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AUTHOR: STEVEN D. BURTON

TITLE: DIVIDING THE HOUSE: A Socio-Political Approach To The Departure of The Followers of The Resurrected Messiah From The House of ISRAEL

Martin A. Cohen 2 August 2001
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Thesis Summary

Steven D. Burton

This thesis surveys a broad spectrum of the scholarly literature concerning the socio-political aspects of the following subjects: the various forms of Judaism that existed in the Second Temple Period; the search for the Historical Jesus; the development of what can anachronistically be labeled Early Christianity; the impact of the destruction of the Second Temple; the consolidation of rabbinic authority at Jamnia; and the process of the separation of the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah, from the rest of the House of Israel. Having been a student of history for the better part of my life, and believing greatly in the need for inter-faith dialogue, I sought an understanding of the origins of the divisions among people that led to, two independent worldviews, ultimately known as Judaism and Christianity. If the thesis satisfies this goal, its contribution will lie in the synthesis and critical evaluation of the materials examined.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters:

1. Methodology and Sources
2. Socio-Political Context: Palestine 4 BCE—70 CE
3. Jesus of The Galilee: Choosing A Historical Portrait
4. The Resurrected Messiah: Paul and the Inevitability of Separation
5. Jewish Life in the Diaspora
6. The Formation of Christian Group Identity
7. The Destruction of The Temple and The Ascension of Yavneh
8. Dividing The House: Cause and Effect

As indicated above a large portion of the material used for this thesis was the secondary literature both on the overall subject matter and on the primary source material. The latter consisted of the works of Josephus, the New Testament, and Rabbinic Literature, including Midrash, Mishna, Tosefta, and Talmud.

Dividing the House:
A Socio-Political Approach To
The Departure of the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah
From the House of Israel

Steven D. Burton

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinic Program
New York, New York

June 2002

Dr. Martin A. Cohen

This Thesis is dedicated to
my teacher, Rabbi Martin A. Cohen,
and to my friend and fellow student of history and faith,
Barry F. Sullivan.

Introduction

"A house divided against itself cannot stand."
Abraham Lincoln, quoting Mark 4:25.

Consider this sample of just a few of the headlines appearing in the *New York Times* within the last year:

"Who Killed Christ?" April 24, 2000.

"Israeli Jews To Outnumber US" September 11, 2000.

"Bishop's Visit Shows Rift" November 25, 2000.

"Signs of Church Unity" March 31, 2001.

"Episcopal Dissidents Look to Expand" June 16, 2001.

"New Tack for Reform Jews" Judaism's liberal Reform movement is poised to adopt guidelines on conversion that embrace traditional practices it once rejected. June 27, 2001.

Perhaps it will surprise you to learn that every one of these stories, and indeed hundreds of others that appear regularly in our newspapers have not just their origins in the period that you are about to read about, but parallels, to an extent, that may simply amaze you. From issues of conversion, to the size of the Jewish Diaspora, from rifts within the Church, to the question of "who killed Christ," history has a way of "of repeating itself."

What if the story we are about to pursue had had the benefit of a variety of reporters covering it from ancient times? And yet, in some ways it did. For as we will discuss in Chapter One, "Methodology and Sources," while the historical period on which we will focus, 4 BCE—135 CE, may have lacked the type of instantaneous on-location news coverage with which we are inundated today, those who preserved the oral, and ultimately written traditions of their time left us a record rich in evidence. Nonetheless, this record is plagued by many of the very same problems that will some day confront historians trying to look back and understand our own times.

A word about the title of this thesis: while some would have simply called this paper "The Separation of Christianity from Judaism," I have deliberately

avoided such usage, wherever possible, as anachronistic to the historical period which we will study. In their own lifetimes neither Jesus of Nazareth nor Paul of Tarsus, those whom historians would some day consider the founders of Christianity, would have ever thought of themselves as anything other than members of The House of Israel. Significantly, although we will devote the entirety of Chapter Three to the "Search for The Historical Jesus," the life work and the writings of Paul will ultimately play a far greater role in our story. As we piece that story together again and again, we will want to keep in mind that even terms like "religion" and "theology" are anachronistic when applied to these times.

Unlike Islam, where the prophet Mohamed believed that a revelation from God had specifically directed him to start a new faith, those who preached the Gospels, i.e., the "Good News," believed themselves to be following in and further elucidating the teachings found in the words of the Hebrew Scriptures. Fifteen hundred years later, when Martin Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses on the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg, he not only relied upon the writings of St. Paul, but also saw himself as following in his footsteps.

Luther did not set out to divide the Church; he merely wished to "correct" its teachings. In the nineteenth century, when men like Abraham Geiger and Samuel Holdheim created the Reform movement, they in turn would rely on the teachings of the Sages of Jamnia who, at the same time that Paul was laying the foundations of Christianity, were solidifying what later historians would designate as Rabbinic Judaism. In each of these cases, local socio-political factors, as well as the exercise of power by players on the larger world state, would play a decisive role in the struggle these men faced, and in the ultimate outcome of their undertakings.

Unlike other historic divisions, whether it be the separation of the thirteen colonies from Great Britain, or the division of Germany into two ideologically opposed states after the Second World War, this paper will be unable to point to a single document, or a specific date upon which to claim the House of Israel had been divided. Like those events, however, we will be able to examine the socio-political context in which the division came to fruition, as well as the roles played

by leading individuals in both unifying and dividing the various "communities" that previously considered themselves as "one."

This paper will explore a long and perhaps inevitable course of events that led some members of the House of Israel to believe not only that the Messiah had come, but that he had died and been resurrected. We will see how the belief in resurrection had been a source of division within the House of Israel long before anyone had heard of Jesus of Nazareth. We will study the formation of communities built around their differing belief systems, but nonetheless communities that considered each other to be within the House of Israel. In Chapters Two and Six we will focus in detail on the socio-political context in which these communities developed and changed over time. Applying principles developed by sociologists, we will be better able to understand how these communities that continued to share so much nevertheless became bitter antagonists within a relatively short period of time.

Two horrific wars, the first of which culminated in the second Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, will be seen as watershed events in this roughly one hundred year process. As noted, while it is impossible to pinpoint a precise date or even a precise year, when this division was completed, we will find ourselves in the company of a significant number of scholars by settling upon the end of the Bar Kokhba rebellion in 135, as an adequately bright line of demarcation.

In order to begin our study, even before considering the socio-political context in which it will arise, we will need to address the issues surrounding our primary sources, our equivalent of today's multiplicity of "journalistic voices." Similarly we will need to explain the methodological approach that will be employed in utilizing those sources. While our primary goal is to better understand a course of events that began more than two thousand years ago, if in so doing we can shed some light on current headlines, we will have provided ourselves with an improved perspective through which to understand the world in which we live.

Chapter One

Sources and Methodology

To judge which is the best of several different explanations of evidence, an historian takes into account several different features of the available explanations, especially their explanatory scope, their explanatory power, their plausibility, their ad hocness, the extent to which they are disconfirmed, and the degree of relative superiority to one with respect to the others.[1]

R. G. Collingwood defined a source as "the raw material out of which history is made,"[2] and went on to say that, "if history means scientific history, for 'source' we must read 'evidence'".[3] Future historians of the times we live in will face problems both similar to and the opposite of those faced by today's historians who are trying to reconstruct ancient events. Suppose a thousand years from now a historian wants to write about the impeachment of President William Jefferson Clinton. Assuming the preservation of even half of the material available today, that historian will have a wealth of "sources" from which to choose. What will he (or she) consider to be his (or her) primary sources?

Certainly there will be the Bill of Impeachment prepared by the United States House of Representatives; there will be the transcripts and videotapes of the trial in the United States Senate and the record of the vote. There will be hundreds, if not thousands, of daily newspaper reports and books including those written within a few years of the event by President Clinton himself, and by his accusers. This material will no doubt constitute hundreds of thousands of pages and a somewhat smaller number of hours of videotape.

Then of course there will be an enormous amount of secondary sources. There will be books written and films made by today's journalists and historians, as well as those written by later generations. Perhaps the future historian will be

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[1] C. Behan McCullagh, *The Truth of History* (London, 1998), p. 26.

[2] R.G. Collingwood, R. G., *The Idea of History*, revised ed. (Oxford, 1992), p. 394.

[3] Ibid., pp. 278-279.

able to visit the "Oval Office" and Senate chamber. Unlike the challenge we face today in terms of the limited amount of similar primary sources from the period on which we are focused, our future historian is likely to face the problem of an excess of material. Yet that historian will face a problem that is exactly the same as ours—that is the evaluation of the reliability of the various sources, and, most importantly, their interpretation. For, as Collingwood also said, "The interpretation of sources, then, is the formal element of history, counterbalancing the material element which is the source itself."[4]

When it comes to secondary sources, our task as historians of first century Judaism and Christianity is not all that different from that of our colleagues of the future. There were hundreds, if not thousands, of books to choose from in researching this paper, and indeed there are archeological sites throughout the Mediterranean that could be visited. Rather, it is in the realm of primary sources that we are so limited. To date, archeologists have not uncovered a transcript of a house meeting from a Johannine community where the members discussed and agreed that they were no longer Jews, but going forward, would be called Christians. Nor do we have notes dated from some time in the first century of a meeting of "Rabbis" excommunicating the followers of the Resurrected Messiah. When it comes to the life of Jesus, we have no contemporaneous accounts of his life or death. Nonetheless, we do have a limited number of texts that historians will generally agree are our primary sources.

Those sources would be the works of Josephus and the New Testament (hereinafter abbreviated as NT). From the Jewish perspective, there really is nothing equivalent to these two works. In terms of what is available today, we are limited to Rabbinic literature that in written form can be dated at the earliest to the beginning of the second century CE, and even then only hypothetically. Because this literature comes the closest to the period of our interest, we will include it in our list of primary sources. We will turn momentarily to the specific problems of each of these sources. Yet, as Martin Cohen has so aptly noted, all of our primary sources, and indeed those that our future colleagues will inherit

[4] Ibid., p.368.

from us, face a common problem: "All sources bear a personal or institutional bias. Our evidence mainly derives from victorious groups and their nearly victorious rivals *with* their penchant for excluding embarrassing data."[5]

It may be that the most concise explanation we have concerning the problems we face with the works of Josephus is that provided by Shaye Cohen:

> By now it should be clear how little we know of the events of 66-70. Because Josephus is our only extensive source and because he is so unreliable our knowledge is very defective. That Josephus provides enough data to refute his own account is a sign of sloppiness and incompetence rather than conscientiousness and objectivity. The narrative is always tendentious and, because we have no external control, we can never be sure of the underlying events. He can invent, exaggerate, over-emphasize, distort, suppress, simplify, or occasionally, tell the truth. Often we cannot determine where one practice ends and another begins. Thus it is easy to destroy Josephus' account, but nearly impossible to construct a more truthful one.[6] (underlining added)

The problems of bias called to our attention by Martin Cohen are also clearly evident in Josephus' work. Irving Zeitlin in *Jesus and The Judaism of His Time*, cites the much earlier work of H. StJohn Thackeray, offering criticisms similar to those quoted above from Shaye Cohen.

> Thackeray maintained that 'Josephus was commissioned by the conquerors to write the official history of the war for propagandist purposes. It was a manifesto, intended as a warning to the East of the futility of further opposition and to allay the after-war thirst for revenge.' For all his criticisms, however, Thackeray acknowledges, that 'the narrative of our author in its main outlines must be accepted as trustworthy.' Citing H. StJohn Thackeray *Josephus: The Man and the Historian*, New York, Jewish Institute of Religion Press, 1929. p. 49.[7]

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[5] Martin A. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths* (Second Annual Rabbi Joseph Klein Lecture, Assumption College, 1979, copyright, 1985), p.4.

[6] Shaye J.D. Cohen, *Josephus In Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development Development as a Historian* (Leiden, 1979), p. 181.

[7] Iriving M. Zeitlin, *Jesus and the Judaism of His Time* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 54.

Shaye Cohen also discusses Josephus' biases and motives with reference to the War of 66-70 CE, and perhaps of greater concern to this paper, his motivation for describing the Pharisees as he does. In *The Wars of The Jews,* Josephus portrays the war as being waged by only small groups of rebels, while the aristocracy sought peace.[8] In terms of his treatment of the Pharisees, he offers the following analysis:

> The war had destroyed the religious establishments of the country, and, we may conjecture many groups were attempting to fill the vacuum. Josephus allied himself with the Rabbis, the heirs of the Pharisees, who were then becoming influential and may have already attained some measure of official recognition for their academy at Yavneh. Perhaps they were becoming important in the Jewish community of Rome too. We may conjecture that Josephus realized that they would emerge as the leaders of the Jewish scene and imagined himself as their representative in Rome who would intercede on their behalf with emperors and empresses. [9]

In a similar vein, Alan Segal makes an important point about the audience for which Josephus was writing, again with particular reference to the Pharisees:

> Josephus is writing for the benefit of philosophically educated Roman readers, not for the Jews, and his attention to Hellenistic philosophical values distorts the picture(s) of the group(s) he describes. ...He does not attempt to capture the real qualities of the Pharisaic movement, even when describing his contemporaries, because he almost entirely ignores the legal and cultic aspects of the movement, as well as its sectarian rules. [10]

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[8] S. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, pp. 182-183.

[9] Ibid., pp. 237-238.

[10] Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, 1986), p.118. We should also note early on that Josephus' use of the term Pharisee is in of itself an anachronism. What Josephus was trying to do was to put the various Jewish "political" parties into the framework of Roman philosophical thought. In so doing he demonstrates the power which this group had.

As we will see, even with the limitations described above, Josephus provides us with the only contemporary written record we have of Jewish political history in Palestine in the Second Temple period. Yet, while he has a great deal to offer concerning the political setting leading up to the War of 66-70, he provides us with practically no information concerning Jesus, his followers or his death. For that we have to turn to our second primary source, the NT, and the host of problems that it presents.

The initial issue we will need to address is: just what kind of document is the NT? We turn first to the Gospels. Bart Ehrman of the University of North Carolina agrees with those scholars who have suggested that the Gospels are best seen as a kind of Greco-Roman (as opposed to modern) biography. He explains that, "Most ancient biographies were less concerned with giving complete factual data about an individual's life, or a chosen period of it; less interested in showing what actually happened in their subjects' lives than in portraying their essential character and personality traits."[11] As an example of this point, he quotes from the introduction to Plutarch's *Life of Alexander the Great:*

> I am writing not histories but lives, and a man's most conspicuous achievements do not always reveal best his strength or his weakness. Therefore as portrait painters work to get their likenesses from the face and the look of the eyes, in which the character appears, and pay little attention to other parts of the body, so I must be allowed to dwell especially on things that express the souls of these men, and through them portray their lives, leaving it to others to describe their mighty deeds and battles.[12]

Raymond Brown points out these essential differences between the Greco-Roman biographies and the Gospels: "the latter's anonymity, their clear theological emphasis and missionary goal, their anticipated ecclesiology, their composition from community tradition, and their being read in community

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[11] Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, second edition (Oxford, 2000), p.56.

[12] Ibid., p.57

worship."[13] Nonetheless, he concludes that is likely that many first century hearers/readers familiar with Greco-Roman biographies would have thought of the Gospels as "lives" of Christ, particularly Matthew and Luke, which begin with an infancy narrative.[14] He also calls our attention to a Jewish work, probably written in Greek, that is similarly patterned after these biographies. The work to which he refers is The *Lives of The Prophets*, which recounts information about the various prophets, including their birth, signs, dramatic deeds, death and burial place.[15]

The purpose of the Gospels, as Brown also points out, was far from simply providing information; rather, he suggests that, to a considerable degree, John's statement of purpose in 20:31 fits all the Gospels. "These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name."[16] In Bart Ehrman's words:

> The main point is that the stories the Christians told about Jesus were not meant to be objective history lessons for students interested in key events. They were meant to convince people that Jesus was the miracle-working-Son of God whose death brought salvation to the world, and to edify and instruct those who already believed. Sometimes the stories were modified to express a theological truth.[17]

Equally important are Brown's observations, considering the audiences for whom the Gospels were written:

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[13] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York, 1997), p. 103.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., p. 102.

[16] Ibid., p. 104

[17] Ehrman, *The New Testament,* p.52.

> We have limited knowledge about the audiences addressed (with the exception of the named communities of some Pauline letters). For example, in Mark 7:3 the evangelist explains that the Pharisees, and indeed all Jews, wash their hands and purify themselves as part of a ritual process antecedent to eating and drinking. From that one may surmise that the author was either a Jew or knew about Jewish customs, whereas the audience knew little about them.[18]

One thing that we can be sure of is that in terms of culture and context, the authors and their audiences had a worldview that differed in innumerable ways from our own. In the broadest of strokes, these differences would include differences in background, knowledge, and suppositions about reality.[19] Perhaps of greatest importance to remember is that the authors of the Gospels were writing for an *hct* (high cultural tradition) audience, and that it would only be through preaching that their messages would reach the *lct* (low cultural tradition). We also need to be aware of the fact that when they were written, the different Gospels had different audiences, and that even within these localized audiences there would be a wide spectrum of the degree to which their members knew or understood the Jewish scriptures to which the NT authors so frequently referred.

As will be discussed in considerable detail below, particularly with reference to the sayings and the events of the life and death of Jesus, the NT presents major problems of authenticity. It is however worth noting here that those problems can be limited to certain phases of our research. While the veracity of what is written about Jesus may be of great importance when we are trying to reconstruct the political import of his message and actions while he was alive, the issue of veracity becomes far less significant when we are assessing the impact of what was said and written about him, on the "departure" or "separation," which is the ultimate focus of this paper. As Gerd Theissen explains in his landmark work *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*:

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[18] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 36.

[19] Ibid.

> If we presuppose that tradition is genuine, we may assume that those who handed it down shaped their lives in accordance with the tradition. If we assume that it originated within the Jesus movement in the period after Easter, we can presuppose that those who handed it down shaped the tradition in accordance with their life. In either case the result is the same: there is a correspondence between the social groups, which handed down the tradition and the tradition itself. Thus a sociology of the Jesus movement transcends the dispute of both 'conservative' and 'critical' exegetes over the authenticity and historicity of the tradition. It is unaffected by the dilemmas of the quest for the historical Jesus.[20]

The letters of the NT, while in some instances still raising issues of authenticity as to their authors, are far less problematic than the Gospels, which post-date them. In fact, Paul's letters are the earliest of all extant Christian writings. In addition, they may be our best primary source for assessing the process of separation. Wayne Meeks calls our attention to two characteristics of these letters, which make them particularly useful for socio-political inquiry:

> Each responds to some specific issue in the life of one of the local churches or in the missionary strategy of the leaders; and they frequently quote traditional material, which provides glimpses of rituals, rules, admonitions, and formulated beliefs common to the Pauline communities.[21]

Each of our primary sources presents problems related to language; still those presented by the NT, specifically the Gospels, are compounded beyond those of our other sources. On one level, the problems of translating Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic all present limitations for even the most competent English translator when it comes to the nuances of the original language. In the Gospels, however, we are faced with the additional possibility that Jesus as a first century Galilean Jew in all likelihood spoke Aramaic, yet by mid century his gospel was

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[20] Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, (translated by John Bodwen) (Philadelphia, 1977), pp.3-4.

[21] Wayne A. Meeks , *The First Urban Christians, The Social World of the Apostle* Paul *(Yale, 1984), p. 7.*

being preached in the diaspora to urban Jews and Gentiles in Greek, a language which he may have never spoken. As a result, what we are reading in English is at best a translation of a translation that was anything but *verbatim*.[22]

Another problem that the Gospels share with our other primary sources is one of internal inconsistency. As Ehrman explains, "we have come to see that people in oral cultures typically do not share the modern concern for preserving traditions intact, and do not repeat them exactly the same way every time."[23] On the other hand, Ehrman also demonstrates how such inconsistencies may have served a later theological purpose. For example, in comparing the differences in the time and day of Jesus' crucifixion as told by John and Mark, Ehrman offers the following observation:

> John is the only Gospel in which Jesus is actually identified as 'the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.' Indeed, he is called this at the very start of the Gospel by his forerunner, John the Baptist (1:29; cf. 1:36 In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' death represents the salvation of God, just as the sacrifice of the lamb represented salvation for the ancient Israelites during the first Passover. Perhaps John (or his source) made a change in the day and hour of Jesus' death precisely to reinforce this theological point. In this Gospel, Jesus dies on the same day as the Passover lamb, at the same hour.[24]

John, of course, is not one of the Synoptics which as we shall see shortly present a problem of their own, not surprisingly dubbed the Synoptic Problem. Before turning to that issue, there is another problem with the NT that we will find also within Rabbinic literature. It is what Dominic Crossan describes as that of layers. "All gospel texts, whether inside or outside the canon, combine together three layers, strata, or voices. There is, as the earliest stratum, 'the voice of Jesus.' There is, as the intermediate stratum, 'the anonymous voices of the community talking about Jesus.' There is, as the latest stratum, 'the voices of

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[22] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p.108.

[23] Ehrman, *The New Testament*, p. 47.

[24] Ibid, p. 52.

their [the gospels'] authors.'"[25] The methodological challenge is how to determine which layer is which.

The Synoptic Problem, to which we have just referred, is the way that NT scholars describe the fact that there are significant amounts of material that are either totally consistent or inconsistent in the Gospels of Mark, Mathew and Luke. Here, it would appear that there is virtually complete agreement among modern scholars on a number of points. First, scholars agree that Mark was the first of the Gospels to be written. Scholars also agree that there is a direct relationship between the different Gospels; their consistencies are due at least in part to the fact that one or more of the evangelists made use of the work of another. Where the consensus begins to break down is on the actual number of sources.

Ehrman contends that the majority of scholars have accepted the "four source hypothesis."[26] Those accepting this hypothesis believe that Mark was used by the authors of Matthew and Luke, who also made use of another source, labeled *"Q"* from *Quelle*—the German word meaning source. It is from *"Q"* that Matthew and Luke derive the narratives that they both contain, that are not to be found in Mark. In addition Matthew had an additional source or sources, labeled "*M*", from which he received the material not found in either Mark or Luke. Finally to explain the material which only appears in Luke, we have the source "*L*."[27]

C. M. Tuckett, writing in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, on the other hand, contends that the most widely accepted theory is the "two source hypothesis."[28] In fact, this may simply be a re-statement of the four-source hypothesis. The two source hypothesis argues that there were only two sources, Mark and *Q*, the latter of which is labeled a "sayings" source. We can surmise that those adhering

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[25] John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity* (San Francisco, 1998), pp. 140-141.

[26] Ehrman, *The New Testament*, p. 77.

[27] Ibid.

[28] C.M. Tuckett, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, 1997, 1992).

to this hypothesis would consider the material that is unique to Matthew and Luke to have come directly from their authors. Either the two source or four source hypothesis may explain the differences among the Gospels, but it will take the methodologies, which we will soon turn to, in order to help us find the historical truth as best we may know it.

Our final somewhat primary source is that of Rabbinic literature. As noted from the outset, these materials are in fact too far removed to be truly considered primary for the period we are considering. Nonetheless, from a Jewish perspective, they represent, to varying degrees, the earliest material we have on our subject. Still both Jewish and Christian scholars would appear to agree upon their limited values. Shaye Cohen for example observes:

> Rabbinic historiography too excels in confusion, especially for the pre-70 period. The Talmudic sages were not historians. For them history was a branch of Aggadah: *nihil illicitum*, Neusner has shown [citing Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions About The Pharisees before 70*, Leiden 1970, and I Heinemann, *Darkhe ha* Aggadah (Jerusalem 1970)] that the Rabbis knew little about pre-70 Pharisaism, let alone Palestinian history, and what they report is usually untrustworthy. The stories about the war of 66-70 CE and about Bar Kokhba too are an insoluble compound of fact and fantasy (mostly the latter). Optimistic scholars may search for historical 'kernels'; but to assume the existence of such kernels is often unjustified.[29]

In terms of the heart of our study, the parting of the ways, Alan Segal is of the view that Rabbinic opposition itself developed not so much during the life of Jesus but rather in response to the Gospels themselves.[30] Finally Meeks while accepting the argument that rabbinic literature will "contain material of a much earlier provenance," nonetheless would caution us against even the use of the term rabbi:

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[29] S. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, p. 253.

[30] Segal, *Rebecca's Children*, p. 147.

> The earliest documents we have of "Rabbinic Judaism" were compiled in the circle around the Patriarch at the end of the second century. They and later sources undoubtedly contain traditional material of much earlier provenance, but only by the most painstaking—and often subjective—form critical studies can we guess which parts are really early or what changes they have undergone in transmission and editing. We will do well to avoid using the term rabbi or rabbinic of any phenomenon earlier than the academy founded at Yavneh (Jamnia) by Yohanan ben Zakkai, and we will be on safer ground to restrict these terms to second-century and later developments.[31]

Having set forth the texts which will serve as our primary sources and delineated at least in general terms the types of problems which they present, we turn now to a discussion of our methodological approach. We will first provide an overview of our approach to the subject at hand and then to the specific approaches designed to address the problems we have outlined with our sources.

What then do we mean by a socio-political analysis? Sociology is concerned with the study of the development, structure, and function of human groups. It wants to know the causes and effects of relationships among individuals and between individuals and groups. Crucial to our understanding will be the concept of "process," for the sociologist sees these developments as part of a continuum of serially related events as opposed to isolated events. For our purposes, we will consider the economic interactions between such groups and individuals as a subset of these relationships. We will seek to draw conclusions about the first century by applying principles that sociologists have observed in studying recurrent human behavior.

Our approach will consider issues of social diversification in first century Palestine and the diaspora, paying attention to the larger picture of the social system as a whole. Just as important as the concept of "process" is that of "context." First century Judaism and Christianity can only be understood in the greater socio-political environment in which they interacted. In this light we will

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[31] W. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, p. 33.

consider the causes and byproducts of the clash between Roman colonialism and Judean nationalism, as well as the interrelationship between cities and countrysides.[32]

> The concept of "process" is also crucial to the political theories of Martin Cohen that we will rely upon and outline below. Certainly politics too is a process. Political science studies the competition of competing groups for power and leadership. As Cohen has explained, this includes the important distinction between power and authority. Both sociology and political science are concerned with conflict—the conflict between groups and individuals once again over control. Ours will be a socio-political approach as it seeks to understand how the factors relevant to both disciplines explain "The departure of the followers of the Resurrected Messiah from the House of Israel."

Key to our methodology is the use of imagination—imagination that is within the bounds of hypothetical reconstruction. Still, as we make use of such reconstructions, we must keep in mind the cautionary note of Max Weber who, as explained by Wayne Meeks, reminds us that "historical hypotheses do not admit of verification in the manner of scientific laws, and the controlled experiment is inevitably a misleading model for historical inquiry."[33]

As noted above, the political tools of analysis developed and utilized by Martin Cohen will be central to this paper. The following list, derived from his groundbreaking monograph, *Two Sister Faiths*, sets forth eight basic principles:[34]

1. The greater the similarity among subgroups, the greater the ferocity of their mutual opposition.

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[32] John H. Elliott, *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism* (Minneapolis, 1993), p. 16.

[33] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, p. 5.

[34] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, pp. 6-7.

2. Centrist subgroups tend to favor the status quo for their entire organism, though within this constraint they jostle for preeminence.

3. Centrists will tolerate orbital deviance as long as they regard it to be no more than a nuisance. As soon as they deem it a menace, they will move to stifle it.

4. Every subgroup regards all its rivals as inauthentic and therefore heretical. Heresy is a rival position which has lost. The term has no place in historiographical reconstruction.

5. The leadership 'high cultural tradition' (henceforth hct) and the led 'low cultural tradition' (henceforth lct) and not elite and masses are the key groups to study.

6. Hct acts primarily cerebrally and cognitively, and lct viscerally and affectively; that individuals of hct may also act viscerally is well documented.

7. Hct is calculating and political; lct is ingenuous and doctrinaire and defends the ideals of the organism.

8. Hct seeks to retain and extend its power and authority.

We will also make use of three other terms regularly employed by Martin Cohen. The first is *credenda*, from the Latin "to believe," by which we will mean the basic beliefs of a community. An example would be, "God is one." The second term is *miranda*, again derived from the Latin "to observe." Here we will be speaking of actions taken, of symbols, again carrying great significance for a particular community. Sacrifice would be an example for the ancient Israelites. Finally, we will speak of a "worldview" as opposed to a theology. By "worldview" we mean the lens through which individuals or a society understands the events that take place around them. Marxism would be an example of a modern worldview.

From the works of Wayne Meeks, we will draw our emphasis on the importance of studying groups. As Meeks observes, "Since we do not meet ordinary early Christians as individuals, we must seek to recognize them through the collectivities to which they belonged and to glimpse their lives through typical occasions mirrored in the texts."[35] Nor does Meeks believe that we can rely upon generalities to do so:

> It will not do to describe that environment in terms of vague generalities: 'the Greek concept of immortality,' 'the Roman genius for organization,' `the spirit of Hellenism,' 'the Jewish doctrine' of this or that, 'the mystery religions,' nor to be satisfied with reproducing the generalizations and idealizations that aristocratic writers of antiquity themselves repeated. Rather, to the limit that the sources and our abilities permit, we must try to discern the texture of life in particular times and particular places.[36]

Not surprisingly, there are multiple places of intersection between the methodology of Martin Cohen and Wayne Meeks. Cohen in differentiating between elites and masses, as well as between hct and lct, has been quick to point out that an individual can be hct for one category of social stratification and lct for another. Meeks offers the following observation on social stratification in the Roman Empire:

> In recent years, however, sociologists have come to see social stratification as a multidimensional phenomenon; to describe the social level of an individual or a group, one must attempt to measure their rank along each of the relevant dimensions. For example, one might discover that, in a given society, the following variables affect how an individual is ranked: power (defined as 'the capacity for achieving goals in social systems'), occupational prestige, income or wealth, education and knowledge, religious and ritual purity, family and ethnic-group position, and local-community status (evaluation within some subgroup, independent of the larger society but perhaps interacting with it). It would be the rare individual who occupied exactly the same rank, in either his own view or that of others, in

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[35] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, p. 2.

[36] Ibid.

> terms of all these factors. The generalized status of a person is a composite of his or her ranks in all the relevant dimensions.[37]

The principles that we have set forth above when applied to ancient texts generally fall under the rubric of "social scientific criticism." As John Elliott notes, "there is as yet no universal consensus regarding presuppositions, procedures, or even nomenclature,"[38] for this discipline. Nonetheless we can outline the general principles that we will make use of herein. Consistent with our overall methodology, we will want to examine our texts within the contexts in which they were written. All texts, ancient or modern, "presuppose and encode information regarding the social and cultural systems in which they were produced and in which they made sense."[39] Our task is to be able to apply the type of precepts, which we enumerated above from Martin Cohen, while at the same time not confusing our own social context with that of ancient times. For example, we must remember that the concept of the "separation of church and state," existed neither in theory nor in practice in the ancient world. As Elliot explains:

> In biblical antiquity there was no freestanding independent institution of "religion" as in modern society with its five major institutions of kinship, economics, politics, education, and religion. Instead, religion, like economics and education, was embedded in the two dominant institutions of kinship and politics, those basic institutions according to which the total constellation of social and economic relations, public and private, was organized.[40]

As noted above in our discussion of the problems inherent in NT, we will repeatedly be faced with the issue of authenticity, particularly with relation to the materials concerning the life of Jesus. E. P. Sanders explains the primary test

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[37] Ibid., p. 54.

[38] J. Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism,* p. 18.

[39] Ibid., p. 50.

[40] Ibid., p. 57

that scholars have come to rely upon for assessing authenticity, which he labels as the test of "double dissimilarity:"[41]

> The test is this: material which can be accounted for neither as traditional Jewish material nor as later church material can be safely attributed to Jesus.
>
> Yet a problem remains. The test rules out too much. We should assume that part of what Jesus said and did became constitutive of Christian preaching, so that the elimination of all Christian motifs would result in the elimination of material which also tells us something abut Jesus. Similarly, we should be prepared to assume a broad ground of positive relationships between Jesus and his contemporaries in Judaism.[42]

Therefore Sanders would have us add to this test considerations of multiple attestation in more than one source or in more than one form.[43] As an entire chapter of this paper will be devoted to "the historical Jesus," we will explore these questions in far greater detail below. Suffice it to say at this time that in so doing we will rely upon the methods utilized by those scholars who fall into the group designated by some as the "third quest." For the most part, these scholars tend not to begin with a theological agenda. Rather, they rely more upon the methods of historiography (hypothesis and verification), and testing of sources as part of that process. Among the works utilized herein that clearly meet these criteria are those of E. J. Sanders, Ellis Rivkin, Martin A. Cohen, Geza Vermes, Marcus Borg, Dominic Crossan and others.

