning to morning, like our own in practice. The Jewish day was evening to evening. If so, Jesus was an Essene because the Essenes seemed to start the day in the morning. In the final vigil in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus seemed to wait through the night, giving up as dawn approached, or at dawn. That would have been Essene behaviour.

- Jesus wrote nothing but the Essenes wrote continuously

terrible Day of God's Vengeance was nigh. The time for writing anything except

obituaries was over. For the next forty years, Christians, expecting Jesus to return on a cloud and begin the miracle that he himself expected in Gethsemane, wrote nothing. When people expect the world to end, they rightly conclude that putting down permanent records is fruitless. Jesus was out there to call the Godless back to God. No Christian will disagree. He expected the world to end, within a generation, he said at first, but he plainly came to think it was a more urgent case, and eventually was captured disappointed that it did not happen when he expected it. Such men are not putting pen to paper.

- Jesus possessed no formal training but Essenes devoted their lives to biblical study and interpretation

Bent Scholar quotes Mark 6:2 in support of this:

“And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?”

But the amazement of the crowds, which Bent Scholar thinks is because an ignorant man has appeared inspired by the Holy Ghost, is really because Jesus was teaching something astonishing—defiance of Rome, indeed, in the parallel passage in Luke (Lk 4:16-24), that he is the Messiah! Quite apart from this the only basis for it is the kiddies’ idea that Jesus was a simple carpenter. Yet in the days before charlatans could get fat-cat incomes for writing crap, scholars had to earn a living. That is what the rabbis did and there is no reason to think, even if Jesus was simply a wandering teacher, that he was not trained.

Bent Scholar pretends or thinks that the question asked of Jesus in Jerusalem:

“By what authority do you do these things?”

simply meant: Goodness, how did you get to know all that? Jesus, in the gospel had just conducted a riot, breaking up legitimate traders in the temple. They were not simply asking him for his diplomas, as Bent Scholar implies. They wanted to know who gave him the right to take the law into his own hands. Legally he had no right. That was sufficient reason for him to be crucified, but Christians still maintain, “He was innocent, milud”.

Bent Scholar asserts with no foundation in the least that Jesus was taught in no academy and by no instructor, a prime example of pious lying. No one has the least idea what Jesus did until he came out as the baptist who succeeded John. No rational man will give any credence to virgin birth stories or even stories of twelve year olds, wandering off from their parents to puzzle sages with his questions. Oh, and be quite insulting to an apparently concerned mother. But, if Bent Scholar wants to take them seriously, then they must show that Jesus was indeed prepared for his task, and lots of

his relatives and friends as well as angels and shepherds must have known about it.

- Jesus was alone whereas the Essenes would have supported each other

Bent Scholar acts towards Jesus like a child whose pet rabbit has run off into the undergrowth and has been left out all night. Sob. He was opposed by religious lawyers. So were the Essenes. Jesus is intermittently reclusive. So were Essenes. He was rejected. Go on. Didn't he have throngs of people after him when he entered Jerusalem? It is all part of the kiddy-wink myth. If Jesus was rejected it is because he failed at what he offered. No kingdom, then or now.

Scholar accuses his disciples of abandoning him at the end of his life. Is this serious? Even on the basis of the gospel story, did they have any choice? The gospels skid over the main story, but even as it stands, no sensible man was going to hang about! They did the sensible thing—a runner. One of the facts the gospel does skate over is who died with Jesus. The aim of the gospels is to focus on Jesus alone, although two more at least were hung with him. The truth is that many more will have been as well. There is no guarantee that the ones who survived were even close to Jesus. They had no knowledge of who provided the ass or who provided the room for the Last Supper. Somebody did. Yet Bent Scholar tells us Jesus was alone, with no community like the Essenes to support him. It will have been the Essenes who gave him this support and doubtless more which has been omitted because it would spoil the story of the solitary son of God battling alone against the wicked Jews.

- Jesus told his supporters not to swear an oath whereas the Essenes swore solemn oaths when they entered

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne.”

The Nazarene converts believe it is all right to swear by God's name. Jesus tells them it is not, nor should they swear by heaven either. It is better not to swear at all rather than risking these prohibitions. You know what? This is just what the Essenes taught, yet Bent Scholar tells us he knows of no ban on oaths in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Let him look at CD(MsA) 15:1, which teaches precisely that a man must not swear on any name of God.

