



**Jesus Never Lived!**  
**Vol 1 Jesus Christ:**  
**A Pagan Myth**

Evidence that  
Jesus Never Existed

**Laurence E. Dalton**  
**Shirley Strutton Dalton**

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VOLUME 1

JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN  
MYTH

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**3RD REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION**

Laurence E. Dalton

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Laurence E. Dalton and Shirley Strutton Dalton

***In Memory, Fay Marie***

***For everything there is a season,  
And a time for every matter under heaven:  
A time to be born, and a time to die . . .  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance . . .***

***Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, 4***



## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

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In this book, what Christians call the *Old Testament* (OT), we will call the *Jewish Scriptures* (hereafter JS); the *New Testament* will be called the *Christian Scriptures* (hereafter CS). No one knows who wrote the four gospels, but we will for convenience accept Mark (Mk), Matthew (Mt), Luke (Lk), and John (Jn) as the authors of the canonical gospels. Mk 1.2 will signify Mark Chapter 1, verse 2. We will use BCE (Before the Common Era) instead of BC and CE (Common Era) instead of AD.

“Gentile” (Greek *ethnos* or *nation*) is used in the *Christian Scriptures* to refer to a non-Jew, that is someone not born of a Jewish mother, or one who has not been converted to Judaism.” We will replace the word *gentile* with the word *pagan*, meaning only a person who is neither a Jew nor a Christian.

Most modern commentators on the *Christian Scriptures* use the phrase *Jewish Christian*, though it appears nowhere in the CS. It is as if Jews are still considered a biological race, a concept long ago discredited. Is a Christian who converts to Judaism called a Christian Jew? A Jew who has converted to Christianity, we will designate a Christian of Jewish background.

Although some ancient Jews interpreted the *Jewish Scriptures* symbolically, they nonetheless preserved the



## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

literal sense of the text where needed. For example, Philo of Alexandria was a Hellenized Jew, i.e., a person who was familiar with Greco-Roman culture. This Biblical commentator held that abstaining from pork reminded people not to be enslaved to greed, but he also took the command literally, believing that Jews should observe the law forbidding the eating of pork.

Ancient Christians interpreted the *Jewish Scriptures* symbolically, often to the exclusion of the literal meaning. For example, in Exodus Moses parts the Red Sea so that the Jewish people may escape slavery in Egypt. Many Christians interpreted this passage as predicting that Jesus would save people by baptizing them with water.

Lastly, it should be noted that the *Jewish Scriptures* were completed nearly 200 years before the time of Jesus, and all modern commentators, other than literalists, recognize that these scriptures never refer to Jesus' baptism or any other aspect of Christianity.

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## PART 1 COMMENTARY ON MARK

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***Nothing is to be accepted save on the authority of Scripture, since greater is that authority than all the powers of the human mind.***

— St. Augustine, *On Genesis*.

***Belief means not wanting to know what is true.***

— Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*.

The purpose of *Jesus Never Lived! Volume 1: Jesus Christ: A Pagan Myth* Part 1 is to show that the Jesus of Mark's Gospel is a product of the pagan Roman world. In addition, some of Mark is composed of material taken from the Jewish Scriptures (the Old Testament).

*The Christ Myth Theory and Its Problems* by Robert M. Price is very useful in defending the thesis that the gospels are fictions composed from material taken from the Jewish Scriptures.

R. Helms' *Gospel Fictions* is helpful in examining Mark's use of the Jewish Scriptures in creating his fictional narrative.



## CHAPTER 1 BIRTH, BAPTISM AND MINISTRY: MARK 1.1-45

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*Seeking to kill the future emperor Augustus, the Roman Senate issued an order to have all Roman male infants killed.*

— Authors

*King Herod ordered all the children in and around Bethlehem, under two years of age, to be killed, in order that the King of the Jews may not survive.*

Matthew 2.16

### THE BIRTH OF JESUS

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Before turning to our commentary on Mark, we will critically examine the birth stories concerning Jesus. According to Matthew and Luke, the father of Jesus was Joseph. Although Mark wrote his gospel about 70 CE, well before Matthew and Luke wrote, he knows nothing about the name of the father of Jesus. Nor does Mark know of any divine and virginal conception of Jesus, his birth in Bethlehem under Herod the Great (36-4 BCE), nor of Jesus' aristocratic ancestry (see genealogies in Mt 1.1-16; Lk 3.23-38).

Pagan divine men were depicted as having noble and/or divine heritage. The philosopher, Pythagoras (fl 530 BCE), was said to have been descended from noble ancestors and from Apollo, the Greek sun god. The editors of *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament* (hereafter Boring, *HCNT*) point out that Diogenes Laertius (3<sup>rd</sup> cent. CE) characterized "Plato as the supernaturally

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conceived son of the god Apollo.” Plutarch relates that Alexander the Great was a descendant of the divine Hercules. [Boring, M., 37, #6, Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, “Life of Alexander” 2.1-3.2] The *gens* (tribes) of the Roman kings and rulers of the Republic were also thought of as divine.

### THE EMPEROR AUGUSTUS (RULED 27 BCE TO 14 CE)

Let us compare Jesus with Octavius, the future Emperor Augustus (ruled 27 BCE to 14 CE). He was a contemporary of Jesus (ca 4 BCE–ca 30 CE). In Matthew, Joseph has a dream in which an angel tells him that “... the child [Jesus] conceived in [Mary] is from the Holy Spirit” (Mt 1.20). Plutarch says that, “[Dreams are] ... a most ancient and respected form of divination .... (cf. Mt 1.18-2.23). He also says that birds can become pregnant by means of a wind. [Boring, M. *HCNT*, 40, #9, Plutarch, *Moralia*, “Dinner of the Seven Wise Men” 59A; “On Inoffensive Self-Praise” 589D]

In Greek, *pneuma*, or wind, can mean spirit (cf. Mt 1.18-25). Matthew quotes Isa 7.14, “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son ...” Isaiah actually says *young woman*, not *virgin*.

Joseph wants to protect Mary by quietly divorcing her (Mt 1.19). Suetonius writes that a serpent approached the mother of Augustus, Attia, as she slept in the temple of Apollo and impregnated her. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 38, #7, Plutarch “Table Talk” 8.1-3]

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Augustus' father may have had a different reaction than Joseph.

In Luke's gospel, the angel Gabriel declares to Mary that her child "will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor [King] David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Lk 1.32-33).

Plutarch relates that before the birth of Augustus, a "prediction was made that a citizen of that town (Velitrae) would one day rule the world." [Martin, F., 160]

## KILLING THE DEMIGOD

In the ancient pagan world it was common for various gods or rulers to attempt to prevent the birth of a demigod or, failing that, to attempt to kill him shortly after his birth. One of the most popular demigods of the Greek and Roman world was Hercules. [Philostratus, 15]

In one tradition, Zeus impregnates Alkmene, the mortal woman who was the mother of Hercules. Zeus announces to all the gods that he will make the child who is born on a specific day the king of Perseus' descendants. Hera stops the labor pains of Alkmene so that Hercules is born one day after the date chosen by Zeus, though eventually a compromise is worked out and Hercules survives.

In Genesis, the Pharaoh attempts to kill the infant Moses by slaughtering all Hebrew baby boys, but Moses' mother saves her son by sending him down the Nile in a basket.



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He is rescued and raised by the Pharaoh's daughter. In Matthew an angel warns Joseph in a dream and he and Mary flee with the infant Jesus to Egypt (Mt 2.14-15). To prevent Octavius from becoming king of the Roman people, "the senate in consternation decree(ed) that no male child born that year should be reared." [Martin, F., 160]

Octavius lived to become the Emperor Augustus because of the resistance of Roman mothers. At Mt 2.16, Herod the Great attempts to kill Jesus by ordering the death of all babies in and around Bethlehem. There is no evidence of any such slaughter in first-century Judea.

The similarities in the birth stories of Moses, Augustus and Jesus include:

- The birth of all three is predicted;
- Powerful people attempt to kill the newborn hero;
- Each grows up to be a law giver who inaugurates a new age. In addition, Jesus and Augustus each had a divine father and a human mother, and miraculous signs and portents accompany their births and deaths.

The striking similarity between Jesus and the Emperor Augustus can be seen even more clearly in a resolution passed by the Provincial Assembly of Asia Minor during the reign of Augustus. Among other things, it states that Providence has given

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*...to us Augustus Caesar whom it filled with virtue (arete) for the welfare of mankind, and who, being sent to us and to our descendants as a savior (soter), ... having become visible (phaneis...) ...surpassing all the benefactors ...the birthday of the God (viz., Caesar Augustus) has been for the whole world the beginning of the gospel (evangelion) concerning him, (therefore, let all reckon a new era beginning from the date of his birth...)* [Cartlidge, D., 13-14]

According to the *Christian Scriptures*, the good news or gospel (*evangelion*) is preached by Jesus. His divinity becomes visible, i.e., he takes on flesh. He has come to benefit the world; he surpasses all others and inaugurates a new age.

### FURTHER PROBLEMS IN THE BIRTH STORIES IN MATTHEW AND LUKE

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According to Mark, Jesus was born and raised in Galilee, but Matthew relates that Joseph and his wife, Mary, lived in Bethlehem near Jerusalem in Judea and Jesus was born there.

Matthew also states that a widespread belief existed among Jews in the coming of the Messiah or king of Israel. (Matthew equates the two, Mt 2.2,4). King Herod (d 4 BCE) and “all Jerusalem” fear that the “King of the Jews” has been born (Mt 2.3). James H. Charlesworth is correct when he says that most Jews did not expect “the Messiah.” [Charlesworth, J. H., *The Messiah*, 5]

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The *Jewish Scriptures* do not mention the coming of “the Messiah.” Josephus, the Jewish historian, and the Jewish exegete, Philo of Alexandria, both of the first century CE, did not know about the coming of a messiah or king, nor does the Mishnah (published ca 200 CE).

Luke, as in Mark, has Jesus’ parents reside in Nazareth in Galilee, not in Bethlehem as Matthew does. Luke relates that the Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken under Quirinius, the governor of Syria (Lk 1.2.) Luke says that all people traveled to their ancestral home towns to be registered (Lk 1.3).

E.P. Sanders, in *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, [Sanders, E.P., 1996, 86-87] discusses some problems connected with this census: 1) Quirinius was not Legate of Syria when Jesus was born, but took office in 6 CE, ten or eleven years after Jesus’ birth in about 4 or 5 BCE. 2) “Rome... [took] a census of people who lived in Judea, Samaria, and Idumaea — not Galilee,” [Sanders, E.P., 1996, 86-87] as it was not a Roman province at that time. Moreover, the idea that people returned to their ancestral home towns for the census is impossible. Chaos would result. The census was done for tax purposes [Sanders, E.P., 1996, 86-87] and thus the Roman imperial government was not concerned with where one’s ancestors lived 42 generations before.

Luke identifies Bethlehem in Judea as the city of David (Lk 2.4). It is true that the Jewish Scriptures state that David was born in Bethlehem and later anointed king there, but, as S. Lachs informs us, Jerusalem, is the city of David. [Lachs, S., 29]

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(See 2 Sam 5.7,9; 2 Sam 6.10,12,16; 1 Chr 11.5,7; 2 Kgs 9.28, 12.22.) [Lachs, S., 29] David conquered Jerusalem, named it, built part of it (2 Sam 5.7,9), and made it the capital of Israel. The city is even described as the city of David in 2 Sam 6.12: he “went and brought up the ark of God ...to the city of David [Jerusalem]...” [Lachs, S., 30, n 8] The idea that Bethlehem is the city of David is a Christian invention, as is the belief that “the Messiah” would be born there. [Wigoder, G., 191.0]

Luke says that in the fifteenth year of Tiberius (ca 28/29 CE) Jesus was about 30 years old (Lk 3.1,23). Counting backwards, we arrive at 2 BCE as Jesus’ birth year, two years *after* King Herod dies. The trouble is that both Luke and Matthew relate that Jesus was born *before* the king’s death in 4 BCE.

## COMMENTARY ON MARK

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The Gospels of Matthew (written ca 80 CE) and Luke (written ca 85 CE) are dependent on Mark which was written ca 70 CE. Thus, Matthew and Luke will not be given much weight where they disagree with Mark. In addition we will rarely refer to the Gospel of John (written ca 100 CE) since most critical scholars consider it historically worthless.

We will generally not be concerned with Jesus’ teachings but only with the alleged events of his life (such as his baptism, arrest, trial, crucifixion), and his actions (the choosing of his disciples, his exorcisms, cures, and nature miracles, etc.).

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Why this disregard for the teachings of Jesus? E.P. Sanders explains why he did not focus on Jesus' teachings in *Jesus and Judaism*, "...scholars have not and, in my judgment, will not agree on the authenticity of the sayings material, either in whole or in part. There are a few sayings on which there is a wide consensus, but hardly enough to allow a full depiction of Jesus." [Sanders, E.P., 1989), 4]

As to the thesis that the moral teachings of Jesus and Paul were largely pagan, see *Evidence That Jesus Never Existed! Volume 2 The Pagan Morals Of Jesus Christ*.

In our commentary, we will search Mark for answers to questions such as the following:

- Was Jesus familiar with the religious thought and practice of Judaism in the first century CE?
- Was the Marcan Jesus so anti-Jewish as to preclude a Jewish milieu for the gospel? For example, would a Jewish prophet teach contempt for Jewish law?
- Are the accounts of Jesus' life and death derived from the Jewish Scriptures?
- How much of Jesus' life is a product of the early church? Has the early church attributed acts and teachings to Jesus in order to provide scriptural support for certain beliefs and practices of the early church, e.g., baptism and the Eucharist?
- Is Mark historically plausible? For example, would

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the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish legal authority in Judea, meet in the darkness of the Passover night to try Jesus?

- Does Jesus fit better in a Jewish or a pagan matrix? Virtually all serious scholars believe that Mark's account of a Jewish Jesus was Hellenized. Is this true, or is Jesus a pagan figure with Jewish dress? In other words, was Jesus a pagan Christ or a Jewish Messiah?

## THE GOOD NEWS GOSPEL: MK 1.1

“The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” is the first verse of the Gospel of Mark; it may originally have been a title. It is an incomplete sentence, untypical of Mark’, and it is missing from some important early manuscripts.

Only Mark refers to his narrative as the *gospel* or *good news* (Greek *evangelion*), a word found in surviving pagan inscriptions. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 169]

One from Pirene (9 BCE) in Asia minor is cited in the *Hellenistic Commentary of the New Testament*: “...the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning for the world of the good tidings (*evangelion*)....” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 169, #225]

The Epicurean Lucretius (d 55 BCE) says of his teacher:

*Of his revelations — he was a god,  
A god indeed who first discovered  
That rule of life that now is called philosophy;*

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... [his] gospel [was...,  
Broadcast throughout the length and breadth of  
empires... [Boring, M., HCNT, 170, #226]

### JOHN THE BAPTIST

Mark thinks the *Jewish Scriptures* predict that John the Baptist will “Prepare the way of the Lord [Jesus]” (Mk 1.3), attributing the citation to the “prophet Isaiah” though it is a fusion of Mal 3.1 and Isa 40.3. [Lachs, S., 37]

Matthew and Luke correct this by omitting the Malachi cite. Malachi writes that the messenger is to prepare the way for “the Lord of Hosts” (Mal 3.1), and Isaiah tells the King to prepare “a highway for our God” (Isa 40.3). *Lord* is the most frequently used title for God in the *Jewish Scriptures*. The *NRSV Exhaustive Concordance* informs us that the word *Lord* is used to refer to God more than 8,000 times in about 7,000 places. [Metzger, B. M., 772]

N. Beck writes, “Jesus is by implication ‘the Lord’ whose way is prepared by John the Baptist.” [Beck, N., 140-141] Early Christians saw Jesus as divine, an impossibility if one assumes that Christianity derives from the strictly monotheistic religion of Judaism.

John the Baptist’s camel’s hair clothing, leather belt, and his diet of locusts and wild honey (Mk 1.6) are based on 2 Kgs 1.8 and Zch 13.4. The Baptist preaches in the wilderness “proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1.4). Matthew deletes “forgiveness of sins” [Lachs, S, 45] as the status of Jesus

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has risen and he has no sin that needs to be forgiven (cf. Mk 2.5-7,10). Besides, Jesus can forgive sins but a Jewish prophet cannot.

The church became embarrassed by John's baptism of Jesus because the Jewish prophet came to be thought of as spiritually inferior to Jesus. Thus, the church altered the text of Mark, forcing John to acknowledge the superiority of Jesus. The Baptist says that "the one to come" will be greater and more powerful than him. The Baptist is unworthy to untie his sandals and he (John) baptizes with water, but the one to come "will baptize with the Holy Spirit" (Mk 1.7-8), though in the gospels Jesus never baptizes anyone, either with water or with the Holy Spirit. The gospel of John omits the baptism of Jesus, as his Jesus is too divine and thus has no sin that needs to be forgiven.

The Baptist and Jesus are non-Jewish when they indicate that baptism can remove sins. In Judaism one who sins must repent, make appropriate restitution, and pray or sacrifice in the temple. [Cohen, S. J. D., 63ff]

Mark and Matthew relate that "all the people of Jerusalem" and Judea come to the river Jordan, confess their sins and are baptized by John (Mk 1.5; Mt 3.5). However, Matthew increases Mark's anti-Judaism when he adds that John rejects many religious leaders (Pharisees and Sadducees) who had come to be baptized, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Mt 3.7). In Matthew and Luke, John preaches that those (Jews) who will not accept Jesus will



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be punished with “unquenchable fire” (Mt 3.12, Lk 3.17, cf. Isa 34.10; 66.24). [Schweizer, E., 52]

The Lukan Baptist even condemns the (Jewish) *crowds* who have come to be baptized, calling them a “brood of vipers” (Lk 3.7). E. Schweizer writes that the poisonous snake metaphor is “vitriolic... [and] used as a term of address is very striking and is almost without parallel....” [Schweizer, E., 49] Almost?

Later (Mk 9.11-13), Jesus says that the Baptist is the resurrected Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah, but neither the *Jewish Scriptures* nor any first-century Jewish writings assert this.

The baptism story provides scriptural support for baptism as an initiation rite in the early church, but there was no such rite; baptism was not an initiation rite in Judaism until the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. It is true that in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* there is a passage involving the “Spirit of understanding and sanctification” resting upon Jesus “in the water,” but the editors of *HCNT* conclude that “in the water” is an apparent Christian interpolation. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 50-51, #21] In the Dead Sea Scrolls water ablutions are referred to, but they are not one time initiation rites, rather they are repeatable purification rituals. In addition, in Judaism baptism was never associated with forgiveness of sins at any time. [Lachs, S., 37]

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

### BAPTISM OF JESUS

When Jesus comes up out of the water, the physical heavens are “torn apart” and the Spirit descends on him like a dove (Mk 1.10). At Mt 3.16 the dove visibly alights on Jesus, and at Lk 3.22 the dove appears “in bodily form.” Yet the crowds make no response to this visible phenomenon, indicating that the dove was a late addition to the scene.

Mark again finds the *Jewish Scriptures* useful. In Ezekiel the heavens open and the prophet sees “visions of God” (Ez 1.1). Isaiah writes that the spirit of the Lord was upon him because God had anointed him (61.1). God takes some of the spirit off Moses and places it on the 70 elders (Num 11.25). Elijah parts the Jordan River, crosses, and is taken up to heaven and Elisha, his disciple, receives a double portion of his master’s spirit (2 Kgs 2.9,15). S. Lachs writes, “In Jewish sources, the dove is the symbol of the Holy Spirit or ...is used metaphorically as the Holy Spirit.” [Lachs, S., 46] However, for Mark the Holy Spirit takes a physical form.

As we will see in the chapters that follow, often when a Jewish idea parallels a pagan one, it is retained, but when Jewish and pagan ideas are in conflict, the pagan idea is preferred. A spirit sent to serve a person was an idea more common among pagans than among Jews. In a *Magical Greek Papyrus*, [Smith, M., 98-100] a pagan magician says that the recipient must perform a rite so that the Lord of the Air will send him a spirit who will serve him, obeying all his commands:

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*The recipient is to pray. A sign will occur: A hawk “will deliver you a... stone and then return to heaven ...you will perceive the angel whom you besought, sent to you, and you will promptly learn the counsels of the gods ...he will respond concisely to whatever you wish.”*  
[Smith, M., 129-130]

Three of the parallels listed by M. Smith between this rite and the baptism of Jesus are:[ Smith, M., 132]

- A bird descends on the initiate. In pagan lore a bird was often seen as a messenger of God. The manifestation of a spirit as a bird appears in another magical papyrus where the initiate achieves a nature “equal to God.” [Smith, M., 14]
- The spirit enables the initiate to do miracles. In Mark, Matthew and Luke, Jesus displays miraculous powers only after the Spirit descends on him at his baptism.
- The initiate will be worshiped as a god. Jesus is worshiped by the wise men in the birth story of Matthew, and in Luke by the shepherds (Mt 2.11; Lk 2.20), by the women who came to the empty tomb, and by believers after his resurrection.

## GOD’S SON

After the spirit descends on Jesus, a voice from heaven says to Jesus, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Mk 1.11; cf. Ps 2.7; Isa 42.1). God is

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revealing to Jesus that he has been adopted as the Son of God.

In Matthew (and Luke), the baptism is a visible event; the voice from heaven says to John and the crowds (Mt 3.17), “This is my son.” Jesus knew that he was the Son of God prior to his baptism. Matthew and Luke push Jesus’ divinity back to his conception, and in John’s gospel he is said to be eternally divine (Jn 1.1-3). The idea, “Son of God” or “God’s son,” appears in Ps 2.7 where the Lord speaking metaphorically to David, says, “You are my son....” and “You shall be a son to me” (1 Chr 17.13). [Wansbrough, H., 1615, n d] Other parallels include: Ex 4.22, “Israel is my first born son” and Dt 14.1 which refers to the Israelites as children of God. E. Schweizer grants that the details of the baptism of Jesus by John are “open to question.” [Schweizer, E., 37]

In various passages in the *Christian Scriptures*, the appears before the titles “Son of God,” “Son of the Most High,” “Son of the Blessed,” and “Son of Man” which indicates that there is a unique relationship between God and Jesus. Judaism allows no such exclusiveness between any person and the deity. In the Roman world, the titles “Son of God” and “Savior of the World” were applied to emperors, philosophers, divine men, and athletes.

## EXCURSUS: THE EMBARRASSMENT THEORY

The “embarrassment theory” is often employed by modern apologists to defend the historicity of Jesus’

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baptism as well as other stories in the *Christian Scriptures*. [Schweizer, E., 37]

The theory holds, for example, that the church would not have created and preserved the baptism story which was so embarrassing to it unless it was in fact true. Therefore, it must be an actual historical event.

But the church which created the earliest layer of Mark, did not find the baptism account embarrassing. Jesus was depicted as an ordinary sinner whose sins are forgiven through the baptism by the Jewish prophet. Gerd Ludemann points out that “Jesus did not understand himself to be sinless.” [Ludemann, G., 101] Only in the latest layer of Mark does the story become embarrassing. Jesus is now divine, so the sandals, the idea that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit, the voice from Heaven, etc., were added to Mark's original story.

Matthew further dilutes the embarrassment found in Mark by having the Baptist say that it is Jesus who should be baptizing him (Mt 4.14). At Lk 3.21, Jesus is not said to be baptized by John. Luke has severed Jesus from John. [Beck, N., 200]

Jesus is far too divine in John's gospel, so John omits any mention of Jesus' baptism at all (cf. Jn 4.1-2). Jesus' superiority to the Baptist is even clearer in the later non-canonical *Gospel of the Nazoreans*. Jesus rejects the baptism of John saying, “Wherein have I sinned that I should go and be baptized by him?” [Beck, N., 101]

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All of this simply shows the development of the character of Jesus, not that the baptism actually occurred. One should not be surprised by the evolving portraits of Jesus or the Baptist. As we shall see, a number of characters in the gospels grow. For example, Peter's status is raised and Judas is depicted as increasingly evil.

### THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

At Mark 1.12-13, the spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness where he stays with the wild beasts for forty days; he rejects Satan's (undescribed) temptations and is waited on by angels, all of which demonstrates the superior power of Jesus.

In the *Jewish Scriptures* people can be driven by the powerful Spirit of God. [Schweizer, E., 211]

The spirit of the Lord can pick Elijah up and throw him down on some safe mountain or in a valley (2 Kings 2.16). In Mark, the Spirit *drives* Jesus into the wilderness, but in Matthew and Luke the divine Jesus is *led* by the Spirit, not driven.

Matthew and Luke add that Jesus fasts in the wilderness for forty days (Mt 4.2, Lk 4.2) as Moses does for 40 days and 40 nights (Ex 34.28; cf Elijah 1 Kgs 19.8) [Lachs, S., 50]. In addition, it rains for forty days and nights during Noah's flood; David and Solomon each rule forty years; Moses and his people wander for forty years in the wilderness, etc. [Funk R. W., 55]

In Matthew and Luke the divine Jesus says to the devil who is tempting him, you should not "put the Lord your

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God to the test....” (Mt 4.7; Lk 4.12; cf. Dt 6.16). Being tempted by a demonic ruler of the world is unknown in the *Jewish Scriptures*. [Smith, M., 211] Satan in the Book of Job is wholly subordinate to the Lord and plays a minor role in Judaism as compared to his later role in Christianity. Paul’s letters, written only 10 to 20 years before Mark, know nothing of any temptation of Jesus by Satan.

## THE GALILEAN MINISTRY

Mark wrongly assumes throughout his gospel that Jews live in certain cities and areas segregated from pagans. Galilee in northern Palestine and Judea in southern Palestine are depicted as Jewish. Pagan territory east of the Jordan River (the Decapolis or Ten Cities), Tyre, and Sidon are depicted as pagan cities or regions. This demographic scheme is artificial. The Mishnah (ca 200 CE) refers to cities and towns in Palestine which include both Jews and pagans. [Neusner, J., 4.11C] Mark wrongly assumes that Jews hated non-Jews and so lived apart from them.

Mark does not tell us how long the Galilean ministry of Jesus lasted; it could have been a few weeks or months, but no longer than a year since the Synoptics (the gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke) mention only one Passover, an annual celebration. The idea of a three-year ministry comes from the gospel of John (written ca 100 CE) which the apologists use to interpret the earlier gospels!

After John the Baptist is arrested (Greek *delivered up*), Jesus begins to preach in Galilee, “the kingdom of God

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has come near; repent, and believe in the good news [gospel]” (Mk 1.14). Ancient mainstream Jews in the first century CE rarely spoke of the kingdom of God. Philo (d 50 CE) and Josephus (d 100 CE) held that the kingdom is present on earth and is not some future cosmic event to be ushered in by “the Messiah.” As E. Schweizer points out, the words *gospel* (good news), *preaching* and *repentance* (Mk 1.15) are “the language of the church (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 20:21),” [Schweizer, E., 44] not Jesus. In what follows, we will find more early church beliefs and practices attributed to Jesus, making their acceptance easier.

Matthew states that Jesus leaves Nazareth and makes his home in Capernaum, “in the territory of Zebulon and Naphtali, so that what has been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled...” (Mt 4.12-14; Isa 9.1f). Matthew quotes Isaiah who describes Galilee as the land of “the Gentiles” (Mt 4.15; cf. Isa 9.1). There a pagan people were in “darkness [and] have seen a great light” (Isa 9.1) which, according to Matthew, refers to the gospel of Jesus (Mt 4.15-16). Jesus has come to save pagans, at least those who convert to Christianity.

### JESUS CALLS HIS FIRST DISCIPLES: MARK 1.16-20

Walking by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus sees four fishermen at work and calls them as his first disciples. Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew know nothing of any miracles or teachings of Jesus and yet instantly follow Jesus when he says, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people”(Mk 1.17). Philosophers, too, “fish for men.” [Schweizer, E., 48]



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The magical call rarely appears in the *Jewish Scriptures* but at 1 Kgs 19.19-21 the prophet Elijah throws his mantle over Elisha who kisses his parents goodbye and sacrifices his oxen, distributing the meat among the people. He then follows Elijah. Miracles and teachings play no role in the call stories of Mark, Matthew, or 1 Kgs 19.

At Luke 5.1-11, Jesus preaches to Simon Peter but this does not induce him to follow Jesus. Instead, Jesus produces a miraculous catch of fish, after which Simon Peter as well as James and John (the sons of Zebedee) immediately follow Jesus, leaving “everything” (Lk 5.11). Herodotus writes of a story told by Cyrus of Persia about a great catch of fish. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 207, #294] In the *Jewish Scriptures* miracles never cause any conversions.

In John’s gospel, Andrew and an unnamed man hear the Baptist identify Jesus as the “Lamb of God” (Jn 1.36) and they join Jesus on that day. Nathaniel recognizes Jesus as “the Son of God” and “the king of Israel” and he and Philip immediately follow Jesus (Jn 1.49).

Diogenes Laertius relates a story of a citizen of Athens who is seeking virtue. He becomes a pupil of Socrates as soon as the philosopher says, “Follow me and learn.” [Balch, D. L., 27] Similarly, Xenophon hears Socrates say, “follow me” and converts. [Balch, D. L., 27] Aristotle writes that a “Corinthian farmer, after coming into contact with” Plato’s dialog, *Gorgias*, “forthwith gave up his farm and his vines, put his soul under Plato’s guidance...” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 54, #27] J. Fitzmyer

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concedes that the miraculous call fits in a pagan world as well as a Jewish one. [Fitzmyer, J. A., vol 1, 546]

### EXORCISMS AND HEALINGS

Jesus goes to Capernaum in Galilee and teaches in the synagogue on the Sabbath (Mk 1.21-28). Mark says that Jesus' Jewish hearers are amazed, for he preaches with "authority, and not as the scribes" (1.22). Mark is depicting Jesus as superior to the Jewish religious leaders.

Jesus does not teach like a rabbi. S. Lachs says real Jewish scribes and Pharisees would "teach the Oral Law by citing the authorities from whom the speaker received the traditions being transmitted." [Lachs, S., 60] E. Schweizer agrees and points out that ". . . the rabbis never could have conceived of a call so radical as to make clear that being with Jesus is more important than all of God's commandments (Mk 10.21)." [Schweizer, E., 49] Quite true. Never.

In the synagogue, when Jesus expels an unclean spirit from a man (Mk 1.23), it cries out "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?" (Mk 1.24). Jesus has come to defeat evil cosmic powers. A stele in Egypt (525-337 BCE) states, "You come in peace, great God, destroyer of the evil ones." [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 171-172, #231] Lucian has Ion refer "to those who free possessed men from their terrors by exorcising the spirits..." [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 172, #230]

## BIRTH, BAPTISM AND MINISTRY

Again, Mark depicts Jewish religious leaders as impotent. They are unable to cast out unclean spirits but Jesus casts them out in a Jewish place of worship, and on the Sabbath at that. In the gospels, virtually no Jewish persons have sufficient faith to perform miracles other than the disciples of Jesus. Mark concludes by saying that Jesus; fame spread “throughout the surrounding region of Galilee” (Mk 1.28). Originally Jesus was an obscure figure. Mark created the summary statements that he uses to stress the popularity of Jesus.

Exorcisms are rare in Jewish tradition. The *Jewish Scriptures* and the works of the first-century CE writers, Josephus and Philo, contain no accounts of exorcisms.

After Jesus casts out the unclean spirit, he and his four disciples immediately leave the synagogue and go to the house of Simon Peter and Andrew (Mk 1.29-31). Peter’s mother-in-law has a fever. Taking her hand, Jesus lifts her up and cures her.

Is Jesus violating the Sabbath by working (lifting her up)? A Jewish Jesus would know that a fever which threatened life could be healed even if labor were required. The rabbis in the Mishnah assert that even a minor eye problem could be treated, since it could lead to blindness, stumbling, and possibly death. But Mark does not say that the fever is life-threatening, so he appears to be indicating that Jesus violated Sabbath law.

Also, if Peter’s mother-in-law was cooking or serving food on the Sabbath, she would be breaking the Sabbath law, as would Jesus and his disciples by accepting this

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service. Real Jews would have served themselves food which had been prepared before the Sabbath.

The Greek word for *serves* indicates a continuous, ongoing activity. Mark here provides scriptural support for the subordinate role assigned to women in the early church. The high office of apostleship was not bestowed on women (the position of deaconess was an office of low status in the church). Christians and pagans had no problem with allocating women a religious role as long as they were subordinate to male authority. Jesus was not a feminist.

In a summary statement Mark writes that at sundown “the whole city” brought their sick and possessed whom Jesus healed, forbidding them to tell anyone who had helped them (part of the messianic secret where Jesus conceals his identity and his mission). Mark says Jesus cures many people and casts out many demons (Mk 1.32-34); Matthew and Luke upgrade the status of Jesus: “all” are cured or exorcised (Mt 8.16-17; Lk 4.40).

At Mk 1.34, Jesus “does not permit demons to speak, because they knew him”(another part of the messianic secret). Originally, the demons were probably depicted as *not* having recognized Jesus. Paul, writing before Mark, says that none of the “rulers of this age” (spirits or *archons*) would have crucified Jesus if they had known who he was (1 Cor 2.7-8). Mark’s depiction of Jesus’ popularity with Jews is odd since Jesus violates Jewish law.

## BIRTH, BAPTISM AND MINISTRY

The Marcan Jesus tells his disciples that he and they should go to the neighboring towns throughout Galilee and “proclaim the message... for this is what I came out to do” (Mk 1.38). The disciples call him *rabbi* (*teacher*), and in Mark the Greek words for *taught* and *teaching* appear a total of twenty times, [Schweizer, E., 50] but Jesus has not taught much up to this point. The gospels of Matthew and Luke are each about double the size of Mark, and almost all of the additional material consists of teachings attributed to Jesus. This raises his status from exorcist and wonder worker in Mark to that of teacher in Matthew and Luke.

Mark says that Jesus teaches in *their* synagogues (1.39). *Their*, not *our* synagogues? Is Jesus not Jewish?

In the *Jewish Scriptures*, cures by prophets are relatively rare and mostly confined to Moses, Elijah and Elisha. [Smith, M., 211] God performs these miracles, or they are done at his will, but Jesus acts on his own authority. M. Smith notes that Jesus is depicted as superior to the prophets and religious leaders. For example, “Miriam’s leprosy was healed by Moses’ prayer and a leper in Galilee [is cured] by Jesus’ command” (Num. 12.13, Mk. 1.41). [Smith, M., 212] Also, “Jesus [tells] ten lepers to go to the priests” and they are cured before they reach the Jewish priests (Lk 17.12ff). [Smith, M., 212]

Mk 1.40-45 relates the story of a leper who kneels before Jesus and begs to be made clean. Jesus, like the Lord of the *Jewish Scriptures*, is moved by pity. He cures the leper and then forbids him to tell anyone. Jesus sends

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him away, telling him to present himself to the priest (at the temple in Jerusalem, 80 miles away?) and to do what Moses (not God?) has commanded as an offering for his cleansing. E.P. Sanders considers this clear evidence of Jesus' respect for the law (Lev. 14.2-9). [Sanders, E.P., 129] But we think it is by no means clear that this is so. When the Jewish priest confirms that the leper is clean, he would be testifying to the power of Jesus. The former leper goes out and tells so many people, "that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly but stayed out in the country" (Mk 1.45).

If a man had a lethal and contagious disease like leprosy, he would not be allowed to appear in public places nor to live in a city or town [Cotter, Wendy, 221-228]. This practice of keeping lepers apart from the public is both a Jewish and a pagan practice, one intended to check the spread of contagion. Herodotus (484 BCE) writes that a leper may not enter a town and the great Greek historian, like Jesus, thinks that the disease is caused by sin. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 64, #49]

Some apologists argue that Mark is referring to a non-contagious minor skin ailment. The Greek word may be so translated, but why would a man kneel before Jesus desperately begging for the cure of a minor skin rash? Besides, the Synoptics indicate that only leprosy is meant. This story of the leper is unhistorical; no location is given, and no disciples or witnesses are present. Matthew finally provides a setting by placing it at the foot of the mountain after Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Mt 8.1ff).



## CHAPTER 2 CONDEMNING JEWISH LAW: MARK 2.1-3.35

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*And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for people were saying, "He is beside himself."*

— Mark 3.21

*No longer will anyone say that I am crazy, I who am a pagan] prophetess of the great God.*

— Sibylline Oracles 3.811-18, 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BCE

Mark 2.1-3.6 is made up of five consecutive stories involving hostility between Jesus and Jewish religious leaders.

### HOSTILITY BETWEEN JESUS AND JEWISH LEADERS

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#### FORGIVING SINS

In the first conflict story (Mk 2.1-12), a crowd seeking to be healed by Jesus is so large that it blocks the entrance to “his home” in Capernaum of Galilee (Mk 2.1). Four people climb to the roof and dig through the ceiling, lowering a paralyzed man on a mat into the house. Jesus is moved by the faith of those who brought the man to him, but why should Jesus consider their faith more important than that of the paralyzed man?

Jesus says to the paralytic, “your sins are forgiven,” and some scribes think Jesus is guilty of blasphemy, since only God can forgive sins (Mk 2.5-7). Jesus, reading their minds, cures the man so that the scribes will know “the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Mk 2.10). The man exits the house. Through the crowd blocking the door? The Jewish messiah has co-opted the



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divine prerogative of forgiving sins. We agree with E. Schweizer who concludes that the forgiveness material was added to an original story about a healing [Schweizer, E., 62] (cf. Ps 32.5; Isa 43.25).

## DINNER WITH TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS

In the second conflict story (Mk 2.13-17), Jesus dines at the house of his disciple, Levi, with “many tax collectors and sinners” (Mk 2.15). The scribes of the Pharisees object to this and Jesus counters, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick” (Mk 2.17).

Medical metaphors were very common in the ancient world. Diogenes Laertius reports that Antithsenes was criticized “for keeping company with evil men...” and the philosopher responds by saying that a physician treats a patient without getting the fever himself. [ Boring, M., *HCNT*,75, #70] Jesus adds that he has come to save not the righteous, but sinners (Mk 2.17). Lucian (120-185 CE) writes, “Demonax... though he assailed sins, he forgave sinners, thinking that one should pattern after doctors, who heal sickness but feel no anger at the sick.” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 74, #66, *Demonax* 7]

N. Beck [Beck, N., 144] writes that, “The presence of the scribes of the Pharisees as observers of the meal” is one of the reasons why some scholars think this story is fiction. How do Jesus’ enemies know that he and his disciples were dining with sinners and tax farmers? Are the enemies of Jesus dining with him? Or are they looking

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through the windows? As to their function in the story, they are there to criticize Jesus.

This dining story is very popular with many contemporary Christian exegetes. M. Borg, for example, argues that Jesus was a champion of outcasts, a kind of hippie who broke the social boundaries which separate Jews and non-Jews, the rich and the poor, males and females, slaves and free, etc. But none of these outcasts are depicted as present at the dinner. Nor does Jesus elsewhere in Mark socialize with prostitutes, women, slaves, pagans, the poor, or the sick except for a former (?) leper at Mk 14.3. We don't know who the sinners are at dinner. In "Table Talk," Plutarch relates that "the rich should dine with the poor," [Beck, N., 428, "Table Talk", I,2.3] a practice common with Stoics and members of the mystery cults.

## FASTING

In the third conflict tale (Mk 2.18-22), the disciples of John the Baptist and those of the Pharisees ask Jesus why his disciples do not fast. Real Jews would fast at least on the most important Jewish holy day, the Day of Atonement, as well as at "times of special need." [Schweizer, E., 68]

Jesus replies that wedding guests do not fast until the "bridegroom is taken away from them" (Mk 2.20). This is the first and only time that Jesus hints at his death before he predicts it at Mk 8.31. Many scholars believe that Jesus was not originally associated with the bridegroom; neither the disciples nor anyone else

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responds to this allusion to his death. Nor is there a response to the saying about putting a new patch on an old cloak which implies that Judaism will be discarded (Mk 2.21-23). This pericope has no location. It is a product of the church which needed to show that Jesus was aware of his upcoming death, and that Judaism was to be superseded by Christianity. Mark also has provided scriptural support for those Christians who believed in fasting (Mk 2.20; Mt 9.15; Lk 5.35). The Didache of the second century (8.1) names Wednesday and Friday as days of fasting for Christians [Schweizer, E., 68].

Incidentally, N. Beck is amused that Luke or his editor has added a verse in his parallel, “No one after drinking old wine desires new wine...” (Lk 5.39) thus unwittingly endorsing “the older wine — Jewish religion and culture!” [Beck, N., 203]

## PLUCKING GRAIN

In the fourth conflict story (Mk 2.23-28), the earliest evangelist writes that Jesus and his disciples are “making their way” through the grain fields on a Sabbath. His disciples pluck some heads of grain to eat. “The Pharisees” pop up and criticize Jesus for allowing his disciples to do “what is not lawful on the Sabbath” (Mk 2.24), i.e., working. E. Schweizer says, “this story appears to be fictitious.” [Schweizer, E., 70]

In his defense, Jesus argues that David went to the house of God where the high priest Abiathar gave him bread which was reserved exclusively for priests (1 Sam 21.1-6).

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If the high priest can set aside the law, why can't Jesus do the same?

How good is Jesus' argument? First, the circumstances of David and Jesus are not analogous. David was not seeking food on the Sabbath, and the future king was acting in a wartime emergency. Jesus' disciples may have been hungry (as Matthew finally says at 12.1) but no emergency is implied. Second, Abiathar was the son of the high priest, Ahimelech, the man who actually helped David (1 Sam 21.1). Matthew and Luke drop the reference to the high priest.

Matthew adds an additional argument. The Jewish Scriptures allow the temple priests to *desecrate* (NRSV *break*) the Sabbath law by performing sacrifices, and yet the priests are "guiltless" (Mt 12.5). The *Jewish Scriptures* allow sacrifice, circumcision, and certain other rites to be performed on the Sabbath in the temple, for laws can be set aside. For example, if necessary to save a life one is required to labor on the Sabbath. However, a Jewish teacher would certainly know that performing a religious ritual is not *desecrating* the Sabbath.

At the end of the grain field story, Jesus preaches that, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath" (Mk 2.27). The rabbis agreed that, "The Sabbath is given over to you, not you to the Sabbath." [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 173, #233] But the saying, "the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath" (Mk 2.28), is anti-Jewish and non-Jewish because Jesus (the Son of Man) makes himself equal to God. Matthew and Luke omit the Jewish saying about the Sabbath being

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given to humans, but keep the anti-Jewish saying that Jesus is lord of the Sabbath.

Plutarch relates that the Spartans said, “Because the laws ought to have authority over men, and not men over the laws...” ancient laws should not be changed. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 174, #234] M. Smith points out that abolishing ancient customs was punishable by death under Roman law. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, #234] This is one reason why Jesus and Paul have difficulty justifying their nullification of ancient Jewish law and custom.

## HEALING OF A MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND

In the fifth and final conflict story in the cycle (Mk 3.1-6), Jesus cures a man with a withered hand in the synagogue on a Sabbath. His enemies have been watching him so that “they might accuse him” of violating Sabbath law (Mk 3.1-2,6). Would Jesus’ enemies have believed that he could perform miraculous healings? [Schweizer, E., 74] Jesus reads their minds and seeing the trap, seeks to foil them by asking, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?’ But they were silent” (Mk 3.4). Jesus then heals the man’s hand. In pagan tradition, cures of disabilities involving hands, legs, eyes, ears, etc., were common. For example, according to Dio Cassius, the Emperor Vespasian cured a man with a withered hand. [Martin, F., 165]

The scene is a good example of Jesus’ non-dialogues. Jesus’ enemies fall into silence, unable to refute his superior teachings. How would Jewish religious leaders

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have answered him if they were not straw men? They would have known that doing good on the Sabbath is a fundamental Jewish value, and that saving a life is obligatory on any day, Sabbath or not. It has been so in Jewish tradition for thousands of years. In Mark and Matthew, the choice is not between life and death, since the man with the withered hand is in no danger of dying. The choice is whether to wait until sunset when the Sabbath ends, or not to wait. The “Jewish Messiah” chooses not to wait.

Here again Jesus shows no special concern for the sick or disabled person being healed. [Beck, N., 147] Beck is right when he writes, “The fundamental purpose of Mk 3.1-6 is to depict the dumbness, the silence, and the callousness of those who oppose the developing traditions of the followers of Jesus.” [Beck, N., 147] At Mk 3.6 Jesus’ enemies are at last identified as Pharisees.[ Beck, N., 147] They leave the synagogue and conspire with the Herodians to figure out “how to destroy him” (Mk 3.6; Mt 12.14; cf. Lk 6.11). Why? What serious crime has he committed?

In Hebrew, there is no word which precisely corresponds to the Christian idea of *sin*. In Judaism, a sin is “An action which breaks a law or alternatively, the failure to observe a positive COMMANDMENT.” [This information comes primarily from G. Wigoder’s *Encyclopedia of Judaism*] This would include any action or thought which violates the commandments of God, whether written or unwritten (oral, not in the *Jewish Scriptures*). “[T]he sinner is morally accountable to God, both for sins

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against man and for infractions of the ritual law.”  
[*Encyclopedia of Judaism*, 658]

Wigoder, co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Judaism*, points out that there are nearly 30 different words in the Tanakh which are associated with various kinds of sins. The most important is *het* (Hebrew) which occurs almost 600 times in the *Jewish Scriptures*; the root meaning is “to miss the mark... [I]t is the only term which describes the *least* offensive category of sin: an unwitting transgression of the ritual law.” [*Encyclopedia of Judaism*, 659]

The third most common term is *pesha*. It is usually translated as *transgress*, and refers to an offense more serious than *het* or *avon*. *Pesha* is the term for the most serious sin, and “is never used to refer explicitly to a ritual sin.” [*Encyclopedia of Judaism*, 659] In other words, even if Jesus had inadvertently violated the Sabbath law (*het*), this would not have been a serious offense. E.P. Sanders [Sanders, E.P., 1990, 90] writes that even if Jesus had committed a minor violation of Sabbath law and then presented his legal defense, all a Jewish magistrate would say is, take “two doves as a sin offering when you are next in Jerusalem.”

It is E.P. Sanders’ opinion that the real Jesus was law-observant throughout his life except for minor violations. [Sanders, E.P., 1996, 252] Against him, E. Schweizer writes, “Undoubtedly, Jesus’ frequent transgressing of the Sabbath commandment in his preaching and in his conduct is historical.” [Schweizer, E., 76] Maybe E. Schweizer is right, but why would a

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Jewish teacher discard the commandments of God? And if he had engaged in serious violations of law, why was he not so charged at his Jewish trial in Jerusalem? And why would a non-Jewish Jesus attract so many Jewish followers?

What motivation does Jesus attribute to the homicidal Pharisees? Jesus is angry and grieves at “their hardness of heart” (Mk 3.5). Jesus grieves for his enemies, the Pharisees (see Mk 7). Matthew and Luke omit this. Neither Jesus nor Mark gives any motivation for the murderous enmity of the Herodians. Do the Herodians see Jesus as a political threat? Do they think that he is claiming to be a king? In Exodus the phrase “hardness of heart” is applied to, among others, the evil Pharaoh who tries to stop Moses from freeing the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. In the *Christian Scriptures*, virtually all Jews and Jewish religious leaders are depicted as “hardened of heart,” i.e., unable or unwilling to perceive Jesus’ truth.

Most scholars agree that Mark himself created the summary statements in his gospel. Mk 3.7-12 is typical. He writes, “a great multitude from Galilee” followed Jesus (Mk 3.7), many coming to him to be cured. They came “from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the [pagan] region around Tyre and Sidon.” Many are healed by touching Jesus. Jesus asks the disciples to prepare a boat so that when the crush of the crowd becomes too great, he can escape.

Mark relates that when “unclean spirits saw [Jesus], they fell down before him and shouted, ‘You are the Son of



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God!” (Mk 3.11). Jesus commanded the spirits “not to make him known” (Mk 3.12; cf. Mk 1.25) and apparently the evil spirits always obeyed, as none of the gospels report otherwise. Neither the disciples, the people who have been exorcised, nor witnesses show any reaction when Jesus is called “the Son of God” at Mk 3.11, or when he exorcises people, or silences the demons. Many Greek heroes were noted for healing diseases, including Hercules and Asclepius, the god of healing, but they probably did not attempt to keep their identity secret by silencing people or demons.

## JESUS APPOINTS THE TWELVE

Jesus had ordered the disciples to prepare a boat (Mk 3.9), but at Mk 3.13 we find that Jesus is up on “the mountain.” The boat has disappeared and will not reappear until Mk 4.1. This is one of many errors in Mark which show that his gospel has been much edited. Matthew and Luke omit the boat.

Jesus calls “those whom he wanted” and appoints twelve, designating them *apostles* (Mk 3.13-14). Some manuscripts of Mark omit the appointing of the twelve and others omit his list of the twelve. [NRSV, 52, fn. z, a] Mark’s list at 3.16-19 conflicts with the other three lists at Mt 10.2-4, Lk 6.14-15, and Acts 1.13. We will comment on only a single problem relating to the list, one that concerns Levi.

In Mark’s list the name *Matthew* is listed, not Levi, although Levi was called as a disciple after the first four. The second gospel also has “Matthew” (Mt 9.9; cf. Mk

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2.14). Levi never appears in his gospel nor does the name appear in the list of the twelve in Acts of the Apostles (1.13). Matthew or his editor has added “Matthew” to the twelve. Why? The twelve had high status in the early church, as we can see when Jesus says, “when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 19.28; cf. Lk 22.30). Matthew’s association with the twelve increased his status, which in turn made it easier for the early church to accept the gospel falsely ascribed to him.

Until the twelve are chosen at Mk 3.14, Jesus has referred to only five disciples. Some scholars think that Jesus may have had only three or four disciples. Burton L. Mack thinks that Jesus may have had none. [Mack, B. L., 79 fn. 1] Mark drew on collections of teachings and acts attributed to Jesus that included no disciples. The title *apostles* is applied to the twelve only three times in Mark and Matthew and is probably a late addition (Mk 3.14, 6.30 and Mt 10.2). [Schweizer, E., 129] Luke uses the title five times, and John never applies *apostle* or *apostles* to the twelve.

E. Schweizer writes, “There is some doubt whether Jesus chose a more limited circle of twelve disciples.” [Schweizer, E., 127] The twelve are only loosely connected to the gospel stories, “usually appear[ing] in editorial statements.” [Schweizer, E., 127, 128] Schweizer adds that in Jewish tradition a group of twelve leaders is virtually unknown. In 1 Corinthians and Acts some

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missionaries are called *apostles*, but the term is applied only to those not associated with the twelve.

### JESUS' TRUE FAMILY: MARK 3.19B-35

Mark says that Jesus is a teacher, yet the only teaching of Jesus presented so far is his preaching about the nearness of the kingdom of God (Mk 1.14).

The story about Jesus' family and Beelzebul is one of eight "sandwich" stories in Mark's gospel. (A sandwich story occurs when one story is begun, interrupted by another, and then resumed.) Mark interrupts the true family story with an incident about Beelzebul and then continues the first story.

Jesus and his disciples enter his home. A crowd comes, pressing so heavily that Jesus and his disciples are not able to eat (Mk 3.19b-20). People have been saying that Jesus is crazy. Jesus' mother and brothers hear this and, believing he is crazy, attempt to reach him in order to restrain him (Mk 3.21).

Pagans knew about wisdom and madness, too. Alciphorn writes that a father, whose son had converted to Cynicism, said he was possessed by an evil spirit which drove him out of his mind. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 174, #235] In the Sibylline Oracles 3.811-18 (3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BCE), a prophetess discloses the wisdom of god; "no longer will anyone say that I am crazy, I who am a prophetess of the great God." [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 175, #236]

Inserted into the family story is the incident at Mk 3.22-29. Here, the scribes from Jerusalem pop up and

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accuse Jesus of being able to cast out demons because he is possessed by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. Jesus counters with, “How can Satan cast out Satan?”

