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Theories of Jesus as a Jewish Nationalist: An Analysis of the Scholarship in the Light of Jewish and Christian Sources

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1976

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination.

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Digest

Determining the motives of Jesus in his first century Jewish context is a formidable if not precarious task. Demands of objectivity require us to examine not only the story of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to survey and evaluate the spectrum of scholarship on this confusing era, and to analyze these views in the light of both Jewish and Christian sources.

This thesis is a study of theories espousing Jesus' role as a Jewish nationalist. The first chapter presents the testimony of our sources on first century Jewish nationalism-- particularly Josephus, rabbinic literature and the Gospels-- and analyzes the exceptionally difficult problems they pose for us; the second chapter treats the scholarship on Jesus as a Jewish nationalist (with particular attention to the theories of Robert Eisler and S.G.F. Brandon); and the third chapter advances our critical analysis of the evidence and opinions provided in the first two chapters.

Our attempt is not to <u>prove</u> that Jesus was sympathetic to the cause of Jewish nationalism but only to demonstrate the <u>plausibility</u> of Jesus' having nationalistic sympathies. We believe this to be a distinctive and more sober approach than are many of the theories which purport to prove Jesus' affinities with any given special philosophy. We will allege that Jesus must have been aware of and must naturally have resented the oppressive atmosphere of the Roman occupation,

that he must have supported the idea of his people achieving their independence from the harsh Roman yoke and the hypocritical priestly aristocracy, that he very likely did approve the political overthrow of the Temple. In this secular mission he was unsuccessful and was therefore crucified as a political, seditious prisoner of the Roman state.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express his appreciation to the HUC library staff for its cooperation in providing resources for this thesis. He is also grateful to Marsha Bernstein for her patience in the typing of this very technical manuscript. However, most importantly, he would like to express his indebtedness to Professor Michael J. Cook, whose assistance and collaboration in this enterprise were invaluable. Professor Cook certainly deserves credit for the time he has devoted to the structure and editing of this manuscript.

Finally, and always, the author wishes to thank his wife, Deborah, for being his inspiration in this and any endeavor he shall undertake. Her patience, understanding, encouragement and love make all things possible.

Richard S. Chapin

Cincinnati, 1976

Chapter 1

The Emergence of Jewish Nationalism in the First Century C.E.

During the first century C.E., Jewish nationalist groups emerged in Palestine. These groups, appearing in our sources under a variety of titles, generated an active Jewish resistance against the Roman occupation, culminating in the great revolt against Rome in 66 C.E. The major primary sources, wherein these groups are defined and described, are, primarily, Josephus (in his Wars, Antiquities and Life) and, secondarily, Rabbinic literature and the Gospels.

The Testimony of Our Sources

Josephus first mentions a nationalist group or sect in his Wars, in connection with the administration of the first procurator, Coponius, following the banishment of Archelaus in 6 C.E.

> Under his [Coponius'] 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.[1]

Since Josephus defines the three existing philosophical sects among the Jews (Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes) in the very next paragraph,[2] it would seem that this sect of Judas was the fourth philosophy which Josephus mentions in the Antiquities.

In this later source, Josephus reiterates the story of Judas and his followers, explicitly terming them "a fourth philosophic sect," expanding more on its unfavorable aspects here than in the Wars. Josephus also mentions a certain Sadduc here, a Pharisee who together with Judas became "zealous" to draw the Jews into a revolt, and "exhorted the nation to assert their liberty."[3] Again Josephus harshly describes this sect:

> All sorts of misfortunes also sprang from these men, and the nation was infected with this doctrine to an incredible degree;... the sedition at last increased so high, that the very temple of God was burnt down by their enemies' fire.[4]

Again referring to Judas' sect as the fourth Jewish philosophy, Josephus reveals further important data about this nationalist group:

> ...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.[5]

In describing a later period in which Felix was procurator in Judea, Josephus mentions and defines a series of similarly troublesome groups. One he calls simply "robbers" (lestai), followed by "another sort of robbers... which were called Sicarii." Felix disposed of the former handily, sending "Eleazar the arch-robber, and the many that... ravaged the country" with him to Rome, and causing many a crucifixion.[6] As for the Sicarii, Josephus describes them as follows:

> When the country was purged of these, there sprang up another sort of robbers in Jerusalem, which were called Sicarii, who slew men in the day time, and in the midst of the city; this they did chiefly at the festivals, when they mingled themselves among the multitude, and concealed daggers under their garments, with which they stabbed those that were their enemies....The first man slain by them was Jonathan the high priest, after whose death many were slain every day....[7]

Josephus next recounts still another subversive group:

> There was also another body of wicked men gotten together, not so impure in their actions, but more wicked in their intentions, which laid waste the happy state of the city no less than did these murderers. These were such men as deceived and deluded the people under pretense of divine inspiration, but were for procuring innovations and changes of the government; and these prevailed with the multitude to act like madmen, and went before them into the wilderness, as pretending that God would show them the signals of liberty. But Felix thought this procedure was to be the beginning of a revolt; so he sent some horsemen and footmen both armed, who destroyed a great number of them.[8]

As can be anticipated, charismatic figures with sizable followings were bound to be considered dangerous and threatening to the Roman government. Josephus shows these fears to be justified in his very next paragraph.

> But there was an Egyptian false prophet that did the Jews more mischief than the former; for he was a cheat, and pretended to be a prophet also, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him; these he led round about from the wilderness to the mount which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place; and if he could but once conquer the Roman garrison and the people, he intended to domineer over them by the assistance of those guards of his that were to break into the city with him.

> But Felix prevented his attempt, and met him with Roman soldiers, while all the people assisted him in his attack upon them, insomuch that when it came to a battle, the Egyptian ran away with a few others, while the greatest part of those that were with him were either destroyed or taken alive.9

In Antiquities Josephus describes another "false" prophet named Theudas:

> 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.... They also took Theudas alive, and cut off his head and carried it to Jerusalem.10

An accurate understanding of the role of nationalist groups in the revolt of 66 begins with a consideration of Florus, who earlier that year became procurator of Judea and openly tried to induce the Jews to a rebellion.[11] There occurred an incident of a Gentile sacrificing birds before a synagogue, thereby breaking Jewish law and polluting the place of the synagogue. The Jews retreated to Narbata after near violence.[12] But Florus aggravated the incident by taking 17 talents out of the sacred treasure.[13] The people first protested peaceably but Florus slew 3600 of them.[14] Agrippa (II) tried to soothe the Jews with a magnificent harangue on why the Jews should ultimately pay the required tribute to Rome, but the Jews hated Florus and not the Romans.

The die had been cast however, for the people rebelled against Florus. Masada was assaulted and taken by the Jews, and Eleazar, the governor of the Temple, persuaded the priests not to receive gifts or sacrifices for any foreigner. According to Josephus, this prohibition of foreign sacrifices was the act which precipitated the great war, for now the sacrifice of Caesar was rejected. The men of power tried to convince the radicals of the importance of maintaining foreign sacrifices but they failed.[17] The two factions eventually opposed each other, the men of power taking the upper city, Mt. Zion, while the seditious part captured the lower city.[18]

The people were later urged on to pursue war by John of Gischala. Josephus paints a bleak picture, describing seditions everywhere. He relates that the captains of these "robbers" gathered together in a "band of wickedness" and took over the city by killing the most important men in Jerusalem.[19] Afterwards the robbers took over the job of appointing high priests and thus secured control over the office.[20] Josephus calls these seditionists "zealots," as he tells how Ananus, the high priest, "encouraged the multitude to go against the zealots."[21]

When Josephus describes the Roman siege of Masada he defines again the Sicarii and Zealots. Eleazar, Josephus says, "was a descendant from that Judas who had persuaded abundance of the Jews... not to submit to the taxation when Cyrenius was sent into Judea to make one."[22] He led the Sicarii who seized Masada. Then Josephus states:

> They ... cut the throats of the high priests; ... they thence proceeded to destroy utterly the least remains of a political government, and introduced the most complete scene of iniquity in all instances, under which scene that sort of people that were called Zealots grew up, and who indeed corresponded to the name; for they imitated every wicked work.... Accordingly, they all met with such ends as God deservedly brought upon them in way of punishment.[23]

On the basis of reading Josephus alone, therefore, there certainly seems to emerge a wide spectrum of nationalist groups operating in the first century C.E. Judas' sect of 6 C.E.: the fourth Jewish philosophy; Eleazar's robbers; the Sicarii, who first began by assassinating Jonathan the high priest; wicked men or false prophets; other seditionists or robbers or zealots who pursued the war against Rome; and Eleazar's Sicarii who were with him in his defense of Masada. This activity was, according to Josephus, extensive and generally of a violent political temperament; its vibrations resounded throughout the entire country, inciting the people to rebellion and sedition against the Roman government.

#

The two most important rabbinic sources attesting to Jewish nationalist uprising against Rome are the Talmudic tractate Gittin and the Aboth de R. Nathan. In Gittin 56a, the word "Birjonim" appears. According to the Soncino edition, "Birjonim" refers to "the Zealot bands who defended Jerusalem."[24] These "birjonim" burned the food supplies which had been allocated for the Jewish people of Jerusalem, and they adamantly refused to make peace with the Romans.

Abba Sikra (possibly, "father of the Sicarii"), was the head of the "Birjonim" and, according to Talmudic tradition, the nephew of Yoḥanan b. Zakkai, who counseled surrender to the Romans as a means of saving the people. Yoḥanan's speech to Vespasian, following his escape from Jerusalem, vividly evidences the rabbis' disapproval of the violent, revolutionary activity of the "Birjonim."

In Aboth de R. Nathan, chapter 4, Yoḥanan b. Zakkai is pictured as a complete loyalist to Rome. Whereas, in Gittin, he first predicts Vespasian's imperial future, and is then rewarded with Yavneh, here the order is reversed. Regardless, both rabbinic sources attest to the activity of subversives against Rome in the 60's.

An even earlier such figure, active in the 40's and 50's, is mentioned in Mishnah Sota:

> When murderers multiplied the ceremony of breaking a heifer's neck was discontinued. That was when Eleazar b. Dinai, also called Tehina b. Perishah, appeared. He was afterwards named "son of the murderer."[25]

Josephus confirms that a certain Eleazar b. Dineus, a "robber," who lived in the mountains, led the Galileans on raids against the Samaritans.[26]

These, then, are the major rabbinic allusions to those first century figures to whom Josephus gives such prominence.

#

The New Testament testimony relevant to this discussion issues from Gospel references to <u>lestai</u> (usually rendered "robbers").

In the "Cleansing of the Temple" scene in all three Synoptic Gospels (Mk. 11:17; Mt. 21:13; Lk. 19:46), Jesus cites Scripture (from Jeremiah 7:11 and Isaiah 56:7) to the effect that the Temple has become a "den of robbers." Is Jesus accusing the men of actual thievery?[27] or is he suggesting that the Temple has become a hotbed for political and revolutionary activity?[28] Since Jesus is quoting Scripture, the usage very likely bears no relation to the nationalist groups filling the land during this period.

Undoubtedly, the word "robbers" in New Testament usage almost always connotes what we would normally infer: a thief, a plunderer or a highwayman (as, e.g., in Lk. 10:30, 36; Jn. 10:1,8; and 2 Cor. 11:26). But in the "betrayal scene" (Mk. 14:48; Mt. 26:55; Lk. 22:52), the Synoptic usage could be interpreted along political lines. For when Jesus and his disciples are approached by Judas and a crowd armed with swords and clubs, Jesus rejects the use of the sword and asks rhetorically, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me?" This statement sharply contrasts with an earlier passage in Luke (22:35-38) in which Jesus directs the disciples to arm themselves with swords before they go toward Gethsemane. If Jesus intended peaceful submission, how are we to understand his instructions to go armed? The disciples do first defend themselves against Judas and the priests and the elders. They seem poised for a fight until Jesus submits without a struggle to his captors. Has the image of a pacific Christ been superimposed by the

tradition on a historical nucleus of a radically different tenor? If so, the statement, "Have you come out as against a robber...?" may preserve a usage of λῃστης akin to that in Josephus.

Probably the most compelling evidence in the Gospels of political activism against the Romans lies in the scenes where Jesus is sentenced and crucified. In John 18:40, the Jews clamor for the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. Then John adds the redundant words, "Now Barabbas was a robber"-- in other words "a political revolutionary, a 'bandit-patriot'."[29] If this tradition-- that is, that the people asked for Barabbas-- is trustworthy, it would attest to the nationalist and revolutionary sentiment of the people who preferred Barabbas, an activist and a revolutionary figure, to Jesus, the man opposed to violence.

In Mk. 15:27 and Mt. 27:38, Jesus is crucified between two robbers.[30] Apparently, he was grouped with them as if he were one of their kind. If these two robbers were more than simply thieves or highwaymen (and it seems obvious that in this serious a context they must have committed a far greater offense against Rome), then Jesus was, very likely, similarly considered by Rome: a "robber" guilty of seditious and revolutionary plans. Why then was he reviled by the crucified "robbers"? Was it because he had not truly behaved as a political revolutionary, as a "King of the Jews" against Rome, but had rather opposed the use of violent tactics?

Problems Occasioned by Our Sources

Our major sources, as surveyed above, must not be used uncritically. Each bring to bear its own tendencies or biases which we must now examine.

Josephus presents us with numerous difficulties both as a man and an author. There seems to be no question, however, that he was an apologist for Rome, a fact definitely influencing his attitude toward the Jewish nationalist groups who we find are repeatedly denigrated by him. Let us examine and evaluate a few of these personal harangues.

In describing the fourth philosophical sect, founded by Judas in 6 C.E., Josephus informs us that they fought for liberty from the Romans under God's name. Then he states:

> All sorts of misfortunes also sprang from these men.... There were also very great robberies and murders of our principal men. This was done in pretense indeed for the public welfare, but in reality from the hopes of gain to themselves.... 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 foundation of our future miseries....[31]

Further on in Antiquities Josephus states:

> Now as for the affairs of the Jews, they grew worse and worse continually, for the country was again filled with robbers and impostors, who deluded the multitude.[32]

In the preface to his earlier work, Wars, Josephus explicitly denigrates the nationalist sentiment in Palestine. He writes:

> ... I... must be allowed to indulge some lamentations upon the miseries undergone by my own country. For... it was a seditious temper of our own that destroyed it.... They were the tyrants among the Jews who brought the Roman power upon us, who unwillingly

> attacked us, and occasioned the burning of our holy temple....[33]

Unquestionably, Josephus blames Palestine's troubles with Rome on the Jewish nationalist groups. However certain contradictions in his works suggest to modern historians the role the Jewish nationalists actually did play in the unfolding drama.

A glaring contradiction emerges, for example, in Josephus' two descriptions of his mission to the Galilee in 66 C.E. In his Wars, Josephus maintains that he was sent to the Galilee for the purpose of organizing the army to fight against the Romans. However in his Life he asserts that the authorities in Jerusalem, apprehensive of the power of the bandits and revolutionaries, sent him to Galilee to dissuade the people from revolt. It was in other words, a peace-making mission.