The Essenes took a solemn vow on entering the Community, but they had to swear it to themselves. They took on themselves the vow to return to the law of Moses. It was a personal commitment. The classic authors tell us that having sworn this solemn commitment they did not swear any more oaths. Jewish vows were vows to God and no one else. Someone had been criticising the Essenes for making this personal commitment instead of vowing to God. Essenes believed that an oath on God's name

which was broken, sullied God himself. Jesus, according to Matthew, says it was better not to swear at all, rather than pollute God's name. Jesus taught exactly the same as the Essenes.

Oddly, Bent Scholar concludes from this that Jesus is teaching the exact opposite of the Essenes. Indeed his teaching was directed against them. Not only that, but for the sake of the kiddies who think that swearing in this context is saying naughty words and calling people rude names, he points out that the Essenes did just that in the Community Rule, cursing the lot of Satan. Can you believe it? This is puerile.

Bent Scholar now contrast the ability of Jesus to summarise the law into the first two commandments of the ten of Exodus, saying this would have been anathema to the Essenes who were absolute sticklers for all of the law. Considering this is the case, it is curious how many of the rabbinical interpretations they ignore or reinterpret. The point is that Jesus feared that the kingdom of God could begin instantly. If, in that instant, he could save a soul, it was his God sent duty to do so. That is why Jesus did, in the trying circumstances of the anticipated end of the wicked world, what Essenes would not normally condone. That is why as the first among the Essenes, he had to be the last when summoning All Israel to salvation.

- Jesus honoured the prophets but the Essenes re-interpreted what they wrote implying they thought them ignorant

Bent Scholar states and defends this in four lines, so he obviously thinks it feeble, which it is. The Essenes revered the prophets, and although they did think they were ignorant of the true meaning of what they wrote, it did not mean the prophets were ignorant but that God was clever and had withheld the understanding of some of his mysteries even from the prophets. The Righteous Teacher had discovered how to read the scriptures in such a way that God's mysteries were revealed. What is more to the point than this is that there is a remarkable agreement between passages quoted from the scriptures in general between Jesus and the Scrolls. Jesus might often have given peshars on the prophets, only parts of which were remembered, together with the quotation itself, which would have been easier to remember for the less backsliding members of the Nazarenes. When scripture is quoted by the gospel writers, they often quote it incorrectly, but in a way which suits them. This was a technique used by the Essenes.

- Jesus taught in parables but the Essenes just set down endless laws

Bent Scholar says that Jesus sought to free the Jews from legalism, yet elsewhere admits that he was a fully orthodox Jew committed to the Torah. These professional shepherds depend upon the Christian sheep having the memory span of an ant. All Jews were legalistic because the most holy gift of God they had was the law handed down to Moses. Jesus, as any Christian will concur, was a Jew devoted to God. It was therefore quite impossible for him to have sought to free the Jews from the law. That was the work of Satan.

Jesus was later shown as freeing people from the law so that gentiles need not be circumcised. The gentile bishops were stealing Judaism and making it applicable to the gentiles because it was seen by many as a noble religion. Many gentiles, especially women, had become godfearers, associates of Judaism who would not convert. Women were inclined to convert but their menfolk would not. They had to undergo the dangerous operation of circumcision, and most would not consider it. Christianisation of Judaism made a religion appropriate for these people and they joined in droves. No honest scholar would pretend that Jesus wanted to abrogate the law. But since the time of the first gentile bishop, few Christians have been honest to God, believing He prefers pious bleating to truth.

Jesus did not teach formal law, because the people he wanted to win back from apostasy were often simple people with imperfect legal education. There was no time to give even crash courses in the Torah and God's requirements. He wanted the Jews to repent and be baptised, as Christians should know. This huge reduction in legal necessity for salvation was because Jesus came to think the world might end in the very next moment. It was that urgent, which is why he thought it necessary to send out disciples to the Jewish cities. He just did not have time to do it himself. The consequence of this was he had to teach his message in short memorable stories, but they were stories in code—they were parabolic messages or parables, like a parabola, they were not direct and had to be understood. They were most comprehensible to Jews because of their scriptural allusions but seemed like cosy stories to onlooking Romans.