After the Beelzebul insertion, Mark resumes his story about the family. Jesus’ mother and his brothers have come to the house but are unable to enter due to the crowd. They send Jesus a message asking him to come out to them (Mk 3.31). Jesus responds with a shocking teaching. He rejects his family, saying, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother” (Mk 3.34-35).

The pagan philosophers also wrote about choosing loyalty to wisdom over loyalty to one’s family. In a letter of the second century CE, a pagan father states that, “a fit of anger” which came from an evil spirit came on his son and “drove him out of his mind.” He had become a Cynic and now ignores his parents. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 174, #325] The real family of the Cynic philosophers were those who accepted Cynic teachings. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 222, #327] Epictetus, the Stoic, writes, “Man, the Cynic has made all mankind his children; the men among them he has as sons, the women as daughters; in that spirit he approaches them all and cares for them all.” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 119, #148] Musonius Rufus writes in *Must One Obey One’s Parents Under All Circumstances?* (30-100 CE), “Your father forbids you to study philosophy, but the common father of all men and gods, Zeus, bids you and exhorts you to do so.” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 192, #264; c.f. 221, #325] He also says that if your father forbids you to

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study philosophy, you may disobey him. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 192, #264]

E. Schweizer writes, “There is scarcely any other passage where Mark’s pen is as evident as it is” [Schweizer, E., 83] in the true family story.

Jesus’ relatives do not merely reject his religious mission, but in the original story they believe he is a slave of Beelzebul or Satan. The story was changed in order to rehabilitate Jesus’ mother and his siblings. Jesus’ status had grown within the early church and with it that of his family. The church no longer wanted to see the family portrayed so negatively. For example, James, the brother of Jesus, is the head of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15.13-19; Gal 2.9,12) and Mary is shown as a believer in Acts 1.14 and in John where she appears at the foot of the cross (Jn 19.25-27). Thus, the accusation that Jesus was allied with Beelzebul or Satan is shifted away from the family; now the scribes from Jerusalem claim that Jesus is possessed. Luke wants not a whisper about the family’s faithlessness. The “true family” material is separated from the Beelzebul story (Lk 8.19-21; Lk 11.14-16). In the gospels of Matthew and Luke there is no reference to the family believing that Jesus is crazy, much less that he is possessed.

But in Mark why does Jesus denigrate his own family? Pagans converted to Christianity and some undoubtedly alienated their families by rejecting the parents’ pagan religious beliefs. Jesus explicitly encourages people to choose Jesus over their own families; he preaches that

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those who have left “house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news” will be rewarded a hundredfold in family and property and will receive eternal life in the age to come (Mk 10.29-30). But family was sacred in the Greco-Roman world and so the editors of Mark and Matthew softened this attack on the family. Jesus quotes Moses saying that one should honor one’s parents, and “Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die...” (Mk 7.10; Mt 15.5). Also, in the story of the rich young man, Jesus requires people to “Honor [their] father and mother” in order to inherit eternal life (Mk 10.19).

The “true family” story is another example of Jesus’ non-dialogues with his “opponents” (Mk 3.22-30). The scribes from Jerusalem accuse Jesus of working miracles through Beelzebul. When Jesus argues, “How can Satan cast out Satan?” (Mk 3.22-23), his enemies can think of no response and disappear from the story. Pseudo debates like this appear throughout the four gospels. They usually consist of a hostile objection to Jesus’ teachings or the behavior of Jesus or his disciples. Jesus then harangues his opponents with a tongue-lashing monologue to which there is no response other than silence. The Pharisees, scribes, chief priests, etc., are simply foils for Jesus’ diatribes (see Mk 7.1-23; Mt 23.1-36; Lk 11.39-52).

## SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT: MK 3.28-29

Near the end of Mark Chapter 3, Jesus teaches that all sins and blasphemies can be forgiven except blasphemy

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against the Holy Spirit (Mk. 3.28-29). In Matthew and Luke Jesus preaches that blasphemy even against the Son of Man (Jesus) is forgivable (Mt 12.31-32; Lk 12.10). Many Christians are shocked and puzzled by this teaching. They needn't be. This saying was added by the church because after Jesus was gone, it claimed that its spiritual guidance came solely from the Holy Spirit. How else could the church justify new rules, beliefs and practices? To blaspheme the Holy Spirit was to reject the authority of the church. John realizes that after Jesus' death, he will no longer be present to supply truth, so his Jesus states that the Father will send the Holy Spirit (the *paraclete*) to teach the disciples and remind them of what Jesus has taught (Jn 14.26)

## CHAPTER 3 BLINDING THE JEWS: MARK 4.1-41

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*For those outside [the kingdom of God], everything comes in parables; in order that they may indeed look, but not perceive, and indeed listen, but not understand... so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.*

— Mark 4.11-12

*Communicate this to no one else, but hide it, by Helios, since you have been thought worthy by the Lord God to receive this great mystery.*

— Magical Papyrus of Paris IV.475-830.

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### AGRICULTURAL PARABLES: MK 4.1-34

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#### THE SOWER: MK 4.1-20; 21-25

Jesus, sitting with his disciples in a boat on “the sea,” speaks in parables to “a very large crowd” on the shore (Mk 4.1). He tells how the seed is sown by the sower, falling on the path, rocky ground, and among thorns, but none of the seed produces grain. Some seed falls on good soil and, without birds or thorns to hinder it, produces bountiful crops, thirty- and sixty- and a hundred-fold.

Jesus is alone with “those who were around him” and the twelve (Mk 4.10). (Note the vague reference to those other than the twelve. The editor of Mark is harmonizing the gospel with Luke which depicts Jesus as having many disciples and followers.) They ask Jesus about the parables, (though he explains only one) and he tells them in plain language that Satan, worldly concerns, and persecutions cause some to fall away from the word (leave the religion), but the seeds on good soil grow and bear fruit, i.e., produce a lasting religious commitment.



## BLINDING THE JEWS

What is the meaning of the sower? It deals with a universal problem, one found in all religions. If one's faith is true, why is it that some abandon their faith while others do not?

Most serious scholars ascribe the sower parable and Jesus' explanation of it to the early church. Many words appear in the parables which are found only in the letters of the early church. [Schweizer, E., 96]

Jesus says all that is hidden will be revealed; in the future the church will teach all in plain language (4.21-22), that is, after his death. He teaches that the kingdom of God is like a seed which grows in a secret and mysterious way which the believer need not understand or even be aware of; the sower can then sleep night after night while the plants mature. Matthew, Luke, and John interpreted the Marcan Jesus as teaching that the spread of the faith requires no human effort. In other words, God alone causes the church to grow. This saying was threatening to the missionary work of the early church, so the later gospel writers omit it.

Burton L. Mack in his influential book *A Myth of Innocence*, points out that the sower and other seed parables were common in the world of pagan rhetoric. [Mack, B., 160] He writes, "The 'sower' was a stock analogy for the 'teacher,' 'sowing' for 'teaching,' 'seed' for 'words,' and 'soils' for 'students'." [Mack, B., 160] Even in the 21st century, we still talk about teachers "sowing the seeds of wisdom" in their students.

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Mark's use of agricultural metaphors does not prove that Jesus operated in a rural setting. Pastoral writing by urbanites, including images of shepherds and sheep and sowing seed, etc., were well known in Greek and Roman literature long before Mark. Aristotle writes of a farmer who, after reading Plato's dialogue, *Gorgias*, "forthwith gave up his farm and his vines, put his soul under Plato's guidance, and made it a seed-bed and a planting ground for Plato's philosophy." [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 54, #27]

B. Mack emphasizes the use of agricultural metaphors by the Cynic philosophers, [Mack, B., 160] but there is no need to do so. Stoics influenced early Christianity more than the Cynics did and they were familiar with such figures of speech. The Roman Stoic, Seneca (d 65 CE) writes, [Seneca, Epistle 38:2] the "word should be scattered like seed; no matter how small the seed may be, if it once has found favorable ground, it unfolds its strength and from an insignificant thing spreads to its greatest growth." [Mack, B., 159] Jesus teaches that the smallest seed is the mustard seed, and yet it grows and "becomes the greatest of all shrubs" (Mk 4.30). Though starting small, the faith or church will grow and blossom.

## DIVINE DECEPTION

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### THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

Before Jesus relates the parables, the twelve "and others" had asked Jesus why he teaches the Jewish crowd only in parables. Jesus replies, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables..." (Mk 4.11). Why? So the

## BLINDING THE JEWS

Jewish people (the crowds) will not understand and be saved. In view of the Holocaust, many modern Christians are shocked by this anti-Jewish teaching and many apologists have tried to interpret it away, but Jesus' meaning is quite clear. He says they are taught in parables, in "order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again [to God] and be forgiven'" (Mk 4.12). Jesus is concealing the kingdom; Jews are predestined to hell!

The disciples are cautioned not to tell anyone. The "messianic secret" involves Jesus hiding his mission, as well as his identity. The secret is revealed through three activities of Jesus:

- He commands the unclean spirits not to reveal who he is, and orders the people whom he has cured or exorcised not to reveal who aided them. (Note that Jesus assumes the Messiah could be identified by his miracles, but in Jewish tradition the Messiah does not work miracles.)
- He teaches the crowds only in parables so they will not understand and be saved.
- Jesus (or God) hardens their hearts (minds), so they are spiritually blind (sometimes "the Jews" themselves harden their own hearts).

Ancient pagans, too, believed in secrecy. "Myths have been used by inspired poets, by the best of philosophers, by those who established the mysteries, and by the gods

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themselves in oracles.” [MacMullen, R., 274] The Pythagoreans taught their disciples to keep secret the “divine mysteries and methods of instruction...” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 92, #98] After communicating a magical formula, a pagan magician says, “Share this great mystery with no one [else], but conceal it, by Helios, since you have been deemed worthy by the lord” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 64, #50, PGM 1.130-32] (cf. Mk 1.44).

Many pagans thought that the wise person interprets myths allegorically, i.e., symbolically, ignoring the literal sense. Sallustius writes that only “the ignorant Egyptians” and others would believe that earth is Isis, moisture is Osiris, water Kronos, and so on. He asserts that various myths are suitable for philosophers and poets. Some are suitable for “. . . religious initiations, since every initiation aims at uniting us with the world and the gods.” [MacMullen, R. 275] For Sallustius the revered myths and literature must be symbolically interpreted in order to reconcile them with sophisticated values and thought. Similarly, using symbolic interpretation writers of the *Christian Scriptures* sought to harmonize the *Jewish Scriptures* with Christian beliefs.

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### SERMON ON THE MOUNT: MT 4.24-7.29; LK 6.17-7.1

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Mark’s gospel contains very little of the teachings of Jesus found in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount and Luke’s Sermon on the Plain, but we will briefly consider some of these ethical teachings as they are still assumed by many to be unique to Christianity.

## BLINDING THE JEWS

In Matthew, Jesus goes up to “the mountain” to escape the crowds, and when his disciples join him, he delivers the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5.1).

Matthew, like Mark, says that Jesus teaches the crowds only in parables, but after three chapters of teachings expressed in plain language, the gospel writer informs us that “the crowds were astounded at his teaching” (7.28-29). Lachs writes that, “the Sermon was apparently intended only for the disciples.” [Lachs, S., 67]

Similarly, Luke says that Jesus chose the twelve and then came down from the mountain to a level place (Lk 6.17) where he delivers his Sermon on the Plain. Luke says that Jesus had “finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people” (Lk 7.1). Most scholars agree with Lachs that originally only the disciples heard the sermons, the crowds were added by the early church. Why? The church wanted to depict Jesus as one who was open to all — a popular view among today’s Christians. It was necessary to rehabilitate the elitist and secretive Jesus of Mark.

Jesus teaches outdoors in a sitting position. This is anachronistic since in 30 CE it was customary to teach indoors and to stand while preaching (cf. Mt 5.1). [Lachs, S., 67-68] Most scholars agree with Lachs that the locale for the sermon is intended to parallel the receipt of the law by Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex 19.1ff). [Lachs, S., 67] The purpose of the sermon is to depict Jesus as a teacher who supersedes Moses. For example, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Mt 5.3) is derived from Psalms of Solomon 10.7. [Lachs, S., 71] The “poor” in Jewish literature refers to the

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

people of God, i.e., Jews, but for Matthew, it refers to the Christians.

At Mt 5.17-20, Jesus says that he has not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to “fulfill” them, but fulfill means “to complete.” At Mt 5.18 Jesus says not one iota of the law is to be erased. We agree with Lachs that this “borders on sophistry...” [Lachs, S., 90] Jesus refers to basic Jewish moral laws which Jesus “improves on” but does not reject.

Mt 5.21-26 is the first of six passages which states a Jewish law and then compares it to a teaching of Jesus, to the detriment of the Mosaic Law.

Jesus says, “It was said to those of ancient times, you shall not murder,... but I say to you...” (Mt 5.21-22). He teaches that anger leads to murder. But Jesus has ignored the Psalmist who writes, “Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath” (Ps 37.8). In the rabbinic literature R. Eleazar says, “He who hates his brother belongs to the shedders of blood!” [Lachs, S., 91,94, ] Indeed, the LORD orders Moses to tell the people not to have hatred of their kin and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lv 19.17-18). Seneca says that anger is a temporary madness (*De Ira* 1.1.2). “Man is born for mutual aid; anger, for destruction...” (*De Ira* 1.5.2-3). Anger was a common topic in Roman schools.

Jesus says “you have heard that it was said, ‘you shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Ex 20.14; Dt 5.18; Mt

## BLINDING THE JEWS

5.27-20). (Apparently Jesus does not believe that women lust after men.) But Jews and pagans also condemned impure thought. [Lachs, S., 96-97. “He who has a pure heart in love, looks not on a woman with thoughts of fornication” (Test. of Benjamin 8.2). [Lachs, S., 96-97] Seneca condemns adulterous behavior by either husband or wife. [Motto, A. L., 60, Ep 94.26] Aristotle writes, “What is a crime for a person to do, is a crime for a person to think...” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 58, #34] and Cicero asserts that lust is a powerful sin. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 58, #34]

The Jewish Jesus condemns Jews who divorce and remarry (Mt 5.31-32; 19.9), yet Dt 24.1ff clearly permits divorce and remarriage, as does rabbinic law. Jesus incorrectly assumes that a Jewish woman, like a pagan woman, could initiate a divorce. The Stoic Musonius (ca 31-100 CE) condemned adultery, regarding marriage as sacred. [Reale, G. 71]

Leviticus says that one should not swear falsely (19.12). Jesus says, “Do not swear at all” (Mt 5.33-37). The Anchor Bible Dictionary points out that Jesus’ teachings on oaths, prayer, revenge, and marriage were close to the doctrines of the pagan Pythagoreans [Freedman, D. N., vol. 5, 564] who were also in favor of daily prayer (cf. Mt 6.9).

Quoting Scripture, Jesus preaches, “you have heard it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also...” (Mt

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5.38-39; Lk 6.29-30; cf. Ex 21.24f; Lv 24.20). Some Christian commentators still argue that the ethics of Jesus are loving and the ethics of Judaism are harsh and primitive. But compensation for injury was a common practice in the pagan world as it is today. Also, an eye for an eye was a vast improvement over the older tradition of a human life for an eye. [For more see Lachs, S., 103-104]

The Lord commands the Jewish people to love their neighbors (Lev 19.18). Assuming Jesus means to include non-neighbors, he has achieved superiority only by ignoring the verse which appears at Lv 19.34 which says that “you shall love the stranger.” [Lachs, S., 107, 110 fn. 1] Jesus adds, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Mt 5.44; cf. Lk 6.27-28,32-36). Jesus does not mean that one should love one’s enemy during combat, as some modern Christians think. As Gandhi and Martin Luther King have demonstrated, nonviolence under certain circumstances is effective, but this is not so if your persecutor is Hitler or the brutal Roman army. The early church was probably advocating that a Christian should react nonviolently when he or she is ostracized. In addition, Matthew is anachronistic since he refers to persecutions of Christians which did not occur until well after Jesus’ death.

In the *Jewish Scriptures* one is commanded to treat one’s enemies in a moral way; Jewish tradition teaches that if your enemy is hungry and thirsty, give him bread and water, etc. (see Ex 23.4-5; Dt 22.4; Prv 25.21). [Lachs, S., 108, 111 fn. 12-14] The Qumranites express a hatred of the Sons of Darkness, i.e., those Jews and others who



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opposed the sect's understanding of God but this sect was not reflective of mainstream Judaism.

The idea that one should harm one's enemies and help one's friends was ancient. "Yet in the Greek world a different view gradually emerged when Pericles urged overcoming enemies by generosity and virtue." [Thucydides 4.19,1-4 as quoted in Fitzmyer, *Luke* vol 1 637, note on Lk 6.27] The Stoics and Pythagoreans taught that one should behave toward one's enemies so that they will turn into friends. [Diogenes Laertius 8.1,23 as quoted in Fitzmyer, *Luke*, vol 1, 637-38]

Jesus says, "whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others" (Mt 6.2). Giving alms on the street was common in both Jewish and pagan circles. As to sounding a trumpet in the synagogues or streets while giving to the poor, this nowhere appears in Jewish literature. [Lachs, S., 112]

Jesus directs his disciples to shut the door and pray in private to their hidden Father (Mt 6.6). So too, some pagan magicians advised their followers to pray in private, "to your hidden Father who sees that which is hidden." [Smith, M., , 131] None of the versions of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew and Luke are found in Jewish literature (Mk 11.25; Mt 6.9-15; Lk 11.2-4).

Jesus says, "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged" (Mt 7.1-5; Lk 6.37-38,41-42). But the idea that we should not judge others but rather should examine ourselves

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was a commonplace teaching among Stoic-Cynics like Seneca, as well as many other philosophers.

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Mt 7.15-20). Matthew is again anachronistic; he refers to Christian heretics or schismatics of his own time.

## GOLDEN RULE

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Jesus preaches, “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets” (Mt 7.12; Lk 6.31. Probably no saying of Jesus is more widely known among Christians than this “golden rule.” Apologists even today use it to demonstrate the superiority and uniqueness of Jesus’ ethics over Jewish ethics, but it is hardly unique to Christianity. Consider, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lv 19.18); “And that which you hate, do to no man” (Tobit 4.15). [Lachs, S., 143] The golden rule is found in all the major religions of the world although the phrase *Golden Rule* is an 18<sup>th</sup> century label. It also appears in ancient Greek literature, e.g., “Isocrates, Nioles 61, ‘Do not do unto others that which angers you when others do it to you.’ Compare also Herodotus 3.142.” [Lachs, S., 144 fn. 6]

J. Fitzmyer writes, “In antiquity many formulations, both positive and negative, were known.” [Fitzmyer, J., vol 1, 639]

## BLINDING THE JEWS

He gives some examples of the rule:

- Lv 19.18 - “You must love your neighbor as yourself.”
- Luke and Philo (20 BCE-50 CE) emphasize duty to God and humanity, to love God and man. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 128-129, #165]
- R. Hillel, a contemporary rabbi of Jesus, writes, “What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else; that is the whole Law, all else is commentary. Go and learn.” [Fitzmyer, J., vol 1, 639, b. Sabbat 31a]

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## CALMING THE STORM: MK 4.35-41

But let us return to Mark. Jesus and his disciples are in “the boat” which, along with other boats, is crossing the Sea of Galilee. (The other boats of vs. 36 probably originally served as witnesses to the storm miracle that follows this verse.)

Randel Helms points out in *Gospel Fictions* [Helms, R., 76-81] that Matthew may have used both Jonah and the Psalmist in constructing this story. The Psalmist writes that when struck by a storm at sea, the crew and others, “cried to the LORD in their trouble [and] he made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed” (107.28-29). In Mark, the disciples wake Jesus who was apparently fatigued since he was sleeping during the storm! They cry out to him in fear, asking him if he cares that they are perishing (Mk 4.38). Jesus commands the wind and the sea, “Peace! Be still!” and it is so (4.39).

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Jonah 1.4-17 relates that the prophet is asleep on board a ship when God sends a storm, endangering the crew. They cry out in fear and pray to their gods to save them but to no avail. The captain wakes Jonah telling him to call on his God so that they might not perish. Jonah knows that it is because of his previous disobedience that God has sent the storm, and he tells the crew to throw him into the sea and the storm will cease. They do so and the storm ends. Jonah is swallowed by a fish; he prays and the Lord releases him. At last he obeys God's command to go to the pagan city of Nineveh in Mesopotamia, and tell them to desist from their evil behavior or else the city will be destroyed by God in forty days. The people of the great pagan city repent of their sins, God spares them, and all ends happily. Thus, God has reminded Jonah that God is responsible not only for Jews but for all people.

There are several parallels between Mark and Jonah. Jesus, like Jonah, is asleep when the storm endangers the boat (Mk 4.37-38; Jon 1.4-5). The disciples cry out in fear, asking Jesus if he cares that they might perish, as people do in Jonah (Mk 4.38; Jon 1.14). Jesus calms the sea (in Jonah, God does so) (Mk 4.39; Jon 1.15). Jesus criticizes the disciples for still having no faith (Mk 4.40), and Jonah was unfaithful when he disobeyed God. After three days in the fish, Jonah goes on to fulfill his mission to the pagans in Nineveh. In Mark, Jesus and his disciples finish the boat trip and arrive in the pagan country of the Gerasenes where Jesus exorcises a "legion" of demons from a pagan man, thus foreshadowing the church's mission to pagans.

## BLINDING THE JEWS

Many miracles resulted “. . . from the virtues of Pythagoras.” He predicted earthquakes and violent winds, and calmed the waves of rivers and seas so that his disciples could pass through the area (cf. Mt 8.26). [Martin, R., 173] “Jesus himself accomplishes the mighty deed which is otherwise ascribed only to divine beings” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 66-67, Unit #54] in the pagan world. In a story from Lucian, two of the divine sons of Zeus calm a similar storm. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 66-67, Unit #54] In Mark, Jesus sleeps during a dangerous storm; in Homer the hero sleeps on a dangerous battlefield (*Iliad* 4.223). In both there are a storm and “help from the hero.” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 66-67, Unit #54] “‘Have pity,’ I [Clitophon] wailed and cried, ‘Lord Poseidon, and make a truce with us, the remnants of your shipwreck, we have already undergone many deaths through fear.’” (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 69, Unit #59] Poseidon was called “Lord” as is Jesus at Mt 8.25. In pagan myth, a god or hero can control nature. [Cotter, W., 131] The gods calm storms to save sailors and other people, e.g., Aphrodite, Poseidon, Neptune. [Cotter, W., 132ff] The Dioscuri calmed the seas in the Homeric hymns. [Cotter, W., 134] The Egyptian goddess, Isis, is mistress of rivers, winds, and the sea, and calms the seas and brings on storms. [Cotter, W., #3.8, 136]

## CHAPTER 4 FAITHFUL PAGANS: MARK 5.1-7.37

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*We decree and order that from now on, and for all time, Christians shall not eat or drink with Jews...*

— Pope Eugenius IV Decree, 1442 CE.

### DEMONS AND PIGS: MK 5.1-20

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Jesus and his disciples travel by boat to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee and disembark in the pagan region of Gerasa. Mark gives no reason for the trip. A pagan man who is possessed appears before Jesus. He has been living among the tombs, has broken his chains and is wandering about (Mk 5.2,8). He bows down and addresses Jesus, “Son of the Most High God... I adjure you by God do not torment me” (5.7). In Mark, this pagan is the only person to call Jesus *Son of God* other than the disciples. Jesus asks him who he is and the man replies, “My name is Legion; for we are many” (vs. 9). Mark’s text switches from singular to plural, from *one* spirit to a *legion* of them. (*Legion* is the Roman military term for a unit of 4,000 to 6,000 soldiers.) Once again we see that Jesus’ knowledge is limited since he has to ask the demon who he is. The unclean spirits beg Jesus “not to send them out of the country” (vs. 10). Jesus doesn’t exile them, but he outfoxes his foes by sending them into a nearby herd of about 2,000 pigs which rushes down a steep bank and drowns in the sea.

Would demons really fear being evicted from their “own country?” Would Jesus have permitted the demons to torment people in other areas? Mark’s solution is to have

## FAITHFUL PAGANS

Jesus send the demons into pigs which then drown in the sea. Even if the pigs die, is it possible for these supernatural entities to die? Luke attempts to correct this latter point by asserting that the demons feared going back “to the abyss” (Lk 8.31), but he apparently accepts the fact that demons were mortal.

Many scholars think that originally the story was located in a Jewish area. Mark, or his editor, knowing that Jews are forbidden to eat pork and so would not be raising pigs, placed the story in Gerasa. The name of this pagan area varies from manuscript to manuscript and gospel to gospel. Why was it so difficult to find a pagan region for the story? Because Mark relates that the demon-possessed pigs rushed down a steep bank into the sea and drowned, but there is no suitable bank or cliff bordering the Sea of Galilee. Mark and Luke placed the pigs near the city of Gerasa, but this is about 33 miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee. [Fitzmyer, J., vol. 1, 736] Matthew locates the story in Gadara, but this is still about six miles from the sea. [Fitzmyer, J., vol. 1, 736] Mark and parallels give no hint that the pigs ran a marathon, as E. Schweizer points out. [Schweizer, E., 113]

The demons use God's name in begging Jesus to spare them but they would hardly make such use of God's name which is why both Matthew and Luke omit this. Incidentally, why do the devils always speak Greek? [Fitzmyer, J., vol 1., 738, vs. 28]

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

The former demoniac begs to be allowed to accompany Jesus who politely refuses his request and tells him to go home to his friends and tell them what the *Lord* has done for him (Mk 5.18-19). Mark says that the man told all the people what Jesus had done for him and they were amazed. Other than the blind beggar at Jericho, the only person who asks to follow Jesus is this man. This story was inserted by the early church to give scriptural support for the church's mission to pagans (non-Jews). [Fitzmyer, J., vol 1. 735]

Exorcisms are rare in ancient Judaism. There are none recorded in the *Jewish Scriptures*, and in the Mishnah (ca 200 CE) there are only three passages that assume the existence of demons, and none mention exorcism. [Cotter, W., 97-98]

### RESURRECTION OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER: MK 5.21-43

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Jesus crosses the sea in "the boat," returning to Galilee.

In Mark, Jesus raises only one person from the dead, the daughter of Jairus, the leader (5.22), or one of the leaders (5.38), of the synagogue. Jairus comes to Jesus, falls at his feet and repeatedly begs him to cure his dying daughter by the laying on of hands (Mk 5.22-23). Jesus heads for Jairus' house, accompanied by the father and a large crowd (5.24).

This is another sandwich story that is interrupted by an incident involving an unnamed woman who has been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years (Mk 5.25-34). Her faith is strong enough that she believes that



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if she only touches Jesus' clothes, she will be cured. She does so and the bleeding stops. Jesus knows immediately that power has gone out of him; he turns to the crowd, asking who touched his clothes. The woman falls down before him and explains "all that has happened" and Jesus says that her faith has cured her (Mk 5.34). Again we see that Jesus is not all-powerful or all-knowing since power leaves him and he has to ask who touched him. E. Schweizer concludes that this story is Mark's own composition. [Schweizer, E., 116] The point of the story is again to show that Jewish religious leaders are impotent, i.e., Judaism is inefficacious.

A number of writers have interpreted this story as meaning that Jesus is superior to Jewish religious leaders in that he ignores Jewish ritual rules governing blood impurity. Mary D'Angelo disagrees, arguing that Jesus is not aware of the presence of blood but she overlooks the fact that Jesus shows no concern even when he becomes aware that he has inadvertently violated a ritual law. [D'Angelo, M. A., 140-141]

E. Schweizer writes that "such miracles were attributed to pagan Greek wonder-workers..." [Schweizer, E., 121] Arrian relates that the soldiers of Alexander the Great sought to touch his garment for healing. There are similar stories in Plutarch's *Life of Sulla* and Tacitus' *Histories*. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 78, #74]

Pagan gods helped women, too. In an inscription from Epidaurus, a god helps a woman named Cleo deliver a baby after a pregnancy of five years. We can accept the

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gestation period, but we have some difficulty with the idea that after his birth, the infant immediately washes himself at the fountain and walks about with his mother! [Martin, F., 225]

While Jesus is talking to the healed woman, some people from Jairus' house exclaim that his daughter is dead. Jesus allows "no one to follow him [to the house] except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James" (Mk 5.37). (Where did the disciples come from? The flow of the narrative is smooth if one omits vs. 37. Apparently the disciples have been added to the original story.)

Jesus enters Jairus' home and says, "The child is not dead, but sleeping" (Mk 5.39). The mourners scoff, and Jesus puts everyone outside the house except the child's parents and the three disciples. He takes the child's hand and commands her to get up. She rises and walks around. Mark says *they* were amazed (Mk 5.42). Jesus then forbids them to tell anyone what has occurred (the messianic secret again), and orders someone to feed the girl.

The tale of the raising of Jairus' daughter is very much like the standard pagan healing story:

- a person has an ailment;
- the sick person or a relative or friend begs the hero for a cure;
- the hero cures the person by touch, spittle, or words; and

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- proof is provided that the cure was effective, e.g., Jairus' daughter gets up, walks around, and is given food to eat.

Often Mark and the other evangelists will use a pagan story but clothe it with details taken from the Jewish Scriptures. R. Helms compares the Synoptic story about Jairus' daughter with the prophet Elisha's resurrection of a young boy (2 Kgs 4.18-37; Mk 5.21-43). He observes five points of similarity. [Helms, R., 65-66]

In both stories:

- a parent begs the hero to come and save his or her child who is near death;
- on the way to the child the hero receives a message not to come since the child is dead, though this deters neither Jesus nor Elisha;
- both healers turn people out of the house where the child lies;
- in each story the hero touches the child, speaks, and the child awakes;
- finally, in Mark and 2 Kings the crowds or the parents of the resurrected child are amazed.

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### EXCURSUS: LUKE'S RESURRECTION AT NAIN

R. Helms also finds five points of similarity between Elijah in 1 Kings 17.10,17-24 and Luke 7.11-17: [Helms, R., 64]

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- Both begin with the words, “And it came to pass.”
- In each the hero meets a woman at the gate of a city.
- Both magic workers speak and touch the woman’s dead son who rises and speaks.
- The miracle establishes that each of the heroes is a prophet.
- Both end with the same words, “he gave him to his mother.”

Helms writes that what is “striking is that all the gospel stories of Jesus’ resurrecting a dead loved one are based on the resurrections...” performed by Elijah and Elisha in 1 and 2 Kings. We would point out that there is one significant difference between the stories of Jesus and Elijah and that is that the Jewish prophet prays to the Lord for help in restoring the boy to life (1 Kgs 17.20,22). [Helms, R., 64] The Messiah, Jesus, never names God as the source of power for his miraculous deeds. This is very non-Jewish.

Resurrecting the dead were not common among pagan magicians, but in the *Jewish Scriptures* they are even rarer. [Smith, M., 118] Pagans could misinterpret signs of death in a patient, as when Asclepiades meets a funeral procession and ascertains that the man is still alive. [Boring, M., *HCNT*,79, #76] J. Fitzmyer states that resurrection stories appear in the pagan works of Pliny and Apuleius, as well as other writings. [In what follows,

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see J. Fitzmyer, *Commentary on Luke*, vol 1, 656-658] In Philostratus' biography of the Jesus-like figure, Apollonius of Tyana (d ca 96 CE), Apollonius stops a funeral bier, touches the dead girl, and wakes her from death. He then returns her to the house of her father. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 203-204, #290]

According to Apuleius, the Greek god of healing, Asclepius, raised a man thought dead. [Martin, F., 179] And Malodorous writes that when Alcestis died, she was brought back from the dead by Hercules. [Martin, F., 214] The resurrected Jesus, like Hercules and Dionysius, descends to the land of the dead (prison) and rescues spirits from Hades (1 Pet 3.18-19).

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### REJECTION IN JESUS' HOMETOWN: MK 6.1-6

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Jesus teaches on the Sabbath in the synagogue of his hometown which remains unknown. Mark uses the word "Nazareth" five times in his gospel, but not here in this story. Jesus' (former) neighbors ask, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" (Mk 6.3). A Jewish child's ancestry would not be traced solely through the mother, since this could imply that she had borne an illegitimate child, an insult to both mother and child. Matthew corrects this by adding that Jesus is "the son of the carpenter" (Mt 13.55).

In Mark and Matthew Jesus' listeners in the synagogue are astounded at his teachings and his "deeds of power" (Mk 6.2), and yet turn against him. Apparently they think that wisdom should not issue from a person with the low

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social status of a carpenter (Mk 6.2-3), but they knew his status before he spoke. Why the change of heart? Philostratus, writing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, states that Apollonius of Tyana said, “Other men regard me as the equal of the gods, and some of them even as a god, but until now my own country alone ignores me...” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 96, #106] Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom write of similar tales of rejection of philosophers in their own countries. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 96, #106]

According to Mark, the faith of the Jews in the synagogue is so defective that Jesus *could* not perform any miracles in his hometown, except for the healing of a few sick people by the laying on of hands (Mk 6.5). Matthew rehabilitates Jesus by asserting that Jesus did not do *many* miracles there, and Luke omits any hint that Jesus’ power is limited.

The rejection at Nazareth is the first story of Jesus’ ministry that Luke records. By placing it at the beginning of his gospel he seeks to depict Jesus as a teacher, not merely the miracle monger of Mark’s gospel. In the synagogue, Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah, indicating that he (the Messiah) is a champion of the oppressed, the captives, the poor, and the blind, although as we said before, there is no such messianic tradition in Judaism.

Luke adds two significant items to the accounts of Mark and Matthew: First, the people identify Jesus as “Joseph’s” son (Lk 4.22), rather than as a carpenter (Mark) or the son of the carpenter (Mt 13.54-55). Second, unlike Mark and Matthew, the audience takes no offense

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at Jesus' humble status. Instead, in Luke Jesus teaches that there was a severe famine in Israel, and Elijah (ca 850 BCE) was sent by God to help a pagan widow of Sidon by multiplying food. In like manner, the prophet's disciple, Elisha, cleanses only the pagan leper, Naaman the Syrian, although there were many Jewish lepers in Israel. In response to Jesus' pro-pagan message, the people in the synagogue attempt to kill Jesus by throwing him off the top of a hill.

Luke has begun his account of Jesus' ministry with an old pagan slander, namely that Jews hated non-Jews.

### JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE: MK 6.6B-13

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Jesus teaches in the villages of Galilee (Mk 6.6b), and then sends the twelve out “. . . two by two...” (Mk 6.7), as does the early church (see Acts). Jesus gives his disciples typical Cynic instructions: they are not to take any possessions with them except a staff, one pair of sandals and a single tunic (Mk 6.8-9). Also, they are to take no bread, no bag, and no money, and they are to exorcise unclean spirits and proclaim repentance.

Plutarch reports that holy men took no wallet and no food on their journeys since they “devote all their time to god.” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 80, #79] Diogenes (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE), says that the Cynics took only one cloak, a wallet and a staff when they traveled. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 81, #80] The Stoic, Musonius Rufus (d 100 CE), relates that wearing one cloak is better than two and it is best to wear no sandals. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 81-82, #81] The editors of *HCNT* write that there are “numerous analogies between

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Cynic wandering philosophers and early Christian wandering missionaries...”. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 118, #144]

To whom are the apostles sent? Mark implies that their mission is to Jews in Galilee and Matthew spells this out. Jesus commands the disciples to “Go nowhere among the gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 10.5-6). Some apologists erroneously use this text as “a proof” that Jesus, being Jewish, naturally dislikes non-Jews.

This pericope is anti-Jewish. In Mark, Jesus says that if (Jewish) towns refuse to welcome or listen to the twelve, they are to leave and “shake off the dust that is on [their] feet as a testimony against them” (Mk 6.11). Matthew is more explicit than Mark. He adds that for any (Jewish) town that rejects the disciples, “. . . it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town” (Mt 10.15-16).

After Mark’s long account of the death of John the Baptist (Mk 6.14-29), the disciples abruptly reappear, reporting to Jesus “all that they had done and taught” (Mk 6.30). E. Schweizer asserts that this verse was added by Mark or his editors. [Schweizer, E., 135] Matthew never reports that the disciples returned to Jesus; they just appear in the grain field story at Mt 12.1ff. This is another story added by the early church to support missionary efforts.



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### DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST: MK 6.14-29

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According to Mark, Jesus' fame has spread throughout Galilee. Herod Antipas and others think that Jesus is John the Baptist raised from the dead (thus Jesus is able to do miracles). Still others think Jesus is Elijah, or a prophet like those of long ago.

Mark relates that John the Baptist is beheaded by Herod (Antipas), the Tetrarch who ruled Galilee under Roman authority (Mark wrongly calls him *king*). Mark relates that Herod married the ex-wife of his brother Philip, Tetrarch of Etruria. The Baptist condemns this union of Herod and Herodias. Because of this condemnation, Herodias desires the death of the Baptist. When her daughter's dance at a banquet pleased Herod, she is granted a favor, and her mother asks for the head of John the Baptist. Herod agrees and, despite his "deep grief," orders the "holy man" beheaded (Mk 6.26,20) and delivers his head on a platter. Note that the execution of the Jewish prophet "is given without any exaltation of the martyr." [Schweizer, E., 134] However, exaltation of the martyr is typical of later Christian Martyrologies.

Many scholars hold this story of John's death to be unhistorical. It contains a number of errors. E. Schweizer mentions a few: [Schweizer, E., 134]

- Philip the Tetrarch was not married to Herodias, but rather to her daughter, Salome.
- Josephus, the first-century CE Jewish historian, gives a different cause for John's death: John had a

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large following and Herod Antipas feared an insurrection (*Ant* 18.5.116-119).

- Josephus writes that the death of John took place at the fortress Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea. One problem is that the guests, high officials and leading citizens of Galilee, would not fit into this small fort. The party would have had to be held at the Herodian palace in Tiberius, the capital of Galilee. Neither Mark nor Matthew relates where the banquet was held.

Schweizer writes that, “it is almost inconceivable that the princess would dance in this way...” [Schweizer, E., 132]

We would add that John’s head being delivered on a platter during a formal banquet is also inconceivable!

Some scholars think the section of Josephus dealing with John’s death is a Christian interpolation. They think the relevant passage in *Antiquities* (18.116-119) [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 96-97, #107] disturbs the narrative flow. King Aretas is angry because Herod Antipas divorced his daughter to marry Philip’s ex-wife and so declares war on Herod. Then Josephus discusses war tactics. The passage about John follows, after which Josephus returns to the war plans. On the other hand, other scholars believe that John was an historical Jewish figure, and that only the reference to John’s baptizing, although not for the remission of sins, was added by Christian editors. These scholars see John as an historical figure, but having no connection with Jesus.

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### FEEDING 5,000 & 4,000: MK 6.32-44; 8.1-9

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In Galilee, Jesus feeds 5,000 men with five loaves and two fish, twelve baskets of food are left over (Mk 6.32-44). (Mt 14.21 says 5,000 men plus women and children.) Later, in pagan territory, the Marcan Jesus feeds 4,000 men with seven loaves and a few fish, with seven baskets of food left over (Mk 8.1-10; Mt 15.32-39).

R. Helms argues persuasively that the feeding stories are based on 2 Kings 4.42-44, where Elisha feeds 100 hungry people with only 20 loaves and a sack of grain with food left over. Jesus is more powerful than Elisha; he feeds more people with less food. The Jewish prophet fulfills the Lord's will; Jesus again acts on his own authority. [Helms, R., 75]

Some apologists argue that Jesus here shows “compassion” for the Jewish crowd, because they are “like sheep without a shepherd” (Mk 6.34), but Jesus is again condemning the Jewish people’s religious leaders as inferior to himself and inefficacious.

At Mk 6.37, the disciples ask Jesus if they should “buy 200 *denarii* worth of bread...” and give it to the people to eat. A single *denarius* was equivalent to a laborer’s pay for one day, so 200 *denarii* would be the wages for a person for about seven months. [Throckmorton, Jr., B., 90, fn j] Where did Jesus and the disciples get this much money? They don’t beg. We get no hint from Mark until much later (Mk 15.40), when we learn that women provided for Jesus while he was in Galilee. According to many scholars, the feeding stories prefigure the

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institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. [Schweizer, E., 138] Although pagan magicians do not multiply food, they are commonly pictured as providing it. [Smith, M., 118]

### EXCURSUS: MIRACLE AT CANA JN 2.1-10

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Pausanias assures us there were many witnesses who verified that at the festival of Dionysius, three empty pots behind locked doors were miraculously filled with wine. [Martin, F., 215] So too, Jesus attends a wedding in Cana of Galilee where there are many witnesses. When the wine runs out, Jesus has six jars filled with water, each holding about 20 or 30 gallons. He turns the water to wine, which is witnessed by the steward when he tastes the water (Jn 2.9). This is one-up-manship. The Dionysian story has witnesses, three pots, and the miracle occurs behind locked doors. Jesus has witnesses, six *large* jars, and the miracle occurs in the sight of all. Jesus' wine was also the best wine. Did the guests drink 120 gallons of wine or more? This story is used by apologists to argue that Jesus approved of marriage, but the early gospels know nothing of it.

### WALKING ON WATER: MK 6.47-52

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When the evening comes, Jesus goes alone to “a mountain” to pray. The disciples are in a boat on the Sea (of Galilee) heading for Bethsaida, although they will not arrive there until two chapters later at Mk 8.22. [Schweizer, E., 142] Early in the morning, Jesus returns from the mountain to the sea, and sees that his disciples are in the middle of the sea having a hard time rowing the

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boat against the wind. Jesus appears walking on the water, “intending to pass them by” (vs. 48). Could Jesus see a ship in distress from the shore, several miles away? If Jesus wanted to rescue the disciples, why does Mark say that he intended to pass them by?

The disciples are terrified when they see Jesus, fearing that he is a ghost. Jesus reassures them, enters the boat, and the wind ceases (Mk 6.50-51). Mark says that the disciples are utterly astounded since “they did not understand about the [multiplication of the] loaves, but their hearts were hardened” (Mk 6.51-52, cf. Mk 8.17). Mark hates the Pharisees and he here equates the disciples with outsiders who are to be damned to hell!

Matthew adds that Peter also walks on the water. Heading toward Jesus, Peter becomes terrified and begins to sink (Mt 14.30). Jesus rescues him. But Matthew ameliorates this faithlessness of Peter and the others by omitting Mark’s comment about their “hearts being hardened” (Mk 6.52) and by having the disciples worship Jesus, declaring him to be “the Son of God” (Mt 14.33).

In the *Jewish Scriptures*, God (and sometimes prophets like Moses, Elijah, and Elisha) miraculously control the seas and rivers (cf. Job 9.8). [Fitzmyer, J., vol 1, 728] “You trample the sea with your horses” (cf. Hab 3.15). [Cotter, W., 149] “The Lord tramples the waves of the sea” (cf. Job 9.6-11). [Cotter, W., #3.31, 149-150] The Lord makes a way on the seas.

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E. Schweizer writes that “Greek writers asserted that supermen and demons could walk upon the sea.” [Schweizer, E., 141] One of Poseidon’s sons, Orion, walked on the sea as if it were solid ground. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 99, #111] Plutarch, Menander, Strabo, and even the Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote of how Alexander the Great crossed the inlet of the Pamphylian Sea, sometimes indicating that a miracle occurred. [Martin, F., 157-158] Josephus sees Alexander’s crossing the Sea as miraculous (the water is held back for him), but he states that everyone is welcome to their own opinion. [Martin, F., 157-158]

Pagans presupposed “that divine origin is demonstrated by great deeds. This conception is significant for the composition of the Gospels as a whole, especially for the idea of Jesus’ divine sonship.” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 96, #105] Great deeds indicate divinity of the one who performs them.

Mk 6.53-56 relates that the boat with Jesus and his disciples came to shore at Gennesaret in Galilee. At once people recognize Jesus and bring their sick to him. The people had come from the villages, cities and farms and all who touched the fringe of his cloak were cured. E. Schweizer attributes this summary statement to Mark’s pen. [Schweizer, E., 143]

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## CONDEMNING ORAL LAW: PHARISEES AND SCRIBES

We must now look at Jesus’ attitude toward oral law (and sometimes written law) and its defenders. “Among Orthodox Jews, it is believed that both the written and

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the oral (unwritten) laws were given to Moses on Mt. Sinai.” [Cohn-Sherbok, L., 130] Rabbinical interpretations of the written law were collected and published in the Mishnah ca 200 CE by Judah ha Nasi. The discussions of the Mishnah are contained in the Talmuds, “*The Jerusalem Talmud* was compiled in the late 5<sup>th</sup> Century (CE) and *The Babylonian Talmud* in the late 6<sup>th</sup> Century (CE)...” [Cohn-Sherbok, L., 174]

In Mark Chapter 7, Jesus condemns “the Pharisees” and “some scribes” who have popped up from Jerusalem. Pharisees did not live in Galilee at this time and Mark treats scribes as if they were a unified political, social, or religious block, but they are not depicted in this way by Josephus.

The Pharisees and scribes observe that some of Jesus’ disciples are eating without ritually washing their hands (Mk 7.2). Mark flatly states that “all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands...” (vs. 3), and they observe many other rituals concerning cups and pots, etc. (vs. 4). The Pharisees and scribes criticize Jesus, asking why his disciples do not live “according to the tradition of the elders...” (vs. 5), as if oral law was not from God.

Lachs writes, “The earliest reference to this practice [of the ritual washing of hands] in Jewish sources is the Mishnah (ca 200 CE) (M. Ber. 8.2-4).” [Lachs, S., 246] Montefiore states that this practice in Jesus’ time applied only to priests; laypersons and the pupils of the rabbis were exempt. [Lachs, S., 246] R. Bultmann states that this account “has all the characteristics of pure polemic

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of the early church.” [As quoted in Beck, N., 151] Beck asserts that Mk 7.6-13 is “vitriolic anti-Jewish polemic.” [Beck, N., 151-152]

Jesus quotes Isaiah who writes that God commanded him to tell Jews, “This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me...” (Mk 7.6-7; Mt 15.8-9; cf. Isa 29.13). As we said above, Mark does not relate the fact that Isaiah chastises the Israelites (the northern kingdom) but intends no permanent condemnation of them or Jews in general.

Jesus condemns the oral law, “You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition” (Mk 7.8; cf. Mt 15.6). In Matthew, too, Jesus sees oral law as human, “in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines” (Mk 15.9). As we said above, in Judaism, all law, oral or written, is believed to come from God.

Pagans, too, placed divine law above human law. Plutarch writes that we are in the world “to obey the commands of the gods” (cf. Mk 7.8). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 57, #31] Epictetus (55-135 CE) asks, should we obey human laws, “these wretched laws of ours, the laws of the dead, and... not [look] to the laws of the Gods...?” [Reale, G., 86] A number of pagan writers condemned Jewish law as Jesus does here (see Chapter 9).

Jesus goes on to say that the Pharisees and scribes do not honor their parents because they set aside money (*corban*) for the temple (see Ex 20.12; 21.17; Dt 5.16; Lv 20.9), and Jesus adds that this robs their parents of



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support (Mk 7.8-11). *Corban* was money put in trust for the temple, but this does not mean that Jews were free to starve their parents any more than it would under today's law. Matthew drops this.

Mk 7.19b is often used to show that Jesus rejected Jewish food laws. Mark says that Jesus "declared all foods clean." But this verse is missing from the earliest extant manuscript of Mark, the third-century CE P<sup>45</sup>, and does not appear in Mark until the manuscripts of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is a scribal gloss (a comment written in the margin of a manuscript and incorporated into the text by a later copyist.).

Here are some comments on the statement of Mark as to Jesus "declaring" all foods as clean:

- Most scholars consider Mk 7.19b to be a late insertion.
- Some think that Jesus is depicted as abandoning ritual law, at least the food laws of the *Jewish Scriptures* and oral law, but if Jesus had abandoned any of the fundamental elements of Judaism, one could hardly blame Jews and Jewish leaders for rejecting Jesus' claim to be a Jewish messiah, prophet, or teacher. And why would he have a large Jewish following?

The New Jerusalem Bible asserts that possibly the phrase was a scribal gloss. [Wansbrough, H., 1671, fn f]

- We do not know where Jesus and his disciples are dining, except that it is somewhere in Galilee. Are

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his enemies, the Pharisees and scribes, dining with Jesus? The disciples make no response to what would be an extremely controversial teaching. This story appears to be a late addition.

### DINNER WITH "GENTILES"

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Christian scholars are inaccurate in picturing Jews as exclusive in refusing to eat with non-Jews. Jewish extra-biblical literature clearly indicates that Jews ate with non-Jews.

In Acts of the Apostles, Peter explicitly says to his first pagan converts, Cornelius and his household, "You... know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile." God, however, has shown Peter that he "should not call anyone profane or unclean" (Acts 10.28). There was and is no Jewish law forbidding contact between Jews and non-Jews, not in the *Jewish Scriptures*, the works of Philo or Josephus, nor any mainstream Jewish writing.

This passage shows a misunderstanding of Jewish law. It is not *people* who are unclean. Rather, ritual laws are to be followed when a person is in an impure *condition*. Generally, only Jews can cause other Jews to be in a state of impurity, and the remedy for the condition of ritual impurity was generally minor — immersion in water and waiting until sunset. Most ritual rules in the *Jewish Scriptures* normally applied only to the priests and others intending to enter the temple. E. Haenchen is right when he writes, "diaspora Jews were not hermetically sealed off from dealings with the Gentiles...".

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[Haenchen, E., 350, fn 4] Pagans, too, had a huge number of ritual rules, but this did not stop them from associating with pagans with different rules, nor with Jesus.

There is no external support for Acts 10.28 until Irenaeus (ca 180 CE). [ANF, Irenaeus, Bk 3.12] Cyprian (d 270 CE) refers to “calling no man unclean” but he does not cite 10.28a which refers to the alleged Jewish law. [ANF, Cyprian, Epistle 58.5]

The Marcan Jesus’ anti-Jewish diatribe ends with a long list of sins attributed to the human heart: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, envy, slander, and pride (Mk 7.21-22). Pagans also supplied long lists of invective against their opponents. Dio Cocceianus (1<sup>st</sup> cent. CE) described his opponents as “...ignorant,... evil-spirited,... impious,... liars and deceivers,... preaching for the sake of gain and glory...”. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 132, #169]

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## SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN: MK 7.24-30

Jesus’ first trip to pagan territory is in Mark Chapter 5. He makes his only other trip into pagan territory at 7.24-9.29.

Only the first two gospels, Mark and Matthew, have the story of the Syrophenician woman. Mark relates that Jesus, wanting to be alone, went to the region of Tyre (southern Syria NW of Galilee). As soon as he enters one of Mark’s pop-up houses, a Syrophenician woman having heard about him, instantly comes to the house

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begging Jesus “to cast the demon out of her daughter...” who is at home (Mk 7.26).

Jesus says to the pagan woman, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs [non-Jews]” (Mk 7.27). To which the woman replies that even the dogs are allowed to eat the children’s crumbs (vs. 28). Jesus admires her witty response and announces that the demon has left her daughter. Mark tells us that at home she found that this was so (vss 29-30).

Matthew is unhappy that in Mark the woman’s wit is what saves the child, so he attributes the exorcism to the woman’s faith (Mt 15.28). (Also, In Matthew the woman is a Canaanite, though they no longer existed in the time of Jesus.)

The pagan woman’s faith is very strong, as is the faith of all other pagans in the Synoptics (including Pontius Pilate, in that he testifies to Jesus’ innocence).

Additional stories involving the strong faith of pagans were added by Matthew and Luke. For instance, in Matthew a centurion comes to ask Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant. Jesus says to the pagan, “Truly I tell you, in *no one* in Israel have I found such faith” (Mt 8.10; cf. Lk 7.9). Jesus adds that many non-Jews will enter the kingdom “while the heirs of the kingdom [Jews] will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt 8. 11-12).