As we come to the close of this chapter on methodology, it is essential that we devote at least a paragraph or two to the issue of "typology." This word is used with two different meanings within this paper. In the broad context of socio-political methodology, it is through the use of "typology" that we try to understand the datum that we can extract about ancient times in light of what we know today about social and political structures from our own experience.

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[41] E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia, 1985), p.16.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., p. 17.

However, when it comes to NT exegesis, we will be using the term in a much more specific way.

George Wesley Burchanan defines "typology" as "a belief that objects, events and institutions exist and occur in relationship to other objects, events persons and institutions." He goes on to explain that "typologies were created when scholars, who were well acquainted with the earlier history of their nation, noticed a close relationship between their own period and an earlier one, between two earlier periods, or two individuals living in two different periods."[44] Lest we think that the typological conception began with the authors of the NT, Buchanan offers us this comparison between the lives of Joshua and Moses:

> Just as Moses had sent messengers in to spy out the land, so Joshua sent messengers in to spy out the land (Josh 2.1-24). Just as the Lord opened up the waters of the Read Sea to allow the Israelites to cross under the leadership of Moses, so Joshua divided the waters of the Jordan so that the Israelites could cross over on dry land (Josh 3.7-17). Just as the Lord commanded Moses to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground, so Joshua was commanded to remove his shoes because he was standing on holy ground (Josh 23.1-16). Just as Moses gave a farewell address before he died, so Joshua (Josh 24.1-28).[45]

Having set forth our primary sources and the tools of interpretation that we will use to examine and draw conclusions from them, it is now time to begin our own "process." We do so by examining the socio-political context of first century Palestine and the Mediterranean arc of the Roman Empire.

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[44] George Wesley Buchanan, *Typology and The Gospel* (Maryland, 1987), pp. 3, 12.

[45] Ibid., p. 9.

Chapter Two

Socio-Political Context: Palestine 4 BCE—70 CE

The first century lacked not only a clear separation of church and state, it also lacked a clear separation of heaven and earth.[46]

Trying to bracket historical periods with specific dates, particularly when it comes to antiquity, is something of an illusory exercise. Indeed as Collingwood has explained, when it comes to historical events a date, "is the most abstract thing you can say" for "all history consists of nothing whatever but narrative, which is not an enumeration of distinct events but a statement of their relations or articulations."[47] Nonetheless, we need to start and finish somewhere, even as we recognize that the time period which we choose to begin with is inextricably linked to all that preceded it, as well as all that follows it. In terms of the subject matter of this paper, we will focus on two periods. The first stretches from the death of Herod in 4 BCE to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and the second, from Jerusalem's destruction to the Bar-Kokhba Revolution in 135. We will cover this second period in a separate chapter.

Although Palestine had been under Hellenist influence for almost four centuries by the time of Herod's death, and surely Jerusalem had had its own unique brand of Hellenistic culture since the days of the Hasmoneans, it is the events following Herod's death in 4 BCE that many historians consider to be the turning point in the relationship between the Jews of Palestine and Rome.[48] However before turning to specific events, it is appropriate that we consider the general impact of Roman rule on Judea. Martin Cohen characterizes the period of Roman control of Judea as one of "dictatorial repression, smoldering hostility, the continuous threat or presence of civil war and an irreversible trend toward

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[46] John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity* (San Francisco, 1998), p. xxi

[47] R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, p. 419.

[48] See for example: Ben-Sasson in ed. William Horbury, W.D. Davies, and John Sturdy, *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol.3, The Early Roman Period* (Cambridge, 1999), Ellis Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus* (New York, 1997).

general rebellion."[49] It is also important to note that Hellenistic influence affected not only the Jewish areas of Palestine but the surrounding, already hostile, Gentile populations as well. Indeed, from the times of Ptolemaic and Seleucid rule, the upper classes of those societies produced leaders who were thoroughly Hellenized.[50]

While we will discuss the socio-economic aspects of Hellenization in greater detail later in this chapter, it is worth noting at the outset that "the Pax Romana had had beneficial effects on the economy of Judea, by helping to create commercial ties with various countries."[51] Although it was primarily the cities of the coast and certain cities in Transjordan that so benefited, Dominic Crossan, relying on the work of archaeologist Eric Meyers, also notes that the "Galilee emerges as an area transformed by the presence of Roman cities and influenced by Roman institutions and ideals."[52] He specifically calls our attention to the city of Sepphoris as providing a particularly good example of how the process of urbanization affected a mixed population, both in the city itself and in its dependent villages."[53]

Another manifestation of Hellenization often overlooked by scholars was the return of diaspora Jews to Palestine particularly under the reign of Herod who sought their presence as allies and as a replacement for much of the establishment that he had liquidated. This was true not only in his choice of high priests, but in his selection of high level civil servants as well.

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[49] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths,* p. 20.

[50] S. Safrai and M. Stern, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 2 Vol., Assen (1974, 1976), p. 564.

[51] Ibid., p. 574.

[52] D. Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity,* p. 218, citing Eric M. Meyers, "Galilean Regionalism: A Reappraisal."in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, ed. William Scott Green. vol. 5 (Atlanta, 1985), pp. 115-131.

[53] Ibid.

> Among the families that came into prominence in the Herodian age, one should include the house of Hillel. Its rise to a position of commanding influence constitutes a unique phenomenon in the period of the second Temple. Gradually, a family with no connections with the priestly class, became hereditary leaders of the nation until eventually in the time of Rabbi Judah the patriarch, it gained official recognition by the Roman Empire.[54]

As Collingwood reminds us, history is in the details, and so we return to specific events surrounding the death of Herod. Shortly before he died, Herod had brutally executed a group of youths for cutting down the golden eagle that had been erected at one of the Temple gates. To Herod, the eagle was nothing more than a political symbol; therefore those who cut it down had to be acting out of political motivation. But to those youths and their teachers, the eagle was far more akin to a graven image of the Emperor than a mere political symbol. Rivkin makes an important observation about this entire incident: "The fact that there was no simple way to distinguish religious/nonpolitical action from religious/political action was bound to unleash violent reactions in the years that followed."[55]

As Passover approached, (note well the timing) not long after the death of his father Herod, Archelaus was faced with riots in Jerusalem over the deaths of these youths, as well as grievances related to exorbitant taxes. Archelaus, who was desperate to please Rome in order to retain his father's prerogatives, brought in a cohort of troops hoping to suppress the agitators. The results were exactly the opposite:

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[54] Safrai and Stern, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, p. 615.

[55] Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus*, pp. 7-8.

> Indignant at the appearance of the troops, the crowd reacted with violence: They killed most of the soldiers and wounded the tribune in command. Terrified by this show of rebellion, Archelaus ordered his entire army into the city, with the result that three thousand lost their lives while others scattered to the neighboring hills (cf. *The Jewish War* II:5-13).[56]

It was not long after these deaths that Sabinus, a Roman officer acting under the orders of Varus, the Roman Governor of Syria, attempted to appropriate the treasures of the Temple. Outraged Jews surrounded the Roman troops and engaged them in battle. As a result Varus *crucified* some two thousand Jews.[57] While the Jews did not fare well at the hands of local Roman authorities, they often did better when they approached the seat of power in Rome itself. In 6 CE a delegation from Judea complained once again about Archelaus. This time, Emperor Augustus dismissed Archelaus, exiled him to Vienne in Gaul, and confiscated his property.

Yet, the newly appointed and first procurator of Jerusalem, Coponius, was no more respectful of Jewish sensibilities than had been other Roman authorities. Not long after taking office he ordered a census for the purpose of tax assessment that once again inflamed Jewish passions. Here too it is easy to see the lack of distinction between political/economic and religious motivation. While in this instance the high priest (Joezer b. Boethus) was ultimately able to pacify the crowds, there were those who sounded the call for rebellion. Among them was Judas of Galilee and Zadok the Pharisee.[58] Note well the appellations of these two leaders whom Josephus considers to be among founders of the "Fourth Philosophy," a movement which we shall hear more about shortly.

The high priest, of course, was not alone in wishing to co-operate with the Romans who now appointed him. Direct Roman rule, at the hands of a

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid, p.9 citing Josephus, *The Jewish War* II: 66-75.

[58] While it is not entirely clear that Josephus' use of the word Pharisee in relationship to Zadok had the same meaning as it does throughout his writing, most scholars have nonetheless assumed that to be the case.

procurator, had immediate advantages to the upper classes (hct) who, consistent with what we have designated as Martin Cohen's seventh and eighth principles, were far less doctrinaire and far more calculating than the lct, and thus sought not only to retain the power they had, but to increase their economic standing. The liquidation of the significant holdings of the now exiled Archelaus presented exactly such an opportunity.[59]

> The substantial overlap between at least some of the large-scale landowners and the upper priestly class allows one to surmise that the latter managed to gain advantages from their situation of power in Jerusalem. The analysis of the archaeological data, even with the difficulties in precise dating, combined with the study of Mishnaic terminology for offices held in the country, confirms the wide scale of the expansionary process in large property holdings.[60]

Yet, at the same time, surveys conducted by the Israel Archaeological Survey in western Samaria suggest that the average holdings in the Second Temple period were about 2.5 hectares.[61] The Mishna and the Bar Kokhba contracts proved evidence of plots as small as 0.3—0.1 hectares.[62] Thus, as the saying goes "as the rich grew richer," the gap between rich and poor, both in the countryside and in the cities increased. Gabba explains:

> Alongside the most widespread poverty which often affected the peasant smallholders, a prominent place is taken by the great estates, particularly in Galilee, normally administered and run on the tenancy system. Obviously, the tenant had every reason and tendency to exploit his subordinate laborers to the utmost, and to enrich himself even at the expense of the absent landlord.[63]

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[59] Emilio Gabba, "The Social Economic and Political History of Palestine 63 BCE to CE 70," in Horbury, *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol.3, The Early Roman Period*, p. 135.

[60] Ibid., p. 110.

[61] Safrai and Stern, *The Jewish People in the First Century,* pp. 566-567.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Gabba, "The Social Economic and Political History" in Horbury, *The Cambridge History of Judaism.*

As the wealthy naturally benefited from the disparate size of their holdings, the poor suffered under a disproportionate tax burden. Marcus Borg in *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in The Teachings of Jesus*, offers us detailed analysis of the combined system of Roman and Torah driven taxation:

> The amount of taxation on agricultural produce, required by the Torah, was slightly over 20 percent. To this system of taxation, the Romans added their own: crop and land taxes, a poll tax (the famous "tribute" tax), customs, and tolls.[a] Many of these could be exorbitant, especially customs and tolls; though certainty about the exact percentage is impossible, the figure of 25 percent has been cited; moreover, since they were added each time a product crossed an administrative boundary, they accumulated. Though all of these taxes affected the farmer directly or indirectly, the land and crop taxes had the greatest impact. The former was 1 percent of the value of the land; the latter was 12.5 percent of the produce.[b] In addition to his need to save for the sabbatical year, the double system demanded from 35 to 40 percent of his produce, perhaps even more.[64]

There were severe social and political consequences from this taxation. The direct consequences included an increasing number of landless workers, beggars, thieves and emigrants. Indirectly, the level of taxation created for some a "test of religious loyalty," as those who felt that they could survive only by being nonobservant, ceased paying their Torah mandated taxes. We will also take note of a similar phenomenon with similar consequences, but with different causes, in the post 70 diaspora where the renunciation of being a Jew served to free one of certain tax obligations.[65]

In addition to, or as a further result of, heavy taxation Stern cites the *prozbul* formulated by Hillel (*Shevi'it* 10.3) which facilitated the official

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[64] Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict Holiness and Politics in The Teachings of Jesus* (Harrisburg, 1998), p. 48, citing [a] For Roman taxation, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 1:372-76, 401-7; Stern in Compendia, 1:330-33. and [b] Stern in *Compendia*, 1:331.

[65] Borg, *Conflict Holiness and Politics in The Teachings of Jesus*, p. 49.

circumvention of the seventh-year cancellation of debts, as evidence of widespread debts among the peasantry.[66] Geza Alfoldy argues that the free peasantry throughout the Roman Empire often fared worse than the slaves:

> The most oppressed social strata in the Roman empire were the fairly poor and impoverished sections of the rural population. Among those sectors those who suffered worst were not the slaves on the *latifundia* [plantations], who were of value to their masters and were at least regularly fed, but the mass of nominally 'free' peasants, who were without means of support and who, in the provinces, often lacked the privileged status of a Roman citizen. For example, the life of the 'free' country-dwellers of Judaea or Egypt was far worse than that of the slaves on [an Italian] estate.[67]

The resentment of the impoverished rural class toward the large landholders naturally fueled resentment toward the cities where, as previously indicated, these large landholders often resided. While the coastal cities may have been the most direct beneficiaries of Hellenist induced trade, Jerusalem, in addition to benefiting from foreign trade, (as is evidenced from many archaeological findings) was also first among the cities in concentration of economic activity. The bulk of this commerce was related to the Temple. Stern offers the following picture:

> Besides purchasing considerable quantities of livestock for public sacrifices, and supporting annually 7,000 priests and Levites, it kept busy a notable staff of physicians, scribes, maintenance workers, butchers, weaver, metal-workers, incense-makers, and bakers of the shewbread. In the decades prior to 66, the remodeling of the shrine employed in addition to trained priests, 10,000 other labourers. About the Temple gathered numerous money-changers connected with the changing of the money of pilgrims for the purchase of sacrificial animals, also purveyors and traders concerned with the sale of such, and with the purchase of Temple surpluses. The Temple further acted as a bank. II Macc. 3.11[68].

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[66] Safrai and Stern, *The Jewish People in the First Century,* p. 662.

[67] Geza Alfoldy, *The Social History of Rome*, translated by David Braund and Frank Pollock (London, 1985), pp. 145-146.

[68] Safrai and Stern, *The Jewish People,* p. 683.

It should not be difficult to see now the centrality of the role which the Temple would play in the unfolding political events in Palestine. We are faced with antagonisms that are economically, socially, and culturally motivated and that are both intra-Jewish, more of which we will hear shortly, and inter-"national". Again we will want to keep in mind Martin Cohen's sixth and seventh principles, particularly as they relate to the "visceral" as opposed to "cerebral" behavior of lct as well as the lct propensity to be "ingenuous and doctrinaire" in defending "the ideals of the organism."

We left off our narrative with the rioting that followed Coponius' demand for a census followed by the "visceral" reaction of lct, the calming actions of the high priest (hct), and the response of those credited by Josephus with the founding of the Fourth Philosophy. According to Ben-Sasson[69] cooler heads, those with a strong interest in maintaining the status quo, prevailed for almost twenty years after these events, until the arrival of one Pontius Pilate as the new procurator in Jerusalem. Once again, it was an issue of images, as Pilate's soldiers entered Jerusalem bearing their royal standards that served to inflame Jewish passions.

A massive protest was mounted in Caesarea at Pilate's official residence. When it became clear that the Jews would not be deterred by a show of force, Pilate removed the imperial images from Jerusalem. In their next confrontation the Jews would not be nearly so fortunate. In this second instance, Pilate had appropriated funds from the Temple in order to build an aqueduct, and when crowds gathered in protest, Roman soldiers planted among them brutally ended the resistance. While Pilate was thus confronted with *lct* opposition, those within the Jewish power/authority structure sought accommodation. It is to that power structure that we now turn.

The first point of interface between Roman authority in Jerusalem and Jewish "self-government" was the High Priest. A High Priest that is who was appointed by and served at the pleasure of Roman power.

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[69] Ben-Sasson, in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol.3, The Early Roman Period*, p. 251.

> The Romans followed the custom of Herod, who retained custody of the high priest's garments as insurance against insurrection. (Ant. 18.92.) Second, the rapid replacement of high priests under several governors may well point to political suspicions. In the fifty-two years following 15 C.E., seventeen high priests were appointed. Since two of these served thirty years, the remaining twenty-two years saw an extraordinarily high figure of fifteen high priests. It is a reasonable conjecture that those with a long tenure had achieved a *modus vivendi* with the governor. Conversely, some of those who served very short terms may have been considered politically unreliable.[70]

The Romans, of course, were hardly the only element with which the high priest had to contend. Before we turn to the differences among Jewish political groupings we should note the areas of their basic agreements. In their dealings with Rome Pharisees, Sadducees, and indeed the Essenes, had adopted what Ellis Rivkin has labeled, "the doctrine of the two realms."[71] The doctrine was relatively straightforward. The Pharisees whose political domination of the Sadducees can be traced back to the Hasmonean Revolution[72] would be the interpreters of the Oral and Written Torah constitution. They would set the terms for public manifestations of religious practice, including the way the priests, more often than not, Sadducees, conducted themselves in the Temple. In return for this religious autonomy, both Pharisees and Sadducees recognized Rome's power, and the procurator's authority, to collect taxes, raise armies and generally regulate areas of non-religious life.[73] While the Essenes[74] had withdrawn to hermetic communities, and therefore did not play a significant part in the political life of the rest of Judea, the same could not be said of the now oft mentioned "Fourth Philosophy." We turn first to Pharisees and Sadducees.

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[70] Borg, *Conflict Holiness and Politics in The Teachings of Jesus*, p. 63.

[71] Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus*, p. 22.

[72] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, p. 14.

[73] Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus*, p. 27.

[74] See Appendix I Quotations from Josephus Sec. III, 3.

It is difficult to estimate whether there is more agreement or disagreement among scholars as to the origins and beliefs of the Pharisees. Certainly many would appear to agree with the views of Morton Smith, Shaye Cohen, and E. J. Sanders that Josephus' view of the Pharisees (See Appendix 1 Sec. III, 1) is colored by the "desire to enhance the reputation of the party which, in the nineties, had become predominant and which he wished to support."[75] Martin Cohen however correctly calls our attention to the fact that where Josephus' bias has done historians more harm is not so much in his over estimation of the Pharisees as in his underestimation of the Sadducees.[76] As Cohen also explains, the Pharisees and Sadducees were political parties with conflicting views as to the interpretation of the Torah constitution.[77] Again we find scholarly agreement concerning the basic Pharisaic beliefs, including their promulgation of and insistence upon the supremacy of the Oral Law, "a doctrine of post-mortal life whose distinctive feature is the resurrection of the body at the end of time,"[78] and their more "liberal interpretations of the Law," all of which is contrasted to the views of the Sadducees.

Scholars do vehemently disagree on the role of Levitical purity in terms of the derivation of the name "Pharisees" and far more importantly in terms of the core of their beliefs. Because of the importance of this issue to our understanding of the Gospels and to the topic of our ultimate interest we will need to spend a few paragraphs explicating the arguments of both sides. Those leading the argument for the centrality of Levitical purity include Jacob Neusner and Louis Finkelstein, joined by Marcus Borg, while those rejecting this view would include Martin Cohen, E. J. Sanders and Solomon Zeitlin.

Finkelstein sees the Pharisees as an outgrowth of a group that originally referred to themselves as *haverim*. The *haverim* believed that if all Israel was truly to be a "kingdom of priests" then the Levitical Laws of Purity had to be universally

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[75] E. J. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 194.

[76] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths.*

[77] Ibid., p.15.

[78] Ibid.

followed. These *haverim* formed a society based on this principle. Observing these rules of purity naturally resulted in the setting of social barriers with those who did not observe them. Indeed, "Its emphasis on purity necessarily made it a primitive "Consumer's League," for its members were prevented, by their adherence to its platform, from making purchases at the shops of those suspected of transgressing the Law."[79] The wall thus created between the *haverim* and other Jews, Finkelstein argues, gained them, most commonly, the name of "Separatists" (Hebrew, *Perushim*; Aramaic, *Perishaia);* Grecized into *Pharisaioi*, hence the English, Pharisees."[80]

Solomon Zeitlin has a rather different view.[81] He argues that the term *perushim*—Pharisees—Separatists was applied as a term of opprobrium by those who opposed the Oral Law and belief in the restoration of the House of David. Such beliefs they claimed "separated" them from the Jewish people and the Pentateuch. The political issue behind this label was the claim of the priests that the Levitical covenant established their own right to rule.

Sanders makes a convincing case that while there no doubt was overlap between the Pharisees and the earlier *haverim*, it is "dubious that the two groups were identical."[82] Sanders notes that, "All that we hear about Pharisaism from people who were actually Pharisees before 70 is that the party was defined by its zeal for the knowledge of the law, belief in the resurrection, and acceptance of the tradition of the elders."[83] Then he asks,

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[79] Finkelstein, *The Pharisees,* pp.75-76.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Solomon Zeitlin, *Who Crucified Jesus?* (New York, 1964), pp. 11-12.

[82] Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 187

[83] Ibid., p. 188.

> Did the tradition of the elders insist that lay people act like priests? Not that we know of. It is noteworthy that Josephus makes a point of the fact that the Essenes would not eat other people's food (*BJ 11.143f.)*, but says nothing about the Pharisees' observing special food laws which set them off from other Jews.[84]

Sanders also points to Rabbinic discussions that make it clear that while the *haberim* may have taken upon themselves special vows concerning purity, they did not expect others to do the same.[85] "They were more scrupulous than others, but they did not exclude them from anything but certain of their own activities—certainly not from the religious and social life of Judaism."[86] This discussion will become particularly important when we seek to reconstruct the ostensible disagreements between Jesus and the Pharisees.

The different schools of thought would also appear to disagree as to whether the term Pharisee was applied neutrally, as Finkelstein would have us believe, or pejoratively, as Solomon Zeitlin and Martin Cohen contend. There does, however, seem to be at least partial agreement as to the context in which the two philosophies derived. Finkelstein argues that "Pharisaism, as a movement, was the product of the market place of Jerusalem; Sadducism, of the priesthood which was of provincial origin." Martin Cohen would consider this partially true. The notion that Pharisaism was the product of an urban environment was no doubt true. However, while the Sadducees would have continued to draw support from rural environments, their leaders were just as likely members of the Jerusalem priestly aristocracy as the rural priests. Both Finkelstein and Cohen would however agree that the Pharisees also drew support and members from the priestly class. Again as Cohen has explained, the *mitzvah* system and the

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[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., p. 192.

[86] Ibid.

promise of a world to come were likely to be more attractive to an urban population then the priestly promises of rain in its season, which naturally would have been more appealing to the rural population.

Cohen and others also point to the development by the Pharisees of the legally innovative, concept of "*halakha*" ('way' or 'procedure' not 'law' as it has come to mean) through which Torah law is radically shaped to meet new contingencies, or radical, new laws are at least theoretically hung on slender Torah threads."[87] Similarly Zeitlin argues that "The Pharisees were willing to amend the Pentateuchal law in order to bring religion into consonance with life. They were acutely aware of the need to modify Jewish law in order to enable the law to accord with the needs of an ever changing life."[88] By way of example, Zeitlin cites Mishnah *Menahot* 10.6,[89] where the story is told of a time when the 16th of Nisan fell on a Sabbath. The farmers reaped the barley on that day in order to bring an *Omer* to the Temple. The Pharisees reasoned that if the priests were permitted to offer the sacrifices on the Sabbath, a form of work done with a religious purpose, so others might do work that also served a religious end. We will want to keep this in mind when confronted in the Gospels with another instance of harvesting on the Sabbath.

Zeitlin's premise overlaps with that of Finkelstein, who argues that the popularity of the Pharisees was tied in part to their leniency in interpreting the law, as opposed to the stringency of the Sadducees.[90] He goes on to acknowledge that those "seeking new rights had more frequent occasion to adopt novel interpretations of the inherited law than their opponents, who were merely trying to preserve what they had."[91] This is, of course, entirely consistent with Cohen's political principles.

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[87] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, p. 16.

[88] S. Zeitlin, *Who Crucified Jesus*, pp. 28-29.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*, p. 83.

[91] Ibid., p. 101.

It is equally important that we keep in mind that there was a spectrum to Pharisaic thought. Most notably was the division between *Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai*. The Shammaites were generally strict constructionists, and the Hillelites loose constructionists. The Shammaites were more nationalistic, and the Hillelites more universalistic.[92] We will consider another smaller yet significant segment of the Pharisaical spectrum when we consider Josephus' discussion of the Fourth Philosophy.

Despite our emphasis on the Pharisees, we must not deny the Sadducees their due. Their continuing power is evidenced by their large holdings, their place on the Sanhedrin (whose function we will discuss in detail in a later chapter), and "their ability to retain their prerogatives and authority positions until the destruction of the Temple."[93] As Rivkin explains,

> As long as the Sadducees carried out all public functions in accordance with the Oral Law, the Scribes-Pharisees would raise no question to the right of a Sadducee to be high priest; or to the right of Sadducees to be priests and to enjoy all the honors, privileges, and revenues attendant to their priestly status; or to their right to live their private lives outside the jurisdiction of the Oral Law.[94]

Having stressed the differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees in these last few pages it is important to remind the reader of the overriding importance of the agreement to which these two political forces had come. It was not just upon what Rivkin formulates as the "doctrine of two realms," but also to a doctrine of live and let live that Sadducees Pharisees, and Essenes agreed:

> The Scribes-Pharisees and the Sadducees coexisted peacefully on the religious plane and held similar views on the political plane. Both had adopted a noninterference policy not only toward each other but toward every religious group in Judaism, however much it might deviate from their own beliefs. Whatever common concern they shared over religious dissidents whose teachings had dangerous political implications, such concern was political, not religious.[95]

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[92] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, p. 22.

[93] Ibid., p.14.

[94] Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus*, p. 30.

[95] Ibid., p. 31.

In contrast to Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenses, the group labeled by Josephus (See Appendix I Secs. I and III, 4) as the "Fourth Philosophy," was unwilling to abide by either of these doctrines. Although Josephus credits the founding of the Fourth Philosophy to Judas the Galilean and Zadok the Pharisee,[96] early first century CE figures, the origins of the movement, or at least those who fit its typology, go much further back in time. The earliest of these figures was one Hezekiah (died 46 BCE) who, though described typically by Josephus as the "a captain of a band of robbers, who overran the neighboring parts of Syria,"[97] would be described by those friendlier to his cause as a "freedom fighter" who conducted a stubborn war against the Roman government and its supporters. As can be readily seen, the application of labels had as much significance in ancient times as it does in our own, when some labeled those opposing the Sandanistas in Nicaragua as "freedom fighters," while others simply considered them "terrorists." What is important about Hezekiah to later history is the pattern that he set, and the Galilee from which he hailed.

Josephus is relatively consistent, though at times confusing, about his treatment of those who opposed Rome with violence. Whether he labels them robbers, *sicarri*, false prophets, or even founders of the Fourth Philosophy, the descriptions remain generally negative. Perhaps the most positive thing he had to say about its leaders was that "These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord."[98] Yet lest this be read in too positive a light, he immediately adds, "They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man lord."[99] Referring to both, Judas the Galilean, and Zadok the Pharisee, and their Fourth Philosophy, he adds that they had "a great

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[96] Josephus: Antiquities 18:1:6; 20:8:5,10; War 2:13:3

[97] Josephus: Antiquities 14:9:2

[98] Ibid., 18:1:6

[99] Ibid.

many followers therein, filled our civil government with tumults at present, and laid the foundations of our future miseries."[100] The future miseries to which Josephus alludes are, of course, those of the War of 66-70 and Jerusalem's destruction. It would appear that Manahem, a leader in the War, was the son of this same Judas.[101]

Josephus also calls our attention to one Theudas, who dies at the hands of the Romans in circa 44 CE. What is particularly interesting here is the reference to Theudas as a magician, an appellation we will later see applied to Jesus of Nazareth, and that Josephus devotes approximately the same amount of space to him as he devotes to Jesus:

> While Fadus was procurator of Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was Theudas, persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan; for he told them he was a prophet, and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it; and many were deluded by his words. However, Fadus did not permit them to make any advantage of his wild attempt, but sent a troop of horsemen out against them; who, falling upon them unexpectedly, slew many of them, and took many of them alive. They also took Theudas alive, and cut off his head, and carried it to Jerusalem.[102]

Within ten years of the death of Theudas, Josephus records the appearance of yet another false prophet, only here he ties him directly to the "robbers." Also noteworthy, from the perspective of typology, is the threat made by another "prophet" of this time against the walls of Jerusalem:

> These works, that were done by the robbers, filled the city with all sorts of impiety. And now these impostors and deceivers persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness, and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God. And many that were prevailed on by them suffered the punishments of

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[100] Ibid., 18:1:1

[101] Josephus, Wars 2.17.8.

[102] Josephus, Antiquities 20:5.

> their folly; for Felix brought them back, and then punished them. Moreover, there came out of Egypt about this time to Jerusalem one that said he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with him to the Mount of Olives, as it was called, which lay over against the city, and at the distance of five furlongs. He said further, that he would show them from hence how, at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down; and he promised them that he would procure them an entrance into the city through those walls, when they were fallen down.[103]

Taking note of the beginning of this last quotation we see that Josephus has included these "prophets" with "robbers, impostors, and deceivers." Here Zeitlin will strongly disagree. These "prophets," Zeitlin contends, were in reality "Apocalyptic-Pharisees."[104] He derives their name from their belief "in the revelation of God."[105] He then argues that, like the *Sicarri*, they preached the "Gospel of no lordship of man over man; the equality of men; the only ruler over man is God," *but* that they opposed violence. It is also Zeitlin's view that the apocryphal works, including *The Book of Enoch, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,* and *The Psalms of Solomon* were written by this group before the Christian Era.[106] Based upon this literature, he concludes that this group believed that the Messiah would be a supernatural being, born of the House of David. This literature refers to "the son of David," "the anointed one of God," the Elect One," "the Son of Man," and "the Son of God," who "would sit on the throne of God."[107]

Finally there is an individual from an earlier period who even Josephus recognizes to be a stripe of a different color. He too is of great typological significance. His name was John the Baptist, of whom Josephus wrote:

> He was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practice justice toward their

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[103] Ibid., 20.8.6; see also Acts 5.36, 21.26-40.

[58] S. Zeitlin, *Who Crucified Jesus?*, pp. 97-98.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., p. 99.

[107] Ibid., pp. 99-100.

> He was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practice justice toward their fellows and piety toward God. . . . When others, too, joined the crowds about him because they were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons, Herod became alarmed. Eloquence that had so great an effect on mankind might lead to some form of sedition for it looked as if they would be guided by John in everything they did.[108]

And yet the fate of John the Baptist is well known to all of us. As Josephus reports, "Herod decided, therefore, that it would be much better to strike first and be rid of him before his work led to an uprising than to wait for an upheaval."[109]

Hopefully we have now set the stage for the entrance of our main characters. To recap briefly, Palestine has been subject to Hellenization for almost four hundred years. The last hundred of those years were characterized politically by Roman "dictatorial repression, smoldering hostility, the continuous threat or presence of civil war and an irreversible trend toward general rebellion."[110] Theologically, yet another aspect of "politically," Jews were divided among themselves. Economic poverty and subsistence living were surrounded by great wealth. Antagonisms existed between country dwellers and city dwellers. Jews were surrounded by less than friendly communities of native gentiles, as well as the forces of occupational Rome. The "spectrum was highly activated." It was onto this stage that one Jesus from the Galilee made his entrance, and it is to his story that we now turn.

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[108] Josephus, Antiquities 18

[109] Ibid.

[110] See ft. nt. 4 supra.

Chapter Three

Jesus of The Galilee: Choosing A Historical Portrait

Seven different images of Jesus have been proposed by scholars in recent years.[111]

Five portraits of Jesus by North American scholars published in the 1980s demonstrate the current resurgence in Jesus scholarship.[112]

Having created the backdrop of the socio-political stage upon which Jesus appeared, we now seek to understand Jesus as a socio-political actor and leader. It should not be surprising, as footnotes 111 and 112 indicate, that we have a fairly wide range of specific portraits and typological images from which to choose. The Gospels themselves, both those canonized by the Church and those specifically excluded, offer us the distinctive views of variety of authors and communities. Once again, if we think of our future historian reading the portrayals by our contemporary historians of President William Jefferson Clinton, we can better understand the problems we face. No doubt those future

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[111] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco, 1991), pp xxvii-xxviii, citing Daniel Harrington, Daniel J. 1987a. "The Jewishness of Jesus: Facing Some Problems". CBQ 49: 1-13. Crossan offers the following summary of those seven:

> There is Jesus as a political revolutionary by S.G.F. Brandon (1976), as a magician by Morton Smith (1978), as a Galilean charismatic by Geza Vermes (1981,1984), as a Galilean rabbi by Bruce Chilton (1984), as a Hillelite or proto-Pharisee by Harvey Falk (1985), as an Essene by Harvey Falk (1985), and as an eschatological prophet by E. P Sanders (1985).