M. I. Finley,[34] B. Niese,[35] and H. St. J. Thackeray[36] all mention this apparent contradiction. However Zeitlin,[37] by contrast, denies that a contradiction exists between the Wars, which casts Josephus in the role of a patriot, and the Life, which admits his co-operation with the authorities. Zeitlin says that both accounts are correct in that Wars represents the official version of the government when it was under the high priest, and the Life, since it was written under Roman auspices, has as its purpose the denunciation of the Zealots in their revolt against Rome.[38] Josephus' different works reflect differing motives by the author.

How are we to explain Josephus' continued and lancing attack on the nationalist movements? Zeitlin holds that

Josephus pleaded with the revolutionists not to wage war against Rome for he was afraid of defeat for Palestine.[39] Josephus was probably "employed" by the Romans to discourage Jews from revolt; he wrote as a member of Rome's propaganda department for the glorification of the Flavian family.[40]

S. Grayzel calls Josephus a traitor, a Jew who gave information to the Romans so they could conquer Jotapata.[41] Thackeray argues, however, that Josephus, rather than being unpatriotic, was actually a pacifist,[42] and this explains Josephus' radical opposition to the nationalist groups. Thackeray doubts that Josephus had any political ambition for leadership for he apparently kept in touch with the Jerusalem authorities throughout the Galilee period.[43] But Zeitlin states explicitly that Josephus did aspire to leadership and that his subsequent lamentations over the Jewish catastrophe were insincere because he was really grieving that his personal ambitions of leadership had never been fulfilled.[44]

It is of foremost importance to note that nearly all the historians agree that Josephus paints too pejorative a picture of the nationalist groups. Thackeray, who supports Josephus' patriotism, admits that Josephus' portrayal of John of Gischala, and his only grudging acknowledgment of the fortitude of the Zealots, are unfair.[45] Niese asserts that Josephus' chief concern was to prove the real instigators of the war were the Zealots who rejected the "generous" terms of peace proposed by Titus-- and Josephus did this simply because he was a Romanophile.[46] He was horrified at

the role of the Zealots and actually knew more about the Roman point of view than about the insurgents.[47] Zeitlin emphatically states that Josephus blamed all the catastrophes on the radical groups and thereby falsified history.[48]

We may thus agree that Josephus' portrayal of the Jewish nationalists is prejudicial. But how principled, then, were these nationalists? Josephus admits to their perseverance and willingness to die for their cause, but only grudgingly so. Farmer, however, posits a connection between these groups and the Maccabees. The fourth philosophic sect, he says, "was a revival of the Maccabean movement, perhaps more fully in its national than its religious aspect."[49] Farmer cites historians such as A. Hausrath, L. Seinecke and C.F. Lehman Haupt, who identified the sect of Judas and Sadduc as the "neo-Maccabean party."[50] J. Wellhausen remarks that these nationalists esteemed patriotism more highly than the Law.[51] H. Ewald and H. Graetz also differ with Josephus' description of the Zealots by calling them "patriots."[52]

After exposure to these more positive assessments, it seems safe to say that Josephus manifests bias. Though having leanings towards the Jewish people and feeling an obvious kinship with their struggle, he nevertheless remained a loyalist to Rome, and was therefore critical of any form of struggle against the Roman government. Both the man himself, and the predicament which ensnared him, are complex, and occasion, as we have noted, a wide variety of assessments of his actions. It is hard to call him a traitor, but

certainly as difficult to call him a patriot. This ambivalence about Josephus will probably always remain, but as Schürer points out, there is truth in his documented scholarship.[53]

There is certainly no question however that the nationalist groups had a greater concern for the welfare of Palestine than Josephus could bring himself to grant. They were religiously dedicated to their fight for independence from Rome. Ironically, while the Maccabees earned adulation for heroics of this very type in the second century, B.C.E., the later zealots, condemned by Josephus, Rabbinic literature and the Gospels, were consigned to ignominy. It is only recently that scholars such as Farmer, Zeitlin and Brandon have restored these nationalist groups to their rightful and honored place in the annals of first century history. Brandon attributes today's more positive assessment of the Zealots to a "variety of factors": resistance by guerilla groups against the Nazis; the struggle of Israel in 1948 to achieve statehood; and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This new orientation of sympathy toward these martyr-like groups has caused historians to evaluate Josephus' accounts of the Zealots more critically.[54]

Our earlier examination of Rabbinic sources has shown that, during the siege of Jerusalem, Yohanan b. Zakkai urged peaceful rather than violent solutions to the problems besetting the nation. But is it not, after all, only to be expected that the founder and leaders of Yavneh would manifest such views? Clearly traditions formulated after

the War and the defeat, after the siege of Jerusalem and the terrible civil strife of one faction against another--such traditions cannot be expected to portray zealotic types in favorable terms. Clearly it was also in the interests of the Rabbis after 70 to tone down the actual extent to which the Pharisees may have been militantly involved in the struggle to their people.

G. Allon has argued that the Pharisees were indeed more nationalistically involved and militant than the rabbinic sources admit.[55] He dismisses the traditionally accepted view that the Pharisees were concerned only with the study of Torah and were willing to relinquish all power in the political sphere. Just as they did struggle and fight against the Hasmoneans,[56] so also were they militantly inclined against Herod,[57] and active participants in the great war against Rome.[58]

In the war against Rome the Pharisees split into two camps: the zealotic movement (קנאים), which resisted Rome; and the movement which accepted Rome as the rightful and legal government in Palestine (שלום).[59] Allon says scholars have ignored the fact that Simeon b. Gamaliel opted for the more militant path, but prevented Israel from senselessly spilling blood as the true קנאים, zealots, were wont to do.[60]

Allon feels the best reflection of Pharisaic militant spirit was the Bar Kochba rebellion. The majority of Pharisees supported Akiba and Bar Kochba against Rome.[61] However, as was the case in 66-70, the Pharisees, once

realizing the futility of their chances against Rome, ceased all outward show of militant opposition, and resisted instead with שנאה סמויה, "repressed hatred," "prophecy" and "prayer" until the end of the Roman occupation.[62]

In Allon's view, from the days of Herod through Agrippa (I), there is evidence of Pharisaic opposition to Roman rule.[63] They fought against Herod's successor in Judea, Archelaus, until he was forced from power.[64] Then during Agrippa's time, two factions emerged, one loyal to Rome, the other more closely aligned with the aims of the Zealots. Ultimately, the Pharisees realized they could not conquer the Romans by force.[65]

Certainly Allon makes a strong case for the actual militant opposition of the Pharisees towards the Romans. J. Neusner, by contrast, contending that Allon's reconstruction of events leading to the creation of Yavneh is not reliable, argues that there were indeed genuine conciliatory relations between the Pharisaic party and the Romans.[66] The Pharisees were actively loyal to Rome and "one may well regard the accounts of Yohanan's escape from Jerusalem [which are certainly loyalist by nature] as a legendary, but ultimately accurate, representation of that recognition."[67] Nevertheless, neither position is conclusive, and the question remains open. In the face of pressure to appease Rome after 70, Rabbinic literature and Josephus himself may have stressed the pacific nature of the Pharisees; and one wonders whether the image of Jesus was not similarly treated by the Evangelists.

Another clue along these lines is afforded by the Megillat Taanith, a document composed during the Roman period, which listed certain festival days commemorating Maccabean victories. Farmer contends these dates would remind the Jews of their former freedom accomplished by their great fight for independence two centuries earlier.[68] There remains, however, the question of the origin of the document. Zeitlin, citing the Talmudic tradition (Shabbat 13b) attributing its composition to the colleagues of R. Eleazar ben Ḥanina ben Ḥezekiah ben Garon, dates it to a few years before the destruction of the Temple.[69] What makes the document supportive of Farmer's thesis is that the Megillat Taanith is cited in the Mishnah with the expression הלכתא, indicating according to Zeitlin, that it was considered of great authority by the sages of the Mishnah.[70] It had the practical effect of reminding the Jews of the successful revolutionary and nationalist uprising of their predecessors, the Maccabees.[71] Such argument is supportive of Allon's thesis that the sages had more than a conciliatory interest in the great war; by encouraging the observance of these days, the sages in effect reminded the people of their great heritage and their responsibility to regain what renowned freedom fighters had won two centuries earlier.

As is the case with Josephus and the Rabbinic literature, so also do the Gospels manifest bias against the political enemies of Rome in Palestine. The latter are made to serve as a foil to Jesus, a clear indication of the viewpoint of

the Evangelists. In Mt. 21:13, Mk. 11:17 and Lk. 19:46, Jesus quotes Isaiah 56:7 as he cleanses the temple. Showing how mercenary and unsanctimonious the temple has become, Jesus declares it a "den of robbers" (cf. Jeremiah 7:11). Whether lestai is used in the literal or political sense, Jesus is clearly made to dissociate himself from them.

Similarly, in the "betrayal scene" (Mk. 14:48, Mt. 26:5; Lk. 22:52), Jesus is portrayed as dissociating himself specifically from the "robbers" as if being called a "robber" were anathema to him. Judging from the context, and considering the grave nature of the confrontation, we feel the Gospels' reference to "robbers" is intentionally disparaging to lestai (used here, we allege, in the political sense); the Evangelists are trying to clear Jesus from any possible suspicion of complicity with subversive groups.

In the Barabbas incident, there is little doubt as to the meaning of lestes. Barabbas is a politically active seditionist: a "notorious prisoner" (Mt. 27:16); "a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city, and for murder" (Lk. 23:19); one of the "rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection" (Mk. 15:7). John 18:40 simply calls Barabbas a "robber," thereby assenting to the more detailed descriptions by the Synoptists and adding fire to the thesis that "robber" could mean more than just an "ordinary robber," but even a political subversive, a nationalist, a revolutionary. This picture of evil Barabbas has elicited the following question over the centuries: how could the Jews cry out for Barabbas'

release instead of Jesus'? If the incident is historically reliable, the answer could very well be that Barabbas was an important nationalist leader to the Jews; he had displayed physical resistance to Rome, something Jesus ultimately failed to do. Whether reliable or not, the episode reveals the Evangelists' own perspective on the seditious element, for the Gospels set up Barabbas and Jesus as complete opposites, Jesus again being completely dissociated from robbers, insurrectionists and any movement which might be politically opposed to Roman rule.

Jesus is crucified between two robbers (Mk. 15:27; Mt. 27:38). It would seem that these three victims might have had some connection with each other, all three perhaps as seditionists against the state; but once again Jesus is dissociated from lestai, for he is reviled by them (Mk. 15:32; Mt. 27:44; Lk. 23:39). Jesus acts as if he has nothing to do with these men, for while they have committed grave offenses against the Roman government, Jesus is portrayed as totally innocent.

#

Our investigation is rendered more complicated by certain difficulties we encounter in terminology. In the first place, the word lestes seems to have more than one meaning. In Rabbinic literature, as we have seen, lestes in its cognate form always means a type of "robber," "highwayman" or "plunderer."[72] But in Josephus and in the Gospels, while there still are examples of this usage,

the meaning of lestes often is extended to include a "political revolutionary," a "zealot," a member of the Sicarii, or any seditionist party against Rome.

S.G.F. Brandon comments extensively on use of the term by Josephus who, as we have seen, attributes the war to the "pernicious activity of Sicarii, or Zealots, or 'brigands'" (Ant. XVIII. i. 1,6).[73] These "brigands" are lestai and obviously have an association with the other subversive groups aforementioned. In the Galilee, Josephus clashed with the lestai whom Brandon calls "Zealots or members of his [Josephus'] so-called 'fourth philosophical sect'."[74]

Commenting on Josephus' two different versions of the origin of the Sicarii, Brandon relates that Josephus calls the Sicarii who flourished during the reign of Felix (52-60 C.E.) "a new kind of brigands" (War II. xiii.3).[75] Brandon asserts concerning the term lestai:

> It was evidently his [Josephus'] favorite expression for all forms of violent activity against the established order of the land. However, there is much reason for thinking that Josephus designedly used this term in an indiscriminate manner to denigrate religio-political action of which he did not approve.... That Josephus chose to describe the followers of Judas of Galilee as brigands (λῃσταί) also significantly attests his point of view; but it does more, for by using this opprobrious term, he was able generally to avoid the name by which these man called themselves and were known to the mass of their fellow-countrymen.[76]

Brandon quotes M. Hengel's work[77] remarking: "Hengel gives good reason for dismissing the suggestion of K.H. Rengstorf[78] that the ליסטים of Rabbinic literature derive from the λῃσταί of Josephus. Hengel[79] asserts that "Josephus probably took the term λῃσταί over from Nicholas of Damascus, who used it for the rebels against Herod."[80]

The revolutionary Zealot leader, Eleazar b. Dineus, is termed a lestes, a brigand, by Josephus (Ant. XX.viii.5).[81] This shows that many different groups are categorized by Josephus as simply "brigands" or lestai. In Ant. XX.viii.6, Josephus states that the brigands (lestai) incited the people to war against the Romans and punished those who did not resist. This statement is important, Brandon argues, because Josephus thereby admits that "those whom he denigrates as 'brigands' were actually patriots devoted to raising their compatriots to active resistance against the Romans...."[82] Again, in discussing other lestai, Josephus says that Albinus' freeing of prisoners filled the country with Zealots (Ant. XX.ix.5).[83]

Brandon has documented his case well: lestes did indeed become a general term for any subversive whom Josephus encountered and yet did not want to identify more specifically. But what of the lestai in the Gospels, particularly the two "robbers" crucified with Jesus? Brandon feels they were probably Zealots, and ends his consideration of the term lestes with the comment:

> Jesus met at the hands of the Romans the same fate suffered by Judas of Galilee and his two sons and on either side of

> the cross that bore his title "The King of the Jews" was crucified a ληστης, as the Romans contemptuously called Israel's resistance fighters, the Zealots.[84]

Brandon has thus shown that lestai in Josephus and in the Gospels can certainly mean "subversives," "revolutionaries," "Zealots," "Sicarii" or "men of the fourth philosophy." Though we have already acknowledged that lestes can also mean simply a "robber" or "highwayman," as indicated also by the probable connection with the Hebrew פריץ,[85] from now on the term lestes shall be used here solely with reference to the Jewish nationalist groups of the first century.

Josephus' indiscriminate use of lestai is thus a source of much confusion. Perhaps an even more troublesome chore for historians is the task of distinguishing between the Sicarii and the Zealots.

Josephus, according to Brandon, assigns two different beginnings to the Sicarii. In describing Eleazar, the leader of the Sicarii at Masada, Josephus identifies him as "a descendant of Judas" (War VII.viii.1). However in War II.xiii.3, Josephus assigns the beginning of the Sicarii to the procuratorship of Felix (52-60 C.E.).[86] Brandon assumes that the Latin-derived term "sicarius," referring to "one who murdered with a 'sica' or 'dagger'," was applied by the Romans to "those nationalist extremists who then resorted to this method of getting rid of their enemies."[87] "Sicarii" thus became a general designation for members of the "extreme action party among the Jews."[88]

Zeitlin says the Sicarii were the sect of the fourth philosophy which appeared after Augustus Caesar annexed Judea in 6 C.E.[89] He remarks also that Josephus later calls these Sicarii lestai,[90] but does not comment on the two different beginnings Josephus assigns the Sicarii.