## FAITHFUL PAGANS

Some Christian apologists argue that ancient Jews hated non-Jews and use this passage about the dogs as evidence that Jesus, being a “typical Jew,” was prejudiced against non-Jews. But Jesus’ bias against pagans is a creation of the early church. It is contradicted by the fact that Jesus cures the pagan woman’s daughter and, according to Matthew, it is because of her “faith.” The gospel writers had a bias *in favor of* non-Jews not against them. In the Matthean birth scene, the pagan magi (wise men) are the first to pay homage to the baby Jesus (Mt 2.11). In Mark and Matthew a Roman centurion at the foot of the cross identifies Jesus as “God’s Son.” Indeed, Jesus has come to save “gentiles” though their salvation will not begin until after Jesus’ death.

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### HEALING A DEAF AND MUTE MAN: MK 7.31-37

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Jesus leaves the area of Tyre and travels north through Sidon and then back southeast to the area of the Ten Cities, or Decapolis. Mark is ignorant of Palestinian geography; one would not go north to reach the south. Matthew omits the reference.

A deaf and mute man begs Jesus for a cure; Jesus takes him away from the crowd, puts his fingers in the man’s ears and touches the man’s tongue with spit (Mk 7.33). In this story, Jesus uses common pagan magical techniques. In Mark, Jesus commands “them” not to tell anyone who helped them, but they spread the news anyway. Matthew omits Jesus’ secrecy order. He also omits the magical procedures and the whole story is omitted by Luke and John.

## CHAPTER 5 THE MESSIAH AND THE SON OF MAN

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*Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."*

— Mark 8.29

*In Mark Jesus fourteen times refers to himself as: Son of Man."*

— Authors

*The place of origin of the myth [of the 'son of man'] is not to be sought in Iran, or in Judea or even in Ugarit, but in the German universities.*

— Paul Winter

Jesus leaves pagan territory by boat and crosses the sea to the district of Dalmanutha (Mk 8.10) where “the Pharisees” pop up and ask Jesus “for a sign from heaven” (Mk 8.11). Jesus insists that no sign will be given “to this generation,” i.e., to the Jewish people (Mk 8.12). Matthew has “evil and adulterous generation” (16.4) and his Jesus asserts that no sign will be given except the sign of Jonah, referring to the prophet who spent three days in the belly of a fish. Matthew this as a prophecy of Jesus' resurrection on the third day. This is an allusion foreshadowing Jesus' death, which Matthew and Luke have added to prove that Jesus is conscious of God's plan and willingly accepts it.

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### SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS OF DISCIPLES: MARK 8.14-21

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The Marcan Jesus and his disciples are re-crossing the sea, returning to the Decapolis. He warns his disciples to beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod, that is, their false teachings. The disciples are worried as they

## THE MESSIAH AND THE SON OF MAN

think that Jesus is referring to real bread, and they only have one loaf left in the boat.

Jesus, reading the disciples' minds, denounces them for their spiritual blindness, saying that their hearts are hardened, that they have eyes and ears but do not see or hear (Mk 8.14-21).

Matthew continues to rehabilitate the disciples; they are *not* blind and *do* understand the significance of Jesus' saying about the yeast (Mt 16.12). The early church created this incident to combat false heretical teachings that plagued the early church.

Jesus and his disciples disembark at Bethsaida in pagan territory. Jesus secretly escorts a pagan blind man out of a village, puts spittle on the man's eyes and lays hands on them. The man perceives people as trees. A second touch cures him entirely. Dio Cassius relates that the Emperor Vespasian was magnified by heaven when he cured a blind man using spittle, [Martin, F., 166] and healed a blind man with a withered hand. [Martin, F., 166] In Mark, for all practical purposes Jesus' ministry ends at this point. Matthew and Luke see that this story indicates that Jesus' power was limited, and they omit it.

Compare Jesus' ministry in Mark with a papyrus as described by M. Smith. Here is what a spirit can do for a pagan wonder worker: (It) sends dreams and calms the wild beasts; it raises up winds from the earth and restrains the foam of the sea. The spirit exorcises many evil demons, and is able to bring down stars as in Mk 13.25. [Smith, M., 130-131]

JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH  
PETER'S DECLARATION: MK 8.27-30

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The Jewish people do not understand who Jesus is or why he has come. The following incident makes this clear. Jesus and his disciples are on the way to the pagan region of the city of Caesarea Philippi in the Decapolis. Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" (Mk 8.27). They answer that some people think that he is John the Baptist, others that he is Elijah, and still others think that he is one of the prophets. Peter is asked who he thinks Jesus is. The chief disciple answers, "You are the Messiah" (Mk 8.29), the other disciples apparently concur. Mark, Matthew and Luke again bring in the messianic secret; the disciples are not to tell anyone about Jesus.

Plutarch writes about the hidden identity and divine powers attributed to Romulus, the co-founder of Rome. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 95, #104] He also quotes Homer, "No god am I; why likenest thou me to the immortals?" [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 104, #120] The *HCNT* editors state that, "Among enlightened Greeks the tradition of rejecting divine predications about human beings was widespread," which is why the Synoptic Jesus never explicitly identifies himself as a god. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 105, #120]

The status of the disciples in Mark is further elevated by Matthew when he changes Peter's response from, "the messiah," to "the messiah, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16.16). Jesus blesses Peter saying that he has received this from God, not from men (Mt 16.17). The trouble with



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this is that the disciples have already addressed Jesus as “the Son of God” after Jesus walked on water (Mt 14.33), and there Jesus made no response. M. Smith informs us that pagan magicians sometimes identified themselves as “the Son of the living God.” [Smith, M., 165]

In Matthew, Jesus not only praises the chief disciple for his answer, but he miraculously predicts that Peter will found the future church, “You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church” (Mt. 16.18). (In church tradition, Peter was the first bishop of Rome.) Jesus also says the church will have the keys to let people into the kingdom of heaven. In some pagan myths heaven is locked, and keys are needed to enter. Virtually all critical scholars agree that these rock and key sayings came from the early church.

Benefiting as many people as possible was the principal task of the divine man. He cured people and, after his death, his disciples passed on his teachings, benefiting future generations. Philo saw Moses in this way, as others saw various kings, generals, and philosophers. And so early Christians saw Jesus.

Pythagorean philosophy was “understood as a divine revelation...”. [Reale, G., 249] Their founder was seen “not so much as a perfect man but as a Daimon or God or, more generally, a prophet or a superior human being who is in contact with the Gods.” [Reale, G., 249] A fragment attributed to Empedocles (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE) states, “But I go about [among] you as an immortal God, no longer as a mortal...” The philosopher relates that when he goes to men and women, “I am honored by

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

them... they follow after me... in their thousands, to learn..." some seeking wisdom and others seeking healing. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 171, #229] Unusual here is that Empedocles, himself, claims that he is a god. In the ancient world, some followers thought of a philosopher as divine, but the individual himself usually did not claim to be divine, did not "grasp at divinity." Bad emperors, like Caligula, were severely criticized for making such claims.

## EXCURSUS: MESSIAH AND THE SON OF MAN

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### MESSIAH

In Hebrew, *messiah* refers to an anointed one (Greek *Christos*). In the *Jewish Scriptures*, *messiah* is applied to priests, kings and prophets of Israel, and even to one pagan, the Persian king Cyrus who freed Jews from captivity in Babylonia. A messiah is one who serves God's purposes; he is an instrument of God. After the fall of Israel (both the northern and southern kingdoms), a future Messiah was expected who would restore the kingdom and usher in the reign of God. But is "the Messiah" of the *Christian Scriptures* compatible with the Jewish concept of *messiah*? Was this idea derived from Judaism?

*The Messiah* is an anthology edited by James H. Charlesworth in 1992. In his own contribution, he correctly asserts that Matthew's concept of "the Messiah" was not Jewish, [Charlesworth, J., 186] nor was the belief that there was a widespread expectation of a coming messiah. Jesus did not fulfill Jewish messianic prophecies. [Charlesworth, J., 5] Charlesworth says that

## THE MESSIAH AND THE SON OF MAN

the idea that Jesus is *the* Messiah who is put to death by Jews is anti-Jewish. [Charlesworth, J., 4] He concludes that messianic Jews did not have a unified vision of a messiah. [Charlesworth, J., 4]

Contradictorily, the conservative Charlesworth also argues that there is some evidence that before Mark, there was an idea of a Christian-type messiah among Jews, but he is wrong. He concedes that the death of the messiah in 4 Ezra is not efficacious which contradicts the Christian idea that Christ's sacrifice saved humanity from its sins. [Charlesworth, J., 8] He rejects the rabbinic evidence of a dying messiah as too late (post 2nd cent. CE). He also stipulates that there is no reference to a Davidic messiah in the pre-70 CE period and informs us that scholars agree that "*the* Messiah" is not referred to in the *Jewish Scriptures*. [Charlesworth, J., 8-9] But Charlesworth accepts the dying messiah of 4 Ezra 7.29 even though he admits that 4 Ezra was edited by the church!

The term *messiah* rarely appears in any Jewish literature written between 250 BCE and 200 CE. The Mishnah (ca 200 CE), Philo, and Josephus omit any mention of a coming messiah, as do the thirteen books of the Apocrypha. Most of the passages referring to *messiah* are found in the Pseudepigrapha (52 documents) and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. [Charlesworth, J., 11-12,16] Here are some of Charlesworth's conclusions about three of the four documents that he believes were put in their final state between 50 BCE and 100 CE which contain the term *Messiah* or *Christ*. [Charlesworth, J., 20-24] Is the

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messiah portrayed as a king? One verse in Psalms of Solomon is ambiguous. God is the chief figure, not the messiah. In 4 Ezra and in 2 Baruch, though the messiah is present, he has no functions. Does the messiah resurrect the dead? Only in 4 Ezra 7.28-29, a Christian interpolation. Is the messiah human rather than divine? Yes. The Pseudepigrapha illustrate that the concept of messianism was not universal, uniform, or Christian-like by the first century CE.

Turning to the Dead Sea Scrolls, Charlesworth writes that of the more than 170 documents “created, written, or redacted at Qumran” only three referred to a messiah: the Rule of the Community (1QS), the Rule of the Congregation (1QSa), and the Damascus Document (CD). [Charlesworth, J., 24,25] The messiah of the Dead Sea Scrolls bears little resemblance to the messiah of the gospels.

Charlesworth rightly asserts that, “The gospels and Paul must not be read as if they were reliable sources for pre-70 Jewish beliefs in the messiah.” [Charlesworth, J., 35] We conclude that the Christian Messiah is a creation of the early church and does not derive from Judaism.

## SON OF MAN: DANIEL CHAPTER 7

The *son of man* passages in the gospels derive from Daniel 7. In a vision, Daniel sees four animals in succession. Then “one that is ‘ancient of days’ takes his seat on a throne of fiery flames....” At the end of the dream, Daniel writes:

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I was looking in a night vision and, behold,  
one like a *son of man* was coming with the  
clouds of heaven  
and went as far as the Ancient of Days and  
was brought near him.  
Sovereignty, glory and kingship were given  
him,  
and all the peoples, nations and languages  
were to serve him.  
His sovereignty was to be an eternal  
sovereignty never to cease  
and his kingship imperishable. (Daniel 7.13,14 [as  
quoted by Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 169])

The Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 37-71) suspiciously contains the only reference to *son of man* as a title in pre-70 CE Jewish literature, but it is found 14 times in the gospel of Mark where Jesus, and only he, applies the title to himself.

Geza Vermes dates the Parables to the last quarter of the first century CE. [Vermes, G., 160-191] In *Jesus the Jew*, he asserts that the phrase *son of man* is used as a substitute for the personal pronoun “I.” [Vermes, Geza, 163] It is normally used this way in the *Jewish Scriptures* and in rabbinic literature. Vermes writes, “...no trace survives of its titular use, from which it must be inferred that there is no case to be made for an eschatological or messianic officeholder generally known as ‘the “son of man”’ prior to Mark in 70 CE. [Vermes, Geza, 163]

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Dan 7.9-14 was seen by second-century exegetes as depicting an *exalted* David or messiah, not a suffering and dying one [Vermes, G., 175] which would be incompatible with the triumphal image of the *son of man* in Daniel 7. [Vermes, G., 175] H. Conzelman asserts that “...all the ‘son of man’ utterances [are] foreign to Jesus.” [Vermes, G., 177] In addition, the Jewish literature written before 200 CE contains no evidence of a messiah whose death is efficacious, nor one to whom divine functions are attributed, such as judging the dead, forgiving sins, etc., and, of course, we do not find a messiah who is depicted as divine or the Son of God. We agree with Vermes and H. Conzelman that the messianic exegesis of Dan 7.13 does not go back to Jesus. [Vermes, G., 186] Where does *son of man* as a messianic title come from? Vermes concludes his chapter in *Jesus the Jew* on the *son of man* with a quote from Paul Winter. Reviewing Norman Perrin’s *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, P. Winter writes, “If Perrin’s interpretation of the ‘son of man’ sayings in the Synoptic Gospels is correct — and it is supported by Vermes’s... study of the linguistic use of ‘bar-nash(a)’ in Jewish Aramaic — then the place of origin of the myth [of the ‘son of man’] is not to be sought in Iran, or in Judea or even in Ugarit, but in the German universities.” Ibid., n 91, p 261. P. Winter, *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 89 (1968), col. 784]

## JESUS’ FIRST PREDICTION OF HIS DEATH: MK 8.31-33

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Immediately after Peter’s declaration, Jesus makes the first of three predictions concerning his own suffering, death, and resurrection. In private he instructs the

## THE MESSIAH AND THE SON OF MAN

disciples that the son of man must suffer greatly, “and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again” (Mk 8.31). (Matthew names the place of Jesus’ death as Jerusalem; Mark does not.) Taking Jesus aside, Peter strongly condemns him for this prophecy. In response Jesus curses Peter saying, “Get behind me, Satan!” (Mk 8.33). He denounces Peter for thinking of human rather than divine things. Matthew continues to rehabilitate Peter. His Peter, referring to Jesus’ death, says only, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you” (Mt 16.22). Luke goes further than Matthew, and drops all reference to Peter’s rebuking of Jesus. The other disciples make no response to any of this.

The detailed nature of the three predictions of Jesus’ death has caused most scholars to conclude that these prophecies come from Mark or the early Marcan community, not from Jesus. Originally Jesus was not aware of his upcoming death.

Jesus tells the disciples and the crowd to take up the cross and follow him (Mk 8.34,38). Again, the church indicates that Jesus knows of his death and voluntarily submits to it. But how did Jesus know that the method of execution would be crucifixion as this was a Roman, not a Jewish method of execution?

Certain people from India tell Alexander the Great that he “must die at the hands of [his] own people.” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 105, #121 Pseudo-Callisthenes] Plutarch says that Heracles, the son of Zeus, suffered painfully in performing his labors. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 106, #122]

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Jesus is virtuous like Alexander and suffers like Heracles. The *HCNT* editors think that these traditions perhaps were familiar to the early Christians.

The custom of giving divine titles like *Son of God* to rulers was common in Egypt and the East. The Rosetta Stone proclaimed the Greek king of Egypt, Ptolemy V Epiphanes (210-180 BCE), to be divine; he is described as “...restorer of the life of man... child of the Gods through the love of the Father... *living image of Zeus*, Son of the Sun... priest of [the divine] Alexander and the Savior Gods and the Benefactor Gods and the Gods of the love of the Father, the God visible, for whom thanks be given.” [Cartlidge, D., 14] Jesus is called *Son of God* thirty-nine times in the *Christian Scriptures*. The Egyptian king has a special relationship with the Father. When “the high priest [asks Jesus], ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’ Jesus says, ‘I am;...’” (Mk 14.61-62).

The pagan Celsus complains that if Christians believe in the miracles of Jesus, such as his miraculous birth, and if they accept that Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven, “then how can [they] refuse to believe precisely the same stories when they are told of other Savior Gods: Herakles, Asklepios, the Dioscuri, Dionysos, and a dozen others I could name?” [Cartlidge, D., 17, quoting from Origen’s *Against Celsus*] For more on the Savior Gods, see Chapter 9.

Cartlidge and Dungan point out that for the ancients there were two kinds of savior gods. First, there are gods like Hercules who have divine and human parents and



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perform great deeds that benefit humankind “and so... were rewarded with immortality, and worshiped as Saviors.” The second type of savior god is identified with “great leaders, especially kings, [who are] in fact temporary manifestations or appearances (*epiphaneia*) of the eternal Gods themselves” [Cartlidge, D., 18], for example, Julius Caesar and Augustus. Plutarch points out that many eastern kings were given the title, god, or son of a god (cf. Mk 8.27-30). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 104, #120] Also, the editors of *HCNT* point out that the suffering of the Son of God, “was not a completely unfamiliar tradition” to the Christians. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 106, #122]

## TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS: MK 9.2-10

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Six days after the first prophecy of his death, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to a high mountain (Mk 9.2) where he is transfigured, his clothes become a dazzling white (9.3). Homer writes that “from the divine body of the goddess a light shone... so that the strong house was filled with brightness as of lightening...” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 107, #125] The editors of *HCNT* conclude that “light on the face or the whole body points as such to one’s nature as son of God...”. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 108, #126]

Elijah and Moses appear and talk with Jesus, (about what we do not know). A voice comes from a cloud, announcing that this is “my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” (Mk 9.7). The Jewish prophets suddenly disappear

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

in a cloud; only Jesus remains. Jesus replaces Moses (the Jewish law) and Elijah (the prophets).

Matthew continues to elevate the status of Jesus. The disciples fall on their faces before the divine Jesus. Luke at last reveals what Jesus has been talking about with the prophets, his departure “which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Lk 9.31).

Coming down the mountain, Jesus commands the disciples to be silent “about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead” (Mk 9.9). Mark sticks with his depiction of the disciples as spiritually blind; they wonder what the “rising from the dead” might mean. But Jews had known about the concept of resurrection at least since ca 165 BCE when the book of Daniel was written. Matthew, elevating Jesus again, drops the wondering. Luke, growing uncomfortable with the messianic secret, merely states that the disciples told no one what they had seen (Lk 9.36).

## THE LAST EXORCISM

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After the transfiguration, there is a final exorcism. This cure brackets Jesus’ public ministry; he begins with an exorcism of a Jewish man in the synagogue, and ends with an exorcism of a pagan, another foreshadowing of the church’s mission to non-Jews. Effectively, the ministry ended before Peter’s declaration. Why was this exorcism added to Mark’s text? Probably because in Matthew, Luke and John there is a tendency to elongate Jesus’ ministry right up to the time of his arrest. For

## THE MESSIAH AND THE SON OF MAN

example, in Matthew he cures people in the temple in Jerusalem (21.14).

After Jesus and his three disciples come down from the mountain, a father complains that Jesus' disciples could not cast out an unclean spirit from his son. Jesus exorcises the spirit and says to his disciples that this kind requires prayer (Mk 8.29), though Jesus has not prayed, and one would have thought that he would already have taught his disciples to pray.

The pagan philosopher, Empedocles, had power over evil spirits, too. He led the soul of a dead man from Hades. [Martin, F., 175-76] In this Marcan exorcism story, the father asks that Jesus help his unbelief (Mk 9.24) which is paralleled in a pagan inscription in which a woman named Ambrosia is healed of her blindness and unbelief. [Martin, F., 226]

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## SECOND PREDICTION OF JESUS' DEATH

Jesus is passing through Galilee. He makes a second prediction of his death, again privately to the disciples who still do not understand why he must die, but are too fearful to ask him about it (Mk 9.31-32). Matthew substitutes "distressed" for "fearful" and drops the reference to the disciples' lack of understanding. Amazingly, Luke writes that the meaning of Jesus' passion "was concealed from them, so that they could not perceive it" (Lk 9.45). God is concealing the kingdom from Jesus' disciples!

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Jesus leaves pagan territory and returns to Capernaum in Galilee. In “the house” Jesus asks the twelve what they had argued about on the way to Capernaum. They inform him that they were disputing as to who was the greatest among them (Mk 9.33). Were they fighting over political power?

The disciple, John, says to Jesus that a non-follower of Jesus was using his name to cast out demons (Mk 9.38). The disciples inform Jesus that they had tried to stop the exorcist, but Jesus says, “Whoever is not against us is for us” (9.40). Luke agrees, but Matthew has the opposite, “Whoever is not with me is against me....” (Mt 12.30).

Mark states that Jesus teaches, “it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell [Gehenna], where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched” (Mk 9.47-48; cf. Isa 66.24). Plato says, “Men are prepared to have their own feet and hands cut off if they feel these... to be harmful” to their virtue. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 113, #136]

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## ON DIVORCE: MK 10.2-12

Jesus leaves “that place” for “the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan” (Mk 10.1). He teaches the crowds, “as was his custom,” but he does he do so in parables?

Some Pharisees, wanting to trap Jesus, asked him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” Jesus asked them what Moses had said, and they answer that Moses’ commandment allowed a man to divorce his wife by writing a certificate of dismissal and giving it to her.

## THE MESSIAH AND THE SON OF MAN

Jesus responds, “Because of your hardness of heart [Moses] wrote this commandment...” (Mk 10.2-5), and Jesus forbids all divorce (Mk 10.9). Note that it was not Moses who allowed divorce, for the Commandments are from God.

When Jesus is alone in “the house” with his disciples, he explains that if a husband or wife divorces his or her mate and marries another, she or he commits adultery (Mk 10.12); however a Jewish woman could not initiate a divorce (cf. Dt 24.1). In a Jewish certificate of divorce from Masada (ca 111 CE), a man initiates a divorce and both are allowed to remarry. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 58, #35] Also, under Roman law, a husband or wife could initiate a divorce and both are free to remarry. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 117, #142] Against Mark, Matthew’s Jesus allows divorce if *pornai* is involved, i.e., an impropriety which would include adultery, but is not limited to it (Mt 19.9). The Pythagoreans also forbade divorce. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 117, #142]

## THE RICH MAN

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A rich man asks Jesus what he must do to “inherit eternal life” (Mk 10.17; Mt 19.29). Jesus lists five of the Ten Commandments: the prohibition against murder, adultery, theft, bearing false witness, and dishonoring one’s father or mother (Mk 10.19). He adds a commandment of his own, i.e., not to defraud people. Matthew and Luke correct this by omitting it (Mt 19.18; Lk 18.20). Note that Jesus omits the specifically Jewish commandments: the acceptance of only one God, the

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

prohibition against graven images (idols), keeping the Sabbath, the prohibition against the misuse of God's name. The rich man says that he has observed these moral laws since his youth. Jesus tells him to go and "sell what you own and give the money to the poor" (Mk 10.21). The Marcan Jesus and his disciples never give money to the poor, and this is the only place where Jesus advises anyone to do so. The man goes away grieving, not wanting to part with his wealth.

Jesus tells the disciples how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for" the rich "to enter the kingdom of God" (Mk 10.25). Despite the modern image of Jesus favoring the poor over the rich, there are a number of pro-rich stories in Matthew and Luke (see Mt 25.14-28; Lk 19.11-27; Lk 16.10-13). The church gradually attracted rich, as well as poor, people and thus the presence of both pro rich and anti-rich sayings.

Pagans, too, taught the worthlessness of wealth and flesh compared to the soul. The Pythagoreans taught, "When the body is left behind you will achieve eternal liberty, you will be an immortal and incorruptible God, no longer a mortal being." [Reale, G., 261]

For the Stoics, the soul is a divine spark, "a fragment of God..." [Reale, G., 84, quoting Epictetus] Seneca writes, "*God is near you, he is with you, he is within you... a holy spirit indwells within us, one who marks our good and bad deeds...*" [Reale, G., 59, Reale's ital.]. Seneca believes that "the untamed spirit" waits "only to be released from the body before it soars to highest heaven." [Reale, G., 61,

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and following two quotes] The soul is burdened by the flesh, the mind is free and “candid to the Gods...” “This poor body [is] the prison and fetter of the soul.” And the Pythagoreans teach, “When the body is left behind you will achieve eternal liberty, you will be an immortal and incorruptible god, no longer a mortal being.” [Reale, G. 261] Epictetus holds a similar attitude, “But the body is nothing to me: the parts of it are nothing to me. Death? Let it come when it chooses...” [Epictetus, Bk 3.22]

With reference to entering the kingdom, Mark says that all things are possible with God (Mk 10.27; Mt 19.26; Lk 18.27). The pagan magical papyri state that, “All things are possible to this god.” [Smith, M., 205, PGM XIII.713]

To the rewards one will get in this life, Jesus adds “persecutions” (Mk 10.30). Apparently the early church felt oppressed. This is another passage created by the early church to provide moral support for the ostracized Christians. Suffering in and of itself is a positive good in Christian thought, but not in Jewish thought.

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### THIRD PREDICTION OF JESUS' DEATH - MK 10.32-34

*Predictions of his death (1<sup>st</sup>-Mk 8.31; 2<sup>nd</sup> Mk9.31) 3<sup>rd</sup> – Mk 10.32-34*

At last, Mark tells us where Jesus is heading, namely to Jerusalem (Mk 10.32). Jesus takes the twelve aside and predicts his death for the third and last time, “the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death...” . (Mk 10.33) This is the first time that Jesus adds that “the Gentiles” will mock, spit, scourge, and kill him. He also adds that after

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three days he will rise again. As to the suffering, again Mark is using the *Jewish Scriptures* to construct Jesus' biography. Compare Isa 53.10, "Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain... his life [is] an offering for sin..." Luke adds that "everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished" (Lk 18.31). Luke again says that the twelve did not understand his prediction because its meaning "was hidden from them" (Lk 18.34). God is still concealing the plan from Jesus' own disciples.

Mark reveals (Mk 10.35-45) that the disciples still have no faith; they are expecting an earthly kingdom. James and John ask that they be allowed to sit on the right and left hand of Jesus when he comes in power. Hercules and Asclepius also fight over who should be ranked above the other. [Cotter, W., 27, #1.30] Jesus asks if they are able to "drink his cup" and "accept his baptism." They say they are. Jesus then predicts that they will be martyred (Mk 10.39), an early church tradition.

As Robert M. Price points out on page 117 of *The Christ-Myth Theory And Its Problems* by Price, "This whole Markan episode comes right out of that of Elisha's request of Elijah just before his ascension. ... " Jesus has just predicted his death for the third time. Now the brothers, James and John, are asking for high positions in the kingdom of God.

Jesus preaches that he has come "to give his life [as] a ransom for many" (Mk 10.45). But to whom will God pay the ransom? To Satan, who is holding humanity captive.



## THE MESSIAH AND THE SON OF MAN

This view was not abandoned by the church for more than a thousand years.

At some point Jesus arrives at Jericho (Mk 10.46-52) about ten miles from Jerusalem; he then leaves Jericho. (Not a lot of activity in this city.) As Jesus leaves Jericho, he cures a blind beggar who addresses him as “Son of David.” This is a royal messianic title, a hint that Jesus is a political Messiah, a king. After the man is cured, he follows Jesus (Mk 10.46-48,52). In the pagan culture, spiritual blindness was often symbolized by physical blindness, as in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, etc.

## CHAPTER 6 JERUSALEM: MARK 11.1-33; 12.13-44; 13.

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*Brown and Fitzmyer simply do not want to accept the fact that Jesus has deceived the Jewish crowds and that they perceive him as a king.*

— Authors

*And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,... these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*

— Isaiah 56.6-7

*My house... you have made it a den of robbers...*

— Mark 11.17

Mark relates that Jesus left “that place,” heading for “the region of Judea beyond the Jordan” (Mk 10.1; Mt 19.1-2). Luke dramatically announces that Jesus “set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Lk 9.51), again emphasizing Jesus’ deliberate intent to carry out the plan of God in Jerusalem.

### ROYAL RECEPTION: MK 11.1-10

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Jesus, his disciples, and a large crowd travel from Jericho, about ten miles east of Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, which are near the Mount of Olives, a stone’s throw from the Eastern Gate of Jerusalem in Judea. Actually Bethany would have come first, since Jesus was traveling from east to west (Matthew drops Bethany, 21.1). Jesus orders two (unnamed) disciples to go ahead to (an unnamed) village near the Mount of Olives, and says that they “...will find tied there a colt

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that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it..." (Mk 11.2). Jesus says that if the owner asks why the two disciples need the donkey, they are to say, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately" (Mk 11.3). Note that Jesus refers to himself as *Lord (kyrios)*, a title commonly used as a reference to God in the *Jewish Scriptures*, and also one that is used in the pagan mystery religions. The two disciples bring the donkey to Jesus.

Jesus mounts the colt and rides toward the Eastern Gate of Jerusalem. Many people spread their cloaks, as well as leafy branches, on the road in front of the colt Jesus is riding (Mk 11.8). Matthew again says explicitly that Jesus is fulfilling ancient prophecies from the Jewish Scriptures. "Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Mt 21.4-5) <sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. Zch 9.9).

Matthew has misunderstood Hebrew parallelism and thinks the prophet is referring to two animals and has Jesus sit on both (Mt 21.7)! Scholars identify the prophet as Zechariah, even though Zch 9.9 was not applied to the messiah until well after the time of Jesus.

Luke, against Mark and Matthew, says the crowd is composed of "the whole multitude" of Jesus' disciples (Lk 19.37-38), apparently thousands from Galilee (Lk 12.1).

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Many people welcome Jesus, shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (Mk 11.9-10; cf. 2 Sam 14.4; 2 Kgs 6.26). This is a variant quote of the royal Psalm (118.25-29; cf. 2 Sam 7.16) used in blessing the king at his coronation.

Only Luke has some Pharisees in the crowd warn Jesus to order his disciples to stop accepting this royal welcome (Lk 19.39). Luke realized that a powerful Roman official like the prefect Pilate, would recognize that the acceptance of royal honors was a treasonous act under Roman law, one punishable by death. Needing to fulfill the divine plan, Jesus rejects the advice of the Pharisees, saying, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out” (Lk 19.40). (Luke has made clear that Jesus is presenting himself as a political Messiah, a king. Editors.)

J. Fitzmyer asserts that Luke is telling us that “the Jews” have misunderstood Jesus’ ministry. [Fitzmyer, J., vol 2, 1241-1252] Misunderstood? Jesus has preached about the kingdom of God during his ministry. He is perceived by his own disciples as a royal claimant. At Jericho Jesus accepts the royal title *Son of David* from the blind man and here, approaching the capital of Judea, Jesus purposefully rides a colt in fulfillment of a royal Psalm (118.26), and accepts the shouts of the crowd acknowledging his kingship. All of this makes it clear that Jesus intends to convey the idea that he is a king, one who is about to come into his power.

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R. Brown, like Fitzmyer, argues that the Jewish crowd misunderstands Jesus' mission and expects a nationalist hero. [Brown, R., 1966, 1, 462] According to Brown, the crowd should have understood Jesus as what? A peaceful, humble, and non-treasonous messiah since Zach 9.9 talks of a peaceful and humble king! We would agree, if the crowds were composed of scholarly Christian exegetes like Raymond Brown and Joseph Fitzmyer.

R. Brown concedes that a "triumph" was "the normal Greek expression used to describe joyful reception of Hellenistic sovereigns into the city." [Brown, R., 1966, vol 1, 462] Titus was greeted this way at Antioch and when Cato retired from the military, his soldiers threw "their mantles down for him to walk upon." [Boring, M., *HCNT*, Plutarch, 123, #156] But Brown still sticks to his guns — the crowds were expecting what, a spiritual messiah?

Brown and Fitzmyer simply do not want to accept the fact that Jesus has deceived the Jewish crowds who thus perceive him as a king.

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### RIOT IN THE TEMPLE: MK 11.11,15-19

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At Mark 11.11, Jesus enters Jerusalem and immediately goes to the temple. He looks around but since it is late in the day he leaves, traveling with the twelve to Bethany.

The next day on the way back to Jerusalem, Jesus is hungry but finds no figs on a tree by the roadside, since it is not the right season. He curses it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again" (Mk 11.14). The following day, after the temple riot, Jesus and the disciples again travel to

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Jerusalem and the disciples see that the tree is withered (Mk 11.21-22). The fig tree is Judaism. Jesus is teaching that a truly divine religion would never be out of season; it would always provide spiritual sustenance for its believers. Judaism is to be replaced by Christianity.

Between the cursing of the fig tree and its withering, Jesus returns to the temple and violently drives out those who buy and sell the animals intended for sacrifice; he overturns the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of those who sell doves. No Jewish messiah would riot against people for performing tasks necessary for worship in the temple. Animals are needed for sacrifice and, if all those pagan coins describing the emperor as “Son of God” and “Savior of the World” are to be kept out of the temple, money changers are needed to exchange the pagan coins for Jewish ones.

Jesus preaches, “My house... you have made it a den of robbers” (Mk 11.17)

Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD. Jer 7.11.

Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. Isa 56.7).

The Synoptic Jesus thinks that selling animals for sacrifice is thievery. John omits the reference to robbers,

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but still sees business in the temple as wrong. At least John has changed Jesus' phrase "my house" to "my father's house," recognizing that it would be blasphemous for Jesus to refer to God's temple as "my house."

For Luke the story of the temple riot involves much too much violence on the part of the Prince of Peace. Fitzmyer notes that Luke has removed all details of violence from the story. [Fitzmyer, J., 2, 1261] Well, most of it — Jesus still "drives out" those who are selling things (Lk 19.45). Luke adds that "the chief priests, the scribes and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him" (Lk 19.47).

Origen (ca 240 CE), the best Christian exegete of the third century, pointed out that Jesus would have been arrested immediately, which is why he rejects the scene as unhistorical. Fitzmyer agrees that Jesus' attack on the temple "would have provoked an immediate reaction from the priests and officials in the Temple," as rioting was a death penalty offense under Roman law and a criminal act under Jewish law. [Fitzmyer, J., 2, 1264] Fitzmyer counters that Jesus was put on trial "quickly." But the temple police and Roman authorities would hardly have waited several days to arrest the law breaker. And John, placing the riot at the beginning of Jesus' three-year ministry, rather than arresting Jesus immediately, has "the Jews" blandly inquire, "What sign can you show us, authorizing you to do these things?" (Jn 2.18).

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Let us examine some additional problems connected with the temple riot. Jesus prophesies, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Mk 11.17; Isa 56.7). Matthew and Luke, thinking that the temple was destroyed before Jesus’ prophecy could be fulfilled, omit the prophecy. But non-Jews were already praying at the temple in the time of Jesus (see Josephus and Philo). Mark relates that the riot occurred on the day after Jesus entered Jerusalem. Conversely, Matthew and Luke depict the riot as occurring on the day that Jesus enters Jerusalem. And John places it at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, some years earlier (Jn 2.13-17).

Jesus invalidates the temple by his actions, but no Jewish prophet or messiah would dream of abolishing a fundamental institution of Judaism. The temple is mentioned over 900 times in the *Jewish Scriptures*. Many modern Christian apologists argue that there was a strong Jewish anti-temple movement in first-century Judaism. Yet in Mark, Jesus praises the widow’s contribution to the temple treasury (Mk 12.42-44), and he pays the temple tax for Peter and himself, granted without great enthusiasm (at Mt 17.24ff). There is no mention of an anti-temple faction in the works of either Philo of Alexandria or Josephus. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Qumranites opposed the priestly administration of the temple in Jerusalem, but not the sacred temple itself.

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### SOME TEACHINGS IN THE TEMPLE: MARK 12.13-44

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We will discuss the story of the “wicked tenants” (Mk 12.112) in Chapter 7.



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“They” send some Pharisees and Herodians to the temple to trap Jesus by asking him if it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, knowing that to withhold taxes was treason under Roman law. Jesus replies that one should render to God the things that are God’s and to the emperor what is his (Mk 12.13-14; cf. Acts 5.37). Josephus condemned Judas the Galilean in 6 CE because the rebel refused to pay Roman taxes (Mk 12.13-17; cf. Acts 5.37). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 126, #160] Jesus is careful to command his followers to obey secular law. Thus the theory that Jesus is a freedom fighter (held by H. Maccoby, S.G.F. Brandon and others) who opposes Roman tyranny is not feasible.

Jesus is asked by a scribe what is the most important commandment (Mk 12.31-33). Jesus quotes part of the Shema, an important Jewish prayer. In part it states that one should love God and love one’s neighbor (Mk 12.28-29). The scribe responds, “This is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mk 12.33); compare Amos 5.21-24 which relates that the Lord says he hates festivals and sacrifice, preferring justice and righteousness (cf. Ps 40.6-8; 1 Sam 15.22). However, Amos is referring to a balance between ethical and ritual law, not to a rejection of sacrifice, etc. Mark tells us, “After that, no one dared to ask [Jesus] a question” (vs. 34)! Another non-dialogue.

We will not dwell on the convoluted argument at Mk 12.35-37 which says that Jesus can’t be David’s son, because in the *Jewish Scriptures* he is called David’s Lord (cf. Ps 110.1). We would merely note that Mark, or his

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editor, does not always want to associate Jesus with the Jewish messiah.

### JEWISH LAW

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In the temple, a large crowd listens to Jesus “with delight” (Mk 12.37b). Jesus says to beware of the scribes; they wear long robes and want respect in the market places, and to have “the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets!” (Mk 12.38-39). Jesus preaches that the scribes “devour widows’ houses, and for the sake of appearance say long prayers” (Mk 12.40). He says, “They will receive the greater condemnation.” A Jewish audience would hardly be happy with a Jewish teacher who slanders and condemns their religious leaders.

Matthew and Luke greatly expand the anti-Jewish material of Mk 12.38-40. In Matthew Jesus lacerates the religious leaders while in the temple. He says the scribes and Pharisees are hypocrites and “are as graves” and whitewashed tombs (Mt 23.27). Jesus preaches that the scribes and Pharisees are hypocrites, “For you lock people out of the kingdom of Heaven...” S. Lachs states that rabbinic tradition held that hypocrites, liars, etc., could not “...receive the face of the Shekinah,” i.e., God would not receive them. [Lachs, S., 368, n 32] Jesus adds that they “make the new convert twice as much a child of hell [Gehenna] as [themselves]” (Mt 23.13,15), but the Pharisees had no authority outside of Judea.

Matthew and Luke provide scriptural support for the widely-held but erroneous Christian belief that Jews consider the law to be a burden which they groaned

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under. The scribes and Pharisees, Jesus says, load people with heavy burdens hard to bear, and do not “lift a finger” to ease them (Mt 23.4; Lk 11.46). It is true that obeying all the 613 commandments is more demanding than keeping the few ethical commandments required of non-Jews. However, for Jews, observing God’s law is a privilege. The Psalmist writes, “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul... the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart...” (Ps 19.7). “I delight in the way of your decrees... I will delight in your statutes; ...” (Ps 119.14,16). There are many more such passages throughout the Jewish Scriptures (cf. Ps 40.8; Prv 29.18, etc.), as well as in the rabbinical writings.

The Lukan Jesus is heading for Jerusalem but, while still in Galilee, he and others are invited by a Pharisee to dine in his home (Lk 11.37). The host is amazed that Jesus has not ritually washed his hands before dinner (Lk 11.38). One has to marvel at the audacity of the Lukan Jesus; reading his host’s mind, Jesus launches into a long, ill-tempered diatribe against his host and the other guests. What has happened to the traditional hospitality of the Near East, the courtesy paid to the host by the guest?

Jesus says they (the Pharisees) are “full of greed and wickedness,” and condemns them for giving alms instead of giving of themselves, for tithing “everything” and neglecting “justice and mercy and faith” (Lk 11.39-42; Mt 23.23). No Jewish teacher would think of tithing as a trivial commandment, as compared to faith, justice, and the love of God, for all are considered sacred, coming from

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God. [For extensive information concerning first-century Judaism, see the works of E.P. Sanders, especially *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* and *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE-66 CE*]

The Lukan Jesus states that “their” Jewish ancestors killed the prophets (cf. Mt 23.30-31). He continues to denounce the lawyers, “You build the tombs of the prophets whom your ancestors killed” (Lk 11.47; Mt 23.29). Jesus charges that Jews have killed all the prophets “since the foundation of the world,” from Abel to Zechariah (Lk 11.50-51). Of course, the *Jewish Scriptures* do not indicate that the Jewish people have “killed all the prophets” from Genesis to 2 Chronicles. Luke and Matthew simply want to condemn Jewish leaders and the Jewish people as faithless murderers.

Jesus adds “I will send [to Jews] prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute” (Lk 11.49). Matthew’s Jesus says, “some... you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town” (Mt 23.34-35; cf. Mk 13.9). nowhere in Acts of the Apostles, Paul’s letters, or later Christian history is there a record of Jews crucifying Christians. As to mark 13.9, there is no organized persecution of Christians by Jews until Acts, written long after Mark’s gospel.

There is still more — the lawyers take away “the key of knowledge;...” (Lk 11.52), i.e., Jews misunderstand the *Jewish Scriptures*, that is, they don’t have Jesus’ Christian understanding of the Scriptures. Finally, the Lukan diatribe ends, and Jesus leaves the Pharisee’s

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home. The scribes and the Pharisees lie “in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say” (Lk 11.54). (Haven’t they heard enough already?)

Compare the list of slanders aimed at the Pharisees in Mk 12.37-40 and Mt 23.1-31 with this pagan list of insults. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 132, #169] Dio Cocceianus (1<sup>st</sup> cent. CE) gives this list of his opponents’ vices: he calls them sophists, ignorant, boastful, unlearned, evil-spirited, impious, liars. He also says that his opponents teach for money and that they are mindless and shameless and deceive others and themselves. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 132, #169]

Many writers view Jesus as a Jewish reformer. This is surely not based on the rage of these passages. Could Jewish soil have produced such fundamental anti-Jewishness?

Jesus praises a widow who gives her food money to the temple treasury (Mk 12.41-44). Euripides (485-406 BCE) writes that those who are poor and give small gifts to the gods have more piety than “those that bring oxen to sacrifice.” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 178, #244]

## APOCALYPSE: MARK 13

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Arriving at the temple, Jesus and his disciples marvel at the largeness of the temple stones and buildings. Was this their first visit? One assumes that Jesus and his disciples had in the past traveled to Jerusalem for the festivals. Luke states that “some” spoke of the temple as “adorned with noble stones and offerings” (Lk 21.5). Luke

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cannot imply that Jesus has never seen the temple complex before, since in Luke's birth narrative he maintains that Jesus' parents came to the temple every year for Passover (Lk 2.41). John omits the whole incident.

In Mark, on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem, Jesus speaks privately to four of his disciples, coldly predicting the destruction of the temple. "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down" (Mk 13.2). The temple is a central institution of Judaism, yet Jesus' disciples respond only by blandly inquiring as to when this destruction will occur and what are the signs of the end (Mk 13.4). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 135, 136, 137, 142, 82] Jesus teaches that wars and rumors of war, earthquakes and famines, will proceed the destruction (Mk 13.8), but in what time period do these not occur?

From Price (p 127-130) Comparison of passages from Mark and *Jewish Scriptures*.

Mark 13:8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

2 Chronicles 15:6 "They were broken in pieces, nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom."

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Mark 13:12 “And brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death.”

Micah 7:6 “for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.”

Mark 13:24 “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light”

Isaiah 13:10 “For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising and the moon will not shed its light”

Mark 13:25 “and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken”.

Isaiah 34:4 “All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.”

Mark 13:26 “And then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory”

Daniel 7:13 “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the

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Ancient of Days and was presented before him.”

Mark 13:27 “And then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.”

Deuteronomy 30:3-4 “then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes, and have compassion upon you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will fetch you.”

The prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the world is judgmental in Mark. This passage (Mk 13.9-13) has been interpreted by some writers as pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome, and by others as predicting a distant cosmic apocalypse. Many argue that Jesus predicted an imminent end of the world.

In Mark, Jesus preaches that “there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power” (Mk 9.1), indicating Jesus is expecting that the end of the world will be soon. Luke emphasizes that salvation is accomplished now, in the present (realized eschatology), and John nearly obliterates the idea of future salvation in favor of the view that salvation has already occurred.



## JERUSALEM

Josephus relates how the leading Jewish citizens and the Roman procurator, Albinus, reacted to predictions of doom. [BJ VI.8.3, as quoted by S. Lachs, 419-421] A farmer named Jesus predicts the coming destruction of the temple, Jerusalem, and its inhabitants. After several years of these prophecies, the farmer is chastised by the leading citizens and turned over to Albinus who scourges him and, thinking him crazy, releases him. The farmer later dies during the first war with Rome. Is this not a bit of evidence that possibly the evangelists may have used the writings of Josephus in composing their gospels?

Greco-Romans, too, knew about an apocalypse. Compare Revelation 8 & 9 with the Stoic Seneca's (ca 3 CE-ca 65 CE) description of the end of the world in his letter to Marcia. In Revelation, the angels of destruction destroy one-third of all trees and all green grass, and a third of the sea becomes blood. The bottomless pit is opened (Rev 9.1ff). "They were allowed to torture [those without seals] for five months but not to kill them" (Rev 9.5). An army of 200,000 destroys people, one-third are killed by fire, smoke, and brimstone, "...if they did not repent, worshiping devils and idols of gold and silver and stone and wood..." (9.20). In the end, all of the heavens and the earth are destroyed (Rev 21.1).

For Seneca and some other pagan Stoics, there is going to be a fiery conflagration in which the cosmos is temporarily destroyed, that is, recycled. Seneca describes this end time, "I am behold the rise and fall of future kingdoms, the downfall of great cities, and new invasions of the sea... know that nothing will abide where it is now

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placed, that time will lay all things low and take all things with it.” [Seneca, II, 95] This includes “...places, countries, and the great parts of the universe. It will level whole mountains... it will drink up seas...” [Seneca, II, 95] There will be plagues, earthquakes and floods, which will kill all creatures. The fire will destroy all. The world will be blotted out in order to begin life anew. “... when it shall seem best to God to create the universe anew — we, too, amid the falling universe, shall be added as a tiny fraction to this mighty destruction and shall be changed again into our former elements.” [Seneca, II, 95,97] For many Stoics, the cycles of destruction and reconstruction are infinite in number



## CHAPTER 7 ARREST, TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

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*Jesus says the owner, “will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.”*

— Mark 12.9

*My God, my God, why did you abandon me?*

— Mark 15.34; The Scholars Bible

The death story of Jesus dramatizes the central message of the Gospel of Mark — Judaism is invalid and is to be replaced by Christianity. This theme is most clearly spelled out in the wicked tenant story of Mark 12 which we will now discuss before turning to the Passion.

### TENANT STORY: MARK 12.1-12

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Jesus relates that a man planted a vineyard, leased it to his tenants and moved away. When the harvest season arrived, the owner sent a slave to collect the owner’s share of the produce, but the tenants beat the slave and kicked him out. The owner sent many others who were also beaten, ejected or killed. Finally, the owner sent his “beloved Son” whom the tenants killed, thinking that he had come for their inheritance. Jesus asks, what will the “owner of the vineyard do?” The owner, Jesus says, “will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others” (Mk 12.9). “They” realize the story was told “against them” (vs. 12) and want to arrest Jesus but are afraid of the crowd. (“They” apparently refers to the priests, scribes and elders at Mk 11.27.) The tenant story is loosely based on Isa 5.1-7, but Isaiah knows nothing about a son being killed.

## ARREST, TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

Isa 5.1-7

Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. Isa 5.1-7

In Mark, the tenants are the Jewish people, those sent to collect the owner's share of the produce are the prophets of the *Jewish Scriptures*, and the son is Jesus. The meaning of the allegory is that the Jewish covenant is only temporary. It will be nullified by "the Jews" when they reject and kill the Son of God. They will then no longer be the people of God; the

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

non-Jews will replace them and be given the vineyard, that is, the kingdom of God. Christianity will replace Judaism

The tenant story is clearly a product of the early church.

### THE PASSION: MARK 14.1-72

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Most scholars concede that the accounts of the death story of Jesus in Matthew and Luke are dependent on Mark, but some argue that John's account of the passion is independent of Mark. Even an admirer of the fourth gospel like Raymond E. Brown writes, "It seems plausible to us that the *final writer* of Jn knew at least part of the Synoptic tradition, and, in particular, some written form of Mark." [Brown, R. E., 1965, 149] Burton L. Mack in his influential *A Myth of Innocence*, argues that John's passion is dependent on Mark and is fiction. [Mack, B., 225, fn 12] Thus, we will rarely refer to John's late account of Jesus' passion.

In Bethany just outside of the holy city, at the home of Simon the leper, an unnamed woman anoints the head of Jesus, preparing him for his burial (Mk 14.3,8,32,33; Mt 26.12). In Luke the anointing occurs much earlier (Lk 7.36-50) and is not a funeral rite.

In the Synoptics the Pharisees play no role in the arrest, trial, and death of Jesus. John is in error when he depicts the Pharisees as playing a powerful role as there is no evidence that in 30 CE they had any such power. They are stand-ins for the Jewish rabbinical leaders of John's day (circa 100 CE).

## ARREST, TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

The chief priests and scribes are looking for a way to arrest and kill Jesus (Mk 14.1). Judas goes to them and says that he wishes to betray Jesus; they are “greatly pleased, and promise to give him money” (Mk 14.10-11). Where did Judas and the priests meet? How did Judas know that these powerful priests needed help in arresting Jesus? [Brown, R., 1998,1, 242]

Matthew begins the process of satanizing Judas by having him *ask* the priests for money, rather than the priests volunteering it as in Mark. In Matthew’s gospel, Judas receives 30 pieces of silver. This is based on Zch 11.12-13, though Matthew wrongly attributes it to Jeremiah. [Crossan, J. D., 1995, 111]

Only in Matthew does Judas repent, return the money to the temple, and hang himself (Mt 27.1-10). This is derived from 2 Sam 12.23 and 17.23, where Ahithophel betrays David, and then hangs himself. [As quoted by Helms, R., 116] Acts contradicts Matthew by relating that Judas died when he fell and his body burst open (1.18) but oddly, in the Gospel of Luke, the supposed author of Acts is not aware of Judas' death by hanging, bursting, or any other method.

What reason is given for the betrayal of Jesus by Judas? In Mark none is given; in Matthew it is money. To Luke, it was not appropriate that the Son of God be betrayed for mere lucre, so Satan enters into Judas before the Last Supper (Lk 22.3) and during the Last Supper in John (Jn 13.26-27).

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### THE LAST SUPPER: MK 14.17-25

In Judaism a festival is a time set aside to commemorate some historical event or religious concept. Passover celebrates the escape of the Hebrew people under Moses' leadership from Egyptian slavery. The four Gospels do not discuss the meaning of Passover or any other Jewish festival.

For John the Last Supper is characterized as a "supper," not a Passover meal (Jn 13.2,4). Jesus is executed the day *before* Passover in John and *on* the first day of the Passover in the Synoptics. John Chrysostom (fl 400 CE) was so anti-Jewish that he thought the Jews postponed Passover for a day to allow them to kill Jesus!

In Mark, Jesus orders the disciples to prepare for the Passover meal. They do so on Thursday a little while before sunset (Mk 14.16), but Jesus would not have waited until it was this late, since in Jewish tradition, 15-30 days is recommended. [Lachs, S., 403-404]

Various kinds of food and drink are regarded as sacred and used in religious rituals. In the *Jewish Scriptures*, unleavened bread and wine are so used, but in Jewish tradition such rituals do not produce mystical effects. In some pagan magical papyri "the food is identified with the body and/or blood of a god with whom the magician is identified; thus the food becomes also the body and the blood of the magician; whoever eats it is united with him and filled with love for him." [Smith, M., 122]

Jesus, referring to the consumption of the bread and wine, says, "this is my body... this is my blood of the



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covenant...” (Mk 14. 22,24). Eating the blood of an animal is explicitly forbidden in the *Jewish Scriptures* and eating human blood and flesh, even symbolically, occurs nowhere in all of Jewish tradition.

The *Jewish Scriptures* are again handy for Mark as he creates the Jesus story. At the supper, Jesus says that his blood is poured out for many (Mk 14.14). “The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities... he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa 53.11-12), or vicarious atonement. Jesus removes the punishment for sin. This is not Jewish; in Judaism each person must atone for his or her own sins.

Jesus predicts that one of the twelve will betray him, the one who is dipping the bread into the bowl with him (Mk 14.20). The name of the betrayer is not given in Mark. Matthew identifies Judas, and adds that the Son of Man is fulfilling Scripture (Mt 26.24). It is, of course, unthinkable that the disciples do not condemn the one whom Jesus has just identified as the betrayer.