[112] Marcus J. Borg, Marcus, *Jesus In Contemporary Scholarship* (Harrisburg, 1994), pp. 18, 26. There is little overlap in the lists presented by Borg and Harrington. Borg's list includes his own work which portrays Jesus as charismatic healer, a subversive sage, a social prophet, and the initiator or a revival movement. Burton Mack's portrayal is contrasted to that of E.P. Sanders, the one author who appears on both lists. Mack's Jesus is neither eschatological nor very Jewish. Next is the work of Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza who portrays Jesus as a wisdom prophet deeply engaged with his social world.Richard Horsley also emphasizes Jesus' role as a social revolutionary. Borg also calls attention to Crossan's own work and its portrayal of Jesus as a peasant cynic.

historians will have to choose from among the contradictory "biographies" offered by today's historians. Some historians will portray Clinton as the socially-liberal, fiscally-conservative leader, responsible for the economic boom of the last years of the twentieth century, while others will have drawn a picture of a pathological liar who set out to undermine America's values in a partnership with the demonic entertainment industry.

As noted in Chapter One, our future historian will have several advantages over today's historian of antiquity. While the varying political perspectives and objectives of our contemporary historians may be quite parallel to the varying theological perspectives and objectives of the Gospel writers, future historians are at least likely to have documents, transcripts and videos of the President preserving his own words, as well as similar evidence from those who opposed him. In contrast, although it is true that the Gospel and Epistolary evidence that we have will enable us to see and understand conflicts within the primitive church itself, all of these writers did have a common element to their agendas: to convince their readers that the Resurrected Messiah was the Son of God. Thus we lack the benefit of the contemporary views of those who did not see Jesus in this light.

Recognizing these limitations, our efforts to understand Jesus as a socio-political leader place us squarely within the bounds of scholarship generally referred to as "The Quest for the Historical Jesus." While this paper will rely primarily upon the works of scholars writing in the late twentieth century, it is nonetheless worthwhile to devote a few paragraphs to the history of scholarship in this field.

H.S. Reimarus (1694-1768) is widely credited with beginning the discipline, which was to become known as "The Quest." The antecedents to his work are found in that of the English Deists.[113] Among Reimarus' conclusions was that Jesus was a Jewish revolutionary whose followers originated the idea

[113] Marcus J. Borg, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, ed. David Noel Freedman* (New York, 1997, 1992).

that he was divine after his death.[114] Thus he reasoned that Christianity was in fact based upon a series of mistakes. It might therefore not be surprising that Reimarus' work was not published until after his death. What may be more surprising, however, is that James Carroll's *Constantine's Sword*, which recently appeared on the *New York Times*, Non-Fiction Best Sellers List, is based in large part on a similar proposition, at least as far as it concerns the anti-Semitism found within the New Testament.

Probably the most well known name from the first period of "Quest Scholarship" is that of Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965). After careful analysis, Schweitzer dismissed much of the work that preceded his and reached his own conclusions. These included that Jesus "deliberately kept his Messiahship a secret, revealing it to the disciples in the Transfiguration and then commanding them to tell nobody,"[115] and that while this secret was betrayed to the chief priests by Judas, Jesus deliberately went to his death to bring about salvation.[116] More recent scholarship, as we shall see, takes major issue with these conclusions.

The second phase of the scholarship, which ironically sought to put an end to the entire enterprise, is exemplified in the work of Karl Barth. Whereas the original "Quest" considered Jesus' life to be the principal area of focus and therefore played down his Jewishness, Barth and others recognized his Jewishness and therefore played down the relevance of his life, arguing that it is in his death that his significance lies. Hence, the argument that the "quest" should come to an end.[117] This approach was challenged in what became a famous lecture by Ernst Käsemann, in October of 1953. Käsemann, then a professor in Göttingen and subsequently in Tübingen, argued that, though it is

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[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

true that a "life of Jesus" cannot be written, one must be careful not to divorce Christian faith altogether from its historical roots."[118] In other words, while it may be true that the significance of Jesus lies in his death, we cannot understand his death without understanding his life. As a result, a "New Quest" was launched. This last point is particularly relevant to the present study. While this chapter will focus on the life and death of Jesus, it is of the utmost importance that we remember that Jesus lived and died as a Jew. The events of our topic, "The Departure of the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah from the House of Israel," could not, and did not take place before his death. Yet just as the Christian faith cannot be "divorced altogether from its historical roots," i.e., the historical Jesus, so that "departure" cannot be separated from its historical roots. It is the work and methodology of the authors of this "New Quest" and a spinoff thereof, the "Third Quest," upon which we will most frequently rely.

While we shall soon explore some of the key disagreements among contemporary Jesus scholars, let us begin by considering some of the broad areas of scholarly consensus. None of the many books cited in the bibliography for this paper questioned the existence of a historical individual known originally by his Hebrew name *Yehoshua*, probably shortened to *Yeshua* or even *Yeshu*. The name, Joshua in English, was hardly unusual in first century Palestine. Nor does there seem to be any dispute about the approximate time of his birth, generally fixed by scholars to precede the death of Herod, somewhere between 1 and 4 BCE.

Although the Gospels of Matthew and Luke provide us with somewhat differing genealogies, both are clearly midrashic. The same may or may not be true of the choice of Bethlehem as the place of his birth in order to fulfill the prophecy of Micah 5:2. The fact that Jesus lived and taught in Galilee, and particularly in Nazareth is not disputed. (Mk 14:67, 70). Similarly, the fact that he was crucified some thirty years after his birth by Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem is not subject to dispute, in sharp contrast, of course, to the circumstances surrounding that execution. It is with that subject which we will conclude this

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[118] Ibid.

chapter; we begin with the academic controversies surrounding his teachings and his actions.

E. J. Sanders is generally recognized as the leading proponent of the portrait of Jesus as the leader of an apocalyptic eschatological movement. Other historians in this camp include: Martin Cohen, Ellis Rivkin, Geza Vermes, Alan Segal, and Solomon Zeitlin. Earlier works, such as those of Norman Perrin, argued that "the gospel of Mark presents 'an apocalyptic drama' in three acts, involving the work of John the Baptist, the work of Jesus, and finally the mission of the disciples into the world."[119] Indeed, according to Marcus Borg from the period of the Second Quest until the early 1980's, this was the consensus view, a view which Borg and Crossan reject and which Borg claims no longer commands a majority position, at least among the scholars he polled. Before considering the views of this "rejectionist" camp, let us consider the evidence offered by those who favor the apocalyptic portrayal.

Clearly the following words of Jesus from Mark 13:24-27, which not surprisingly the Jesus Seminar considers inauthentic[120] would affirm the apocalyptic tradition:

> 24 "But after the suffering of those days, 'The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, 25 the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of heaven will be shaken loose.' 26 Then people will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. 27 He will send out his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven."

See also Mt. 17:2,6-7; 24:3, 24-27, 37; Luke 12:40; 17:24,26.

Beyond the sweeping descriptions such as that quoted above, two phrases that occur repeatedly in the Synoptics are considered by many to be

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[119] Adela Yabro Collins, "Apocalypticism," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, 1997, 1992) citing Perrin and Duling (1982), 238.

[120] Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and The Jesus Seminar, *The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York, 1993), p. 112.

apocalyptic in intent. They are the references to the coming of the "Kingdom of God," and the "Son of Man." As Perrin indicates, the teaching of the coming of the Kingdom did not begin with Jesus, but rather with John the Baptist. (Mt. 3:2) Also, as Martin Cohen observes, "Jesus' beginnings as a confirmand of John through Baptism support his placement on the apocalyptic side of the Pharisaic spectrum."[121] Both Cohen's and Solomon Zeitlin's placement of Jesus at the apocalyptic end of the Pharisaic spectrum is, of course, a crucial observation on a number of grounds. First, it calls our attention to the fact that Jesus was hardly the only person still preaching the apocalypse after the death of John the Baptist. It will be equally important to keep this in mind, when we consider the so-called controversies between Jesus and the Pharisees. Also worth noting, as Ellis Rivkin does,[122] is the fact that John, who preached the coming of the kingdom and drew large crowds, was also summarily executed by those wielding Roman power. The notion that Jesus preached the "coming of the kingdom" is surely beyond doubt, as there are close to fifty references thereto in the synoptics alone. Although there have been volumes written on the meaning of this phrase, few would argue that it did not refer to a cataclysmic change which would result in God's direct governance of the world.

The references to the coming of the "Son of Man" are also cited by those who portray Jesus as an apocalyptic. As noted in Chapter Two, beyond the obvious connection of the references to "the Son of Man" in Daniel 7:13 (widely agreed to be an apocalyptic work), Solomon Zeitlin traces the development of the "Son of Man" through the apocryphal writings of the group he labels Apocalyptic-Pharisees. Arguing that the references to the "Son of Man" are a later addition to the Gospels by "the Church," Borg and Crossan reject the apocalyptic conclusion. Indeed, the Jesus Seminar would appear to generally reject the idea that Jesus ever referred to himself using that phrase.[123] Using the same

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[121] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, p. 26.

[122] Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus*, p. 15.

[123] Funk, *The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus.*

argument they reject the Marcan perspective of the imminence of the Kingdom of God (9:1).[124] Segal, on the other hand, argues that the most apocalyptic statements about the Son of Man "satisfy the criterion of dissimilarity," citing Mk 8:38; Luke 12:8-9; and Mt10: 23, 16:28; 19:28.[125]

In his socio-political analysis, Segal observes that there are "important analogies between apocalyptic movements and political revolutions"[126]—an observation that would have been shared by Pharisees, Sadducees, and Romans. What is clear is that if the Kingdom of God were about to arrive, the message to the crowd would have been that the dominion of Rome was about to end. Again, this is not a message that would have pleased the Romans or endeared Jesus to those on the Pharisaic and Sadducean spectrum who wished to keep the peace. While what was being preached may have been intended to encourage moral behavior and diffuse the sufferings of the downtrodden, it would inevitably be seen by those in power as a revolutionary threat to their existence.

The idea that Jesus' message also had economic overtones would seem clear from at least two of the sayings: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mt 19:24; Mk 10:25) (receiving the Seminar's second highest rating for authenticity)[127]; (Luke 18:25), and "But many that are first will be last, and the last first" (Mk 10:31; Mt 20:16) (also receiving the second highest rating)[128]. See also Luke 6.24 and Mt 6:25-32. These messages would not necessarily have been particularly disturbing to the Hillelite end of the Pharisaic spectrum. Although they may have been more offensive to conservative Shammites, as well as to the priestly

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[124] Borg, *Jesus In Contemporary Scholarship*, p. 8.

[125] Alan F.Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 78-79.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Funk, *The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, p. 222.

[128] Ibid., p. 224.

aristocracy among the Sadducees, they would not have been as highly problematic as the "Kingdom of God" statements. Still, when coupled with the crowds' approving cheers, such rhetoric would not have been likely to earn Jesus many friends, among those who strove to maintain the status quo.

Yet, as remains true today, those who favor the poor often find allies among the rich, as in the case of wealthy supporters of the Democratic Party. So we find among Jesus' followers and disciples individuals situated at various places on the economic spectrum. In Mt 11:28 Jesus calls upon those "that labor and are heavy laden." In Mk 10:46, the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, joins Jesus' following, and in Luke 5.1ff, it is the fisherman of Galilee that become his disciples. But then there were also the well-to-do, including "Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance," (Luke 8:3), "Joseph of Arimathaea, an honorable counselor," (Mk 15:43), and Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, (Luke 9:1ff, 16:9). See also Mk 3:6, 12:13, and Acts 13.1.

Of course it was not just Jesus' message that attracted a following and the troublesome crowds. While many of us would look skeptically at the claims of miracles, particularly those of walking on water or multiplying loaves and fish, the reality of "cures" and "healings" may well be far closer to reality. As Morton Smith explains,

> Jesus' 'exorcisms' and 'cures' are now commonly thought to have resulted from the sudden cessation of hysterical symptoms and cognate psychological disorders. Almost nobody thinks the preserved stories are accurate in all details, but few scholars would deny that at least some of them probably derive from reports of 'cures' that actually occurred in Jesus' presence and were understood by the patients, the observers, and Jesus himself, as miracles performed by him.[129]

Smith further posits that the miracle stories (at least in the form of cures) are crucial to the belief by his followers that Jesus was the Messiah, Son of

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[129] Morton Smith, *Jesus The Magician* (London, 1978), p. 8.

God.[130] Their centrality may also be argued from the fact that all of the Gospels contain them. See for example, Mt. 4:23, 9:35, 12:22, 21:14 Luke 4:16-30, 7:16, 9:43; John1:48; 1:50,2.11; 2:23; 3:2. Indeed, in John's Gospel, the miracles are used to resolve a dispute between the followers of Jesus and those of John the Baptist as to the identity of the real Messiah (John 10:41). See also Mark 1:2-4, 7-8; Matthew 3:2, 11-12; Luke 3:4-6, 15-18. While the cures undoubtedly led to the crowds in of themselves, unlike proclamations of the coming of the end of the world and God's direct governance, they would hardly have aroused the opposition of leading Pharisees, Sadducees, or Romans. Let us turn then to some of the other alleged causes for at least the Pharisaic and Sadducean opposition.

E. J. Sanders notes "an increasing willingness on the part of Christian scholars to see Jesus as deliberately opposing the authority of the law"[131] (Torah for our purposes). He contrasts this to the fact that Jewish scholars have rejected this premise with "remarkable consistency."[132] Sanders would also appear to tacitly acknowledge that such Christian scholars are driven to do so out of their need to find a connecting thread between Jesus' teachings, his execution, and the development of Christianity.[133] As we shall see shortly, Sanders' own demonstration that the ostensible disputes about the Law were well within the bounds of Pharisaic discourse would seem to belie such a conclusion. Martin Cohen would probably put this far more forcefully, arguing that a denial of the authority of Torah would simply have eliminated any possibility of a serious following for Jesus.

Sanders also argues that the violations relating to the washing of hands, failing to fast on designated occasions, the plucking of grain and healing on the Sabbath are not deliberate violations of the oral and written Torah, but are symbolic

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[130] Ibid., p. 14.

[131] Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 51.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid., pp. 55-58.

demonstrations (perhaps similar to whatever took place at the Temple) designed to demonstrate the imminence of the apocalypse.[134] Sanders offers a particularly cogent argument for the rejection of the idea that Jesus opposed the Torah commandments concerning the Sabbath. First of all, he questions the entire authenticity of debates about the fine points of Sabbath observance. Yet, if one accepts their authenticity, he argues, then the very details of the debate would argue for a general acceptance of the law. Nor does he find any proof for rejection of the Torah by Jesus in the early history of Christianity.[135] Here he points to the fact that the apostles in Jerusalem were unaware of the Torah's abrogation.[136] Sanders concludes his argument with one that is similar to Martin Cohen's view that a leader could not deny the authority of the Torah constitution and expect to have any kind of following. In Sanders' words, "covenantal nominism was the common denominator" underlying all forms of Judaism.[137]

A word also needs to be said about the issue of hand washing. Borg, relying on the work of Jacob Neusner, sees this issue as crucial to Jesus' problems with the Pharisees.[138] Again relying on Neusner, he argues that hand washing was essential to purity, and that purity equaled holiness, which, Borg argues, is the essential rule used by the Pharisees to interpret Torah. Jesus, on the other hand, advocated an essential rule of compassion, hence the conflict.[139] Once again Sanders does an excellent job in rejecting both Neusner's hypothesis and Borg's corollary. Essentially, he argues that Neusner has equated the Pharisees with a smaller group that may have had a place on the Pharisaic spectrum, but for which there is no evidence that they constituted the

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[134] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths,* p. 26.

[135] Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 336.

[136] Ibid., p. 56.

[137] Ibid., p. 336.

[138] Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict Holiness and Politics in The Teachings of Jesus* Harrisburg, 1998), p. 2.

[139] Ibid., p. 8.

mainstream. That group would have been the *haberim*. The failure of others to live by the standards of the *haberim* hardly made them sinners.[140] Finally, relying on Josephus, Sanders argues that the issues of purity would have been far more likely to be a great significance to the Essenes than to the Pharisees.[141] Interestingly, the Jesus Seminar gives the hand washing sayings their lowest or second lowest level of authenticity.[142]

It may be that in the Sermon on the Mount that we find the item of greatest disagreement between Jesus and the Pharisees. This would not, however, have been any challenge to the "doctrine of the two realms" mentioned earlier. Here it is Borg who makes an excellent case that the commands to "love your enemy," "to go the second mile," and "to give up not just your shirt but your coat as well" (Mt. 5:41-44) can all be read as references to behavior toward the Romans.[143] Rather, the controversial issue, at least with respect to the more conservative elements of the Pharisaic spectrum, would have been Jesus' prohibition on divorce. Martin Cohen has argued that this prohibition was aimed as an aid to Jesus' lower economic class followers.[144] Certainly it could also be that this position, like Jesus' other "proletarian" economic messages, would also resonate well with sympathetic members of the upper social/economic classes. Interestingly, the Jesus Seminar assigns the divorce verses (Mt 5: 31-32) their lowest level of authenticity.[145] Sanders, on the other hand, vouches for its authenticity and sees it as further evidence of Jesus' apocalyptic views.[146]

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[140] Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp.185-188.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Funk, *The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, pp. 202-203.

[143] Borg, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, pp. 143-144.

[144] Class notes February 20, 2001.

[145] Funk, *The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, pp. 142-143.

[146] Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 230.

There is one additional area that Sanders believes would have been an area of real conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, relating to the claim of how sinners would be admitted to the Kingdom of God:

> Jesus apparently did not require them to make restitution and to indicate their repentance by offering sacrifice. If he did not do so, he was probably seen as having challenged the adequacy of the Mosaic covenant, not because there was some part which he explicitly opposed, but because he thought that its requirements could be waived for those who accepted him.[147]

Rivkin, takes a similar view.[148] While such a position would seem to undermine the mitzvah system, and thereby Pharisaic authority, it hardly seems to rise to the level of a major dispute. Jesus would have needed to be cautious about undermining a *miranda* as significant as that of sacrifice. It is unlikely that he would have openly taken a position on this issue that was not "politically correct."

Morton Smith adds some important observations to our discussion of Jesus' relations with the Pharisees. Concerning the later dating of the polemical statements which he argues were added in the 70's, 80's and 90's of the first century, the last years in which he contends the synoptic Gospels were being edited, he writes:[149]

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[147] Ibid., p. 271.

[148] Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus*, p. 58.

[149] Smith, *Jesus The Magician*, p. 29.

> Of the eleven references to Pharisees in Mark, it seems likely that only those in 2:24; 3:6; 8:15; and 12:13 came from his sources. The rest were probably added by Mark himself or his editors, and therefore date from about 75 or later. The addition of these references, and their hostility, shows a beginning of the polemic concern further developed by Matthew and Luke. It may be evidence that Mark should be dated somewhat later than 75, if this polemic is to be seen as a reaction to the increasing influence of the Pharisees and their followers in Jaminia.[150]

Growing hostility to the Pharisees is further evidenced by the additional hostile references to them found in Matthew and Luke (Mt. 9:34; 12:24; 15:12; 16:11f; 19:3; 21:45; 22:34;Lk. 5:17,21; 7:39). Smith argues that "It is noteworthy that neither Mark nor Luke attributes to the Pharisees any role in the passion story."[151] He additionally suggests that "the synoptics picture of a Galilee swarming with Pharisees is a further anachronism. John at least avoided this, his Pharisees all appear in Jerusalem, and Jesus goes to Galilee to get out of their reach." In concluding his argument for the late nature of the conflict between Christians (as opposed to Jesus) and the Pharisees, Smith convincingly writes:

> It appears that some Pharisees may have had some differences with Jesus, but the serious conflict between Christians and Pharisees grew up in Jerusalem after Jesus' death, soon became acute, when Paul and (probably) other Pharisees were active in persecuting the new sect, reached a crisis in 41-44 when the Pharisees had the support of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12), and subsided after the flight of Peter, the death of Herod, and the accession of James, Jesus' brother, to leadership of the church. When Paul visited Jerusalem in the late 50's he found that the church under James was on excellent terms with its Pharisaic neighbors, from whom there were many converts (Acts 21.20); when he was tried there, the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin defended him (Acts 23.9); later, about 62, when James was executed by a Sadducean High Priest, the Pharisees seem to have protested the execution and secured the High Priest's deposition.[152]

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[150] Ibid, p. 155.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Ibid, p. 29. Despite his well conceived argument, Smith nonetheless anachronistically refers to a dispute between "Christians" and "Pharisees," at

Smith's arguments, however, go to Jesus' teachings and healing, and not to the issues of crowds and disturbances. With that in mind, we turn our attention to an incident which allegedly took place at the Temple involving the moneychangers—an incident which, in its specifics at least, is of dubious reliability. The idea that Jesus would have said, "I will destroy this Temple" (Mark 14:58;Mark 15:29-30) is almost unanimously rejected by commentators.[153] On the other hand, that some disturbance took place at the Temple seems likely.[154] Thus, it would appear that the action, whatever it was, was not substantial enough to even interfere with the daily routine; for if it had, Jesus would surely have been arrested on the spot.[155] It has also been argued that there is no logic to claiming that Jesus took issue with the changing of money itself, as it was an integral part of the sacrificial system. There is absolutely no evidence that Jesus objected to sacrifice. Indeed, if he had, he would have eliminated himself from any place of leadership among the people. Rather, it would seem that the best reading of *some incident at or near the Temple* is the one offered by Sanders. It would have been a symbolic action, indicating the rapid approach of a new age.[156]

The assumption that the disruption caused by this incident had to be relatively minor due to the fact that Jesus was not arrested on the spot does not mean that it went unnoticed. Another individual might have been considered to be merely a nuisance and received a flogging. But an individual who collected large unruly crowds, who preached the coming of the Kingdom of God, and whose followers at least may have proclaimed him the King of the Jews, was another story. Such an individual had to be turned over to the Roman authorities. Before considering the nature of the Sanhedrin responsible for such an act, let us briefly examine the issue of Jesus' being proclaimed King of the Jews.

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at a time when the former term did not exist, and when the latter should at least have been modified by the word "centrist."

[153] Borg, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, p. 192.

[154] Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 61.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid., p.76.

Clearly the Gospels see Jesus being crucified bearing that title. John 6:15 tells us that his followers in the Galilee wished to crown him as such. Similarly Mk 11: 9-10; Lk 19:38; and John 12:13 have him being hailed King of Israel on his entry to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover festival. Sanders argues, and correctly so, that the texts show Jesus reluctant to claim this title for himself. Rather, the claim is made by inference, and Sanders believes that the inference is a strong one.[157] Assuming the veracity of his crucifixion as "King of the Jews" would certainly lead one to conclude that others (Pharisees, Sadducees, and Romans) believed that he had made such a claim.[158] Surely few would deny that convincing your followers that you were about to become their king, and gathering large crowds in the process of doing so, was not only a political act, but also among the most provocative ones conceivable. We need not rely upon the veracity of the story of his entering Jerusalem on an ass, to reach this conclusion. The preaching of the Kingdom, his own role in it, and the circumstances of his death would appear to be adequate evidence.

As we will see in Chapter Eight, the development of the narrative concerning the role of "the Jews," in general, and the Sanhedrin, in particular, in the crucifixion of Jesus was a contributing factor to what would establish Christianity as a faith separate from and hostile to Judaism. Before considering the historical reconstructions of the Sanhedrin's role, it is worth quoting the observations of two prominent Christian scholars concerning the Gospels' treatment of this subject. Dominic Crossan writes, "It is impossible, in my mind, to overestimate the creativity of Mark, but his twin trials (by the Sanhedrin and by Pilate) must be emphasized for what they are, namely consummate theological fictions."[159] Morton Smith writes, "The accounts of interrogations and trials—by night before the Sanhedrin, and before the high priests Annas and perhaps

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[157] Ibid., p. 321.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Crossan, The *Historical Jesus*, p. 390.

Kaiaphas, by day before the Sanhedrin, Pilate (repeatedly), and Herod—are unscrupulous dramatizations of uncertain events."[160]

Martin Cohen, Ellis Rivkin, and Solomon Zeitlin all present similar reconstructions of the nature and role of the Sanhedrin in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. There are, however, important differences in their analyses. All three trace the origins of the Sanhedrin to the Hasmonean revolt and the struggles for power between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. While there is some disagreement between Zeitlin and Cohen as to terminological differences between the Sanhedrin and the *Bet-Din ha-Gadol*, there is no disagreement as to division of functions between two institutions, i.e., one having religious responsibility and the other political. This disagreement in terminology may well be reflected in the Gospel's use of the word "Sanhedrin." The Mishna Sanhedrin itself may also have contributed to this disagreement and confusion through a variety of usages. For our purposes, we will rely upon Cohen's terminology where the courts of the religious realm are divided into "local *batei-din* of three judges, regional *batei-din* of twenty-three and a *Bet-Din ha*-Gadol, the Supreme or Great Bet-Din of seventy to seventy-two members, which also served as the supreme legislature."[161] References to the Sanhedrin will be limited to the political body upon whose functions there is total agreement.

Zeitlin calls our attention to Mishna Sanhedrin 1:1 and 4:1 concerning the practices of the court system. From 1:1 and Tosefta Hagigah 2:9, we learn that the *Bet-Din ha-Gadol* met in the Hall of Hewn Stone in the Temple, giving it a fixed place of meeting. In Sanhedrin 4:1 we are told:

> Monetary suits are judged during the day and are completed during the night; capital cases are judged during the day and completed during the day. Monetary suits are completed on the same day, whether for non-liability or for liability; capital cases are completed on the same day for acquittal, and on the following day for conviction. Therefore they do not judge, neither on the eve of a Shabbat nor on the eve of a Festival.

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[160] Smith, *Jesus The Magician*, p. 38.

[161] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, p. 16.

As we shall see, this, of course, would contradict the Gospel accounts; yet, while this may be relevant to the historicity of the Gospel accounts of the trial of Jesus before the "Sanhedrin," we need to keep in mind that the Mishna was completed at least 150 years after the death of Jesus and may accurately reflect the practices at the time of his death or be a subtle attempt to refute the Gospel account.

According to the first three Gospels Jesus was crucified on the first day of Passover (Mark 14.12; Matt. 26.2; Luke 22.7), with the trial having taken place the evening before. In John the crucifixion takes place on the eve of Passover (John 13.1,18,28; 19.31). For Mark, Matthew and Luke Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples was "the Paschal Meal." According to John, however, Jesus was arrested on the night of the 13th of Nisan, the night before the first evening of Passover, and was crucified on the 14th of Nisan, *paresque* the eve of Passover, when 'the Paschal Lamb' was slaughtered. Zeitlin explains the important theological differences in this difference of dates.

> The 'Synoptic Gospels,' on the one hand, conceived of Jesus *as the Saviour* personifying the idea of salvation in the Passover festival. They emphasized the fact that he suffered death for the sins of the people, hence fulfilling, in his death and resurrection the words of the prophets of Israel. Just as the Israelites were saved from the slavery of Egypt on the 15th day of Nisan, the first day of Passover, smearing the blood of 'the Paschal Lamb' on their doors as a symbol of unity between God and Israel, so, according to the Gospels, the blood of Jesus served as a symbol of unity between God and the followers of Jesus.[162]

On the other hand, the fourth Gospel presented the theological view of Jesus *as the Redeemer,* personifying the 'Paschal Lamb.' Just as the Paschal Lamb was sacrificed on the eve of Passover, so they conceived Jesus the Messiah to have been crucified on the eve of the Passover to redeem the world from Original Sin. See John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world;" and 19:33, "When they came to Jesus, and saw that he was

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[162] S. Zeitlin, *Who Crucified Jesus*?, p.105.

dead already, they broke not his legs," referring to Exodus 12:46 that requires that the bones of the Paschal lamb not be broken.[163]

Returning to the nature of the Sanhedrin (now the term employed by Cohen and Rivkin as well as Zeitlin) it is broadly accepted as a political body. As Cohen explains, "The Sanhedrin was an ad hoc institution composed of upper class Jewish leadership, Sadducean as well as Pharisaic, and chaired by the High Priest. Its function was to deal with matters affecting Roman-Jewish relations, especially lese majesty (acts of treason)."[164] Here Luke and John, as fictitious as their dialogues, are probably closer to historical reality than are Mathew and Mark. The latter claim that the charge against Jesus was blasphemy (Mk 14:64 and Mt 26:65). Luke, on the other hand, records the following charge against Jesus as being brought by "the multitude" before Pilate: "We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King." To which Pilate responds, "Are you King of the Jews?" (Luke 23:2-3). John (18:23) has Pilate asking the same question, after ostensibly trying to give the responsibility for dealing with Jesus back to the Jews. The second part, no doubt, is a polemical addition.

As noted earlier, Crossan also believes that the events surrounding the crucifixion were "theological fictions." He believes that "Jesus' closest followers knew nothing more about the passion than the fact of the crucifixion, that they had fled and later had no available witnesses for its details. They were concerned with far more serious matters, such as whether death had negated all that Jesus had done, all that they had accepted and believed."[165] Specifically concerning Pilate's offer to free Jesus, Crossan adds:

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[163] Ibid., p. 106.

[164] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths,* p. 16.

[165] Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 375.

> I do not believe for a second that (the Barabbas incident, Mk, 15.6-15) actually happened, that there was ever or ever could be any such open and preset Passover amnesty, or that Pilate deviated on this occasion from his normal crowd-control tactics. When Philo is discussing what decent governors do for crucified criminals on festive occasions he can mention only two possibilities—postponing but not abrogating sentences or allowing familial burial to the crucified.[166]

A final point upon which I found unanimous agreement among all the sources consulted is the following: crucifixion was not a Jewish method of execution, but was solely employed by the Romans. Most scholars also agreed that the Jews had no right to exercise capital punishment at this time. We will return to the polemical nature of the Gospel treatments of this subject in Chapter Eight.

We can conclude this chapter with the widely accepted view that Jesus was put to death for political reasons, and yet it is also here that Zeitlin's position departs sharply from the others. All three would agree that a Jewish power structure concerned with maintaining the status quo was responsible for turning Jesus over to Pilate. Rivkin, in particular, emphasizes the danger to the populace in general generated, by the large crowds and cites adequate evidence from Josephus of prior Roman conduct, both in relation to crowds and executions. Jesus' Galilean background and following as well with the "Kingdom of God" message, which he preached typologically, tied him to John the Baptist, and easily could have led the Romans to see him in the same light as Josephus describes the Fourth Philosophy, e.g., robbers, brigands, troublemakers and murderers. It was the time of the Passover Festival. Huge crowds of pilgrims, including followers of Jesus from the Galilee, were converging on Jerusalem. There may or may not have been a disturbance in the Temple, a place where Jewish and Roman police wished to make sure there was no trouble. The result

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[166] Ibid., p. 390.

was an apocalyptic-crowd- gathering charismatic from Galilee who was turned over to the Romans and crucified by them.

Where Zeitlin takes issue with Rivkin and Cohen is in his characterization of the members of the Sanhedrin responsible for this action. To Zeitlin, these people were "quislings." The term was derived from the name of Major Vidkun Quisling, head of the Nazi party in Norway and the country's puppet government during World War II. Major Quisling was executed for treason in 1945. While it is true that the High Priest may have been a puppet of the Romans, I do not believe that this can be said of the entire political hct. Rather, as explained by Martin Cohen's principles, these people sought the preservation of a status quo that, in fact, protected the majority. I find the "quisling" label inappropriate.

The Gospels, of course, conclude not with the death and crucifixion of Jesus, but rather with his resurrection and the events that follow. The matter of the resurrection itself is not one that can be historically assessed. What happened as a result of the belief that it occurred is both indisputable and more than essential to our story. Integral to the result of that belief is the work of Paul of Tarsus. It is that work which we will begin to address in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four

The Resurrected Messiah: The Apostle Paul and the Inevitability of Separation

Even if we did think of Christ from a human point of view, we don't think of him that way any more. 2 Cor. 5:18

But this religion, born in Palestine, and confined by its founder wish ground, in only a few years after his death was severed from that connection. Paul put it in competition with the Israelitish religion: "Christ is the end of the law."[167]

The only *question comes to be how the apostle Paul appears in his Epistles to be so indifferent to the historical facts of the life of Jesus.*[168]

The contrast in the quality and quantity of primary source material that we have from and concerning the Apostle Paul with the comparable material concerning Jesus of Nazareth is dramatically striking to say the least. Although, as we shall soon see, the letters of Paul present all of the evidentiary problems set forth by Collingwood and McCullagh[169] they nevertheless represent our greatest primary historical resource for understanding the history of Christianity. Indeed, this last statement is applicable, not just to the origins of Christianity and its separation from Judaism, but in many respects to all of Christian history. For as Meeks has explained, "The history and development of Christianity dates of course from the departure of Jesus from the world. But in Paul this history has a new beginning."[170]

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[167] Wayne A. Meeks, ed., *The Writings of St. Paul* (London, 1990), p. 280, quoting Adolf Von Harnack, "The Founder of Christian Civilization" (1900), from *What is Christianity*, tr. by Thomas Bailey Saunders, Torchbook edition, pp.173-189.