Bent Scholar claims that Mark 4:10-12, in which Jesus says that the parables held the mysteries of God and were not readily understood by those without (outside):

“Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”

was added by the gospel writers, reflecting later interests. You could say the same about the whole set of gospels, it becoming purely arbitrary what is considered original and what is added. It is certain, as Bent Scholar concedes, that Jesus wrote none of it. Everything we read about Jesus was therefore what the post-Easter community wanted future generations to know about him. When it suits Bent Scholar that a saying is originally Jesus's, he quotes it. When it suits him to say it is merely the disciples or the early church speaking, he ignores it. The end of Mark 7:19 (This he send rendering all meats clean), it suits him to accept, though it is a glaring interpolation. These two verses in Mark explain too clearly that parables are not nursery stories for infant Christians. That is too much. It could not have been Jesus who said it. Yawn!

- Jesus did not believe in fate but the Essenes did

It is hard for a skeptic like me to make anything of this, coming from a Christian. If

God had a plan which Jesus followed, how did he not believe in fate? Three times in Mark, Jesus predicts his own death. Isn't that a belief in fate? These people really do talk a load of tripe, apparently without even realising it, because they have divorced Jesus so thoroughly from the historical world that none of the rules of Nature even apply to the way he thinks. Or, perhaps they are just stupid.

- Jesus believed in the resurrection of the dead at the End Time but there is no clear evidence that Essenes did

Josephus says Essenes believed in the immortality of the soul, comparing it with Greek beliefs. Bent Scholar quotes 2 Macabbees 14, seemingly as being not (?) clear evidence that the Essenes believed in bodily resurrection. Judas dies with his bowels hanging out and calling upon God to resurrect him, evidence that the Hasidim believed in resurrection. The Essenes were the Hasids, staunch believers in the Jewish theocracy.

Bent Scholar dismisses passages in the Scrolls, which suggest a belief in resurrection, as ambiguous and metaphorical. This one is fairly clear (Vermes 1QH14 10-15):

“Thou hast purified man of sin... that bodies gnawed by worms may be raised from the dust to the counsel [of thy truth]... that he may stand before Thee with the everlasting host and with [Thy] spirits [of holiness], to be renewed together with all the living and to rejoice together with them that know.”

There is no disagreement necessary between a belief in resurrection and the belief in an immortal soul. It is after all what the Christians are supposed to believe. If anyone is to be resurrected to life then notionally the soul must be returned to it. The soul therefore lives while the body is dead. Heaven is perfect and God's kingdom on earth is heaven on earth. It too is perfect. The Essenes were trying to bring it about by aiming to act perfectly. But a perfect world has no corruption. It is therefore difficult to see how the Essenes could not believe in resurrection.

Quite apart from the gnawed bodies, the passage quoted says that the man who is free of sin will stand before God and his everlasting host and will be renewed. It is resurrection. All Jews other than the Sadducees believed in the prophets and undoubtedly Jesus and the Essenes did. Hosea promises a general resurrection on the third day. Are we supposed to think that the Essenes ignored this bit of scripture. Unfortunately, their commentary on Hosea is almost destroyed and the relevant part is missing.

- Jesus never mentioned the names of the angels but Essenes had to remember them and had an extensive angelology

This is pretty fatuous. Christians are usually keen to warn we critics of Christianity that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Whatever Jesus might have had to say about the names of angels has not come to us, but it does not mean he had nothing to say. His followers were extremely interested in angels and they appear all over the

place in the birth narratives and at the empty tomb. More angels are mentioned in the New Testament than in the much larger Old Testament. Doesn't that show that Christians had an unusual interest in angels? Jesus plainly believed angels were important and would appear in hosts at the end of the wicked world. Luke mentions the name of the angel Gabriel, but Michael, who is eschatologically important is not mentioned in the gospels although he is named in Jude and in Revelation. The reason is that his job was given to the risen Jesus as the one like unto a son of Man of Daniel returning on a cloud. The Jesus who returns will be Michael!

- Jesus was a martyr and prophesied it but the Teacher of Righteousness was not

Christians are particularly sensitive about the Righteous Teacher because there are clues that his career was remarkably like that of Jesus. My own argument is not that Jesus was the Teacher of Righteousness who founded the Essenes but he was probably one of his successors as the Righteous Teacher, having a senior rank among the Essenes. Somebody had the task of summoning Israel and reading in their ears the requirements of holiness before the world was renewed and the wicked were destroyed. My guess, based on what we know of Essene humility and that of Jesus, is that only the holiest man could undertake such an important task. John the Baptist did it until he was imprisoned and then Jesus.

If Jesus prophesied his own death, it was only as part of the general renewal that everyone had to experience, but only the righteous would emerge to be resurrected. Later Jesus became the sole subject of this general story he told to assure the faithful. Not just Jesus but every righteous person would be raised on the third day! This obvious scriptural fact has been willfully ignored by the pious liars for two thousand years.