After the meal, Jesus and his disciples head for Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives (Mk 14.32) which is within sight of the temple in Jerusalem. On the way, Jesus miraculously predicts that his disciples will desert him, that Peter will deny him three times before the cock crows twice, and that Jesus will meet them in Galilee (after his resurrection).

Mark again utilizes the *Jewish Scriptures*, in this case to prove that Jesus’ disciples’ desertion has been

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prophesied and is thus in accordance with the divine plan. Alluding to Zechariah Jesus says, “You will all become deserters; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered’” (Mk 14.27; Mt 26.31; cf. Zch. 13.7). [Helms, R., 112] Luke softens this harsh image of the disciples as faithless deserters, omitting the prophecy of their desertion (22.31).

In the garden, while the disciples sleep, Jesus experiences great mental agony although he assents to God’s will, i.e., God’s plan (Mk 14.34,36). L. Feder rightly points out that Hercules’ most impressive trait “is his power to endure the burden of great toil and danger and agonizing personal sorrow” and his gruesome death by fire. [Feder, L., 161]

## THE ARREST OF JESUS: MK 14.43-52

In the earliest gospel, Jesus and the twelve leave for the Mount of Olives after the Last Supper. At Gethsemane Judas pops up with the crowd coming to arrest Jesus even though Mark has not related that Judas had left the group. John knows this is a problem, and his Judas leaves during the supper at Jesus’ command.

In Mark, the chief priest, scribes and elders *send* the crowd to arrest Jesus, but Luke has the aristocratic chief priests and elders personally appear to arrest Jesus! It is incredible that such powerful and aristocratic men would join the Temple police at night to make an arrest, and on Passover at that!

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John's gospel fixes this. The dignitaries are not present. Rather, they have sent some officers to arrest Jesus. Yet, unbelievably, John has added a Roman captain with a cohort of 600 soldiers! This seems a bit much. At least the fourth gospel writer knew that only Roman authority could arrest a man for treason, that is, claiming to be a king.

Judas identifies Jesus with a kiss (cf. 2 Sam 20.9ff where Joab kisses Amasa just before killing him with a sword).

In Mark, a man near Jesus draws a sword and cuts off the ear of a slave of the high priest. Over time the gospel writers developed some of their fictional characters more fully. The name of the disciple (Simon Peter) and the name of the slave (Malchus) are finally revealed in John's gospel (18.10). Consider how much of Judas' story is lacking in the earliest account of Mark. He knows nothing about the 30 pieces of silver paid to Judas nor that he is a thief; he is not named at the Last Supper and Mark omits Judas' repentance and death. After the arrest of Jesus, Judas disappears. [Maccoby, H., 37] In Matthew, Jesus says he could call on twelve legions of angels to protect himself if he desired (26.53); again demonstrating that Jesus is not accepting the divine plan against his will. He is fulfilling Scripture (Mk 14.49; Mt 26.56).

Mark says that at Jesus' arrest, "All of [the disciples] deserted him and fled," Mk 14.49-50 (cf. Isa 53.2,12), fulfilling Jesus' own prophecy.

Regarding the lack of historicity in the passion narratives, the reader should recall the number of

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miracles performed by Jesus. He miraculously predicts his arrest, the desertion of his disciples, Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial of Jesus, and his own trial, suffering, death, and resurrection. In addition, in John the arresting crowd miraculously falls to the ground. Also, the Johannine Jesus commands the authorities to let his disciples go, which fulfills Jesus' prophecy that he would not lose any of his disciples. (Presumably John means other than Judas!)

### DID JUDAS EXIST?

R.E. Brown in *The Death of the Messiah*, writes, "Judas is mentioned 22 times in the NT: Mark 3, Matt 5, Luke-Acts 6, John 8." [Brown, R., 2, 1394] Judas is chosen as one of the twelve (Mk 3.19) and is not heard of again until 14.10-11 where he conspires to betray Jesus, and is not identified by name at the Last Supper in Mark.

The names, Judas, derives from the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, Judah, but R. Brown thinks the name is not suspect, though he grants that, *Judas* "is etymologically related to 'Jew'..." [Brown, R., 2, 1395] (Greek *Judah*) and he concedes that Judas could be seen as the hostile "quintessential Jew," as Augustine does when he holds that Peter represents the church and Judas represents the Jews. [Brown, R., 2, 1395]

W.B. Smith, G. Volkmar, and Hyam Maccoby, among others, have argued that Judas never existed. R. Brown [Brown, R., 2, 1397] disputes this, but lists some of the arguments advanced for this thesis:

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- the paucity of evidence in the *Christian Scriptures*;
- “John (the brother of James) is named more frequently than is Judas (30 times)... compared to 22” mentions of Judas;
- “the staged nature of the scenes” as at the Last Supper where each disciple asks if he is the one who will betray Jesus, Judas speaking last (Mt 26.21-25);
- Judas appears in a setting in which an earlier gospel does not have him, e.g., the anointing at Bethany (Jn 12.4-5);
- the conflicting accounts of Judas' death in Matthew and Acts.

R. Brown concedes that nearly all of the gospel evidence about Judas is unreliable, but wrongly insists on the historical existence of Judas. [Brown, R., 2, 1396-97] We would add that Paul, writing before Mark, knows nothing of Judas.

We have to wait more than a hundred years after Mark's gospel (written about 70 CE or later) to find a mention of Judas outside the *Christian Scriptures*. Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons, writing about 180 CE, uses neither Matthew nor Acts in discussing Judas' fate, and the Bishop knows only that Judas was kicked out of office, not that he died. [ANF, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1, 388] It is only with Origen in the early third century that we find a writer who refers to Judas' death by hanging (Matthew), though he

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does not know of the alternative death by bursting (Acts). We do not find a reference to both of the accounts of Judas' death in Matthew and Acts until the late fourth century CE.

### TRIAL OF JESUS BY JEWISH AUTHORITIES:

Mk 14.53-65; (Daniel 6:4 LXX; Mark 14:53-72)... Price p 140

Jesus is led to the (unnamed) high priest late on Thursday evening where “all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes [are] assembled” (Mk 14.53-54). (The Sanhedrin never met at night; thus, Luke places the trial in the morning.)

In Mark, the “whole” Sanhedrin (all 71 members apparently) is “looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death” (Mk 14.55). Matthew has the trial take place at the high priest’s house, but the Sanhedrin was not convened there, [Lachs, S., 398] nor did the high priest preside over the Sanhedrin at this time. [Lachs, S., 419] Against Luke and John, Mark and Matthew relate that some witnesses falsely charge that Jesus had said he would destroy the Temple, but their testimony is not in agreement and is dismissed (Mk 14.56-59; Mt 24.60-61). According to the Scriptures, at least two witnesses are required for a verdict in a criminal trial (Num 35.30; Dt 17.6, 19.15). Mark has no valid witnesses. Matthew adds the two witnesses.

14:53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

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14:55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.

14:56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.

Again, the *Jewish Scriptures* provide material for Mark's fictional portrait of Jesus. (cf. Dan 6.4 LXX). [Helms, R., 118]

Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Daniel 6:4.

Mk 14:60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

14:61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing.

Is 53.7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Mk 14.61-62 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said

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unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Dan 7:13-14 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

In Mark and Matthew at the end of the trial Jesus is convicted of blasphemy, but claiming to be Messiah was not a crime. Could other charges have been leveled against Jesus? Some have suggested that Jesus' death could have been brought about because of his conflict with the Pharisees and scribes over ritual law, i.e., healing on the Sabbath, ritual washing of hands, etc. In Mark and Matthew, no such charges are raised, even though Jesus was tried in Jerusalem, the seat of what power the Pharisees had.

Also, criminal charges could have been brought by the Sanhedrin against Jesus since he attributed to himself



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divine characteristics by allowing himself to be called *Lord* and claiming the authority to forgive sins and regulate the Sabbath, etc. If Jesus claimed to be the “only” Son of God in a literal, not metaphorical sense, this would be non-Jewish and perhaps a criminal offense.

At the trial, the high priest asks Jesus if he will defend himself, but he is “silent and [does] not answer,” fulfilling Isa 53.7. The high priest asks, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” But how does the high priest know that any of the titles, *Messiah* (Christ), *Son of the Blessed*, *Son of Man*, *Son of God*, apply to Jesus? Jesus is called the “Son of God” by demons, but they are silenced at his command, and none of the people even suspect that these titles apply to him; at most, the people think Jesus is a prophet (Mk 8.28) or maybe one who cures illnesses or exorcises demons.

Asked if he is the Messiah, Jesus answers, “I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mk 14.61-62), a union of Dan 7.13 and probably Ps 110.1. [Lachs, S., 420] Hearing Jesus’ admission, the high priest tears his garments and judges that Jesus is guilty of blasphemy. The priest asks the Sanhedrin for its decision and “All of them [condemn] him as deserving death” (Mk 14.64). S. Lachs points out that the high priest “was not allowed to tear his clothes in mourning for the dead” [Lachs, S., 420] and probably he would not do so here either. He also points out that the rabbinic writers held that blasphemy could not be punished by a court, but only by God. [Lachs, S., 420] Some members of the Sanhedrin and

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some of the guards spit on Jesus and beat him (Mk 14.65), behavior hardly likely to occur during a meeting of this distinguished court.

The historical inconsistencies and implausibilities contained in the accounts of the arrest of Jesus and his trial before the council force us to agree with Burton L. Mack, John Dominic Crossan, and others that these events are fiction, a good deal of which has been constructed from passages in the *Jewish Scriptures*.

## TRIAL BY PILATE: MK 15.1-20

Leviticus 16:7-10.

<sup>7</sup> And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

<sup>8</sup> And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

<sup>9</sup> And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering.

<sup>10</sup> But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

Mark relates that the whole council again meets, and then in broad daylight parades Jesus through the streets of Jerusalem bringing him to Pilate, the Roman prefect (Mk 15.2-20). It is still the Passover, a holy day on which

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work is forbidden. What happened to the idea of arresting Jesus secretly?

Mark does not tell us why Pilate is in Jerusalem. The elders, scribes and the whole council who brought Jesus to Pilate apparently stay, and yet Mark does not relate that anyone other than Pilate witnesses Jesus' trial (Mk 15.2-5). The prefect asks Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answers ambiguously, "You have said so." Mark says that the chief priests accuse Jesus of many things, but Jesus makes no response. Pilate is amazed at Jesus' silence, but he needn't have been astonished. Mark is again borrowing from the *Jewish Scriptures*. Isaiah 53.7 says, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like the lamb that is led to the slaughter...."

Suddenly a crowd pops up and asks Pilate to release a prisoner on the festival day as was his custom (Mk 15.8). (There was no such pagan or Jewish custom.) Pilate, based on Jesus' ambiguous answer and his silence, concludes that Jesus is innocent and offers to release Jesus, "the King of the Jews." But stirred up by the chief priests, the crowd demands that Barabbas, an insurrectionist and murderer, be freed instead and yells, "Crucify him!" Why is a murdering rebel freed? To keep the peace one assumes!

In Matthew, Mrs. Pilate needs even less evidence of Jesus' innocence than her husband. She has had a dream that Jesus is innocent, and sends word to her husband that he should have nothing to do with the death of this "innocent man" (Mt 27.19). Pilate washes his hands

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saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood...” (Mt 27.24). This is based on Deuteronomy 21.6-8, where the elders of the town wash their hands saying, “Our hands did not shed this blood.” This practice is also found among the Greeks and Romans (cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.719). The powerful prefect, Pilate, is portrayed as a strong and cruel official in the works of both Philo and Josephus. They know nothing of the weak and vacillating Pilate offered in the gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke.

In a passage that has caused much bloodshed, Matthew intensifies the guilt of all Jews throughout all time when he has the Jewish crowd cry out, “his blood be on us and on our children” (Mt 27.25). Compare this with Sam 1.16 where an Amalekite killed Saul at his own request and David says to the killer, “Your blood be on your head; for your own mouth has testified against you, saying ‘I have killed the LORD’s anointed [Messiah].’”

Did the Sanhedrin have the power to try Jesus for a capital offense? The first-century Jewish historian, Josephus (*Ant* 20.202-203), relates that a high priest convened the Sanhedrin and tried and executed some of his enemies. This was done between procurators. When the new one arrived in Jerusalem, the high priest was removed from office. Luke and John know that the council could not try capital cases, which is why the third and fourth gospels omit the formal trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin. In John, “the Jews” tell Pilate that Jesus is a criminal, and the prefect tells the chief priests to “judge him by your own law” (Jn 18.29-32). “The Jews said to him, ‘It is not lawful for us to put any man to death’” (Jn

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18.31). Did not the powerful Roman official know that under Roman law, only he could try and execute someone for a capital crime?

According to Mark after the murderer, Barabbas, is released, the Roman soldiers take Jesus away, mock and spit on him and strike him on the head.

Mk 15:19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.

15:20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. 15.19-20.

Is 50.6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. 50.6). [Helms, R., 120, describes a similarity between Isaiah and the beating of Jesus before the Sanhedrin]

But a Roman governor would never have executed a man after publicly announcing his innocence.

After the scourging by the Roman soldiers, Jesus is led away to be crucified, carrying his cross (Mk 15.20). In Mark, Matthew and Luke, a stranger, Simon of Cyrene, carries Jesus' cross part of the way to the place of execution.

It is unlikely that it was a Roman custom for the victim to carry his own cross. The condemned, especially one who had been flogged, would not have been physically able to

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carry a large and heavy cross, the vertical beam alone being about nine feet long. The upright beam of the cross was probably permanently embedded at the place of crucifixion, the cross beam being supplied at the time of execution.

Why does John contradict the Synoptics by flatly saying that Jesus carries the cross by himself? Perhaps R. Helms is correct when he says that John may be attempting to counter the Gnostic claim that Jesus was not crucified, that instead Simon took his place on the cross. [Wilde, R., 153]

Mark uses *cross* in a metaphorical sense when he has Jesus say, “whoever wishes to follow me, let him deny himself, let him bear his cross and let him follow me” (Mk 8.34). Luke takes this saying of the early church too literally, and has Simon actually follow behind Jesus while carrying the cross (Lk 23.26).

To “bear your cross” is an ancient metaphor. The idea that a divinely inspired man or a demigod could be unjustly convicted and die on the cross was not alien to the Greco-Roman world. Martin Hengel in his book *Crucifixion*, concedes that in Stoic thought “... an ethical and symbolic interpretation of the crucifixion was still possible.” A staple of the ancient novel was the hero who barely escapes crucifixion. [Hengel, M., 1977, 89]

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### CRUCIFIXION

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#### Introduction

The issue of who was present during the crucifixion again illustrates the confusion of the passion accounts in Mark and the other gospels. In addition to the centurion's presence at the crucifixion, Mark includes women, among whom Mark names Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome (Mk 15.39-40). (Mark says these are the women who ministered to Jesus out of their own funds in Galilee, though up to 15.41 he has not mentioned any such women.) The disciples in Mark Matthew are not present at the crucifixion.

Luke, against Mark and Matthew, says that the disciples did not desert Jesus at his arrest and Luke claims that "all his acquaintances" are present at the cross (23.49). Luke is again rehabilitating the disciples.

Only the late gospel of John relates that at the cross Jesus entrusts his mother to the care of the "disciple whom he loved" (Jn 19.26). But why is Jesus' mother not given into the care of her surviving sons?

#### CRUCIFIXION: MK 15.22-39

<sup>22</sup> And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

On the cross, Jesus is offered drink, "they gave him wine mixed with gall, but having tasted it he refused to drink"

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(Mk 15.23; Mt 27.34). Compare this with Psalms 69 (17), “they gave me also gall for my food, and made me drink vinegar...” (Ps 69 [70]:21). John fuses Ps 69 with Ps 51.7, and adds that Jesus is offered the wine on a branch of hyssop (Jn 19.21-30). John is heavily into the lamb of God imagery and hyssop was used for sprinkling the blood of the Passover lamb on the door posts of Jewish homes (Ex 12.21).

Mk 15.24) “they parted my garments...

The soldiers cast lots to see who gets Jesus’ clothing (Mk 15.24).

Mk 15.24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

Ps 22.18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture - “they parted my garments... among themselves, and cast lots for my raiment.”

The seamless tunic in John (19.23) comes from Ex 28.32. The gospels indicate Jesus’ clothing is removed before the crucifixion (Mk 15.24). The Mishnah concludes that the inclusion of nudity in an execution would violate Jewish religious laws. [Brown, R., *John*, 2, 902] As Brown points out, nudity would cause conflict in the community which Rome was anxious to stabilize. [Brown, R., *John*, 2, 902]

Mk 15.25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.



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### COMMENT ON CRUCIFIXION

Some conservative exegetes have tried to explain why Jews in the gospels are depicted as embracing the crucifixion, a Roman method of execution much hated in Jewish tradition. The apologists claim that Jews accepted crucifixion. But Paul Winter is surely correct when he says that we do not know of a “single instance [during the war, 66-70 CE] in which the Jewish guerrillas... resorted to the method of crucifixion in disposing of those who had fallen into their hands. Crucifixion was not a punitive measure used by Jews or adopted by Jewish judicial institutions at any time in history.” [Winter, P., 66] The Jews accept this cruel form of punishment because Mark wishes them to do so. He cannot make the representative of the pagans, Pilate, the murderer of Jesus.

#### Mk 15.26 Sign on cross

According to Mark, a sign reading, “The King of the Jews,” was affixed to the cross indicating the charge for which Jesus was executed (Mk 15.26)

R. Brown concedes that, “we have no evidence of the custom of affixing [a sign] to the cross.” [Winter, P., 66] And where is the sign located? Mark does not say; Matthew indicates that it is over Jesus’ head; Luke has it over Jesus, and John, trying to smooth things out, says that the sign was “on the cross.”

#### Mark 15.27-28 Two Thieves

Mk 15.27-28 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on

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his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

Ps 22:16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

Jesus is crucified along with two (unnamed) bandits, one on each side of him (Mk 15.27). The Psalmist writes, “For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me” (Ps 22.16). Isaiah writes, “he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors” (Isa 53.12; cf. Mk 15.27). Mark and Matthew describe those crucified with Jesus as *bandits*, a word which has strong political connotations. Luke, wishing to de-politicize Jesus’ death, changes the word to *criminals* (Lk 23.32).

Mk 15.29-31 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, Save thyself, and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

Ps 22:6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

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Mk 15.32-33 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

The evangelists were children of their time. They believed, as did pagans, that miraculous events accompany the death of a great or divine man. Mark 15.33 records that the whole Earth was in darkness between noon and three on Friday afternoon. Some apologists say that this refers to an eclipse of the sun, but modern astronomy shows that no solar eclipse was visible from Judea at the time Jesus died in the early 30's CE.

Mk 15.34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Ps 22.1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

In Mark and Matthew, Jesus' despairing last words on the cross are, "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?" (Scholars Bible, Mk 15.34; cf. Mt 27.46; Ps 22.1). In Luke and John this is too much for their divine messiah; they change the last words, removing Jesus' deficient faith. Luke's Jesus calmly commends his spirit to God (23.46). John's Jesus triumphantly proclaims, "it is finished"( 19.30).

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Mk 15.35-36.( Mk 9.12; 15.29-32) And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.<sup>36</sup> And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

Is53.3 “He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering...”

Mk 15.37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

### Mark 15.38 Veil of the Temple Torn

Mk 15.38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

All of the Synoptics state that the curtain which closed off the inner Holy of Holies in the temple is torn in two. The divine presence has deserted the temple. The evangelists are supersessionists. They claim that Christianity replaces Judaism.

### The Centurion at the Cross

Mk 15.39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

This obviously is the work of the early church. Crucifixion was a common Roman method of execution. The death of

## ARREST, TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

Jesus would hardly draw from a Roman soldier the conclusion that he was a son of God, much less, *the* son of God - unless he were a Christian writer of the early church.

Epictetus wrote that since one's true ancestors are the gods, we should cheerfully be willing to die for God. [Reale, G., 77] The pagan centurion at the foot of the cross after Jesus' death exclaims that Jesus was "Truly this man was the Son of God." (Mk 15.39). Luke thinks it is too much that the pagan soldier would miraculously draw this conclusion and changes it to "Surely this man was innocent" (Lk 23.47).

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### BURIAL OF JESUS: MK 15.42-47

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Mark relates that Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council who was looking for the "Kingdom of God," "boldly" goes to Pilate and asks him for Jesus' body for burial (Mk 15.43). The problem is that Joseph, as a member of the Sanhedrin, must have voted to condemn Jesus, since Mark and Matthew relate that the vote of the council was unanimous. Luke can only weakly argue that Joseph had "not agreed to their plan and action" (Lk 23.51). As a known follower of Jesus, Joseph should have been arrested. Why wasn't he? And the disciples, too?

In Matthew, Jewish authorities request guards to watch over Jesus' tomb because Jesus said that he would be raised on the third day (Mt 27.64), but Jesus had predicted his resurrection only in private to his disciples. After Jesus is raised from the dead, the soldiers are

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

bribed by the priests to say that Jesus' body was stolen while they slept. If Roman soldiers admitted they were asleep on duty, there would have been more crucifixions, and soon!

R. Helms correctly asserts that "... the [passion] accounts are... fiction, composed for theological purposes." [For additional Jesus material used in the gospel passions see Helms, R., *Gospel Fictions*, 123ff]

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### EXCURSUS ISAIAH 53: WHY DID JESUS DIE?

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It is curious that in the Passion of the Gospel of Mark there is no mention as to why Christ dies. There are no real clues in the arrest, trial or death of Jesus as to what is accomplished by his death.

John the Baptist preaches:

Mk 1:4-5 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

Did Jesus die for the remission of sins?

Mk 1:14-15 Now after that John was out in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Jesus preached the gospel.

## ARREST, TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

Mk 1:36-39 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

Jesus says that he is a ransom for many (Mk 10.45). But in the passion of Mark's Gospel no explanation is offered for his death. Granted, in Chapter 7 the Vineyard story indicates that the killing of the Son transfers salvation from the Jews to the non-Jews. But in this story there is no mention of saving people from their sins. (Most modern biblical scholars think that the Vineyard story was added to the gospel by the early church.)

Ransom for many - Mk 10.45; Mt 20.28 KJV

Mk 10.45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Mk 10.45: The Son of Man did not come to be a slave master, but a slave who will give his life to rescue many people. CEV

Again, Mark's Jesus does not mention that through his death he will save people from their sins. In time this became the standard teaching of Orthodox Christians. The Gospel of Mark does not explicitly teach this central doctrine. It is to be kept a secret. What evidence do we have for this? Well, let us consider Isaiah, Chapter 53.

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Suffered and/or died for our sins?

Is 53, 1-12: Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

...for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.



## ARREST, TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Is Mark referring to the suffering servant?

Isaiah states that "... he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole..." (Isa 53.5; cf. Rom 4.25; 1 Cor 15.3). What Isaiah means by the "suffering servant" is the subject of much debate, but he certainly was not referring to Jesus or to a Jewish Messiah.

For an exhaustive look at the relationship between the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) and the material of the New Testament, see *The Christ Myth Theory And Its Problems* by Robert M. Price.

Comment:

Isaiah in chapter 53 seems to be talking about the pain and suffering endured by a person perhaps suffering from a disfiguring disease. In some places in the Jewish Scriptures and the New Testament disease is thought to be a punishment by God for sin. Here, Isaiah seems to be putting forth the idea that this suffering person bears the pain/punishment for others.

Though written several centuries before Christ, the Christians saw Isa 53 as a prophecy of the suffering of Christ. Modern scholars assert Isa 53 provided Mark with material which he could use to describe the suffering and death of Jesus (Isaiah 53.12). The problem is that Mark in his Gospel does not say that Jesus suffered and/or died for our sins. Though ancient Jews took the suffering

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servant of Isaiah as the nation of Israel, one could easily, as the Christians did, take it as a reference to the idea that the suffering servant suffered and died to save people from sin. The problem was that in the crucifixion scene Mark does not say this is why Jesus died. Nor does he do so anywhere else in his Gospel. Of course the ancient Christian reader already believed that Christ died to save the Christians from their sins.



## CHAPTER 8 RESURRECTION

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*The women “fled the [empty] tomb...and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”*

— Mark 16.8

*The hero, thinking his wife is dead, comes to mourn, and finds the tomb empty.*

Ancient pagan novel.

### THE EMPTY TOMB: MK 16.1-8

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For the Greco-Romans, physical resurrection was seen as superstitious and repulsive. So, isn't Mark opposing pagan values when he states that Jesus is physically resurrected from the dead? Let us see.

According to Mark, after the Sabbath on Sunday morning Mary Magdalene and two other women travel to the tomb of Jesus in order to anoint his body with spices (Mk 16.1-2). They discover that the large stone that had blocked the entrance has been moved. They enter the tomb and are alarmed when they see an angel (“a young man”) who informs them that the crucified Jesus of Nazareth has been raised. The angel orders them to tell Peter and the other disciples that Jesus will meet them in Galilee. Mark relates that the women fled the tomb in terror, “and... said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (Mk 16.8). It is widely accepted by scholars that the original version of Mark ends at 16.8 with the empty tomb, because Mk 16.9-20 appears only in very late manuscripts (fourth and fifth century). Thus, for Mark there is no physical resurrection. There are no

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appearances to anyone. Jesus' body has simply disappeared.

Nearly all serious scholars agree that the variant resurrection accounts of the gospels cannot be reconciled. A few examples of the inconsistencies involved will suffice to show why. In Mark, Luke, and John, when the women (or a woman in John) arrive at the tomb, the stone has already been rolled away from the entrance. But in Matthew's account, when the women arrive, the stone is still in place and is rolled away by an angel of the Lord in their presence and that of the guards.

In Mark three women go to anoint Jesus' body, though earlier an unnamed woman has already anointed Jesus. In Mark and Matthew, Jesus appears first to Mary Magdalene and some other women. In Luke, Jesus appears only to men. In John, Mary Magdalene is alone when Jesus first appears to her. Matthew says that the women had come to "see" the sepulcher (Mt 28.1), and John gives no reason why Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb.

## ANCIENT GRECO-ROMAN NOVELS: LIFE AFTER DEATH

The best place we know of to examine the basic issues concerning the historical Jesus is the *Journal of Higher Criticism* edited by Robert M. Price. (See his website of the same name at [www.depts.drew.edu/jhc](http://www.depts.drew.edu/jhc).) For the following, we have depended on Robert M. Price's book, *Deconstructing Jesus*. [Price, R. M., 2000, 213-221]

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

The plot line for certain ancient pagan novels, mostly of the Hellenistic period (ca 300-30 BCE), is primitive. In these novels, the wife or fiancé of the hero is in a coma and is prematurely buried. The hero, thinking she is dead, comes to mourn, and finds the tomb empty. He concludes that a god has taken his fiancé or wife to heaven because of her beauty.

In searching for her, the hero runs across a ruler who wants the heroine for himself and orders that the hero and those who stole the woman's corpse from the tomb be crucified. This being a romance novel, the hero survives. When the couple finally is reunited, they think at first that they are seeing ghosts.

The similarities between Mark and, for example *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, are obvious:

- condemning the hero to be crucified;
- the entombment of the victim who is (apparently) dead;
- the removal of the stone;
- the empty tomb;
- the temporary inability of the lovers to recognize each other (in Mark, the women think that the angel is a ghost and in John, Mary Magdalene doesn't recognize Jesus at first).

There are parallels in other novels as well. Note that sometimes mistaken identity is involved, as in Achilles

## RESURRECTION

Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*. This novel echoes the Gnostic accusation that Jesus did not die, another man takes his place on the cross. Also in this novel, a woman discovers on the third day that the tomb is empty. In the Latin novel, *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius (ca 123 C.E.), there are two scenes involving crucifixions, one of which involves the actual, if temporary, raising of a dead person.

In a fragment of Petronius's *Satyricon*, a woman decides to starve herself to death in her dead husband's tomb. Nearby, thieves are crucified. Guards are placed to keep other thieves from breaking into the tomb and removing the corpse. The woman is encouraged to eat proving that she is alive. Matthew, Luke and John provide witnesses to prove that Jesus has risen. In these pagan novels many people witness the empty tomb. As with Mark's gospel, these popular novels contain empty tombs, but this does not indicate physical resurrection.

## TRANSLATION

In *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism*, an anthology edited by P. Borgen & S. Giversen, "Apotheosis and Resurrection," an article by Adela Yarbro Collins argues persuasively that the empty tomb in Mark "is shaped by Greek and Roman traditions of the translation and apotheosis of human beings." [Collins, A.Y., 88-100] According to Ovid, Hercules' body was destroyed and he received a divine form, and Plutarch relates that Hercules' body disappeared. The *Jewish Scriptures* record that some people like Elijah, Enoch, Moses, and Melchizedek were translated, i.e., transformed after

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death not physically resurrected, and disease Jewish figures are not depicted as becoming divine. [Maccoby, H., 1963, 62]

Although Paul wrote in the 50's, only 10-20 years after the supposed death of Jesus (about 30 CE), his letters show no awareness of the empty tomb or anything else that would indicate a physical resurrection. Paul agrees with Mark – Jesus was not resurrected, but translated.

A.Y. Collins believes that the Gospel of Mark ended at the death of Jesus on the cross; there was no empty tomb and no resurrection of Jesus. [Collins, A.Y., 88] Virtually all serious scholars think that the resurrection appearances at Mk 16.9-20 were created from material extracted from the other gospels. For Mark, Jesus was transformed after death; he was translated, not resurrected. But what happened to his body? According to A. Y. Collins, when a person is translated, the body may remain behind or can disappear as in the case of Enoch, Elijah and Hercules. [Collins, A.Y., 88]

Mark, the earliest Gospel writer, indicates that Jesus is translated. Physical resurrection was developed by Matthew and Luke. Matthew indicates that Jesus was physically resurrected; the women take hold of Jesus' feet and worship him (Mt 28.9). Luke supplies more evidence of physical resurrection; Jesus shows the wounds on his hands and feet to the disciples, and points out that ghosts don't have flesh and bones; he then asks for food and eats a piece of fish (Lk 24.38-43). In John's gospel Jesus eats food, appears in a closed room, and the



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doubting Thomas physically examines the wounds in Jesus' hands and side (Jn 20.26-27).

In the Roman world, it was required that witnesses testify to seeing the emperor's shade or soul ascending toward the heavens before the emperor could be deified. Not satisfied with witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, the author of Acts supplies witnesses to Jesus' ascension, "When he [Jesus] had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1.9; cf. Mk 16.19; Lk 24.50-53).

Lucian (120-185 CE) says that Hercules "was burned and deified on Mount Oetna: he threw off the mortal part of him that came from his mother and flew up to heaven, taking the pure and unpolluted divine part with him...". [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 177, #242, Lucian in *Hermetimos, or Concerning the Sects* 7] (In Greco-Roman tradition the mother supplies the body; reason and virtue, etc., come from the father!)

## EXCURSUS: ZOROASTRIANISM

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Christian apologists, assuming that Christianity was a Jewish sect, suggest that we look to the *Jewish Scriptures* for the origin of the idea of resurrection. Yet the term *resurrection* appears rarely in the *Jewish Scriptures*. As the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* states, the term resurrection "...does not appear except in texts that are rare, obscure with regard to their precise meaning, and late." [Freedman, D., vol 5, 680] Resurrection is not clearly mentioned until Daniel (ca 165 BCE). The usual biblical view is that the soul goes to Sheol after death.

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Perhaps, then, we should look at the later Jewish writings of the Second Temple period (ca 200 BCE to ca 100 CE). The problem is that in Daniel and in pseudepigraphic literature such as 1 Enoch, Jubilees, 2 and 4 Maccabees, we find the concept of a *general* resurrection, not an *individual* resurrection, much less one where the Messiah is resurrected.

Eastern religions had for a long time influenced the Roman world. Zoroastrianism was widespread, especially in the eastern empire where Christianity originated. The idea of apocalypticism in Persian Zoroastrianism was taken over by ancient Judaism in the exilic period. By the sixth century BCE, Zoroastrianism had worked out its basic eschatology.

Some of the following items found in Zoroastrianism are also found in Christianity: the evil god, Angra Mainyu, or Ahriman (cf. Satan), rules a demonic world. Zoroaster teaches that after death the soul hovers around the body for three days before going to its judgment. After the judgment, the soul goes to either heaven or hell, or an intermediate state, which we may call purgatory.

In Zoroastrianism, the cosmos lasts for twelve thousand years. There are three saviors who will follow Zoroaster, all born to virgins. Each savior's work lasts a thousand years, which reminds one of the thousand-year rule of Christ in *Revelation*. The third savior, Soshyant, overcomes evil and at the final judgment raises the dead (as Christ does in *Revelation*). Each individual is judged. The body and soul are purified and all (*some* in Christianity) are reunited with God. At this time the earth

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returns to its original perfection. Christianity is close to this latter idea in *Revelation* when, after people are judged, the cosmos is destroyed, a new heaven and a new earth are created, and the heavenly Jerusalem descends to the new earth.

We conclude that:

- The resurrection material in the gospels contains too many inconsistencies and contradictions to be harmonized.
- As time passed, the four gospels gradually eliminated the role of women regarding the resurrection of Jesus.
- The idea of translation is more compatible with the pagan culture than with Jewish tradition. For Paul and Mark, Jesus is translated, but by the early second century CE, the idea of a physical or bodily resurrection became dogma.
- Physical resurrection was derived from the religion of Zoroastrianism.

## COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK: CONCLUSIONS

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- Jesus is non-Jewish; he is grossly ignorant of Judaism and things Jewish..
- The Marcan Jesus is a radically anti-Jewish Christian; he is a supersessionist, believing that Judaism is to be replaced by Christianity.
- Jesus' biography was created by the early church.

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- His death story was written for theological reasons and is largely based on *Jewish Scriptures*.
- Jesus fits better in a pagan, rather than a Jewish milieu. He is a pagan savior in Jewish dress. Mark's gospel is a fiction. It is a myth, and one that is not based on an historical figure.

That Jesus was non-Jewish needs to be emphasized. Virtually all modern scholars accept the gospels' portrayal of Jesus as a first-century CE Judean Jew. J.H. Charlesworth writes, "To me as a scholar *Jesus' Jewishness* seems redundant. Obviously Jesus was a Jew...". [Charles, J. H., 1991], 13] Cardinal Martini agrees, "In its origins Christianity is deeply rooted in Judaism... Jesus is fully Jewish, the apostles are Jewish, and one cannot doubt their attachment to the traditions of their forefathers." [Martini, 19] All this is wrong. As we have shown, one *can* have serious doubts about Jesus' Jewishness, indeed about his very existence.

According to the Marcan Jesus, the Jews were the chosen people of God but they severed their covenant with God when they rejected and killed God's Son. Thus, non-Jews will replace them as the people of God. Christians have so interpreted the Gospels for nearly 2000 years and today conservative Christians, still faithful to the Gospels, preach this message of supersessionism. Mark's gospel is, on a fundamental level, far too anti-Jewish to have been created in a Jewish milieu. Mark was created by the church, but who created the church? We will turn to this question in Chapter 10 of this book after exploring Paul's contribution to the creation of Christian orthodoxy.

## RESURRECTION

Chapter 10 will also deal with why Mark's Gospel contains both a low and high Christology, that is, is Jesus is depicted as both a fallible human failure and a divine like being.

## PART 2 WHO CREATED JESUS?

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*Using the hope of heaven and the punishment of hell as the proper motives for virtue falls "...far below the best of the ancients [pagans]...."*

—John Milton, *On Liberty*

### Note on Part 2

In Part I of this book we showed that Mark's Jesus was a literary fiction. In Part 2, Chapter 9 we demonstrated that Paul, allegedly the earliest literary witness to Jesus, was not aware of the existence of Mark's historical Jesus. If Jesus was an imaginary figure, who invented him? The Paulinists created Jesus as we will show in Chapter 10.



## CHAPTER 9 PAUL AND THE MYSTERIES

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*Paul founded or joined a syncretistic mystery cult.  
He fused this cult with Gnosticism and stoic-cynicism, and  
added a Jewish veneer.  
Paul never knew the historical Jesus.*  
— Authors.

### QUOTES ON THE APOSTLE PAUL (30CE.COM)

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Note by Editors. We would agree with the quotations listed below except for one important difference: the ethics of Jesus were hardly that of the loving kind. He was not sympathetic to the outcasts, the poor, the sick, women etc. Also Jesus, like Paul, was very big on condemning people to Hell who did not accept Jesus as their Savior. For more, see Volume 2 and 3 in our Series, *Evidence That Jesus Never Existed!*

George Bernard Shaw, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925; in his *Androcles and the Lion*:

"There is not one word of Pauline Christianity in the characteristic utterances of Jesus. . . . There has really never been a more monstrous imposition perpetrated than the imposition of Paul's soul upon the soul of Jesus. . . . It is now easy to understand how the Christianity of Jesus. . . . was suppressed by the police and the Church, while Paulinism overran the whole western civilized world, which was at that time the Roman Empire, and was adopted by it as its official faith."



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Albert Schweitzer, winner of the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize, called "one of the greatest Christians of his time," philosopher, physician, musician, clergyman, missionary, and theologian in his *The Quest for the Historical Jesus and his Mysticism of Paul*:

"Paul. . . did not desire to know Christ. . . Paul shows us with what complete indifference the earthly life of Jesus was regarded. . . What is the significance for our faith and for our religious life, the fact that the Gospel of Paul is different from the Gospel of Jesus?. . . The attitude which Paul himself takes up towards the Gospel of Jesus is that he does not repeat it in the words of Jesus, and does not appeal to its authority. . . The fateful thing is that the Greek, the Catholic, and the Protestant theologies all contain the Gospel of Paul in a form which does not continue the Gospel of Jesus, but displaces it."

Rudolf Bultmann, one of the most respected theologians of this century, in his *Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul*:

"It is most obvious that Paul does not appeal to the words of the Lord in support of his. . . views. when the essentially Pauline conceptions are considered, it is clear that Paul is not dependent on Jesus. Jesus' teaching is -- to all intents and purposes -- irrelevant for Paul."

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Walter Bauer, another eminent theologian, in his *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*:

"If one may be allowed to speak rather pointedly the Apostle Paul was the only Arch-Heretic known to the apostolic age."

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### THE SILENCE OF PAUL ON THE HISTORICAL JESUS

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Traditional Christians hold that Paul's Christ is Mark's Jesus. In his letters, Paul appears to refer to the historical Jesus and his associates, Peter, James, etc. We will examine these passages to see if this is correct, but first we will briefly consider the authenticity and integrity of Paul's letters.

Virtually all modern scholars believe that of the thirteen letters attributed to Paul, only seven are genuine: 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Philippians, and Philemon. Traditionally they have sought to have been written between 45 and 62 CE. These letters were edited, that is material was added to or subtracted from them as the needs of the church changed. In *The Journal of Higher Criticism*, Hermann Detering briefly reviews some of the evidence offered by the Dutch school in the 19th-century as regard the integrity of the Pauline letters. [Detering, H.,163-193] There are a number of anachronisms in Paul's epistles. The highly-developed theology and international organization of the church which is apparent in Paul's letters assumes "a *longer period of incubation* and could not possibly have been arrived at within two decades" of Jesus' death [Detering, H., 181. Detering's ital]. Paul

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writes that he fought at Ephesus with wild animals (1 Cor 15.32), [Detering, H., 190] but we have no evidence that Christians were fed to the lions until about 117 CE in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch.

There are other problems with Paul's letters. Apologists argue that Paul wrote to individual churches, but 1 Corinthians is addressed to the church in Corinth at 1 Cor 1.2a, and to the churches "everywhere" at verse 2b. Scholars claim that Paul deals with specific problems of individual churches, but the subjects of his letters are universal in nature. The Apostle deals with faith versus works, morality, the theological meaning of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection; he writes of false apostles, false gospels and false "Christs," and of the end times, divorce, and ascetic practices, among other subjects. These topics are so general in scope, they could have been addressed to the church in general at any time. [Doughty, Darrell J., 112-113]

Another problem with the historicity of Paul's correspondence is that the situation in which the letters were produced is confused. Often we do not know when or why Paul wrote a given letter, whether he is in prison or not, etc. Paul claims to be Jewish, but his letters "have in many places a completely un-Jewish character." [Detering, H., 187, fn 66] Van Manen argued that Paul was a "Gentile Christian." [Detering, H., 175]

Nearly every subject that Paul writes about is treated in an ambiguous and often contradictory manner. For example, there have been two centuries of debate about

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who the opponents of Paul are in Galatians (54-55 CE). Some of the guesses are: 1) Jews, 2) Christians of Jewish background, 3) gentiles who observed the ritual laws of Judaism, 4) Gnostics of pagan background, 5) Gnostics of Jewish background, 6) spirit-filled enthusiasts. Another problem with Galatians is that the accounts of the Jerusalem meeting in Galatians 2 and Acts 15 have long been seen as inconsistent and even as fiction.

Some scholars think 1 Corinthians (ca 56-57 CE) is a composite document that has been interpolated. [Brown, R. E., 1997, 512] (Most think that this is true of 2 Corinthians as well.)

## JESUS

Now let us see what, if anything, Paul knew about the historical Jesus, his disciples or family. We will focus primarily on Galatians and 1 Corinthians, as these two letters contain virtually all of Paul's supposed references to the historical Jesus, his brother, and his disciples.

Paul says that Jesus was “born of a woman, born under the law” (Gal 4.4), but the Apostle supplies no historical detail. Paul knows of no birthplace and Jesus could have been born a hundred years before Paul. In his single reference to Jesus’ ancestry, Paul says that Jesus “was descended from David according to the flesh,” i.e., was of Jewish royal descent [Rom 1.3-4]. We agree with Earl Doherty, (*The Jewish Puzzle*) that Paul does not know that Christ is a descendant of David. We think the entire passage (1.1-7) is an interpolation, since Paul nowhere else gives any historical data as to the ancestry of Jesus;

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and Rom 1.1-4 contains too much detail unknown to Paul and Mark, the earliest gospel. Many scholars have questioned the integrity of these two passages from Galatians and Romans.

Paul describes the “Lord’s Supper” at 1 Cor 11.23-29, but the integrity of this passage has been much questioned. Jesus’ words, “this is my body and blood... Do this in remembrance of me,…” are closest to Luke’s account, but Paul died about 64 CE, 25 years before Luke wrote his gospel (ca 85 CE).

Paul’s most detailed depiction of the human nature of Jesus occurs at Phil 2.6-11. This pre-Pauline hymn says that Jesus Christ “was in the form of God,... that he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness... he humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross.” Finally, the hymn adds that after Jesus’ death, God “exalted him” above all others. There is nothing else in the “genuine” letters of Paul about a divine figure descending from heaven and becoming human. The hymn was inserted by later editor.

Paul refers to Jesus’ crucifixion but again gives no historical detail. At I Thess 2.14-15 Paul says that “the Jews” killed “the Lord Jesus.” R. Brown lists some arguments that scholars have given against the Pauline authorship of this passage (which Brown, nevertheless, accepts as genuine): [Brown, R., 463]

1) The letter gives a second thanksgiving, indicating that the letter is a composite.

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

2) The passage says that Jews are “enemies of the human race,” a common pagan slander.

3) The letter says that divine wrath has overcome the Jews, a reference to the first war with Rome (66-70 CE) which occurred after Paul’s death about 64 CD..

Against Brown, most modern scholars have concluded that 1 Thess 2.14-15 was inserted by the early church. Earl Doherty in *The Jesus Puzzle*, lists some of the scholars who have found this to be so: [Doherty, E. 299]

- Burton Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* p 113;
- Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, p 9, n 117;
- Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2, p 113;
- PHEME PERKINS, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, p 1230,1231-2;
- S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, p 92-93;
- Paula Fredericksen, *From Jesus to Christ*, p 122.
- We would add J.D. Crossan who, in *Who Killed Jesus?*, asserts that the whole account of the Jewish trial is fiction.

Paul knows that Christ was “resurrected,” but he does not know where or when. In 1 Corinthians, Paul preaches

## PAUL AND THE MYSTERIES

that, “Jesus died, was buried, and raised on the third day according to the scriptures” (15.3-4), a passage which many scholars think is a creedal formula added by a later editor. Following this is Paul's list of resurrection appearances: Jesus first appeared to Cephas and the twelve (1 Cor 15.5); then to the 500 disciples (vs. 6); then to James and all the apostles (vs. 7); and finally to Paul (vs. 8). Scholars have found many problems with this passage, one of which is that it is inconsistent with the other passages dealing with Jesus' resurrection appearances as described in the four Gospels and in Acts of the Apostles.

As we saw in Chapter 8, Mark does not assert that Jesus physically arose from the dead, but was translated or transformed after death. This is also true of Paul.

Paul's Savior is not Mark's historical Jesus, but the Christ, a triumphant and divine figure of glory from the mythic past.

## PETER

There is much evidence in Paul's letters of general conflict within the early church. Paul warns his flock to watch out for those who would cause dissensions and offenses contrary to what they have learned (Rom 16.17). He says there are false apostles who preach a perverted gospel and “another Jesus” (2 Cor 11.4-8,13-14,22-33; Gal 1.6-9); he says they “will pay the penalty” (Gal 5.10,12).

What was Paul's relationship to Peter? Paul's references to Peter, John and James were added by an editor in an

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attempt to prove that the Apostle knew these associates of Jesus, thus establishing a link between Paul's Christ and the historical Jesus. But are the references genuine?

Paul says that his gospel “is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1.11-12). He says, God “set me apart before I was born” and revealed “his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles” (Gal 1.15-16; 1 Cor 1.1; 2 Cor 1.1, Phil 1.1, Rom 1.1). Paul writes that after his conversion, he “did not confer with any human being, nor did [he] go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before [him], but... went away at once into Arabia....” (Gal 1.16-17). In about 40 CE, three years after his conversion, Paul says he visited Cephas for fifteen days in Jerusalem and also saw James, the Lord's brother (Gal 1.19), but Paul insists that he did not receive any part of his gospel from Peter, Cephas, James, or any other human being.

About 14 years after his first visit to Jerusalem, Paul writes that he received a revelation from God, and again went to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas and Titus (Gal 2.1-2). Paul meets privately in Jerusalem with the supposed “acknowledged leaders” (James, Cephas and John) but he again flatly asserts that they “contributed nothing to me,” (Gal 2.2, 6). Paul insists that his gospel did not come from Jesus of Nazareth through his disciples or Jesus' brother. Even if Peter is Cephas, Paul does not indicate that he received truth from Peter either. Also, it would be anachronistic for Paul to refer to Peter is



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Cephas, since Peter was not called this until John 1.42, written decades later (ca 100 CE) long after Paul's death about 64 CE.

An editor of Galatians attempted to convince his readers that Paul knew Peter by having Paul explicitly say that Peter's gospel, as well as his own, came from God (Gal 2.7-8). We do not find any reference to this passage in Christian writings until Irenaeus about 180 CE. Tertullian, writing about 207 CE, knows about the Jerusalem leaders shaking hands with Paul, i.e., approving of his mission to the non-Jews, but he knows nothing of the statement that Peter's gospel came from God.

Paul says he met with James, whom he describes as the brother of Jesus, but only once, at Gal 1.19; a passage which many scholars are wary of. After all, we last saw James in Mark's gospel, where he is depicted as an unbeliever who thinks that Jesus is crazy and maybe even possessed by Satan, and yet at the meeting in Jerusalem we find James is apparently the head of the church of Jerusalem!

Paul knows nothing about the disciples as depicted in Mark and the other gospels. Paul never even hints that Peter, James (excluding the brother passage), John, or anyone else ever met Jesus, much less that they were his disciples.

Finally, how can it be argued that all knew of the historical Jesus when he is wholly ignorant of the Marcan traditions about Jesus? Here are some items found in

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Mark's gospel but omitted in the Apostle's letters. Paul omits Bethlehem, Capernaum, Galilee, Nazareth, and Judea. Paul does not know of Judas, John the Baptist, Herod Antipas, the high priest, or Pontius Pilate. He doesn't mention the Sadducees, the Sanhedrin (which tried Jesus), the scribes, or even that Jesus had disciples, and he applies the name Pharisee only once (to himself at Phil 3.5). The apostle refers to Cilicia but fails to mention the city of Tarsus, though Acts says that he was born there. He mentions the twelve one time at 1 Cor 15.5, but does not associate the twelve with apostles. A major element of Judaism which he ignores is the temple in Jerusalem, having only a single reference to it at 1 Cor 9.13.

Also Paul does not know about Jesus' special teachings, his cures, exorcisms, or other miracles. Paul knows only of Jesus' ahistorical death. He does not know of an historical man who lived and died in Palestine about 30 CE. Paul's Christ was crucified in the mythic past and returned to life as a god, a spiritual Christ. His Christ is in the tradition of pagan gods like Osiris, Dionysius, Mithras, and Hercules, all of whom suffered and died, were transformed after death and became divine. For additional analysis of the silence of Paul about Jesus, see Earl Doherty, *The Jesus Puzzle*.

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## PAUL AND PAGAN SYNCRETISM

If Paul was unaware of the existence of Jesus, and thus was not a Christian, what was his religion? To answer this, one must fully appreciate the powerful and

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pervasive syncretism of the ancient Roman world that produced him.

*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines the verb *syncretize* as an "...attempt to unite and harmonize especially without critical examination or logical unity." [*Merriam-Websters Collegiate Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1998, 1873] The word has been applied to both religion and philosophy.

Religious syncretism is ancient, existing long before Paul. In Herodotus' *History of the Persian Wars*, (5<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE), we find Greeks identifying the Egyptian Osiris with the Greek god Dionysus. [Griffiths, J. G., 250] When Rome conquered Greece, the chief god, Zeus, was identified with the chief Roman god, Jupiter. In the syncretistic world of the first century CE we should not be surprised to find that Paul's religion was a mix of many elements. We shall examine that religion, but first a note on Paul's Jewishness.

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## PAUL WAS NOT A JEW

Paul claims to be Jewish but 90 percent of the evidence of his Jewishness is contained in Acts of the Apostles, a late fantasy that we need not consider here. Paul does not know Hebrew. He writes in Greek (Koine), and quotes the Greek translation of the *Jewish Scriptures* (the Seventy), and when it differs from the Hebrew, he always prefers the Greek. Paul was neither a rabbi nor a Pharisee and was not even Jewish. (See H. Maccoby's books *The MythMaker* and *Paul and Hellenism*.)

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Greco-Romans today are described as anti-Jewish and Paul is said to love Jews since he was Jewish himself. But as we shall see, pagan opinions of Jews and those of Paul are virtually identical.

Both Paul and paganism wrongly claimed that Jews hated non-Jews. At 1 Thess 2.15-16, Paul claims that “the Jews” are against humanity, and have attempted to prevent him from saving non-Jews. Posidonius (fl 2nd and 1st cent. BCE) says that pagan writers believed that Jews disliked non-Jews. He says that Jews would neither eat with “gentiles” nor “...show any good will towards them.” [Wilde, R., 45] Diodorus says that the Syrian king should “wipe out the Jews completely” on the ground that they look upon all non-Jews as I know I didn't dare out and their enemies. He says Moses “ordained their misanthropic ways.” [Feldman, L. H, 1993, 10.141] Apollonius Molon (fl 1st cent. BCE) reproaches the Jews for hatred of non-Jews, intolerance, superstition, and the immorality of the law. [Wilde, R., 46-47] Tacitus claimed that Jews held as sacred all things which were impure to the (non-Jewish) Romans. According to Josephus, Apion insisted that by law Jews kidnapped a non-Jew each year and sacrificed and ate him and swore an oath of hostility to the Greeks. [Feldman, L., 1996, 386] Later Christians adopted this slanderous myth and held it until the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE!

Paul was pro non-Jews. He writes that Israel has been blinded until the fullness of the gentiles is in (Rom 11.19,21). Jews are the enemies of God in order to save non-Jews (Rom 11.28-30). “I am an apostle to the gentiles

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in order to make my fellow Jews jealous and thus save some of them” (Rom 11.1-14). Loyalty to the ethnic or religious traditions of one’s ancestors was greatly valued by the Romans, so here and elsewhere Paul claims that he has strong feelings for his “kinsmen,” and indeed he does love “some” of the Jews — if they become non-Jews, i.e., Paulinists.