[168] Ibid., p. 280.

[169] See Chapter One, pp.1-3.

[170] Meeks, *The Writings of St. Paul*, p. 278.

While we have just devoted a single chapter to the "historical" Jesus, the remaining five chapters of this thesis will be dominated by the figure and writings of Paul. In this chapter, we will explore his life and his teachings. In Chapter Six, we will focus on the formation of Christian group identity and the struggle for power within the early Church in which the Paulinians will ultimately prevail. Finally, in Chapter Eight, as we focus on The Departure of the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah from the House of Israel, we will see the guiding hand of one Paul of Tarsus. Even as we consider the role played by the New Testament itself in that departure, we will be dealing with source that is tonally Paulinian. Yet lest it appear that this material has led to a singular understanding of the man and his theology, Meeks once again reminds us of what Collingwood and McCullagh had forewarned:

> The history of European and American thought is crowded with a discouraging variety of interpretations of Paul. The variety is in fact so great and of such polar tendencies that one may reasonably doubt whether an accurate and consistent judgment of the apostle is possible.[171]

Fortunately the standard that historians face is not one of "beyond a reasonable doubt," and so we will endeavor to find the most accurate and consistent portrait of Paul that we can from the available evidence. However, as was true with our search for the historical Jesus, that perception proved to be more important than "reality," so it will also be true with the impact of Paul upon history. To take just one example into which we will delve more deeply below, scholars may continue to debate the question of whether or not Paul intentionally abandoned the Torah. Yet if that was the appearance that he gave to Jews of the time, and that conception helped to form a separate Christian identity, Paul's intentions become of secondary importance to us.

The NT evidence concerning Paul can be relatively easily divided into three parts. There are the epistles, widely recognized as genuine, those that are considered the works of later authors, and the Book of Acts, generally agreed to be

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[171] Ibid., p 437.

a biographical work by the same author(s) as the Gospel of Luke. With reference to the epistles, there is of course a range of scholarly opinions as to which are authentic and which are Paulinian as opposed to Pauline. There would appear to be no doubt as to the authenticity of *Romans*, I & II Corinthians and Galatians. Many scholars would add to that list Philippians, I Thessalonians and Philemon, with a smaller group arguing for *Colossians and II Thessalonians*[172] as well. There also appears to be a scholarly consensus to rely first on the epistles and secondarily upon Acts, and where there is an inconsistency, to favor the epistles. Where Acts provides information unavailable elsewhere, its reliability will have to be viewed in the light of the bias of Luke.

Despite their canonical placement after the four Gospels and the Book of Acts, Paul's letters represent the earliest of all the preserved Christian writings. Of these letters, I Thessalonians is widely accepted as the oldest. Sanders dates it to c.51 based upon an inscription found at Delphi relating to the proconsulship of Gallio in Corinth before whom Paul was brought according to Acts 18:12 ff.[173] Meeks explains what it is that makes the letters so useful for social-historical inquiry:

> Each responds to some specific issue in the life of one of the local churches or in the missionary strategy of the leaders; and they frequently quote traditional material, which provides glimpses of rituals, rules, admonitions, and formulated beliefs common to the Pauline communities.[174]

Meeks also comments frequently upon the problems of reliability concerning the Book of Acts.

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[172] E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis, 1977), p. 431.

[173] Meeks, *The Writings*, p. 3.

[174] Wayne A. Meeks , *The First Urban Christians, The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (Yale, 1984), p. 7.

> But is the detailed account of Paul's career in Acts factually reliable? Not by far, in the opinion of some scholars, beginning with F.C. Baur in the last century. Significant aspects of the portrait, they argue, derive not from historical reminiscence, but from conventions of Hellenistic literary style and, more important, from the author's rather than Paul's, theological perspective.[175]

Having taken note of the strengths and weaknesses of our sources, we begin with a biographical sketch of Paul.

Although Paul's letters never explicitly state where or when he was born, in a monologue in Acts 22, Luke has Paul tell the people that he was born in Tarsus in Cilicia, modern day Turkey. Based upon information provided in Acts, which can be correlated with datable events, scholars generally believe that Paul was born between 5 and 10 CE. In all likelihood, Luke knew that Paul had died in Rome in the early 60's, possibly as a martyr (Acts 20:22-24; 21:11, 13), yet Acts makes no reference to his death. Paul tells us in Romans 11:1 that he is "an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin." Paul's description of his ancestry was unusual in that the term Israelite was not common in his day, and that the tribe of Benjamin had vanished hundreds of years before Paul was born. Whether this ancestry was family tradition or a gloss added to establish Paul's bona fides, we do not know. See also 11 Cor 11:22.

Paul, whose Jewish name, according to Acts, was Saul, was thus a diaspora Jew. This in itself enables us to place him in the Jewish political mainstream, for by this time there were far more Jews living outside of Judea than there were within it. Whether or not Paul was a Roman citizen, as claimed by Acts 16:37f and 22:25ff, cannot be ascertained. The fact that Tarsus was an important trade center and the capital of Cilicia certainly allows the possibility.

Based upon the skill with which he wrote in Greek, Paul would appear to have received an excellent Roman education, implying at least a middle class background. The notion that he traveled extensively and may have worked as a

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[175] Meeks, *The Writings*, p. 150.

tent maker or leather tanner (Acts 18:3) is not inconsistent with such a premise. He also received an excellent Jewish education as demonstrated by his ability to quote scripture. We know this directly from his scriptural citations. Paul himself tells us that he was a Pharisee and a Hebrew (Phil 3:5; II Cor 11:22), the greater implications of which we will discuss below, but in relation to his education and background, this is further indication of his having had a significant Jewish education. Luke's claim that Paul was also the son of Pharisees (Acts 23:6) is rejected by many scholars[176] as is his statement that he studied specifically under Gamaliel[177]. On the other hand, the notion that he went from Tarsus to Jerusalem to study Torah is credible. Paul tells us himself that he "advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so zealous was I for the traditions of my people" (*Gal* 1:14). Paul would appear to qualify as urban *hct*, with his letters directed in writing to an equivalent urban *hct* and through preaching to the urban *lct*.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Paul's description of himself as a Pharisee still leaves us a wide spectrum in which we need to place him. Nonetheless, there are basic elements of the "party platform" to which he must have ascribed. First and foremost among these would have been a belief in Resurrection, the Oral Law, and the coming of a Messiah. Was Paul among the apocalyptic Pharisees? It is somewhat difficult to assess whether he would have been a member of this sub group prior to his experience on the way to Damascus – an experience which led him to believe that Jesus had been resurrected and was the Messiah. To the extent that we accept the statements that he had initially set out to persecute those who were followers of the Resurrected Messiah (Galatians 1:13ff), it is difficult to believe that he would have been a member of the apocalyptic sect. While the details of this persecution, as laid out in *Acts* 7-9,

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[176] Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *Paul A Critical Life* (Oxford, 1996), p. 58.

[177] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, ABRL (New York, 1997), pp. 425-426.

are rejected by many scholars,[178] it does seem possible that the same political concerns for which the power structure opposed the apocalyptics during the life of Jesus there might have been opposition to those who continued to preach his brand of apocalypticism. There was a fear of the political instability it could bring, and had brought, and the potential for further repercussions. Paul himself rarely mentions the teachings of Jesus, indeed we have seen that the living Jesus was of no consequence to Paul. Moreover, since the theological differences of The Way with other Pharisees were, to a great extent, created by Paul, it is difficult to believe that Paul's ostensible persecutions were derived from theological motives.

There are a variety of accounts of the experience which lead to Paul accepting that Jesus had been resurrected and was indeed the Christ, i.e., Messiah, (*Acts* 9:3-7; 22:6-9: 26:13-18; his own references *1 Cor* 9:1; 15:8). It is important to note that none of these accounts are described as a conversion. Paul never "converted to Christianity"; such a term did not exist in his day. His "theological shift" remains within "the Jewish political spectrum" in that he accepts Jesus as the "Resurrected Messiah" and joins the apocalyptics. His mission becomes to spread this word to the Gentiles. This mission, and the theological views which ultimately accompany it, place Paul in the leadership of a "party within a party, within a party": apocalyptic-pharisee; Jesus-the-Christ; Gentiles-admitted-without-circumcision.

As these characteristics begin to shape the identity and cohesion of entire communities, particularly those which never included a strong or any Judean heritage, and as another community (namely, that at Jamnia) gains power by emphasizing the very elements which Paul was de-emphasizing, the total separation of these communities became inevitable. See Martin Cohen's first, third, and fourth principles. However, we're getting ahead of ourselves; let us return to our biographical summary.

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[178] O'Connor, *Paul A Critical Life,* pp. 66-70.

After his experience with the Christ (c.36 CE),[179] Paul sets out to spread the Word. He is preaching in Damascus and is forced to flee. See Acts 9:20ff and II Cor 1:32f. Paul then goes to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26ff; Gal 1:18-20), where according to Acts, his life is threatened. After leaving Jerusalem, Paul spends time in Cilicia and Antioch prior to what scholars refer to as his first missionary journey through southern Asia Minor. As set forth in Gal 2:1, fourteen years later, Paul returns to Jerusalem, for a political confrontation with the "reputed pillars" James, Cephas-Peter, and John over his mission to the Gentiles, a subject we will consider in detail in Chapter Six. The explanation for why Paul went to Jerusalem in Acts 15:1f is different from Paul's own explanation; political analysis in this instance favors the validity of Luke's version. The same is probably true of Luke's account of the results (Acts 15:29ff). After the Jerusalem conference (c.49 CE),[180] Paul sets out again on his missionary work. It is at this time that the splintering within the parties begins to intensify.

As we shall see in Chapter Six, the social-stratum to which Paul appealed in the cities that he traveled to were not basically different from those who had been attracted to the Hillelite Pharisees, who had previously set out to win proselytes throughout the Roman Empire. How then did Paul set himself and his teaching apart from those of other Hillelite-Pharisees and in so doing antagonize them, as well as other apostles spreading the good news of the Resurrected Messiah? In order to answer this question, we need to turn to the specifics of Paul's teachings and, at the same time, keep in mind that it will not be the theological implications alone upon which we wish to focus. Of equal or greater importance to us will be the sociological implications and results of these teachings. One other cautionary note: it must be remembered that Paul was not a systematic theologian, and further, that we lack his entire thought. Similarly, as we try to draw comparisons with the Hillelite-Pharisees or proto-rabbis and eventually the rabbis, it is important to remember that these men also were not systematic in their thinking.

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[179] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* Chapter 16.

[180] Ibid.

We begin with those areas where Paul's teaching diverged most dramatically from those of his Hillelite contemporaries: first and foremost will be his conception of the Resurrected Messiah. What is crucial here is *not* that Paul came to believe that Jesus had been the Messiah and that he had been resurrected. Had this been all that Paul and his disciples believed, it would have been nothing more than a confirmation of mainstream Pharisaic teaching on resurrection. Rather, it is in the theological supersession by "the Christ" over Torah and the Mitzvot system as the key to salvation that will lead to the inevitable division. Here, it is essential that we define at least two terms, "the Christ," and "the Law".

While it is generally acknowledged that the Greek word *Christos*, Christ in English, is a translation of the Hebrew *mashi'ah*, which became Messiah in English, Paul's *Christos*, the Christ, is no longer the human figure the Pharisees had promised. Indeed prior to the assertions about Jesus, no would-be-Messiah's designation had ever survived his death.[181] Rather *Christos*, or *Cherestos*, is the Resurrected Messiah (See I Cor 15; Rom 3:23; 5:6-7; Gal 3:13), who becomes "a full revelation of God and of His (God's) will for man" and who "replaced Torah at the center of Paul's life."[182] I. W. Hurtado has calculated that of the 531 occurrences of the term *Christos* in the NT, 383 are in the Pauline corpus[183], suggesting that the term is both Paulinian and of greatest significance to Paul.

As to "the Law", Martin Cohen argues that throughout Paul's letters the translation of the word *nomos* as "law" should be replaced with the word Torah. Basing his argument in part on Gal 1:14 where Paul describes himself as a Pharisee "zealous for the traditions of my fathers," he argues that for Paul, Torah was oral and written, encompassing all of Tanakh.[184] W. D. Davies citing G. F.

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[181] Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus*, p. 155.

[182] Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*. .

[183] I.W. Hurtado, "Christ," in ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, *Dictionary of Jesus and The Gospels* (Illinois, 1992), p.107.

[184] M. Cohen, "Paul and Rabbinic Judaism", class notes, HUC-JIR, Fall 1998.

Moore's three volume work on Judaism concurs, adding that "By *Torah* Judaism meant, as Moore has written, 'all that God has made known of his nature, character and purpose and of what he would have man be and do.' It is not merely to be understood in the restricted sense of legislation."[185]

So, what was Paul's position concerning Torah? Paul was not anti-Torah. He could not have been. While his missionary work was primarily among the Gentiles, he still worked and lived within the Jewish spectrum and sought to reach and influence other Jews with his opinions. Clearly he needed the Torah for political/theological underpinnings of much of his message. Paul never renounced Judaism or Israel. To the contrary, those who accepted Christ, i.e., the Resurrected Messiah, were not the "new" Israel but the "true" Israel.

Paul's discourse on Torah in Romans 2:17-29 could well have been taken from the Prophets. He argues that simply being instructed in Torah is far from enough. Rather it is action that is required (Romans 2:13). Proclaiming the law while violating it is blasphemous. The essence of Paul's view concerning the relationship between Torah and Messiah is perhaps best defined by a combined reading of Romans 3:10-31 and Gal 3:19-26. Specifically, Romans 3:20b teaches that Torah enables us to recognize sin. But, as just noted, recognizing sin alone is insufficient. Indeed recognizing and adhering to the Torah will not bring justification, i.e., salvation, redemption; that is obtained only through grace, achievable through faith in the Resurrected Messiah, i.e., Christ Jesus (Romans 3:23-26). In Romans 5:20, Torah is credited with either increasing sin, or increasing the awareness of sin, and perhaps therefore the proclivity to sin, so that grace might be all the greater. Still Paul goes to great pains to state that he is not overthrowing the Torah, but rather upholding it (Romans 3:31). It is most important, however, to remember that these fine distinctions available to us in written and easily comparable texts would readily have been lost upon ancient Jewish ears, simply outraged at the sound bite that, "Torah increases sin!"

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[185] Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, p.149. citing G.F. Moore, *Judaism* Vol. 1, p. 263, Oxford, 1927-30.

Gal 3:19-26 may take a somewhat more polemical view, but it is really not that different. This view stated that the Torah was provided "because of transgressions" and was to serve as our guardian until the Messiah had come; hence once he came we no longer needed a guardian. The argument concerning the primacy of faith over Torah is also explicitly tied in Gal 3:6-9 to Abraham, an indication, I might note, of Paul's failure to reject Torah. Even these passages from Galatians never argue that the law is evil; rather that it is insufficient to achieve justification. See also Gal 2:16. Though more difficult on its face (I Cor 15:56), with its statement that "the power of sin is the Torah," should also be viewed in this overall context, or questioned as to its authenticity.

If Paul's teachings had simply been that following Torah was not in of itself a guaranty of salvation; but rather that God's grace was also necessary, he hardly would have created a stir. The word "grace" is derived from the Hebrew word *chesed*, lovingkindness. That the Hillelite Pharisees agreed that no one could perform every commandment of the *mitzvah* system there can be no doubt. We find much rabbinic debate over how God would judge an individual in relation to the number of *mitzvot* performed. The rabbinic emphasis, however, is on God's evenhandedness and his mercy,[186] as opposed to Paul's emphasis on grace. This is not a division of "faith vs works," for as Sanders explains, Pauline soteriology recognizes a separation of judgment by works and salvation by grace.[187] Rather, the bright line of demarcation is Paul's superseding of the *mitzvah* system with incorporation in the "body of Christ."[188] (See for example Rom 7:4, 12:5; 1 Cor 10:16.) We also want to keep in mind the fact that both systems were designed to alleviate the same sufferings.

As we discussed in Chapter Two, the ongoing social and economic dislocation in the Roman Empire throughout the first century lead people to cry out for spiritual assistance. This was particularly true in urban settings. There

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[186] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian*, p.296.

[187] Ibid., pp. 434-8; 515; 543.

[188] Ibid.

were a variety of groups and subgroups competing for people's allegiances. The common thread of the solution to the miseries of this world was that there would be a better life in a world to come. Hillelite Pharisees had spread the word that those "in Israel" who participated in the mitzvah system were assured of a place in the *olam ha ba* (the world to come). A similar place was reserved for those known as "God fearers," i.e., those who though not going through a full conversion (including circumcision) nonetheless agreed to abide by the Noahide covenant.

The mitzvah system was not the only other approach available to those disoriented people living throughout the Roman Empire. The mystery cults, which were Greek in origin though significantly Hellenized by the first century, also provided a way to assure eternal life.[189] These cults were generally based around a "dying and resurrecting deity."[190] Members of these groups went through some form of initiation rite that included a sacrificial meal in which the members of the group partook, thereby incorporating the deity within themselves and assuring "post mortal salvation".[191] This was a mystical experience.

It was with methods of salvation like these and various blends thereof, that Paul would have to compete. The Hillelite Pharisees (based on our reading back of later Rabbinical doctrine) would essentially have said that if you are born into Israel, i.e. the Jewish people, or convert into it, and follow the *mitzvot* system, you will achieve salvation. This was the meaning of "choseness." This was covental nominism. One must accept the covenant, given by grace, and live by the *mitzvot* in order to remain within it. There was, of course, a spectrum of Jewish belief concerning the covenant. At one extreme, were groups like the Essenes who took the position that one could not be born into Israel. Rather one had not only to specifically join, but to join their subgroup and adopt their specific

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[189] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, p. 19.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Ibid.

Miranda.[192] On the other hand, the Rabbis as successors to the Hillelite Pharisees only exclude three categories of people from a place in the world to come: those who deny resurrection (political opponents, i.e., Sadducees); those who deny that the law is from heaven; and heretics (political opponents, i.e., *inter alios* Christians). (Sanhedrin 10.1.)

For Paul as well, though definitely not an Essene, birth did not assure a place in Israel. Salvation required being in Christ. Jesus' atoning death (Romans 3:25; 5:9f), cleansed the individual of his sins, past and future. See also II Cor 5:14f. This cleansing was not simply from individual transgressions, but from a state of being controlled by sin. One was baptized (a Jewish *mirandum*) into Christ's death in order to be raised with him into a new life (Romans 6:3f). One was crucified with Christ in order to do away with the old sinning body and live in the new spiritual body (Romans 6:6-11). This is a mystical doctrine that appealed to both Jews and Gentiles. In addition to assuring future salvation it freed one from the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14), thereby having an immediate impact on one's present life as well. The broader issue of sin also merits our attention.

Paul's concept of sin marks a considerable departure from his proto-rabbinic contemporaries. For Paul, sin was man's innate condition.[193] Mainstream Jewish thought had always conceived of sin as relating to a specific transgression. Paul would probably have been familiar with the discussion found in Rabbinic literature of the *yetzer-ha-ra* and *yetzer-ha-tov.*[194] In this concept the inclination to commit sin is indeed part of man's nature, but it is balanced by the opposite impulse, the inclination to do good. Man is also given free choice. To some degree we find this present in Romans 7:7-25. Paul argues, depending on which translation one uses, that it is man's sinful nature or his sinful flesh which prevents him from doing good. He sees himself, and man

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[192] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian*, pp. 240, 270, 284.

[193] Samuel Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul* (New York, 1970), p. 58.

[194] Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, p. 21.

in general, as a slave to sin. He has omitted the other half of Rabbinic doctrine. Like the Rabbis, Paul felt free to pick and choose.

Paul's concept of the origins of sin is also related to that of his proto-rabbinic contemporaries. In *Romans* 1:21-27, Paul writes that since the creation God has made himself known to man, but that man, rather than glorify God or thank him, chose to worship idols. As a result, God gave men over to lust and depravity, leading to all kinds of sins (murder, envy, disobeying parents). Citing *Shab.* 105b, Davies points to the rabbinic view of idolatry as the cause of sin in the Gentile world.[195] Idolatry was considered the greatest sin, and indeed a sin that would lead to all others, in the rabbinic view.

Similarly, Paul's view of the entry of sin into all mankind through Adam, (*Romans* 5:12-14), is not without rabbinic parallel. Yet as Davies once again observes, the Rabbis would not have stopped there. They would not have allowed Adam's sin to have been causal of mankind's sinning, for to do so would again deny freewill and thereby individual responsibility.[196]

Paul has also significantly altered, indeed some would argue omitted, a concept that the Rabbis would have certainly included in any discussion of sin. This concept is man's ability to engage in repentance or *tshuvah*. Paul conceives of man as totally dominated by sin. He is unable on his own to achieve righteousness. Only through accepting the Christ, who died for mankind's sin (I Cor 15:3b), can righteousness be achieved. In Romans 6, Paul explains how by living in Christ, one's body can be dead to sin, and alive to God. The concept of Christ as sacrificial lamb bears obvious relation to proto-rabbinic Judaism. Paul was taking the accepted *miranda* of sacrifice and blood, and transferring it to Christ. Although the *credenda* of atonement remains, the communities established by Paul would soon have very different ideas of how one dealt with sin, and achieved salvation, and this would not be without consequence. The differences in the rituals which these beliefs would generate

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[195] Ibid., p. 25.

[196] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

would soon outweigh the fact that both communities shared a common goal, and as a result, such rituals would play a crucial role in their separation.

Before we consider some of the areas where Paul continued to teach the same doctrines as his Hillelite contemporaries there is one more area of conflict that needs to be addressed. This area, of course is circumcision. Paul is regularly put on the defensive with those "churches" that he had already established when the "Jewish-Christians" insist on the necessity of circumcision and compliance with Torah by Gentiles. The best evidence of this is found in *Gal* 1:6-9,11-2:21; *I Cor* 1:17; and *II Cor* 3:1-5; 10-13. Paul sees circumcision as a symbol of the Torah. It is valuable if one upholds the Torah; if not, it is useless, Romans 2:25-29. In Romans 4:7-13, circumcision is discussed in the context of salvation through faith. "For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the Law, but through the righteousness produced by faith" (Romans 4:13). Surely Paul had to have been aware of cultural significance of circumcision.

Jews had been ready to die for the right to perform this ritual at the time of the Hasmoneans when Antiochus Epiphanes prohibited it under threat of death (1 Macc. 1:48). Still there is evidence as late as Yevamot 46a of Rabbi Joshua not considering it necessary for conversion. The prevailing majority opinion was, however, that of R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanus requiring both circumcision and ritual immersion (baptism) prior to admission as a proselyte. The prohibition by Hadrian of circumcision was one of the causes of the Bar Kokhba rebellion. Paul's establishment of communities, where circumcision was no longer required contributed significantly to their inevitable separation from the Jewish communities that continued to view this ritual act as of the greatest significance.

As we will see in Chapter Six, long before the issue of circumcision became one between Jewish and Christian communities, it was a source of conflict within the Christian community itself (Acts 15; Gal 2). Meeks believes that the manner of the resolution of the dispute demonstrates that the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah had by this time become a distinct sect.

> We see that within two decades of Jesus' death the community of those who believed in his messiahship and resurrection had become a distinct sect among the Jews, not only in Jerusalem but in several places outside Palestine, including the metropolis of Antioch. Their own leaders had emerged, though their relationships were still fluid, and they settled their disputes within their own movement. Moreover, the sect had already reached beyond the Jewish community to convert, on its own, gentiles—although exactly what that meant was precisely the point in dispute.[197]

Having stressed the theological aspects of Paul's teachings that would contribute so much to the "great divide", we should also spend a moment on areas of his teachings that some would place in that category, but more rightfully belong in a list of similarities . First among these would be the universality of God. The concept of a universal God recognizable to all mankind was hardly new with Paul. It had been recorded centuries ago in the words of Deutero-Isaiah. It was also consistent with the Hillelite view of the first century.[198] Just as there were at the this time separatist parties within mainstream Judaism, among the Jewish-Christians there were those who believed that the gospel was only for Jews, and those who differed with Paul on how Gentiles were to be brought into the fold. While Paul believed that salvation would come "first for the Jew, and then for the Gentile," (Romans 1:16b; 2:10b) he also believed that God did not show favoritism (2:11). Paul's most direct statement is in Romans 3:29f that there is simply one God of Jews and Gentiles. Similarly, the belief that "God is one" is as basic to Paul as it was to all Judaism (1 Thess. 1:9; Gal. 3:20; Rom. 3:30; Eph. 4:6; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6: cf. 1 Cor. 11:12; 15:28; 2 Cor. 5:18).

As noted early on, Paul's apocalyptic views, however late he came to them, were not in of themselves outside of the Pharisaic spectrum. Clearly his belief in resurrection, as opposed to the resurrection, were also mainstream. Nonetheless, his belief in Christos directly impacts his eschatological views. The sign that the End was near was the messiah's resurrection (I Cor 15:20-23).

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[197] Meeks, The *First Urban Christians*, p. 113.

[198] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, p. 29

Christ was the "firstfruits," a scriptural reference to sacrifice. When Christ would return, believed to be imminent, the resurrection of those "in him" would begin. First, Christ would destroy all dominion and power 15:24, a position, by the way, not very likely to ingratiate Paul, or the Way with the Romans. Then Christ would destroy death (15:26). After this Christ would be made subject to God, (!) so that God may be all in all,15:28.

Paul also provides us with his vision of how the remaining resurrection will take place (I Cor 15:42-54). The living, along with those who have previously died will be raised in a spiritual body. The flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God. Precisely what the Rabbis and proto-rabbis believed on this subject is difficult to ascertain. Neil Gillman cites *Ketubot* 111b for the position of an earthly body.[199] Similarly the *Gevurot* can certainly be read to mean the earthly body. The idea that Rabbis always intended a spiritual body has also been argued. Either way, Paul's description would hardly seem to place him outside of the Jewish mainstream.

That the agreements with Paul's Hillelite contemporaries just discussed were overwhelmingly outweighed by the impact of his teachings concerning the Resurrected Messiah, is a historical judgment that cannot be denied. As we noted at the outset of this Chapter, Paul never renounced either Judaism or Israel. Yet he clearly recognized that there was now a division. Romans 11:2-24 is crucial, both to Paul's theology and our understanding of the process of separation. In 11:14, he refers to Israel as "my people", allegorically he speaks of some of the branches having been broken off of the tree, but explains in verse 23 that if they will cease in their unbelief (in the Resurrected Messiah), they will be grafted in again. Nonetheless, such an affirmation reinforces our conclusion, that beginning with Paul's conception of the Resurrected Messiah, it was clear that the House of Israel would soon be divided.

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[199] Neil Gillman, *The Death of Death* (Vermont, 1997), p. 132.

Chapter Five

Jewish Life in the Diaspora

Julius Caius, praetor of Rome, to the magistrates, senate, and people of the Parians, sendeth greetings: I permit these Jews to gather themselves together, according to the customs and laws of their forefathers, and to persist therein.[200]

The lot of Hellenistic Jewry outside Palestine was the lot of every Diaspora Jewish group down to our own time.[201]

Just as the socio-political context of first century Palestine was essential to our understanding of the historical Jesus, so we must now turn to Jewish life in the Diaspora as a prelude to our probe of the formation of Christian identity and its ultimate separation from Jewish identity. While Jerusalem will continue to play a role in this drama, and while the apostles of the Resurrected Messiah sought and gained followers there and in the Galilee, the Paulinian Christianity, which would finally come to dominate the movement, clearly gathered its most significant number of adherents in the Diaspora milieu.

Indeed, we will want to keep in mind that Paul of Tarsus was himself a product of the Jewish Diaspora. His first language was undoubtedly Greek, and his Bible was the Septuagint. Nor was he the only one of the leaders of the new movement who was shaped by a non-Judean background. Prisca and Aquila were from Rome, Barnabas from Cyprus, Apollos from Alexandria, as well as the unnamed Cypriot and Cyrenaean (modern Libya) Jews who brought the Gospel to Antioch (Acts 11:20), were all Diaspora Jews.

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[200] Josephus, Antiquities 14.10.8: decree of Julius Caesar.

[201] Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (New York, 1959, 1970), p. 345.

Thus, although Paul tells us in Romans 11:13 that he is "an apostle to the Gentiles," he might just have accurately have said that he was at least originally "an apostle to the Diaspora." Leaving the question of the accuracy of the narratives of Paul's experiences at various synagogues for a later chapter, there is no doubt that each of the cities which he visited had a substantial Jewish population from which he hoped to attract followers. As John Barclay explains,

> The Jewish communities in the Diaspora were usually the initial home of early Christian groups, but often subsequently their chief competitor. In either capacity they provided a model for the communal life of the first Christians and unwittingly contributed the literary and intellectual resource with which Christianity constructed its own identity. Thus, directly or indirectly, the Jewish Diaspora influenced the development of early Christianity to a very significant degree.[202]

Despite a wide range of estimates there would appear to be a growing consensus among scholars that by the first century there were between five and six million Jews living outside of Palestine, possibly four or five times the number of Jews then living in "the holy land." Philo estimates that the Jewish population in Egypt alone was one million people. Since, as Meeks has clearly demonstrated, the early Christian movement was overwhelmingly urban in tonality, it is on the cities that we will wish to concentrate. Indeed, there were major Jewish enclaves estimated to be between ten and fifteen percent of the total population of practically every city in those areas of the Roman Empire that bordered on the Mediterranean.[203]

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[202] John Barclay, "The Jews of the Diaspora," in ed. John Barclay, and John Sweet, *Early Christian Thought In Its Jewish Context* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 27. Barclay, like others, is making an anachronistic use of the terms Jewish and Christian in this paragraph. These communities all considered themselves part of the House of Israel at this time and would not yet necessarily have had an "us" versus "them" mentality.

[203] Meeks , *The First Urban Christians, The Social World of the Apostle* (Yale, 1984), p. 34.

The origins of the Diaspora can be traced back at least as far as the Babylonian Exile, with new communities developing alongside older ones during the period of Greek rule. Stern cites a number of factors that had over time contributed to the geographic and numerical growth of Diaspora communities. These include "expulsion, political and religious oppression in Judea, attractive economic prospects in prosperous countries, and a proselytizing movement whose roots reached back to the Second Temple era which reached its peak in the first century CE."[204] Surely, the years of oppression accompanied by social and economic dislocation described in Chapter Two, make it easy to understand why many would have left their homeland. Nor should short shrift be given to Stern's final point concerning the proselytizing movement; the point here, however, is not so much that the number of Hillelite Pharisees who were proselytizing in of themselves increased the Jewish population, but rather that their success added significant numbers of people to the Jewish communities, Jews who had no ancestry in Judea. This activity took place primarily in the Hellenized urban centers of the Empire. Yet, we will want to keep in mind that just as life in Hellenized Jerusalem differed from the other urban centers in Palestine, so Hellenized Jewish life could not be said to be exactly the same in Alexandria, Antioch, Rome or Ephesus.

The large cities like Alexandria and Antioch had an international flavor. Perhaps because of its roots going back to the third century BCE, the Jews of Antioch found themselves in a less hostile environment than those of Alexandria. This was also true of Damascus. When we return to Paul and the conflicts within the early church, it should not be surprising to see some of them being played out in Antioch, which had become a center of political, military, and commercial inter-connection between Rome and its Empire.[205] Similarly, Ephesus, another port city which was to become home to a significant Pauline community, also had

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[204] M. Stern, "The Jewish Diaspora in the Second Temple Era," in ed. Ben-Sasson, *A History of The Jewish People* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 277.