K. Kohler equates the Zealots and Sicarii, and identifies Phinehas as the paradigm for these religious fanatics.[91] All the "robbers" to whom Josephus refers are really Zealots.[92] The years 49-64 C.E. define the height of the Zealots' power.[93]

Obviously, confusion prevails among most historians as to the origins of the Sicarii and the Zealots and as to how these groups are to be distinguished. M. Smith attests[94] that most scholars identify the Zealots with a party founded by Judas the Galilean, an opinion canonized by E. Schürer.[95] However, K. Lake maintains that Josephus never used the term Zealots to refer to a political party before 66 C.E., and therefore the identification of this party with the fourth philosophy is not justified.[96] J. Klausner claims that the Zealots were Pharisees, Hasidim and the fourth philosophy: "... in fact they were the leaders of all the revolts in all parts of the country."[97]

In Smith's view, Josephus merely depicts Judas as one who set an example for resistance to Rome; there is no indication he founded the Zealot party. Nor does "one reference" to the word zealot necessarily mean the individual referred to was a member of that specific party; the mere

existence of a "zealot" among the apostles thus in no way proves the existence of the Zealots as a party before 66 C.E.[98]

Smith takes to task both C. Roth[99] and M. Hengel[100] who equate Zealots and Sicarii in Rabbinic literature and the Gospels with the Zealots and the Sicarii of Josephus.[101] But in actuality, Josephus explicitly indicates three times (War VII.viii.1,6) that the Sicarii preceded the Zealots and that the Zealots became important only later in the war against Rome.[102]

While Hengel holds that the fourth philosophy was the single controlling organization behind all the revolutionary movement from 6-66 C.E.,[103] Smith argues that the social conditions of the land were conducive to the formation of local robber bands, and thus would not favor the growth of a "single, organized ideologically motivated party"; the Sicarii "may have numbered several thousand but hardly more."[104]

Simply because Josephus sometimes refers to all revolutionists as "brigands" does not mean that all brigands were revolutionists and therefore Zealots and Sicarii. Nor does the fact that the robbers had the sympathy of the local peasants prove anything regarding their ideology. The Sicarii probably never had very large support in the country. If Josephus, in reporting about the war in the Galilee, did not mention the Zealots or Sicarii, it seems evident to Smith that neither group had importance in that part of the country.[105]

Smith rejects Zeitlin's notion that the Zealots were a Jerusalem priestly party,[106] and cites Josephus (War IV. iii. 2-9) for their true origin. In 67-68, when Vespasian began

moving south, conflict arose between advocates of resistance and surrender. The former got the upper hand, merged together, took over the Temple, and appointed their own high priest: "They called themselves the Zealots, on the pretense that they were zealous for good deeds, and not for the worse actions possible" (War IV. vi. 9). Therefore other zealots whom Josephus mentions prior to the actual naming of the party are individual zealots and not the real Zealot party.[107]

Smith summarizes his position as follows: from Maccabean times, there were instances of zealous individuals resisting the Roman government; the first of prominence was Judas of Galilee. The fourth philosophy which survived and led revolts against distinguished individuals was the Sicarii party. But not every assassin was therefore a party member. The party was located in Judea but did not by itself direct all resistance groups against Rome. Rather, in 66, the Sicarii allied with that portion of the priesthood which had started the revolt and gained control over Jerusalem; the Sicarii also overran Masada. Menahem tried to take command of Jerusalem but was slain by the city population and the priests who had started the revolution. Then most of the Sicarii fled to Masada and were relatively inactive until the Roman siege in 73.[108]

The Zealots, the party which came into existence in 67-68, seem to have had no connection with the Sicarii. There were indeed many individual zealots before this time, but they did not form a party until late in the war.[109] Regarding the latter, Smith explains:

> We may therefore plausibly see in the Zealot party the representatives of Palestinian, principally Judean, peasant piety, hostile alike to the rich of the city, the upper priesthood of the Temple, and of course the foreign rulers. In Jerusalem it was a relatively small but highly militant and effective party, which tried to strengthen itself by various alliances, played an important and determined role in the defense of the city, and was finally involved in its destruction.[110]

Smith has thus not only made a fine and clear-cut distinction between the Zealots and the Sicarii; he has explained that many of Josephus' mentions of zealots and brigands throughout his works are only references to certain zealous and nationalist individuals rather than the actual groups themselves. For the first time we can perceive actual differences in the make-up and historical origin of these respective groups.

If Smith is correct in contending that the Zealot party was late in formation, then S.G.F. Brandon's work on Jesus and the Zealots is at least wrongly titled. But this hardly renders Brandon's works any the less compelling. For even if the Zealot party postdates the ministry of Jesus, no one would deny the proliferation of Jewish nationalist sentiment in Palestine from the days of his youth, with many an individual "Simon" girded by this spirit of revolution. The possibility must yet be pursued that Jesus was himself a Jewish nationalist.

#

Still another problem requires our attention, that of the Slavonic Josephus. This has a very limited bearing on

the general problem of Jewish nationalism but it could affect our understanding of Jesus' possible relation to it. For the Slavonic Josephus contains passages concerning Jesus and seemingly alleging his involvement in political activity, whereas the standard edition of Josephus focuses on Jesus only once (Ant. XVIII.iii.3),[111] and conveys none of the political particulars. On the basis of the Slavonic Josephus, Brandon concludes: "There is reason to think Josephus regarded Christianity primarily as a revolutionary movement against the Roman domination of Palestine, akin to the many other similar movements which characterized Jewish national life during the period from the incorporation of Judaea into the Empire in A.D. 6 to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70."[112]

Neither John the Baptist nor Jesus is so named in the Slavonic Josephus; rather the one is called the "Wild-Man" and is a leader of a political movement, and the other is called "Wonder-Worker" and effects miraculous cures. Of the Wonder-Worker we read: "His followers, including 150 closer disciples, vainly urged him to lead a revolt against the Romans."[113] Brandon describes the Wonder-Worker's personality:

> His work excites the popular desire for national emancipation from Rome, he is specially invited to lead an armed attempt to overthrow the Roman government and he is finally executed as a rebel by Pilate after the forceful suppression of his followers.... His personality and his teaching stimulated nationalist fervor, and that his supporters did in consequence resort to arms against the Romans, there is no doubt.[114]

Brandon adduces further evidence from the Gospel According to John, allegedly validating the description of the Wonder-Worker in the Slavonic Josephus[115]-- even though the Gospel admittedly does not inspire confidence as a reliable historical source, it nevertheless "has a real historical value in showing what views were current about Christian Origins in the sub-Apostolic age...."[116]

Zeitlin posits that scholars, including, among others, J.S. Kennard, Jr., mistranslated parts of the Slavonic Josephus to make Jesus appear to be a rebel when the text says exactly the opposite.[117] We are not prepared to argue linguistics but, since Kennard himself acknowledges his mistranslation,[118] one must presume Zeitlin is persuasive on this score at least. But is Zeitlin completely accurate when he calls the Slavonic Josephus a "hoax"?[119]

R. Eisler associates the Slavonic Josephus with a work Josephus prepared on the capture of Jerusalem, in Aramaic (while producing a different edition of the Wars of the Jews for the Romans)[120]-- and despite Zeitlin's energetic critique,[121] Eisler feels this work preserves reliable historical data.

#

Whatever is finally proved about the Slavonic Josephus, there is no question that all our major sources attest to widespread turmoil in the first century Palestine. It was a time of Jewish nationalism, a time of political action and a time of revolution. That Jesus lived in this type of environment is undeniably true. Whether it affected him is a question which we shall now explore in depth.

Chapter 2

Scholarly Theories on Jesus the Jewish Nationalist

A number of scholars have espoused, in varying degrees, the view that Jesus was a Jewish nationalist. We shall examine the most important: Hermann Samuel Reimarus (The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples); Robert Eisler (The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist According to Flavius Josephus' Recently Rediscovered "Capture of Jerusalem" and the Other Jewish and Christian Sources); Samuel G.F. Brandon (The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church, Jesus and the Zealots and The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth); William Farmer (Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus); Joel Carmichael (The Death of Jesus); and Hugh Schoenfield (The Passover Plot and The Jesus Party).

Hermann Reimarus

Hermann Reimarus (1694-1768) developed a rationalistic approach to religion at variance with the traditional ways of thinking about Jesus and hence irreconcilable with orthodox Christianity.[1] He was the first scholar "to form a historical conception of the life of Jesus."[2] Reimarus recognized that the key to solving the problem of Jesus' life called for a "combination of the methods of historical and literary criticism." It was necessary to recognize a creative element in the tradition.[3]

Reimarus characterizes Jesus:

> Jesus practiced nothing else but moral obligations, true love of God and of the

> neighbor, in which he based the whole content of the law and the prophets and on which he said rests the hope of building the Kingdom of Heaven and blessedness.[4]

Jesus was essentially a practicing Jew who interpreted terms such as "Kingdom of God," "son of God," and "Messiah" in a Jewish way. Reimarus contends that "Jesus, no more than John, said who or what was the Christ, i.e. the Messiah or the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven or the Gospel."[5] The term "son of God" is "nothing else... than a pious or righteous man whom God loves especially in the sense that he might look out for him in a miraculous way."[6] Reimarus dismisses any divine meaning inherent in the term, asserting that the Old Testament, the Jews and the Evangelists did not know such a "son of God," and Jesus certainly did not try to give the impression he was such a being.[7]

In addition, Jesus in no way brought forth teachings new to Judaism. He fulfilled Levitical law. All his disciples conceived Jesus to be a worldly leader: it was only after his unexpected death that the apostles built up "the system of a spiritual suffering savior of the whole human race." Therefore, the nature of the goals, teachings and actions to be properly ascribed to Jesus were made to undergo an essential change after his death.[8]

There were thus two different systems of salvation set forth: one based on the secular salvation of Israel (the true one); and another system which his followers fabricated "because of the unfulfilled hope after his [Jesus'] death."[9] When Jesus proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven

he thereby stirred the Jews to hope for a secular Messiah. Jesus achieved his goal through the missions of his apostles, who encouraged the Jews then suffering under Roman rule.[10]

Jesus attempted to fulfill the role of a secular Messiah, but his death by crucifixion quashed the temporal hopes of his apostles. He was thus

> ... an unsuccessful political messianic pretender;... the disciples were disappointed charlatans who invented the early Christian faith... and... they stole the body of Jesus in order to have an empty tomb to support their story of a resurrection.[11]

Reimarus is the first great contributor to the theory that Jesus was a Jewish nationalist, though, to be sure, he kept his works hidden--they were published only posthumously and the author's identity was initially,at least, concealed. By recognizing Jesus' adherence to law and practice, he believes he proves quite conclusively that Jesus approached his mission, that is, fulfilling the role of Messiah, in a secular Jewish context. Thus any change in the Jewish Messiah-concept was wrought by his apostles who, following the crucifixion, tried to cover up Jesus' failure as a secular Messiah by substituting a new suffering-savior concept. Reimarus provides the framework for all subsequent historical criticism of the Gospel narratives.

#

Robert Eisler

In Robert Eisler's complex and imaginative work, The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist..., Jesus emerges as a

Jewish nationalist, attached to the revolutionary movements extant in his day. Eisler specifically attempts to connect Jesus to Judas of Galilee's resistance movement. He accomplishes this by ingeniously interpreting a passage from the Halosis or Slavonic Josephus (ii. 118-119).[12] This passage describes Judas as a man who "found a way to live in the outside." Eisler connects "outside" linguistically with the Barjonim,[13] the extremists, and thus claims Judas was the founder of this radical group. This is most important because, in Matthew (16:17), Jesus addresses Simon Peter as Simon barjona, an adherent of the radical party created by Judas. This fact is obscured by later manuscripts which render the term: "Bar Jonah" or "Bar Johanan"; and which, in a similar way, change "Simon the Zealot" to "Simon the Canaanean." This reflects the obvious embarrassment of the later church writers with traditions that two of Jesus' disciples were adherents of militant Jewish nationalist sects.[14]

Though Jesus retains these two zealotic disciples, he himself practices a "higher righteousness" or radical pacifism, exemplified by his "Sermon on the Mount." Jesus does not condone reprisal for any evil, even in self-defense. He inherits this attitude from nomadic craftsmen, the Qenites and Rekhabites, who either brought him up or actually bore him.[15] How, then, did Jesus allow Simon barjona and Simon the Zealot, two violent men, to enter his inner circle?

> If the gospel of quietism, of non-resistance to evil, could win these hard men of action, it must have been because Jesus had shown

> them some way of devoted action which would compel the saving intervention of God.[16]

Jesus was clearly partisan to the Zealots' struggle, but he chose to eschew any active resistance against Rome. What he actually desired was a return to the "nomad life of privation but of freedom in the desert...."[17]

This exodus echoes the words of Mattathias ben Johanan of Modein (1 Macc. 2:27), who cries out for all the "zealous ones" to forsake their possessions and dwell in the wilderness. Jesus was advocating a complete withdrawal from all economic labor and flight from Israel.[18]

Eisler cites Josephus' portrayal (Ant. XX. viii.6) of the Rekhabites (under Felix' governorship) leading the people out into the wilderness to show them "signs of liberty."[19] Jesus wanted to return to the Rekhabite life in the desert, but his disciples failed to bring in enough recruits for the new Kingdom of God because people, especially farmers, were reluctant to divest themselves of their economic holdings. What few recruits there were, therefore, came from the destitute. But unlike the weapon-carrying Maccabees, the new disciples were to receive no arms and also had to endure an intolerably strict form of justice. The mission was understandably a failure.[20]

Despite Jesus' avowed radical pacifism, however, there remain in the Gospels passages designated by Eisler as "fire and sword" sayings. Could Jesus have pronounced both the sayings of peace and the sayings of war? Eisler answers:

> Even if Jesus himself trusted too confidently in the miraculous and seasonable help of God, Simon the Zealot and Simon Barjona can have been under no delusion as to the dangers involved. And Jesus himself, when he thought over the situation must have realized that he was bringing not peace but the sword to those prepared to follow him.[21]

Jesus was a quietist in his early career. It is possible the Zealots influenced him to become more militant or he gave up waiting for divine intervention. Matthew (10:26) reveals the transition in Jesus' thinking.

In Luke's narrative (22:35 ff.), Jesus actually tells his disciples to arm themselves. Eisler assumes the passage has been misplaced, noting that it would have been foolhardy for Jesus to arm his men after he had already been betrayed. He infers rather that the arming was for another mission-- the "Exodus." Jesus knows he is breaking the law, but he conceives this to be the only avenue for accomplishing his goals.