Some pagans wrote that Jews were atheists because they rejected the pagan gods. Some pagan writers charged Jews with worshiping idols; Plutarch implies that Jews worship a donkey [Feldman, L., 1996, 363, 10.81] and Tacitus explicitly says so. [Feldman, L., 1996, 363] Some scholars say Paul argues that Jews were idolatrous (see Gal 4.9) and he accuses Jews of unbelief in that they reject the “true” God and his son, Jesus.

Feldman writes, “Circumcision was regarded by the Greeks and Romans as a physical deformity and hence, like others who had various deformities, circumcised men were not permitted to participate in the Olympian Games.” [Feldman, L., 1996, 377]

Paul warns the Philippians to “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh!” (are circumcised, Phil 3.2).

Seneca, Tacitus and Suetonius all ridiculed the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, as did Horace, Ovid, the satirist Persius, Plutarch, etc. [Feldman, L., 1996, 366] So does Paul. He rejects Jewish dietary law, which was viewed derisively by Greco-Roman writers. For instance Plutarch writes about the Jews “honoring the

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pig.” [Feldman, L., 1996, 374] Juvenal says that Jews feel “merciful” toward pigs. [Feldman, L., 1996, 377] Paul asserts that observing ritual law contributes nothing to salvation.

The Apostle to the “gentiles” insists that the law causes sin. He says the law was given to Jews because they were morally degenerate. [Downing, F., 69] No Jewish thinker would condemn the ritual or ethical law by characterizing it as non-efficacious, as Paul does. [Downing, F., 62]

A number of texts in which “the Jews” are spiritually blinded appear in Paul's letters, and Acts. often they depend on Isa 6.9-10:

The Lord orders the prophet Isaiah to tell

“this people: 'Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.' Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed [saved].”

The authors of the *Christian Scriptures* tear this passage from its historical context. Isaiah is labeling the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel as faithless. He is not rejecting all Jews for all time.

In the Jewish Scriptures, God at times spiritually blinds people in order to accomplish his purpose. In Exodus, for example, God hardens the Pharaoh's heart or that of the Egyptians. Sometimes the king himself does it (Ex 8.32; Ex 4.21, 10.20). God's purpose is accomplished, e.g., the

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King's army pursues the Israelites into the Red Sea and drowns (Ex 14.17), thus freeing the Jews from slavery.

The following passages illustrate how the early church explained why Jews rejected Jesus and the Kingdom of God, i.e., the church:

- In Rom 11.25, Paul states that part of Israel has been hardened “until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.” The agent seems to be God (cf. 2 Cor 3.14; Heb 3.7-8, 4.7; and Mk 7.6-7).
- Paul argues that the gospel is “veiled to those who are perishing” (2 Cor 4.3). Unbelievers have been blinded “by the god of this world [Satan]... to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel” (2 Cor 4.4)
- At Acts 28.25-28, Paul describes the Jewish heart as having grown dull; their ears do not hear, eyes do not see, etc. Jews have blinded themselves.
- At Rom 9.16, 18-20, Paul asserts that whether one is saved or not depends on the mercy of God. He writes that it is God who “hardens the heart of whomever he chooses” (vs. 18). Paul discounts human will or exertion. He writes that people say that if God blinds people, why does Paul find fault with unbelievers? Paul answers that human beings are not to argue with God. God has made us the way we are and we have no right to complain; it is like the pot criticizing the potter.
- At Rom 11.7-8, Paul argues that the elect have received salvation. The Apostle then paraphrases

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Isa 6.9-10, “God gave them a sluggish spirit, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.”

Why does the early church depict Jesus as teaching that Jews are spiritually blinded by God? Paul in Acts spells it out, “Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen” (Acts 28.28). The mission to the Jews, if there ever was one, had failed. The church needed to explain why few Jews converted to Christianity. Note that no mission to Jews is related in Paul's letters, but only in the late fantasy, Acts, with a mission to “the Jews” fails.

From the preceding, one can see that Paul shares anti-Jewish views very similar to many pagan writers. Paul is hardly pro-Jewish or anti-pagan. R. Ruether writes, “For Paul, there is, and has always been, only one true covenant of salvation.” And this covenant was “given *apart from the Law*, to Abraham and now [is] manifest in those who believe in Abraham's spiritual son, Christ. The people of the Mosaic covenant do not now and never have had any way of salvation through the Torah itself.” [Ruether, R. R., 106] Jews can only be saved by becoming non-Jews, a view with which many pagan writers would agree.

While Greco-Romans like Tacitus were quite anti-Semitic, it has to be granted that Paul is even more so. Why is this? Paul must make sure that Greco-Romans do not mistakenly believe that he is accepting Judaism as the true religion. Thus, while many pagans were certainly critical of Judaism, Paul



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invalidates it, replacing it with Paulinism, that is, proto-Christianity.

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### STOIC-CYNICISM

If Paul was a pagan, why did he embrace a belief in only one true God? Many ancient Greeks and Romans rejected polytheism of the pagan religions, including Plato and Aristotle, the Stoic-Cynic philosophers, and others.

Diogenes the Cynic “...expressed contempt for the Eleusinian mysteries... his teacher Antisthenes, who attacked all religious conventions including the belief in a multitude of gods, maintained that there existed one God beyond all visible phenomena.” [Griffiths, J., 253] The Sophist and atheist, Protagoras, said, “I am unable to know whether [the gods] exist or do not exist, nor what they are like in form; for the factors obstructing knowledge are many: the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of human life.” [Griffiths, J., 252-253]

Paul shared many beliefs with Stoic-Cynics. Here are a few items held in common by Paul and the Stoic-Cynics.

For Epictetus, the Cynic is a mediator between god and humanity (cf. 2 Cor 2.17 to 3.9). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 446, #721] The Cynic is a representative of god who has been sent by Zeus to humans to teach them how to live (cf. Gal 1.1). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 459, #753]

Chrysippus, head of the Stoic school in 232 BCE, used allegory or symbolism in an attempt to prove that Homer and Hesiod were actually Stoics. [Ferguson, E., 334] The

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Stoics rearrange “the letters in the name of the goddess Hera (ERA) [giving] the word for air (AER).” [Ferguson, E., 336] Similarly, Paul (and Jesus) rejects the literary meaning of the *Jewish Scriptures*. Interpreting them symbolically enabled Paul to “prove” that the Jewish Scriptures predicted long ago that Jesus Christ would be crucified, etc.

Seneca says, “What is my object in making a friend? To have someone to be able to die for, someone I may follow into exile....” [Seneca, *Letters*, Letter 9, 50] Some parallels from Paul are: Gal 5.14 says love your neighbor; Rom 12.14, bless those who persecute you. Note that Paul is not as universal as some think, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6.14-17).

Seneca says that the slave “has the same good sky above him, breathes as you do, lives as you do, dies as you do...”. [Seneca, *Letters*, Letter 47, 93] He also says, “treat your inferiors in the way in which you would like to be treated by your own superiors.” [Ibid] Plutarch (45-125 CE) says we should give good for evil. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 384, #609] Paul says to “overcome evil with good” (Rom 12.17,19-21; cf. Prv 20.22 — do not repay evil with evil).

Epictetus says we are “all children of god, and that god is the father of gods and men...”. [Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.3.1; 11] Paul teaches that God is our father (cf. Rom 1.7; Rom 8.15-17; 1 Cor 8.6; Gal 4.6; Mk 11.25).

Seneca writes that one should love one’s country, father, and wife. [Seneca, *Letters*, Letter 88, 153] He writes that the wise man “remains self-content even when he

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marries, even when he brings up his children.” [Seneca, *Letters*, Letter 9, 52] He would rather not live at all than to give up human companionship. Of Musonius Rufus (30-101 CE) it was said, “...he is the clearest of any ancient writer on the equality of man and woman (Frgs. Nos 3 and 4); he believed marriage to be a complete partnership” with sex being confined to marriage for the purpose of procreation. [Ferguson, E., 344]

Epictetus states that men get married and beget children because they wish to be happy. [Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.11.3; 28] Family feeling is good and natural. [Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.11.17; 30] He also says that the man who commits adultery destroys friendly feeling toward his neighbor, destroys friendship, and the country [Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.4.1-3; 82] (cf. 1 Cor 6.9-12, adulterers will not inherit the kingdom). Seneca writes that many things encumber us in our pursuit of wisdom, the “body, property, brother, friend, child, and slave...”. [Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.1.14; 6] The fundamental purpose of philosophy is to learn how to live. [Seneca, *Letters*, Letter 55, 107]

Judaism celebrates life. Stoic-Cynics varied as to the value they put on marriage but most accepted it if it was not perceived as an obstacle to the pursuit of wisdom.

Paul’s view on marriage is similar to Stoic-Cynics in that he does not explicitly forbid it, yet like some Stoics, he writes that the people should be celibate as he is (cf. 1 Cor 7.7-8) and that a man should not touch a woman (1 Cor 7.1). He also says that women should be silent in

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church and subordinate to the husband, a view that most Greco-Romans would find acceptable.

Stoicism and Paul share the same terminology, “Spirit, conscience, *Logos*, virtue, self-sufficiency, freedom of speech, reasonable service, etc.” [Ferguson, E., 346] Also, both believe in the human tendency toward evil (stronger in Paul), the need for self-examination, human kinship with the divine, denial of the world’s values, and emphasis on inner freedom from external circumstances. [Ibid., 346]

Other parallels between Paul and the Stoic-Cynics are: [Ibid., 346]

- Both the Stoic-Cynics and Paul believed in proselytizing, and posited founders whose teachings were passed down.
- Both saw externals as neutral or indifferent, playing no role in salvation. Examples of externals would be marriage, wealth, politics, as well as whether one was a Greek or barbarian, slave or free, male or female.
- Both argued that one must not fear death or suffering in the pursuit of truth.
- Both thought of conscience as the source of ethical truth.

In general, Paul was influenced by the ideals of the pagan ethicists, “especially by the Cynic-Stoic synthesis of

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popular philosophy” (cf. Gal 5.19-23). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 474, #782]

“Seneca’s sentiments have more nearly approximated Christian teaching than those of any other classical philosopher. Tertullian described him as ‘always our Seneca’ (*On the Soul* 20),” [Ferguson, E., 343] though, of course, the letters supposedly written by Paul and Seneca to each other are bogus.

The fundamental difference between Paul and the Stoic-Cynics is that the latter sought virtue in this world, while Paul sought salvation in the next world. For Paul, life begins after death.

So Paul’s ethics were a syncretistic mix of Stoicism and Cynicism, but what of his views on salvation? Were they Jewish?

## GNOSTICISM

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To Paul's syncretistic soup, we must add a large measure of Gnosticism. Gnosticism existed by the first century CE. [Cohn-Sherbok, D., 56. In the description of Gnosticism that follows, we have relied on this book] J. M. Robinson dates it to this century or earlier. [*Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible, The: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962) Supplemental Volume, 364] A number of scholars concede that incipient Gnosticism coexisted with Christianity’s beginnings.

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In Gnosticism, souls (sparks) have been expelled from heaven (the *pleroma*) and are trapped in the flesh, [Maccoby, H., 188] i.e., bodies. [Maccoby, H., 187] The gnostic savior, a spiritual being, descends from the heavenly hierarchy and imparts *gnosis* (mystical knowledge) to the elect (*pneumatics*) which enables them to be reunited with God. Some souls can be saved by the elect; others are doomed. When enough sparks have returned to God, the material cosmos will collapse back into chaos.

Hyam Maccoby in *Paul and Hellenism* identifies some elements common to Paulinism and Gnosticism. [Maccoby, H., 186] The rulers of the cosmos are evil spiritual entities (*archons*) and the purpose of the savior's mission is to break the power of these evil forces led by the demiurge (Satan), and save the elect. Both Gnostics and Paulinists believed that humans fell from grace, from innocence to irredeemable sin; they are cut off from the true God and can only be rescued by a divine redeemer.

In ancient Judaism there was no such radical alienation from God. The sin of Adam and Eve simply explains why God's children do not live in Paradise, why men must labor to make a living, and women must give birth in pain. After Genesis, the *Jewish Scriptures* rarely refer to the Eden story. Judaism does not require a divine redeemer.

Additionally, Paulinism and Gnosticism admired figures in the Jewish Bible who are non-Jewish, for example, Abraham, Seth, Enoch, and Melchizedek. According to

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Paul, all of the Jewish prophets thought that Judaism was only temporarily valid. [Maccoby, H., 188] Against Exodus, Paul asserts that the law was given to Moses not by God, but by angels who also authored it. [Maccoby, H., 41] (The Greek word *diatageis* in Galatians 3.19 means *ordained* not *transmitted*. [Ibid] ) Similarly, for the Gnostics the law was composed and delivered by the evil demiurge, not by God.

Paul obliterates the literal text of the Jewish Scriptures by allegorizing it, turning it into a Paulinist anti-Jewish book. [Maccoby, H., 51] Similarly, Gnostics turned “bad guys” into the good Gnostics, e.g., the snake in Eden is the cosmic savior. Plato (428-349 BCE) pointed out that pagans allegorized their sacred myths and writings. Plato’s Socrates says, “these fine poems are not human...,” “the poets are merely the interpreters of the gods,...” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 460, #754] The editors of *HCNT* assert that Paul “totally agrees” with the pagan idea of inspiration (cf. Gal 1.1). H. Maccoby concludes that Paul is “close to the Gnostics in his view of God, Satan and Torah.” [Maccoby, H., 52-53]

As regard anti-Jewishness, the Gnostics on the whole did not view the Jews as evil incarnate but as simply spiritually ignorant. However, they opened the doors for diabolization of the Jews by Christians, e.g., Jews are the people of the devil (cf. Jn 8.44). [Maccoby, H., 37]

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Another large influence on Paul was the mysteries, or savior religions.

In the mystery cults, a savior god or one close to him or her dies and is brought back to life. Members of the cult undergo sacred secret rites, e.g., baptism and sacred meals. Through these rites they receive benefits such as health, protection from drowning at sea, and bliss after death and some argue that they achieve immortality. Momigliano writes that the “Imperial cult and [the mysteries] are, in fact, two of the most important features of Roman religion in the imperial period.” [Momigliano, A., 222]

From the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE in the Greek world there were local mystery cults that, like the Christians, included women, foreigners, and slaves, and which, as E. Ferguson grants, may have involved the concept of an afterlife. [Ferguson, E., 236-237] The mysteries “became truly universal after the conquests of Alexander, being expressly made available to citizens of the Roman Republic and then the empire.” [Ferguson, E., 238]

### *Orpheus*

The mysteries each had their associated myths. Orpheus was initiated into the Samothracian Mysteries and descended into the land of the dead, attempting to rescue his wife Eurydice. He was killed by the women of Thrace. [Grimal, P., 315-316] Some said that he instituted the mysteries; in one tradition, the soul of Orpheus was



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taken to the Elysian Fields (heaven) and brought out the secrets of how to reach the land of the blessed. [Ibid., 316]

### *Eleusinian Mysteries*

In the myth of the Eleusinian mystery, Kore, the daughter of the grain goddess Demeter, is kidnapped by Hades and taken to the underworld, the land of the dead. After Demeter negotiates with Zeus, Kore is allowed to spend part of the year on earth with her mother, thus benefiting humanity by preserving the agricultural seasons. Demeter assures her initiates of happiness after death. This mystery cult predates Jesus and Christianity by about 600 years.

### *Dionysius*

The cult of Dionysius was widespread during the Roman imperial period. In its myth Zeus inadvertently kills his human consort, Semele, with a lightning bolt which makes their unborn son, Dionysus, immortal. Dionysius engages in missionary activity from Greece to India preaching that he is an Olympian god. He and his followers are persecuted. Like Osiris he is hacked to pieces but is brought back to life by Zeus. Later the son travels to the underworld, bringing his human mother's shade back from Hades [Ferguson, E., 238-241, 243] (cf. Jesus' trip after his death to preach to the spirits in prison 1 Pet 3.19-20). Dionysius then ascends to Mount Olympus to take his place among the immortals.

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### *Isis*

By 38 CE the cult of the Egyptian goddess, Isis, had spread throughout the empire. (The following information on Isis is from E. Ferguson.) [Ferguson, E., 253, 255, 297-300] She describes her powers in an inscription (1<sup>st</sup> cent. BCE to 1<sup>st</sup> cent. CE). In part Isis says that she is the oldest daughter of Cronus, and the wife and sister of Osiris who was dismembered by their brother, Set, who scatters his body throughout Egypt. Isis brings Osiris back to life. She is called God by women. She divided earth from heaven, created the courses of the stars and the sun and moon, made justice strong, coupled woman and man, set the pregnancy of women at nine months, ordered that children will love their parents and that humans will love truth. She punishes those who act unjustly. Lucius in *The Golden Ass* says that Isis ruled the world, and was the savior of the human race. Devotees of Isis repented of their sins. Meals were commonly associated with mysteries, and in the cult of Isis, the elect are “saved,” i.e., given immortality or bliss after death.

### *Adonis and Attis*

E. Ferguson tells us that the Phoenician deity, Adonis, is killed by a wild boar and brought back from the dead. In the late second century BCE, the cult of the Phrygian gods, Cybele and Attis, was received in Rome by the Senate. Attis dies a violent death. [Ferguson, 260, 264] R. Price writes up an “... effigy of ashes crucified to a pine trunk. On the third day he would be proclaimed gloriously risen from the dead...” [Price, R. M, 2000, 87]

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### *Mithras*

According to Ferguson, Plutarch says that, as a mystery, the Persian cult of Mithras existed by 67 BCE. A shrine to Mithras was built into Hadrian's wall (d 135 CE) in what is now England. Like Jesus in the birth stories of Matthew and Luke, Mithras was not a product of sexual union. He slays the sacred bull from whose blood all life arises and is associated with the sun god, Sol, with whom he shares a sacred meal. As with the deified Roman emperors, Mithras ascends to heaven. E. Ferguson concedes that the Persian god offered a form of salvation to his adherents. An inscription in Rome says, "You saved us by shedding the eternal blood." [Ferguson, 271, 274, 275] Many scholars assert that Mithras believed that baptism of blood made them immortal. This cult like that of Isis had "a supernaturally sanctioned ethic" comparable to Christianity. [Ferguson, 281]

### *Hercules*

Hercules was one of the most universally worshiped gods in the Greco-Roman world and was said to have been initiated into the Mysteries of Eleusis. He was punished by Zeus for freeing Prometheus, who had saved humans by providing them with fire. Hercules, after much physical and psychological suffering, climbed onto his burning funeral pyre on Mount Oetna, and was raised to the heavens on a cloud, becoming one of the immortals.

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### *Asclepius*

Asclepius, the god of healing, raised so many people from the dead that Zeus killed him, after which he was divinized. [Price, R. M., 2000, 62-63, 189, 193-195] Price writes that, “the Greco-Roman world was up to its hips in mystery gods.” [Price, R. M., 2000, 88] We would add that it was also up to its hips in other gods who were associated with violent death and helping humankind.

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Like most pagan saviors, Paul’s Christ is an ahistorical being. The apostle gives no date or place for Jesus’ birth, crucifixion, or death. His Christ is crucified and translated in the mythic and vague past where, according to Greco-Roman tradition, Hercules, Asclepius, Kore, Dionysus, Osiris, Mithras, and many other demigods and gods died violent deaths.

The savior gods were associated with the translation of a person after his or her death. H. Maccoby writes, “Dionysius... is brought to life again by Rhea. Adonis... is raised on the third day. Baal... comes back to life. Attis, after dying of his wounds, comes back to life and dances. Osiris... is put together again and revived, after which he becomes a god. In Mithraism, the bull killed by Mithras was not itself resurrected, but it provided life, through its body and blood, for the whole created universe.” [Maccoby, H., 71] Paul makes many references to the raising up of Jesus. But as Maccoby points out, there is no reference to a dying messiah in Judaism until the Talmud of the fifth century [b. Sukkah 52a]. “[W]e find

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the antecedents of the death of Christ...” in the mystery religions. [Maccoby, H., 63, 65]

Most scholars vigorously deny that Paul was a member of a mystery, arguing that the myth of dying and rising gods did not predate Paul. R. Price asserts that perhaps the strongest argument “that the resurrection of the Mystery Religion saviors preceded Christianity is the fact that ancient Christian apologists did not deny it! Only so would they have reached into left field for the desperate argument that Satan *foreknew* the resurrection of Jesus and counterfeited it *in advance*, so as to prejudice pagans against Christianity as a mere imitative also-ran, which is just what they thought of it” [Price, R. M, 2000, 91]. That is, Satan supplied myths of the dying and rising gods so that pagans could later claim that Christians copied the Mithran and other pagan savior cults!

H. Maccoby concludes that, “In general, we must conclude that there is good evidence that the concept of salvific revival or resurrection of a violently-dying god existed in the mystery cults by the time of Paul.” [Maccoby, H., 73]

JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH  
EXCURSUS: THE PAGAN THEOLOGY OF PAUL

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THE PAGAN THEOLOGY OF PAUL FROM THE JEWISH  
ENCYCLOPEDIA (1906)

The Apostle Paul

SAUL OF TARSUS (known as Paul, the Apostle of the Heathen): (Redirected from PAUL OF TARSUS.) (From Jewish Encyclopedia - 1906) Edited by the Daltons.

The actual founder of the Christian Church as opposed to Judaism; born before 10 C.E.; died after 63. The records containing the views and opinions of the opponents of Paul and Paulinism are no longer in existence; and the history of the early Church has been colored by the writers of the second century, who were anxious to suppress or smooth over the controversies of the preceding period, as is shown in the Acts of the Apostles and also by the fact that the Epistles ascribed to Paul, as has been proved by modern critics, are partly spurious (Galatians, Ephesians, I and II Timothy, Titus, and others) and partly interpolated.

Not a Hebrew Scholar; a Hellenist. "HELLENISM - Word used to express the assimilation, especially by the Jews, of Greek speech, manners, and culture, from the fourth century B.C. through the first centuries of the common era."

Note by the Editors. Was Paul Jewish? He was a non-Jew, perhaps one that became a proselyte and then dropped out of the program and thus, knew only a little bit about Judaism as his letters reflect.

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Most modern Christian scholars assume that Paul was Jewish and explain away the evidence of his paganism by simply stating that he was a Hellenized Jew, like Philo. Of course, they ignore the fact that Philo, while acquainted with Greek culture, nevertheless remained Jewish; for example, he speaks of the logos but his logos is not a personal being as it is in the Gospel of John 1.1.

The writer in the Jewish Encyclopedia correctly insists that Paul had no rabbinical training and that he was a pure Hellenist. He also concedes that Paul made mistakes relating to his alleged Jewish ancestry etc. and yet the writer states that Paul was born of Jewish parents which is doubtful. End of Note.

Saul (whose Roman cognomen was Paul; see Acts xiii. 9) was born of Jewish parents in the first decade of the common era at Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts ix. 11, xxi. 39, xxii. 3). The claim in Rom. xi. 1 and Phil. iii. 5 that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, suggested by the similarity of his name with that of the first Israelitish king, is, if the passages are genuine, a false one, no tribal lists or pedigrees of this kind having been in existence at that time.

Nor is there any indication in Paul's writings or arguments that he had received the rabbinical training ascribed to him by Christian writers, ancient and modern; least of all could he have acted or written as he did had he been, as is alleged (Acts xxii. 3), the disciple of Gamaliel I., the mild Hillelite. His quotations from Scripture, which are all taken, directly or from memory,

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

from the Greek version, betray no familiarity with the original Hebrew text.

... —he was, if any of the Epistles that bear his name are really his, entirely a Hellenist in thought and sentiment. As such he was imbued with the notion that "the whole creation groaneth" for liberation from "the prison-house of the body," from this earthly existence, which, because of its pollution by sin and death, is intrinsically evil (Gal. i. 4; Rom. v. 12, vii. 23-24, viii. 22; I Cor. vii. 31; II Cor. v. 2, 4; comp. Philo, "De Allegoriis Legum," iii. 75; *idem*, "De Vita Mosis," iii. 17; *idem*, "De Ebrietate," § 26; and Wisdom ii.24). As a Hellenist, also, he distinguished between an earthly and a heavenly Adam (I Cor. xv. 45-49; comp. Philo, "De Allegoriis Legum," i. 12), and, accordingly, between the lower psychic. life and the higher spiritual life attained only by asceticism (Rom. xii. 1; I Cor. vii. 1-31, ix. 27, xv. 50; comp. Philo, "De Profugis," § 17; and elsewhere). His whole state of mind shows the influence of the theosophic or Gnostic lore of Alexandria, especially the Hermes literature recently brought to light by Reizenstein in his important work "Poimandres," 1904 (see Index, s. v. "Paulus," "Briefe des Paulus," and "Philo"); hence his strange belief in supernatural powers (Reizenstein, *l.c.* pp. 77, 287), in fatalism, in "speaking in tongues" (I Cor. xii.-xiv.; comp. Reizenstein, *l.c.* p. 58; Dieterich, "Abraxas," pp. 5 *et seq.*; Weinel, "Die Wirkungen des Geistes und der Geister," 1899, pp. 72 *et seq.*; I Cor. xv. 8; II Cor. xii. 1-6; Eph. iii. 3), and in mysteries or sacraments (Rom. xvi. 25; Col. i. 26, ii. 2, iv. 3; Eph. i. 9, iii. 4, vi. 19)—a term borrowed solely from heathen rites.



PAUL AND THE MYSTERIES  
ANTI-JEWISH ATTITUDE

Whatever the physiological or psychological analysis of Paul's temperament may be, his conception of life was not Jewish. Nor can his unparalleled animosity and hostility to Judaism as voiced in the Epistles be accounted for except upon the assumption that, while born a Jew, he was never in sympathy or in touch with the doctrines of the rabbinical schools. ... It is quite natural, then, that not only the Jews (Acts xxi. 21), but also the Judæo-Christians, regarded Paul as an "apostate from the Law" (see Eusebius, *l.c.* iii. 27; Irenæus, "Adversus Hæreses," i. 26, 2; Origen, "Contra Celsum," v. 65; Clement of Rome, "Recognitiones," i. 70. 73).

Note by the Editors. Paul's attitude toward the Jews is typical of some Roman writers like Tacitus: Jews hate non-Jews etc. but Paul's hatred is pathological. This is because if Jews interpreted the Jewish Scriptures correctly (literally), then Christianity would be invalidated. In addition, the vast number of converts to Christianity were non-Jews (Gentiles). What does it mean if the people of God do not convert? Thus, Paul had to twist the words of Genesis so that Abraham would become the father of those who are saved i.e. non-Jews. End of Note.

JEWISH PROSELYTISM AND PAUL

(Non-Jews were allowed to convert to Judaism long before Paul. Editors.)

... Why did Paul find it necessary to create a new system of faith for the admission of the Gentiles, in view of the

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

fact that the Synagogue had well-nigh two centuries before opened its door to them and, with the help of the Hellenistic literature, had made a successful propaganda, as even the Gospels testify? ... (Matt. xxiii. 15) .... See Schürer, *l.c.* i. 126) and others (who wanted to reserve the claim of universality for Christianity, (denied) the existence of uncircumcised proselytes in Judaism ....

Note by Editors as to Mt 23.15:

Mt 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Very few modern biblical scholars would accept this passage by Matthew as an accurate statement. The power of Pharisees was limited to Judea. Scribes were not a political or religious group but rather an occupation. However, we certainly would not deny that Judaism accepted converts in the ancient world as it does to this day. End of Note.

This was the question at issue between the disciples of Jesus and those of Paul; the former adhering to the view of the Essenes, which was also that of Jesus (Few modern scholars would accept the connection between Jesus and the Essenes – Eds.); the latter taking an independent position that started not from the Jewish but from the non-Jewish standpoint. Paul fashioned a Christ of his own, a church of his own, and a system of belief of his own; and because there were many mythological and Gnostic elements in his theology which appealed more to

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the non-Jew than to the Jew, he won the heathen world to his belief.

Note by Editors. Of course, the real issue was not about circumcision. It was rather about the rejection of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah since he did not have the characteristics of the Messiah. Another problem was that the vast majority of Jews were not expecting a Messiah, much less a divine, Crucified Messiah. For example, a messiah is not mentioned by Philo or Josephus. This is simply a Christian fiction. End of Note.

### PAUL'S CHRIST (A DIVINE CHRIST WOULD MAKE JUDAISM A POLYTHEISTIC RELIGION)

Multiple gods would not have been a problem for the polytheistic pagan world. It would not have been a problem for Roman philosophers and other the educated pagans; for example for the Roman Stoics there was one God with many names. Editors.)

In the foreground of all of Paul's teaching stands his peculiar vision of Christ, to which he constantly refers as his only claim and title to apostleship (I Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8; II Cor. xii. 1-7; Phil. iii. 9; Gal. i. 1, 12, 16) .... The other apostles saw Jesus in the flesh; Paul saw him when, in a state of entrancement, he was carried into paradise to the third heaven, where he heard "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (II Cor. xii. 2-4).... To him the Messiah was the son of God in a metaphysical sense, "the image of God" (II Cor. iv. 4; Col. i. 15), "the heavenly Adam" (I Cor. xv. 49 ... the mediator between God and the world (I Cor. viii. 6), "the first-born of all

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creation, for by him were all things created" (Col. i. 15-17), identical also with the Holy Spirit manifested in Israel's history (I Cor. x. 4; II Cor. iii. 17 .... [Note: In any case, the Christ of Paul was a spiritual, heavenly being, not a human being; much less was he a Jewish historical figure of the recent past.]

It is, however, chiefly as "the king of glory" (I Cor. ii. 8), as ruler of the powers of light and life eternal, that Christ is to manifest his cosmic power. He has to annihilate Satan or Belial, the ruler of this world of darkness and death, with all his hosts of evil, physical and moral (I Cor. xv. 24-26). Paul's "gnosis" (I Cor. viii. 1, 7; II Cor. ii. 14; I Tim. vi. 20) is a revival of Persian dualism, which makes of all existence, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, a battle between light and darkness (I Thess. v. 4-5; Eph. v. 8-13; Col. i. 13), between flesh and spirit (I Cor. xv. 48; Rom. viii. 6-9), between corruption and life everlasting (I Cor. xv. 50, 53). The object of the Church is to obtain for its members the spirit, the glory, and the life of Christ, its "head," and to liberate them from the servitude of and allegiance to the flesh and the powers of earth. In order to become participants in the salvation that had come and the resurrection that was nigh, the saints were to cast off the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light, the breastplate of love, and the helmet of hope (Rom. xiii. 12; II Cor. x. 4; Eph. vi. 11. I Thess. v. 8; comp. Wisdom v. 17-18; Isa. lix. 17 ....

## THE CRUCIFIED MESSIAH

How then can this world of perdition and evil, of sin and death, be overcome, and the true life be attained instead?

## PAUL AND THE MYSTERIES

... was apparently the one uppermost also in the mind of Paul (see Kabisch, "Die Eschatologie des Paulus," 1893); and in the form of a vision of the crucified Christ the answer came to him to "die in order to live." This vision, seen in his ecstatic state, was to him more than a mere reality: it was the pledge ("erabon") of the resurrection and the life of which he was in quest. Having seen "the first-born of the resurrection" (I Cor. xv. 20-24 .... he felt certain of the new life which all "the sons of light" were to share. No sooner had the idea taken hold of him that the world of resurrection, or "the kingdom of God," had come, or would come with the speedy reappearance of the Messiah (or a Savior God), then he would invest with higher powers "the elect ones" who were to participate in that life of the spirit. There can be no sin or sensual passion in a world in which the spirit rules. Nor is there need of any law in a realm where men live as angels. ... To bring back the state of paradise and to undo the sin of Adam, the work of the serpent, which brought death into the world—this seems to have been the dream of Paul. The baptism of the Church, to which sinners and saints, women and men, Jews and Gentiles, were alike invited, suggested to him the putting off of the earthly Adam and the putting on of the heavenly Adam (Rom. vi.). He was certain that by the very power of their faith, which performed all the wonders of the spirit in the Church (I Cor. xii., xv.), would the believers in Christ at the time of his reappearance be also miraculously lifted to the clouds and transformed into spiritual bodies for the life of the resurrection (I Thess. iv.; I Cor. xv.; Rom. viii.). These are the elements of Paul's theology – a system of belief which

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

endeavored to unite all men, but at the expense of sound reason and common sense.

### PAUL'S CONVERSION

Note by Eds. Acts of the Apostles is a fantasy of the late first century or early second century CE. It is in our opinion historically worthless. Many modern scholars agree with this.

There is possibly a historical kernel to the story related in the Acts (vii. 58-ix. 1-31, xxii. 3-21, xxvi. 10-19), that, while on the road to Damascus, commissioned with the task of exterminating the Christian movement antagonistic to the Temple and the Law (*ib.* vi. 13), Paul had a vision in which Jesus appeared to him, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (comp. I Sam. xxvi. 18); that in consequence of this vision he became, with the aid of Ananais, one of the Christian seers, "a chosen vessel unto me [Christ], to bear my name before the Gentiles." According to the Acts (vii. 58; ix. 2; xxii. 5; xxv. 1, 10-12), Paul was a young man charged by the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem with the execution of Stephen and the seizure of the disciples of Jesus. (The Sanhedrin of Jerusalem had no such power outside of Judah and certainly no power outside of Palestine. Nor, outside the New Testament, is there any evidence of the persecution of Christians by Jews. Eds.) The statement, however (*ib.* xxii. 8-9), that being a zealous observer of the law of the Fathers, "he persecuted the Church unto death," could have been made only at a time when it was no longer known what a wide difference existed between the Sadducean high priests and elders, who had a vital

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interest in quelling the Christian movement, and the Pharisees, who had no reason for condemning to death either Jesus or Stephen. In fact, it is derived from the Epistle to the Galatians (i. 13-14), the spuriousness of which has been shown by Bruno Baur, Steck, and most convincingly by Friedrich Maehliß ("Die Unechtheit des Galaterbriefs," 1891). The same is the case with Phil. iii. 5. Acts xxii. 17-18 speaks of another vision which Paul had while in the Temple, in which Jesus told him to depart from Jerusalem and go with his gospel to the Gentiles. Evidently Paul entertained long before his vision those notions of the Son of God which he afterward expressed; but the identification of his Gnostic Christ with the crucified Jesus of the church he had formerly antagonized was possibly the result of a mental paroxysm experienced in the form of visions.

### INFLUENCE OF THE GREEK MYSTERIES (BAPTISM. COMMUNION. PREDESTINATION)

Paul, the Hellenist, however knowingly or unknowingly, seems to have taken the heathen cult associations as his pattern while introducing new features into the Church (see ... Hatch, "Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church," 1890, pp. 281-296; Cumont, "Die Mysterien des Mithra, Deutsch von Gehrich," 1903 ...). To him baptism is no longer a symbolic rite suggestive of purification or regeneration, as in Jewish and Judæo-Christian circles ... but a mystic rite by which the person that enters the water and emerges again undergoes an actual transformation, dying with Christ to the world of flesh and sin, and rising with him to the

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world of the spirit, the new life of the resurrection (Rom. vi. 1-10). (In all of history Jews never accepted baptism as an initiation rite. Jews did not become Jews through any water ceremony. Eds.)

Still more is the partaking of the bread and wine of the communion meal, the so-called "Lord's Supper," rendered the means of a mystic union with Christ, "a participation in his blood and body," exactly as was the Mithraic meal a real participation in the blood and body of Mithra (see Cumont, *l.c.*). To Paul, the Holy Spirit itself is not an ethical but a magic power that works sanctification and salvation. It is a mystic substance permeating the Church as a dynamic force, rendering all the members saints, and pouring forth its graces in the various gifts, such as those of prophesying, speaking in tongues, and interpreting voices, and others displayed in teaching and in the administration of charity and similar Church functions (Rom. xii. 4-8; I Cor. xii., xiv.; see Kabisch, *l.c.* pp. 261-281). The Church forms "the body of Christ" not in a figurative sense, but through the same mystic actuality as that by which the participants of heathen cults become, through their mysteries or sacraments, parts of their deities. Such is the expressed view of Paul when he contrasts the "table of Christ" with the "table of the demons" (I Cor. x. 20-21). While Paul borrows from the Jewish propaganda literature, especially the Sibyllines, the idea of the divine wrath striking especially those that commit the capital sins of idolatry and incest (fornication) and acts of violence or fraudulence (Rom. i. 18-32; I Thess. iv. 5)... (W)hile he accordingly wishes the heathen to turn from their idols to



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God, with desire of being saved by His son (I Thess. i. 9-10), his Church has by no means the moral perfection of the human race for its aim and end, as has Judaism. Salvation alone, that is, redemption from a world of perdition and sin, the attainment of a life of incorruption, is the object; yet this is the privilege only of those chosen and predestined "to be conformed to the image of His [God's] son" (Rom. viii. 28-30). It is, accordingly, not personal merit nor the greater moral effort that secures salvation, but some arbitrary act of divine grace which justifies one class of men and condemns the other (*ib.* ix.). It is not righteousness, nor even faith—in the Jewish sense of perfect trust in the all-loving and all-forgiving God and Father—which leads to salvation, but faith in the atoning power of Christ's death, which in some mystic or judicial manner justifies the undeserving (Rom. iii. 22, iv., v.; comp. Faith; for the mystic conception of faith, πιστις, in Hellenism alongside of gnosis, see Reizenstein, *l.c.* pp. 158-159).

## THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS

(A Pagan Myth. God's wrath is appeased by the death of Jesus. Polytheism. Editors.)

Heathen as is the conception of a church securing a mystic union with the Deity by means of sacramental rites, equally pagan is Paul's conception of the crucifixion of Jesus. While he accepts the Judæo-Christian view of the atoning power of the death of Jesus as the suffering Messiah (Rom. iii. 25, viii. 3), the crucifixion of Jesus as the son of God assumes for him at the very beginning the character of a mystery revealed to him, "a

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stumbling-block to the Jews and folly to the Greeks" (I Cor. i. 23-ii. 2, ii. 7-10). It is to him a cosmic act by which God becomes reconciled to Himself. God sent "his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh" in order to have His (God's) wrath appeased by his death. "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up," so that by his blood all men might be saved (Rom. v. 8; viii. 3, 32). To a Jewish mind trained by rabbinical acumen this is not pure monotheistic, but mythological, thinking. Paul's "Son of God" is, far more than the Logos of Philo, an infringement of the absolute unity of God. (It is polytheism, a belief in multiple gods. Editors) While the predicate "God" applied to him in Titus ii. 13 may be put to the account of Paul's school rather than to his own, throughout all the Epistles a share in the divinity is ascribed to Jesus in such a manner as to detract from the glory of God. He is, or is expected to be, called upon as "the Lord" (I Cor. i. 2; Rom. x. 13; Phil. ii. 10-11). Only the pagan idea of the "man-God" or "the second God," the world's artificer, and "son of God" (in Plato, in the Hermes-Tot literature as shown by Reizenstein, *l.c.*), or the idea of a king of light descending to Hades, as in the Mandæan-Babylonian literature (Brandt, "Die Mandäische Religion," 1889, pp. 151-156), could have suggested to Paul the conception of a God who surrenders the riches of divinity and descends to the poverty of earthly life in order to become a savior of the human race (I Cor. xv. 28, with ref. to Ps. viii. 6-7; Phil. ii. 6-10). Only from Alexandrian Gnosticism, or, as Reizenstein (*l.c.* pp. 25-26; comp. pp. 278, 285) convincingly shows, only from pagan pantheism, could he have derived the idea of the "pleroma," "the fulness" of the Godhead dwelling in Christ as the head of all

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principality and power, as him who is before all things and in whom all things consist (Col. i. 15-19, ii. 9).

## PAUL'S OPPOSITION TO THE LAW

Paul's attitude toward the Law was by no means hostile from the beginning or on principle, as the interpolated Epistle to the Romans and the spurious one to the Galatians represent it. Neither is it the legalistic (nomistic) character of Pharisaic Judaism which he militates against, as Jesus in the Gospels is represented as doing; nor was he prompted by the desire to discriminate between the ceremonial and the moral laws in order to accentuate the spiritual side of religion. ... All such interpretations fail to account for Paul's denunciation of all law, moral as well as ceremonial, as an intrinsic evil (Hausrath, "Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte," 2d ed., iii. 14).

According to his arguments (Rom. iii. 20, iv. 15, vii-viii.), it is the Law that begets sin and works wrath, because without the Law there is no transgression. ... For Paul, the world is doomed: it is flesh beset by sin and altogether of the evil one; hence home, family life, worldly wisdom, all earthly enjoyment are of no account, as they belong to a world which passes away (I Cor. vii. 31). ... In fact, they ought to live in celibacy; and only on account of Satan's temptation to lust are they allowed to marry (*ib.* vi. 18-vii. 8). ... As regards eating and drinking, especially of offerings to idols, which were prohibited to the proselyte of the gate by the early Christians as well as by the Jews (comp. Acts xv. 29), Paul takes the singular position that the Gnostics, those who possess the higher knowledge

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("gnosis"; I Cor. viii. 1, xiii. 2, xiv. 6; II Cor. iv. 6; comp. Reizenstein, *l.c.* p. 158), are "the strong ones" who care not for clean and unclean things and similar ritualistic distinctions (Rom. xiv. 1-23; I Cor. viii. 1-13). Only those that are "weak in faith" do care; and their scruples should be heeded by the others.... The Gnostic principle enunciated by Porphyrius ("De Abstinencia," i. 42), "Food that enters the body can as little defile free man as any impurity cast into the sea can contaminate the ocean, the deep fountain of purity" (comp. Matt. xv. 11), has in Paul's system an eschatological character: "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17; comp. Ber. 17a; Jew. Encyc, v. 218, *s.v.* Eschatology). ...

The original attitude of Paul to the Law was accordingly not that of opposition as represented in Romans and especially in Galatians, but that of a claimed transcendency. (Christ is the end of the law and death.) He desired "the strong ones" to do without the Law as "schoolmaster" (Gal. iii. 24). The Law made men servants: Christ rendered them "sons of God." That is, their nature was transformed into an angelic, if not altogether divine, one (Rom. viii. 14-29; I Cor. vi. 1-3).

*Comment by the Editors on Paul's Opposition to the Law:* For the purpose of this book the editors are not concerned as to exactly when Paul became obsessed with condemning Jewish law. To us, the crucial point is in his last paragraph which we quote immediately below.

"The original attitude of Paul to the Law was accordingly not that of opposition as represented in Romans and

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especially in Galatians, but that of a claimed transcendency. (Christ is the end of the law and death.) "

Our only disagreement with the author is that he states that Paul originally was not opposed to the law; Paul only insists that the law must be transcended. But how can you insist on transcendency without opposing the law? How could Christ be the end of the law and death without being opposed to the law? Perhaps, the author would agree with our interpretation of his writing. This appears in the next paragraph.

The Stoics thought that being slave or free, male or female, Jew or non-Jew or having blue eyes or preferring chocolate ice cream was irrelevant to salvation, that is, were neutral. So with Paul. The death of Christ on the cross, baptism, and communion were taken mystically and this for Paul resulted in salvation. Morality does not save. A mystical faith in the death of Jesus and in sacraments brings salvation. Stoicism had a huge influence on early Christianity, even on the New Testament. The Stoics thought that ethical conduct saved people. Paul rejects this Stoic idea that ethical behavior brings salvation in this life - and rejects the idea of any supernatural world or salvation. For more on moral salvation see volume 2 of our series on the nonexistence of Jesus. The Editors.

## ANTINOMIANISM AND JEW-HATRED

His antinomian theology is chiefly set forth in the Epistle to the Romans, many parts of which, however, are the product of the second-century Church with its fierce

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

hatred of the Jew, *e.g.*, such passages as ii. 21-24, charging the Jews with theft, adultery, sacrilege, and blasphemy, or ix. 22 and xi. 28 (comp. iii. 2). (As we have shown above in Part One of this book, hatred of Jews and Judaism existed long before the second century. Indeed, this bigotry was present when the religion came into being. Eds.) The underlying motive of Paul—the tearing down of the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile—is best expressed in Eph. ii. 14-22, where it is declared that the latter are no longer "gerim" and "toshabim" (A. V. "strangers" and "foreigners"), but "fellow citizens with the saints" of the Church and fully equal members "of the household of God." In order to accomplish his purpose, he argues that just as little as the heathen escapes the wrath of God, owing to the horrible sins he is urged to commit by his clinging to his idols, so little can the Jew escape by his Law, because "the law worketh sin and wrath" (Rom. iv. 15). Instead, indeed, of removing the germ of death brought into the world by Adam, the Law was given only to increase sin and to make all the greater the need of divine mercy which was to come through Christ, the new Adam (*ib.* v. 15-20). By further twisting the Biblical words taken from Gen. xv. 6, which he interprets as signifying that Abraham's faith became a saving power to him, and from Gen. xvii. 5, which he takes as signifying that Abraham was to be the father of the Gentiles instead of nations, he argues that the saving grace of God lies in faith (that is, blind belief) and not in the works of the Law. And so he declares faith in Jesus' atoning death to be the means of justification and salvation, and not the Law, which demands servitude, whereas the spirit of Christ makes men children of God

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(Rom. iv.-viii.). The Pauline Jew-hatred was ever more intensified (see *ib.* ix.-xi., and comp. ix. 31)—which is clear evidence of a later origin—and culminates in Gal. iii., where, besides the repetition of the argument from Gen. xv. 6 and xvii. 5, the Law is declared, with reference to Deut. xxviii. 26 and Hab. ii. 4 (comp. Rom. i. 17), to be a curse from which the crucified Christ—himself "a curse" according to the Law (Deut. xxi. 23; probably an argument taken up from controversies with the Jews)—was to redeem the believer. Another sophistic argument against the Law, furnished in Gal. iii. 19-24, and often repeated in the second century (Heb. ii. 2; Acts vii. 38, 53; Aristides, "Apologia," xiv. 4), is that the Law was received by Moses as mediator from the angels—a quaint notion based upon Deut. xxxiii. 2, LXX.; (In Deut. the law is received by Moses from God, not from Angels. Eds.) comp. Josephus, "Ant." xv. 5, § 3—and that it is not the law of God, which is a life-giving law of righteousness. Furthermore the laws of the Jews and the idolatrous practises of the heathen are placed equally low as mere servitude of "the weak and beggarly elements" ("planets"; Gal. iv. 8-11), whereas those that have put on Christ by baptism have risen above all distinctions of race, of class, and of sex, and have become children of God and heirs of Abraham (*ib.* iii. 26-29; what is meant by the words "There shall be neither male nor female" in verse 28 may be learned from Gal. v. 12, where eunuchism is advised; see B. Weiss's note *ad loc.*).

JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH  
THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW

The Pauline school writing under Paul's name, but scarcely Paul himself, worked out the theory, based upon Jer. xxxi. 30-31, that the Church of Christ represents the new covenant (see Covenant; New Testament) in place of the old (Rom. xi. 27; Gal. iv. 24; Heb. viii. 6-13, ix. 15-x. 17; and, following these passages, I Cor. xi. 23-28). Similarly the interpolator of II Cor. iii. 6-iv. 4, in connection with *ib.* iii. 3, contrasts the Old Testament with the New: the former by the letter of the Law offering but damnation and death because "the veil of Moses" is upon it, preventing God's glory from being seen; the latter being the life-giving spirit offering righteousness, that is, justification, and the light of the knowledge (gnosis) of the glory of God as reflected in the face of Jesus Christ. It is superfluous to state that this Gnostic conception of the spirit has nothing to do with the sound religious principle often quoted from I Cor. iii. 6: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The privilege of seeing God's glory as Moses did face to face through a bright mirror held out in I Cor. xiii. 12 (comp. Suk. 45b; Lev. R. i. 14) to the saints in the future is claimed in II Cor. iii. 18 and iv. 4 as a power in the actual possession of the Christian believer. The highest hope of man is regarded as realized by the writer, who looks forward to the heavenly habitation as a release from the earthly tabernacle (II Cor. v. 1-8).

SPURIOUS WRITINGS ASCRIBED TO PAUL

This unhealthy view of life maintained by Paul and his immediate followers was, however, changed by the Church the moment her organization extended over the



## PAUL AND THE MYSTERIES

world. Some epistles were written in the name of Paul with the view of establishing more friendly relations to society and government than Paul and the early Christians had maintained. While Paul warns his church-members not to bring matters of dispute before "the unjust," by which term he means the Gentiles (I Cor. vi. 1; comp. Jew. Encyc. iv. 590), these very heathen powers of Rome are elsewhere praised as the ministers of God and His avengers of wrong (Rom. xiii. 1-7); and while in I Cor. xi. 5 women are permitted to prophesy and to pray aloud in the church provided they have their heads covered, a later chapter, obviously interpolated, states, "Let your women keep silence in the churches" (*ib.* xiv. 34). So celibacy (*ib.* vii. 1-8) is declared to be the preferable state, and marriage is allowed only for the sake of preventing fornication (Eph. v. 21-33), while, on the other hand, elsewhere marriage is enjoined and declared to be a mystery or sacrament symbolizing the relation of the Church as the bride to Christ as the bridegroom (see Bride).

A still greater change in the attitude toward the Law may be noticed in the so-called pastoral epistles. Here the Law is declared to be good as a preventive of wrong-doing (I Tim. i. 8-10), marriage is enjoined, and woman's salvation is declared to consist only in the performance of her maternal duty (*ib.* ii. 12, 15), while asceticism and celibacy are condemned (*ib.* iv. 3). So all social relations are regulated in a worldly spirit, and are no longer treated, as in Paul's genuine epistles, in the spirit of otherworldliness (*ib.* ii.-vi.; II Tim. ii. 4-6; Titus. ii.-iii.; comp. Didascalia).

JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH  
HIS SYSTEM OF FAITH

(Paul) construed a system of faith which was at the very outset most radically in conflict with the spirit of Judaism: (1) He substituted for the natural, childlike faith of man in God as the ever-present Helper in all trouble, such as the Old Testament represents it everywhere, a blind, artificial faith prescribed and imposed from without and which is accounted as a meritorious act. (2) He robbed human life of its healthy impulses, the human soul of its faith in its own regenerating powers, of its belief in its own self and in its inherent tendencies to goodness, by declaring Sin to be, from the days of Adam, the all-conquering power of evil ingrained in the flesh, working everlasting doom; the deadly exhalation of Satan, the prince of this world, from whose grasp only Jesus, the resurrected Christ, the prince of the other world, was able to save man. (3) In endeavoring to liberate man from the yoke of the Law, he was led to substitute for the views and hopes maintained by the apocalyptic writers the Christian dogma with its terrors of damnation and hell for the unbeliever, holding out no hope whatsoever for those who would not accept his Christ as savior, and finding the human race divided between the saved and the lost (Rom. ii. 12; I Cor. i. 18; II Cor. ii. 15, iv. 3; II Thess. ii. 10). (4) In declaring the Law to be the begetter of sin and damnation and in putting grace or faith in its place, he ignored the great truth that duty, the divine "command," alone renders life holy; that upon the law of righteousness all ethics, individual or social, rest. (5) In condemning, furthermore, all human wisdom, reason, and common sense as "folly," and in

## PAUL AND THE MYSTERIES

appealing only to faith and vision, he opened wide the door to all kinds of mysticism and superstition. (6) Moreover, in place of the love greatly extolled in the panegyric in I Cor. xiii.—a chapter which strangely interrupts the connection between ch. xii. and xiv.—Paul instilled into the Church, by his words of condemnation of the Jews as "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction" (Rom. ix. 22; II Cor. iii. 9, iv. 3), the venom of hatred which rendered the earth unbearable for God's priest-people. Probably Paul is not responsible for these outbursts of fanaticism; but Paulinism is. It finally led to that systematic defamation and profanation of the Old Testament and its God by Marcion and his followers which ended in a Gnosticism so depraved and so shocking as to bring about a reaction in the Church in favor of the Old Testament against the Pauline antinomianism. Protestantism revived Pauline views and notions; and with these (a hatred) of Judaism and its Law took possession of Christian writers, and prevails even to the present (comp., *e.g.*, Weber, "Jüdische Theologie," 1897, where Judaism is presented throughout simply as "Nomismus"; Schürer's description of the life of the Jew "under the law" in his "Gesch." 3d ed., ii. 464-496; Bousset, "Religion des Judenthums in Neu-Testamentlichen Zeitalter," 1903, p. 107; and the more popular works by Harnack and others; and see also Schechter in "J. Q. R." iii. 754-766; Abrahams, "Prof. Schürer on Life Under the Jewish Law," *ib.* xi. 626; and Schreiner, "Die Jüngsten Urtheile über das Judenthum," 1902, pp. 26-34).