[205] Meeks, The *First Urban Christians*, p. 10.

a vigorous Jewish population. Yet here, Meeks offers another interesting observation, the cause of which we can only speculate. It concerns two cities that, despite their proximity to those just mentioned, were apparently never visited by Pauline missionaries. These are the cities of Sardis and Apameia, cities, he argues, that contained the strongest and best integrated Jewish communities in the area.[206]

In contrast to Jerusalem, where the potential for swift retribution from overwhelmingly powerful Roman forces led to Jewish fear and thereby accommodation of Rome, Meeks posits that the letter from Julius Caesar just cited as well as the political writings of Philo and other evidence, suggests that the Jews of the urban Diaspora "more often regarded Rome as their protector," than as a threat. Significantly he points out that,

> During the two Palestinian revolts, the Jews of the diaspora cities seem to have offered almost no direct support to the revolutionaries, and they suffered no visible consequences of the latter's defeat.[207]

The size and dispersion of the Jewish Diaspora did not go unnoticed by Roman historians. Josephus cites the work of Strabo for the proposition that "in the entire world there was hardly a place where the power of the Jews had not made itself felt."[208] What then was the societal structure of these communities, and how did they project an image of "the power of the Jews"? What was the meaning of Julius Caesar's grant to live "according to the customs and laws of their forefathers"? And, perhaps most importantly, how did Hellenized Jewish life and all it entailed in the Diaspora differ from Hellenized Jewish life in Palestine?

Permission to live "according to the customs and laws of their forefathers" equated to a significant degree of autonomy for the Jewish communities. It meant the freedom to practice their religion, including Torah observance and, as result, an exception from Sabbath court appearances and military service. It

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[206] Ibid., p.45.

[207] Ibid., p. 38.

[208] Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.115.

included the right to build synagogues, to establish independent courts of justice, schools and other communal institutions, and the right to collect money and send it to the Temple in Jerusalem.[209] Of equal or greater importance were the obligations from which the Jews were excused. Foremost among these was the requirement to participate in the cults of various local gods. Remembering that, at this time, there was no such thing as separation of church and state, this was an enormous concession. It was, in fact, these exemptions that contributed both to anti-Semitism and the aura of power to which Strabo refers.

The fact that the Jews were permitted autonomy was not in of itself unusual in the Roman Empire. The Jews constituted what the Romans called a *politeuma*, an ethnic-religious group often forming a city within a city. Since religious persecution was virtually unknown in the ancient world, simply allowing an ethnic group to worship its own gods was not unusual. What made the Jews unusual was their general refusal to join in the worship of the local gods and the cult of the Emperor, and the fact that this was tolerated with rare exception by the Romans.

Prior to the time of Augustus (12-10 BCE), there is some evidence that the Jewish community had been governed by an "ethnarch." Augustus, however, either replaced the rule of a single individual with a council of elders, or simply instituted a council known as a *gerousia*. Philo refers to the members of the *gerousia* as *achrons*, although it is possible that this title was applied only to its leading members. We find evidence of this title in Antioch, Berenice, in the city of Tlos in Asia Minor, at Arsinoe in Fayum, and particularly in Rome. We also know from inscriptions of names of those who held these positions that an effort was made to keep them within powerful families as opposed to broad sections of the public.[210] Other positions of power within some of the Jewish communities included the head of the synagogue, an overseer, and a secretary.[211] Obviously

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[209] Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, p. 301.

[210] Ibid., pp. 301-303.

[211] Ibid.

a community could not simply be made up of leaders, but had to have a diversified social strata. As Tcherikover explains:

> Apart from the priests there was no single social class in Palestine which did not exist in the Diaspora. Generals, soldiers, policemen, officials, tax farmers, estate-owners, agricultural laborers, slaves, craftsmen, merchants, moneylenders, and doubtless also members of the free professions such as physicians, scribes and the like—all these types of people were to be found in the Diaspora.[212]

Because these are the communities from which Paul would eventually draw new followers for the Resurrected Messiah, Tcherikover also provides us with an important observation from an economic point of view concerning the lack of any "difference between the Jews and other peoples among whom they lived," and the fact that "no one economic sector had a monopoly on Jewish activity."[213]

Recognizing that there would have been inherent differences among Diaspora communities we learn something of the breadth of Jewish enterprise based upon a list provided by Philo describing those who were affected by the aftermath of riots in Alexandria in 38 CE. There "were owners of property, merchants owning their own ships and simple merchants as well as 'capitalists', meaning those who while not taking part in trade personally, financed it by investing sums of money in business transactions."[214] Tcherikover concludes that the majority of the middle class would have been composed of simple traders while, at the wealthiest end of the spectrum, there were those who were bankers, loaning money at interest.[215] At the same time there would have been minor salaried officials whose living standard would have equaled that of their Greek and Egyptian counterparts.[216] Despite the differences among

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[212] Ibid., p. 343.

[213] Ibid.

[214] Ibid., p. 338.

[215] Ibid., p. 339.

[216] Ibid.

communities and within the same community, it seems fair to say that the Jews were not an impoverished minority living in hostilely mandated ghettos. That is not, however, to say that they did not live, as has often been the case in modern times, in self-imposed ghettos.

Rodney Stark stresses the analogy of the Jews in the Roman Diaspora to Jews living as newly emancipated citizens of France and Germany and, indeed, ultimately in the United States. "The Law set Jews apart as fully in the first century as in the nineteenth and prevented them from full participation in civic life."[217] Stark argues reasonably for the far greater Hellenization—assimilation—of those living in the Diaspora as compared to the Jews still living in Palestine. He cites the taking of Roman names and perhaps, more convincingly, the use of the Greek language as opposed to Hebrew or Aramaic. As evidence of the latter, he relies in part on the inscriptions found in the Jewish catacombs of Rome where fewer than two per cent were in Hebrew or Aramaic, as contrasted to 74 percent in Greek, and almost one quarter in Latin.[218] Based on their adoption of the ideas of the Greek Enlightenment coupled with pagan religious thought, he concludes that "large numbers were no longer Jews in the ethnic sense and remained only partly so in the religious sense."[219] Not surprisingly, the greater degree of Hellenization ascribed by Stark and his sources to Diaspora Jews is not universally shared by other scholars.

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[217] Rodney Stark, The *Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, 1996), p. 58, citing Martin Hengel, *Judaism and* Hellenism (Philadelphia, 1976).

[218] Ibid, p. 58, citing Jack Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament*, revised. ed. (Princeton, 1992).

[219] Ibid, citing W.H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford, 1965), Jonathan Goldstein, "Jewish Acceptance and Rejection of Hellenism," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, ed. E.P. Sanders, A.I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelson (Philadelphia, 1981); and Henry A. Green, *The Economic and Social Origins of Gnosticism* (Atlanta, 1985).

Tcherikover sums up a conclusion that is quite consistent with our findings in Chapter Two:

> The difference between Palestinian Jewry and the Jews of the Diaspora was not a difference of principle but only of degree. Obviously the Hellenizing movement struck deeper roots among the Jews of Alexandria than it did in Jerusalem, but in Jerusalem too a strong Hellenizing movement had arisen which left its decisive impress on the course of Jewish history.
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> ***
>
> On the other hand while it is true that the center of tradition was Jerusalem, the Jewish community of the Diaspora also stood four square on tradition, and this was officially recognized by the authorities.[220]

Tcherikover does not deny that the *forces* of assimilation would have been much greater upon the Diaspora Jews. His conclusion differs with that of Stark as to the greater extent to which such assimilation took place. There is evidence of continued Roman recognition and Jewish utilization of the right to live according to the "laws and customs of their forefathers"; the significant revenues sent each year to the Temple in Jerusalem; the voluntary "ghettos"; the number of synagogues and other organizations; and, to cite a piece of Stark's own evidence, the very fact that the Jewish catacombs were so extensive. This evidence totally favors Tcherikover's conclusion.

Stark sees the Hellenized Jews as "socially marginal, relatively worldly, accommodated, and secular."[221] This charge of social marginality is well refuted in at least some urban communities by Meek's description of active Jewish participation in civic life. He cites,

> ...the section of seats in the Miletus theater reserved for "the Jews who are also theosebeis," or the inscriptions of Jews who were municipal senators and held various magistracies in Sardis, Aphrodisias, Acmonia, and elsewhere, [and] the high status of some of the patrons and patronesses of synagogues, like Julia Severa of Acmonia or Capitolina of Tralles, or the location of the magnificent synagogue in Cardis

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[220] Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, pp.344-345.

[221] Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, p. 60.

at the heart of the city's civic, educational, and commercial center.[222]

Stark also assumes a widespread acceptance of Philo's teachings (for which there is little evidence) and suggests that they anticipated many Christian doctrines including those taught by Paul. For notion that both Paul and Philo, and perhaps even more so, the Gospel of John, were influenced by Greek thought there can be no doubt. However, the extent of Philo's influence on the Diaspora beyond Alexandria is far more difficult to assess. Nor does it seem likely that Philo's allegorical interpretations of the Bible would have made those who accepted them more prone to believe in a new doctrine of salvation through a Resurrected Messiah. Indeed, there would appear to be fairly widespread agreement among other scholars that it is simply impossible to maintain any clear-cut distinction between the theologies of Diaspora and Palestinian Judaism.[223]

Tcherikover's references to the unknown author of the second century BCE, *Letter of Aristeas,* seems to be more consistent with what we have seen of Jewish community life in the Diaspora. This "letter" that sought to, bridge the gulf between Jews and Greeks conceives of Judaism as mainly identical with Greek philosophy with the addition of the belief in one God."[224] Aristeas took the position that Jews needed to acquire a Greek education, "but simultaneously must cleave with all their hearts to the Law of Moses."[225] An interesting source of verification that Jews did precisely these things is the anti-Semitic literature of the time highlighting circumcision, mocking the Sabbath, and caricaturing Jewish festivals and dietary laws.[226]

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[222] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians,* p. 44.

[223] Craig C. Hill, *Hellenists & Hebrews: Reappraising Division Within The Earliest Church* (Minneapolis, 1992), p. 2, citing Sandmel and Davies.

[224] Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews,* p. 351.

[225] Ibid.

[226] Ibid., p. 354.

Tcherikover explains that anti-Semitism originated with the Egyptians and not with the Greeks, some two thousand years ago; he also makes the questionable assumption that, once started, its development was continuous. The Greeks originally esteemed the Jews as fellow philosophers. During the reign of Ptolemy II, an Egyptian priest, wrote an Egyptian history in Greek, and at least, according to Josephus, laced it with anti-Semitic rhetoric.[227] It is not then surprising that among the worst outbreaks of anti-Semitism in the first century Roman Empire is the previously referenced rioting, often described as a pogrom, that took in Alexandria in 38 CE. What then was the cause of this anti-Semitism?

Much as today, even before the contribution that the Gospels would make at a much later time in history, three different sources are often cited for the origins of anti-Semitism. They are: economic, religious, and political. Clearly there were wealthy Jews throughout the Diaspora, but as we have previously noted, such wealth in of itself would not have set the entire Jewish community apart from other ethnic groups within the Empire. Religious belief, again in of itself, would not have been a likely cause. However, the differences in behavior which Judaism engendered when coupled with the Jews' tendency to self-segregate, would naturally be an instigation of suspicion. Suspicion abetted by ignorance as has so often been the case, led to hatred. Jewish refusal to acknowledge the Greek gods, indeed was, at best, a thinly-veiled disgust at the multiplicity of pagan deities, would easily have earned the Jews a reputation for arrogance among their neighbors. But perhaps, most important of all, was the political antagonisms generated by the Jews distinct political privileges. Here we refer again to the exemptions from cult participation, military service and associated taxes, as well as Sabbath, necessitated privileges and their right to send money to Jerusalem.

Related to Jewish political status was the issue of citizenship. While it is clear that individual Jews were able to achieve the rank of citizen, this was not true of Jewish communities as a whole. That entire communities actually sought

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[227] Ibid., pp. 357-363.

citizenship is confirmed by a papyrus copy of a letter written to officials in Alexandria by the Emperor Claudius and dated 41 CE. This letter reconfirmed the rights granted by Julius Caesar, but denies the right of citizenship to the Jewish community. Tcherikover suggests that those Jews who sought such citizenship without giving up their Jewish way of life further antagonized at least some of those around them.[228]

Again we face a conflict in the interpretation of this data between Stark and Tcherikover. Where Stark has described the majority of Jews becoming "secularized" as a result of Hellenization and in hopes of greater acceptance within Greek society, Tcherikover reaches a very different conclusion:

> Hellenization did not make departure from the Jewish community obligatory, the less so because as a rule it brought few real benefits; the Jews enjoyed many privileges and it was not always worthwhile giving them up in order to enter Greek society, which was not at all inclined to welcome Jews readily.[229]

Stark reaches an additional conclusion about these Hellenized Jews that I do not find consistent with the evidence adduced. He argues that "the Hellenized Jews were the best group prepared to receive Christianity."[230] This argument is based upon the impact that Greek thought would have had on their thinking, their desire for greater acceptance within the Greek community, and their ostensible willingness to believe that the Messiah had come to Palestine. For these same reasons, Stark argues that those who spread the Gospel would have believed that they would receive a greater reception among these Hellenized Jews than their gentile counterparts. Stark does acknowledge that this latter perception will ultimately prove not to be true.

While Paul and the other Apostles who set out to preach in the Diaspora in all likelihood, did intend to bring the Good News to fellow Jews, the audience from whom they undoubtedly received the warmest welcome were another group

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[228] Ibid., p. 376.

[229] Ibid., p. 297.

[230] Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, p. 62.

of 'marginal' Jews. In fact they were not really Jews at all, but a group or groups that had attached themselves with Jewish acceptance to the synagogues. These are the "God-fearers." (See Acts 13:26,13:50; 17:4; and 17:17.) They were people who were attracted to Judaism for a variety of reasons, including its ethical teachings, its monotheism and the communal aspects of synagogue life. For reasons that may best be subsumed under the heading of "their own ethnic pressures," they were not, however, willing to take the necessary steps to become full proselytes, which for males obviously included circumcision, and for both men and women included dietary laws and other aspects of the Law as then practiced.

While it is conceivable that some of the God-fearers were "second generation" family members, it is probably more reasonable to assume that they were only one step away from what we would generically describe as pagan religion and/or mystery cults. Beyond a multiplicity of gods, these religions often included a variety of divine being that were somehow a blend of humans and the gods. There were also humans who, upon dying, had become gods, and finally those (indeed included in the Hebrew Bible) who were supposedly the product of divine and human unions.[231] The mystery cults, on the other hand, often included a belief in a dying and resurrecting god whose followers were promised a better life in a world to come and whose rituals included some form of ingesting their god.[232]It would seem that with such beliefs in their recent past, these God-fearers would have been particularly accepting of the teachings about the Resurrected Messiah and the rituals that included incorporation into his body.

The notion that Diaspora synagogues were numerous and played a central part in Jewish life is a certainty. It would appear that many of them had attracted the God-fearers. Far from being under the dominion of Jerusalem, they were under the control of a local educated lay upper social class. It would be

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[231] Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, second ed. (Oxford, 2000), pp. 21-24.

[232] Ibid., p. 29.

well into the second century before, what would, by that time, be called the Rabbinic influence, that would come to dominate Jewish life in general and synagogue practice in particular. There is no reason to believe that these first century synagogues had uniform policies or procedures. Yet these synagogues clearly bore the "stamp of the Pharisees".[233]

Indeed, it may have been in these very synagogues where the Gospel's depictions of Pharisaic opposition to Jesus began. That opposition arose in these synagogues to those who sought to recruit followers for the Resurrected Messiah, either from Jewish members or Gentile God-fearers there would seem to be virtually certain. Although the Jews had welcomed these God-fearers into their synagogues, they had insisted that a distinction remain. The Hillelite Pharisees who had taught the universality of God were not willing to accept Paul's version of a universality of Israel, open to Jew and God-fearer alike. Nor were these Jews willing to give up the boundaries that served to separate them, including circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath observance. As a result Paul would have to forge a new identity for the communities that he would establish. Paul, however, was not the only evangelist preaching a Gospel of the Resurrected Messiah. In the next chapter, we will examine a variety of Gospels being preached and the various "Christian" group identities being forged at that time.

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[233] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, p. 16.

Chapter Six

The Formation of Christian Group Identity

The complex or pluralistic perspective is as true to early Jewish Christianity as it is to first-century Judaism generally.[234]

Whatever they had to offer their members, Christian congregations could give them a sense of belonging, fostered by the direct fellowship within an intimate group, warmth, closeness and mutual support.[235]

The followers of the Resurrected Messiah would not leave the House of Israel so much as individuals as they would as communities with distinctive identities. If, as noted earlier, the only belief that would distinguish these people from their "religious" contemporaries was that Jesus had been the Davidic Messiah and that he had been resurrected, in all likelihood his followers could have remained within existing Jewish communities either in Palestine or the Diaspora. Far more would be necessary before those who became "followers" would start to conceive of themselves as "us", and those who did not share this singular belief as "them". The formation of a new group identity, particularly when it emerges from within an existing group that is already pluralistic in terms of its worldview and the manner in which it chooses to express that view, is a complex matter.

Indeed the process of group identity formation and the development of the defining the behavior that will set group boundaries are often intertwined and perhaps indistinguishable. It also must be remembered that the "apostles" of "the Way," Christianity's original self-identification (See John 14:6; Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23;

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[234] Craig C. Hill, *Hellenists & Hebrews: Reappraising Division Within The Earliest Church* (Fortress, Minneapolis, 1992), p. 4

[235] R. A. Markus, "The Problem of Self-Definition: From Sect to Church," in ed. E. P. Sanders, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, 3 Vol. (Philadelphia, 1981), Vol. 1, p. 2.

22:4 24:14, 22), did not set out to create a new identity or to "depart from the House of Israel." Rather they set out to unify "Jew and Greek" as the "true Israel" under the kingship of the Resurrected Messiah. Obviously, those intentions came up against other forces. The conflict between those forces, and as we discussed in the chapter on Paul, the teachings of the apostles set in motion the process of an inevitable divide.

The first step in that process was the formation of separate "groups" or "congregations," whose beliefs and the practices they generated would set them apart from their "co-religionists". As Meeks has observed, particularly with reference to the Pauline congregations, but with applicability to those to whom the Four Gospels were addressed as well, these congregations "belong to the category studied extensively by modern sociologists especially American sociologists, and called 'small groups' or simply 'groups.'"[236] Our focus in this chapter is on determining the factors that ultimately led these individuals to develop a sense of a distinct group identity that would distinguish them in their own minds and the minds of others from the rest of society.

The Four Gospels are a rich source of material on the communities for whom they were written. Each, as we shall see, was composed to meet the needs of and thereby help formulate the identity of different groups of people. Of course, we will need to keep in mind that in their written form the Gospels would have had a limited *hct* audience. Nonetheless as a source of preaching to *lct* it is fair to assume a broad impact. Similarly as noted in Chapter One the Pauline letters are particularly useful not only because of the specific rules, rituals, and restrictions that they contain, but also for their linguistic style. It is a style that was clearly intended to build group solidarity. Tessa Rajak also believes that we can learn a great deal from the study of Paul's congregations. She argues that his attempts to abolish the distinctions between Greek and Jew make his "drawing of boundaries appear[s] sharper and more complete," and his use of

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[236] Meeks , *The First Urban Christians* (Yale, 1984), p. 74.

"alternative language, value-system and structure more overwhelming,"[237] than they would be otherwise. While it is true that Paul regularly speaks of Greeks, *Helen,* and Jews, *loudaios*, it is important to emphasize that we cannot always be sure of what distinction Paul was calling attention to. Sometimes it was a geographic distinction of those living outside of Palestine or those living within its borders. Sometimes, as Hill explains below it was a reference to the language spoken by particular groups of people. Even more importantly we want to avoid falling into the trap of thinking that all "Jews" or all "Greeks" would fit neatly into a single category. This was no truer then, than it would be today to think that the labels Americans and Greeks, or even Americans and Jews, would be categories so well defined or for that matter so mutually exclusive, that all the individuals within any of these groups were somehow precisely the same as one another. With this caveat in mind the letters are indeed a valuable resource.

As Meeks demonstrates Paul's letters are also useful in terms of what they omit. Among the most striking omission "is that there is no visible connection or even contact between them [*the Pauline communities*] and the synagogues."[238] Nonetheless, focus in this chapter will be both upon the conflicts between the synagogues and the *ecclesia*, or house churches, as well as upon the differences among the churches themselves. Paul used of the term *ecclesia* not just to refer to individual churches, but as a name for Christian groups everywhere. As Meeks explains:

> Paul can speak of the ekklesiai (plural) of a province--Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, Judea (1 Cor. 16:1; 16:19; Gal. 1:2; 2 Cor. 8:1; 1 Thess. 2:14)--but also of "all the ekklesiai of the gentiles" (Rom. 16:4) and "all the ekklesiai of Christ" (Rom. 16:16) or "of God" (1 Cor. 11:16, 22; 2 Thess. 1:4).
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> Most striking among these passages is the phrase "the ekklesia of God," which stands alongside "Jews and Greeks" (1

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[237] Tessa Rajak, "Jews and Christian Groups," in ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest Frerichs, *To See Ourselves As Others See Us" Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity* (Chico, 1985), p. 259.

[238] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians,* p. 168.

> Cor. 10:32), but which was also used of a local community, as in the case of "the ekklesia of God that is in Corinth" (1 Cor. 1:2).[239]

The Gospels and the letters will also provide us with some understanding of the liturgical rituals of the early churches including: Baptism, the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, and early Christian prayer, including the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus*. For it is in these rituals and liturgical practices that we will find the brightest lines of demarcation, both in terms of identity formation and the divisions resulting from them.

As we move from the earliest Gospel to those of later date, we will begin to see "The Way's" identity shifting from one dominated by Israelites who had become Followers of the Resurrected Messiah, to one dominated by Followers of the Resurrected Messiah who, at least according to Paul and the Gospels, had become Israelites. Many authors have simply labeled these two groups Jewish Christians versus Gentile Christians. Once again, turning to the work of Martin Cohen we find the statement that "The sharp demarcation between a Gentile and a Jewish Christian, often the expression of later racist thinking, simply did not exist."[240] It will also be important throughout our discussion in this chapter particularly, that we keep in mind Dr. Cohen's first principle: "The greater the similarity among subgroups, the greater the ferocity of their mutual opposition."[241]

While it is true that we will seek to identify differences between the communities that developed in Palestine and those that developed in the Diaspora, one division which we will not pursue (indeed one that a scholarly consensus would seem to now disavow, just as has been done in the study of first century Jewish groupings) will be the concept of "Hellenists" as a distinct group. As Craig Hill demonstrates in his aptly titled book, *Hellenists & Hebrews: Reappraising Division Within The Earliest Church*:

> It might be noted that the Hellenists often are treated as though they were an identifiably Christian group. But Luke (Acts) uses the term only twice, and in the second instance it refers

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[239] Ibid., p. 108.

[240] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, p. 29.

[241] See Chapter One.

> unquestionably to anti-Christian Greek-speaking Jews (6:9; 9:29). Now if as has been claimed, the offense of the 'Stephen group' was their liberal interpretation of the law or temple, one would suppose that the group that persecuted them did so out of a conservative interest in those very issues. And who might these intolerant conservatives have been? According to Acts, they were none other than fellow Hellenists By far the simplest explanation of Acts' use of Hellenist is that it means "Greek speaking Jew from the Diaspora." [242]

Finally we will consider once again the issue of apocalypticism and evaluate here, as well, how it played a defining role in setting the followers of the Resurrected Messiah apart from other communities. It is appropriate that we begin our discussion of Christian group identity formation by returning to the work of Paul. It is not just that Paul's letters precede the Gospels, but more importantly that it was Paul who quite deliberately set out to establish groups of followers for the Resurrected Messiah and whose continuing correspondence with those groups played a major, if not *the* major role in creating their identity. Paul and his teachings were also a flashpoint for some of the major controversies we will want to examine within the early church.

Wayne Meeks has done a masterful job of collecting words and phrases from Paul's letters chosen by Paul to emphasize the special nature of the ecclesia and its members. The consistent repetition of this language undoubtedly played an important "role in the process of resocialization by which an individual's identity is revised and knit together with the identity of the group, especially when it is accompanied by special terms also for 'the outsiders,' and 'the world.'"[243] Two examples of his selections are particularly instructive. The first is his repeated use of the term *hagioi* (and on one occasion *hegiasmenoi*), generally translated as "saints" or "holy ones," (equivalents to the Hebrew *kidushim* or *tzadikim*) *to* address

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[242] Craig C. *Hellenists & Hebrews: Reappraising Division Within The Earliest Church*, pp. 23-24.

[243] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, p. 85.

his audience. See 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Rom. 1:7; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2. As Meeks explains,

> The term is the functional equivalent of *ekklesia* in the letter openings, as it is elsewhere when used in the third person (Philem. 5 and 7; 1 Cor. 6;1f. in contrast to the "unjust" outsiders; Col. 1:4; many manuscripts of 1 Thess. 5:27). It is also used of Christians in other places, especially in conveying greetings from one place to the other (2 Cor. 13:12; Phil. 4:21f; Rom. 16:15) and in statements about the collection for "the saints" in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25f.; 1 Cor. 16:1, 15;2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 12).[244]

Paul also regularly reminds his listeners that they are especially "loved" by God and "known" to him: Rom. 1:7; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; cf. Rom. 5:5, 8; 8:35, 39; 15:30; 2 Cor. 5:14; 13:11, 13; Eph. 2:4; 3:19; 5:2, 25; 2 Thess. 2:16; 1 Cor 8:3; Gal 4:9. Paul's characterizations are clearly drawn from his "Jewish" background, as the concept of "choseness" was very much a part of the worldview that bound the Jews together. In contrast to the ecclesia are the *hoi exo*, "the outsiders," (1 Cor 5:12, 13; 1 Thess 4:12; Col 4:5). More polemical terms such as *apistoi*, "nonbelievers" and *adikoi*, "unrighteous" and "those who do not know God" (1 Thess 4:5; Gal 4:8; 2 Thess 1:8) are also utilized. The rabbis also would regularly draw the distinction between Israel and "the nations." In both cases, this language increased the sense of differentiation from the "other," an essential step in group identity formation.

Common use of symbolic or metaphoric language is another important tool of group identity formation. One example of this would be Paul's regular references to the members of the ecclesia as the "body of Christ" (Col 1:18; 2:19; cf. 2:10; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; cf. 5:23). As Meeks once again so well explains,

> A group of people who strongly hold a set of beliefs about what is real and valuable, different in some salient aspects from beliefs commonly held in the general society, and who also share evocative symbols for those beliefs, naturally find communication with one another easier and more satisfying than communication with those who do not share their way of seeing. Furthermore, unless some countervailing factors work to divide the group, the more

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[244] Ibid.

> frequently and intensively the members interact, the more strongly these common, distinctive patterns of belief will be reinforced.[245]

Beyond the development of metaphoric language, we can trace in Paul's letters the development of the rituals that would also serve to build group cohesiveness among the early Christians. Among the earliest of these rituals with clearly Jewish antecedents was that of baptism. Paul, however, gave new meaning to this practice quite different from that of Judaism, but also different from the man whose name is most often associated with the practice, i.e., John the Baptist. Specifically, for Paul, those who "have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life," Romans 6:3-4.

Thus, the ritual of baptism serves not only to create a shared identity and to set a boundary for the community that participates in it, but also to re-enforce the *credenda* behind it. Boundaries, of course, are created by exclusion as well. If we assume that the Diaspora synagogue had a *mikveh* attached to it, it is hardly likely that the elders of the synagogue would have allowed it to be used by "one of Paul's groups, of uncircumcised gentiles, chanting about a messiah equal to God, crucified, resurrected, and reigning in heaven."[246] It is also likely that Paulinian Baptism included some formulaic statement by the "immersee" that served as a boundary marker. Meeks suggests that the simple confession mentioned by Paul in Rom 10: 9 "The Lord is Jesus!" may have been used for this purpose.[247] Clearly, these are words that when coupled to an action that in of itself had an entirely different, but equally powerful, meaning for the synagogues "non-Christian" members would have been offensive to them. Whereas for the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah, the Baptism and the declaration served as an act of

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[245] Ibid., p. 90.

[246] Ibid., p. 151.

[247] Ibid., p. 152.

solidarity. What has happened is that shared *miranda* have become invested with distinct *credenda*, paving the way for future enmities.

A second solidarity building measure that we find in Paul's letters is that of the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. See 1 Cor 10:14-22 and 11:17-34. Gospel references are to be found in Mt 26: 26-28; Mk 14: 22-4; Lk 22:17-20. We find reports of its celebration by the early Christian community at Jerusalem in Acts 2: 42, 46, and by Paul on his visit to Troas, Acts 20:7. While some initially may have seen the Eucharist as only symbolically conveying to the believer the Body and Blood of Christ, its literal meaning ultimately became the official church position. Indeed, the language that would become required usage referred to the Eucharistic elements themselves as that very Body and Blood.[248]

While Paul may not have emphasized Jewish purity and dietary restrictions, he nonetheless sought to create group boundaries. By using the eating of bread and the drinking of wine in a "Christian" communal setting, Paul was also seeking to preclude similar participation in pagan cultic settings. Note the direct connection in 1 Cor 14-16, 28:

> [14]Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols.
> [15] I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. [16]
> The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of
> Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of
> Christ? ... [28]But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in
> sacrifice," then do not eat it.

Interestingly, Paul also criticizes the way that some of the Corinthians had previously been engaging in what was supposed to be a ritual meal. In so doing, he indicates his awareness of factions within the church (1 Cor 11:17-22). The communal meal was, of course, only one aspect of the ecclesia's liturgical practice. Certainly, another regular group practice, as opposed to initiation rite, would have been communal prayer. Here too the letters of Paul are somewhat helpful.

In 1 Cor 14:13-15, we learn that one could pray either "by tongue" or "with the mind." While the former practice would clearly have stood out in a synagogue,

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[248] F. L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 566-567.

nonetheless just as was the case with the ritual practices, we are able to see both traces of, and distinctions from, Jewish prayer in the early church. Consider the prayer offered by Paul in 2 Cor 1:3-4. The similarity to the *peticha* of Jewish prayer, "Blessed art thou O Lord our God, King of the Universe," could not be more striking,

> [3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
> the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, [4] who
> consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console
> those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we
> ourselves are consoled by God.

Similarities aside, it should be equally obvious that such a prayer could only be voiced in a community that shared a belief in the Resurrected Messiah. Clearly, another liturgical borrowing from Judaism was the frequent use of the word "Amen." (see 1 Cor 14:16) It can also be assumed that the phrase "in the Name of Jesus," which to this day is regularly repeated in Christian worship, would not have been welcome in non-follower communities. It is derived from Col 3:17: "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (see also Eph. 5:20)

Philippians 2:6-11, in all likelihood, provides us with an early Christian hymn:

> Christ Jesus,
> [6] who, though he was in the form of God,
> did not regard equality with God
> as something to be exploited,
> [7] but emptied himself,
> taking the form of a slave,
> being born in human likeness.
> And being found in human form,
> [8] he humbled himself
> and became obedient to the point of death—
> even death on a cross.
>
> [a]Therefore God has highly
> exalted him and bestowed on him
> the name which is above every name,
> [10]that at the name of Jesus
> every knee should bow, in heaven
> and on earth, [11]and every tongue
> confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
> to the glory of God the Father.

Ritual, prayer and worldview found another companion in the institution of marriage as a means of building group solidarity. While Paul's position on the inviolability of marriage seems close to that of Christ in the Gospels, his preference for marriage within the "faith" (1 Cor 7:12-160) is hardly inconsistent with Jewish practice. Such a position would ultimately leave both communities prohibited from marrying "across group boundaries."

Lest we too quickly form a view of a "united Christian Church," let us return briefly to the issue discussed in Chapter Four concerning the conflict within the early church between the Jerusalem Apostles and Paul's mission to the Gentiles. As you will recall, the focal point of these disputes were circumcision and Torah.

The conflict receives its greatest airing in the Letter to the Galatians where Paul perceives a challenge to his right to be called an Apostle and more importantly the truth of his Gospel (Gal 1:6-9; 4:17; 5:10, 12; 6:12). Paul apparently has been accused of watering down the true Gospel in order to "please men" (Gal 1:10). Paul's opponents (again apparently as we lack any document from them) have taken the position that pagan converts must be "under the law." (4:21; cf. 2:16 ff.; 3:2-4:7); be circumcised (5:2-12; 6:12-15. cf. 2:3-12); and observe the festival calendar (4:10). While Acts would have us believe that this dispute was resolved by the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:20,29), scholars now widely agree that this could not have been the Council to which Paul refers as he does not seem to know about it at the time that he wrote Galatians or Corinthians.