> The burden weighing most heavily on his conscience was the tragic necessity of breaking that law of the "better righteousness," of non-resistance, which he had himself proclaimed as the will and ordinance of God.... He now resigned himself to the realization that the peaceful kingdom of God could only be established through battle.[23]

Jesus and his small army of men went to Jerusalem to gather followers for the proposed exodus into the wilderness. Possibilities of a successful attack were fair providing the city population joined in the revolt. The Levitical temple guard was certainly responsive to the

messianic tidings. Jesus and his disciples, upon arriving in Jerusalem, occupied the Temple and entered the holy sanctuary;[24] "only as the messianic ruler could he venture to enter the temple itself and view the holy implements."[25]

Where were the Romans during this occupation? Eisler speculates they were garrisoned in the royal palace of Herod in the western part of the city rather than in the temple-fortress Antonia. Only if the Romans were in this western stronghold could Jesus and his band overpower the temple guard, march into the Temple, and attack the money-changers.[26]

Jesus and his zealotic followers detested the mammonist spirit which pervaded the Temple. The money-lenders exchanged coins which bore Caesar's image; their grandiose system of sacred traffic in wine, oil, incense, wood and animals revolted Jesus. He intended to abolish sacrificial law when he promulgated his Messiahship.[27] Eisler describes the imminent danger from the sacerdotal aristocracy:

> ... the priests must have gained an impression from his [Jesus'] proceedings that the most vital sources of revenue of the temple and the very means of subsistence of the priesthood, the <u>sheqel</u> tax and the sacrifices, were most seriously threatened by his attack on the temple banks and the cattle-merchants. Even if they were possibly inclined at first to make common cause with the national rising against the Romans under the leadership of a Davidic king, they could only regard as their deadly enemy a ruler who in this fashion destroyed the economic basis of their class.[28]

Jesus does forecast the destruction of the Temple (Mk. 14:58; Mt. 26:61; Jn. 2:19), and naturally there did exist Jewish

antipathies towards the structure upon which had been erected a golden eagle. The Zealots considered this adornment an idol, "the abomination of desolation in the holy place." Jesus wanted a restoration of the tabernacle the Jews had employed in the Wilderness following the Exodus from Egypt-- this is what he promised to build up "in three days."[29]

Jesus knew what the repercussions of his attack on the Temple would be. He expected to die (since he did not plan to offer resistance or to flee in an armed encounter), but not in the manner of a slave or criminal, i.e. on the Roman cross, condemned for sedition. He hoped that his followers might be able to start the new exodus, but, realistically speaking, knew the chances for escape were minimal.[30]

Luke (13:1) suggests that Pilate retaliated against the Galileans who entered the Temple with Jesus. Jesus enjoins the other Galileans to abstain from spilling blood; but most certainly Zealots and Galileans, fanatical freedom fighters, once provoked would not submit without an armed battle. Even disregarding Mark's mention of the insurrection (15:7), it was obvious men must have lost their lives in the attack on the Temple. Jesus must have been horrified:

> What he had willed and planned was the exodus into the wilderness, screened, if necessary, by an armed rearguard defense, but no stubborn battle with the Romans for the possession of the temple and city of Jerusalem, which meant nothing to him and, according to his deepest conviction, were doomed to inevitable ruin in the messianic war of the princes of the world.[31]

Eisler explains the fall of the tower of Siloam (Lk. 13:4) as part of a two-pronged attack by Jesus and his followers to gain control over Jerusalem. The Galileans stormed the Temple while the Barjonim, inhabitants of the city itself, surprised the temple guard and seized the tower of Siloam. Thus for a time the most northern and southern fortified points of the city were in the rebels' hands and Pilate had to reconquer both Antonia and Siloam. When the tower did fall Pilate was naturally impelled to capture the person responsible for jeopardizing the Temple, the man publicly acclaimed as "King of the Jews."[32]

Jesus, though he escaped to the Mount of Olives, was defeated, and, despite a "feeble attempt to offer armed resistance," surrendered to the enemy.[33] The exchange of Jesus for Barabbas[34] is made and Jesus is crucified between two lestai, probably the commanders respectively of the separate attacks on the tower of Siloam and the Antonia fortress.[35]

On the cross, one of the lestai asks Jesus: "Art not thou the Messiah? save thyself and us" (Lk. 23:39). If the insurgent were just an ordinary "robber" without any connection to the rebels, his remark would make no sense. But the words are extremely appropriate if he had fought under and followed the will of the man he believed to be the Messiah. The statement of the other lestes ("Do you not fear God since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?... this man has done nothing wrong.... Jesus,

remember me when you come into your Kingdom [Lk. 23:39-42] is also appropriate, for it was then believed that God required the death of the Messiah for the redemption of Israel. The contrast is well-drawn between the rebels' lawless actions and Jesus' avoidance of violence and faith in God.[36]

Jesus, despite all his efforts to achieve the new exodus and to avoid violence, is ironically thrust into the midst of a bloody insurrection. He is sentenced for the crime of sedition and crucified between two fellow lestai. Surely his plan of secular salvation had been defeated.

#

S.G.F. Brandon

Samuel Brandon offers the most elaborate portrayal of Jesus as a Jewish nationalist. He begins with Jesus' youth, for Jesus was but a boy when Judea was incorporated into the Roman Empire and when the census provoked the rebellion by Judas of Galilee. Accordingly, Jesus must then have become aware of Judas and his followers, the קנאים (zealots). These rebels evoked popular memories of the heroic Maccabees and impelled the people of Jesus' time to hope for the overthrow of the Romans.[37]

Jesus' attitude to Rome was also conditioned by his visits to Jerusalem. He must have noted the presence of Roman troops at the Temple, and witnessed the damages to that structure inflicted by them in response to the latest rebellion. In all probability, Jesus was not only opposed to the Roman occupation but looked forward to its termination.[38]

After the death of John the Baptist-- a preacher Herod feared would incite a rebellion (Ant. XVIII. v. 2)-- Jesus began to proclaim the apocalyptic message (Mk. 1:14-15) which implicitly called for the overthrow of the present political and social order, and the recognition of Yahweh's sovereign rule. Thus was Jesus launched on a career which immediately thrust him into the role of a popular Jewish nationalist leader.[39]

Jesus first preached in Galilee-- where Judas and the Zealots were active. Clearly, he must have had contact with this nationalist party since he specifically chose as members of his inner circle: Simon the Zealot; Peter barjona, a terrorist; and James and John, whom Mark (3:17) calls "Boanerges," the "sons of thunder."[40] Brandon remarks concerning Simon the Zealot:

> Full weight must be given to the significance of this fact that a member of the extreme nationalist party of contemporary Jewish life was a close supporter of Jesus of Nazareth and that he continued to be known for his profession of Zealot principles, which would seem to imply that he found nothing incompatible in holding both loyalties together.[41]

Jesus never does mention the Zealots, whereas he explicitly does condemn the Pharisees and Sadducees. This silence is most likely a result of the developing tradition's suppression of Jesus' dealings with a nationalistic party. The facts that the name Simon the Zealot exists, and that Mark tried to camouflage the incriminating nature of the word "Zealot" by substituting "the Cananaean," suggest Jesus' true attitude towards the party's members and ideals.[42] Mark (8:34)

attests to the "zealousness" of Jesus, for the cross (before it became the sign of Christian salvation) was the symbol of Zealot sacrifice.[43]

Jesus' association with members of the Zealot party and with Zealotic principles is clearly revealed in his famous remark concerning the payment of the "tribute money." His answer seemingly satisfied the Pharisees, but actually he ruled decisively against the paying of the tribute. Jesus could never have been acknowledged as Messiah had he sanctioned the tax: he was implicitly saying that Yahweh owned the land of Israel and thus the paying of the tribute to Caesar would be an act of "disloyalty" to Yahweh. The tenability of this interpretation of Jesus' statement is confirmed by Luke 23:2 wherein we learn that Jesus was actually accused of "forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar...." Therefore Jesus adhered to the ideology voiced in 6 C.E. by the ardent nationalist, Judas of Galilee.[44]

Jesus never denies being a "Messiah-King." By accepting this appellation, Jesus thereby tacitly repudiates Caesar's authority, and must accordingly be considered seditious. This denial of the kingship of Caesar was a fundamental principle of Zealotism. Further, when Jesus proclaims the imminence of the Kingdom of God in addition to his messiah-ship, he is encouraging a movement that bodes dangerous political consequences.[45]

Jesus attacks the high priests because they are preventing the conversion of Israel to a state of spiritual preparedness. He realizes that the high priests are merely

representatives of the Roman government, which has vested its power in these sacerdotal leaders. Thus Jesus plans a messianic takeover which he knows will ultimately cost him his life.[46]

The most outward display of Jesus' nationalistic activity is revealed in the "Triumphal Entry" and "Cleansing of the Temple" scenes. Jesus' ride into Jerusalem on the Messianic animal and his acclamation as "King of Israel" was in essence a "proclamation of rebellion."[47] That very day (Mt. 21:12; Lk. 19:45) or the very next one (Mk. 11:12-16), Jesus attacks the Temple, showing open disdain for the authority of the high priests and the Romans. Did Jesus have any support in the "cleansing"? Brandon surmises:

> Surely no man, no matter how dynamic his personality, could have succeeded unaided in driving from their place of legitimate business a company of traders when engaged with their customers, who needed their services to fulfill their religious duties. Moreover there were Temple police, whose duty it would have been to deal promptly with such an act.[48]

It was highly unlikely that Jesus, who had just been escorted into the city by an excited crowd of people, would walk unsupported into the Temple.

There seems to be a genuine connection between the insurrection mentioned in Mark (15:7) and Luke (23:19,25) and the attack on the trading system of the Temple. Though the Gospels camouflage any traces of violence, there was obviously blood shed in the city during Jesus' entry and occupation of the Temple. Since Jerusalem was so small a city, it was very likely the two events were interrelated.

It is possible that Barabbas, a Zealot,[49] led an attack on the Roman-held Antonia fortress on the northwest side of the Temple while Jesus himself actually seized the Temple.[50]

Jesus, we may thus presume, is unquestionably involved in a rebellious assault against the Roman government and priestly aristocracy. He manages, after his failure to capture Jerusalem, to rejoin his inner group of disciples on the Mount of Olives. All the evangelists now agree on the following three points: first, the disciples in Gethsemane were armed; second, the Roman or Jewish officials sent out to arrest Jesus were heavily armed in anticipation of violent resistance; and third, armed resistance was put forth by the disciples.[51]

Judas Iscariot had previously betrayed Jesus to the authorities. Possibly "Iscariot" is derived from the Latin word sicarius-- which would not only reveal that Jesus had selected a political terrorist for an apostle but also that this particular revolutionary might have become disillusioned by Jesus' failure to effect a Messianic take-over of the city. Perhaps Judas was trying to force Jesus to use his supernatural powers by placing him in a dire situation.[52]

Jesus is led to the high priest's house where the Sanhedrin has assembled. Though the interpolation of Peter's denial obfuscates the picture, there is an obvious discrepancy between the charges made against Jesus in the evening, on the one hand, and in the morning, on the other.

At the evening meeting, Jesus is definitively charged with committing blasphemy (Mk. 14:64; Mt. 26:65), but, in the morning, the Sanhedrin makes no official charge against Jesus before he is sent to Pilate.[53]

This inconsistent portrayal reflects a Jewish Christian apologia, which set out to gloss over the fact that the Sanhedrin was accusing Jesus of threatening the Temple. Thus the charge by the Sanhedrin against Jesus is in effect negated by "false witness" and Jesus is ultimately instead condemned for admitting he is the Messiah (Mk. 14:55-64).[54]

Echoing Eisler's position regarding Jesus' attack on the sacerdotal aristocracy, Brandon outlines the Jewish authorities' actual reason for sentencing Jesus. Jesus had great support from the masses and thus he threatened not only the high priests but also the Roman government. Therefore the Sanhedrin assembled at the unusual nocturnal hour to discover what Jesus' real intentions were, since his actions had obviously appeared subversive of the established order.[55]

The accusation against Jesus that he had foretold the destruction of the Temple was not an adequate cause for a sentence of death by the Sanhedrin.[56] It seemed rather that the tribunal's main motive was to learn Jesus' objective in the "Cleansing of the Temple." The attack, though unsuccessful, had "constituted a grave threat to the establishment." Jesus upset the high priest further by refusing to divulge information concerning the incident.[57]

Pilate's first question to Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" reveals further the true nature of the charge the Sanhedrin brought to the governor. The phrase, "King of the Jews," is oft repeated by Pilate, the Roman soldiers and the Jewish leaders, most likely indicating that this charge was prominent in the Sanhedrin's original accusation. The title further reveals that indeed the Jewish leaders preferred a charge of political pretension against Jesus. This attribution implies Jesus' dedication to a politically free Israel. Its inclusion in the Gospels gives further evidence that this was, despite other coverups by the Jerusalem Christians, an indisputably accurate description of the Jewish nationalist leader.[58]

Jesus does not deny Pilate's question, causing him to "wonder" (Mk. 15:5; Mt. 27:14) and to open up, because of his uncertainty of Jesus' true identity, the possiblity for the incredible Barabbas-Jesus exchange. What begins as an interrogation of Jesus by Pilate develops into a dialogue between Pilate and the crowd about amnesty. However, the interpolation of the Barabbas story aside, Pilate somehow proceeds to deal with the case presented by the Jewish authorities against Jesus. And the conclusive fact that Pilate eventually sentences Jesus to death as a rebel confirms the authenticity of the original sedition charge.[59]

Having led us through Jesus' youth, his association with actual Zealots and his acceptance of the title of King of the Jews, Brandon draws what he claims to be the

inevitable conclusion: though the Gospel writers apologetically deny Jesus' alleged hostility towards the Temple, Jesus was indeed guilty of sedition against Rome and Pilate himself ultimately accepted this verdict, for, after sentencing Jesus, he had him executed as a political pretender.[60] Jesus was involved in insurrectionary activity against both the Roman government and the priestly aristocracy. One can only conjecture how militantly involved Jesus actually became, but the reality of his sentencing as a political and seditious prisoner in procedures initiated by the Jewish authorities and implemented by the Roman government is, according to Brandon, undeniable.

Nowhere does Brandon mention, as does Eisler, Jesus' alleged desire to lead a "new exodus" into the wilderness. This was a central concept of Eisler's work and its corollary was that Jesus had absolutely no desire to remain in the Temple or even in the city of Jerusalem which had no meaning for him. Brandon, who agrees in principle with many of Eisler's theories (for example, he also states that Jesus did not want to become violently resistant against Rome, but was drawn inevitably into the throes of the resurrection), explicitly stresses the importance Jerusalem held for Jesus, for, as the center of the Jewish state, it was in the greatest need of his secular salvation.