End of Encyclopedia Article

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

### MYSTICISM

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The mysteries associated death and mysticism. Paul alludes more than 150 times to a mystical union of himself (or other believers) and Christ or the holy spirit. “I have been crucified with Christ” (Gal 2.20). Many have put on Christ and been baptized in him (Gal 3.27). At the Lord’s Supper, many participate in the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor 10.16). Paul says that believers will unite with Jesus Christ in the resurrection (Rom 6.5). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 361-362, #570]

Paul believes that God caused Jesus’ death, “as a sacrifice of atonement by [Jesus’] blood” (Rom 3.24-25). In the religions of Cybele and Mithras, atonement was through the blood of sacrificed animals. The Mithran initiate is reborn for eternity (cf. Rom 6.1-10). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 364, #572]

According to Apuleius (ca 125 CE), a mystical union with the deity occurs during a religious meal (cf. Mk 14.22-25). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 149, #194, Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, 11] He also says the cult of Isis involved an ecstatic state on the part of the initiate, visions of hell and heaven, and contact with the realm of the dead. Lucius says that he was “given new life [immortality]” by Isis (cf. Rom 5.1-11). [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 361-362, #570]

### ORGANIZATION

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Lastly, we must note the similarity of the organization of Paul's churches with that of the voluntary associations common in the Greco-Roman world. Under Augustus,

## PAUL AND THE MYSTERIES

many private groups met under the auspices of a god; these voluntary associations (funeral societies, the mysteries, etc.) were regulated by the Roman senate. [Beard, M., 292-294, 12.2] Note the organizational features held in common by the mysteries and the early Pauline churches.

For example, compare the inscription from Philadelphia in Asia Minor (Lydia, late 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. or early 1<sup>st</sup> cent. BCE) with Gal 3.28; 5.13 to 6.10. [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 416-418, #670]

Here are some of the traits shared by voluntary associations and the Paulinists:

1. the “equality of women and men, slaves and free is emphasized”;
2. hospitality and belonging to a community;
3. the group is morally elite, superior to the culture at large;
4. anti-magic, as in Acts Ch 8, also see 13.8-12, 19.18-19, Rev 9.21;
5. lists of activities that are considered immoral;
6. a strict code of sexual ethics;
7. an oath at time of initiation;
8. the presence of the god in the cult (cf. Mt 18.20).

The Statutes of the Associates of the Worshipers of Diana and Antinous (2<sup>nd</sup> cent CE) [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 468-469,

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

#771] are important for understanding the Christian Eucharist texts:

1. the common meal is religious;
2. the organization revolves around the meal;
3. there was conflict involved during the celebration of the meal; the meal is institutionalized as in 1 Cor 11. In paganism, “The festive meals serve as memorials to important events in the lives of honored figures in the life and history of the group.” [Boring, M., *HCNT*, 427, #687]

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## CONCLUSIONS

R. Price is correct in pointing out that it is difficult for Christian apologists “to see extensive and basic similarities between [the mysteries] and the Christian religion. But somehow Christian scholars have managed not to see it, and this, one must suspect, for dogmatic reasons. Those without such a Maginot Line mentality have less trouble.” [Price, R., *DJ*, 88]

Many Christian writers reject equating Paul’s religion with the mysteries and Gnosticism. R. Price rightly asks, “How close does a parallel have to be to count as a parallel? Does the divine mother have to be named Mary? Does the divine child have to be named Jesus?” [Price, R., *DJ*, 89] Does the dying and rising god have to mirror Christ in every respect? Must members of every mystery cult believe that she or he will be physically resurrected in a manner identical to that of the early Christian

## PAUL AND THE MYSTERIES

church? We need not assert that Paulinism was a mirror image of a pagan mystery, as did F. Cumont, Richard Reitzenstein, and R. Bultmann in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Paul's religion was a kaleidoscope, reflecting many syncretistic elements of the Greco-Roman world; it was not an identical copy of any particular pagan religious phenomenon. The Pauline church played a creative role in the development of its own myth.

R. Price asks whether when members of the mystery cults were mystically united with the god, was "it possible for them to participate in the god's death and resurrection in some way and so gain an immortality like his? Sure it was. And the Mystery Religions were born." [Price, R., DJ, 87] And so was Paulinism.

Paul was a pagan. He was not a Jew and he was not a Christian in that he did not know of, or follow, the Marcan Jesus. His cult was not based on the life and teachings of an "historical" Jesus. In the next chapters we will see who created Jesus and why and who equated him with Paul's ahistorical Christ, thus creating orthodox Christianity.

## CHAPTER 10 THE GOSPEL OF MARK. WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 1

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*Pilate asked [Jesus], "What is truth?"*  
— John 19.38

*Paul's "belief that he received the myth from the heavenly Jesus himself has obscured his own role in creating it."*

Hyam Maccoby, *Paul and Hellenism*.

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### COMMENTS ON PROTO-MARK AND THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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#### WHO CREATED JESUS?

"It is most obvious that Paul does not appeal to the words of the Lord in support of his. . . . views. When the essentially Pauline conceptions are considered, it is clear that Paul is not dependent on Jesus. Jesus' teaching is -- to all intents and purposes -- irrelevant for Paul." Rudolf Bultmann, one of the most respected theologians of this century, in his *Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul*.

We agree with this quote by Bultmann.

#### PROTO-MARK WAS CREATED BY A WING OF PAULINISM:

But if Paul did not know of the historical Jesus, how could he have created the Gospel of Mark? The answer is simple. He did not create the Gospel. Proto-Mark was created by a wing of Paulinism. In time it became the current Gospel of Mark.

Proto-Mark presented Jesus as a human being, an obscure figure with a ministry of a few weeks or months.



## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 1

He thinks the world is about to end and that he is about to become a triumphant King in the Kingdom of God. (Whether Jesus claimed to be a Messiah or prophet is irrelevant. For our purpose it is enough to say that he is pictured as one who would become King when the Kingdom of God arrived.) He dies a failure, rejected by Jewish authorities who engineered his death through Roman authorities.

He died on the cross in despair, saying My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Mk 15.34) He desperately wanted to know why God had abandoned him. God deserted him because the plan of God was not to set up a political kingdom as Proto-Jesus had thought.

But why would a Pauline wing want to produce a Savior which would replace the purely spiritual Christ of Paul with a human Messiah and one that died a failure at that? Christians will object. Is not Jesus triumphant? Yes, but that comes later in the gospel of Mark. In Proto-Mark Jesus is a failure.

*Albert Schweitzer*

In this chapter, as the reader will see below, we have relied a good deal on these works by Schweitzer: *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (1901) and *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906).

### ALBERT SCHWEITZER FROM WIKIPEDIA, THE FREE ENCYCLOPEDIA:

Albert Schweitzer, (14 January 1875 – 4 September 1965) was a German and then French theologian, organist, philosopher, physician, and medical missionary. He was

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

born in Kaisersberg in the province of Alsace-Lorraine, at that time part of the German Empire. Schweitzer, a Lutheran, challenged both the secular view of Jesus as depicted by the historical-critical methodology current at his time in certain academic circles, as well as the traditional Christian view. He depicted Jesus as one who believed the end of the world was coming in his own lifetime and believed himself to be a world savior. Schweitzer received the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize for his philosophy of "Reverence for Life"

### A REVIEW OF THE MYSTERY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD BY ALBERT SCHWEITZER

*"The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (EDS - 1906) is an important theological work. In it, Schweitzer offers a life of Jesus radically unconventional for its times which changed the nature of theological inquiry, and which is still seriously regarded by theologians today. Schweitzer analyzed the Gospels, and became convinced that Jesus' message was essentially eschatological. That is, it was about the forthcoming end of the world. The Kingdom of God which Jesus expected early in his ministry was not an ethical revolution to come after his death, as many before and since have preached, but a true end of the world followed by the judgement of all people. In fact, he (Jesus) expected it (the end of the world) to happen ... at any moment. When he made his commission to the twelve disciples to go about the country and preach, he told them to preach the Kingdom, Repentance, and the Judgment. In fact, he expected the end to come before they returned. When it didn't, he realized that the Son of Man must atone for Israel's sins before the Kingdom

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 1

arrives. He understands that his own death is required, and therefore not only does nothing to prevent it but rather goes out of his way to encounter it. During his Passion, Jesus expected the Kingdom--the literal end of the world--to come about immediately following his death." (end--PCISYS.NET)

Schweitzer believed that when the world did not come to an end, Jesus knew that his death was necessary to bring about the Kingdom and offered his life. Unlike Schweitzer we do not believe that Jesus came to believe that he must die in order to bring on the Kingdom of God. Proto-Jesus may have been apprehensive about an early death as he was claiming that he would become a King; claiming to be a King, one not appointed by the Roman government was risky. In any case, he tried to set up a political kingdom, came to Jerusalem, was arrested for treason and executed by Roman authorities.

Whether Jesus consciously believed that he must force the hand of God by dying is irrelevant. The point is that he was a deluded prophet; the end of the world and the Kingdom of God did not arrive. We agree with Schweitzer that Jesus died a failure. Proto-Jesus is pictured as dying in despair since God had not intervened, had not ended the world and set up the Kingdom of God.

Jesus' last words on the cross are about his abandonment by God.

Mk 15:34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is,

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Robert M. Price, reviewing Bruno Bauer's *Christ and the Caesars: The Origin of Christianity from Romanized Greek Culture*. (Translated by Frank E. Schacht. Charleston House Publishing.) writes:

“If David Friedrich Strauss showed that the historical Jesus had become obscured behind the myth-screen of the gospels, Bruno Bauer maintained that the historical Jesus had never had any existence at all, being rather a fictive character created by...” Mark. (Robertmprice.mindvendor.com/reviews).

Our books in the series, *Evidence That Jesus Never Existed* argue that Jesus never lived. We are merely presenting the thesis that Proto-Mark was the earliest version of the Gospel myth.]

Some critics on Schweitzer's view that Jesus believed that the Kingdom is coming soon:

We would agree with the critics of Albert Schweitzer that in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus (1906)* he pushes too hard to find eschatology or apocalypse in every passage of the Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke). However, we agree with Schweitzer's picture of Jesus as a person who preached that the end of the world and the Kingdom of God were coming soon.

Jesus sometimes teaches that the Kingdom of God would come soon.

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Mk 8:34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Mk 9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

Schweitzer's critics argued that these passages were added to the Gospel of Mark by the early church.

1. We agree with Schweitzer that the early church would not have assigned such a huge false prophecy to Jesus; Mark is thought to have been written in 70 CE and the end has not come yet. The trouble with his reasoning is that the church did not do so; Mark's Jesus does not clearly say that the end of the world is to come soon. The words of Jesus on the subject are ambiguous. Jesus says that some will live to see the kingdom of God. But the early church taught that the church was the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom was within us or was not of this world. So it was safe to say that some would live to see the Kingdom. In Mark Jesus does not clearly say that some will live to see the world come to an end.
2. Jesus is also vague in the current Gospel of Mark as to the time the world will come to an end. Modern scholars take Mark 13 to be a reference to the coming war between Rome and Palestine.

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Others think that the chapter is referring to the apocalypse. However, there is nothing in this chapter that gives any hint as to when this will occur. When was there ever a time when there were not wars and rumors of war?

3. We think that in Proto-Mark the immanent end of the world was a strong belief because in the current Gospel of Mar, the disciples still believe that the Kingdom will come soon.

We think the answer to all of the above is that in the early Christian church there were believers that felt the end of the world would come soon. As time passed and the end did not come, many Christians came to believe that the apocalypse would occur in the distant future when Christ would return, as in the Book of Revelation. This reliance on ambiguity is common in the Gospels. There are inconsistent passages on sex and marriage, on anger, bigotry, vengeance, Platonic love, women, alcohol, etc.

## REPLACEMENT THEORY OR SUPERSESSIONISM

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Proto-Jesus fails to accomplish the mission of God. However, the Jesus of the current Gospel of Mark does not fail to do so. Jesus willingly accepts his death, which is engineered by the Jewish authorities. Thus, the non-Jews (Gentiles) replace Jews as the chosen people of God and Judaism is replaced by Christianity (supersessionism or what we call Replacement). Thus, the Jewish Scriptures and salvation belong to the Christians.

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 1

In both Ur-Mark and the current Gospel of Mark the plan of God succeeds but the Proto-Markan Jesus does not know that the replacement plan of God was to be accomplished when the Jews engineered the death of the Messiah, Jesus.

Supersessionism or Replacement Theory may shock the reader but as the reader will see in what follows it was taught by Christianity for nearly 2000 years and is still taught today by many Christians.

### SUPERSESSIONISM FROM WIKIPEDIA, THE FREE ENCYCLOPEDIA

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Supersessionism, fulfillment theology, and replacement theology are terms for the view that the New Covenant replaces the Old Covenant, the latter also known as the Mosaic Covenant of the Hebrew Bible. The terms do not appear in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, however the view they cover is considered part of most traditional Christian views of the Old Covenant, viewing the Christian Church as the inheritor of the promises made to the children of Israel. This view contrasts with the minority views of dual-covenant theology and abrogation of Old Covenant laws.

1. Rev. Brian W. Harrison, O.S., M.A., S.T.D.: "The word designates the traditional Christian belief that the covenant between God and the People of Israel, established through the mediation of Moses at Mount Sinai, has been replaced or superseded by the 'New Covenant' of Jesus Christ. This implies that the Mosaic covenant, with its ritual and

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

dietary requirements, Sabbath observance, etc., is no longer valid for the Jewish people, since God's revealed will is for Jews, as well as all Gentiles, to enter into the New Covenant by means of baptism and faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah." [catholicculture.org article]

2. Christians and Jews: Starting Over - Why the Real Dialogue Has Just Begun by Dr. Luke Timothy Johnson: "It is an odd word, supersessionism. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, a reference work that defines almost everything, has no entry for it. The term is traditionally used for the conviction that the church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people. Israel has lost its place and Christianity now occupies it. Supersessionism is shorthand for the dominant Christian theological position regarding the Jews."

### TYPES

Both Christian and Jewish theologians have identified different types of supersessionism in Christian reading of the Bible.

R. Kendall Soulen notes three categories of supersessionism identified by Christian theologians: punitive, economic, and structural.

- *Punitive supersessionism* is represented by such Christian thinkers as Hippolytus, Origen, and Luther. It is the view that Jews who reject Jesus as the Jewish Messiah are consequently condemned



## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 1

by God, forfeiting the promises otherwise due to them under the covenants.

- *Economic supersessionism* does not refer to money; rather it is used in the technical theological sense of function (see economic Trinity). It is the view that the practical purpose of the nation of Israel in God's plan is replaced by the role of the Church. It is represented by writers such as Justin Martyr, Augustine, and Barth.

## CHURCH FATHERS

Many Early Christian commentators taught that the Old Covenant was fulfilled and replaced (superseded) by the New Covenant in Christ, for instance:

- Justin Martyr (about 100 to 165): "For the true spiritual Israel ... are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ."
- Hippolytus of Rome (martyred 13 August 235): "[The Jews] have been darkened in the eyes of your soul with a darkness utter and everlasting."
- Tertullian (ca.160 – ca.220 AD): "Who else, therefore, are understood but we, who, fully taught by the new law, observe these practices,—the old law being obliterated, the coming of whose abolition the action itself demonstrates. . . . Therefore, as we have shown above that the coming cessation of the old law and of the carnal circumcision was declared, so, too, the observance of the new law and the spiritual circumcision has

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

shone out into the voluntary observances of peace.”

- Augustine (354–430) followed the views of the earlier Church Fathers.

In short, the new covenant is a replacement for the old covenant; Judaism is replaced by Christianity and Jews by Christians. It should be added that all other religions are replaced by Christianity as the only way to be saved. Also, it should be noted that traditionally Christianity has also damned all non-Orthodox Christians as well as unbaptized babies. Liberal Christians tend to reject replacement theory.

God's plan was to replace Judaism with Christianity. The Christian church would be victorious. But how could the writer of the current Gospel of Mark know all this? Was he a prophet? No, his Gospel was the product of the early church. Mark is predicting that the Christian church will arise after it had already arisen. The Gospel of Mark is a product of the early church.

Paul may have attempted to convert to Judaism. The Roman world was heavy into prophecy. Perhaps that's why the Paulinists and the Gospel writers accepted the oldest book in the Western world (the Jewish Scriptures) as prophecy. The problem was that Judaism, its Scriptures and its people were Jewish. It was necessary to establish that non-Jews (Gentiles) were the chosen people, were slated for salvation. God cannot break his promises. The killing of the Jewish Messiah would break the covenant between God and the Jews. It was

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 1

necessary for Replacement Theory to enter. Jews are out; non-Jews are saved.

Messianic consciousness grew in Jesus. As time passed, the status of Jesus grew; he became a semi-divine being and eventually, in the Gospel of John, God. The Markan Jesus knew that the true plan of God was to save the non-Jews and Jesus purposely fulfills it through his death. All of this is in the current Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John.

### COMMENTS ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK AND ON PROTO-MARK

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Let us now take a look at the Gospel of Mark and see what evidence this Gospel provides for our thesis as regard Proto-Mark and its relationship to the Canonical Mark.

#### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK FROM WIKIPEDIA, THE FREE ENCYCLOPEDIA

However, most contemporary scholars now regard it as the earliest of the canonical gospels (c 70)....

It focuses particularly on the last week of his life (chapters 11–16) in Jerusalem. ... An important theme of Mark is the Messianic Secret. Jesus silences the demoniacs he heals, tries unsuccessfully to keep his messianic identity secret, and conceals his message with parables. Meanwhile, the disciples fail to understand both the implication of the miracles of Jesus and the meaning of the things he predicts about his arrest, death and resurrection.

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

### BRUNO BAUER FROM WIKIPEDIA, THE FREE ENCYCLOPEDIA

Bruno Bauer (September 6, 1809 – April 13, 1882) was a German philosopher and historian. As a student of G. W. F. Hegel, Bauer was a radical Rationalist in philosophy, politics and Biblical criticism. Bauer investigated the sources of the New Testament and, beginning with Hegel's Hellenophile orientation, concluded that early Christianity owed more to ancient Greek philosophy (Stoicism) than to Judaism. Bruno Bauer is also known by his association and sharp break with Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, and by his later association with Max Stirner and Friedrich Nietzsche. Starting in 1840, he began a series of works arguing that Jesus was a 2nd-century fusion of Jewish, Greek, and Roman theology.

### VIEWS ON CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

Bauer's criticism of the New Testament was highly deconstructive. David Strauss, in his *Life of Jesus*, had accounted for the Gospel narratives as half-conscious products of the mythic instinct in the early Christian communities. Bauer ridiculed Strauss's notion that a community could produce a connected narrative. Rather, only a single writer could be responsible for the first Gospel. His own contention, embodying a theory of Christian Gottlob Wilke (*Der Urevangelist*, 1838), was that the original narrative was the Gospel of Mark.

For Bruno Bauer, the Gospel of Mark was completed in the reign of Hadrian [76 CE-138 CE] (where its prototype, the 'Ur-Marcus,' identifiable within the Gospel of Mark by a critical analysis, was begun around the time of

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Josephus and the Roman-Jewish Wars). Bauer, like other advocates of this 'Marcan Hypothesis', affirmed that all the other Gospel narratives used the Gospel of Mark as their model within their writing communities.

In 1906 Albert Schweitzer wrote that Bauer "originally sought to defend the honor of Jesus by rescuing his reputation from the inane parody of a biography that the Christian apologists had forged." However, he eventually came to the belief that it was a complete fiction and "regarded the Gospel of Mark not only as the first narrator, but even as the creator of the gospel history, thus making the latter a fiction and Christianity the invention of a single original evangelist" (Otto Pfleiderer).

Although Bauer did investigate the 'Ur-Marcus,' it was his remarks on the current version of the Gospel of Mark that captured popular attention. In particular, some key themes in the Gospel of Mark appeared to be literary. The Messianic Secret theme, in which Jesus continually performed wonders and then continually told the viewers not to tell anybody that he did this, seemed to Bauer to be an example of fiction. If the Messianic Secret is a fiction, Bauer wrote, then the redactor who added that theme was probably the final redactor of our current version of the Gospel of Mark. In 1901, Wilhelm Wrede would make his lasting fame by repeating many of Bauer's ideas in his book, *The Messianic Secret*.

Also, for some influential theologians in the Tübingen School, several Pauline epistles were regarded as forgeries of the 2nd century. Bauer radicalised that position by suggesting that all Pauline epistles were

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forgeries, written in the West in antagonism to the Paul of *The Acts*. Bauer observed a preponderance of the Greco-Roman element, over and above the Jewish element, in Christian writings, and he added a wealth of historical background to support his theory; though modern scholars such as E. P. Sanders and John P. Meier have disputed this theory and attempted to demonstrate a mainly Jewish historical background. Other authors, such as Rudolf Bultmann, tended to agree that a Greco-Roman element was dominant.

According to Bruno Bauer, the writer of Mark's gospel was "an Italian, at home both in Rome and Alexandria"; that of Matthew's gospel "a Roman, nourished by the spirit of Seneca"; Christianity is essentially "Stoicism triumphant in a Jewish garb."

What Bruno Bauer added was a deep review of European literature in the 1st century. In his estimation, many key themes of the New Testament, especially those that are opposed to themes in the Old Testament, can be found with relative ease in Greco-Roman literature that flourished during the 1st century. Such a position was also maintained by some Jewish scholars.

Bauer's final book, *Christ and the Caesars* (1877) offers a penetrating analysis that shows common key-words in the words of 1st-century writers like Seneca the Stoic and New Testament texts. While this had been perceived even in ancient times, the ancient (Christian-eds) explanation was that Seneca 'must have been' a secret Christian. Bruno Bauer was perhaps the first to attempt to carefully demonstrate that some New Testament writers freely

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borrowed from Seneca the Stoic. One modern explanation is that common cultures share common thought-forms and common patterns of speech; that similarities do not necessarily indicate borrowing.

In *Christ and the Caesars*, Bauer argued that Judaism entered Rome during the era of the Maccabees, and increased in population and influence in Rome since that time. He cited literature from the 1st century to strengthen his case that Jewish influence in Rome was far greater than historians had yet reported. The Imperial throne was influenced by the Jewish religious genius, he said, citing Herod's relation with the Caesar family, as well as the famous relationship between Josephus and the Flavians, Vespasian and Titus, and also one of the poems of Horace.

According to Bruno Bauer, Julius Caesar sought to interpret his own life as an Oriental miracle story, and Augustus Caesar completed that job by commissioning Virgil to write his *Aeneid*, making Caesar into the Son of Venus and a relative of the Trojans, thereby justifying the Roman conquest of Greece and insinuating Rome into a much older history.

By contrast, said Bauer, Vespasian was far more fortunate, since he had Josephus himself to link his reign with an Oriental miracle. Josephus had prophesied that Vespasian would become Emperor of Rome and thus ruler of the world. This actually happened, and in this way the Roman conquest of Judea was justified and insinuated Rome into an even older history.

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According to Albert Schweitzer, Bruno Bauer's criticisms of the New Testament provided the most interesting questions about the historical Jesus that he had seen.

Judging by the second-to-last chapter of his *Quest*, Schweitzer's own theology was partly based on Bauer's writings. The title of that chapter is *Thoroughgoing Skepticism and Eschatology*. In that chapter Schweitzer clashes head-on with Wilhelm Wrede, who had recently (in 1905) proposed the theory of a Messianic Secret. Wrede's theory claimed that Jesus' continual commands to his followers to "say nothing to anybody" after each miracle was performed could only be explained as a literary invention of this Gospel writer. (That is, Wrede was the thoroughgoing skeptic, and Schweitzer was the thoroughgoing eschatologist.) Schweitzer began by showing that Wrede had merely copied this idea from Bruno Bauer. Then Schweitzer listed another forty brilliant criticisms from Bruno Bauer (pp. 334–335) some of which he disagreed with (such as the so-called Messianic Secret) and some of which he considered indispensable for any modern theology of the Gospel.

This line of criticism has value in emphasizing the importance of studying the influence of environment in the formation of the Christian Scriptures. Bauer was a man of restless creativity, interdisciplinary activity and independent judgment. Many reviewers have charged that Bauer's judgment was ill-balanced, but history has barely begun to review his life. It is not surprising, given the institutional response to his ideas. Due to the controversial nature of his work as a social theorist,



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theologian and historian, Bauer was banned from public teaching by a Prussian monarch. After many years of similar censorship, Bauer came to resign himself to his place as a free-lance critic, rather than as an official teacher. ...

### STANFORD.EDU ON BRUNO BAUER

(eds. - As far as we know, none of Bruno Bauer's work on biblical criticism has been translated into English.)

#### *BRUNO BAUER*

Bauer's political and theoretical radicalization is evidenced in his biblical studies. The series is comprised of *CRITIQUE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN* (1840), and the three-volume *CRITIQUE OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS* (1840– 42).

Bauer's critique of John convinced him that the gospel narrative was a purely literary product, and he now argued that the Synoptics too contained no historically authentic material.

The third volume of the series denied the historicity of Christ.

In the Synoptics texts, Bauer explicitly equated Christianity and feudalism, and defended the freedom and equality of self-consciousness. Religion and the absolutist state were mutually sustaining, sharing the essential features of alienation and repression.

The churches were now impotent to perpetuate their own existence without the support of the state.

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### 3. Bauer's Late Work, 1850–1882

Like Nietzsche, he continued to repudiate tradition and religion. Because of his anti-Semitism, Bauer was claimed as a precursor by some National-Socialist authors, though Ernst Barnikol, for example, disputes a direct connection (Barnikol 1972, pp. 350–53).

In common with many post-1848 intellectuals, Bauer's abandonment of metaphysics led him to a new conception of critique as a positive science or empirical investigation. Bauer no longer contended that history represents an unfolding dialectic of self-consciousness. Critique was to permit the observer to examine historical phenomena without distortion or partiality, and without an a priori systemic concern. Bauer maintained that scientific research must remain independent of ecclesiastical and political tutelage.

Bauer likened the present crisis to the end of the classical world in Roman imperialism. His studies in the 1850s located the origins of Christianity in the second century CE, concluding that the first gospel was written under Hadrian (117–138 CE), though slightly predated by some of the Pauline epistles. Bauer traced the evolution of Christian ideas from Hellenism and Stoicism, deriving the logos doctrine of John's gospel from Philo and neo-Platonic sources. As in HERR DR. HENGSTENBERG, he denied that Christianity had emerged directly from Judaism. More than in his early work, though, he now stressed the revolutionary power of the early Christian religion, as a source of liberation for

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the excluded and impoverished elements of the Roman Empire. His final book described Christianity as the socialist culmination of Greek and Roman history. Responding to this argument in his very positive obituary of Bauer, Friedrich Engels acknowledged the importance of Bauer's late work for the socialist critique of religion (*Sozialdemokrat*, 1882). In 1908, Karl Kautsky's book, *The Origins of Christianity*, applied Bauer's thesis.

Bauer's late writings identified sentiment and pietistic feeling-certainty, rather than autonomous reason, as the principal force in shaping modern subjectivity. His studies of the Quakers and of pietism described passive inwardness and sentiment as the dominant characteristics of the German Enlightenment. The practical reason of Kant and Fichte merely translated the inner voice of pietist conscience into a rationalist idiom. Bauer also described pietism as the end of Christianity, since it destroyed dogma in favour of inner illumination and personal moral rectitude. Consistent with his CHRISTIANITY REVEALED, Bauer continued to define positive or statutory religions by their exclusive dogmas and symbols; and he still saw the general course of history as dissipating these dogmas, as mere illusions. ... The new world empire would end with the inner erosion of religious belief. Not rational speculation, but sentiment, would effect this transformation. [End of Stanford Entry]

ALBERT SCHWEITZER ON BRUNO BAUER (1809-1882): THE QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS, CHAPTER 11 BRUNO BAUER (1910) EDITED BY THE DALTONS.

[Schweitzer, Albert, 1875-1965; Montgomery, W. (William), 1871-1930; *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: a critical study of its*

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*progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (1910) Kindle Locations 73-75).  
London: A. and C. Black.]

Bruno Bauer was born in 1809 at Eisenberg, in the duchy of Sachsen-Altenburg.... He died in 1882. His was a pure, modest, and lofty character.

The Fourth Gospel is in fact a work of art. ...

Bauer treats, in his work of 1840, the Fourth Gospel only.  
...

(H)ow far did he still retain a belief in the historical character of the Synoptics? It looks as if he had intended to treat them as the solid foundation, in contrast with the fantastic structure raised upon it by the Fourth Gospel. But when he began to use his pick upon the rock, it crumbled away. Instead of a difference of kind he found only a difference of degree. The "Criticism of the Gospel History of the Synoptists" of 1841 is built on the site which Strauss had levelled. "The abiding influence of Strauss," says Bauer, "consists in the fact that he has removed from the path of subsequent criticism the danger and trouble of a collision with the earlier orthodox system."

Bauer finds his material laid ready to his hand by Weisse and Wilke. ... The Marcan hypothesis was no longer on its trial. (Eds. - Mark was written first. Bauer thought Mark might be of purely literary origin.)

But what if Papias' statement about the collection of "Logia" were worthless, and could be shown to be so by the literary data? In that case Matthew and Luke would

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be purely literary expansions of Mark, and like him, purely literary inventions.

In this connexion Bauer attaches decisive importance to the phenomena of the birth-stories. If these had been derived from tradition they could not differ from each other as they do. If it is suggested that tradition had produced a large number of independent, though mutually consistent, stories of the childhood, out of which the Evangelists composed their opening narratives, this also is found to be untenable, for these narratives are not composite structures. The separate stories of which each of these two histories of the childhood consists could not have been formed independently of one another; none of them existed by itself; each points to the others and is informed by a view which implies the whole. The histories of the childhood are therefore not literary versions of a tradition, but literary inventions.

If we go on to examine the discourse and narrative material, additional to that of Mark, which is found in Matthew and Luke, a similar result appears. The same standpoint is regulative throughout, showing that the additions do not consist of oral or written traditional material which has been worked into the Marcan plan, but of a literary development of certain fundamental ideas and suggestions found in the first author. These developments, as is shown by the accounts of the Sermon on the Mount and the charge to the Twelve, are not carried as far in Luke as in Matthew. The additional material in the latter seems indeed to be worked up from

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suggestions in the former. Luke thus forms the transition stage between Mark and Matthew. [Note by Editors: Virtually all modern scholars hold that Mark came first and then Matthew, Luke and John.] The Marcan hypothesis, accordingly, now takes on the following form. Our knowledge of the Gospel history does not rest upon any basis of tradition, but only upon three literary works. Two of these are not independent, being merely expansions of the first ... . Consequently there is no tradition of the Gospel history, but only a single literary source (Mark).

But, if so, who is to assure us that this Gospel history, with its assertion of the Messiahship of Jesus, was already a matter of common knowledge before it was fixed in writing, and did not first become known in a literary form? In the latter case, one man would have created out of general ideas the definite historical tradition in which these ideas are embodied.

The only thing that could be set against this literary possibility, as a historical counter-possibility, would be a proof that at the period when the Gospel history is supposed to take place a Messianic expectation really existed among the Jews, so that a man who claimed to be the Messiah and was recognised as such, as Mark represents Jesus to have been, would be historically conceivable. This presupposition had hitherto been unanimously accepted by all writers, no matter how much opposed in other respects. They were all satisfied "that before the appearance of Jesus the expectation of a

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Messiah prevailed among the Jews"; and were even able to explain its precise character.

But where -- apart from the Gospels -- did they get their information from? Where is the documentary evidence of the Jewish Messianic doctrine on which that of the Gospels is supposed to be based? Daniel was the last of the prophets. Everything tends to suggest that the mysterious content of his work remained without influence in the subsequent period. Jewish literature ends with the Wisdom writings, in which there is no mention of a Messiah. In the LXX (Greek translation of the OT) there is no attempt to translate in accordance with a preconceived picture of the Messiah. In the Apocalypses, which are of small importance, there is reference to a Messianic Kingdom; the Messiah Himself, however, plays a quite subordinate part, and is, indeed, scarcely mentioned. For Philo He has no existence; the Alexandrian does not dream of connecting Him with his Logos speculation. There remain, therefore, as witnesses for the Jewish Messianic expectations in the time of Tiberius, only Mark and his imitators. This evidence, however, is of such a character that in certain points it contradicts itself.

In the first place, if at the time when the Christian community was forming its view of history and the religious ideas which we find in the Gospels, the Jews had already possessed a doctrine of the Messiah, there would have been already a fixed type of interpretation of the Messianic passages in the Old Testament, and it would have been impossible for the same passages to be

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interpreted in a totally different way, as referring to Jesus and His work, as we find them interpreted in the New Testament. Next, consider the representation of the Baptist's work. We should have expected him to connect his baptism with the preaching of "Him who was to come" — if this were really the Messiah -- by baptizing in the name of this "Coming One." He, however, keeps them separate, baptizing in preparation for the Kingdom, though referring in his discourses to "Him who was to come."

The earliest Evangelist did not venture openly to carry back into the history the idea that Jesus had claimed to be the Messiah, because he was aware that in the time of Jesus no general expectation of the Messiah had prevailed among the people. When the disciples in Mark viii. 28 report the opinions of the people concerning Jesus they cannot mention any who hold Him to be the Messiah. Peter is the first to attain to the recognition of His Messiahship. But as soon as the confession is made the Evangelist makes Jesus forbid His disciples to tell the people who He is. Why is the attribution of the Messiahship to Jesus made in this surreptitious and inconsistent way? It is because the writer who gave the history its form well knew that no one had ever come forward publicly on Palestinian soil to claim the Messiahship, or had been recognised by the people as Messiah.

The "reflective conception of the Messiah" was not, therefore, taken over ready-made from Judaism; that dogma first arose along with the Christian community, or



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rather the moment in which it arose was the same in which the Christian community had its birth.

Moreover, how unhistorical, even on a priori grounds, is the mechanical way in which Jesus at this first appearance at once sets Himself up as the Messiah and says, "Behold I am He whom ye have expected." In essence, Bauer thinks, there is not so much difference between Strauss and Hengstenberg. For Hengstenberg the whole life of Jesus is the living embodiment of the Old Testament picture of the Messiah; Strauss, a less reverent counterpart of Hengstenberg, made the image of the Messiah into a mask which Jesus Himself was obliged to assume, and which legend afterwards substituted for His real features. ...

"It was only now that the vague, ill-defined, prophetic representations were focused into a point; were not only fulfilled, but were also united together by a common bond which strengthened and gave greater value to each of them. With His appearance and the rise of belief in Him, a clear conception, a definite mental picture of the Messiah became possible; and thus it was that a Christology first arose."

While, therefore, at the close of Bauer's first work it might have seemed that it was only the Gospel of John which he held to be a literary creation, here the same thing is said of the original Gospel. The only difference is that we find more primitive reflection in the Synoptics, and later work in the representation given by the Fourth Evangelist; the former is of a more practical character, the latter more dogmatic.

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Nevertheless it is false to assert that according to Bauer the earliest Evangelist invented the Gospel history and the personality of Jesus. ... It was only in the course of his investigations that Bauer's opinion became more radical. ...

The story of the temptation embodies an experience of the early Church. This narrative represents her inner conflicts under the form of a conflict of the Redeemer. On her march through the wilderness of this world she has to fight with temptations of the devil, and in the story composed by Mark and Luke, and artistically finished by Matthew, she records a vow to build only on the inner strength of her constitutive principle. In the sermon on the mount also, Matthew has carried out with greater completeness.... It is only when we understand the words of Jesus as embodying experiences of the early Church that their deeper sense becomes clear and what would otherwise seem offensive disappears. The saying, "Let the dead bury their dead," would not have been fitting for Jesus to speak, and had He been a real man, it could never have entered into His mind to create so unreal and cruel a collision of duties; for no command, Divine or human, could have sufficed to make it right for a man to contravene the ethical obligations of family life. So here again, the obvious conclusion is that the saying originated in the early Church, and was intended to inculcate renunciation of a world which was felt to belong to the kingdom of the dead, and to illustrate this by an extreme example.

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The mission of the Twelve, too, is, as an historical occurrence, simply inconceivable. It would have been different if Jesus had given them a definite teaching, or form of belief, or positive conception of any kind, to take with them as their message. But how ill the charge to the Twelve fulfils its purpose as a discourse of instruction! What the disciples needed to learn, namely, what and how they were to teach, they are not told; and the discourse which Matthew has composed ... implies quite a different set of circumstances. It is concerned with the struggles of the Church with the world and the sufferings which it must endure. This is the explanation of the references to suffering which constantly recur in the discourses of Jesus, in spite of the fact that His disciples were not enduring any sufferings, and that the Evangelist cannot even make it conceivable as a possibility that those before whose eyes Jesus holds up the way of the Cross could ever come into such a position. The Twelve, at any rate, had no sufferings to encounter during their mission, and if they were merely being sent by Jesus into the surrounding districts they were not very likely to meet with kings and rulers there.

That it is a case of invented history is also shown by the fact that nothing is said about the doings of the disciples, and they seem to come back again immediately, though the earliest Evangelist, it is true, to prevent this from being too apparent, inserts at this point the story of the execution of the Baptist.

All this is just and acute criticism. The charge to the Twelve is not a discourse of instruction. What Jesus there

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sets before the disciples they could not at that time have understood, and the promises which He makes to them are not appropriate to their circumstances.

Many of the discourses are mere bundles of heterogeneous sayings, though this is not so much the case in Mark as in the others. He has not forgotten that effective polemic consists of short, pointed, incisive arguments. The others, as advanced theologians, are of opinion that it is fitting to indulge in arguments which have nothing to do with the matter in hand, or only the most distant connexion with it. They form the transition to the discourses of the Fourth Gospel, which usually degenerate into an aimless wrangle. In the same connexion it is rightly observed that the discourses of Jesus do not advance from point to point by the logical development of an idea, the thoughts are merely strung together one after another, the only connexion, if connexion there is, being due to a kind of conventional mould in which the discourse is cast.

The parables, Bauer continues, present difficulties no less great. It is an ineptitude on the part of the apologists to suggest that the parables are intended to make things clear. Jesus Himself contradicts this view by saying bluntly and unambiguously to His disciples that to them it was given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the people all His teaching must be spoken as parables, that "seeing they might see and not perceive, and hearing they might hear and not understand." The parables were therefore intended only to exercise the intelligence of the disciples; and so far from being

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understood by the people, mystified and repelled them; as if it would not have been much better to exercise the minds of the disciples in this way when He was alone with them. The disciples, however, do not even understand the simple parable of the Sower, but need to have it interpreted to them, so that the Evangelist once more stultifies his own theory.

Bruno Bauer is right in his observation that the parables offer a serious problem, seeing that they were intended to conceal and not to make plain, and that Jesus nevertheless taught only in parables. The character of the difficulty, however, is such that even literary criticism has no explanation ready. Bruno Bauer admits that he does not know what was in the mind of the Evangelist when he composed these parables, and thinks that he had no very definite purpose, or at least that the suggestions which were floating in his mind were not worked up into a clearly ordered whole. ...

The way in which Jesus makes known His Messiahship is based on another theory of the original Evangelist. The order of Mark can give us no information regarding the chronology of the life of Jesus, since this Gospel is anything rather than a chronicle. We cannot even assert that there is a deliberate logic in the way in which the sections are connected. But there is one fundamental principle of arrangement which comes quite clearly to light, viz. that it was only at Caesarea Philippi, in the closing period of His life, that Jesus made Himself known as the Messiah, and that, therefore, He was not previously held to be so either by His disciples or by the

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people. This is clearly shown in the answers of the disciples when Jesus asked them whom men took Him to be. The implied course of events, however, is determined by art, not history – as history it would be inconceivable.

Could there indeed be a more absurd impossibility? "Jesus," says Bauer, "must perform these innumerable, these astounding miracles because, according to the view which the Gospels represent, He is the Messiah; He must perform them in order to prove Himself to be the Messiah—and yet no one recognises Him as the Messiah! That is the greatest miracle of all, that the people had not long ago recognised the Messiah in this wonder-worker. Jesus could only be held to be the Messiah in consequence of doing miracles; but He only began to do miracles when, in the faith of the early Church, He rose from the dead as Messiah, and the facts that He rose as Messiah and that He did miracles, are one and the same fact."

Mark, however, represents a Jesus who does miracles and who nevertheless does not thereby reveal Himself to be the Messiah. He was obliged so to represent Him, because he was conscious that Jesus was not recognised and acknowledged as Messiah by the people, nor even by His immediate followers, in the unhesitating fashion in which those of later times imagined Him to have been recognised. Mark's conception and representation of the matter carried back into the past the later developments by which there finally arose a Christian community for which Jesus had become the Messiah. "Mark is also influenced by an artistic instinct which leads him to

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develop the main interest, the origin of the faith, gradually. It is only after the ministry of Jesus has extended over a considerable period, and is, indeed, drawing towards its close, that faith arises in the circle of the disciples; and it is only later still, when, in the person of the blind man at Jericho, a prototype of the great company of believers that was to be has hailed the Lord with a Messianic salutation, that, at the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the faith of the people suddenly ripens and finds expression."

It is true, this artistic design is completely marred when Jesus does miracles which must have made Him known to every child as the Messiah. We cannot, therefore, blame Matthew very much if, while he retains this plan in its external outlines in a kind of mechanical way, he contradicts it somewhat awkwardly by making Jesus at an earlier point clearly designate Himself as Messiah and many recognise Him as such. And the Fourth Evangelist cannot be said to be destroying any very wonderful work of art when he gives the impression that from the very first any one who wished could recognise Jesus as the Messiah. ...

### Difficulties of the Messianic Entry

The difficulty involved in the conception of miracle as a proof of the Messiahship of Jesus is another discovery of Bauer's. Only here, instead of probing the question to the bottom, he stops halfway. How do we know, he should have gone on to ask, that the Messiah was expected to appear as an earthly wonder-worker? There is nothing to that effect in Jewish writings. And do not the Gospels

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themselves prove that any one might do miracles without suggesting to a single person the idea that he might be the Messiah? Accordingly the only inference to be drawn from the Marcan representation is that miracles were not among the characteristic marks of the Messiah, and that it was only later, in the Christian community, which made Jesus the miracle-worker into Jesus the Messiah, that this connexion between miracles and Messiahship was established. In dealing with the question of the triumphal entry, too, Bauer halts half-way. Where do we read that Jesus was hailed as Messiah upon that occasion? If He had been taken by the people to be the Messiah, the controversy in Jerusalem must have turned on this personal question; but it did not even touch upon it, and the Sanhedrin never thinks of setting up witnesses to Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. When once Bauer had exposed the historical and literary impossibility of Jesus' being hailed by the people as Messiah, he ought to have gone on to draw the conclusion that Jesus did not, according to Mark, make a Messianic entry into Jerusalem.

It was, however, a remarkable achievement on Bauer's part to have thus set forth clearly the historical difficulties of the life of Jesus. One might suppose that between the work of Strauss and that of Bauer there lay not five, but fifty years—the critical work of a whole generation.

The stereotyped character of the thrice-repeated prediction of the passion, which, according to Bauer, betrays a certain poverty and feebleness of imagination



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on the part of the earliest Evangelist, shows clearly, he thinks, the unhistorical character of the utterance recorded. The fact that the prediction occurs three times, its definiteness increasing upon each occasion, proves its literary origin.

It is the same with the transfiguration. The group in which the heroic representatives of the Law and the Prophets stand as supporters of the Saviour, was modelled by the earliest Evangelist. In order to place it in the proper light and to give becoming splendour to its great subject, he has introduced a number of traits taken from the story of Moses.

Bauer pitilessly exposes the difficulties of the journey of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, and exults over the perplexities of the "apologists." "The theologian," he says, "must not boggle at this journey, he must just believe it. He must in faith follow the footsteps of his Lord! Through the midst of Galilee and Samaria — and at the same time, for Matthew also claims a hearing, through Judaea on the farther side of Jordan! I wish him Bon voyage!"

The eschatological discourses are not history, but are merely an expansion of those explanations of the sufferings of the Church of which we have had a previous example in the charge to the Twelve. An Evangelist who wrote before the destruction of Jerusalem would have referred to the Temple, to Jerusalem, and to the Jewish people, in a very different way.

The story of Lazarus deserves special attention. Did not Spinoza say that he would break his system in pieces if

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he could be convinced of the reality of this event? This is the decisive point for the question of the relation between the Synoptists and John. Vain are all the efforts of the apologists to explain why the Synoptists do not mention this miracle. The reason they ignore it is that it originated after their time in the mind of the Fourth Evangelist, and they were unacquainted with his Gospel. And yet it is the most valuable of all, because it shows clearly the concentric circles of progressive intensification by which the development of the Gospel history proceeds. "The Fourth Gospel," remarks Bauer, "represents a dead man as having been restored to life after having been four days under the power of death, and having consequently become a prey to corruption; Luke represents the young man at Nain as being restored to life when his body was being carried to the grave; Mark, the earliest Evangelist, can only tell us of the restoration of a dead person who had the moment before succumbed to an illness. The theologians have a great deal to say about the contrast between the canonical and the apocryphal writings, but they might have found a similar contrast even within the four Gospels, if the light had not been so directly in their eyes."

The treachery of Judas, as described in the Gospels, is inexplicable.

The Lord's Supper, considered as an historic scene, is revolting and inconceivable. Jesus can no more have instituted it than He can have uttered the saying, "Let the dead bury their dead." In both cases the objectionableness arises from the fact that a tenet of the

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early Church has been cast into the form of an historical saying of Jesus. A man who was present in person, corporeally present, could not entertain the idea of offering others his flesh and blood to eat. To demand from others that they should, while he was actually present, imagine the bread and wine which they were eating to be his body and blood, would be for an actual man wholly impossible. It was only when Jesus' actual bodily presence had been removed, and only when the Christian community had existed for some time, that such a conception as is expressed in that formula could have arisen. A point which clearly betrays the later composition of the narrative is that the Lord does not turn to the disciples sitting with Him at table and say, "This is my blood which is shed for you," but, since the words were invented by the early Church, speaks of the "many" for whom He gives Himself. The only historical fact is that the Jewish Passover was gradually transformed by the Christian community into a feast which had reference to Jesus.

As regards the scene in Gethsemane, Mark, according to Bauer, held it necessary that in the moment when the last conflict and final catastrophe were coming upon Jesus, He should show clearly by His actions that He met this fate of His own free will. The reality of His choice could only be made clear by showing Him first engaged in an inner struggle against the acceptance of His vocation, before showing how He freely submitted to His fate.

The last words ascribed to Jesus by Mark, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" were written without

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thinking of the inferences that might be drawn from them, merely with the purpose of showing that even to the last moment of His passion Jesus fulfilled the role of the Messiah, the picture of whose sufferings had been revealed to the Psalmist so long beforehand by the Holy Spirit.

It is scarcely necessary now, Bauer thinks, to go into the contradictions in the story of the resurrection, for "the doughty Reimarus, with his thorough-going honesty, has already fully exposed them, and no one has refuted him."

### Summary

The results of Bauer's analysis may be summed up as follows:—

The Fourth Evangelist has betrayed the secret of the original Gospel, namely, that it too can be explained on purely literary grounds. Mark has "loosed us from the theological lie." "Thanks to the kindly fate," cries Bauer, "which has preserved to us this writing of Mark by which we have been delivered from the web of deceit of this hellish pseudo-science!"

In order to tear this web of falsehood the critic and historian must, despite his repugnance, once more take up the pretended arguments of the theologians in favour of the historicity of the Gospel narratives and set them on their feet, only to knock them down again. In the end Bauer's only feeling towards the theologians was one of contempt. "The expression of his contempt," he declares, "is the last weapon which the critic, after refuting the arguments of the theologians, has at his disposal for their

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discomfiture; it is his right to use it; that puts the finishing touch upon his task and points forward to the happy time when the arguments of the theologians shall no more be heard of."

These outbreaks of bitterness are to be explained by the feeling of repulsion which German apologetic theology inspired in every genuinely honest and thoughtful man by the methods which it adopted in opposing Strauss. Hence the fiendish joy with which he snatches away the crutches of this pseudo-science, hurls them to a distance, and makes merry over its helplessness. A furious hatred, a fierce desire to strip the theologians absolutely bare, carried Bauer much farther than his critical acumen would have led him in cold blood.

Bauer hated the theologians for still holding fast to the barbarous conception that a great man had forced himself into a stereotyped and unspiritual system, and in that way had set in motion great ideas, whereas he held that that would have signified the death of both the personality and the ideas; but this hatred is only the surface symptom of another hatred, which goes deeper than theology, going down, indeed, to the very depths of the Christian conception of the world. Bruno Bauer hates not only the theologians, but Christianity, and hates it because it expresses a truth in a wrong way. It is a religion which has become petrified in a transitional form. A religion which ought to have led on to the true religion has usurped the place of the true religion, and in this petrified form it holds prisoner all the real forces of religion. ...

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The question which has so much exercised the minds of men— whether Jesus was the historic Christ (= Messiah) – is answered in the sense that everything that the historical Christ is, everything that is said of Him, everything that is known of Him, belongs to the world of imagination, that is, of the imagination of the Christian community, and therefore has nothing to do with any man who belongs to the real world.

### Historical Existence of Jesus Denied

Thus the task which Bauer had set himself at the beginning of his criticism of the Gospel history, turned, before he had finished, into something different. When he began, he thought to save the honour of Jesus and to restore His Person from the state of inanition to which the apologists had reduced it, and hoped by furnishing a proof that the historical Jesus could not have been the Jesus Christ of the Gospels, to bring Him into a living relation with history. This task, however, was given up in favour of the larger one of freeing the world from the domination of the Judaeo-Roman idol, Jesus the Messiah, and in carrying out this endeavour the thesis that Jesus Christ is a product of the imagination of the early Church is formulated in such a way that the existence of a historic Jesus becomes problematical, or, at any rate, quite indifferent.

### Bauer of the Second Period

But it was a mistake to bury, along with the Bauer of the second period, also the Bauer of the first period, the critic – for the latter was not dead. It was, indeed, nothing less

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than a misfortune that Strauss and Bauer appeared within so short a time of one another. Bauer passed practically unnoticed, because every one was preoccupied with Strauss. Another unfortunate thing was that Bauer overthrew with his powerful criticism the hypothesis which attributed real historical value to Mark, so that it lay for a long time disregarded, and there ensued a barren period of twenty years in the critical study of the Life of Jesus.

The only critic with whom Bauer can be compared is Reimarus. Each exercised a terrifying and disabling influence upon his time. No one else had been so keenly conscious as they of the extreme complexity of the problem offered by the life of Jesus. In view of this complexity they found themselves compelled to seek a solution outside the confines of verifiable history. Reimarus, by finding the basis of the story of Jesus in a deliberate imposture on the part of the disciples; Bauer, by postulating an original Evangelist who invented the history. On this ground it was just that they should lose their case. But in dismissing the solutions which they offered, their contemporaries also dismissed the problems which had necessitated such solutions; they dismissed them because they were as little able to grasp as to remove these difficulties.

But the time is past for pronouncing judgment upon Lives of Christ on the ground of the solutions which they offer. For us the great men are not those who solved the problems, but those who discovered them. Bauer's "Criticism of the Gospel History" is worth a good dozen

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Lives of Jesus, because his work, as we are only now coming to recognise, after half a century, is the ablest and most complete collection of the difficulties of the Life of Jesus which is anywhere to be found.

Unfortunately, by the independent, the too loftily independent way in which he developed his ideas, he destroyed the possibility of their influencing contemporary theology. The shaft which he had driven into the mountain broke down behind him, so that it needed the work of a whole generation to lay bare once more the veins of ore which he had struck. His contemporaries could not suspect that the abnormality of his solutions was due to the intensity with which he grasped the problems as problems, and that he had become blind to history by examining it too microscopically. Thus for his contemporaries he was a mere eccentric.