- Jesus was liberal about observance of the sabbath while Essenes were sticklers for it

Essenes would not even help an animal out of a pit on the sabbath, so the passage in Matthew (Mt 12:11) seems to be directed at them.

“What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?”

But an examination of the original piece in Mark shows this part about the animal in the pit is missing. It is also absent from Luke. Plainly then it is a later elaboration by Matthew or an editor. Not one of the passages in which Jesus is considered cavalier about the sabbath carries any conviction when studied.

This curing of a man with a withered hand is certainly a distorted parable. The episode of plucking which precedes it is the real case and that is explained internally as an expedient, which even Essenes would have respected, based as it was in scripture. Matthew's interpolation would have been strong evidence that Jesus disdained the Essene sabbath observances, had it been original. It is derived and the incident that

suggests it is a distorted parable not a real incident.

Bent Scholar wants to consider this interpolation as original because, it was on a matter which did not concern the later church. He says it was an intra-Jewish debate about sabbath laws. No! It was a Christian justification for avoiding the sabbath laws. The gentile Christians wanted to prove that the strict Jewish sabbath need not be followed by their godfearing converts. Matthew, or an editor, therefore put this bit of Essene law into Jesus's mouth. It seemed an ideal example of the absurdity—to the pagans who would be reading Matthew—of Jewish sabbath observance. It is one of the more obvious instances of the way, the later Christians avoided the central beliefs of Jesus himself. They need hardly have bothered because most of the beliefs of Jesus recorded in the gospels are ignored by Christians anyway. This is the one exhibit out of all that has been presented, that Bent Scholar considers astounding!

- Jesus considered himself to be God's son but the Righteous Teacher did not

Bent Scholar tells us that Honi the Circle Drawer also considered himself God's son. He was called by Josephus, a righteous man, denoting that he was an Essene. All male Jews were God's sons and it seems likely that anyone with a particular holy calling might have used the explicit expression. In the Psalms of Solomon the righteous men who are saved by God are all Sons of God. Probably the terms righteous and son of God are synonymous. The Essenes might well have considered themselves as sons of God and therefore addressed God as Abba. The evidence of Acts of the Apostles is that Barabbas was a title but it has been distorted into various similar names in a Malapropish sort of way, but deliberately for sure. Christians were trying to distance themselves from the strong and persistent rumour that Jesus was Jesus Barabbas, crucified as a seditionist. So they had to change the occurrences of Barabbas to Barsabas, etc.

- The Essenes prayed at dawn and dusk and had an extended metaphor of light and dark for good and evil which Bent Scholar denies that Jesus had

Bent Scholar knows these things. Curious then that "light" occurs almost as often in the New Testament as in the Old Testament, even though the Old Testament is much bigger. Any concordance will show that light especially but darkness also appears in the New Testament and often with the fearful meaning of the Essenes. If the usage is not as intense as it was for the sectarians, it is probably merely an historical development rather than a product of revelation. Curious too that Jesus's followers are fond of using light and darkness comparisons. Jesus himself, according to Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 6:22-23), uses the light and darkness metaphor beloved of the Essenes. If not Jesus, was it then Paul who was the Essene, for Paul sounds thoroughly Essene when speaking in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18? Or maybe Peter was the Essene infiltrator. He prayed at noon in Acts. But Jesus several times prays all night, so must have prayed at dusk and at dawn. They were praying continuously. We saw that in the parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke, Jesus called his audience, the Sons of Light.

- Jesus taught about the coming kingdom of God but the Essenes never used the expression

This last is a highly dubious assertion which even Bent Scholar has to virtually contradict himself by offering quotations from the Scrolls which say, the kingdom shall be to the God of Israel, and an awesome God in the glory of your kingdom and God and His kingdom. Not, though the kingdom of God! On this criterion, Matthew's Jesus had nothing to do with the Jesus Bent Scholar is talking about. He does not use the technical term the kingdom of God just as the Essenes apparently don't. Matthew calls it the kingdom of Heaven, but it is Jesus who says it. Bent Scholar actually quotes one scholar who maintains on the basis of the Gospel of Thomas that the term Jesus habitually used was simply the kingdom. If that is true, the question arises, what kingdom did Jesus mean? The obvious conclusion is that Jesus was being deliberately parabolic in these references. The kingdom of God was the kingdom of the Jews.

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.
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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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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.

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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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