#

William Farmer

William Farmer attributes the rise of revolutionary and nationalistic spirit in the Roman period to the fervor

initiated by the Maccabees two centuries earlier.[61] Farmer asserts:

> ... the Zealots were... like their prototypes the early Maccabees,... deeply patriotic and motivated by a dynamic theology of zeal for the Torah.... This zeal for the Law included zeal for the Jerusalem temple... and... presupposed an undying confidence in God's promise of the Land.[62]

Thus Israel's military endeavors and victories were attributed to the strength of their covenant God, and as long as the war against the Greeks or the Romans was a Holy War the Israelites were encouraged to believe in ultimate victory despite the overwhelming odds against them.[63]

The Zealots shared this religious belief, and so did Jesus, whom Farmer calls "a true son of Israel who wrestled with and agonized over the political, economic, social and religious issues of his own particular people in his own particular day."[64]

Farmer defines the Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots as "parties of resistance" which agreed Israel should be a separate independent people. These theological movements placed great importance upon the Land, Law and Temple, and this nationalistic theology of Jesus' time could be traced back through the Maccabean period into the pre-exilic history of Israel.[65]

Farmer denies that Jesus can be identified as a Zealot, Pharisee or Essene, but he is certain that Jesus shared more with these parties than he did with the Sadducees. Jesus was willing to become a martyr for his people; he

came to fulfill the law; he possessed a great zeal for the Temple; and he affirmed as authoritative the doctrine of resurrection, the book of Prophets, later Jewish writings and the five books of Moses.[66]

Jesus "transcended" his period's national resistance movements but this does not mean he was "detached" from Jewish nationalism or out of touch with his people. Gospel records reveal that both the elements of nationalism and apocalypticism were important in the understanding of Jesus' background. The Dead Sea Scroll, The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness, proves that the Jewish Apocalyptists sometimes shared the militant spirit which inflamed both the Maccabees and Zealots.[67]

Jesus' ability to call upon the Heavenly Hosts for protection (Mt. 26:52-53) reflects this "apocalyptic Zealotism."[68] Farmer also cites John 6:15, which depicts Jesus withdrawing from the crowds who want "to make him King by force." Jesus comes alive as a real Jewish patriot who loves and is loved by his country.[69]

Considering the violent, tumultuous and uncertain nature of the period, Jesus could have commanded the loyalty of his disciples only by displaying great courage and devotion unsurpassed by the Jewish patriots of his day. Farmer asserts:

> The Gospels make it quite clear that Jesus was executed on the charge of a political crime. The authorities were afraid of his political power. He had been acclaimed "King of the Jews." This

> title he never denied, and he bore it nobly to the end. Jesus not only matched the zeal of a Zealot, he was crucified "as a Zealot."[70]

However, the "Triumphal Entry" and resulting Gospel scenes leading to Jesus' crucifixion break the Zealot-Apocalyptic pattern Jesus had followed throughout his career. The throngs looked upon Jesus as the resurrected Judas Maccabaeus marching victoriously into Jerusalem. But Jesus abstained from the warrior-zealot role and placed all his faith in the Lord of Hosts who had promised through the prophet Zechariah that the sons of Zion would destroy their enemies with any weapons that happened to be available. The people screamed "hosanna," waved palm tree branches (the national symbol of Israel[71]) and acclaimed Jesus the King of Israel and son of David because they considered this act to have more of the "Maccabean-Zealot" meaning than Jesus himself actually had ever intended. They failed to recognize that Zechariah's king was distinctively humble and concerned for peace, and did not correspond to popular expectations of a victorious military redeemer.[72]

But the people soon realized that Jesus was not a Judas Maccabaeus; this is evidenced by his answer regarding tribute to Caesar.[73] Doubts as to Jesus' true devotion to Maccabean militancy were soon confirmed by his passive acceptance of his arrest. Jesus had apparently sold out his people without a struggle and had thereby endangered their lives by eliciting only false hopes.[74]

Thus Barabbas, whom Farmer sees as a patriotic Jew,[75] was naturally the choice of the people to be released instead of the impostor King Jesus. But in his crucifixion, Jesus finally triumphs over Barabbas, the Zealots and the Maccabean spirit. For Jesus, on the cross, surpasses the zeal of the Maccabees and of the Zealots not so much through martyrdom (for they were certainly martyrs) but rather through his "compassion, tenderness and forgiving spirit which is quite different from the bitter invectives spewed forth by a martyred son in II Maccabees (7:34-36)."[76]

Farmer critically departs from Eisler and Brandon for he theorizes that, fundamentally speaking, Jesus had no genuine pretensions of being a secular Messiah. It is true that Eisler and Brandon both deny that Jesus wanted to become as politically involved in violent resistance against the Roman government as he did indeed become; but neither author would subscribe to the theory that Jesus would deliberately leave his followers for the true Kingdom of God in heaven. Farmer, however, while he attributes much zealotic, Maccabean and spirit of Torah to Jesus, neatly extricates him from any temporal and nationalistic involvement with his people at the end. Farmer adopts the traditional Christian view that Jesus' zeal for his people was best expressed through his martyrdom, for through crucifixion his religious and forgiving spirit would live on to inspire suffering peoples everywhere. Farmer concludes his essay with this other-worldly Christian spirit, and therefore

differs from Eisler and Brandon in their more temporal theories about Jesus the Jewish nationalist.

#

Joel Carmichael

Joel Carmichael's explanation of the "Cleansing of the Temple" resembles nearly in its entirety the theories proposed earlier by Eisler.[77] After examination of certain Gospel passages (Mk. 11:11; Mt. 21:12; Jn. 2:14-15), Carmichael concludes that violence was a prerequisite for the seizure of the Temple. Not only did Jesus need arms to overtake the Temple, but he also employed them in holding on in the Temple for some period of time. Jesus' followers carried weapons (Mk. 14:47-48; Mt. 26:51-52; Lk. 22:49-50), and the fall of the tower of Siloam described in Luke (13:4) indicates fighting occurred between the insurgents and the Romans.[78]

Carmichael subscribes to Eisler's theory that Jesus was influenced to serve the national interest by John the Baptist, who was a Barjon, an extremist who lived outside of formal civilization (Mk. 1:5; Mt. 3:5). John is depicted as a commander of troops and a perpetrator of violence in Matthew (11:11-13) and Luke (16:16). In Luke (3:7-14) he gives instructions to soldiers for the conduct of a guerilla campaign.[79]

Therefore John's baptism meant a "rite of initiation into a new Israel"-- an oath of allegiance to the one true God and his Messiah.[80] Further, Jesus' eulogy of John as

the greatest man who ever lived meant that Jesus regarded him "as the father of the movement exemplified by the Zealots."[81]

There were significant differences between John and Jesus, however: Jesus did not baptize-- only his disciples did (Jn. 4:1-3); Jesus did not share John's views on baptism and eventually broke off from him and travelled to the Galilee. The dispute about baptism (given its definition above) was really a dispute over military organization and strategy. The Baptist remained in the wilderness preaching his inimitable type of sedition, whereas Jesus went into civilization, stirring up the peoples of Galilee. John met his death for inciting his followers to secede from the state; Jesus was crucified for storming the Kingdom of God in Jerusalem.[82]

There are conflicting statements in the Gospels attributed to Jesus which Carmichael labels "quietist" statements, on the one hand, and "fire and sword" statements, on the other. He asserts:

> ... whether Jesus was a quietist before joining the Baptist, or whether he became one after leaving the Baptist, and then abandoned that too in favor of his final onslaught on the citadels of the powers of this world, he made his fateful decision, and went on the Jerusalem not only like the Herald of the Kingdom but also like the Herald of the Kingdom bringing it about in power.[83]

There is no question the Gospel writers intended Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem as a Messianic demonstration. The Hebraic word, Hosanna, means "save us," while in the Aramaic

and Syrian versions it is rendered "free us." Either translation has temporal significance to those cheering Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, for they wished liberation from Roman rule and worldly oppression. Jesus was a national leader, representing a religious ideal.[84]

Jesus fulfills the concept of a warlike-Messiah by storming the city of Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God. It is possible he was induced to violence because of the desecration of the Temple by Pontius Pilate and the prophecy concerning the "abomination of desolation" described in Daniel (11:31)--predicting the onset of the last times, ending with the death of the Messiah and the destruction of the Holy City in the Messianic War. Jesus (in Mk. 13:14-17; Mt. 24:15) suggests his change in attitude by his warning that the end of days is near and the godless are to be wiped out by another flood.[85]

Jesus is captured; he clearly is charged with sedition against the Roman government; and he undergoes the Roman punishment of crucifixion. The charge "King of the Jews" is most revealing, especially in an exchange between Pontius Pilate and the Jewish priests (Jn. 19:19,21,22). Carmichael interprets:

> Pilate's point is clear: when the Temple authorities tried to exculpate the Jews of disaffection toward the Romans by putting the blame for the insurrection on Jesus alone, Pilate reminded them that from his point of view Jesus' seizure of power had not merely been an outburst of individual fanaticism but had also had a collective character. Jesus had been <u>acclaimed</u> King, and for a time had, in

> fact, exercised sovereignty with the consent of a sizable portion of the community. The brevity of his reign was a matter of legal indifference to the Roman procuration: the mere notion of the Jews having a self-appointed King was reason enough for Roman intervention.[86]

Carmichael, despite his dependence on Eisler for many of his theories, differs conclusively from him (and thereby also concurs with Brandon) in his emphasis on Jesus' need to return to Jerusalem, into civilization, to take the Kingdom of God by force. In this way Jesus departed from his prototype John the Baptist. Eisler has Jesus follow to the letter the idea begun by the Baptist of remaining an "outsider."

Further, Carmichael also differs from Eisler and Brandon in describing the goals of Jesus. Jesus, according to Carmichael becomes more the Maccabean hero who tries to fulfill completely the role of a secular Messiah-King. Farmer also ascribes Maccabean qualities to Jesus, but theorizes that he abandoned the Maccabean spirit at the end. Carmichael depicts a Jesus more intense in his work, a man who fully believes in his "fire and sword" sayings. The fact that Jesus fails and is tried as a political prisoner thus comes as no surprise to this secular leader as it did to the Jesus of Eisler's study. Jesus' cry on the cross (Mk. 15:34; Mt. 27:46) and the great mourning of the Jewish people for their national leader (Lk. 23:48) confirm the solidarity of Jesus and the Jews. Jesus speaks in the end as a national leader, who, despite his failure to bring about

a Jewish triumph in battle against the Romans, is loved and followed by the masses.[87]

#

Hugh Schoenfield

Hugh Schoenfield deals with the political implications of Jesus' life and crucifixion. Jesus believed it was his destiny to fulfill a messianic role, but the Gospels, while asserting Jesus' Messiahship, choose to disclose him in a "light more congenial to Hellenic rather than Jewish concepts."[88]

The Galilean Jews differed in many ways from the Judeans. They were proud and independent-- not as respectful toward the Pharisees as were the Judean Jews. Further, the Damascus Document of the Dead Sea Scrolls describes "penitents" who went out from Judea to observe strict Nazirite traditions. These ascetics preserved a more ancient type of the true Israelite religion. This environment was conducive to producing from a society of "Elect Ones" an "Elect One"-- Jesus. By assuming a title such as "Son of God" Jesus could be thought of having a "filial relationship" to God without the Jews assuming he was a deity. It was only as Christianity developed that the Messiah Jesus became identified with the Logos, and was assumed to be an incarnation of God.[89]

In this environment Jesus grew up believing he was "called," but the baptism by John convinced him of his messianic role. He changed from the retiring Jesus to a man confident of his authority and dominance over his followers.[90]

The death of John the Baptist convinced Jesus to reveal himself as the Messiah to his twelve disciples. Disregarding the threat of Herod Antipas, of whom Jesus speaks disparagingly (Lk. 13:31-33), he girds himself to march on Jerusalem with three aims: first, he wants to deliver his prophetic call to national repentance at the very center of Jewish life; second, he wants to publicize his identity to the Jewish authorities; and third, he wants toreveal himself as the Messiah and to fulfill his destiny.[91]

Jesus planned his mission and was aided by the family of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, which granted him respite in their Bethany village home. Jesus was thus in short walking distance from Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane. He began to plan his revelation and martyrdom for Passover, taking advantage of that specific season and all its sacrificial symbols.[92]

Jesus begins his final operations with the "Triumphal Entry"-- an open political display of his Messiahship which made him accountably guilty of treason against Caesar. Since there were great crowds of pilgrims in the city and the Romans were not interfering with the Jews' celebration of their holiday, the Roman garrison had no particular reason to perceive Jesus' real purpose in entering Jerusalem. Jesus enters the Temple and overturns the tables of the money-changers but the priests are too fearful of the "consequences" to call upon the Temple police to restore order.[93]

During his occupation of the Temple, Jesus responds brilliantly to the question about the payment of the tribute tax, granting money but not love or loyalty to the Emperor.[94] But how militantly involved does Jesus become in the struggle for Jerusalem? Schoenfield suggests:

> While the massacre in the Temple is taking place he [Jesus] is found with his disciples quietly celebrating the Last Supper in some remote house away from the fighting. Then they go the Gethsemane.... It is ignored that with the Kedron Valley now in Roman hands the chances that Jesus could have reached Gethsemane were slim, and he would much more likely have gone somewhere else.[95]

Luke's statements concerning the slaughter of the Galileans and the fall of the tower of Siloam must refer therefore to an earlier event, perhaps to the period of the Roman Census in A.D. 34-35.[96]

Though Jesus rejected any violent means to overtake the Holy City, Schoenfield asserts:

> If he [Jesus] had not presented himself as a claimant to the throne of Israel and a menace to national security he would have been completely ignored by the Sanhedrin.[97]

Jesus was aware of the necessity of his being a martyred messiah. He thus encourages the perpetration of the final scheme, encouraging Judas to betray him.[98] Jesus finally does <u>not</u> tell his disciples to arm themselves but rather instructs them what they must now do without him, since they would be regarded as rebels.[99]

Jesus was put on trial not because of a religious offense but because of his political pretensions. By

admitting he was the Messiah, Jesus had "blasphemed" not the God of Jewish law but of Tiberius Caesar in Roman law. Therefore he was subject to Roman judgment.[100]

Pilate beheld a passive Jesus, not a militant Zealot. He was set to release the man in accordance with a Passover amnesty custom but the priests (along with their slaves and henchmen) cried for Barabbas instead, a man who was imprisoned for fighting against Rome in an attack against the aqueduct demonstrators.[101]

Jesus died a non-violent but political death. Schoenfield asserts:

> Never had Jesus been more the Messiah of his oppressed people than when he hung there with bowed head at rest, on a cross of imperial Caesar bearing a placard which announced him poignantly to all the world in Greek, Latin, and in Hebrew, as King of the Jews.[102]

Schoenfield complexly and in much different fashion from Eisler, Brandon and Carmichael, arrives at the same conclusion that Jesus was crucified as a political messianic figure. He presents a much more peaceful picture of Jerusalem than do Eisler and Brandon. His interpretation of the "Temple Cleansing" and "Triumphal Entry" scenes seems to follow traditional Christianity. He discounts Eisler's, Brandon's and Carmichael's theories of the insurrection and attributes any violent activity to another time which did not involve Jesus.