Precisely how the dispute evolved is not of great concern to us. What is important to us is the evidence of disagreement and its clear indication of efforts by different individuals to shape not only their own communities, but all of those that would follow "the Way." We know today that it was the Paulinians who would in the long run prevail on this issue, thereby substantially increasing the division between Christian and Jewish identity. Considering some of the variations in the Four Gospels, to which we now turn, we will further enhance our understanding of the widening gap between those identities.

While there is a wide range of opinion on an equally wide range of issues concerning NT scholarship, there would appear to be nearly universal agreement that Mark's is the earliest of the Gospels and was used as a source by both Matthew and Luke. The general range of dating Mark is somewhere in the late 60's or early 70's. The additions and deletions made in the two later Gospels will give us the opportunity to examine differences in the communities from which they came and for whom they were written.

As early as the late second century, Clement of Alexandria considered Rome to be the place where Mark was written. While tradition has also held this Gospel's author to have been Peter's interpreter, there seems to be little modern support for this position, as compared to considerable agreement among modern scholars concerning the Roman setting.[249] The Latin influence on the Greek text as well as parallels with Paul's letter to the Romans, are credible evidence for this position. From a perspective of timing, it certainly seems possible that Mark's author would have been familiar with this letter.

An example of such Pauline parallels, cited by Brown, is Mark's declaration that Jesus "declared all foods are clean" (7:19) and Paul's statement in Romans: (14:14) "I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself."[250] Yet as David Catchcole observes, Mark 7:1-23 offers ample evidence that Mark did not see the setting aside of the food laws as implying that any other laws were to be set aside.[251] Catchpole further sees verses 10-11 as a specific endorsement of Mosaic legislation.[252] It is also interesting to note that Mark fails to make any comment at all on the issue of circumcision. From this, Catchpole concludes that for Mark's community circumcision was not a boundary marker and that, therefore, the community "could easily have been a mix of

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[249] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 161-163.

[250] Ibid.

[251] David R. Catchpole, "Mark," in ed. John Barclay and John Sweet, *Early Christian Thought In Its Jewish Context* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 73.

[252] Ibid.

Jews who had been circumcised and non-Jews who were put under no such pressure."[253]

Further evidence of an originally gentile population as, at least, a significant part of Mark's community might be found in the fact that Mark had to explain a variety of Jewish customs (7:3-4; 15:42) as well as translate Aramaic expressions (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:22). Interestingly, Mark's explanation of hand washing is inaccurate. His erroneous statement that hand washing was followed "by all the Jews" has led some scholars to conclude that Mark himself was not of Jewish origin.[254] Nonetheless his use of certain words with clearly Jewish *miranda* (Satan, Beelezebul, Gehenna, Rabbi, Hosanna, and Amen) would indicate some familiarity with Jewish traditions, not only by Mark, but also probably by those who heard his Gospel preached as well. Thus, Brown is willing to suggest that members of this community "were probably Christians who had been converted by evangelizers familiar directly or indirectly with Jewish Christian tradition."[255]

Citing Mark 10:42, with Jesus' implicit criticism of the Romans, Brown suggests that Mark's community may have been subject to Nero's persecutions. In the same vein, he also posits that "The strong emphasis on the failure of the disciples to understand and on their flight when Jesus was arrested suggested that Mark addressed a community that had been persecuted and failed."[256] Consistent with an overriding sense of persecution is a continuing apocalyptic worldview. Indeed, of all of the Gospels, Mark's would appear to be the most apocalyptic, carrying an imminent belief in the parousia. (see especially Mark 13). This is both indicative of Gospel's early date and perhaps, once again, Mark's "relation" to Paul. The shared belief in an imminent "second coming"

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[253] Ibid.

[254] Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, p. 74.

[255] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament.*

[256] Ibid.

would have helped to add social cohesion to a community that was feeling persecuted and seeking relief. The apocalyptic overtones and its early dating help to distinguish Mark and his community to some degree from those of the other Gospels. This will be immediately apparent as we turn to Matthew, whose changes to Mark can serve to highlight some of these distinctions.

Current scholarship heavily favors the attribution of Matthew's Gospel to a Jewish Christian as opposed to a Gentile Christian. A majority would also seem to agree that the actual author's name is unknown to us, and that he or she was not an eyewitness to the events described.[257] With regard to the concept that the author relied upon Mark and *Q*, there can be no doubt. According to Meeks, a majority of Matthean scholars are willing to locate Mathew's author(s) in Antioch or Orontes.[258]

Meeks does acknowledge that there is a wide variety of scholarly opinion on the relationship of Matthew's community to that of non-Christian Jews. In some ways he sees a parallel to the Gospel of John in terms of a contradictory combination of strong Jewish traditions coupled with the rejection of Jewish institutions.[259] Yet Meeks finds plausible "the proposition that Matthew's 'scribes and Pharisees' refers to the emerging rabbinate at Yavneh."[260] Recognizing a variety of strata within the text, it is possible to explain both the "contradicting combination" and to suggest a community whose relationship was increasingly in conflict with the views being expressed by the emissaries of Jamnia. Brown, too, would appear to find Matthew's Gospel, generally dated as between 80 and 90, to be the reaction of an originally Jewish Christian community nearby to Jamnia, as probable. As evidence of this, he points to the fact that the title of those revered for interpreting the law there was "Rabbi" and to Matthew's rejection of

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[257] Ibid., pp. 211-212. See also, Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70—170 C.E* (Minneapolis, 1995), pp. 51, 56, and Meeks, "Breaking Away," in Neusner, *To See Ourselves As Others See Us*, pp. 108-109.

[258] Meeks, "Breaking Away."

[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid.

that title, (23:7-8) which is unique to this Gospel.[261] In a summary very much reflective of Martin Cohen's first principle as quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Brown adds:

> Perhaps the Matthean Christians lived in the *shadow* of a larger Jewish community that resented them. If the two groups shared the same Scriptures and many of the same convictions, their differences may all the more have been subject to dispute.[262]

A similar conclusion is reached by Meeks who sees Matthew's as a community with "a high degree of sectarian self-consciousness; possibly a sect of Galilean Jews who join an existing community at Antioch."[263] As support for this position, he cites Mt. 18:15-29. In verse 17, Jesus (anachronistically) says in reference to a sinner who has been reproached, "And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as a Gentile and a tax collector, " in other words, expel him from the community.

Brown, who shares the view of a community that is ultimately part of an Antioch church, finds in Matthew additional evidence of a group seeking to, or already viewing itself, as separate from Jamnian Judaism. He cites the five references to Jesus' teaching in *their* [*the* Jews] synagogues: 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54, and Jesus' address to the Scribes and Pharisees in 23:34, referring to *your* synagogue.[264] Perhaps most striking is the evangelist's comment at the end of Chapter 28 concerning the alleged theft of Jesus' body that "this story has been spread among the Jews to this day," (28:15). Brown concludes, "Such language of alienation suggests separation from Judaism on the part of the Jewish Christians who together with Gentile Christians formed a self-subsistent church."[265]

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[261] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* p.215.

[262] Ibid.

[263] Meeks, "Breaking Away," p. 109.

[264] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* p.215.

[265] Ibid., p. 216.

Matthew's Gospel also gives us evidence of his community's views on a number of controversial issues. They are not opposed to admitting uncircumcised Gentiles (28:19), nor on the other hand are they willing to see the Law fully abandoned (5:17-18), a view paralleled in Mark and Luke but missing and some would say contradicted, in John (see John 8:5-11). Brown also argues for a differentiation on this subject between Matthew and Mark based upon Matthew's addition to the parable of the wine skins, where Matthew has Jesus conclude that both the old and the new are preserved, as opposed to Mark's version which would suggest survival only of the new.[266]

In what Brown sees as a further indication of the differences between the communities of Matthew and Mark, an indication that reinforces his tie to a church in Antioch, Brown observes,

> Matthew has taken over Mark, a Gospel addressed to Gentiles, but omitted the explanation of Jewish customs in Mark 7:3-4, as if the Gentile section of the Matthean community would know the issue of cleanliness in eating. The most plausible interpretation is that Matthew was addressed to a once strongly Jewish Christian church that had become increasingly Gentile in composition. ...The history of Christianity at Antioch fits that situation.[267]

As additional evidence of changes within Matthew's community from that of Mark, Brown cites the possibility that "the Matthean 'Our Father' was taught so that the emerging church would have its own prayer to match what was being said in the synagogues."[268] Finally, he notes a comparison between Mt 22:15ff and Mark 12:29, in the suggestion that Matthew's community has eliminated the Shema. One does not have to accept the details of these analyses to accept the fact that in Matthew's Gospel, we have firm evidence of a community in the midst of distinguishing itself not only from "the Jews," but from other Jewish Christians as well. We turn now to the Gospel of Luke.

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[266] Ibid., p. 212.

[267] Ibid., p. 213.

[268] Ibid., p. 215.

It is perhaps axiomatic that as we consider the Gospel of Luke that we also include observations about the Book of Acts, which is almost universally agreed to be the work of the same author(s), hence their scholarly designation as Luke-Acts. While neither work directly identifies its author, tradition considers them to have been written by "the beloved physician" who accompanied Paul on much of his travels. There are three references to such an individual in the NT: Phlm 24; Col 4:14; and 2 Tim 4:11. Although it is true that Luke was written decades after Paul's death, Brown considers it "not impossible" that he Luke was a minor figure traveling with Paul on limited occasion.[269] Just as Luke modified material that he received from Mark, he also made changes to the teachings of Paul.

Once again there is ample reason to believe that Luke and the community to whom his work is addressed is one that lay outside of Palestine. There are the inaccurate references to Palestinian geography (4:44; 17:11), as well as his facile use of a variety of Greek linguistic styles to support such a conclusion. Some, relying upon Acts 16:9-10, have suggested Greece as the area from which he hailed. On the other hand, the fact that Acts 11:19-15:41 demonstrates a great familiarity with the church at Antioch has led some to suggest that Luke was a part of that community. Brown rejects such a conclusion based upon his belief that it is more likely that that is where Matthew wrote, and that it is unlikely that the two Gospels would have been conceived of and in the same community.[270] Similarly Brown's belief that Mark was written for Rome rules out for him that the same would be true of Luke. In another significant contrast to Matthew, Brown accepts the plausibility of the argument that whereas, for Matthew's church, "the synagogue has become a foreign institution, for Luke's addresses the synagogue always was a foreign institution."[271]

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[269] Ibid., p. 326.

[270] Ibid., p. 269.

[271] Ibid., p. 270.

The relationship to the synagogue is not the only indication of the shifting ethnic base of Luke's audiences. Luke's omission of Aramaic expressions and place-names suggest an even greater change than Mark's need to translate the same material. But perhaps most telling of all are the words that he attributed to Paul in Acts 28:24b-28, after Paul's apparent failure to convince a group of Jews about Jesus and the Kingdom of God:

> Some were convinced by what he had said, while others refused to believe. [25] So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: 'The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah, [26] 'Go to this people and say, You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. [27] For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn—and I would heal them.'[28] Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.'

Such a statement would be clearly heard as Paul "writing off" those who already considered themselves to be within Israel and equally clearly indicating that in his view the future would be found with those he would bring into the "true Israel." Such a message would hardly be suitable to a congregation composed to any significant degree of individuals who had rejected the Resurrected Messiah; on the contrary, it arguably supports Wilson's conclusion that by the time Luke was written, "The separation between church and synagogue was complete," and "that Luke addressed his political message to Christians, to cultivate in them a sense of identity and their place in the world."[272] We will reserve until Chapter Eight further discussion of the claim of "complete separation" by the time of Luke—somewhere between 80 BC and 100 BC. There, we will want to address the political reasons why each group might be seeking to create a greater distance from the other by that time.

Assuming for the moment the truth of the claim concerning a complete separation of church synagogue, Wilson and others nonetheless assert the Gospel's desire to continue to emphasize Christianity's Jewish origins and Jesus'

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[272] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, p. 68.

fulfillment of Jewish scripture. Yet, as we noted in the just quoted verses from Acts, Luke also wished to emphasize that the "Jews" had rejected Jesus. Here, Luke was straddling two difficult positions: Jewish continuity and Jewish rejection. Hence, what clearly appears to be ambivalent at best—contradictory at worst—views of the Jews may have been nothing more than a socio-political necessity. Jewish scriptures could not serve as the basis or the proof text of the Resurrected Messiah if the Jews were totally discredited. Further, as Ehrman explains, the idea that "Christianity" was something entirely "new" in the ancient world simply would not have been acceptable, particularly in light of the widely known fact that Jesus had been crucified by Pontius Pilate.[273]

Brown also endorses the idea of Luke's goal of shoring up group "self-understanding," particularly to allay the community's concern of subversive origins of Jesus' relationship to the revolutionaries responsible for disastrous War with the Romans.[274] Similarly, as Luke's author states, his purpose was to assure his listeners of the truth of the teachings they had already been given: "So that you may realize what certainty you have of the instruction you have received" (Luke 1:4). D.L Block, in his article on Luke, offers a similar conclusion noting that "Any gentile who felt out of place in an originally Jewish movement would have recognized the reassurance Luke offers."[275] It is also true that in this introduction, Luke acknowledges the existence of previous Gospels. This would seem to imply his own recognition that either his community, or his times, required a new telling or new interpretation.

In concluding our discussion of Luke's communal purpose, it is also appropriate to state my agreement with those who reject the idea that Luke-Acts was written to influence Roman officials, to convince them that the Christians were peace loving and that it was the Jews who were the troublemakers. The argument, to the contrary, that the Romans would hardly take the time to read

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[273] Ehrman, *The New Testament*, pp. 139-140.

[274] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 272.

[275] D.L. Block, "Gospel of Luke," in *Dictionary of Jesus and The Gospels*, 1992.

through everything else that the books contain, would simply appear to be persuasive. Indeed, the evidence that seems most forceful is that Luke's primary audiences were communities of Gentile Christians who needed reassurance as to their own legitimacy in the face of growing Jewish rejection of the Resurrected Messiah and Roman suspicions of the new sect. In contrast, the Fourth Gospel that we will now discuss would appear to be the work of an evangelist(s) and perhaps a community far more secure in their identity and beliefs.

Once again, we have a Gospel with an unidentified author. While tradition has linked the book with John, son of Zebedee, there really is no internal support for such a claim. Some have claimed the author to be the Beloved Disciple, a figure unique to John (see for example John 13:23-25; 19:26:27). There is, however, simply no consensus on this point. Scholars are also still debating whether or not the author of John had access to the synoptic Gospels. The issue of dating John's Gospel is similarly debated, yet with some general agreement that the Gospel is post 70 yet prior to the year 100. There does, however, seem to be agreement that John gives voice to the harshest polemic (with the possible exception of Matthew 23) in the NT against "the Jews," e.g., Jn 8:42-47. James Carrol calculates that this loaded phrase (in Greek, *hoi loudaioi*) appears a total of 16 times in the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, while in John it appears 71 times.[276] The number of references, and the hostility with which they appear, itself would support a later dating and a group whose identity was more clearly formed.

Some believe that the polemical nature of much of John may, in fact, be a reaction to expulsion of John's community from the synagogues (9:22; 12:42; 16:2). John's hostility, however, is directed not just at "the Jews," but at other Christians as well. Brown[277] sees evidence of this hostility in Jesus' words and the evangelists description of the disciples reaction to them in John 6:60-66, words and an incident not appearing in the synoptics:

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[276] James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword* (New York, 2001), p. 92.

[277] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* p. 375.

> [60] When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" [61] But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you?'... [64] But among you there are some who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. [65] And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the father.' [66] Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him.

More direct evidence of hostility to other Christian groups is to be found in the harsh criticism voiced of those followers of Jesus who would not make the public break with the synagogue. (9:21; 12:42-43)

What perhaps sets John apart the most from the synoptic evangelists is his theology or worldview. Here, he is closest to Paul in that his interest is not so much in the historical Jesus as it is in the Resurrected Messiah. We saw evidence of crucial differences between John and the synoptics in the discussion in Chapter Three of John's unique interpretation of the crucifixion. Similarly, from the first words of this Gospel, John distinguishes himself from the synoptics in terms of his Greek philosophical underpinning. An underpinning, we might quickly add, that has great parallels in Philo. The only other place in the NT that the title *logos*, "Word of God" appears is in Revelation 19:13. The Stoics, on the other hand, used the word *logos* regularly to refer to the mind of God.

Another word which appears in John alone is the transliterated form of the Hebrew or Aramaic term *messiah* (1:41; 4:25); indeed the debate over Jesus' "messiahship" takes a far more prominent role in John than it does in the synoptics. At the same time, John places greater emphasis upon Jesus' divine nature than do the other Gospels. John refers to Jesus four times as the "only (*monogenes*) Son." (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18) Perhaps this emphasis on the divine is reflective of Paulinian influence.

Robert Kysar considers the community of John to have been "charismatic (or better, pneumatic) insofar as it gained its life and existence from the form of

the spirit."[278] It also conceived of itself as the "enclave of the children of God within a world that shared a far different orientation." (1:12) The community saw itself as "a body sent on a mission" (4:35-38).[279] The significant roles given to women in John including Mary Magdalene and others, as well as the mission to the Samaritans (20:11-18; 12:1-8; 4:1-42); this suggests a community striving to be inclusive. Still, the notion that this was a community with a clear sense of identity there can be little doubt. It may well be the most acutely defined of the Gospel communities, and as such its teachings, will become pivotal as we approach "the great divide."

Finally, we look at an important early calendrical change made by the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah. Although we cannot be sure of the timing of its implementation, it seems clear that this took place as a result of Gospel teachings. This would be the change from the Sabbath to Sunday as the Day of the Lord. Evidence of a separate Sabbath comes as early as the Epistle of Barnabas, roughly dated between 70 and 135. In 15:8-9, it is declared that the Jewish Sabbath has been overturned:

> The present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but that which I have made, in which I will give rest to all things and make the beginning of an eighth day, that is the beginning of another world. Wherefore we also celebrate with gladness the eighth day in which Jesus also rose from the dead, and was made manifest and ascended into heaven.

We simply do not know how or precisely when this transition took place. The notion that it became a further hallmark of Christian identity is beyond dispute. Interestingly, it has been suggested that it came as a result of the Bar Kochba revolution and was one of many Christian attempts to separate themselves from the rebellious Jews.

Based upon what we have seen in this chapter, I believe that a reasonable argument that could be made that by the time of the writing of at least the

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[278] Robert Kysar," John, Gospel of," in T*he Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 3, ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York, 1997, 1992), p. 930.

[279] Ibid.

Gospels of John and Luke, the House of Israel had already been divided. A fuller discussion of this issue will have to await our final chapter. Prior to considering that issue, however, we need to understand the consolidation of Judaism and Jewish internal power that began with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, followed by Rabbinic Judaism's ascension at Jamnia. These will be the issues upon which we will focus in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven

The Destruction of The Temple and The Ascension of Yavneh[280]

Two roads led out of Jerusalem, one to Yavneh,
the other to Masada.
Yohanan ben Zakkai led the way to Yavneh.
Because he did, he fathered another generation, and
they another. Judaism endured as a living faith and the
Jews as an enduring people from that day to this one.[281]

As we concluded Chapter Two, we recalled Martin Cohen's description of Jewish life under Roman rule in Palestine in the last hundred years before the birth of Jesus as characterized politically by "dictatorial repression, smoldering hostility, the continuous threat or presence of civil war and an irreversible trend toward general rebellion."[282] From our long historical vantage point, and in all likelihood, evident to many at the time, the fact that this "general rebellion" finally erupted in 66 CE would not have come as a surprise. The surprise may well be that after so many previously failed attempts, and in light of the overwhelming superiority of the Roman forces, the Jewish War lasted as long as it did.

The consequences of that War for the next two thousand years of Jewish history would, in itself of course, fill volumes. Fortunately, our task herein is much smaller, our focus much narrower. The destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem would, have enormous impact beyond the development of Judaism. It

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[280] While the Hebrew name of this biblical city located on the coastal plain south of Jaffa was Yavneh or Jabneh, during the Hellenistic Period it was known by its Greek name of Jamnia. Hereinafter, unless we are directly quoting a source, it will be referred to as Jamnia.

[281] Jacob Neusner, *A Life of Yohanan Ben Zakkai, Ca. 1-80 C.E.*, 2d ed. (Leiden, 1970), p. 174. Although written more than thirty years ago, this book and Neusner's other work on Yohanan Ben Zakkai, *Development of A Legend: Studies on The Traditions Concerning Yohanan Ben Zakkai* (Leiden, 1970) continue to be the definitive works on this period. For my work on this chapter, this author is heavily indebted to the work of this world renowned scholar.

[282] See Chapter Two, ft nt 4.

would not only bring about practically overnight the hegemony of the Pharisaic, soon to be Rabbinic party, but also would have a dramatic impact on the leadership and tonality of early Christianity.

In this chapter, while we will look briefly at the latter subject we will concentrate our efforts on the consolidation of Jewish authority in Jamnia and the dominant role played in that consolidation by one man, Yohanan ben Zakkai. As we turn to examine first the War itself, and then the developments in Jamnia, we will want to keep in mind the problems with our sources as set forth in Chapter One. Specifically, with reference to Josephus, our primary source on the War, his role as a partisan of the Jews and as a prisoner and apologist for the Romans, must be remembered.

Similarly, as in this and the next chapter, as we begin to rely more on rabbinic literature, it is important to remember Neusner's caution: "No one seriously supposes that the rabbinic sources supply either eyewitness accounts of great events or stenographic records of man' speeches or lectures. By the time we hear of a speech or an event, it has already been recast."[283] It is equally important to recall that these sources are far from contemporary to the events that they recall. While many of the traditions that they contain may have originated in the late first century, the documents that recorded these traditions will range anywhere form one hundred to five hundred years later.

Despite or perhaps indeed because of, their theological and homiletical overtones, as opposed to their "historical truth," it is appropriate that we begin our discussion of the War and the Temple's destruction with the Rabbis' perspective. The most well known story concerning the cause of the destruction is that found in *Gittin* 55b. There, we are told of a man who had a friend named Kamtza and an enemy with the name Bar Kamtza. The man gives a banquet to which all of Jerusalem's high society is invited including, by mistake, the despised enemy Bar Kamtza. When the host sees that Bar Kamtza has come to the banquet, he insists that he be ejected. Bar Kamtza's pleads not to be embarrassed, and

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[283] Neusner, *Development of A Legend*, p. 3.

offers to pay for the entire event to avoid being ejected. His plea and offer are rebuffed, and he is forced to leave in disgrace.

Bar Kamtza is set upon vengeance. He has noticed that the "rabbis" observed his humiliation and did not so much as bend a finger in rebuke to their host. So Bar Kamtza goes and slanders the rabbis to Caesar, alleging their refusal to accept his offering for the Temple. When Caesar sends a new offering with Bar Kamtza to determine if this is true, Bar Kamtza deliberately blemishes the calf so as to make it unacceptable. The rabbis are left with the dilemma of whether to offer the blemished calf, for the sake of relations with Rome, or to put Bar Kamtza to death in order to be sure that he will not be able to report the calf's rejection to Caesar. The story concludes:

> Rabbi Yochanan said: The tolerance displayed by Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulas in refusing to have Bar Kamtza put to death destroyed our Temple, burned down our Sanctuary and exiled us from our land.

In *Yoma* 9b, we find comparable reasoning: "In the era of the second Temple, the people studied Torah and performed mitzvos, so why was the second Temple destroyed? Because there was baseless hatred among the people." In both the longer story and the shorter conclusion, we do, in fact, find historical truth. The prolongation of the War and the Temple's destruction can, in fact, be tied to sectarian fighting within the Jewish community and the failure to maintain the peaceful relationship with Rome. Josephus's writings confirm this understanding.

In April of 66, a mob is successful in ambushing and killing a relatively small detachment of Roman soldiers outside of Jerusalem. As the War began, it would appear that the rebels had the support of much of Palestinian Jewry. There were, in fact, initial if short-lived, successes in and around Jerusalem and in the Galilee. Yet, in the majority of places, Roman soldiers, aided by as previously described hostile non-Jews, quickly maintained or regained control. Jerusalem, as a walled "city on a hill," had strategic advantages that contributed to its long but ultimately fatal resistance.

While Josephus may argue that the War was the result of irresponsible *siccari*, his so called "Fourth Philosphy," we are also told that some of the Sadducees and other members of Jerusalem's upper classes joined the rebellion. Significantly, the Pharisaic party was split. Simeon ben Gamaliel, heir of the House of Hillel, served on the original revolutionary tribunal, along with members of the House of Shammai. The pacifist wing of the party was ostensibly led by none other than Yohanan ben Zakkai. Neusner, however, cautions us about assuming too much concerning Yohanan's original positions: "The evidence of his opinions at this time is circumstantial and scant."[284] Similarly, Neusner concludes that while the original uprising may have had the support of, and included leadership from, Temple authorities and the aristocracy, it was fought primarily by "by two classes [*lcf*], a part of the peasantry, and the urban proletariat, aided by certain fervent messianic nationalists within all classes of society."[285] Schurer would appear to see greater involvement of other *hct* here, as opposed to that of the *siccari* at the outset of the War:

> The men who now had the power in their hands belonged exclusively to the higher ranks. The chief priests, the most distinguished of the Pharisees were those who directed the organization of land defenses.[286]

Neusner[287] appropriately questions Shurer's assertion citing Josephus, (*Wars*, 2,17,6):

> The others then set fire to the house of Ananias the high priest and to the palaces of Agrippa and Bernice; after which they carried the fire to the place where the archives were deposited, and made haste to burn the contracts belonging to their creditors and thereby dissolve their obligations for paying debts; and this was done, in order to gain the multitude of those who had been debtors, and that

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[284] Neusner, *A Life of Yohanan Ben Zakkai*, p. 146.

[285] Ibid., p. 146.

[286] Emil Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 3 Vol. (Edinburgh, 1973), p. 489.

[287] Neusner, *A Life of Yohanan Ben Zakkai*, 151, nt 3.

> they might persuade the poorer sorts to join their insurrection with safety against the more wealthy.

As Martin Cohen has taught, revolutions are never staged solely by the poor. There was undoubtedly some *hct* involvement early on. Josephus attests to Simeon ben Gamaliel's participation in the revolutionary coalition in *Life* 38, 39, 44, and 90. Josephus also asserts that ultimately the Zealots turned on the more moderate wing of council members, murdering them as traitors.[288]

While we will probably never know how widespread *hct* involvement was at various stages of the War, it is clear at least that the Pharisees were divided on the issue and that Yohanan ben Zakkai not only fled the city, but was able to ultimately secure Roman support for the powerful position he eventually assumed. Even if we presume a large majority of innocent victims, sheer numbers alone tell us that a significant portion of the people participated in the War effort. Josephus claims that "All the prisoners taken from beginning to end of the war totaled 97,000; those who perished in the long siege 1,100,000."[289] This number may well be an exaggeration, as Tacitus put the number of Jewish dead in this first war at around 600,000. Clearly, either way, the loss of life was massive.

Before beginning our discussion of the War's aftermath in depth, it is important that we comment on Roman aims and the question specifically of the Temple's destruction. Again we turn to Neusner and Josephus:

> Evidence on the burning of the Temple is equivocal. The Romans through Josephus denied responsibility and attempted to represent it as either or an accident of war or the act of the Jews themselves. Both destroying the Temple and disclaiming responsibility at the same time constituted a wise and shrewd policy.[290]

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[288] Josephus, *War* 4,6,1.

[289] Ibid., 6, 9,3.

[290] Neusner, *A Life of Yohanan Ben Zakkai,* p. 171.

It is not unreasonable to assume that the Romans would have preferred not to see the Temple destroyed. Support for such an argument at least traditionally can be found in *The Avot According to Rabbi Nathan*, Chapter Three (hereinafter ARN):

> Now, when Vespasian came to destroy Jerusalem he said to the inhabitants: 'Fools, why do you seek to destroy this city and why do you seek to burn the Temple? For what do I ask of you that that you send me one bow or one arrow, and I shall go off from you?"

As the text continues, when the Zealots refuse to heed Vespasian, the same words are spoken by Yohanan. The Romans had good political reason not to want to destroy the Temple. They had managed to wage the War without any substantial loss of the loyalty of the significant Jewish Diaspora spread throughout the Empire. Destroying the Temple could have potentially turned a localized "nationalist revolt" into a potentially Empire-wide ethnic uprising. Clearly, if the Romans had desired the total destruction of the Jews in Palestine, they had the wherewithal to do it. Yet, it is also possible that the Romans believed that with the loss of their temple, with the inability to offer sacrifices to their god, Judaism would die out. Clearly, the Jews had no more powerful *miranda* than their Temple. Nonetheless, a policy of "plausible denial" may have best served all of their interests. Such a policy would be consistent with their long term policies of pacification and conciliation of subject people. This was a policy of finding local leadership to whom they could entrust autonomous control. Such a policy found a natural ally in Yohanan ben Zakkai, to whose story of escape and of building the academy at Jamnia we now turn.

Numerous sources speak of two somewhat different traditions concerning Yohanan's escape from Jerusalem. See ARN (text a) Ch.4; ARN (text b) Ch. 6; Lam. R. 1. 5. 31; Git 56a-b. The basic elements of the story are known by every *heder* school graduate. Yohanan was smuggled out of Jerusalem in a coffin. He is taken to Vespasian, whom he greets as though Vespasian were already Emperor. Shortly after Vespasian learns that he indeed will be Emperor, he offers to grant Yohanan a singular request. Yohanan replies, "Give me Yavneh

and its sages, the chain of Rabban Gamaliel, and a physician to heal Rabbi Zaddoq."[291]

The version of this story in Lamentations Rabbah includes a prior request by Yohanan to Vespasian to spare the city. This is probably nothing more than an attempt by later authors to further cleanse Yohanan's name from the accusation of being a traitor. As just noted, there are other differences in the traditions. They relate to whether the Romans had previous knowledge of Yohanan's desire to stop the war and therefore knew who he was, or whether they did not know him, but based upon his prediction concerning Vespasian, granted him what may have appeared to them to be a small favor. In either version, Yohanan is shown to have resisted the Zealots, outsmarted them in his escape from the city, and perhaps most importantly in terms of "the great divide," demonstrated, in Neusner's words, that "It was the sage through Torah who would predict the future, not the prophet or messiah proclaiming his own visions or revelations from heaven."[292]

Neusner also observes that while either rabbinic account is "rather fanciful," their essence remains believable in that they demonstrate that the Romans "willingly and knowingly" permitted Yohanan to establish the academy in a Jamnia, where some number of Roman-loyalist Jews previously had fled. Once again, such a decision would be entirely consistent with Roman policy. Such policy dictated a means of placating the Diaspora, particularly those living close to the Parthian border where the Babylonians were only too happy to try and stir up trouble; as well as a means of governing the Jewish population in Palestine. Both objectives would be accomplished by the re-installation of a Jewish government, with pro-Roman leadership. The Romans also were likely to have known that Jewish law would continue to be observed, and therefore in need of administration in both Palestine and the Diaspora. The most natural party for such an assignment was in fact the Pharisees.

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[291] *Gittin* 56b.

[292] Neusner, *A Life of Yohanan Ben Zakkai*, p. 117.

In support of the Pharisaic choice, Neusner cites with approval the analysis of Morton Smith who, in turn, relied upon Josephus:

> Pharisees have by far the greatest influence with the people. Any government which alienates them has trouble...Sadducees have more following among the aristocracy...but they have no popular following at all, and even in the old days when they were in power, they were forced by public opinion to follow the Pharisees' orders.[293]

As Neusner also observes, there really weren't any other options. The Zealots ever unwilling to compromise, had perished at Masada, and the Essenes were virtually irrelevant. No doubt the Pharisees, with the apparent aid of Josephus, also promoted themselves for this role. Indeed, it is possible that an actual agreement with the Romans was formally negotiated by Yohanan's ultimate successor, Rabban Gamaliel.[294] How and when the transition from Yohanan to Gamaliel took place, we will focus on shortly. For the moment we wish to examine in detail the manner in which Yohanan established the Rabbinic power that would last for centuries to come.

In addition to the stories concerning Yohanan's skill as a diplomat in dealing with Vespasian, the ARNb retells the tradition of his astutely political warnings to the people of Jamnia in the aftermath of an incident that took place during the reign of Caligula (37-41). Philo reports the event in which the Jews of Jamnia had destroyed a pagan altar and were ordered by Casius to pay for an expensive replacement. Fortunately, Casius died before the order could be fulfilled. Nonetheless, Yohanan's comments have been preserved.