But his eccentricity concealed a penetrating insight. No one else had as yet grasped with the same completeness the idea that primitive Christianity and early Christianity were not merely the direct outcome of the preaching of Jesus, not merely a teaching put into practice, but more, much more, since to the experience of which Jesus was the subject there allied itself the experience of the world-soul at a time when its body—humanity under the Roman Empire—lay in the throes of death. Since Paul, no one had apprehended so powerfully the mystic idea of the supersensible. Bauer transferred it (the mystic Jesus) to the historical plane and found the "body of Christ" in the Roman Empire. [end]



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### MARK'S GOSPEL

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Mark's Gospel is layered. The first layer, Proto-Mark, was followed by a second layer. These two layers make up the earliest Gospel, that of Mark.

In what follows below all Gospel cites with no name attached are from the Gospel of Mark.

#### 1-- JESUS IS HUMAN.

In Proto-Mark, Jesus is not divine; he is merely a man, a deluded one who wrongly believes that he is the Messiah King. He believes he will become King of God's Kingdom once God intervenes and brings about the end of this world. Jesus feels pity, anger, compassion and other human emotions as we can see in what follows.

#### *Genealogies of Jesus*

There are no genealogies in the first Gospel, the Gospel of Mark.

Matthew 1.1-17 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Matthew's genealogy commences with Abraham and then from King David's son Solomon follows the legal line of the kings through Jeconiah, the king whose descendants were cursed, to Joseph, legal father of Jesus.

Luke 3.23-38 Luke gives a different genealogy going back to Adam, through a minor son of David, Nathan, and apparently again to Joseph.

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(The two genealogies are in conflict and many apologists have attempted unsuccessfully to reconcile them.)

### *Birth of Jesus*

Mk 3.31-35 There is no birth scene in Mark, though Jesus has a mother (named Mary), a father, and brothers and sisters.

The father of Jesus is unnamed as this would create problems for Christians who later were reading Matthew and Luke.

Mt 1.18: Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

See Luke 1.34-35 where Jesus is semi-divine and John where Jesus is God, Word or Logos. John 1.1: In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God.

### *John the Baptist Preaches Repentance*

Mk 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Mk 1:5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized (by John) in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

The fame of John the Baptist was widespread. This is the first passage in Mark that hints that the fame of Jesus may have been widespread since the followers of John apparently switched over to Jesus. Most of the verses

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indicating the fame of Jesus occur in the Markan narrative. This is important since many modern scholars believe that there was first a collection of sayings and miracles which was then put into a narrative form by Mark. Thus, material primarily found in the Markan narrative is sometimes thought less reliable than material found elsewhere in the Gospel.

### *Baptism of Jesus*

Mk 1:7 And (John) preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

(This is to make it clear that John the Baptist his inferior to Jesus. This is necessary, since over time Jesus was seen as semi-divine and then divine.)

Mk 1.5, 9-11 Would Jesus come to be baptized by John the Baptist where people were confessing their sins? If Jesus were divine would he have any sins?

1:9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

1:10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

1.11 The voice from heaven says this is my beloved son.

Verse 11 was added by a later editor after the birth scenes in Mt and Lk make Jesus semi-divine. This savior is far from the obscure human failure of Proto-Mark.

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### *Jesus' Family*

Jesus disowns his mother, brothers and sisters. Mk 3.31-35 (CEV)

3.31 Jesus' mother and brothers came and stood outside. Then they sent someone with a message for him to come out to them.

3.32 The crowd that was sitting around Jesus told him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside and want to see you."

3.33 Jesus asked, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?"

3.34 Then he looked at the people sitting around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers.

3.35 Anyone who obeys God is my brother or sister or mother."

This passage shows that Jesus is not a spiritual being but rather a member of a normal family. However, verses 34 and 35 well they do not show divinity that nevertheless indicate a high status for Jesus.

Also, note that he has brothers and sisters so that we can see that Mary was not a perpetual virgin as the Catholic Church maintains even to this day.

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*Some human traits of Jesus:*

### Mk 4.37- 39 *Jesus Sleeps*

Jesus can be fatigued; he is found sleeping during the storm he is about to still (Mk 4.38).

4:37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

4:38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? (Jesus then calms the storm and indicates that the disciples have defected faith.)

### *No Infinite Power or Knowledge*

He does not have infinite power at his disposal as the power flows out of Jesus in the story of the woman with the hemorrhage. Also he is not omniscient; he has to ask who touched his robe (Mk 5.30-34).

5:30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue [power] had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

5:31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

5:32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

5:33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

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5:34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

### *Amazement*

The lack of faith among the people in Jesus' hometown amazes him and makes him unable to do any wonders other than cure a few sick people (Mk 6.5-6).

### *Indignation*

He is indignant when the disciples do not want him bothered by parents seeking a blessing for their children (Mk 10.13-14).

10:13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

10:14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

### *Anger*

In Jerusalem, he expresses great anger at those carrying out the normal business of the temple (Mk 11.15-16).

11:15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

11:16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

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### *Jesus us not all-knowing*

Mk 5:25 Woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years:

Mk 5:30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

### *Jesus is not all powerful: Rejection in his own country*

Mk 6:1-6 Jesus preaches in the synagogue of his own country

6.3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. (In Mark Jesus is a human being, not semi-divine as in Mt and Lk, or God as in John.)

### *Lack of Faith Amazes Jesus*

The lack of faith among the people in Jesus' hometown amazes him and makes him unable to do any wonders other than cure a few sick people (Mk 6.5-6).

Mk 6:5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

Mk 6:6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching. (Marveling is a human trait.)

Mt 13.58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief. (Jesus did not have infinite power. Luke and John omit this limitation on the power of Jesus.)

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### *Human Despair on the Cross*

The last words of Jesus on the cross in Mark and Matthew ask why have you deserted me? But in John's Gospel the Divine Christ triumphantly announces that all is accomplished or finished. (Jn 19.30)

In Mk, Mt and Luke Jesus suffers at the hands of the Jewish chief priests and is scourged by Pilate's Roman soldiers.

John 18.3 Judas then, having received the *Roman* cohort (Ed-600 soldiers) and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. (New American Standard Bible)

18:6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground (all 600!). (The divine Jesus is in charge!)



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### 2— JESUS: DIVINE AND SEMI-DIVINE AND FAMOUS

#### *Who is Jesus?*

#### Mk1.23-25

1:23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

1:24 Saying, let us along; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy one of God.

1:25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

This is the first example of the Messianic Secret in the Gospel of Mark. The unclean spirit identifies Jesus as 'the Holy One of God' and Jesus commands him not to speak. We assume Jesus is forbidding the spirit from telling anyone who Jesus is. See #3 Messianic Secret below.

#### *Forgiving Sins*

Mk 2:7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?

2:10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins ...

2:28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.

This passage is by a later editor who viewed Jesus as divine and so had the power to forgive sins or was given the power to do so.

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Mk 3:11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. (The Devils know that Jesus is the Son of God.)

3:12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

The unclean spirits identified Jesus as the Son of God and Jesus commands them not to make him known.

Mk 6:14 And King Herod heard of him (Jesus); (for his name was spread abroad) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore might works do show forth themselves in him.

6:15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or one of the prophets. (Note, that in the Gospel none of the people suspect that Jesus is the Messiah.)

### *Fame of Jesus Mk 3.7-10*

Mk 3:7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea,

3:8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

(More pop-up people from Mark, probably to explain why, if his mission was in Galilee, how can one say his message reached beyond Galilee? Those visitors from Tyre and Sidon would explain how his message reached Gentiles (non-Jews. Mark says that the mission of Jesus

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is to Jews, to the lost sheep of Israel. The early church can now say that he ministered to non-Jews but did not break this rule since Gentiles came to him. He did not go into their territory to preach.)

3:9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

3:10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

4.1-11 And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

### *Mk 6:32-33*

6:32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

6:33 And the people saw them (Jesus and his disciples) departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and out went them, and came together unto him. (Mark wants to make sure that people in the cities have no excuse for not accepting his message.)

### *Mk 6.35- 44 Jesus feeds 5000 men.*

Mt 13.21 Matthew increases the status of Jesus. Jesus feeds 5000 men plus women and children.

Jesus feeds the 5000. Note that this does not endanger the secret of his identity or mission. He gives no

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

command to anyone not to tell of this miracle, as the people do not know that a miracle has been done. Of course, the 5,000 would indicate a large following. The problem is that modern scholars do not accept that this story goes back to Jesus; that is a later interpolation.

### *Mk 6:45-6:53 Walking on the Sea*

There are no witnesses other than the disciples.

### *Healing the sick*

6:55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

6:56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole. (This passage is unusual since it says Jesus enters cities where he cures the sick, etc. Other than Jerusalem, Jesus does not much care for cities.)

9:17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

## 3--THE MESSIANIC SECRET

Above we have mentioned the Messianic Secret. We will now give the reader our thoughts on this subject.

In Biblical criticism, the Messianic Secret refers to a proposed motif primarily in the Gospel of Mark in which Jesus is portrayed as commanding his followers to

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silence about his Messianic mission. This is a modern motif and the first theory for it was proposed in 1901 by William Wrede. [from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia]

Part of Wrede's theory involved statements in the New Testament by Jesus to his followers not to reveal to others that he is the Messiah. Wrede suggested that this theme was not historical but was an addition by the author of Mark.

### *Wrede's theory*

Wrede proposed that the author of Mark invented the notion of secrecy to reduce the tension between early Christian beliefs about Jesus being the Messiah, and the non-Messianic nature of his ministry.

Editors' Note: In other words, the earliest views of Jesus had not pictured him as a Messiah. Mark explained this by saying that Jesus was not famous because he had commanded the Devils and people to keep his mission and identity a secret. Later, Wrede more or less dropped his theory.

We would modify Wrede's theory by saying that we believe that the earliest version of Jesus was a failed Savior or Messiah. This is not compatible with the current Gospel of Mark with its triumphant Savior. Therefore, Jesus is pictured as commanding silence as to his identity and mission. But why would Jesus do this? The Gospels of Mark is a secret Gospel. There is very little even in the current Gospel of Mark that explains the mission of Jesus. Why was Jesus not famous in proto-Mark? The

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Roman government did not praise people who were traitorous, claiming to be a King not authorized by Rome.

As to the editor who added *The Messianic Secret*, it perhaps was necessary to explain why a victorious and triumphant Savior would not have widespread fame during his ministry. As the reader will see there is very little even in the current Gospel of Mark that indicates that Jesus was famous.

Maybe it was simply necessary to explain why the early Jesus was considered an obscure Messiah and one that failed to achieve the plan of God to save the non-Jews (and Jews too and others -- if they converted).

### *Mk 1.40-1.45 Curing the Leper*

1:44 And saith unto him, Say thou say nothing to any man ...

1:45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter. (Perhaps verse 45 is to explain why Jesus did not have a mission to any cities -- until the trip to Jerusalem at the end of his life.)

### *Swine Story*

#### Mk 5:1-20 Man with unclean spirit

5:1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

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5:2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit ....

5:6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

5:7 [Unclean spirit] cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

5:13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

5:18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

5:19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

5:20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel. (Is it significant that Jesus tells the man who is a Gentile, a non-Jew, to go home and tell people what Jesus has done for them?)

9:30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

## CHAPTER 11 THE GOSPEL OF MARK. WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

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### 4—THE MISSION OF JESUS IN PROTO-MARK AND IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK: REPLACEMENT OF JUDAISM WITH CHRISTIANITY.

#### *The Mission of God*

The mission of God in Proto-Mark as well as in the Gospel of Mark is what we call Replacement or supersession.

By Replacement we mean that the plan of God is to replace Judaism (and all other religions) with Christianity. This will be accomplished when the Jews and their leaders engineer the death of Jesus. Then Christians are the only people of God.

#### *The Mission of Jesus*

In Proto-Mark both Jesus and his disciples wrongly believe that the mission of God is that Jesus is to be the king when the political kingdom of God comes. But the kingdom does not come, and Jesus dies on the cross, a failure.

The use of the Old Testament quotes for the construction of the Gospels is taken from *The Christ Myth Theory and its Problems* by Robert M. Price; American Atheist Press. Kindle Edition.



## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

### REPLACEMENT: DISINHERITING THE JEWS IN PROTO-MARK AND IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

#### **Hiding the Kingdom of God: Parables**

##### *The Purpose of Parables*

Mk 4.2,10-12 The Purpose of Parables is to spiritually blind Jews so that they will not be saved.

In Mark's Gospel Jesus teaches in parables so that Jews will not be saved! This will appear shocking to many readers. But the reader should keep in mind that Jesus preaches only to the lost sheep of Israel, i.e., Jews. Why? If the Jewish people and their leaders do not engineer the death of Jesus, the Gentiles or non-Jews do not become the people of God and so cannot be saved. (It makes no difference that Jews did not believe that all gentiles were condemned even if they remained pagans. Jews had also accepted converts and had done so for centuries - see Isa 60.3. This Mark is a Christian Gospel and reflects the erroneous views of ancient Christians as regards Jews and Judaism.)

Mk 4:2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine ...

Mk 4.10-12 (The mission of Jesus is to 'the lost sheep of Israel' and he teaches to Jews in parables so they will not be saved !)

4:10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

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4:11 And he said unto them Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables;

4:12 That seeing they may seem and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

### Mt 13:10-17

Mt 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given

### Lk 8:9-10

8:9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?

8:10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

### John 12:37-40

12:37 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

12:38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our

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report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

12:39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

12:40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

### MISSIONS OF JESUS, HIS DISCIPLES AND GOD. IDENTITY OF JESUS

Mk 8.27-30, The *Royal Messiah* of the Disciples. Political kingdom.

The Jesus of the Gospel of Mark does not explicitly teach that his kingdom is not political. We will not explicitly hear that the kingdom of God is not of this world until the Gospel of John.

The first hint that the Kingdom is not political is in chapter 8 where Jesus predicts his death. Peter is upset. A dead king could not rule a political kingdom. Of course Jesus could be resurrected and then be the king (Mk 8.31).

Mk 8:27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

8:28 And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

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8:29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. (The Anointed One, *Messiah*.)

### *Anointing*

The High Priest and the king are each sometimes called "the anointed" (Leviticus 4:3-5, 4:16; 6:20; Psalm 132:10). Prophets were also anointed with the Holy anointing oil (1Kings 19:16; 1Chronicles 16:22; Psalm 105:15).

### *Christian Gospels*

Distinct from the Jewish view, Christians believe the "anointed" one referred to in various biblical verses such as Psalm 2:2, Daniel 7:13 and Daniel 9:25-26 is the promised *Christian Messiah*.

(There was no widespread belief among Jews in the coming of "the Messiah". This is a Christian view.)

8:30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. ( Jesus continues to hide his identity and mission by commanding humans, devils and his disciples to be silent.)

The 3 Predictions of His Death by Jesus are there primarily to show that Jesus is aware of the plan of God, that Jesus must die if the Kingdom is to come. Peter condemns Jesus for predicting his death for then there could be no political kingdom.

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

### Mk 8.31-33 1<sup>st</sup> Prediction of His Death

8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

But the longer ending of the Gospel of Mark, Mk 16.9-20, was not added until the second century CE. Thus, Mark would not have known of the myth that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.

8:32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

8:33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

8:34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matthew follows Mark in the first prediction of the death of Jesus. The divine status of Jesus is growing so that Luke omits the dialogue between Jesus and Peter (Lk 9.22-27). The passage about Peter and Satan is not suitable for the apostle whose status is rising.

Note that Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah but violently objects to his statement that he will die in Jerusalem. Peter is still expecting a political kingdom and a dead Messiah would mean no kingdom. In the

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Proto-Gospel the disciples and Jesus continue to expect a coming political kingdom along with the end of the world.

### *Kingdom of God Soon?*

Mk 9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power.

This was added by the church. The Kingdom of God is the church. The New Testament is inconsistent as to how soon the world will end. This is due to the fact that some Christians believed the end would be soon and others believed the end would be in a more distant future.

### *Replacement*

#### Mk 9:2-15 Transfiguration

On a mountain Jesus appears to the disciples along with Elisha and Moses (v. 4).

9:7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

9:8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

Elisha and Moses disappear leaving only Jesus behind. Judaism is to be replaced by Jesus, that is, Christianity.

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

### *Reference to Death of Jesus*

Mk 9:12 And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought (eds- die).

### *Mk 9.30-32 2<sup>nd</sup> Prediction of His Death*

9:30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. (Jesus is still continuing with the Messianic Secret, hiding his identity and mission.)

9:31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise on the third day.

9:32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

### *Mark 10 Replacement Again*

What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

Mk 10:17-21 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one (eds. of the people) running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

Jesus tells him to obey the ethical commandments which he says he has always done. But when told him to give his possessions away to the poor, and “come, take up the cross, and follow me”. He then grieves and goes away for he had many possessions. The reference to the cross is

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

an obvious interpolation by the early church. Jews will be replaced by Christians.

### *Mk 10.32-34 3<sup>rd</sup> Prediction of His Death*

Mk 10:32 And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

10:33 Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

10:34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

Look at what Luke adds: Lk 18.34: And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. (At last we get an explanation as to why the disciples don't understand the plain language of Jesus. God has spiritually blinded the disciples (!) so that they will not understand that Jesus must die.

Allusions to the death of Jesus and His predictions of his death are considered by most modern biblical scholars to be interpolations by the early church.



## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

### *Political Kingdom. Who will be the greatest?*

Mk 9:33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

Mk 9:34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.

The disciples are still expecting a kingdom with Jesus as the King.

Mk 10.35-37 Sitting on the right hand of God.

10:35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

10:36 And he said unto them, What would it is in the ye that I should do for you?

10:37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on they right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. ■

### *Allusion to the death of Jesus.*

10:38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

10:39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized (eds: they will die as martyrs):

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

10:40 But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.

10:41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, ask that they be given the highest positions in Jesus' kingdom when he comes to "his glory." The other ten disciples are angry, for all of the twelve expect that Jesus will be the head of an earthly kingdom.

### *A Ransom for Many*

10:45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

(The Jews are disinherited so that the many non-Jews may be saved.)

Mt 10:28 follows Mk 10:45

Lk 22:24-27 keeps the thought but omits the ransom

John 13:4-5, 12-17 also omits "ransom."

### *Political Messiah (king)*

Mk 10:46 Jericho: The King

Up to this point only the disciples believe that Jesus is the Messiah and only a political one (a king) at that. Jesus asked Peter "who do people think that I am"? The people think that Jesus is John the Baptist; but some

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets (Mk 8.28). Now as Jesus approaches Jerusalem the blind Bartimaeus recognizes Jesus as the Son of David, that is, a political Messiah or King.

Mk 10:46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.

10:47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

As Jesus exits Jericho, a blind beggar, Bartimaeus, addresses him as “Son of David,” one of the signs Christians believed would identify the Messiah, although Jews held no such belief by the time of Jesus (died ca 33 CE).

Mk 10.48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

10:52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way. (A rare mention of a person being allowed to follow Jesus.)

### *Mark 11 Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem*

Many modern scholars believe that the triumphal entry was fiction that was added by the early church.

Mk 11.1-7:

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Jesus miraculously produces a colt and enters Jerusalem, greeted as a king.

Mark 11:7. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and threw their garments on it; and he sat upon it.

Old Testament:

Zechariah 9:9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.

Though Mark does not make it explicit, it is evident that the scene of Jesus entering the holy city on donkey back is a fleshing out of Zechariah 9:9. The actions and words of the crowd come right from Psalms 118:26-27, "Blessed is he who enters in the name of the LORD! ... Bind the festal procession with branches ..." "Hosanna in the highest" comes from the Hebrew or Aramaic of "Save now!" in Psalms 118:25 and from Psalms 148 (LXX): "Praise him in the highest!" (Helms, p. 104). Of course the Psalm means to offer its blessings on any pilgrim into the holy city. Price.

Mark does not say that the following comes from the OT but he implies that it is a prophecy which shows that Jesus is executing the plan of God.

11:10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. (Mk 11.9-10; cf. 2 Sam 14.4; 2 Kgs 6.26).

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

This is a variant quote of the royal Psalm (118.25-29; cf. 2 Sam 7.16) used in blessing the king at his coronation. (See Chapter 6 of this book.)

Unlike Mark 11.1-7, Matthew flatly says that the event occurs so that the prophet's prediction would be fulfilled (vss 21.4-5). References to the Scriptures being fulfilled are more common in Matthew and Luke. All this increases the status of Jesus and indicates that Jesus is willingly executing the plan of God.)

Mt 21.10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

Mt 21.11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

The mission of Jesus was primarily in Galilee. Mark and Matthew don't give any real reason why the Jews of Jerusalem give Jesus a big welcome.

Luke 19.37: "as they approach the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice ...")

(Well, a multitude of disciples came a couple hundred miles down from Galilee!)

John is again trying to fix up the errors of the Synoptic Gospels: why did so many people come to greet Jesus in Jerusalem when his mission had been in Galilee?

John: 12.12 says that a "great crowd" heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

12.13 the crowd says" Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!"

12.16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, (eds. remembered the Scriptures) and that they had done these things unto him.

12.17-18 In the Gospel of John we are told that the people showed who were with him when he raised Lazarus from the dead or who had heard about the great miracle.

As for the mission in Judea in John's Gospel: Judeans do not understand that the Messiah has not come to set up a political kingdom.

*Jesus Enters Jerusalem and Divine Dishonesty Mk 11.1-12*

According to the Gospel of Mark, when Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem he leads people to believe that he is their king. Does he not cause them to falsely believe that he is a political Messiah by fulfilling prophecy, by riding on an ass, etc.? Is not all of this massively dishonest of Jesus?

Did not Jesus teach the Jews with parables so that they will not understand and be saved?

Did not God blind the Egyptians so that the Jews could escape slavery in Egypt?

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

The Proto-Markan Jesus did not know what the plan of God was but Jesus in the current Mark is fully aware of the divine plan. And that plan was supersessionism. The Jewish people and their religion are to be replaced by non-Jewish Christians.

The bottom line is that the Jews must accept Jesus as the true Savior, not as a political Messiah. True, they are tricked into believing he is a political Messiah but then again that is God's plan. The Proto-Markan Jesus did not know of the plan of God and so dies in despair. But in both Proto-Mark and the canonical Mark the result is the same supersessionism. Non-Jews are saved.

Mk 11.8-10 Jews in Jerusalem think Jesus is a political Messiah (King). He enters Jerusalem.

Mark gives no real explanation as to why the people in Jerusalem know and admire Jesus. The best that Mark can do is to state earlier that the fame of Jesus had spread and people came up from the Judea to Galilee, etc.

Mk 11:8 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.

11:9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

Jesus “has been perceived by his own disciples as a royal claimant. At Jericho Jesus accepts the royal title “Son of David” from the blind man and here, approaching the

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

capital of Judea, Jesus purposefully rides a colt in fulfillment of a royal Psalm (118.26), and accepts the shouts of the crowd acknowledging his kingship. All of this makes it clear that Jesus intends to convey the idea that he is a king, one who is about to come into his power.” See Chapter 6 of this book.)

Jesus has convinced the crowds that he is the Messiah King. This is necessary since the power of the Sanhedrin lay in Judea, especially in Jerusalem. If the Jewish authorities do not think he is a political threat (claiming to be the King of the Jews) why should they engineer his death? And if they do not get him killed then the covenant with the Jews is not broken and the non-Jews cannot be saved.

*Fig Tree: Replacement: Jews will be replaced by Christians.*

### Mk 11:11-14 Fig Tree

11:11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

11:12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

11:13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet.



## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

11:14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

### Fig Tree Again

Mk 11:20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. (Judaism is to be replaced by Christianity.)

11:21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

11:22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

As anyone can see, the tree is made to stand for unrepentant Jerusalem, and the episode is then seen [Miller, pp. 274-275] to stem from Psalms 37:35-36. Here is the source of Jesus seeking figs on the tree but finding none, and of the note that it was in passing the spot again they discovered the tree blasted. [Price]

### Fig Tree Parable: Mk 11.11-14 & Mk 11.20-22

“The fig tree is Judaism. Jesus is teaching that a truly divine religion would never be out of season; it would always provide spiritual sustenance for its believers. Judaism is to be replaced by Christianity.” Chapter 6 of this book.

Mk 11:27-33 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders ... .

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Jewish leaders seek to trap Jesus by questioning him about John the Baptist. Mark wishes to make sure that the reader understands that Jewish authorities and sometimes Jewish crowds are determined to destroy Jesus.

*Mk 11.15-19 Riot in the Temple*

*Replacement*

Note that in the passage below Jesus, supposedly a Jew, takes the normal activity which takes place in the Temple as sacrilegious. The temple will be replaced by the Christian Church.

11:15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves

11:16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

11:17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

11:18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. Also, notice the blind hatred of Jesus by the scribes and chief priests Mk 11.18

11:19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

### *Old Testament*

Malachi 3:1. Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah 56:7. My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations.

Jeremiah 7:11. Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? {124}.  
Price.

Mt 21.15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased ... .

Mk 11:27-33 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders ... .

Jewish leaders again seek to trap Jesus by questioning him about John the Baptist.

### *Mark 12*

The death story of Jesus dramatizes the central message of the Gospel of Mark — Judaism is only temporary and is to be replaced by Christianity. This theme is most clearly spelled out in the wicked tenant story of Mark 12.1-12 which we will now discuss before turning to the passion.

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

*Mk 12.1-12 The Vineyard (Wicked Tenants) Parable: Replacement Theory - Christianity will Replace Judaism. (For more, see Chapter 7 of this book.)*

11:27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders ... .

12:1 And he began to speak unto them by parables. (So they will not understand and be saved. See Mk 4 above.) A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

12:2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

12:3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.

12:4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.

12:5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

12:6 Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

12:7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

12:8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

12:9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

12:10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

12:11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? (Psalms 118)

12:12 And they (the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of Mk 11.27) sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way. (Apparently they understood parables – Mk 12.1)

### *Summary of the Comment on Wicked Tenants Parable:*

Jesus relates that a man planted a vineyard, leased it to his tenants and moved away. When the harvest season arrived, the owner sent a slave to collect the owner's share of the produce, but the tenants beat the slave and kicked him out. The owner sent many others who were also beaten, ejected or killed. Finally, the owner sent his "beloved Son" whom the tenants killed, thinking that he had come for their inheritance. Jesus asks, what will the "owner of the vineyard do?" The owner, Jesus says, "will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others" (Mk 12.9). "They" realize the story was told "against them" (vs. 12) – (the chief priests, scribes and

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

elders of Mk 11.27). and want to arrest Jesus but are afraid of the crowd. (Chapter 7 Part 1 of this book.)

### *Comment on the Wicked Tenants Parable*

“In Mark, the tenants are the Jewish people, those sent to collect the owner’s share of the produce are the prophets of the *Jewish Scriptures*, and the son is Jesus. The meaning of the allegory is that the Jewish covenant is only temporary. It will be nullified by “the Jews” when they reject and kill the Son of God. They will then no longer be the people of God; the non-Jews will replace them and be given the vineyard, that is, the kingdom of God.

The tenant story is clearly a product of the early church. (Chapter 7 of this book.)

### *Borrowing from the Old Testament: Isaiah 5.1-7*

Most biblical scholars point out that Isaiah 5:1-7 is one of the main sources for the vineyard parable.

The tenant story is loosely based on Isa 5.1-7, but Isaiah knows nothing of slaves or a son being murdered.

Isa 5:1 Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

5:2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

5:3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

5:4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

5:5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

5:6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

5:7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

Christianity will replace Judaism.

*Mk 12:18 The Sadducees: there is no resurrection.*

12:26 (Jesus) And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

12:27 (Jesus says) He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

The God of the Jews will be replaced by the God of the Christians. Also, the Christians only know how to

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

properly interpret the Jewish Scriptures. That is why they can find Jesus in the Old Testament and the Jews cannot.

### *Mark 13 End of the World*

Mk 13:1-37

13:1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!

13:8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

2 Chronicles 15:6 “They were broken in pieces, nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom.”

Mk 13.26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

This is obviously based upon Daniel 7:13 : (“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.”). Jesus is still fulfilling OT prophecies.

### *Mk 14 Judas Iscariot*

14:10 And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray (Jesus) unto them.



## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

*Judas Iscariot From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

He is infamously known for his kiss and betrayal of Jesus to the hands of the chief Sanhedrin priests in exchange for a payment of thirty pieces of silver coins. His place among the Twelve Apostles was later replaced by Matthias.

### Etymology

"Judas" ... is the Greek form of the common name Judah (יהודה, Y<sup>e</sup>hûdâh, Hebrew for "God is praised").

### Modern interpretations

Jewish scholar Hyam Maccoby, suggests that in the New Testament, the name "Judas" was constructed as an attack on the Judaeans or on the Judaeen religious establishment held responsible for executing Christ. The English word "Jew" is derived from the Latin *Iudaeus*, which, like the Greek Ιουδαίος (*Ioudaios*), could also mean "Judaeen".

(So Judas, the betrayer, is named after 'the Jews'.)

### *Gethsemane:*

14:32 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

14:34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

14:36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

This is a passage which shows that Jesus is subordinate to the father. But the chief purpose is to show that Jesus is not forced to die but willingly accepts the plan of God.

14:43 And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

14:46 And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

14:49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

Jesus has divine powers but the prophecies of the OT must be fulfilled.

14:50 And they [the disciples] all forsook him, and fled.

### *Jewish Trial*

14:53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

14:55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.

This passage emphasizes that the Jewish authorities are determined to engineer the death of Jesus even on their is no evidence to suggest that he is guilty of anything. In the gospel of John Jews are said to be children of the devil.

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

14:56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.

14:61 ... Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

14:62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

14:63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?

14:64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

Actually, claiming to be a Messiah was not against Jewish law.

14:65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

### *Mark 15.1-15 Trial by Pilate*

15:1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

15:2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto them, Thou sayest it.

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

15:3 And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.

Even in the trial by Pilate Jewish authorities are allowed to make accusations against Jesus. Mark wants to make sure that we know that it is the Jewish chief priests who want Jesus condemned, not the non-Jewish Pilate.

### *Barabbas*

15:6 Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

15:7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

15:9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

15:10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

15:11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

“The people” is another one of Mark’s pop-ups. Mark does not say where they came from.

15:12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

15:13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.

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Mk 15:14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

### Matthew 27.23-25

27:23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

27:24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

27:25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.]

### Mk 15.15-20

15:15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

15:16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

15:17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, 15:18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

15:20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Note that the Roman soldiers take Jesus to be a criminal, one who claims to be King of the Jews. Note that these words are the inscription on the cross.

Here is an example of Old Testament passages used in the story of the Death of Christ.

### *The Crucifixion Mk 15.22-32*

15:22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

15:23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

15:24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

15:25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

15:26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

15:27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

15:28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

15:29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

15:30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

15:31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes,

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

15:32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

### *Last Words*

Mk 15:33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

15:34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (The Gospels of Luke and John dump these last despairing words of Jesus.)

15:35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.

15:36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

15:37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

15:38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

15:39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

Obviously this was the work of the early church. Crucifixion was a common Roman method of execution. The death of Jesus would hardly draw from a Roman

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

soldier the conclusion that he was a son of God, much less, the son of God - unless this was written by a Christian writer of the early church.

Psalm 22 BibleGateway.com -- (King James Version)

All scholars know that the crucifixion is based on Psalm 22.

*22 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*

<sup>2</sup> O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

<sup>3</sup> But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

<sup>5</sup> They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

<sup>6</sup> But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

<sup>7</sup> All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

<sup>8</sup> He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.



## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

<sup>9</sup> But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

<sup>10</sup> I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

<sup>11</sup> Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

<sup>12</sup> Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

<sup>13</sup> They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

<sup>14</sup> I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

<sup>15</sup> My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

<sup>16</sup> For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

<sup>17</sup> I may don't tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

<sup>18</sup> They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

Albert Schweitzer in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* says that Jesus expected the kingdom to come soon. When it did not come Jesus came to believe that it was necessary for him to die; he headed for Jerusalem. We agree with Schweitzer except that we do not believe that Jesus came to believe that he must die. We believe that the Proto-Jesus simply went to Jerusalem believing that the kingdom would come soon and that he would become King. The kingdom did not come and thus Schweitzer and we believe that Jesus died a failure.

### *Mark 16.1-8 The Empty Tomb*

16:1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

16:2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

16:3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

16:4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

16:5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

16:6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

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16:7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

16.8 The young man in white told the women that Jesus had risen. The women ran away, telling no one, because they were afraid.

These verses constitute the original ending of the gospel of Mark.

Mk 16.9-20 The longer ending of the Gospel of Mark. The victorious Jesus

The idea that until after his resurrection nobody can believe that Jesus is the Messiah who will die in Jerusalem was a later church belief. Most modern scholars think the resurrection scenes were added to the Gospel of Mark in the second century CE or later.

The vast majority of modern biblical scholars believe that verses 9-20 were added to Mark in the early second century or later. So the original Gospel of Mark ended without any reference to the resurrection of Jesus and without any witnesses of such an event.

The longer ending is obviously a forgery as it is composed of material taken from the other Gospels.

In *The Quest Of The Historical Jesus* (1910) Albert Schweitzer writes:

Jesus . . . in the knowledge that he is the coming Son of Man lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself on it.

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Then it does turn; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign.

“Then it does turn; and crushes Him.”

And Schweitzer, too. But then again all moral idealists, in “trying to bend history,” are crushed. So people look up towards Heaven or down to Hell.

For more on the passion of Jesus, see part one of this book.

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### PROTO-MARK

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Proto-Mark was not threatening to the Paulinists:

Paul's divine and spiritual Christ was not threatened by Proto-Mark's Jesus, a human Messianic failure. Jesus had brothers and sisters; a divine father was not created for Jesus until the birth scenes in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (80 CE). Proto-Jesus may have been apprehensive about an early death but he was not clearly aware of the fact that he must die so that the plan of God could be accomplished.

For the Paulinists, Paul remained “the apostle.” Truth came from Paul's mystical union with Christ not from Jesus through Peter. Even in the present Gospel of Mark the disciples, especially Peter, are spiritually dense.

## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

Mk 14:66-72

14:72 And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

### *A Failed Messiah and Supersessionism or Replacement Theory*

Why did the Paulinists create a failed messiah? God does not break His promises. But people can break their covenant with God. God presents to Jews a royal claimant, a messianic figure who believes that the end of the world will come soon and he will be the king in God's kingdom. Jewish leaders engineer Jesus' death with the approval of Jewish crowds. When the end does not come, Jesus dies on the cross in despair, crying out "My God, my God why did you abandon me?" (Scholars Bible Mk 15.34). The Jesus of Proto-Mark failed. The political kingdom of God had not come.

Thus, Paulinism superseded Judaism. The Jewish Scriptures are now true (as interpreted by the Paulinists.

*The Current Gospel of Mark was a threat to the Paulinists.*

The current Gospel of Mark threatened the Paulinists, some of whom had believed that Jesus was the failed Messiah. The Jesus of the current Gospel of Mark is divinely empowered at his baptism. He is a threat to the followers of Paul. The later editors of Mark's Gospel added the title *Son of God* and other divine characteristics to Jesus. For example, like God Jesus forgives sins,

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

regulates the Sabbath, walks on water, and calms the sea. He raises the dead. In Mark Jesus is aware of God's plan and consciously and deliberately executes it. Jesus three times clearly predicts his death (Mk 8.31-33, Mk 9.31-32 Mk 10.32-34) but many modern biblical scholars agree that these predictions of his death are later interpolations. After Peter angrily reprimands Jesus for predicting that the Messiah-King will suffer and be killed, Jesus calls Peter "Satan," and strongly condemns him for his unbelief.

In the current Gospel of Mark, Jesus no longer merely predicts that the mysterious *Son of Man* will come in the future, nor that he himself will become this figure after his death. Now, during his lifetime, Jesus is the "Son of Man," the "Son of God." "Messiah" is now interchangeable with these divine terms. The title "Christ" becomes his last name.

In time Matthew and Luke will add semi-divinity in the birth scenes. And eventually, John will declare that Jesus is God. But regardless of whether the nature of Jesus is human, semi-divine or entirely divine, what would really upset the Pauline applecart is that Jesus is now a victorious, a triumphant figure. As we said above, he knows the will of God and consciously seeks his own death to accomplish the plan of God. His death will establish the Christian religion and the Christian church will save the non-Jews (also Jews and others if they convert to Christianity). Christianity superseded Paulinism. Jesus Christ replaced the heavenly Christ of Paul. *Acts of the Apostles* portrays Peter and Paul as

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apostles of the Christian church but in time the Apostle Paul would be superseded by Peter.

Matthew and Luke continued to rehabilitate Jesus and Peter. In the birth scene in Matthew, Jesus' mother Mary, goes from thinking he is crazy (Mark) to a pious Christian. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus is divine from his birth and in John's Gospel, he is divine before the cosmos was created through him; "... the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (Jn 1.1, 3). Peter replaces Paul as the founder of the Church. Matthew's Jesus says he will build his church upon this rock (Peter's faith). The human failure, Jesus, replaces the heavenly Christ of Paul. In the resurrection appearances in Matthew, Paul's leadership is challenged by the chief disciple of Jesus, Peter. (Mark has resurrection scenes also but as modern scholars concede, they were added to Mark at a much later time.)

### *Summary*

In Proto-Mark, Jesus is not clearly conscious that part of his mission is to go to Jerusalem and die, but in the current Gospel of Mark the divine Jesus is well aware of the fact that he must die in Jerusalem and consciously executes the plan of God. A political Messiah who is a failure, that dies having failed to set up the political Kingdom of God, would not be threatening to the Paulinists. A victorious Messiah is a threat to Paulinism. The incarnate human/God (Jesus Christ) replaces the pure, spiritual Christ of Paul. Peter replaces Paul. The Bible belongs to the believers in Jesus. Christianity replaces Judaism and Paulinism.

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

### *The Polarization of the Paulinists*

By the end of the first century CE, the church had polarized. It now had the Jesus and Pauline wings, each defending its own faith and founder. Those that stayed with Paul's ahistorical and spiritual Christ made up the Paulinist wing. The supporters of the historical Jesus made up the Jesus wing.

Conclusion: Both Proto-Mark and the current Gospel of Mark served the same purpose: supersessionism, Judaism is replaced by Christianity and the Jewish people are no longer the chosen people of God; they have been replaced by non-Jews. Over time, as the divine status of Jesus increased, Jesus and his disciples were rehabilitated. Christianity replaced Paulinism and Judaism. The spiritual Christ of Paul was replaced by the human deified version of Jesus; Paul was replaced by Peter. Orthodox Christianity had arrived.

What is the evidence that the church was polarized into these two wings? When we look at the church writings that appeared between Paul (d. ca 64 CE) and Justin (fl ca 150 CE), we find they reflect two traditions:

1. the Pauline tradition as seen in Paul's letters, the pseudo-Pauline letters, and the writings of Ignatius – none of which mention the historical Jesus;
2. the Jesus tradition as reflected in the Gospels and in the writings of Justin Martyr who is unaware of Paul, Ignatius or other writers in the Pauline tradition.



## WHO CREATED JESUS? PART 2

In reviewing the Paulinist literary tradition, we find that Paul's letters, aside from the interpolations that we discussed in Chapter 9, know nothing of an historical Jesus who died on a cross in Jerusalem. Paul knows only of a demigod who was crucified in the mythic past and transformed after death into a spiritual Christ. In this mythic past, many pagan gods had lived, died and come back to life. The pseudo-Pauline letters, too, (Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus) are unaware of the historical Jesus except for a bare reference to Pontius Pilate in the late and fraudulent 1 Timothy (6.13) which was written about 150 CE.

1 Clement (ca 95 CE) briefly refers to Peter and Paul as “illustrious apostles,” indicating that the Jesus and Pauline traditions were united, i.e., that Paul's Christ is Mark's historical Jesus. This letter is unsigned and the earliest manuscript is late 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Bishop Ignatius (d ca 117 CE) mentions Peter and Paul only once as apostles in his letter to the Romans at 4.3. It is hard to explain why no other early Orthodox Christian author knows of a united church (both Peter and Paul) until the end of the second century (Irenaeus and Tertullian).

Bishop Ignatius appears to know the Jesus tradition when he mentions Jesus' virginal conception, his crucifixion under Pontius Pilate and his resurrection but, according to many critical scholars, these historical references are part of a creedal formula added to Ignatius's writings at a later date. He has no knowledge of the birth stories of Jesus contained in the Gospels of

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Matthew and Luke. Indeed, Ignatius never mentions any written gospel.

We will now deal with the Pauline letters and Acts of the Apostles that depict both Peter and Paul as operating in a united church, allegedly in the first century CE.

As to the meeting in Acts 15.6-29, surely Robert M. Price is correct when he asserts that this meeting is an insertion that attempts to prove Peter and Paul were harmonious fellow apostles. [Price, R. M., 1995, 95] The passage was added to attempt to prove that the Marcan historical Jesus, represented here by Peter, and the Pauline ahistorical Christ are the same personage. Acts of the Apostles, as John Knox demonstrated in *Marcion and the New Testament*, reached its final form by the second half of the second century CE. One can reject this late date for Acts, but how then could one explain why no one refers to this fantasy before Irenaeus (ca 180 CE), 95 years after its alleged composition by Luke in about 85 CE?

The second tradition (the Jesus wing) is anchored in the four Gospels, supposedly written by about 100 CE. The next writings used by the apologists to show that the apostolic writers of the second century were aware of the gospel tradition are those of Justin Martyr (fl ca 150 CE). Justin quotes a variant form of Matthew's birth narrative (although he uses Isaiah 7.14, not Matthew or Luke, to prove that Jesus was conceived by a virgin). Although he quotes Jesus (or "the Lord") and he knows of Pilate, the crucifixion, etc., Justin's knowledge of Jesus' life is sketchy. In any case, he knows nothing of Paul or his

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letters. He does not refer to the pseudo-Pauline letters, or the letters of Ignatius, i.e., the Pauline literary tradition, though he was writing nearly 100 years after the last letters of Paul were written in the early 60s CE.

In summary, by the end of the first century CE the church was divided into the Pauline ahistorical wing and the gospel historical Jesus wing. Ignatius knew only the Pauline wing, and Justin knew only the Jesus wing (variant Matthew). In short, there is no definitive evidence before Marcion (ca 145 CE) that any apostolic writer embraced both the Pauline and Jesus traditions. There may have been a movement which attempted to unify the Jesus (Peter) and Paul traditions, but the evidence is thin. If the apostolic fathers knew of the dual tradition, they did not choose to reflect that knowledge in their writings. Tertullian says in *Against Marcion* that there was a Canon uniting the Gospels and Paul before Marcion. Even taking Tertullian into account, there is still very little evidence to support the existence of a united church until Irenaeus (ca 180 CE).

### *Unified Church*

But what united the Jesus and Pauline wings, producing a single canon and a single, unified church? Probably the answer lies in the work of the wealthy Gnostic Marcion (ca 144 CE).

Marcion traveled from Pontus (in modern Turkey) to Rome, joined the church there and was kicked out about 144 CE as a heretic. He founded many Marcionite churches across the Roman Empire. Marcionism

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

threatened to split the church. Marcion denied both the Jewishness and humanity of Jesus. He severed any connection between Christianity and Judaism. The canon that Marcion created rejected the *Jewish Scriptures*, omitting any mention of things Jewish in his version of Luke, the ten Pauline letters which he accepted as valid, or in his own writings. He asserted that the “cruel” God of the *Jewish Scriptures* and the “loving” God of his *Christian Scriptures* were not the same God. Marcion's ahistorical and bodiless savior was compatible with Paul's ahistorical, spiritual Christ, but Marcionism threatened to sever the Jesus wing from the polarized church. Thus, Marcion stimulated the formation of a united church which identified the historical Jesus with Paul's ahistorical, divine Christ, forming a Canon – Paul's letters, the Gospels, etc., in the process.

Who reconciled the two wings? The centrists, or moderates, did so. By 180 CE, Bishop Irenaeus knows of the spiritual Christ of Paul and the historical Jesus of the Gospels; for him they are one and the same. Irenaeus copiously quotes the *Jewish Scriptures*, the Pauline corpus, the pseudo-Pauline letters, the Gospels, and Acts (mostly the first half). He struggles mightily to pull the Pauline and Jesus wings together, forcefully insisting that the church had never been divided, that it came unified from God. He asserts that the canon had from the beginning contained only four gospels since there are only four principal winds, four faces of the cherubim, etc. [Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* Bk. 3, Ch 11 in ANF vol 1, 428] He writes that, “the very ancient, and universally known church (was) founded and organized at Rome by the two

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most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul.” [Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* Bk. 3, Ch 3 in ANF vol 1, 415] But no writings reflect any such tradition before him, other than the interpolated letter, 1 Clement, Ignatius, and Acts of the Apostles, which we have discussed above. The apologists argued there was One Truth, united from the beginning.

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### SUMMARY OF PART 1 COMMENTARY ON MARK

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- The Marcan Jesus is not Jewish. He fits better in a pagan, rather than a Jewish milieu. He is a pagan savior in Jewish dress.
- He is grossly ignorant of Judaism and is radically anti-Jewish. He is a supersessionalist, believing that Judaism is to be replaced by Christianity.
- Mark’s gospel is a fiction. It is a myth, and one that is not based on an historical figure. Jesus’ biography was created by the early church. The four Gospels are massively inconsistent and historically contradictory. The death story of Jesus was written for theological reasons and is largely based on the *Jewish Scriptures*.

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### SUMMARY OF PART 2 THE JESUS AND PAUL FACTIONS

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In summary, Christianity began with Paulinism. Its apostle was Paul who supposedly experienced a mystical union with a spiritual Christ who died in the mythic past and was then glorified. Current Mark took the Pauline Christ and historicized him, in time producing a unified

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orthodoxy. The divinized human Jesus of Mark caught on, leaving the Gnostics far behind. A god-man who recently lived on earth (Matthew and Luke) differentiated Christianity from all other mystery religions and from Gnosticism.

The polarized wings of the church had struggled with Gnosticism, the popular Mysteries, Jews, Stoic-Cynics, and “heretics.” In the end, Irenaeus and the other centrists triumphed, but only at a great cost, namely the sacrifice of the original religion, Paulinism. The founder, Paul, was reduced to a mere apostle, and at that, one who was soon to be eclipsed by Peter. The centrists accepted Mark’s historicization of Paul’s mythic Christ and the religion became “orthodox” Christianity.

Jesus Christ was declared God at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE.



## CHAPTER 12 DID JESUS EVER LIVE? BY JOSEPH MCCABE. REBUTTAL BY THE DALTONS.

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Quotes by McCabe:

The chief teachings, even the phrases and sentiments to a great extent, were common to priests of Isis, Serapis, Esmun, Apollo, Mithra, Ahura- Mazda, and Jahveh, as well as wandering Stoic apostles. (As to the moral teachings of Jesus, as we have shown above, much of his moral teachings are from the Stoics except for all that punishment in Hell and rewards in Heaven.)

Every single moral sentiment attributed to Christ in the Gospels has several parallels in the literature of the time. There is not one point in the "teaching of Christ" that was new to the world.

The chief doctrinal features of the Christ of the Gospels -- the birth, death, and resurrection -- were familiar myths at the time, and were borrowed from "the pagans."

End of McCabe quotes.

DID JESUS EVER LIVE? BY JOSEPH MCCABE.

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### THE MODERN DENIAL

THERE were hundreds of Jesuses. A life of the Rabbi Hillel, if we had one suitably embroidered with miracles, would be a life of Jesus. A life of the slave-moralist, Epictetus, if we had one, would be a perfect life of Jesus. The life which we have of the wandering apostle



## DID JESUS EVER LIVE?

Apollonius of Tyana is a life of Jesus. ( He was not the product of virginal conception; therefore, he was not semi-divine. He did not work miracles nor rise from the dead. ) The chief teachings, even the phrases and sentiments to a great extent, were common to priests of Isis, Serapis, Esmun, Apollo, Mithra, Ahura- Mazda, and Jahveh, as well as wandering Stoic apostles. (As to the moral teachings of Jesus, as we have shown above, much of his moral teachings are from the Stoics except for all that punishment in Hell and rewards in Heaven.)

Every single moral sentiment attributed to Christ in the Gospels has several parallels in the literature of the time. There is not one point in the "teaching of Christ" that was new to the world. Even the parables were borrowed from the Jewish Rabbis. (The parables of the Rabbis were too late for Jesus to have borrowed them. Most modern scholars would, however, agreed that the moral teachings of Jesus have much in common with Stoicism.) The chief doctrinal features of the Christ of the Gospels -- the birth, death, and resurrection -- were familiar myths at the time, and were borrowed from "the pagans." (We agree though many modern scholars would not agree. But see Robert M. Price who believes that the " historical " data of the New Testament and much else was created by symbolically interpreting material from the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament). Also, Price, like McCabe, believes that the NT derived much from pagan myths that were popular in the Ancient World.

What we see, in fact, is evolution in religion. The ideas pass on from age to age, a mind here and a mind there

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adding or refining a little. The slow river of human evolution had entered its rapids. The mingling of twenty nations in a series of world-empires had brought about such a clash of ideas as the world had never seen since until our time. Every possible shade of moral idealism and religious thought was represented, from Alexandria to Rome. (Well, the reader will note that in our present book, as well as our previous book on Jesus, that we believe that the first century of the Roman Empire was the main source of Christianity.) You could blot Christ out of the history of the first three centuries of the "Christian Era" -- what happened after that is a different matter, as we shall see in due time -- and it would make no more difference than cutting a single tree out of a well-wooded landscape.

Blot out Christ! Yes, that is what many serious scholars are now attempting to do, and we must consider that first. It is, to the Rationalist, to any man who resents this long distraction of the (human) race by the Christian religion, a tempting proposition. Suppose we could prove that there never had been on this earth such a person as Jesus! What an ironic consummation! Yet this modern denial is so weighty that we find so cautious and courtly an authority as Sir J.G. Frazer writing, in his introduction to Dr. P.L. Couchoud's recent "Enigma of Jesus," that "whether Dr. Couchoud be right or wrong" in denying the historicity of Jesus, "he appears to have laid his finger on a weak point in the chain of evidence on which hangs the religious faith of a great part of civilized mankind." (For modern scholars, see Robert M. Price above.)

## DID JESUS EVER LIVE?

### THE FICTION OF THE GOSPELS

No Christian writer mentions one of our four Gospels until a hundred years after the death of Christ or makes any clear and certain quotation from any one of them.

It is not until about 140 or 150 A.D. that Christian writers refer to and quote from the Gospels. (Agree.)

The less learned of the clergy pour fine scorn on the modern denial of the historicity of Jesus. It is a humorous illustration, they say, of the extravagances of the spirit of denial. There is a legend amongst them that an archbishop once showed that on the same principles you could prove that Napoleon I never existed: which certainly would be a humorous thing to do, as there were plenty of people still living in the archbishop's time who had actually seen Napoleon! I have myself known old ladies who remembered his death.

The ordinary believer is startled by, and is apt to be impatient of, the very question which forms the title of this chapter. But a very little reflection, if he will condescend to it, will show him that it is a quite serious question. A number of characters whose historical existence was as certain as the sun to whole ages -- King Arthur, Homer, William Tell, etc. -- have proved to be legendary. Adam is certainly a legend: Moses and Abraham are most probably legends: Zarathustra is doubtful. If the historicity of Jesus is so very certain, there must be some quite indisputable witnesses to it. Who are they?

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The Gospels. Now, just as science is said to be "organized common sense," so modern scientific history organizes or directs common sense in these matters. Who wrote the Gospels? No one knows. They are entitled "According to Matthew," etc., not "by Matthew," etc., in the oldest Greek manuscripts and in early references to them. Indeed, even if they professed to be written by Matthew, etc., it would not follow that they were. But they do not profess this. Many scholars think, on very slender grounds, that the third Gospel was actually written by Luke. We shall see; though it matters little for our purpose, as the writer expressly says that he was not an eye-witness. He is, he says (i, 1-3), writing down for a friend, as "many" others have done before him, an account of what they have heard about Jesus.