But most uniquely, Schoenfield subscribes to the notion of destiny in Jesus' life. Jesus as an Elect One proceeded to fulfill this destiny through his death and revival. He

knew he was to be a martyr for his people and relentlessly pursued the timetable which would earn him the title of Messiah. Eisler and Brandon hint that Jesus knew he would not be able to escape punishment, but in their works Jesus still possesses the free will to make that fateful decision. Jesus always knows his destiny in Schoenfield's thesis, but though his fate is a planned one he nevertheless remains a political pretender, a Jew and a nationalist.

#

Each writer discussed in this unit ascribes to Jesus Jewish nationalist motives. As we have observed, each author differs in his approach to the subject but would ultimately agree that Jesus was affected by the religious and political nationalism of his time to act as a political, temporal Messiah on behalf of his Jewish brethren against the priestly establishment and against Roman hegemony. In this mission-- the quest and purpose of his life-- he failed.

Chapter 3

Jesus the Jewish Nationalist

We have examined various competing scholarly theories on the question: was Jesus a Jewish nationalist? It is now incumbent upon us to deal critically with this scholarly material in an attempt to formulate our own conclusions as to the actual role Jesus did play in first century Jewish life. We shall refer to relevant scenes and passages from the Gospels in our examination.

The Triumphal Entry

What did Jesus intend by his grand march into Jerusalem on a lowly donkey? Was he appealing to the people as a neo-Judas Maccabaeus or did they mistakenly view him as a political, messianic freedom-fighter?[1] Did Jesus actually enter Jerusalem to promulgate an "exodus" from that holy city,[2] or did he plan to storm Jerusalem, uproot the sacerdotal aristocracy and implant within its walls the true Kingdom of God?[3]

Cullmann interprets the Triumphal Entry in the light of the Zechariah verse (9:9) in its literal sense: that is, Jesus enters the city as a humble and peaceful monarch. Thus, even though the time and desperate situation of the Jews seemed to warrant a warrior-like Messiah, Jesus symbolically rejects rebellion by employing a donkey on his ride.[4] H.E.W. Turner criticizes the political interpretation of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem: "... he [Brandon] does not

seem to allow sufficiently for a gap between the intention of Jesus and the response of the crowd."[5]

These critics would have us believe the unassuming, peace-loving Jesus deliberately chose a donkey to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy of Zechariah. Can we confidently presume that Jesus was willing to rely on the Old Testament's Lord of Hosts once more to destroy the enemies of the children of Israel rather than himself assuming an instrumental role? The Synoptic Gospels plausibly record that a great uproar accompanied Jesus' entry into the city-- an uproar that cried out to him, "save us!", "help us!". Having been called the "son of David," the "blessed one who is King," could Jesus have been oblivious to how others would perceive him in such a scene? If Jesus had not intended to solicit this type of support, could he not somehow have avoided the "triumph" and managed a more secretive, less obtrusive "entry" into Jerusalem? In other words, Jesus' very participation in such a scene argues for his willingness to be perceived in accordance with the popular expectations.

The Cleansing of the Temple

This remarkable scene has engendered much of the raging controversy over Jesus' actual intentions toward the high priests, the Temple and the Romans. Eisler emphasizes the import of Jesus' takeover of the Temple.[6] Jesus, by ransacking the Temple, was unquestionably making trouble for the Roman as well as the Jewish officials. Brandon, meanwhile, also relates the "insurrection" mentioned in Mark (15:7) and Luke (23:19,25) to the "cleansing scene."[7]

Eisler's theory is cleverly conceived. The "cleansing scene" is credible precisely because it depicts unusual open enmity of Jesus toward the establishment and the Romans; it surely has an original ring to it. The Gospels, beginning with Mark, do such an excellent job of creating a pacifist Jesus that the "cleansing," the mention of insurrection in the city and the fall of the tower of Siloam become all the more compelling. Mark (15:7) and Luke (23:19,25) mention an "insurrection." Persistent scholars like Eisler and Brandon felt compelled to ask-- what insurrection? They began to search for hints of an uprising in other Gospel passages. Could Jesus have been completely oblivious to a recorded "insurrection" in Jerusalem? Could he have naively wandered into Jerusalem coincidentally at the same time there began a Jewish rebellion against the Romans? Knowing the importance of the Temple as a place of business and an institution of vital concern to the Roman government, Jesus-- as Eisler and Brandon plausibly allege-- must have anticipated that his attempt to "cleanse" the Temple would evoke resistance. Surely, moreover, Jesus would not have undertaken such a mission alone. He had been greeted and accompanied by great crowds during his Triumphal Entry; surely, when he would begin to overturn tables in the Temple he would be met with violence, and the aroused people would then cause sparks to fly, with Roman troops and reinforcements called in to subdue the brash rebellion. Clearly the prospects of a full-fledged conflict were fully at hand, and Jesus could not have been unmindful of such a scenario.

Given the theoretical plausibility of Brandon's position, how compelling, therefore, are the usual objections to Brandon? D. Catchpole criticizes Brandon's analysis of the Temple Cleansing: "... the political interpretation proposed by Brandon is altogether lacking in textual support."[8] Cullmann draws this conclusion:

> He [Jesus] was as far removed from a revolt against the state as from an unconditional inner acceptance of it. Both of these positions would have been incompatible with his message of the good news of the kingdom of God.[9]

A.E. Harvey criticizes Brandon for making a statement indicating the "possibility" that Jesus wanted to gain control of the Temple and to depose the High Priest (Trial, p. 84) and then subsequently asserting that Jesus "decided to attack the priestly aristocracy in the Temple" (Trial, p. 145).[10]

But where is the critical evidence which disproves Jesus' active role in the Temple Cleansing and the possibility of his involvement in a simultaneous insurrection of the city? There is a certain plausibility inherent in such a reconstruction which is impervious to essentially subjective disclaimers that Jesus could have ever been involved in such developments. Surely we cannot prove Eisler's theory of a two-pronged attack which culminated in an initial Jewish takeover of the vital points of Jerusalem and an eventually successful Roman counterattack. But Eisler and Brandon do draw support from the Gospel texts for their theories, and it must be granted that some of the passages on which they focus simply do not readily make sense in the context of a

story about a presumably peaceful man who has come to fulfill the law. No critic has been able to offer textual proof that there was no connection between an insurrection in Jerusalem (of which Barabbas seems an integral part) and Jesus' march into and takeover of the Temple.

We know from our historical sources the seriousness of daily Temple life and the threat that an outsider like Jesus posed, or could be construed to pose, to that sacerdotal institution. We know that the preservation of the Temple cleansing scene, in spite of the obvious embarrassment it caused the later Church, tends to confirm the historicity of the Gospel account. We know that the incident would not have been treated lightly by the establishment, whether priestly or Roman. We know the mood of the Jewish people would have been at an agitated state during the pilgrim holiday. We know the volatile mood of Jews in Palestine during the Roman occupation. We have not seen any reason, other than apologetic sentiment, why Eisler's theory of a city-wide insurrection should be so easily discounted.

Tribute Money

Brandon finds in Jesus' answer to the Tribute Money question indication of his Zealotic sympathies: Jesus, in Brandon's interpretation of the passage, ruled decisively against the paying of tribute, for this would be a disloyal act to Yahweh. Brandon confirms this interpretation by citing Luke 23:2, wherein Jesus is accused of "forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar..."[11]

S. Perowne questions the logic of Brandon's assertion, for the Synoptic Gospels clearly show Jesus commanding his interrogators to give the money back. Thus it is "rather odd" to say that Jesus "ruled emphatically against the payment of tribute." (Trial, p. 67). Perowne rejects Brandon's proof text (Luke 23:2), for Pilate did not accept the charges made against Jesus.[12]

D. Catchpole agrees with Perowne's comments, stating that "Mark 12:17 cannot bear the weight Brandon places on it."[13] O. Cullmann asserts that Jesus gave neither a "yes" nor a "no" answer to the Tribute Money question.[14]

We cannot prove the legitimacy of Brandon's interpretation of the "Render unto Caesar" response. Superficially, Jesus seems to be accommodating to Rome. But Brandon, operating on the premise that Jesus, given his historical context, must have sympathized with the anti-establishment, nationalistically inclined Jewish groups of that period, interprets Jesus' words so that they will accord with the Zealotic ideology. Our objection to Brandon's exegesis of the Tribute Money is thus on methodological grounds: he interprets Jesus' response in terms compatible with the a priori assumption that Jesus was a nationalist sympathizer. This assumption is soundly criticized by Hans-Ruedi Weber, who accuses Brandon of this a priori reasoning in other relevant Gospel passages as well.[15] We would agree Brandon has interpreted the Tribute Money scene prejudicially in order to support his theory that Jesus maintained zealotic ideals.

However, Luke 23:2 persists as a problem despite Perowne's assertion that Pilate cleared away all the charges against Jesus. Refusal to pay tribute to Caesar was indeed a charge levelled against Jesus. Pilate's alleged rejection of the charge is not immediately relevant here; what interests us is how this charge could have been lodged in the first place. The only Gospel passage that implicitly suggests resistance towards the payment of tribute is of course Mark 12:17 f. (Mt. 22:21; Lk. 20:25). We do know that refusal to pay this tax was considered by Rome a criminal, political act. We do know Jesus is charged with encouraging the people to withhold Caesar's tribute money. We do know that Jesus is eventually executed for sedition.

We are not able to determine, even if we accept Brandon's interpretation, that Jesus' response was motivated precisely by Zealotic principles in particular. But we can assume by the later charge against Jesus in Luke that even if Jesus did not promulgate the opposition to the tax, he certainly did not encourage its payment by his enigmatic answer to the Pharisees. Most probably, if we accept the evidence from Luke against Jesus and the eventual charge of sedition on which Jesus is executed, we may conjecture that Jesus did in fact discourage the payment of tribute money to the Roman government.

Arming of the Disciples

What is the meaning of Luke's singular passage concerning the arming of Jesus' disciples (22:35-38)? Was the passage

chronologically misplaced?[16] Did not the disciples offer resistance to a heavily armed party of Roman and/or Jewish officials?[17]

There is no denying the Gospel accounts mention swords and resistance by Jesus' disciples. The question is: how much did Jesus encourage the disciples to offer resistance and for whose benefit was resistance offered? Many critics are skeptical of the militaristic interpretations of Luke 22:35-38. A.E. Harvey sarcastically asserts: "... the simple reference in Luke [to the procuring of swords] appears to be decisive for the view that Jesus intended to offer armed resistance...."[18] D. Catchpole first interprets the problematical Luke passage linguistically.[19] He then proceeds:

> The lack of support within the Gethsemane complex for Brandon's theory is reinforced by the fact that none but Jesus was arrested .... The ineptitude and incompetence of the arrest party, if it is true that "they succeeded in seizing Jesus but in the darkness and confused fighting they failed to arrest the disciples who made good their escape" (Trial, p. 149), defies all credibility. Such a suggestion is further damaged by the unhindered presence of Peter in the neighborhood of the high priest's house, ... a happening whose historicity is hardly in doubt.[20]

H.E.W. Turner remarks:

> ... [the Luke passage is] admittedly difficult, but to speak of it as Jesus ensuring that the disciples were armed to prevent arrest is probably over-exegesis.... The size and arming of the arresting party cannot be admitted as evidence of the intention of Jesus. They were evidently taking no chances, afraid of popular disturbances at Passover time and uncertain of the temper of the disciples.

> The question of Jesus "Are you come out as against a thief? (perhaps or even probably, the word implied a Zealot) marks a sharp contrast between Jesus and the Zealots.[21]

We cannot prove Jesus encouraged his disciples to arm themselves for the purpose of offering further resistance against the Romans and Jews of the arresting party. Though we feel strongly there was good indication that Jesus did encourage resistance in the Temple Cleansing (perhaps in concert with a simultaneous attack on the Roman fortress of Antonia), active resistance on Gethsemane would have been a futile gesture. We can readily believe, however, that Jesus' disciples took Jesus' statement in Luke (22:35-38) literally and did arm themselves for the purpose of protecting their commander, who had already consigned himself to a fate of martyrdom.

It was evident that at least one of the disciples offered resistance by sword as he sliced off a high priest's ear (Mk. 14:47; Mt. 26:51; Lk. 22:50) in order to protect Jesus from being seized by the arresting party. This incident, we would think, would very likely have set off more immediate violence unless Jesus had been quickly able to smooth things out by healing the priest's ear (Lk. 22:51)-- assuming that we can accept any of this episode at face value. Perhaps Jesus could have stayed the imminent collision of forces. More likely, after somehow finally convincing his disciples that he must fulfill his scriptural destiny, Jesus let himself be seized so that his disciples could escape. Why does Catchpole feel Brandon's theory to be so implausible? We

would think that indeed it was dark and confusing in Gethsemane that night. We would wonder about the efficiency of this Roman-Jewish posse, and we would be surprised if this ad hoc arresting party would not indeed be very satisfied with the singular capture of Jesus. It also seems plausible that Jesus' passive submission, an act which was so obviously disappointing to his disciples, would explain why they finally "forsook him and fled" (Mk. 14:50; Mt. 26:56). As for Peter, was he so well-known that Catchpole can justifiably expect him to have been recognized on sight? Only innocent by-standers sensed he was of Jesus' party and these people apparently felt no danger from the man as they did not call out to the proper authorities to arrest him. It is even possible they finally believed his ultimate denial of Jesus. Catchpole asserts Peter's presence was "a happening whose historicity is hardly in doubt." We do not accept this statement especially since the entire story of Peter's denial is confusedly intermeshed with the two meetings of the Sanhedrin, and may reflect a tradition of the developing Church.

We do conclude that Jesus ultimately surrendered to the arresting party. Resistance by violent means was no longer viable for him. He probably never wanted violence but only resorted to it as a means of overthrowing the unrighteous Roman and priestly establishments. However, though he allowed himself to be taken captive peacefully, his aims were still purposeful and political. He knew that, with hope of the secular Kingdom destroyed, he could still inspire

his people as a martyr who had fulfilled the law and fought valiantly for the cause of Jewish freedom.