> Do not destroy their altars, so that you do not have to

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[293] Ibid., p. 169, citing Smith's "Palestinian Judaism in the 1st Century,' *Israel, Its Role in Civilization,* ed. M. Davis (New York, 1956), pp. 76-78.
As we discussed in Chapter Two, historians have consistently underestimated the size of the Sadducees' *lct* following without which they never would have had any power whatsoever.

[294] Ibid.

> rebuild them with your own hands. Do not destroy those of brick, that they may not say to you, 'Come and build them of stone.' [295]

Tradition also speaks of Yohanan making a visit to Gaul on what may have been a Pharisaic diplomatic mission.

After his escape from Jerusalem, certainly Yohanan could have gone to Jamnia and been satisfied to simply continue to study Torah as he had always done. Indeed, on the level of appearances, Yohanan and his disciples continued to do precisely that. Now, however, there was to be a far more important but clearly related outcome to their study. With the Temple destroyed and Jerusalem in ruins, steps needed to be taken to establish some form of Judaic/Israelite authority. While still based in Palestine, having been removed from Jerusalem, the court in Jamnia would take the form of a "government in exile." That required making practical and immediate use of the reins of power that the Romans had placed in the hands of Yohanan and his disciples.

Yohanan's method was the same as that of Hillel, Gamaliel I, and Simeon ben Gamaliel: to issue *tachnunim*, that is decrees. While some of these decrees would meet with initial resistance from the priests, others, ultimately in no small measure because of the power of Roman force that stood behind them, were accepted. In time, Yohanan's successors would assert that the academy in Jamnia now held the same authority that had formerly been vested in the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.[296]

Yohanan followed an ancient variation on the more modern saying that "he who controls the purse strings, controls the government." Only in Yohanan's time the equivalent was "he who controls the calendar will control the lives of the Jewish people." In the fall of 70, in what was probably his first public act, one with both great symbolic overtones and immediate results, he ordered the

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[295] Ibid., p. 148, citing ARNb, ch. 31, Shechter, p. 33b.

[296] Ibid., p. 196, citing J. Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," in ed. L. Finkelstein *The Jews, Their History, Culture and Religion, I*, (Philadelphia, 1949), p. 147.

sounding of the Shofar to proclaim the New Year. The event and the dispute it generated is preserved in *Rosh HaShana* 4:1:

> If a festival day of the New Year fell on a Sabbath, they might blow the shofar in the Holy City, but not in the provinces. After the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai ordained that they might sound the shofar wherever there was a court.

The Mishna goes on to discuss how the Men of Bathyra, of whom we know little more than that they had been part of the establishment under Hillel, tried to argue with him and how he outsmarted them. As in Temple days once Yohanan's Court determined the new moon and other important dates, the message would be sent out by a system of lanterns and messengers throughout Palestine and the Diaspora. By this simple act of declaring the New Year, Yohanan provided the people with continuity and quickly established in their minds that the new center of power was in Jamnia, at the academy.

As he had legislated concerning the New Year, Yohanan similarly issued decrees involving the Feast of Tabernacles and giving permission to eat new produce when the omer could no longer be brought to Jerusalem. In a matter which both confirmed the special status of the priests yet at the same time made it clear who was setting the rules, he proclaimed that the priests, would continue to remove their shoes when they came up to the bima to bless the people. With respect to the "Fourth Year Fruits," which were formerly required to be either offered in Jerusalem and eaten there or redeemed, he ruled that after the destruction, such fruit even if planted close to the city wall, might be redeemed and freely eaten anywhere. (See R.H 4.3, 4;and Suk.3.12) In an act with both financial and political consequences, he ruled that as long as the Temple was destroyed, neither was the proselyte on conversion to set aside the quarter-shekel for his bird offering (y. Sheq. 8.4), nor were any items to be consecrated for use or sacrifice therein.[297]

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[297] For a more complete list of citations see Neusner, *A Life*, pp. 208-210.

Neusner summarizes the nine enactments that tradition personally connects to Yohanan, though he also suggests that it is unlikely that they were in fact limited to these nine:

> (1) the Shofar; (2) the lulav; (3) the Day of Waving; (4) receiving testimony on the eve of the New Year; (5) receiving testimony even when the head of the court is absent; (6) not profaning the Sabbath to give such testimony, except for the New Year and Passover; (7) the priestly blessing; (8) the proselyte's offering; (9) the fourth year fruits.[298]

As a great spiritual leader, as well as a political one, Yohanan also had to address the loss of the Temple in a way that would help console the Israelites throughout the Roman Empire for this terrible loss. As some of the people saw themselves rejected by God, as some saw themselves once again bearing punishment for their sins, only now without a means of atonement, and as others continued to teach that there was a "new paschal lamb," Yohanan (ARNa Ch. 4) offered a different solution.

> Once as Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai was coming out of Jerusalem, Rabbi Joshua followed him, and beheld the Temple in ruins.
>
> 'Woe unto us,' Rabbi Joshua cried, 'that this place, the place where the iniquities of Israel were atoned for is laid waste.'
>
> 'My son,' Rabban Yohanan said to him, 'be not grieved. We have another atonement as effective as this.' 'And what is it?' 'It is acts of lovingkindness, as it is said, '*For I desire mercy, not sacrifice.*'(Hos. 6:6)"

In contradistinction to those who claimed that relief would come quickly, either from a true Messiah or a Resurrected one, Yohanan taught:

> If you have a sapling in your hand, and it is said to you, 'Behold, there is the Messiah'—go on with your planting, and afterward go out and receive him.
> ARNb Ch. 31.

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[298] Ibid., pp. 213-214.

Yohanan's teachings, although filtered through the lenses of his own times, in many ways mirrored that of the prophets, and in so doing undoubtedly struck a familiar cord with both Palestinian and Diaspora Jews. In teachings attributed to him and paralleled in a variety of texts, tradition holds him to have said:

> Happy are you, O Israel! When you obey the will of God, then no nation or race can rule over you! But when you do not obey the will of God, you are handed over into the hands of every low-born people but even into the power of the castle of that low-born people.[299]

The message was clear. Salvation would come in time, but only based upon repentance and living according to Torah. As a result of his beliefs, Yohanan concentrated upon the immediate problems of the day and not on an eschatological vision.[300] Nonetheless, a re-invigorated call to a life of Torah and deeds of loving kindness alone could not and did not consolidate authority in the hands of those now encamped at Jamnia.

Yohanan ben Zakkai did not spend the rest of his life at Jamnia. Whether he was ultimately forced out, or left voluntarily, we do not know. We do know that in the year 96, Titus' brother, Domitian, was murdered, thus bringing an end to the Flavian dynasty. Not long after Domitian's death, Rabban Gamaliel of the House of Hillel and the son of Simon ben Gamaliel, one of the early leaders of the revolt, became the *nasi* in Jamnia, and Yohanan went to Bror Hayil to head another academy.

Safrai reports traditions holding that Rabban Gamaliel was not only installed by the Romans in Antioch, but that he made several journeys to Rome as head of the Sanhedrin.[301] He concludes that the authority that Yohanan established spread and solidified under the direction of Gamaliel. Of direct import to our own

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[299] Ibid, p. 185, citing *Mekhilta de R. Ishmael, Bahodesh 1* and Ket. 66b; *Pesiqta Rabbati* ch. *Nahamu; Sifre Det.* 305; *Midrash Ha Gadol* Deut., section *Ki Tavo*

[300] Ibid.

[301] S. Safrai, "The Era of the Mishnah and Talmud, (70-640)," in ed. Ben-Sasson, *A History of The Jewish People*, p. 323.

focus was Gamaliel's resumption of trips to the Diaspora communities by the leading sages. These emissaries served once again not only an economic purpose, in that funds were now brought back to Jamnia as opposed to the Temple in Jerusalem, but of equal or greater importance, through their instruction in Torah, they played a crucial role in establishing Jamnia's Roman backed authority. As Safrai explains:

> The emissaries provided not only an institutional connection but also personal contact with the greatest Torah authorities of the time, acting on behalf of the *nasi*. They taught Torah wherever they went, brought the latest news from the academies in Israel, inspected the administration of the communities and their institutions and saw to the establishment of such institutions as they thought necessary, including charitable societies, schools and so forth. They had a decisive voice in the appointment of community leaders and could even depose them, if they found them inadequate.[302]

The role that these emissaries would play in relation to ongoing efforts by the apostles of the Resurrected Messiah (in reality an alternative group of emissaries) should be all too obvious by this point. Before we address that issue in our final chapter, we need to briefly consider the impact of the Temple's destruction on these very apostles and their communities.

It is generally agreed that shortly after the War began in 66, a large part of the "Christian" community in Jerusalem fled to Pella.[303] Neusner ties their escape to the "reign of terror" introduced by the *siccari* (discussed above).[304] Prior to this time, he argues, consistent with our findings in earlier chapters, that the Pharisees had treated the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah with relative tolerance. To have expected similar tolerance from the Zealots would clearly

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[302] Ibid, p., 323.

[303] Those taking issue with this conclusion include Gerd Ludemann, "The Successors of Pre-70 Jerusalem/Christianity: A Critical Evaluation of the Pella-Tradition", in ed. E. P. Sanders, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, Vol. 1, further citing S.F.G. Brandon.

[304] Neusner, *A Life*, p. 155.

have been foolhardy. Hence Neusner concludes this report from Eusebius to be most plausible, though others would argue that it was also quite doctored:

> But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men. Eusebius Hist. Eccl. 3.5.3

Many scholars have concluded that, with this flight, the Jewish-Christians of Palestine lost their remaining influence with the Diaspora churches. Martin Hengel's analysis is particularly noteworthy in terms of our overall timeframe and context:

> Even if a remnant returned to the city after its destruction (an event which according to Hegesippus, Origen, and Eusebius, the Jewish Christians considered to be a punishment for the execution of James, 'the righteous') and even if, according to Epiphanius, they had established a small new church in a house on the southern end of the western hill, the Jewish Christian communities had lost the considerable influence they previously had upon the other churches of the Diaspora and were in time erased from the scene in Judea with the Bar Kochba revolt. Even the community in the new establishment of Aelia Capitolina was from its beginnings a Gentile Christian community.[305]

There would appear to be substantially less evidence, at least within the pages of the Gospels themselves, for the claims of other authors concerning the immediate impact of the Temple's destruction on Christian communities, which at any rate, would hardly have been uniform. For example, Philip Alexander claims that "The destruction of the Temple handed the Christians a propaganda coup, for it gave them the chance to argue that the catastrophe was a divine judgment

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[305] Martin Hengel, "Early Christianity as a Jewish Messianic Movement," in Martin Hengel and C.K. Barrett *Conflicts and Challenges in Early Christianity*, p. 33.

on Israel for the rejection of Jesus."[306] Similarly, James Carrol writes, "To first- and second-century Christians, the destruction of the Temple by the Romans was 'proof' that God had sided with them against 'the Jews,' and the Christians promptly appropriated the savage Roman war crime for their own theological purposes."[307] While such utilizations did ultimately take place, as we saw with Eusebius, the late dating of at least *Luke* and *John* hardly suggests that this was anywhere near an immediate response.

On this issue as well, Hengel would seem to have the better argument. Citing Matt 27:25, he writes that although the Temple's destruction may have been viewed as divine retribution and consistent with Jesus' prophecy, "the event was never given strong polemical emphasis; in this context one finds no traces of Christian triumphalism, only feelings of regret and even horror."[308] It was within their own communities that the different Christian groups offered a variety of interpretations of the Temple's destruction, some no doubt ultimately emphasizing the triumphalism missing from the Gospel. Interestingly in the *Book of Revelations*, that the new world order contains a new Jerusalem, but not a new Temple. Such a view seems entirely consistent with John's interpretation of the crucifixion as the ultimate form of sacrifice.

One other result of the Temple's destruction that bears mentioning in this chapter is the two drachma tax imposed thereafter upon Jews in both Palestine and the Diaspora, a tax levied on proselytes as well. The tax was a levy for the benefit of Jupiter Capitolinus, the supreme god of Rome and was to be paid in lieu of the half shekel that had previously gone to support the Jerusalem temple. Since, in the Roman mind, their gods had now conquered the god of Israel, it was only proper that the revenue that previously went to that god now go to

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[306] Philip Alexander, "'The Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism," in ed. James D. G. Dunn, *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways,A.D. 70 to 135* (Grand Rapids, 1989), p. 20.

[307] Carroll, *Constantine's Sword*, p. 108.

[308] Hengel, *Conflicts and Challenges in Early Christianity*, p. 33.

theirs. The potential effect of the desire to avoid paying this tax will be addressed in Chapter Eight.

It would now appear that the stage is set for the final dénouement, a denouement that will, of course, not take place with a single event or on a single day but that will continue to unfold over a period of time. Nonetheless, it would seem clear that by the final decade of the first century, there had developed two well defined groups with their own *hct* and *lct,* and with distinct but overlapping *miranda* and *credenda.* As a result of the work of Yohanan ben Zakkai and those who succeeded him, Pharisaic Judaism was well on its way to becoming "normative Judaism." The work of Paul, in particular, as well as that of the other Evangelists, had clearly succeeded in shaping communities with what could soon be described as having a clearly Christian identity. It is to this ultimate division of these two larger communities that we turn in our final chapter.

Chapter Eight

Dividing The House: Cause or Effect

There never was a single edict which caused the so-called irreparable separation between Judaism and Christianity. The separation was rather the result of a long process dependent upon local situations and ultimately upon the political power of the church.[309]

The story of the parting of the ways is in essence the story of the triumph of Rabbinism and of the failure of Jewish Christianity to convince a majority of Palestinian Jews of the claims of the Gospel.[310]

While there remain scholars who continue to be willing to cite a specific event as *the* definitive moment in the dividing of the House of Israel into Jews and Christians,[311] the current majority view would appear to support Philip Alexander's conclusion that "There was no sudden break between Christianity and Judaism but rather an ever-widening rift." Nonetheless, as this chapter's epigraphs indicate even among those who support the "long process theory,"

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[309] Reuven Kimelman, "Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity" in ed. E.P. Sanders, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, Vol. 2, p. 226.

[310] Philip S. Alexander, "The Parting of the Ways From the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism," in ed. James D.G. Dunn, *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, A.D. 70 to 135*, p. 3.

[311] Ibid; see for example Lawrence Schiffman's "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism," in Sanders, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, p. 117, where Schiffman argues that "It is [therefore] the halakah which ultimately determined the expulsion of the Christians from the Jewish community." The "edict" referred to in Kimelman's statement in the first epigraph is the Birkat Ha-Minim, on which at least in part, Schiffman bases his argument. It is, of course, possible that Schiffman would respond that he is only referring to the expulsion of "Christians" from the community and not their recognition as a separate religious group.

there remains a wide range of opinions as to "ultimate causes." By way of example, the first epigraph of this chapter suggests that the ultimate cause was the "power of the church," and the second that it was the triumph of the Rabbis. In this chapter, I will seek to identify the most significant of the contributing factors responsible for this "ever widening rift." Although I would take issue with those who would argue that the Bar Kokhba Revolt was *the* defining event, as set forth in the Introduction, I do agree with those scholars who see that War's conclusion as a fairly bright line of demarcation signaling the end of the process for the majority of the communities involved. As Martin Cohen has written, "The historical independence of the Church cannot be said to begin until the onset or perhaps even the conclusion of the Bar Kokhba War."[312]

As in Chapter seven, we will rely a great deal in this chapter upon rabbinic literature. Once again, we will need to proceed with caution lest we fall into the trap of retrojecting the statements found in this broad corpus of work too far back in time. Even among those who share this cautionary perspective, there is, however, a division of thought as to how we should read this literature, both in terms of what it contains and what it omits. As noted earlier, Neusner argues that omission of a subject or person was one of the tools that the rabbis used for expressing opposition. Sanders "on the other hand takes the position that silence does not signify dissent or even disinterest; rather, it reflects the natural constraints of the legal genre."[313]

In our own analysis of these texts, we will also want to keep in mind a distinction between Jesus, with whom it is impossible for any of the Tannaim ever to have had contact, and those whom we described in Chapter Six as Israelites, first and Followers of the Resurrected Messiah second, as well as those who became Followers first and Israelites second.

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[312] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, p. 30.

[313] Analysis by Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70—170 C.E.*, p. 24.

While we will consider halakic issues in greater detail later in this chapter, Alexander provides us with a succinct summation of their impact on this distinction among the followers of The Resurrected Messiah:

> Viewed from the perspective of the halakic definition of who was a Jew, it is clear that for the Rabbis that the early Christians fell into two broad groups: (a) there were those who were Israelites by birth and who were halakhically Jewish; and (b) there were those who were non-Jews. Since the latter group had never undergone a valid Rabbinic conversion, they were not in the covenant and never had been.[314]

Alexander also appropriately notes that at the end of the first War (66-70) the followers of the Resurrected Messiah and their pre-War opponents continued to compete for the "hearts and minds" of the same people, both within Palestine and the Diaspora. He argues further that "It was the gradual rabbinization of Palestinian Jewish society that pushed Christianity and Judaism ever further apart."[315] Although Alexander's use of the term "Christianity" is still probably anachronistic at this point in time, conceptually his conclusion is one with which few could take issue. I see no reason why this thought should be limited to Palestinian Jewry.

As we observed in the previous chapter, while this rabbinizaton may have "originated" in Jamnia, and its influence under Yohanan ben Zakkai may have been limited to Palestine, by the time of Rabban Gamaliel's "missionaries," the "Rabbinic Gospel" was being spread throughout the Diaspora as well.

One problem with the argument based upon halakhic conversion is that we know that even within rabbinic circles there remained a wide range of opinion,

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[314] Alexander, "The Parting of the Ways" in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways,* p. 6. There is of course a problem with the timeframe within which such an analysis can be made, i.e., are these halakhic distinctions the product of a later period, from a time when the separation of the communities was already complete, or were they an actual cause of separation? While we cannot be sure as to whether we are dealing here with a "cause or an effect" of the division, the latter seems more likely.

[315] Ibid., p. 3.

dating back at least to the time of Hillel, on the issue of stringent versus liberal requirements for conversions. This was not a "theological debate," but rather a political one based upon the need of one faction or another to recruit additional members in order to achieve political dominance, or to prevent another faction from doing so.

As in previous chapters, it would be impossible to understand the "Great Divide" without also considering the role that Rome played in bringing it about. The Pharisaic to Rabbinic hegemony secured through Jamnia simply could not have taken place without the tacit, and many would say, overt support from the Romans. Indeed, just as Roman support aided in the development of so-called "normative Judaism," it was Roman support, albeit several hundred years later under the reign of Constantine, that led to a Paulinian hegemony within Christianity.[316]

Of more immediate impact, though one lacking a great deal of direct evidence, was the imposition by Vespasian after the first War of the *fiscus Iudaicus*. As noted earlier, this was a two drachma tax paid to Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome, ostensibly in the place of the old Temple tax. Martin Hengel suggests that this tax,

> ...may have given the Jewish Christians who were no longer observing the ritual law a sufficient reason not to circumcise their child and even encourage them to disclaim their standing as Jews. Apparently the tax was most rigorously collected under Domitian, who even succeeded in arousing opposition from parts of the Roman nobility.[317]

In keeping with Martin Cohen's rejection of the labeling of Christians as Jewish or Gentile, I see no reason to limit this analysis to Jewish Christians, for it could just as easily have included "God fearers" and the members of Paul's churches, regardless of their ethnic origin. Perhaps more importantly, we really

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[316] M. Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, p. 42.

[317] Martin Hengel, "Early Christianity as a Jewish Messianic Movement," in Hengel, *Conflicts and Challenges in Early Christianity*, p. 37

have little understanding of what "observing ritual law" meant at this time. While we may be able to assume a minimum of not eating pork or "the food of idols," beyond that it is difficult to say with any specificity which ritual laws were being observed by any given segment of the population. Without some structure to enforce "greater observance," it would seem likely that the majority would have observed only those restrictions necessary for the preservation of their identity.

In support of his argument concerning Vespasian's tax, Hengel goes on to cite the following passage from Matthew, 17:24-27. Although he acknowledges that it literally applies to the Temple tax, he argues that it nonetheless could be understood to apply to the *fiscus Iudaicus* as well:

> [24] When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and said, 'Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?' [25] He said, "Yes, he does." And when he came home, Jesus spoke of it first, asking, 'What do you think, Simon? From who do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?' [26] When Peter said, 'From others,' Jesus said to him, 'Then the children are free. [27] However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and yourself.'

Hengel's argument concerning the application of this passage to *fiscus Iudaicus* unfortunately lacks sufficient evidence to be convincing. On the other hand, that a tax aimed at an "ethnic group" would not have had socio-political ramifications is inconsistent with the reasoning we have relied upon throughout the chapters of this thesis. Hengel is, therefore, on the right tract in seeking evidence of sociological causes for division within a wide spectrum of passages in the NT. While we will consider the impact of what can be gathered from a number of such passages shortly, let us briefly consider here the impact of the NT generally on the process of separation.

It should be obvious that over a period of time, whether through written or oral transmission, the polemical aspects of the various Gospels would have to have had a negative impact on those elements within Jewish communities that rejected the very notion of a Resurrected Messiah. As such, the Gospels

themselves would serve to drive a wedge between the "rejectionists" and those who were moving closer and closer to considering that Resurrected Messiah to be an equal to God. Yet as Ellis Rivkin points out the "harshness of feeling" can hardly be limited to one side.

> Since it was the Christians who preserved the anger of both sides, first in oral transmission and then in a written canon of sacred books, it is the New Testament and not the Mishnah or the Tosefta that is the repository of the harshness of feeling that stirred both camps *of Jews*.[318]

I have emphasized the last two words of this quotation to underscore an important point. This point is that while the language of the NT inevitably contributed to "Dividing the House Of Israel," in the words once again of Martin Hengel:

> None of the NT authors could have known that the messianic movement of the Nazarenes or *Christianoi* would bring about a new religion alongside and in opposition to the Jews. In fact, it is not in the NT but first in the apologists of the second century in the *Kerygma of Peter* and in Aristides, that we encounter the notion of the Christians as a 'third race' or people alongside the Jews and Gentiles. Tertullian, for his part, rejects the notion. The polemics of individual NT authors from Paul to Luke and Matthew, and from there to John, were no more intense than were those of the Essenes against 'Ephraim' and 'Manasseh' (i.e., the Pharisees and the Sadducees), other Jewish groups.[319]

Hengel also points out that the word *Christianoi* (Christians) only occurs three times in the NT, and two of these three relate to encounters with the Roman state (Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Peter 5:1).[320] He goes on to argue that it was not until the year 114 that Ignatius used the word with frequency and for the first time distinguished between Christianity, *Christianismos* and *Ioudaismos*, Judaism. Concurrent with the usages of Ignatius is that by Pliny. When in writing

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[318] Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus*, p. 121, emphasis supplied.

[319] Hengel, "Early Christianity as a Jewish Messianic Movement," in Hengel, *Conflicts and Challenges in Early Christianity*, p. 8.

[320] Ibid., p. 6.

to Trajan he uses the word *Chrisitani*, he defines it as a *superstitio prava et immodica*, 'a degenerate and extravagant superstition'. In the same time period Suetonius refers to the Christian movement as a *supersitio nova et malefica*, ' a new and magical superstition.' Somewhat later Tacitus (56-120) writes that this "*exitiabilis superstitio* ('detestable superstition') began in Judea (which is to indicate its Jewish origins), was subsequently suppressed by Pilate, rose again, and from there made its way to Rome."[321]

Although the three references in the NT, as well as those of these later writers, are hardly sufficient evidence to conclude that a definitive division had already taken place by the time they were written, as noted in Chapter Six, the NT does offer a great deal of evidence of concerning the separation of those Jewish of communities that had accepted Jesus as the Resurrect Messiah from those that had not. As Meeks observes,

> By the end of the first century, and much earlier than that in the Pauline groups, the Christian movement was socially independent of the Jewish communities in the cities of the Empire. That had little or nothing to do with formal measures like the *birkat ha-minim*, but much to do with internal dynamics. There would continue to be interactions between Jews and Christians in various places; there would continue to be followers of Jesus who remained within synagogues here and there, down through at least the fifth century, despite disapproval by leaders on both sides; there would be Christians of pagan origin who continued to be attracted to the synagogue until at least the same period. These however were the exceptions.[322]

Having emphasized up until this point the role of the Gospels and the writings of Paul in creating this social division, and in the previous chapter having

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[321] Ibid., p. 7.

[322] Wayne A. Meeks, "Breaking Away: Three New Testament Pictures of Christianity's Separation from Jewish Communities," in ed. Neusner and Frerichs, "*To See Ourselves As Others See Us.*" In addition to calling attention to Meeks' anachronistic use of the terms "Jews" and "Christians," Martin Cohen argues that we lack sufficient evidence to postulate the "social independence" of the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah at this time. Cohen also rejects Meek's implied characterization of an "us versus them" attitude on the part of these communities.

established the consolidation of Pharisaic—Rabbinic power at Jamnia, it is appropriate that we now take a more specific look at the contribution of the Rabbis to the Dividing of the House of Israel. Of course from the rabbinic perspective, it would better be labeled the "Preserving of the House of Israel." We begin with the few rabbinic references that remain to Jesus himself, all the while keeping in mind that it is extremely unlikely that any of these "traditions" circulated during Jesus' lifetime. They nonetheless may well have been "in the air" by the first quarter of the second century.

A frequent place for commencing any discussion of rabbinic literature's impact on hastening the ultimate separation of Judaism and Christianity is Sanhedrin 10:1 and 2. These *mishnayot* begin with the statement that "All Israel shall have a portion in the world to come," and then go on to list certain exceptions. Among those excluded is Balaam, who although not an Israelite according to the Book of Numbers 22ff, acknowledged and obeyed the God of Israel. As Herford explains, the reference to Balaam in the Mishna is not to this prophet but rather to someone else for whom Balaam could serve typologically.

> From the Jewish point of view there was considerable likeness between Balaam and Jesus. Both had led the people astray; and if the former had tempted them to gross immorality, the latter according to the Rabbis, had tempted them to gross apostasy—not unaccompanied by immorality, as will appear from some of the passages relating to Christians. This was the great charge against Jesus, that 'he practiced magic and deceived and led astray Israel.'[323]

Sanhedrin 107b also makes the claim that Jesus engaged in idol worship, a charge regularly made against later day Christians, as well as in immoral conduct. Hereford further demonstrates the connection between Balaam and Jesus by citing Gittin 56b-57a, with its references to Titus, Balaam and Jesus, three of the great enemies of Israel. In this passage, it is midrashicly told how Titus's nephew desired to become a proselyte. Using necromancy, the nephew calls up his uncle Titus, Balaam, and Jesus. Of each one he asks the same

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[323] R.T. Herford, *Christianity In Talmud and Midrash* (London, 1903), p. 68, quoting Sanh 107b.

question: "Who is honored in the world?" Each time the answer is "Israel", to which the nephew replies, "What about joining them?" Following the reply of each of the dead, he asks about their punishment. Each would appear to be in hell receiving a punishment appropriate to their crime.[324] See also Sanh 106a.

Further disparaging references to Jesus remain in a number of places in the Talmud. Shabbat 104b // Sanh 67a, attacks not only Jesus as a magician, but his mother Miriam as being a harlot. From this passage read in connection with Sandh 43a, we also learn two of the "code names" utilized for Jesus. They are Ben Stada and Ben Pandira. In Sandh 43a, we find not only the connection between the various names, but the direct reference to 'Jeshu' being hung on the eve of Pesach. What has to be much later reference to Jesus, but nonetheless informative, if for no other reason than that the Rabbis were at that time directly confronting the claims of the Christians, is attributed to Rabbi Abahu, who lived in Caesarea at the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century. It is found in the Jerusalem Talmud, Taanith 65b:

> R. Abahu said: If a man says to you, 'I am God,' he is a liar; if he says, 'I am the son of man,' in the end people will laugh at him; if he says, 'I will go up to heaven,' he speaks, but shall not perform it.

Of far greater import to the Rabbis role in the process of separation were the measures of social ostracism that they adopted as well as the proscriptions they placed on interaction with *minim*, a term in which we can certainly include the followers of the Resurrected Messiah. The following passage from Tosefta Hullin 2:20-21 is perhaps the best example of such measures. Interestingly it treats the *min* even more severely than the ordinary gentile:

> Flesh which is found in the hand of a gentile is allowed for use, in the hand of a Min it is forbidden for use. That which comes from a house of idolatry, lo! This is the flesh of sacrifices to the dead, because they say, 'slaughtering by a Min is idolatry, their bread is Samaritan

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[324] Ibid., pp. 68-69. Herford also points out that "The modern editions of the Talmud, which have been subject to the censor of the press, do not mention the third criminal by name," but that internal evidence alone would suffice to show that Jesus was meant.

> bread, their wine is wine offered to idols, their fruits are not tithed, their books are the books of witchcraft, and their sons are bastards. One does not sell to them, or receive from them, or take from them, or give to them; one does not teach their sons trades, and one does not obtain healing from them, either healing of property or healing of life.

See also Tosefta Shabb 8:5, where with reference specifically to the books of the *minim* despite the fact that they could well include the name of God, it is written: "Even as men do not save their books from burning, so they do not save them from falling, nor from water, nor from anything which destroys them." Having considered some of the halakic proscriptions placed upon the *minim*, this is probably a reasonable place to address Lawrence Schiffman's more fully developed thesis on the role played directly by the Halakah in building the wall that would, in his view, create the "Great Divide."

Schiffman begins his argument by focusing upon what clearly must be seen as one of the longest running arguments in the last two thousand years: "Who is a Jew?" We should note, parenthetically at least, that in the context of the period we are studying, the question would more appropriately have been put: "Who is a member of the House of Israel?" Indeed even Kiddushin 3:12, which Schiffman cites for the proposition that a child's status is determined by that of his mother, i.e., the child of a Jewish mother is Jewish, speaks not of Jews, but of Israelites and Gentiles. Nomenclature aside for the moment, Schiffman dates this conclusion to the time of the Yavneh Sanhedrin and states that, by the same time, the law was equally clear that the child of a non-Jewish woman and a Jewish father was not considered Jewish.[325]

From the tannaitic perspective, the only other way to become a Jew, that is a member of the House of Israel, was to go through a formal conversion. Since at

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[325] Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism," in Sanders, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, p. 120. While Schiffman may be correct on this point, one must nonetheless be aware of his tendency to portray current Orthodox positions as securely grounded in the ancient past.

least the Second Temple period, there have been four basic requirements for such a conversion: Acceptance of the Torah; Circumcision for males; Immersion; and Sacrifice, the last of which was no longer required after the destruction. Yeb 47a-b, describes the conversion process in detail. Based upon the language contained within the relevant baraita, Schiffman makes the reasonable argument that considering,

> ...the language of our baraita with its stress on the persecution and downtrodden nature of Israel it is most likely to have been compose in its present form in the aftermath of either the Great Revolt of 66-74 CE pr the Bar Kokhba revolt (132-5 CE). Regardless of which of these two dates is correct, the baraita reflects the legal rulings prevalent among the Tannaim by the Yavnean period.[326]

Before we continue with Schiffman's reasoning, let us pause to consider these two "methods" of joining the House of Israel, both in comparison and contrast to what was being taught by Paul and the other "apostles to the Gentiles." Although we lack statistical evidence as to actual practice, we know from biblical times that despite the behavior of such notables as Solomon and Moses, Jews were forbidden to marry non-Jews. We know from the story of Dina that if non-Jewish males wanted to marry "into a Jewish family," circumcision was a pre-requisite. Paul, as we observed in Chapter Six, was urging marriage within Christ, or as we might put it today, Christians should only marry Christians. At the same time, Paul was teaching that men could, in fact, enter Christ and thereby the House of Israel, without circumcision.

We also know that once admitted to the House of Israel, there were different limitations on behavior being imposed by the apostles, as opposed to those being required by the Rabbis. Evidence of these Rabbinic restrictions, amplifications of the biblical laws of "kashrut," can certainly be seen in Hullin 2:20, quoted above. In Acts 15:28-29 we find the essence of the apostolic decree "to the brethren who are of the Gentiles" (15:23): "that you abstain from

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[326] Ibid., p.122.

what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and what is strangled and from unchastity."

Consider for a moment of the difficulties that would be posed today by a marriage of an "observant Jew" and a non-Jew. In the period we are examining beyond the practical problems such marriages would have faced, e.g., "Where can we shop? And what can we eat?" they would have led, at a minimum, to the kind of ostracism we still see in Orthodox communities today. Such couples would have found themselves with far less ability to find a community that would accept both members without one or the other making a complete "conversion." Simply put, two competing sets of familial, and thereby community boundaries, were being advanced by two groups of *hct*, the rabbis versus the emissaries of the Resurrected Messiah, and it was now more inevitable than ever that the House they both claimed would soon have to be divided.