Jesus' Nationalistic Involvement-- Textual Contradictions

If we are to cite Gospel evidence supportive of Jesus' being a para-Zealot, a Jewish nationalist of his age, how are we to evaluate the many pacific and beatific sayings of Jesus? Surely they cannot be dismissed outright. How do they affect a reconstruction of Jesus and his movement in relation to Zealotry? W.H.C. Frend asserts:

> The political aspects of Jesus' ministry are real enough, but they must not be overdrawn. If the story of the Temptations means anything it means the rejection of the Maccabean ideal with its call for the forceful overthrow of the oppressor, in favor of that of the suffering prophet ready to die for his people. The recorded commands of Jesus too, have little of the political about them.... The "pacific Christ" of the Gospels has a weight of evidence to support it that it would be foolish to deny.[22]

We find much truth in Frend's statement. However, though Jesus rejects violence in many parts of the Gospels, his oft-predicted martyrdom indicates he is willing to fulfill the higher Maccabean ideals of righteousness and faith in Yahweh and his people. In this way Jesus' passivity can be seen in a political light. Therefore we make no attempt to deny or discredit the "pacific Christ," but we do not consider it necessarily exclusive of a political portrait as well. J.G. Griffiths seems to concur as he admits there is good evidence "for the belief that Jesus differed basically from the Zealots in his rejection of armed resistance although he shared with them a deep concern for the future of Israel."[23]

We have seen above that Brandon sometimes offers flimsy evidence in support of his theories. J.A. Emmerton criticizes his interpretation of Mark 13:14 as an "oracle of Zealot origin."[24] O. Cullmann, while admitting the existence of verses which link Jesus with the Zealots, cites Matthew (5:39ff.) as an anti-Zealot text. The concepts Jesus expressed, such as loving enemies, not drawing one's sword, being faithful to the law, are all an "energetic repudiation of political events in his divine mission, which resulted in his viewing Zealotism as <u>the</u> great diabolical temptation."[25]

Again we admit the ample evidence of Jesus' irenic "personality," but we reiterate that his anti-violent views did not necessarily divorce him from nationalistically-minded Jewish patriots or zealotic groups with whose ideals he often was in agreement. We cannot assume that because Jesus abhorred violence and preached against it that he would never allow himself to be associated with it in order to achieve a higher aim-- his lofty goal of bringing in the Kingdom of God during his lifetime.

Jesus' Appeal to All Strata of Society

Brandon particularly concentrates on the presence of a Zealot in Jesus' inner party of disciples. But what about other disciples, especially the one identified as a tax collector for the Romans? Was not Jesus' association with tax collectors, moreover well-known (Mk. 2:14-16);[26] how does this square with the theory of his Zealotic sympathies? D. Catchpole similarly avers:

> ... a Zealot's membership of the band of disciples must be seen in the context of Jesus' appeal to all strata of society and in particular to those repugnant to both Pharisees and Zealots, namely the prostitutes and tax collectors.[27]

We comply with these critiques of Brandon's theory; that is, we agree Jesus had a universal appeal to different strata of society and thus a Zealot could be attracted to his messianic message without necessarily requiring us to find any political implications. A.R.C. Leaney suggests that Brandon "ignores the possibility that the twelve were called away from what they had been. Does Brandon mean, for example, that Jesus called the other Simon to be a Zealot or Peter to be a 'terrorist'?"[28] Leaney's point is well-taken. Yet if a man like Simon the Zealot were called for a peaceful mission would he not naturally change his name in favor of a less bellicose one upon initiation into Jesus' inner party? Simon's retention of his name indicates to us that neither he nor Jesus was concerned about the impression others would receive upon recognizing an avowed Zealot within the group of disciples.

Confusion of Politics and Religion

Was Jesus politically motivated in his mission to Jerusalem? Can we even separate politics from religion? S. Perowne remarks on the sentencing of Jesus:

> On the question of capital punishment, the question whether Jesus was a "political" offender is irrelevant. For one thing, in Palestine, then as now, it is quite impossible to separate politics from religion; for another, the power of the procurator is clear: the jus gladii belonged to him....[29]

A.R.C. Leaney condemns Brandon who "ignores any evidence which suggests that Jesus, like the Pharisees and other contemporaries, looked beyond politics to God, so that John 18:36, though unhistorical, does summarize the view of the historical Jesus."[30]

H.E.W. Turner concludes:

> That some of the disciples were or had been sympathizers is highly probable. It would not, therefore, be surprising if the message and mission of Jesus became confused in popular imagination with these strivings for independence. Any transvaluation by Jesus of concepts like the Kingdom of God or Messiahship could hardly be exempt from such misunderstanding which might extend even to the disciples themselves. But that Jesus was a Zealot or a para-Zealot with similar intentions though a different target, and therefore that he was guilty of the charges raised against him is not borne out by the evidence taken as a whole. The theory of a Messianic cross-purpose, a discrepancy between the intention of Jesus and the popular expectation, seems a preferable explanation covering more of the evidence.[31]

Turner speaks of misunderstandings and the inevitable confusion resulting from the mixture of Zealots among Jesus' disciples. But why, we must ask, is there a need to apologize for Jesus' association with Zealots? Turner admits that there was a religious as well as a political basis to this group of patriots. We can certainly agree that there is no factual indication that Jesus was in favor of the violent overthrow of the present religious and political establishments, but we see, as opposed to Turner, that much of the evidence in the New Testament depicts Jesus as a zealous individual. His "higher righteousness," his devotion and

zeal for the Law, his love for his fellow human beings and his Jewish people are all ideals which, though expressed peacefully, exist side by side with Maccabean and Zealot goals. One can make a salient case against Jesus' actual involvement with Zealot plans to overthrow the Roman government, but can one disprove as easily Jesus' abhorrence of the Roman occupation and the "puppet priesthood?" We think not and thus we believe all the gathered evidence does bear out Jesus' political and religious involvement with Zealot goals and ideals.

Who was Jesus?

We have observed many critics who deny Jesus was anything more than a "prince of peace." Some call for the abrogation of Brandon's entire theory. D. Catchpole claims:

> Jesus was no Zealot, nor was he close to the Zealots. It is altogether in excess of the evidence to regard his movement and Zealotism as parallel or in sympathy with one another.[32]

J.J. Sullivan argues similarly:

> Jesus had little or nothing to do with the Zealots and... the Zealots had no bearing on the essential Gospel message.[33]

However, most critical is M. Hengel, upon whom Brandon relied heavily for the origin of the Zealots. He writes:

> The now again much discussed interpretation of Jesus as a political, social and revolutionary who stood near the Zealots... is based upon a one-sided and forced interpretation of the sources and is therefore not justified from a historical point of view. Some individual aspects of the last events in Jerusalem and of the Passion story... are considered in an isolated way

> while the proclamation of Jesus as a whole as well as other information on the attitudes of Jesus are disregarded.[34]

The commentators discussed above have been severely critical of the scholarly theories which score Jesus as an active partisan in his country's fight for religious and political independence. Unfortunately, we believe these commentators have erred by viewing Jesus in just as narrow a stricture as the scholars whom they have criticized. We readily agree that the theories propounded in this thesis are open to scrutiny. They have glaring weaknesses, and often make generalities based on mere threads of evidence.[35] However, can those who condemn these theories deny what is factual, that is, that the Gospels do mention an insurrection, and do describe fighting and a political-Messianic procession associated with Jesus and his followers? Can these critics deny the likelihood that Jesus was indeed convicted of sedition by Roman authorities? Can they maintain he neither offended the political nor religious establishment? Can they deny the possible political implications of his leadership of the masses? We think not and therefore we move now, using our best intuition, to reconstruct the complex motives of the man Jesus.

#

Conclusion

We reject any interpretation of Jesus which designates him to be either a revolutionary or a defender of existing institutions. O. Cullmann asserts:

> Jesus' attitude towards wordly institutions, without being contradictory, had to be complex, because his thinking proceeded entirely from his expectation of the end.[36]

Jesus is a complex figure-- we cannot expound on his "fire and sword" sayings without regarding also his peace-loving sentiments. Further, we are not able to prove which character-- Jesus the prince of peace, or Jesus the revolutionary-- is more historically accurate. All we can rely upon is the material with which the Gospels present us and the most objective picture of first century C.E. Palestinian history as we can possibly glean from our sources.

The Gospel portrayal is primarily concerned to demonstrate not that Jesus was a Zealot freedom-fighter or a prince of peace, but rather that he was the Messiah. On the basis of Gospel testimony, we can determine four other things: 1) Jesus was partial to the poor; 2) he challenged the social structure of his age; that is, his disciples were composed of men, women, members of Jewish resistance movements, tax collectors and Pharisees; 3) he called for the end of religious self-righteousness; and 4) he knew he must become a martyr, "a victim of violence for the sake of both the oppressed and the oppressors."[37]

From our investigation of first century C.E. Palestinian history, we have determined that the historical figure Jesus could hardly have been unaware of the general unrest and Jewish nationalistic activity which took place in Palestine during his lifetime. We have determined that Jesus was

affected by this environment and that he acted on behalf of his brethren-- the עם הארץ -- the poor and oppressed people of his land. We cannot determine how violently he opposed Roman sovereignty and the hypocritical sacerdotal aristocracy, but there are indications he took some measure of rebellious action against the authorities in an insurrection within the holy city of Jerusalem. In this messianic mission Jesus unquestionably failed.

If it is historically true that Jesus chose to die as a martyr for his people, as a man who was devoted to the Kingdom of God and the salvation of Heaven, and that the cross was his true goal and not the secular takeover of Jerusalem, then he and those who retold his story certainly have reason to believe his mission was a great success. We tend to believe, however, that Jesus resigned himself to be the messiah of the "world to come" only because he could not capture the political messiahship of the world in which he actually lived. Ultimately, Jesus was convicted of sedition and died, condemned as King of the Jews, between two lestai-- two other political prisoners. Certainly we must conclude that Jesus did indeed play an active role in the development of Jewish nationalism in the first century C.E.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. Josephus, War II. viii.1.
2. Ibid., viii.2.
3. Ant. XVIII. i.1.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., XVIII. i.6.
6. War II. xiii.2,3.
7. Ibid., xiii.3.
8. Ibid., xiii.4.
9. Ibid., xiii.5.
10. Ant. XX. v.1.
11. War II. xiv.3.
12. Ibid., xiv.5.
13. Ibid., xiv.6.
14. Ibid., xiv.9.
15. Ibid., xvi.5.
16. Ibid., xvii.2.
17. Ibid., xvii.3.
18. Ibid., xvii.5.
19. Ibid., IV. iii.3,4.
20. Ibid., iii.6.
21. Ibid., iii.11.
22. Ibid., VII. viii.1; cf. Lk. 2:2.
23. Ibid.
24. Gittin 56a, p. 256. On the possible connection between "Birjonim" and Simon bar Yona or Simon the Zealot, see S.G.F. Brandon, Jesus and the Zealots, pp. 204-205.
25. Sota 9:9.

26. Ant. XX. vi.1.

27. The rabbinic meaning of lestai is expressly that of actual thieves or highwaymen.
In Alkali dictionary, לסטים means robber, originally לסטיס;
in Jastrow dictionary, לסטים means robber;
in Midrash Rabbah (cf. Soncino Index: Lam. 20, 195; S.S. 154; Lev. 414; Num. 863; Deut. 94), the meaning of lestai is "robbers" or "thieves";
in שודד הדרך בפרשת דרכים = לסטים — אוצר לשון תלמוד
שודדים = לסטים — אוצר לשון תרגית

28. As Josephus, e.g., customarily uses the word lestai.

29. RSV Oxford Annotated Bible, p. 1314.

30. In Luke 23:33, they are termed "criminals" (RSV); "malefactors" (KJ).

31. Ant., XVIII. i.1.

32. Ibid., xxviii.5. Also notes 6-9 above.

33. War, "Preface."

34. M. Finley, Introduction to The Great Historians: Josephus, p. ix.

35. B. Niese, "Josephus," J. Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 7:571.

36. H. St. J. Thackeray, Josephus: The Man and the Historian, p. 48.

37. S. Zeitlin, "Josephus-- Patriot or Traitor?", The Jewish Chronicle (Sept. 7, 1934), pp. 2-3.

38. Ibid., p. 3.

39. Ibid., p. 4.

40. Ibid., p. 8.

41. S. Grayzel, A History of the Jews, p. 167.

42. Thackeray, op. cit., p. 21.

43. Ibid.

44. Zeitlin, op. cit., p. 7.

45. Thackeray, op. cit., p. 48.

46. Niese, op. cit., p. 571.

47. Ibid., p. 572.

48. Op. cit., p. 7.

49. W.R. Farmer, Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus: an Inquiry into Jewish Nationalism in the Greco-Roman Period, p. 27.

50. Ibid., p. 30.

51. Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte, cited by Farmer, op. cit., p. 29.

52. Geschichte des Volkes Israel; Geschichte der Juden-- cited by Farmer, op. cit., p. 25.

53. Lehrbuch der Neutestamentische Zeitgeschichte, cited by Farmer, op. cit., p. 36.

54. S.G.F. Brandon, The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth, p. 32.

55. Allon, Mehqarim Bi'Toldoth Yisrael, Vol. I, p. 28.

56. Ibid., p. 30.

57. Ibid., p. 37.

58. Ibid., p. 43.

59. Ibid., p. 44.

60. Ibid., p. 45.

61. Ibid., p. 46.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid., p. 47.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Jacob Neusner, A Life of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, Ca. 1-80 C.E., pp. 125-26; cf. Allon, op. cit., I, pp. 219-252.

67. Neusner, op. cit., p. 127.

68. Farmer, op. cit., p. 158.

69. "Megillat Taanith as a Source for Jewish Chronology and History in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods," Jewish Quarterly Review 9 (1918-1919): 73.

70. "The Slavonic Josephus and its Relation to Hegesippus and Josippon," Jewish Quarterly Review 20 (1929): 72.

71. Farmer, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

72. Cf. n. 27. In the opinion of L. Ginzberg, "... λῃστής 'thief' is regularly misspelled as ליסטיס, though its meaning must have been known as it occurs hundreds of times in Talmudic-Midrashic literature." See "Some Observations on the Attitude of the Synagogue towards the Apocalyptic-Eschatological Writings," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 41 (1922):128.

73. Brandon, *Zealots*, p. 31.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

76. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

77. *Die Zeloten*, p. 36.

78. "λῃστής", *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Vol. 4, 264 ff.

79. *Op. cit.*, pp. 43, 323.

80. Quoted by Brandon, *op. cit.*, p. 41n.1.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 358.

85. See *supra*, p. 17; and nn. 27, 72.

86. Brandon, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

89. S. Zeitlin, *Who Crucified Jesus?*, p. 91.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

91. "Zealots", *Jewish Encyclopedia* 12 (1906):639.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 640.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 642.

94. "Zealots and Sicarii, Their Origins and Relation," *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971):1.

95. Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi, Vol. 1, 486f.; 573 ff.; cited by Smith, op. cit., p. 1.

96. The Beginnings of Christianity, Vol. 1, 421 ff.; cited by Smith, op. cit., p. 3.

97. Historia shel habayit hasheni, Vol. 4, 202; cited by Smith, op. cit., p. 5.

98. Ibid., p. 6; cf. Brandon, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

99. The Historical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

100. Die Zeloten.

101. Smith, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

102. Smith, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

103. Die Zeloten, cited by Smith, op. cit., p. 12.

104. Ibid., p. 14.

105. Ibid., pp. 14-15.

106. S. Zeitlin, "Zealots and Sicarii," Journal of Biblical Literature 82 (1962): 395 ff.

107. Smith, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

108. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

109. Ibid., p. 18.

110. Ibid., p. 19.

111. The famous Christ passage has evoked much controversy. Thackeray (Josephus: the Man and the Historian, pp. 137-8) and R. Eisler (The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist, pp. 36-58) try to prove its authenticity while Brandon (Jesus and the Zealots, p. 36), Niese ("Josephus", Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, p. 578), Finley (Introduction to The Great Historians: Josephus, p. xxix) and Zeitlin (Rise and Fall of Judean State, p. 377) say it is not authentic but rather a later interpolation by the Church writers. We tend to agree that the passage is a later interpolation, or at least a reworking of an earlier version. See Sh. Pines, An Arabic Version of The Testimonium Flavianum and Its Implications (Jerusalem: Academic Press, 1971).