Let us return to Schiffman's theory of a halakhically-induced divide. Having established the limited means of entry to the House of Israel, he goes on to argue, again taking a position that is totally consistent with today's Orthodoxy and perhaps equally true for the majority of Reform authors of Responsa, that one cannot lose their Jewish status based either upon beliefs or actions. In differentiating between these last two words, he defines a *heretic* as "one whose beliefs do not accord with those of the established religion to which he claims adherence."[327] An *apostate,* on the other hand, is one whose behavior does not comply with the norms set by this same group.[328] Despite a reasonably linguistic distinction between the two terms, Martin Cohen's caution concerning their use is nonetheless appropriate to keep in mind, particularly in light of Schiffman's reliance upon Sanh 12:5. Cohen writes, "Every subgroup regards all its rivals as inauthentic and therefore heretical. ... Heresy is a rival position which has lost. ... Dispassionately, the term has no place in historiographical reconstruction."[329]

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[327] Ibid., p.139.

[328] Ibid.

[329] Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths,* p. 6.

The Rabbis, on the other hand, were hardly dispassionate historians. Schiffman correctly posits that despite their inability to remove the *minim* from the House of Israel, they felt perfectly free to deny them a place in "the world to come," and instead to sentence them to a life in *Gehenna* (hell!):

> But as to the heretics (*minim*), the apostates *(meshummadidm),* the informers, the *apiqoorsin*, those who denied the Torah, those who separated from the ways of the community, those who denied the resurrection of the dead, and everyone who transgressed and caused the public to transgress..., Gehennna is shut in the faces (or 'before them'), and they are punished in it (Gehenna) for ever and ever. Sanh 12:5

Despite his ultimate conclusion, quoted above, that it was "the halakah which ultimately determined the expulsion of the Christians from the Jewish community,"[330] Schiffman does concede that the Tannaim did not see the "earliest Christians as constituting a separate religious community."[331] Having said this though, his argument for halakic expulsion is nonetheless capped with a discussion of the Birkat HaMinim. Here, he is in the camp of those who date this portion of the Amidah to Jamnia and argue that it was aimed specifically at the Christians. Let us briefly review the pros and cons of this argument.

Schiffman begins his discussion with the often cited baraita from Ber 28b:

> Our rabbis taught: Simeon Ha-Faqoli ordered the Eighteen Benedictions before Rabban Gamaliel in Yavneh. Rabban Gamaliel said to the sages: Is there no one who knows how to compose a benediction against the *minim*? Samuel Ha-Qatan stood up and composed it. Another year (while serving as precentor), he (Samuel Ha-Qatan) forgot it. And tried to recall it for two or three hours, yet they did not remove him.

The argument that this benediction was aimed specifically at the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah, to a great extent, rests upon a finding in the Cairo

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[330] Supra, ft nt 3.

[331] Schiffman, "At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism," in Sanders, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, p. 147.

Geniza of a Palestinian text, which its supporter's contend to be the original version of the blessing. It states:

> For the apostates may there be no hope unless they return to your Torah. As for the *nosrim* and the *minim*, may they perish immediately. Speedily may they be erased from the Book of Life and may they not be registered among the righteous. Blessed are You, O Lord, Who subdue the wicked.

Again, while acknowledging a lack of certainty Schiffman nonetheless concludes that the *minim* were Jewish Christians and the *noserim* were Gentile Christians. As further support for the early dating and applicability of this portion of the Amidah to Gentile Christians, Schiffman and others cite the references in John 9:22, 12:42, and 16:2 that "the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue."

Among the significant number of scholars who deny the early dating of, as well as any applicability to "Gentile Christians" as opposed to Jewish sectarians, is Reuven Kimelman. Kimelman would appear to agree with those scholars who see the use of the word *nosrim*, about which he suggests there is as much scholarly debate as the word *minim*, as a later addition, rather than an earlier version. He concludes, rather matter of factly, that the Birkat HaMinim:

> Was not directed against Gentile Christians, but against Jewish sectarians. The Genizah version which reads *ha-nosrim ve-ha-minim* was primarily directed against Jewish Christians. It is no watershed.[332]

As to the precise timing of the introduction of this "benediction" to the synagogue, it is not clear to the author, which, if either side, actually has the better argument. What is clear is that while the Birkat HaMinim may or may not have contributed to the Division of the House of Israel, once that division had taken place, it certainly would have had the effect of exacerbating the division and tension between the two communities. As the title of this chapter indicates,

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[332] Reuven Kimelman, "Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity" in Sanders, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, vol. 2, p. 226.

when it comes to specific items or events, it will not always be clear whether they were a *cause* or an *effect* of the Dividing of the House of Israel.

The reference to the Birkat HaMinim is not the only indication of liturgical changes tied to *minim*. In Pesahim 56a, there is a discussion concerning the softly spoken verse, "Blessed is his name, whose glorious kingdom is forever and ever," (derived from Ezekiel 3:12) after the first verse of the *Shema*. Once again, it is a teaching from the late third century that we consider: "R. Abahu said, 'The sages enacted that we should recite [Blessed is the name...] aloud because of the murmuring of the *minim*. But in Nehardea, where there are no *minim* they still recite [Blessed..] quietly.'" Rashi explains that the apostates would claim that this statement was consistent with their heretical beliefs, and that therefore the Sages ruled that the prior rationale for whispering "Blessed is the name" had to bend to the imperative of making evident the belief in God's absolute unity. Once again the dating of this discussion is, of course, highly problematic in determining whether in fact it was a cause or an effect.

Similarly, in Berakhot 12a there is a discussion regarding the avoidance of reciting the Ten Commandments immediately after the *Shema*, on the basis that the *minim* would argue that by reciting only the Ten Commandments and no other segment of the Torah, proof would be given to their argument that only these ten commandments, and not the entire Torah, was spoken by God at Sinai. Here, we clearly seem to have the recording of the discussion of an issue that took place far beyond the time period of our study. It is equally true that the same can be said of the overwhelming majority of midrashic material dealing with Jesus and Christianity. It is nonetheless worthwhile to look briefly at a selection or two from this material, at least to get some flavor of later rabbinic treatment of these subjects, before returning also briefly to the Gospels.

By way of example, let us consider *Bereshit Rabbah* 56:4. Here, in the retelling of the story of the Akedah, the Rabbis have Satan warning Isaac of his impending sacrifice, and Isaac replying, "I accept my fate." The polemical contrast is of course to Jesus, and the Gospel's tradition of his having cried out to God, "Why hast thou abandoned me?" We find what is in all likelihood another

polemical response in *Exodus Rabbah* 19:4. It concerns the Paschal Lamb. The eating of the Lamb is tied directly to the covenant of circumcision. Those desiring to share in the paschal lamb are told that they must be circumcised, a command to which they readily ascent. The midrash states that as a result, "the blood of Passover mingled with that of circumcision." The midrash is evidently a response to Christian claims of Jesus having replaced the paschal lamb and to the Christian lack of circumcision.

In the *Mekhilta Shirta* 4 and *Bahodesh* 5, we find a polemical argument opposing what is generally described as the claim of Two Powers in Heaven. Here the Rabbis are responding to their belief that their opponents were compromising the unity of God. While it is possible that this is an issue that arose early on, particularly with gnostic Christians, it is nonetheless important to note here that the concept of the Trinity did not become official Christian doctrine until the Council of Constantinople in the fourth century. Finally, almost as if to come full circle, we find reference in the midrash to the Birkat HaMinim and the requirement that unlike other benedictions within the Amidah, if the precentor omits this benediction, he is required to go back and say it. See Midrash Tanhuma (Buber) Lev. 1:1, Part III.

We return now to our discussion of the impact of the Gospels on the ultimate division of Christians and Jews. While earlier we sought indications from the NT of the formation of separate Christian identities, here we will wish to focus on how the Gospels, when read by *hct* and heard by *lct* would have served to widen the gap between those who had followed the Resurrected Messiah and those who rejected him. Two reference points will be useful as we take a second look at some of these texts. First, let us recall Martin Cohen's first and third principles:

1. The greater the similarity among subgroups, the greater the ferocity of their mutual opposition.

3. Centrists will tolerate orbital deviance as long as they regard it to be no more than a nuisance. As soon as they deem it a menace, they will move to stifle it.[333]

Second, we can place those principles very specifically into our late first to mid-second century context and controversy with the aid of this summary from Ellis Rivkin:

> The parties to the controversy are at one another's throats over issues that would make sense only to those who were members of a community that shared the same basic ideas, concepts, and assumptions. God, revelation, Israel, prophetic visions, Messiah, resurrection—concepts so charged with sanctity and so fraught with life and death—could mean nothing to one who had not been nurtured in Judaism or one who had not been taught its doctrines. Indeed, even when it becomes obvious, as we read our sources, that non-Jews, Gentiles, have become very much a part of the movement, it is nonetheless evident that in the act of becoming a Christian there must have been some exposure to and adoption of such key concepts as God, Israel, Holy Scriptures, Messiah, and resurrection to sustain discourse within the community of Christians.[334]

Not in spite of, but indeed because of, these shared values, the two communities would become more and more openly engaged in a hostile conflict—hostile to the point that Luke, and probably Paul, could believe that just as the "Jews" had been responsible for the murder of the Messiah, they were now planning on murdering a man who had certainly become one of the most important, if not most beloved, among "the brethren." That, of course, is Paul. In Acts 23:12-14, we read:

> [12] In the morning the Jews joined in a conspiracy and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. [13] There were more than forty who joined in this conspiracy. [14] They went to the chief priests

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[333] See Chapter One.

[334] Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus*, p.108.

and elders and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by
an oath to taste no food until we have killed Paul.

Think of the reactions of those in both camps hearing or reading these words, not just the first time, but regularly over some extended period of time. Those who think of themselves as Jews are certainly not likely to respond positively to being accused once again of murder. Those who may have never thought of themselves as "Jews" are certainly not going to think warmly of the people being so accused. "Religious" gatherings around a meal or for purposes of worship were also intended to increase the bonds of fellowship among their participants. Readings or preaching that could only serve to set one part of such a group gathering against another had to have played a substantial role in leading members of both groups to believe that their meetings would be more hospitable if held separately.

As the polemical nature of these readings intensified, it is surely likely that those involved would come to see themselves as separate peoples; each, however, believed that *theirs* was the true House of Israel. It is true that the dating of Acts is too early for us to conclude, based on passages like the above, that the division had already taken place. On the other hand, I believe that the words themselves and their circulation (whether orally or in written form) contributed to the ultimate division.

Romans 11:25-29 may represent the best example of Paul's almost schizophrenic treatment of a "part of Israel." Specifically, in verses 28-29 those receiving the message would hear: "As regards the gospel they [the Jews] are enemies of God for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." Would not the most likely sound bite from this part of Paul's letter be that the Jews are the enemies of God? Never mind that they will be saved for the sake of their ancestors; they are nonetheless God's enemies. Once again we have language that over time could only contribute to enmity, and, ultimately a total division between the two communities.

Consider also the bitter words placed in the mouth of Jesus in *Matthew* Chapter 23. In verse 23 the term "rabbi" is disparaged; in verses 13, 23, 25, 27, and 29, the scribes and Pharisees are "hypocrites" who "lock people out of the kingdom of heaven;" in verse 17 "blind fools;" and verse 33 "snakes and vipers." It is not difficult to agree with those who argue that, in the context of the times that this language was written, it could not be classified as "anti-Semitic." It should be equally easy to see how such language would only serve to divide those to whom it was addressed from those who were being portrayed. There is, of course, no other more damning condemnation of the "Jews" than that in which Matthew has "the people" declare in 27:25: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." While the true danger of this passage may have taken centuries to become visible, it is easy enough to see once again its divisive impact from its earliest usage.

The Gospel of Luke not only continues to disparage the Pharisees as "self righteous"(18:9-14), and "lovers of money" (16:14), but as Elaine Pagals explains, while "all of the New Testament gospels" "depict Jesus' execution as the culmination of the struggle between good and evil--between God and Satan," "Luke says what Mark and Matthew imply."[335] While in John Satan places Jesus' betrayal into the heart of Judas, it is only in the Gospel of Luke that Satan literally "entered" Judas. The parallel texts of Mark and Matthew contain no such reference. As Pagals observes, "Spiritual warfare between God and Satan—which is reflected in conflict between Jesus and his followers and the Jewish leaders—intensifies throughout the gospel."[336] As these Gospels circulate, they introduce an ultimately far more dangerous level of polemic than referring to a group's leaders as "fools" and "hypocrites,"- that is, the equating of the Jews and their leaders with Satan. John further escalates the rhetoric by having Jesus tell those Jews who would question him that they are "of their father, the devil" (John

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[335] Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York, 1995), p. 12.

[336] Ibid., p. 91.

8:44). Of course, in all likelihood, Jesus never uttered these words; rather they reflect the growing tensions between the two communities.

John also gives recognition to a "theological" development that clearly would have served to further divide his community from those that had rejected the Resurrected Messiah. In both 5:18 (quoted below) and 10:33, John has the Jews reacting negatively to Jesus' claim to be equal to God:

> For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

Once again, it seems highly unlikely that Jesus himself would ever have made such a claim. On the other hand, that such a belief would have become a major point of contention between John's community and neighboring Jewish communities is virtually certain. Here again, we see how "world view," the predecessor to theology, served to divide groups of people. Thus, in John's view, those who refused to recognize the divine nature of Jesus no longer deserved the right to be called the People of God, or Israel. Obviously, the Rabbis had a different view.

As these communities grew more and more estranged, and as each developed its own *miranda* and *credenda,* the times were growing more and more ripe for events to provide a line of demarcation that would help historians, if not the people themselves, recognize that they were no longer of "one house." That line, though perhaps not as bright as we might like, will be the Bar Kokhba rebellion. It is a rebellion that begins in 132 and lasts approximately three years.

Among consequences of this nationalistic uprising was the murder by Bar Kokhba and his supporters of those "Jewish Christians" living in Palestine who refused to join in the war effort. Unlike the Great Revolt of 66-70, we have no equivalent of Josephus to help us understand this war in detail. Even Bar Kokhba's name is in dispute. The very designation "Bar-Kokhba" translated as "son of a star," with its obvious messianic overtones, is one found only in references by the Church Fathers. In Jewish sources, he is Bar Koziba, "son of a liar," or "deceiver." Still it is Rabbi Aqiba who considers him to be "King

Messiah."[337] The idea that the war itself was fueled by Messianic fever would certainly appear to be true.

Dio Cassius, sixty to eighty years later, attributed the revolt to Hadrian"s decision to build Aelia Capitolina on the ruins of Jerusalem and to erect a temple to Jupiter there. Spartianus, writing even later, considered the cause to be Hadrian's prohibition on circumcision.[338] Either way, the War was brutal, with Cassius claiming that 985 villages were destroyed and almost 600,000 people killed. With so many Jews fighting and dying in a war in which the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah refused to participate, it seems realistic that after the War was over and once again the Jews had to regroup, that those who had refused to join them, and yet who still spoke of a return of their own Messiah, would hardly be welcomed within the same community.

It would also seem logical that those Followers of the Resurrected Messiah that survived within Israel would not only be loathe to call attention to their own identity, but that it would be equally dangerous to seek new recruits at such a time. As the Rabbis of Jamnia were quickly able to reassert their authority, such attempts, if they were ever made, would have appeared more and more futile. So whether by death in War or natural attrition "Christian" involvement in Palestine would seem to have come to a natural ending.

Similarly, it would make sense that, throughout the Roman Empire, the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah would want to go to greater and greater lengths to disassociate themselves from yet another Jewish rebellion. As the emissaries of Jamnia continued to gain in influence, and their teachings more and more dominated synagogue and communal life, it would become painfully obvious to the Followers of the Resurrected Messiah that their efforts to gain converts were proving to be far more successful among those who never considered themselves Jews than among those who had. While the God-fearers would still have been a group susceptible to their message, the majority of

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[337] Lamentations Rabbah 2:2.

[338] Yigael Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba* (New York, 1971), p. 21.

synagogue members would by now have clearly rejected the newer, as yet "uncanonized," Gospels. Though we find no smoking gun, it would appear appropriate to say that "separate dies" had by now "been cast." By the time Bar Kokhba's War had drawn to a close, from our historical perspective, it would appear that The House of Israel had been divided.

APPENDIX

JOSEPHUS QUOTATIONS

I FALSE PROPHETS

Antiquities 14:9:2
And seeing that Hyrcanus was of a slow and slothful temper, he made Phasaelus, his eldest son, governor of Jerusalem, and of the places that were about it, but committed Galilee to Herod, his next son, who was then a very young man, for he was but fifteen years of age But that youth of his was no impediment to him; but as he was a youth of great mind, he presently met with an opportunity of signalizing his courage; for finding that there was one Hezekiah, a captain of a band of robbers, who overran the neighboring parts of Syria with a great troop of them, he seized him and slew him, as well as a great number of the other robbers that were with him; for which action he was greatly beloved by the Syrians; for when they were very desirous to have their country freed from this nest of robbers, he purged it of them.

Antiquities 14:9:3
For Herod, Antipater's son, hath slain Hezekiah, and those that were with him, and hath thereby transgressed our law, which hath forbidden to slay any man, even though he were a wicked man, unless he had been first condemned to suffer death by the Sanhedrim yet hath he been so insolent as to do this, and that without any authority from thee.

Wars 5:1:2
There was also with him Hezekiah, the son of Chobar, a person of eminence. Each of these were followed by a great many of the zealots; these seized upon the inner court of the temple and laid their arms upon the holy gates, and over the holy fronts of that court. And because they had plenty of provisions, they were of good courage, for there was a great abundance of what was consecrated to sacred uses, and they scrupled not the making use of them; yet were they afraid, on account of their small number; and when they had laid up their arms there, they did not stir from the place they were in.

Wars 2.8
And now Archelaus's part of Judea was reduced into a province, and Coponius, one of the equestrian order among the Romans, was sent as a procurator, having the power of [life and] death put into his hands by Caesar. Under his administration it was that a certain Galilean, whose name was Judas, prevailed with his countrymen to revolt, and said they were cowards if they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans and would after God submit to mortal men as their lords. This man was a teacher of a peculiar sect of his own, and was not at all like the rest of those their leaders. (d.c. 6 C.E.)

Wars 2.17
8. In the mean time, one Manahem, the son of Judas, that was called the Galilean, (who was a very cunning sophister, and had formerly reproached the Jews under Cyrenius, that after God they were subject to the Romans,) took some of the men of note with him, and retired to Masada, where he broke open king Herod's armory, and gave arms not only to his own people, but to other robbers also. These he made use of for a guard, and returned in the state of a king to Jerusalem; he became the leader of the sedition, and gave orders for continuing the siege; but they wanted proper instruments, and it was not practicable to undermine the wall, because the darts came down upon them from above.

Antiquities 20:5:2
Under these procurators that great famine happened in Judea, in which queen Helena bought corn in Egypt at a great expense, and distributed it to those that were in want, as I have related already. And besides this, the sons of Judas of Galilee were now slain; I mean of that Judas who caused the people to revolt, when Cyrenius came to take an account of the estates of the Jews, as we have showed in a foregoing book. The names of those sons were James and Simon, whom Alexander commanded to be crucified. But now Herod, king of Chalcis, removed Joseph, the son of Camydus, from the high priesthood, and made Ananias, the son of Nebedeu, his successor.

Wars 6.5.2
A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose on the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God; and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. Now a man that is in adversity does easily comply with such promises; for when such a seducer makes him believe that he shall be delivered from those miseries which oppress him, then it is that the patient is full of hopes of such his deliverance. (70 CE)

Wars 7.5.5
This general was Simon, the son of Gioras, who had then been led in this triumph among the captives; a rope had also been put upon his head, and he had been drawn into a proper place in the forum, and had withal been tormented by those that drew him along; and the law of the Romans required that malefactors condemned to die should be slain there. Accordingly, when it was related that there was an end of him, and all the people had set up a shout for joy, they then began to offer those sacrifices which they had consecrated, in the

prayers used in such solemnities; which when they had finished, they went away to the palace. (70CE)

Wars 7.8.1
Again, therefore, what mischief was there which Simon the son of Gioras did not do? Or what kind of abuses did he abstain from as to those very free-men who had set him up for a tyrant? What friendship or kindred were there that did not make him more bold in his daily murders? for they looked upon the doing of mischief to strangers only as a work beneath their courage, but thought their barbarity towards their nearest relations would be a glorious demonstration thereof

Antiquities Book 18 Chapt. 1
1. Yet was there one Judas, a Gaulonite, of a city whose name was Gamala, who, taking with him Sadduc, a Pharisee, became zealous to draw them to a revolt, who both said that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty; as if they could procure them happiness and security for what they possessed, and an assured enjoyment of a still greater good, which was that of the honor and glory they would thereby acquire for magnanimity. They also said that God would not otherwise be assisting to them, than upon their joining with one another in such councils as might be successful, and for their own advantage; and this especially, if they would set about great exploits, and not grow weary in executing the same; so men received what they said with pleasure, and this bold attempt proceeded to a great height. All sorts of misfortunes also sprang from these men, and the nation was infected with this doctrine to an incredible degree; one violent war came upon us after another, and we lost our friends which used to alleviate our pains; there were also very great robberies and murder of our principal men. This was done in pretense indeed for the public welfare, but in reality for the hopes of gain to themselves; whence arose seditions, and from them murders of men, which sometimes fell on those of their own people, (by the madness of these men towards one another, while their desire was that none of the adverse party might be left,) and sometimes on their enemies; a famine also coming upon us, reduced us to the last degree of despair, as did also the taking and demolishing of cities; nay, the sedition at last increased so high, that the very temple of God was burnt down by their enemies' fire. Such were the consequences of this, that the customs of our fathers were altered, and such a change was made, as added a mighty weight toward bringing all to destruction, which these men occasioned by their thus conspiring together; for Judas and Sadduc, who excited a fourth philosophic sect among us, and had a great many followers therein, filled our civil government with tumults at present, and laid the foundations of our future miseries, by this system of philosophy, which we were before unacquainted withal, concerning which I will discourse a little, and this the rather because the infection which spread thence among the younger sort, who were zealous for it, brought the public to destruction.

6. But of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy, Judas the Galilean was the author. These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man lord. And since this immovable resolution of theirs is well known to a great many, I shall speak no further about that matter; nor am I afraid that any thing I have said of them should be disbelieved, but rather fear, that what I have said is beneath the resolution they show when they undergo pain.

Antiquities *Book 20 Chapt 5*
1. Now it came to pass, while Fadus was procurator of Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was Theudas, persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan; for he told them he was a prophet, and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it; and many were deluded by his words. However, Fadus did not permit them to make any advantage of his wild attempt, but sent a troop of horsemen out against them; who, falling upon them unexpectedly, slew many of them, and took many of them alive. They also took Theudas alive, and cut off his head, and carried it to Jerusalem. This was what befell the Jews in the time of Cuspius Fadus's government. (44–46)

Antiquities 20.8.6
6. These works, that were done by the robbers, filled the city with all sorts of impiety. And now these impostors and deceivers persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness, and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God. And many that were prevailed on by them suffered the punishments of their folly; for Felix brought them back, and then punished them. Moreover, there came out of Egypt about this time to Jerusalem one that said he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with him to the Mount of Olives, as it was called, which lay over against the city, and at the distance of five furlongs. He said further, that he would show them from hence how, at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down; and he promised them that he would procure them an entrance into the city through those walls, when they were fallen down. Now when Felix was informed of these things, he ordered his soldiers to take their weapons, and came against them with a great number of horsemen and footmen from Jerusalem, and attacked the Egyptian and the people that were with him. He also slew four hundred of them, and took two hundred alive. But the Egyptian himself escaped out of the fight, but did not appear any more. And again the robbers stirred up the people to make war with the Romans, and said they ought not to obey them at all; and when any persons would not comply with them, they set fire to their villages, and plundered them. (time of °FELIX, ANTONIUS, procurator of Judea 52–60 C.E.)

II JUDAISM

Against Apion 2:18
Accordingly, he made a fixed rule of law what sorts of food they should abstain from, and what sorts they should make use of; as also, what communion they should have with others what great diligence they should use in their occupations, and what times of rest should be interposed, that, by living under that law as under a father and a master, we might be guilty of no sin, neither voluntary nor out of ignorance; for he did not suffer the guilt of ignorance to go on without punishment, but demonstrated the law to be the best and the most necessary instruction of all others, permitting the people to leave off their other employments, and to assemble together for the hearing of the law, and learning it exactly, and this not once or twice, or oftener, but every week; which thing all the other legislators seem to have neglected.

III SECTS

1 Pharisees

Life of Flavius 2
I returned back to the city, being now nineteen years old, and began to conduct myself according to the rules of the sect of the Pharisees, which is of kin to the sect of the Stoics, as the Greeks call them.

Antiquities 13:10:5
The Pharisees, who were one of the sects of the Jews, as we have informed you already. These have so great a power over the multitude, that when they say any thing against the king, or against the high priest, they are presently believed.

Antiquities 13:10:6
What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers. And concerning these things it is that great disputes and differences have arisen among them, while the Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side.

Antiquities 17:2:4
For there was a certain sect of men that were Jews, who valued themselves highly upon the exact skill they had in the law of their fathers, and made men believe they were highly favored by God, by whom this set of women were inveigled. These are those that are called the sect of the Pharisees, who were in a capacity of greatly opposing kings. A cunning sect they were, and soon elevated to a pitch of open fighting and doing mischief. Accordingly, when all the people of the Jews gave assurance of their good-will to Caesar, and to the king's government, these very men did not swear, being above six thousand; and when the king imposed a fine upon them, Pheroras's wife paid their fine for them. In order to requite which kindness of hers, since they were believed to have the foreknowledge of things to come by Divine inspiration, they foretold how God had decreed that Herod's government should cease, and his posterity should be deprived of it; but that the kingdom should come to her and Pheroras, and to their children. These predictions were not concealed from Salome, but were told the king; as also how they had perverted some persons about the palace itself; so the king slew such of the Pharisees as were principally accused, and Bagoas the eunuch, and one Carus, who exceeded all men of that time in comeliness, and one that was his catamite. He slew also all those of his own family who had consented to what the Pharisees foretold

Antiquities 18:1:3
Now, for the Pharisees, they live meanly, and despise delicacies in diet; and they follow the conduct of reason; and what that prescribes to them as good for them they do; and they think they ought earnestly to strive to observe reason's dictates for practice. They also pay a respect to such as are in years; nor are they so bold as to contradict them in any thing which they have introduced; and when they determine that all things are done by fate, they do not take away the freedom from men of acting as they think fit; since their notion is, that it hath pleased God to make a temperament, whereby what he wills is done, but so that the will of man can act virtuously or viciously. They also believe that souls have an immortal rigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but that the former shall have power to revive and live again; on account of which doctrines they are able greatly to persuade the body of the people; and whatsoever they do about Divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, they perform them according to their direction; in so much that the cities give great attestations to them on account of their entire virtuous conduct, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also.

Wars 2:8:14
14. But then as to the two other orders at first mentioned, the Pharisees are those who are esteemed most skillful in the exact explication of their laws, and introduce the first sect. These ascribe all to fate [or providence], and to God, and yet allow, that to act what is right, or the contrary, is principally in the power of men, although fate does co-operate in every action. They say that all souls are incorruptible, but that the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies, — but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment. ... Moreover, the Pharisees are friendly to one another, and are for the exercise of concord, and regard for the public; but the behavior of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degree wild, and their conversation with those that are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them. And this is what I had to say concerning the philosophic sects among the Jews.

Wars 2:17:3
3. Hereupon the men of power got together, and conferred with the high priests, as did also the principal of the Pharisees; and thinking all was at stake, and that their calamities were becoming incurable, took counsel what was to be done. Accordingly, they determined to try what they could do with the seditious by words, and assembled the people before the brazen gate, which was that gate of the inner temple [court of the priests, which looked toward the sun-rising. And, in the first place, they showed the great indignation they had at this attempt for a revolt, and for their bringing so great a war upon their country; after which they confuted their pretense as unjustifiable, and told them that their forefathers had adorned their temple in great part with donations bestowed on them by foreigners, and had always received what had been presented to them from foreign nations; and that they had been so far from rejecting any person's sacrifice (which would be the highest instance of impiety,) that they had themselves placed those donation about the temple which were still visible, and had remained there so long a time; that they did now irritate the Romans to take arms against them, and invited them to make war upon them, and brought up novel rules of a strange Divine worship, and determined to run the hazard of having their city condemned for impiety, while they would not allow any foreigner, but Jews only, either to sacrifice or to worship therein. And if such a law should be introduced in the case of a single private person only, he would have indignation at it, as an instance of inhumanity determined against him; while they have no regard to the Romans or to Caesar, and forbid even their oblations to be received also; that however they cannot but fear, lest, by thus rejecting their sacrifices, they shall not be allowed to offer their own; and that this city will lose its principality, unless they grow wiser quickly, and restore the sacrifices as formerly, and indeed amend the injury [they have offered foreigners] before the report of it comes to the ears of those that have been injured.

2 SADDUCEES

Antiquities 13:10:7
Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side.

Antiquities 18:1:4
But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of any thing besides what the law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent: but this doctrine is received but by a few, yet by those still of the greatest dignity. But they are able to do almost nothing of themselves; for when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly and by force sometimes obliged to be, they addict themselves to the notions of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear them.

Wars 2:8:14
But the Sadducees are those that compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to every one, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades.

3 ESSENES

Antiquities 18:1:5
The doctrine of the Essenes is this: That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for; and when they send what they have dedicated to God into the temple, they do not offer sacrifices because they have more pure lustrations of their own; on which account they are excluded from the common court of the temple, but offer their sacrifices themselves; yet is their course of life better than that of other men; and they entirely addict themselves to husbandry. It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men that addict themselves to virtue, and this in righteousness; and indeed to such a degree, that as it hath never appeared among any other men, neither Greeks nor barbarians, no, not for a little time, so hath it endured a long while among them. This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs, which will not suffer any thing to hinder them from having all things in common; so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who hath nothing at all. There are about four thousand

men that live in this way, and neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep servants; as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels; but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another. They also appoint certain stewards to receive the incomes of their revenues, and of the fruits of the ground; such as are good men and priests, who are to get their corn and their food ready for them. They none of them differ from others of the Essenes in their way of living, but do the most resemble those Dacae who are called *Polistae* [dwellers in cities].

Wars 2:8:2-6

Essenes. These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have. These Essenes reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning, and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behavior of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man.

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

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

although there be no requital made, they are fully allowed to take what they want of whomsoever they please.

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

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

4 THE FOURTH PHILOSOPHY

Antiquities 18:1:1
Judas and Sadduc, who excited a fourth philosophic sect among us, and had a great many followers therein, filled our civil government with tumults at present, and laid the foundations of our future miseries, by this system of philosophy, which we were before unacquainted withal, concerning which I will discourse a little, and this the rather because the infection which spread thence among the younger sort, who were zealous for it, brought the public to destruction.

Antiquities 18:1:6
But of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy, Judas the Galilean was the author. These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man lord. And since this immovable resolution of theirs is well known to a great many, I shall speak no further about that matter; nor am I afraid that any thing I have said of them should be disbelieved, but rather fear, that what I have said is beneath the resolution they show when they undergo pain. And it was in Gessius Florus's time that the nation began to grow mad with this distemper, who was our procurator, and who occasioned the Jews to go wild with it by the abuse of his authority, and to make them revolt from the Romans. And these are the sects of Jewish philosophy.

War of the Jews: 7.8.1
It was one Eleazar, a potent man, and the commander of these Sicarii, that had seized upon it. He was a descendant from that Judas who had persuaded abundance of the Jews, as we have formerly related, not to submit to the taxation when Cyrenius was sent into Judea to make one; for then it was that the Sicarii got together against those that were willing to submit to the Romans, and treated them in all respects as if they had been their enemies, both by plundering them of what they had, by driving away their cattle, and by setting fire to their houses; for they said that they differed not at all from foreigners, by betraying, in so cowardly a manner, that freedom which Jews thought worthy to be contended for to the utmost, and by owning that they preferred slavery under the Romans before such a contention.

Jesus

Antiquities 18:3:3
Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. *He was [the] Christ.* And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; *for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him.* And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day

Antiquities 20:5:1
Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrim without his consent. Whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.

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