112. The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church, p. 118.

113. Thackeray, op. cit., p. 151.

114. The Fall of Jerusalem, p. 118.

115. E.g., Jn. 6:15; 11:47-51; 18:19,29,30,33-34.

116. Ibid., p. 124.

117. S. Zeitlin, "The Hoax of the Slavonic Josephus," Jewish Quarterly Review 39 (1933):177.

118. J. Spencer Kennard, Jr., "Slavonic Josephus--a Retraction," ibid., p. 281.

119. "The Hoax of the Slavonic Josephus," ibid., p. 179.

120. See detailed discussion, infra, pp. 31-38, on Eisler's The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist According to Flavius Josephus' Recently Rediscovered "Capture of Jerusalem" and the other Jewish and Christian Sources.

121. S. Zeitlin, "The Slavonic Josephus and its Relation to Hegesippus and Josippon," Jewish Quarterly Review 20(1929): 1-50.

Zeitlin attempts to refute Eisler by saying that the edition hostile to Rome was a translation from the Byzantine-Greek version of the accepted Josephus, and therefore the hostile passages in the Slavonic Josephus are explained since the Byzantine Empire was hostile to the Latins. Zeitlin attempts to prove the translations are not from Josephus since Josephus would use the word "Romans" instead of "Latins" (pp. 14-15). Zeitlin then shows (p. 18) the parallels between the Slavonic Josephus and the Acts of Pilate (the Gospel of Nicodemus). Other passages, Zeitlin shows, derive from certain writings of the Church Fathers (p. 24). Zeitlin proceeds further to demonstrate the similarity between the Slavonic Josephus, the Latin Hegesippus, and the Hebrew Josippon (pp. 30-40). Finally Zeitlin attempts to prove that Eusebius, and not Josephus, was the real author of the Christ passage (p. 42).

Zeitlin, through thorough comparisons of certain of the above-mentioned passages, tries to demonstrate that indeed the Slavonic Josephus must be a "hoax." He theorizes that it was compiled by "a converted Jew, who made use of the Hebrew Josippon, and who, being apprehensive lest the book be taken as the work of a Christian, refrained from mentioning the name of Jesus, substituting the word 'Wonder-doer'." Zeitlin believes the Byzantine-Greek version was translated into the Old Russian language during the twelfth or thirteenth century. The language, he notes, is not the Slavonic, "but the Old North Russian" (p. 40).

Notes to Chapter 2

1. N. Perrin, What is Redaction Criticism?, p. 3.
2. A. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 13.
3. Ibid., p. 24.
4. H.S. Reimarus, The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples, p. 41.
5. Ibid., p. 43.
6. Ibid., p. 48.
7. Ibid., p. 50.
8. Ibid., p. 80.
9. Ibid., p. 84.
10. Ibid., pp. 86-87.
11. Perrin, op. cit., p. 4.
12. On the problem of the historicity of the Slavonic Josephus see supra, pp. 26-28.
13. See supra, pp. 6-7.
14. Robert Eisler, The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist, pp. 252-3.
15. Ibid., pp. 340-343.
16. Ibid., p. 356.
17. Ibid., p. 358.
18. Ibid., pp. 359-360.
19. Ibid., p. 360.
20. Ibid., pp. 362-363.
21. Ibid., pp. 366-367.
22. Ibid., p. 367.
23. Ibid., pp. 369-370.
24. B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt, A Fragment of an Uncanonical Gospel from Oxyrhynchos. (Oxford, 1908), reprinted from Oxhyrh. Papyrij U., Papyr. Oxyrhynchos, No. 840.
25. Eisler, op. cit., pp. 481-485.

26. Ibid., p. 486.

27. Ibid., pp. 490-493.

28. Ibid., p. 493.

29. Ibid., pp. 494-497.

30. Ibid., pp. 500-501.

31. Ibid., pp. 505-506.

32. Ibid., pp. 507-508.

33. Ibid., pp. 512-513.

34. Eisler theorizes that Barabbas was a "well-known partisan of the hierarchy," and his name was connected with the rebels' opponents (p. 474). It was absurd to think that Pilate would pardon a known criminal, but likely that he would attempt to mollify the hierarchy of high priests by releasing "the son of a learned rabbi, who had erroneously been arrested by his soldiers in the turmoil of the fray" (p. 475).

35. Ibid., p. 510.

36. Ibid., pp. 510-511.

37. S.G.F. Brandon, The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth, pp. 30-31.

38. Idem, Jesus and the Zealots, pp. 343-344.

39. Trial, p. 143.

40. Ibid., p. 144. See discussion, supra, pp. 22-26, on term "zealots." Brandon disputes the thesis that the Zealots were not an official nationalist party until the war against Rome (A.D. 66-70); the mention of Simon the Zealot proves the existence of the party in Jesus' time (Jesus and the Zealots, p. 43n2).

41. The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church, p. 105.

42. Ibid.

43. Zealots, p. 145.

44. Ibid., pp. 346-348; Trial, p. 67.

45. Trial, pp. 103, 145.

46. Ibid., pp. 145-146.

47. Ibid., p. 147.

48. Zealots, p. 333.

49. Cf. Eisler's antithetical view of Barabbas, supra, n34.

50. Brandon, Trial, p. 102; cf. Eisler's interpretation of the insurrection, supra, pp. 34-37.

51. Fall of Jerusalem, p. 103. See Mk. 14:43, 47, 48; Mt. 26:47, 51-55; Lk. 19:28-38; Jn. 18:3, 10.

52. Trial, p. 149.

53. Ibid., p. 86.

54. Ibid., p. 87.

55. Ibid., p. 88.

56. Ibid., pp. 88-89. See Josephus, War VI. v.3 where the historian records activities of a peasant named Jesus who prophesied in A.D. 62 the destruction of the sanctuary, but was not killed because of it.

57. Ibid., p. 89.

58. Ibid., p. 93.

59. Ibid., p. 99.

60. Ibid., p. 23.

61. W. Farmer, Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus: an Inquiry into Jewish Nationalism in the Greco-Roman Period. See supra, pp. 13, 17 for further development of Farmer's thesis and influence of Megillat Taanith on Jews of Jesus' time.

62. Ibid., p. 175.

63. Ibid., p. 180.

64. Ibid., p. 188.

65. Ibid., pp. 189-190.

66. Ibid., p. 190.

67. Ibid., pp. 193-194.

68. Ibid., p. 196.

69. Ibid., p. 197; cf. Amos Wilder, Otherwordliness and the New Testament (N.Y.:Harper, 1954), pp. 67, 84, 93.

70. Ibid., p. 197. Farmer cites Oscar Cullmann, The State in the New Testament (N.Y.:Scribner's, 1956), pp. 6, 11-12, 22. "Cullmann does not regard Jesus as a Zealot. But he rightly insists that Jesus was regarded as a Zealot by the State, and that he had to come to terms with the Zealot movement (p. 12)."

71. See W.R. Farmer, "The Palm Branches in Jn. 12:13," The Journal of Theological Studies, 3/1 (1952):62-66.

72. Farmer, Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus, pp. 198-200.

73. Cf. Brandon's quite different interpretation of Jesus' answer, supra, p. 40.

74. Farmer, op. cit., pp. 200-201.

75. Cf. Eisler's and Brandon's views on Barabbas, supra, n34 and p. 42, respectively.

76. Farmer, op. cit., p. 201.

77. See supra, pp. 34-37.

78. Joel Carmichael, The Death of Jesus, pp. 139-145.

79. Ibid., pp. 164-168. Cf. Eisler, op. cit., pp. 354-370.

80. Ibid., pp. 168-169.

81. Ibid., p. 170.

82. Ibid., pp. 171-175; cf. Eisler's view of Jesus' intentions, supra, pp. 31-38. Though Eisler concludes Jesus led a violent attack on Jerusalem, he contends that his main goal was to lead a new exodus into the wilderness.

83. Ibid., pp. 181-182.

84. Ibid., pp. 183-187.

85. Ibid., pp. 194-195.

86. Ibid., p. 197.

87. Ibid., pp. 198-199.

88. Hugh Schoenfield, The Passover Plot, p. 34.

89. Ibid., pp. 38-41.

90. Ibid., pp. 75-77.

91. Ibid., pp. 90, 106.

92. Ibid., pp. 109-112.

93. Ibid., pp. 121-124; cf. Priests' and Romans' reactions to Jesus' attack on the Temple in the view of Eisler, supra, pp. 34-37; in the view of Brandon, supra, pp. 41-42.

94. Ibid., p. 125; see Brandon, supra, p. 40, for similar answer.

95. Hugh Schoenfield, The Jesus Party, pp. 78-79.

96. Ibid., p. 79.

97. Passover Plot, p. 137.

98. Ibid., pp. 138-140.

99. Ibid., p. 142n13; cf. Eisler and Brandon's different interpretations of these passages, supra, pp. 37-38, 42 respectively.

100. Ibid., pp. 147-148.

101. Ibid., pp. 151-152; cf. Schoenfield's later work, The Jesus Party, where the author concurs with Eisler's view on Barabbas, having consulted Eisler's study on the Slavonic Josephus. Schoenfield accepts the theory that Barabbas might have been a loyalist to Rome, and a part of the established priestly class (pp. 79-85).

102. Ibid., p. 156. A good part of Schoenfield's thesis deals with the theory that Jesus was preserved by drugs and lived after the crucifixion. Jesus planned this actual "resurrection" and thus had achieved a real temporal messianic victory (pp. 161-181). However, it seems this theory, or one similar to it, was proposed as early as 1782 by Karl Bahrdt. Bahrdt asserts that the order of the Essenes devised this plan, and that after Jesus healed from his wound he was allowed to appear in public several times to lend credence to his resurrection (A. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, pp. 38-43). Schweitzer cites other scholars, for example, Karl Venturini (pp. 44-47); August Gfrörer (pp. 163-166); and F.W. Ghillany (pp. 166-172), whose fictitious lives of Jesus could have formed part of the foundation for Schoenfield's much later "theories" about Jesus' death. It is unclear whether Schoenfield himself is familiar with these earlier theories.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. On W. Farmer's discussion, see supra, pp. 45-50.

2. On R. Eisler's discussion on the "exodus", see supra, pp. 34-36.

3. On S.G.F. Brandon and J. Carmichael, see supra, pp. 38-45; 50-54.

4. H.R. Weber, "Freedom Fighter or Prince of Peace?", Study Encounter 8/4:1-24 (1972). Weber cites Cullmann, Jesus and the Revolutionaries (N.Y., Scribner's, 1970), p. 43.

5. H.E.W. Turner, Church Quarterly Review 168:346-349 (July-Sept. 1967), p. 348. Cf. Farmer, see supra, p. 48.

6. See supra, pp. 34-37.

7. See supra, p. 41.

8. D. Catchpole, The Trial of Jesus-- A Study in the Gospels and Jewish Historiography from 1770 to the Present, p. 124.

9. H.R. Weber, op. cit., p. 15. Weber cites O. Cullmann, op. cit., p. 43.

10. A.E. Harvey, Journal of Theological Studies New Series 22:200-202 (Apr. 1971), p. 202.

11. See supra, p. 40.

12. Stewart Perowne, Palestine Exploration Quarterly 103:46 (Jan.-Jn. 1971).

13. Catchpole, op. cit., p. 123.

14. Weber, op. cit., p. 50. Weber cites O. Cullmann, op. cit., p. 43.

15. Ibid., p. 13.

16. See Eisler's view, supra, p. 34.

17. See Brandon, supra, p. 42 and n51.

18. A.E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 202. Harvey comments on Brandon's assertion that the disciples most likely had more than two swords (Zealots, p. 341).

19. Catchpole, op. cit., p. 125. Catchpole asserts that in v. 38 ἱκανόν ἐστιν means "sufficient" in a quantitative sense, that is two swords were considered enough for the mission, signifying there was to be no real

uprising. ἱκανόν ἐστιν could perhaps indicate a "cutting off of the conversation." Cf. RSV Oxford Annotated comment on Luke 22:36-38: "The sword apparently meant to Jesus a preparation to live by one's resources against hostility. The natural meaning of v. 38 is that the disciples supposed he spoke of an actual sword, only to learn that two swords were sufficient for the whole enterprise, i.e. were not to be used at all" (p. 1279).

20. Ibid., p. 125.

21. H.E.W. Turner, op. cit., p. 348.

22. W.H.C. Frend, Palestine Exploration Quarterly 99:119-21 (July - Dec. 1967), p. 120.

23. J.G. Griffiths, "Zealot and Para-Zealot", New Testament Studies 19:483-489 (July, 1973), p. 485.

24. J.A. Emmerton, Theology 70:278-279 (June, 1967), p. 279.

25. Weber, op. cit., p. 14. Weber cites O. Cullmann, op. cit., p. 9f.

26. J.T. Townsend, Journal of Biblical Literature 89:246-247 (June, 1970), p. 247.

27. Catchpole, op. cit., p. 122.

28. A.R.C. Leaney, Theology 72:121-122 (March, 1969), p. 122.

29. Perowne, op. cit., p. 46.

30. Leaney, op. cit., p. 122.

31. Turner, op. cit., p. 349.

32. Catchpole, op. cit., p. 126.

33. J.J. Sullivan, Journal of Religious History 5:167-170 (Dec. 1968). p. 167.

34. Weber, op. cit., p. 13. Weber cites M. Hengel, "Sechs Thesen eines Neutestamentlers", Evangelische Kommentare 12/1969, p. 694.

35. We do not readily accept the historicity of all episodes recorded in the Gospels, but have rather, for the purpose of this thesis, often dealt with these accounts on a conditional basis; that is, if these events actually occurred in Jesus' lifetime and are accurately recorded then we can allow ourselves to make certain assumptions.

Thus, e.g., we do not necessarily agree that a great throng greeted Jesus upon his entry into Jerusalem. This theme of Jesus' popularity could have been an apologetic device on the part of the later Church to present Jesus as a popular figure in his own day (p.60). We cannot be sure of the chronological relationship between the insurrection mentioned in Mark (15:7) and Jesus' Cleansing of the Temple (p.61). Luke 23:2 might not have been an actual charge against Jesus, but rather a literary device to demonstrate to the reader the falseness of Jewish accusations. The reader knows Jesus has encouraged the payment of Tribute to Caesar; this charge, therefore, proves the Jews have lied about Jesus' actual behavior in order to dispose of him (pp. 63-65). Finally, we do not necessarily accept the ear-healing and flight stories as historically reliable. The healing of the ear could have been a late attempt to demonstrate Jesus' pacifism, and the flight could have been part of a Markan Tendenz to discredit the disciples of the Palestinian Church (pp. 67-68).

36. Weber, op. cit., p. 14. Weber cites O. Cullmann, op. cit., p. 12f.

37. Ibid., pp. 22-23.

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