What we want to know about the Gospels is whether the men who wrote them were in a position to know the facts. In ordinary history we ask two questions about any writer: what was his knowledge of the facts, and is he truthful? In dealing with religious documents, especially Oriental documents, we have to be particularly critical. Let me illustrate this.

About twenty years ago Mr. Myron H. Phelps wrote an account ("Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi") of the origin of the new Babi or Babai religion which was then finding adherents in America. It arose out of the teaching of a Persian reformer, Ali Mohammed, called "the Bab" (gate). Like Christ, but in the year 1844 A.D., Ali Mohammed set out to reform the accepted creed and to bring people back to the worship of a purely spiritual

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God. He and hundreds of his followers were put to death, in 1850, by a combination of Persian priests and government; and what Sir J.G. Frazer calls "the bribe of immortality" had no place in the faith of those fearless martyrs. But the significant point is this: two or three years after the death of the Bab his life was written, and it was a purely human account of a Christ-like man; but some decades later a new life appeared richly embroidered with miracles in the Gospel manner!

What happened in the East in the nineteenth century could, surely, happen in the first century. If these lives of Jesus, the Gospels, were not written until some decades after his death, we must read them with great caution. (Another good argument by McCabe that the Gospels should not be taken as evidence of an historical Jesus.) The American Fundamentalist, who is the last to realize this, ought to be the first. He knows well how Catholic enthusiasm still makes miracles at Lourdes and St. Anne. Enthusiasm, even innocently, always glorifies its cause with miracles. In the early days of Spiritualism an eminent British judge published some remarkable experiences he had had a few years before; and he was compelled, in great confusion, to admit that his memory was entirely wrong and he had misstated the facts in every important detail. It is therefore most important to know when the Gospels were written. If they were not written until several decades after the death of Christ -- if the stories about Christ passed merely from mouth to mouth in an Oriental world for a whole generation at least after his death -- it is neither reasonable nor honest to put implicit faith in them. There were no journals in those

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days. Few people could read and write. Moreover, the Jews were scattered over the earth by the Romans in the year 70 A.D.; and the Christians had previously been scattered by the Jews themselves. What should we make of a story going from mouth to mouth in such conditions as these for several decades?

However, let us approach the subject on common-sense lines. How are we to test whether the writers of the Gospels knew the facts and did not merely put on parchment what was being said in the obscure and scattered Christian communities? Some Christian writers try to apply what are called internal tests. They say that the description of places and customs and daily life in Judea is so confident and precise in the Gospels that the writers were evidently familiar with the country in the time of Christ.

Tests of this kind are very delicate and uncertain. In one of Mr. H.G. Wells' novels -- "Marriage," I think -- the story is partly located in Labrador, which is minutely and accurately described. I found that few people had any doubt but that Wells had been there. But, when the able novelist was writing that book, he told me that he had just collected all the available books on Labrador and was "steeping himself" in the subject. He has never been near Labrador. Similarly, Prescott, the vivid American historian of the conquest of Mexico and Peru, never saw either land. He was blind.

A careful writer can easily "get up" a country in this way -- Keeping common sense as our guide, however, we will not suppose that a number of early Christians "got up on"

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Galilee and Judea in order to write lives of Jesus. In point of fact, they have only a very general and often inaccurate knowledge. Mark is generally admitted to be the oldest Gospel, and it is by no means detailed and precise in topography. (True the semiliterate of Mark did not get even the geography of Palestine correct but it should be added that neither Mark nor any evangelist has any accurate picture of the fundamentals of the religion of Judaism, nor did Jesus or Paul.) In others, such as Luke, there are historical errors. Luke admittedly did not know Judea.

But we need not linger over tests of this sort. Take the book of Daniel. It is as vivid and precise and circumstantial as any Gospel; and it is quite demonstrably a forgery written centuries after the time it describes. We should say the same of a very great deal of the Old Testament. Such tests are useless. They would break down hopelessly in Homer. They would prove that Dante had really visited hell. They would make Keats a native of Corinth.

The first condition of any confidence in the Gospels is to ascertain that the writers lived within a reasonable time of the events described; and one hundred and fifty years of biblical scholarship have not succeeded in finding any proof of that. At present the general opinion is that Mark, the oldest Gospel, was written between 65 and 70 A.D.; and Matthew and Luke in the last decade of the first century; and John in the second century. ( Modern scholars would agree with these dates more or less.) Mark, it will be remembered, knows nothing about the

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miraculous birth of Christ; the first account of that turns up at least ninety years after the supposed event! Moreover, the resurrection story and other details are not supposed, and cannot be proved by anybody, to have been in Mark by the year 70. (It should be noted that modern scholars recognize that the resurrection appearances in Mark were added to his gospel more than a century after it was written.)

Scholars have come to the conclusion that there existed at first a simple sketch of the life of Jesus which is the groundwork of the first three Gospels (and is best seen in Mark) and a collection of teachings which is most used by Matthew. At what date this sketch was written nobody knows. What precisely was in it nobody knows. You cannot put your finger on a single verse and say that it is part of the original Gospel. (True) And, even if you could, there is not a scrap of evidence that it was written within thirty years of the death of Christ. Remember Ali Mohammed and his miracles!

If a religious reader thinks that he can dismiss all this as "Higher Criticism stuff," and points out how much these critics have changed their theories and how contradictory they are, let him reflect on his own position. He trusts the Gospels without any evidence whatever; without making the least inquiry into their authority. His preachers dogmatically say that the Gospels were "inspired" -- though the opening verses of Luke plainly say the contrary -- and he takes their word as simply as a child does.



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This "Higher Criticism," which he hears so much reviled, is a very serious and conscientious effort of Christian divines, sustained now for more than a hundred years, to prove that the Gospels are worthy of ordinary historical credence. In the case shall that a given item It has failed. The miraculous birth, the death on the cross, the resurrection and ascension, and the healing miracles, it is compelled to sacrifice altogether. By great effort it then concludes that some sort of, small Gospel or life of Jesus was in existence thirty years after the death of Christ; but that is too late to be reliable, and no one knows exactly what it said.

Moreover, while there is no evidence at all that the Gospels, our Gospels, existed before the end of the first century, there is very serious evidence that they did not. No Christian writer mentions one of our four Gospels until a hundred years after the death of Christ or makes any clear and certain quotation from any one of them. That is serious, surely. Yes, you may say, if it is true; but it may be another bit of Higher Criticism or of Rationalism. It is not. It is the very serious verdict of a committee of historians and divines appointed to study this question by the Oxford (University) Society of Historical Theology, an ecclesiastical society. They courageously published this disappointing result of their labors in "The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers" (1905). (Yes, we personally are inclined to put the Gospels in their final state after 100 CE.)

Pope St. Clement of Rome, for instance, wrote an important letter, which we have, about 96 A.D.; and a

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second letter bearing his name, though probably a Christian forgery, was written later. About the same time, or a little earlier, there were the so-called "Epistle of Barnabas" and the first part of the "Teaching of the Apostles." These never quote from, or refer to, the Gospels. For the first three decades of the second century we have the second part of the "Teaching," the "Pastor" (supposed to be by "Hermas"), and letters of Bishops Ignatius and Polycarp. Not one of these mentions the Gospels or makes a clear quotation from them. They quote certain words which roughly correspond to words in Matthew, Luke and (at a late date) John; but this proves nothing, as by the second century these sayings of Christ certainly circulated in the Church. We must say the same of the "Sayings of Our Lord" (or "Logia"), a second-century fragment containing seven "sayings," two of which are in the Gospels. It has no significance whatever, unless it be to discredit the Gospels. The writer clearly knew of no Gospel collections.

It is not until about 140 or 150 A.D. that Christian writers refer to and quote from the Gospels. They are clearly known to Justin, Marcion and Papias. The latter, the Bishop of Herapolis, an ignorant and credulous man who writes a good deal which nobody now believes, is known to us only from quotations in the fourth century historian Eusebius; a man who notoriously held that the use of statements to the Church was more important than their accuracy. This fourth-century quotation of a second-century obscure bishop is the only "serious" evidence for the Gospels! Papias says that he learned from older men that Mark and Matthew really wrote

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Gospels. That is not evidence that any historian would credit, and, in fact, divines do not believe it. (And modern scholars too.)

In order to realize the full significance of this, it is necessary to know a little more about the early Christian world than a Christian usually knows. He imagines just a loyal group of virtuous men and women meeting secretly here and there, at Corinth or Ephesus or Thessalonica, to break bread and pray to Jesus. On the contrary, from about 50 to 150 A.D., early Christianity was a most intense ferment of contradictory speculations. Greek, Persian, Jewish, Egyptian, and all kinds of religious ideas were blended with Christianity. We know the names of at least a score of Christian intellectual leaders and sects of the time. Gradually, of course, these people were thrust outside the Church and called "Gnostics"; but in the first century and the early part of the second Christian communities everywhere swarmed with these mystics.

It was in such a world that the Gospels gradually took shape. The idea of the average believer, that someone sat down one day and, under inspiration, wrote a "Gospel according to Matthew," and so on, is naively unhistorical. The writer of Luke indicates what happened. For decades the faithful merely talked about Christ. Men like Paul went from group to group, much as the cheapest types of revivalists do today, and talked about Jesus. Probably few of them could read, in any case; and Paul, to judge by his Epistles, had very little to say about an earthly life of Jesus. (See below the excerpt from our previous book on Jesus on the silence of Paul as to the historical Jesus.)

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Then, here and there, some who could write put upon parchment what was being said. All sorts of wild and contradictory stories about Jesus were going about. (The Gospels contain numerous contradictions and inconsistencies both as to the teachings of Jesus and the events of his life.) Our four Gospels are just four that were selected in the fourth century out of a large number. These little biographies and lists of "sayings" grew larger and larger. There was no central authority to check them; the various communities were a day's, or even a week's, journey apart; and travel was costly for poor folk. There was not the slightest approach to what we call standardization.

So it is mere waste of time to write a Life of Jesus by a sort of intelligent selection of what you think is probable in the Gospels. All the Rationalist and other such biographies, from Strauss and Renan to Papini, are just subjective compilations. You may think it probable that Jesus really did this or that, but you cannot call it an historical fact because it is in the Gospels. The figure of Jesus, the biography, grew, as time went on. And, since that growth took place, during at least half a century of unchecked speculation and argumentation, in a world of Oriental mysticism and theosophy, you see the strength of the writers who hold that Jesus (as many of the Gnostics held) never was a man at all.

## JEWISH AND PAGAN WITNESSES

We may conclude that no non-Christian writer of the first century mentions Christ.

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On the very day on which I begin to write this chapter, the leading Sunday newspaper of Britain, the Observer, has a prominent article on "Jesus Christ in History." The pretext of it -- a claim that new evidence has been found -- I will discuss presently; but a part of the article must have surprised many people.

The writer is an orthodox and respected English theologian, Dr. Burch. He is going to publish a book about this supposed new evidence for the historicity of Jesus. Meantime, as his publishers naturally will not allow him to give away the great secret, he writes articles in connection with it.

In this article he deals with "the scantiness of references to Christ in the histories which have come down to us." He quotes "the ablest Jewish book on the whole subject," Klausner's recent "Jesus of Nazareth", and he shows that, in the way of non-biblical witnesses to Christ, we have only "twenty-four lines" from Jewish and pagan writers, and four of those are spurious. Of the twenty genuine lines twelve (which are almost universally regarded as spurious) are in the Jewish historian Josephus. In the immense Latin literature of the century after the death of Jesus there are only eight lines; and each of these is disputed.

Certainly a disturbing silence from the Christian point of view. We might argue that, since the Jews were very hostile to the Christians, their great writers, Philo and Josephus, would be not unnaturally reluctant to speak about them. We might suggest that the teaching and crucifixion of Jesus, more than a thousand miles away

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from Rome, in a very despised province, would not be likely to come even to the notice of a Roman writer. Yet how strange, how ironic, that God should have lived on earth, for the salvation of men during thirty years, and consummated a great sacrifice which dwarfs every other event in human history, and the stream of literature can flow on for a hundred years without more than half a dozen disputed lines on these transcendent miracles!

We are trying to take a common sense view of religious problems, using whatever aid we can get from modern science and modern history. Now from that point of view there does not seem to be much importance in this discussion of the non-Christian references to Christ. We have to deal with them because the theme of this chapter is the historicity of Christ, and we have to ask whether, since there are no Christian witnesses except the late and anonymous Gospels and the Epistles of Paul, there are any Jewish or pagan witnesses. But for the reasons I have just given I should not be greatly astonished if there were none at all. What was Jesus, or the Jesus cult, to the Greeks and Romans of the first century? One Asiatic superstition amongst many. They would hardly hear of it. It was only when Christianity became an organized religion, giving trouble to the imperial authorities, that they could be expected to notice it.

The argument is less strong as regards the Jewish writers. The more learned of these, Philo, who was born about the same time as Jesus, could scarcely be expected to mention Jesus and his followers. He was an Alexandrian Jew, and he wrote mainly on philosophy. An

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aristocrat of great wealth and culture, he would, even if he heard during his visit to Jerusalem of the new sect, not have any reason to speak of it in his works. His silence can mean no more than that Christianity was not of much importance in the world of his time.

It is very different with the historian Flavius Josephus. He was a Palestinian Jew, born at Jerusalem in 37 A.D., a man of high connections and great culture. He was intensely interested in religious questions, and he gives in one of his works so detailed an account of the Essenian monks, with whom I shall suggest that Jesus was connected, that many suspect that he may for a time have lived in one of their monasteries. (The idea that Jesus was Essenian is generally rejected by the vast majority of scholars today, though it was a popular idea in the time in which McCabe was writing – 1929.) After the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) he resided in Rome and wrote his works, the chief of which are his "History of the Jewish War" and "Jewish Antiquities." In one or other of these lengthy and exhaustive works he would, though a Pharisee, reasonably be expected to speak of Jesus and his followers. He even includes, in his "Jewish Antiquities," a full and unflattering portrait of Pontius Pilate; and he tells of other zealots and reformers than Jesus in the Jewish history of the time.

Now in the "Jewish Antiquities," as we have the book, we read the following passage (xviii, 3)

About this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed  
be

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should be called man. He wrought miracles, and was a teacher

of those who gladly accept the truth, and had a large

following among the Jews and pagans. He was the Christ.

Although Pilate, at the complaint of the leaders of our

people, condemned him to die on the cross, his earlier

followers were faithful to him. For he appeared to them alive

again on the third day, as god-sent prophets had foretold this

and a thousand other wonderful things of him. The people of

the Christians, which is called after him, survives until the

present day.

This passage is so obviously spurious that it is astonishing to find a single theologian left in our time who accepts it. No competent theologian or historian does. Josephus was a zealous Jew: and most of this is rank blasphemy from the Jewish point of view. There is a hint that Jesus was divine: he is said to have taught the truth, to have wrought miracles, and to have risen from the dead; and the messianic prophecies are expressly referred to him. To imagine Josephus writing such things is preposterous. It is a Christian interpolation.



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But was a real reference to Jesus cut out by the Christian interpolator and replaced by this clumsy forgery? I have always held that that is probable, though some claim that the text of Josephus does not favor my idea. (Most serious the Biblical scholars today reject the clumsy forgery hypothesis that McCabe accepts.) The passage about Jesus breaks in rather abruptly. Yet, clumsy as the forger was -- making a zealous Jew recognize Jesus as "the Christ (Anointed One-McCabe)" and the Messiah at the very height of the bitter feud of Jews and Christians -- he would hardly pick any random page of the historian for his purpose. It seems to me not unlikely that he found there a reference to Jesus, and it would not be surprising if the last sentence of the passage, which would be just as clumsy for a later Christian to write, really is from the pen of Josephus.

We are told that an ancient Slavonic version of Josephus' "Jewish War" (not the "Antiquities") has been discovered, and that it contains testimony to the historicity of Christ. This may be one of two things. It may be a Christian interpolation in the "Jewish War" corresponding to the interpolation in the "Antiquities": or it may be a genuine Josephus reference to Jesus in sober terms. The former supposition is by far the more probable, since no later Christian would venture to cut out a reference to Jesus from our Greek version of Josephus (unless it was uncomplimentary-McCabe).

The next most important reference to Jesus is in the "Annals" of the great Roman historian Tacitus (xv, 44). He mentions the fire which burned down the poorer quarters

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of Rome in the year 64 A.D. It was suspected that Nero had ordered the fire, which caused great misery at the time, and, Tacitus says, the Emperor diverted suspicion by blaming the Christians for it and persecuting them. I will translate the entire passage from the Latin:

In order to put an end to this rumor, therefore, Nero laid the blame on, and visited with severe punishment, those men, hateful for their crimes, whom the people call Christians. He, from whom the name was derived, Christus, was put to death by the Procurator Pontius Pilatus in the reign of Tiberius.

Tacitus goes on to describe how "an immense multitude" of Christians were put to death with fiendish torments, and were convicted "not so much of the crime of arson as of hatred of the human race."

This passage has many peculiar features. There cannot possibly have been "an immense multitude" of Christians at Rome in 64 A.D. There were not more than a few thousand two hundred years later. It sounds like a Christian interpolation. On the other hand, Tacitus has one of the most distinctive and difficult styles in Latin literature, and, if this whole passage is a forgery, it is a perfect imitation. We must, however, not press that argument too far. It is only the few words about the crucifixion that matter, and a good Latin scholar could easily achieve that. Professor Drews' indeed, who has a long and learned dissertation on the passage, believes it to be a forgery in its entirety, and argues that there was no persecution of Christians under Nero. He is not

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convincing, and it is difficult to believe -- although there have been other scholars who agreed with Drews -- that the passage generally was not written by Tacitus. The short sentence about Pilate may be an interpolation, but I know the peculiarities of the style of Tacitus too well to think the whole passage forged.

But why spend time over the matter? Tacitus is supposed to have written this about the year 117 A.D., or nearly eighty years after the death of Jesus. What does it prove? Only that after the year 100 there was a general belief in the Christian community that Jesus was crucified at the order of Pontius Pilate. That is nothing new. The reference to Pilate in I Timothy, whether Pauline or not, must be as old as that. Three of the Gospels were then written.

Some Christian writers argue that Tacitus must have seen the official record of the crucifixion, It is neither likely that any such official report would be sent to Rome nor that Tacitus looked up the archives, seventy years later, for such a thing. He was not the man to make such research or to be interested in such a point. If the passage is genuine, it shows only that there were in 117 A.D. Christians in Rome who said these things -- which nobody doubts; and it is not certainly genuine.

I am inclined to accept it because another Roman historian of about the same date, Suetonius, has an obscure passage, in his "Life of Claudius" (Chap". xxvi), which seems to refer to the Christians: "Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome because, at the instigation of Chrestos, they were always making trouble." Chrestos

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was a not uncommon Greek name, and it is urged that it may have nothing to do with Christ. Claudius died in the year 54 A.D., and it is almost impossible to imagine that there was sufficient sectarian fighting between Jews and Christians at Rome over Christ -- that is the only sense we can give to the sentence -- before the year 54. On the other hand, the sentence would be quite meaningless as a Christian interpolation. (As to the meaninglessness of the Christian interpolation; this is silly the first century is filled with documents created by Christians including the Gospels. In the Gospels of Mark and Matthew Christ dies on the cross with the words - why have you -God-forsaken me?)

On the whole, since it would be too remarkable a coincidence to find the Jews rioting about a Greek named Chrestos when they were actually rioting about Christ, I prefer to think that Suetonius has heard, and has written in a confused way, about the Jewish reformer Christ. (Jesus could not have been the Jewish reformer. His ignorance and hatred of things Jewish, including Judaism, is way to massive.) But it is of even less value than Tacitus. By the year 120 or 130 the cult of Christ was spread over the Roman world, and that is all that the mention by Suetonius implies.

Of Dr. Burch's twenty lines there remain only five in a letter of Pliny the younger to the Emperor Trajan. They say that the Christians were numerous enough in the province of Bithvnia (Asia Minor), of which Pliny was Governor, to cause him concern. But he speaks of them as respectable, law-abiding folk who meet to sing hymns

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at day-break to Christ "as a God." A number of scholars have disputed the authenticity of the passage or the whole letter; and it hardly seems plausible that a Proconsul should write to the Emperor about such a matter. We need not, however, go into this. It follows only that by 113 there were a good many Christians in Asia Minor. Apologists merely reveal the desperate poverty of their case when they quote such things as these Latin sentences to prove that Jesus really lived nearly a century before. (Yes, these desperate attempts by Christian apologist to find external evidence as to the existence of Jesus are - desperate. Thus, these late quotations which really proves nothing because as McCabe says we know that Christians existed by the time of the second century.)

We may conclude that no non-Christian writer of the first century mentions Christ -- Josephus being equivocal and certainly actually adulterated -- and references in the second century are of no value at all. I repeat, however, that this need not impress us much. Josephus is the only writer who could reasonably be expected to mention Christ, and we do not know whether or not he did. The Christians remained a very obscure sect in a world that was seething with sects. That is all we can infer; and we knew it. (McCabe could have mentioned that one of the big proofs offered by early Christians was that the religion had to be valid since the rapid expansion of Christianity which they imagined occurred, could only have done so with the help of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it was necessary to dig up external witnesses as to the early and thus rapid spread of the religion.)

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### A BROAD VIEW

The more the Modernist feels compelled to sacrifice the miracles and divinity of Jesus, the more zealous he is to magnify the grandeur of his personality.

There is no "figure of Jesus" in the Gospels. There are a dozen figures.

Must we, then, despair of finding any human Jesus at all, and suppose that he is a myth who became man in the imaginations of his followers?

There are some very potent reasons why I cannot agree with my learned friends in this.

It seems probable that the phenomena of a Christianity in the first century imply an historical personage.

Beyond any question there were great numbers of Christian churches in existence before the end of the first century.

The Epistles of Paul take us back to about the middle of the first century. (For the use of Paul to establish the historicity of Jesus, see our excerpt below on the significance of the silence of Paul on the historical Jesus.)

Moreover, Paul, as we saw, habitually speaks of Cephas and others who were actual companions of Jesus.

I conclude only that it is more reasonable to believe in the historicity of Jesus.

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(McCabe, in the first three sections, presents a pretty good case for making the claim that Jesus never lived! But in the "Broad View" section he presents very little evidence for the thesis that Jesus actually existed as we will show in what follows.)

It is a commonplace of religious literature that, if the Jesus of the Gospels did not exist, the creation of his personality by some obscure writers of the first century must itself be considered a miracle. Jesus is said to be "the grandest figure in all literature," and so on. The more the Modernist feels compelled to sacrifice the miracles and divinity of Jesus, the more zealous he is to magnify the grandeur of his personality.

Let us try, on the sober common-sense lines which we are following, to form an impartial opinion on this "figure of Jesus." Many Rationalist writers have used language about him just as superlative as that of the liberal theologians. Renan thought that there was "something divine" about Jesus. J.S. Mill was little less complimentary. Even Conybeare uses very high language. On the other hand, G.B. Shaw (in the preface to "Androcles") bluntly says that Jesus was insane. George Moore (in the preface to his "Apostle" -- one of the most refreshing impressions of the Gospels that you could read) says that the figure of Christ in Luke, to which the preachers generally turn, is "a lifeless, waxen figure, daintily curled, with tinted cheeks, uttering pretty commonplaces gathered from 'The Treasury of the Lowly' as he goes by." A collection of the sayings about Jesus by

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able writers would beautifully illustrate the truth that on such subjects scarcely anybody tells the truth.

I have not the least interest in belittling the figure of Jesus. A liberal parson once genially asked me to "take off my hat to the universe." I replied that I was not a fool; but that I would not mind raising my hat to the figure of Christ on the cross -- or of Bruno at the stake or Socrates in prison. But, mind you, these others met death more serenely than Jesus did: I mean, if we are to take Jesus as he is described in the Gospels. No amount of theological ingenuity will explain that "sweat of blood" in the garden of Gethsemane; and, if you point to the "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," I point to the other words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

If you recall how Jesus loved little children, I remind you how by his advocacy of virginity as the higher ideal he cut at the root of family life and blighted love, and how he believed in eternal torment for people of weak will. If you bring up the gentleness to the adulterous woman, I remind you of the bitter and rather vulgar abuse of the Pharisees, to which you will find no parallel in any pagan moralist of the time. In the Gospels Jesus utters hardly a single sentiment which, apart from chastity, he does not violate. He even scorns synagogues and meeting-places, and then founds a Church. He has not one word of guidance in the great problems of social life because he believes that the world is coming to an end. He is the archetype of the Puritans: scornful of all that is fair in life, bitter and unjust to those who differ from him, quite



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impracticable -- nay foolish -- in many of his counsels. It is absurd to say that our modern world has any use for Christ.

Now, the plain solution of all this tissue of contradictions, this mixture of sentiments of humanity with fierce intolerance, this gentleness to women and children and scorn of love and comfort, is quite easy after what we have seen: a dozen different conceptions of Jesus have been blended -- or, not blended, mixed together -- in these composite writings which we call the Gospels. Theologians have for ages perspired in attempting to reconcile the two different genealogies and other contradictions. It is a waste of time. One man did not write any Gospel. One spirit did not dictate them. They embody the contradictory opinions of the isolated and often hostile communities in different parts of the Greco-Roman world. There is no "figure of Jesus" in the Gospels. There are a dozen figures. It was not the same man who made Jesus love children and scorn his mother. It was not the same man who made Jesus turn water into wine for marriage roisterers (probably singing what we now call indecent songs) and then advise us to live on bread and sleep on stones: who made Jesus the warm friend of the painted lady of Magdala and the advocate of barren isolation from all that is human. Jesus of Nazareth became in time the Jesus of Tarsus, of Ephesus, of Corinth, of Antioch, of Alexandria, and so on. The figure of the pale enthusiast was shaped and colored differently in a score of different environments. Paul's letters picture them for us. To one group he has to talk much about fornication and feasting, to another about

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correct ritual, to another about points of theology, and so on. (Agreed.)

Must we, then, despair of finding any human Jesus at all, and suppose that he is a myth who became man in the imaginations of his followers?

There are some very potent reasons why I cannot agree with my learned friends in this. Let it be understood that there is no reason for bias either way. No Rationalist could in our time -- what-ever might be said of Matthew Arnold or Renan or Mill -- be tempted to think that favoring the historicity of Jesus lessened the odium of his position. Most people now do not care a cent what you think about Jesus. (Today, there is much interest in "finding the real Jesus".)

It seems probable that the phenomena of a Christianity in the first century imply an historical personage. I have not made a special study of the point, but from a general knowledge of Hindu and Chinese sacred literature I should say that we have less evidence of the personal existence of Kong-fu-tse or Buddha than of Jesus. The documents are even further removed from the events than the Epistles and Gospels are. Yet no historian doubts their historicity. Dr. Couchoud tells of a learned Buddhist priest who seems to have wondered how far Buddha was historical. But it is not clear from his five or six words to Dr. Couchoud that he meant more than that actual details of Buddha's life were unreliable, as in the case of Jesus.

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Broad views are often the best views. We have a large number of historical and literary events to explain. Beyond any question there were great numbers of Christian churches in existence before the end of the first century. (Mostly this is in Acts of the Apostles, which we believe was a late second century forgery. Note, that the main actor in this fantasy was neither Paul nor Peter but the Holy Spirit!) Probably Peter was never at Rome, but the other Roman bishops named, from about 70 A.D. onward, are not doubted.(But there is doubt in the minds of most modern Biblical scholars.) This group was a thousand miles from Judea; and there were churches all the way between, with overseers (bishops), elders (priests), and servers (deacons). Lives of Jesus were circulating amongst them, and, with all respect to Professor Smith, those lives or Gospels do unquestionably represent Jesus as a man, living in Judea. The Church made short work of the Gnostics who held that Jesus was never contaminated by a bodily frame. (The Christians did not make short work of the Gnostics. See The works of Elaine Pagels and also check out the Gnostic elements in the letters of Paul and in the Gospel of John.) Basilides, one of the ablest of the Gnostics, an Alexandrian, tried to teach in the first half of the second century that Jesus was never a man; and the whole Church promptly and emphatically repudiated him. He had to found a special half-Persian, half-Christian sect.

The Epistles of Paul take us back to about the middle of the first century. There are then groups of Christians in every large city. They have no bishops or priests in the

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modern sense, but there are "elders" (Timothy, Titus, etc.), and there are some sort of higher men who appoint them and consider complaints about their conduct. It is clear that this situation existed certainly by 60 A.D. Paul was closer in touch with them all than any other man was. I am not relying on Acts, though part of it may be fairly early, but on the generally accepted Epistles. And Paul's gospel, which in these respects he does not find challenged anywhere, is quite clear. His belief in the physical resurrection of Jesus is, he admits, not accepted by all. That belief is on a different plane, One could easily be mistaken about it. But that Jesus was born, taught, and was executed in Judea is at the very basis of Paul's teaching; and he never mentions any member of a church who doubts it. ( Except for one mention, he knows nothing about the historical events of the passion of Christ.) The Gnostics with their spiritual Jesus came later.

Moreover, Paul, as we saw, habitually speaks of Cephas and others who were actual companions of Jesus. (See our excerpt below.) We have to deny the genuineness of all the Epistles to doubt this. In II Corinthians (iv, 10) Paul says that it is fourteen years since he first came to believe in Jesus: that is to say, to believe that he was God, not that he was man. So he joined the Christian body, and mingled with them in Jerusalem, within less than ten years of the execution of Jesus. No Jew there seems to have told him that Jesus was a mere myth. In all the bitter strife of Jew and Christian the idea seems to have occurred to nobody. Setting aside the Gospels entirely, ignoring all that Latin writers are supposed to have said

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in the second century, we have a large and roughly organized body of Christians at a time when men were still alive who remembered events of the fourth decade of the century.

I conclude only that it is more reasonable to believe in the historicity of Jesus. There is no parallel in history to the sudden growth of a myth and its conversion into a human personage in one generation. (It was a common belief among educated Romans that the gods had once been actual historical human beings. Does that mean that they were?) Moreover, to these early Christians Jesus is not primarily a teacher. A collection of wise teachings might in time get a mythical name attached to it -- though why the name "Jesus" it is hard to see and the myth might in further time become a real person. But from the earliest moment that we catch sight of Christians in history the essence of their belief is that Jesus was an incarnation, in Judea, of the great God of the universe. (See our first book on Jesus, *Jesus Christ A Pagan Myth - Evidence That Jesus Never Existed*, for more on this subject.) The supreme emphasis is on the fact that he assumed a human form and shed human blood on a cross. So it seems to me far more reasonable, far more scientific, far more consonant with the facts of religious history which we know, to conclude that Jesus was a man who was gradually turned into a God. ( Before the reader swallows McCabe's thesis please check out the excerpt below on the silence of Paul on the historical Jesus.)

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## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

### JESUS NEVER LIVED: REBUTTAL BY THE DALTONS.

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#### THE SILENCE OF PAUL ABOUT (THE HISTORICAL) JESUS:

##### *Birth*

Now let us see what, if anything, Paul knows about the historical Jesus or his disciples or family. We will focus primarily on Galatians and 1 Corinthians, as these two letters contain virtually all of Paul's supposed references to the historical Jesus, his brother, and his disciples.

Paul says that Jesus was “born of a woman, born under the law” (Gal 4.4), but the Apostle supplies no historical detail. Paul knows of no birthplace and Jesus could have been born a hundred years before Paul. In his single reference to Jesus’ ancestry, Paul says that Jesus “was descended from David according to the flesh,” i.e., was of Jewish royal descent (Rom 1.3-4). We agree with Earl Doherty, (*The Jesus Puzzle*) that Paul does not know that Christ is a descendant of David. We think the entire passage (Rom 1.1-7) is an interpolation, since Paul nowhere else gives any historical data as to the ancestry of Jesus; and Rom 1.1-4 contains much detail unknown to Paul and Mark, the earliest Christian writings. Many scholars have questioned the integrity of these two passages from Galatians and Romans.

##### *“Lord’s Supper”*

Paul describes the “Lord’s Supper” at 1 Cor 11.23-29, but the integrity of this passage has been much questioned. Jesus’ words, “this is my body and blood... Do this in

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remembrance of me,...” are closest to Luke’s account, but Paul died about 64 CE, 25 years before Luke wrote his gospel (ca 85 CE).

### *Human Nature of Jesus*

Paul’s most detailed depiction of the human nature of Jesus occurs at Phil 2.6-11. This pre-Pauline hymn says that Jesus Christ “was in the form of God,... that he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness... he humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross.” Finally, the hymn adds that after Jesus’ death, God “exalted him” above all others. There is nothing else in the “genuine” letters of Paul about a divine figure descending from heaven and becoming human. The hymn was inserted by later editor.

Again, Paul refers to Jesus’ crucifixion but gives no historical detail. At I Thess 2.14-15 Paul says that “the Jews” killed “the Lord Jesus.” R. Brown lists some arguments that scholars have given against the Pauline authorship of this passage which Brown, nevertheless, accepts as genuine:

1) The letter gives a second thanksgiving, indicating that the letter is a composite.

2) The passage says that Jews are “enemies of the human race,” a common pagan slander.

3) The letter states that divine wrath has overcome the Jews, a reference to the first war with Rome (66-70 CE) which occurred after Paul’s death about 64 CD..

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Against Brown, most modern scholars have concluded that 1 Thess 2.14-15 was inserted by the early church. Earl Doherty in *The Jesus Puzzle*, lists some of the scholars who have found this to be so:

- Burton Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* p 113;
- Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, p 9, n 117;
- Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2, p 113;
- Pheme Perkins, *Harper's Bible Commentary*, p 1230,1231-2;
- S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, p 92-93;
- Paula Fredericksen, *From Jesus to Christ*, p 122.
- We would add J.D. Crossan who, in *Who Killed Jesus?*, asserts that the whole account of the Jewish trial is fiction.

Paul knows that Christ was “resurrected,” but he does not know where or when. In 1 Corinthians, Paul preaches that, “Jesus died, was buried, and raised on the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor 15.3-4), a passage which many scholars think is a creedal formula added by a later editor. Following this is Paul's list of resurrection appearances: Jesus first appeared to Cephas and the twelve (1 Cor 15.5); then to the 500 disciples (vs. 6); then



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to James and all the apostles (vs. 7); and finally Jesus appeared to Paul himself (vs. 8). Scholars have found many problems with this passage, one of which is that it is inconsistent with the other passages dealing with Jesus' resurrection appearances as described in the four Gospels and in Acts of the Apostles.

As we saw in Chapter 8, Mark does not assert that Jesus physically arose from the dead, but was translated or transformed after death. This is also true of Paul elsewhere in his letters.

Paul's Savior is not Mark's historical Jesus, but the Christ, a triumphant and divine figure of glory from the mythic past.

### *The Silence of Paul on (the Historical) Peter and other disciples*

There is evidence in Paul's letters of general conflict within the early church. Paul warns his flock to watch out for those who would cause dissensions and offenses contrary to what they have learned (Rom 16.17). He says there are false apostles who preach a perverted gospel and "another Jesus" (2 Cor 11.4-8,13-14,22-33; Gal 1.6-9); he warns that they "will pay the penalty" (Gal 5.10,12).

Paul did not know Peter. His references to Peter, John and James were added by an editor in an attempt to prove that the Apostle knew these associates of Jesus, thus establishing a link between Paul's Christ and the historical Jesus.

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Paul says that his gospel “is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1.11-12). He says, God “set me apart before I was born” and revealed “his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles” (Gal 1.15-16; 1 Cor 1.1; 2 Cor 1.1, Phil 1.1, Rom 1.1). Paul writes that after his conversion, he “did not confer with any human being, nor did (he) go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before (him) “ but... went away at once into Arabia....” (Gal 1.16-17). In about 40 CE, three years after his conversion, Paul says he visited Cephas for fifteen days in Jerusalem and also saw James, the Lord’s brother (Gal 1.19), but Paul insists that he did not receive any part of his gospel from Peter, Cephas, James, or any other human being.

About 14 years after his first visit to Jerusalem, Paul writes that he received a revelation from God, and again went to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas and Titus (Gal 2.1-2). Paul meets privately in Jerusalem with the supposed “acknowledged leaders” (James, Cephas and John) but he again flatly asserts that they “contributed nothing to me,” (Gal 2.2,6). In other words, Paul insists that his gospel did not come from Jesus of Nazareth through his disciples or his brother. Even if Peter is Cephas, Paul does not indicate that he received truth from him. Also, it would be anachronistic for Paul to refer to Peter as Cephas, since Peter was not called by this name until John 1.42, written decades later (ca 100 CE) after Paul's death about 64 CE.

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An editor of Galatians attempted to convince his readers that Paul knew Peter by having Paul explicitly say that Peter's gospel, as well as his own, came from God (Gal 2.7-8). We do not find any reference to this passage in Christian writings until Irenaeus about 180 CE. Tertullian, writing about 207 CE, knows about the Jerusalem leaders shaking hands with Paul, i.e., approving of his mission to the non-Jews, but he knows nothing of the statement that Peter's gospel came from God.

Paul says he met with James, whom he describes as the brother of Jesus, but only once, at Gal 1.19; a passage which many scholars are wary of. After all, we last saw James in Mark's gospel, where he is depicted as an unbeliever who thinks that Jesus is crazy and maybe even possessed by Satan, and yet at the meeting in Jerusalem we find James is apparently the head of the church of Jerusalem!

Paul knows nothing about the disciples as depicted in Mark and the other gospels. Paul never even hints that Peter, James (excluding the brother passage), John, or anyone else ever met Jesus, much less that they were his disciples.

*The silence of Paul on Jesus:*

Finally, how can it be argued that Paul knew of the historical Jesus when he is wholly ignorant of the Marcan traditions about Jesus? Here are some items found in Mark's gospel but omitted in the Apostle's letters. Paul knows nothing of Bethlehem, Capernaum, Galilee,

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Nazareth, or Judea. Paul does not know of Judas, John the Baptist, Herod Antipas, the high priest, or Pontius Pilate. Before God and Christ Jesus I (Paul) give you a command. Jesus is the one who confessed that same wonderful truth when he stood before Pontius Pilate. And God is the one who gives life to everything. 1 Timothy 6:13 (Virtually all serious scholars agree that this letter was not written by Paul. It was probably written in the second century CE long after Paul's death about 64 CE.) This passage did not appear in our first book on the non-existence of Jesus.

He doesn't mention the Sadducees, the Sanhedrin (which supposedly tried Jesus), the scribes, or even that Jesus had disciples. He uses the word Pharisee only once (referring to himself at Phil 3.5). The apostle refers to Cilicia but fails to mention the city of Tarsus, though Acts says that he was born there. He mentions the Twelve one time at 1 Cor 15.5, but does not associate the twelve with the apostles. A major element of Judaism which he ignores is the temple in Jerusalem, having only a single reference to it at 1 Cor 9.13.

Also, Paul does not know of Jesus' special teachings, his cures, exorcisms, or other miracles. Paul knows only of Jesus' ahistorical death. He does not know of an historical man who lived and died in Palestine about 30 CE. Paul's Christ was crucified in the mythic past and returned to life as a god, a spiritual Christ. His Christ is in the tradition of pagan gods like Osiris, Dionysius, Mithras, and Hercules, all of whom suffered and died, were transformed after death, becoming divine. For

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additional analysis of the silence of Paul about Jesus, see Earl Doherty, *The Jesus Puzzle*.

## APPENDIX A EARLY JEWISH AND PAGAN REFERENCES TO CHRISTIANS.

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*Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man...*

Josephus Antiquities 18.63-64

*... it would seem ridiculous to have a Jewish historian imply that Jesus was 'more than a man'... But ancient Christian forgers lived in their own world.*

Authors

What Jewish literary witnesses are there to the existence of Jesus? The first to Jewish author who provides independent evidence for the first century existence of early Christianity is Flavius Josephus (ca 37 – ca 95 CE), a Jewish historian. As a general, he took part in the first war of Judea with Rome (66-70 CE) and after his capture by the Romans, became a favorite of the Roman general is later emperor, Vespasian. Four books by the Jewish historian are extant, his *Vita* (a brief autobiography), *The Jewish war*, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, and *Against Apion* (a defense of Jews). There are three passages in Josephus's *Antiquities* that refer either to Jesus, his brother James, or to John the Baptist. We will discuss only the first two here as we have discussed the passage of John the Baptist above.

### *James, the Brother of Jesus*

After the death of the Roman procurator of Judea, and before the arrival of a new one, the high priest Ananus tried and executed some of his enemies. One of the victims, according to Josephus, was a man called James, “the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ...” (*Ant*

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20.200). If the phrase “who was called Christ” is removed, no one would imagine that the James referred to was the brother of Jesus. Rather, one would have thought he was the brother of the high priest “Jesus, son of Damneus” (*Ant* 20.203) who is mentioned in the text only three sentences after the “Christ” phrase.

We regard this reference to Christ as a Christian interpolation. The use of the word *Christ* by Josephus also occurs in the Jesus passage at *Ant* 18.63-64. The only use of the word *Christians* appears there, too. Origen, more than 120 years later, is the first to refer to the passage about James (Celsus, I.47). Origen states that Josephus, “although not believing in Jesus as the Christ,” attributes the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple to the fact that “James the Just, who is the brother of Jesus (called Christ)...” was killed. The problem is that the extant manuscripts of Josephus do *not* say that the destruction of the Temple was a consequence of the death of James (cf. *Ant* 20.200-203).

### *Jesus, the Christ*

The most famous passage used to demonstrate that Josephus had independent knowledge of the existence of Jesus appears in *Ant* 18.63-64:

“Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, *if it be lawful to call him a man*, for he was a doer of wonderful works... a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. *He was [the] Christ*; and when Pilate, at

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the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, *for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him;* and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.” (Our italics identify those words which many scholars find inauthentic.)

Some scholars believe this entire passage about Jesus the Christ is a late Christian insertion. It breaks the flow of the narrative, not relating to what comes before or what follows. Origen (ca 230 CE), who knew of Josephus's references to the stories of John the Baptist and James, was not aware of this passage about Jesus. This passage from *Antiquities* is unknown to any ancient writer until the dishonest Eusebius who wrote more than 200 years after Josephus. [Bauer, W., 1971]

Would a Jewish historian, a defender of monotheism, write of the man Jesus, “if it be lawful to call him a man?” And where do Mark or the other Gospels say that many “Gentiles” were attracted to Jesus during his ministry? Besides, why wasn't Josephus a convert if he believed Jesus was (the) Christ and more than a man? the answer is that some ancient Christians believed that Josephus was a (secret) Christian; indeed some thought he was Bishop of Jerusalem. The Christian who interpolated this passage thought that Josephus was a convert, and thus he did not see the glowing description of Jesus ascribed to



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Josephus as odd at all. Christian writings of the Imperial period were often forged. Many forgeries survived to this day, for example: the *Protevangelium of James*, *Acts of Pilate*. Some, like the *Shepherd of Hermas* and 1 Clement, nearly made it into the canon of the *Christian Scriptures*.

Often a forged reference to Jesus was a glowing tribute, especially if the person was thought to be a secret Christian like Josephus, Philo of Alexandria, Pontius Pilate, Mrs. Pilate, Joseph of Arimathea, or Nicodemus. To the modern reader it would seem ridiculous to have a Jewish historian implied that Jesus was “more than a man” in a book which supposedly concealed Josephus's conversion to Christianity. But ancient Christian forgers lived in their own world. As late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE, Christians like William Whiston, Josephus's translator, thought that Josephus was a Christian!

We conclude that these passages in Josephus's *Antiquities* are Christian interpolations. None of the other passages in Josephus contain any allusions to Christians. Shaye J. D. Cohen writes that Josephus “... can invent, exaggerate, over-emphasize, distort, suppressed, simplify, or, occasionally, tell the truth. Often we cannot determine where one practice ends and another begins.” [Shaye J. D. Cohen, 181, as quoted in Crossan, J. D., 91] Perhaps, but these remarks apply equally to certain ancient Christian editors.

### *Other Jewish Writings*

Other Jewish documents of the first century CE will not detain us long in our search for independent witnesses to

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early Christians, since none of them mentioned Christians. Philo, the Alexandrian (ca 20 BCE-ca 50 CE), was a Jewish philosopher and biblical exegete. He lives in Alexandria, Egypt, and travel to Rome to present the grievances of Jews to the Emperor Caligula (39-40 CE). Philo thus had the opportunity to meet and comment on early Christians, but he knows nothing of the “famed” Christ or his followers.

Another first-century Jewish source is the Dead Sea Scrolls, more than 500 scrolls were found in caves near Qumran on the shores of the Dead Sea only about 20 miles from Jerusalem. The Qumranites lives that Qumran from circa 150 BCE to circa 68 CE. Married members of the sect apparently lived in Jerusalem and other cities. [Most scholars today believe this sect to be the Essenes mentioned by Josephus and later Christian writers] There is no mention in the Scrolls of Jesus, John the Baptist, his disciples, or early Christians.

Many apocryphal books survive which were written by Jews between ca 200 BCE and 200 CE, like Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, etc., and none of these mention Jesus or Christians. Sixty-five pseudepigrapha have been collected and published by James H. Charlesworth in his two volume work, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Many of these books were written in the same time period as the apocryphal books but except for a few Christian interpolations, these works contain no allusions to Christians either.

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### *Pagan References to Early Christians*

This section examines the supposed early pagan literary references to Jesus. Epictetus (ca 60-ca 138 CE), a Stoic philosopher, uses the term “the Galileans” once (*Discourses*, IV.7). He may mean Christians, but in any case, his reference is too late. The Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE), a Stoic philosopher, names “the Christians” once (*Meditations* 11.3). The allusion is late second century, and may be a gloss.

Galen, philosopher and physician (ca 130-ca 200), mentions the “followers of Moses and Christ” and “the school of Moses and Christ.” He seems not to differentiate between the two “schools” of Judaism and Christianity. [Wilken, R., 72-72] Lucian, the Greek satirist, and Apuleius, author of the Roman novel *The Golden Ass*, also mention the Christians, [Wilken, R., 68] but they are contemporaries of Galen, and their comments are too late to be considered. These references appear too late to give us independent verification of the existence of Jesus or early Christianity. No one after all denies that Christianity existed by the late first and early second centuries. This leaves three additional pagan references to examine, and one Christian reference.

### *Pliny and Trajan*

In 111 CE, Pliny was appointed by his uncle, the Emperor Trajan, as governor of the province of Bithynia (in Asia Minor). One of his responsibilities was to investigate some charges brought by local citizens against Christians. Pliny wrote a letter to the emperor (No 10.96)

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in 112 CE inquiring how he is to deal with Christians charged with crimes. [Meier, J., 1991, 92] Pliny does not name the city involved. In the collection of sixty letters of Pliny, there is no other mention of Christians. Other than this letter, there is no evidence that would indicate that Pliny even knew of the existence of Christians.

Pliny does not indicate what crimes the Christians were charged with, but we agree with R. Wilken that the letter of Pliny hints at cannibalism. [Wilken, R., 21] We also agree with him when he writes, "...that the accusations of promiscuity and ritual murder appear *only* in Christian authors. They are *not* present in the writings of pagan critics of Christianity." [ibid. Wilken's ital]

In seeking to find some evidence for Roman persecution of religion, Wilken dredges up the Bacchae of the second century BCE, some of whom were apparently repressed by the Roman state. He admits that those who practiced the rites of the Bacchanalia, if the rites were traditions of long standing, were exempt from persecution. He neglects to inform the reader that, according to Christian evidence, Christianity was still seen as a Jewish sect in the time of Pliny. For example, the references to Christians in Galen at the end of the second century CE refer to the Christians as "the school of Moses and Christ." Why then would Christianity not be exempted from persecution as was the ancient religion of Judaism?

Wilken admits the romanticized martyr tradition that accused Christians of cannibalism and so on, is from a later time, and so, "...cannot be simply read back into..."

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Pliny's situation. [Wilken, R., 21] But this is precisely what Wilken does.

Pliny had expected to find that Christians were guilty of crimes, but states that he did not find them so. He writes that they "chant verses... in honor of Christ as if to a god..." [Quoted in Wilken, R., 22] And what else do the Christians do? Well, of course, they "...bind themselves by oath,... to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery...." Why then would Pliny execute them? He was conscientious enough to write the Emperor to make sure that he made no mistakes.

Even more "curious" is the fact that Pliny proceeds with his actions against the Christians without having received a reply from the emperor in this matter. Wilken admits that this is not characteristic of Pliny's character, which was one of "customary deliberateness." [Wilken, R., 22] Why would Pliny commit a criminal act by executing a person merely because they said they were Christian, when he knew that merely claiming to be a Christian was not a crime? The Christian god was not in the Roman Pantheon; this did not mean that Christianity was a criminal organization. True, Pliny adds something about Christians being obstinate and so should be punished, but obstinacy was not a crime under Roman law.

Finally, Pliny's letter tells us that some Christians claimed to be only *former* Christians, and so a test was given by Pliny. If these people, claiming to be former followers of Jesus, invoked the gods, offered wine and

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incense, and reviled the name of Christ, they would be let go. Wilken admits this tale of refusal to throw a bit of incense on the pagan altar is a later Christian tradition. So he goes looking for a Roman legal precedent, but fails to find a valid one.

After this letter regarding the Christians, Pliny's letters return to the subjects of his previous letters, which pertain to the governor's duties. Christians are never mentioned again.

### *Tacitus*

Writing a few years after Pliny's letter of 112 CE, the historian, Tacitus (ca 56 CE-ca 117 CE), was the most blatant pagan anti-Semite of the ancient world that we know of. Around 64 CE, Nero, apparently looking for scapegoats, supposedly blamed Christians for the burning of Rome. Of course, *Rome* was not burned. At most, Tacitus claims that some parts of the city were set afire. Modern historians think that the parts of Rome affected were the slum areas, the working class sections of the city. It is hard to see how Nero's palatial buildings could have had fire anywhere near them. In any case, he was out of the country.

Once again, we find the usual trademarks of the Christian forger. The Christian martyrs resemble those of the later centuries, gloriously accepting death. Their pagan persecutors are brutal monsters who feed their innocent victims to wild dogs. First, Nero slaughters admitted Christians, then a large number, not known to be Christians, are killed, mostly for "antisocial

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tendencies.” [Hoffman, R., 60] We find passages in the *Annals* of Tacitus which confirm some historical details of the gospels. He just happens to mention that “the Christ” was executed under Tiberius by Pontius Pilate, that Christianity originated in Judea, and early on arrived in Rome. Wilken characterizes Tacitus’ history as “disinterested” testimony. [Wilken, R., 149]

The real reason for the popularity of the Tacitus witness is that the later Christians of the ancient world saw Nero as an “anti-Christ” who engaged in empire-wide persecution of Christians. Evidence has led modern apologists to lean more to blaming Domitian for a certain degree of persecution of Christians, as opposed to Nero. But apologists have held on to Nero as, at least, a local persecutor of Christians.

### *Suetonius*

The last pagan source to be examined is *Lives of the Caesars* by Suetonius (ca 69 CE-ca 140 CE). His *Lives* was written a little later than Tacitus’ *Annals* in the first quarter of the second century. Writing in reference to Claudius (ca 49 CE), Suetonius states that the emperor “...banished the Jews from Rome, since they had made a commotion because of Chrestus.” [Quoted in Hoffman, R., 60] Some scholars think this may be a reference to Jews being expelled from Rome (cf. Acts 18.2). It is not clear whether this reference is to Christians or to messianic Jews.

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In the *Twelve Caesars*, writing of Nero's reign, Suetonius mentions in passing a "...new and mischievous' sect...". [Hoffman, R., 61] No mention is made of Jesus or Judea.

These preposterous stories of the lawless persecution of innocent Christians are not credible. Why would men of such prestigious offices and power be concerned with a small, innocuous sect, one of many floating around the Empire?

### *Muratorian Fragment*

"The document [Muratorian fragment] is best regarded as a list of New Testament books recognized as authoritative in the Roman church at the time." [Bruce, F.F., 159] Bruce thinks the time the fragment was written is "...most probably to the end of the second century (CE)." [Bruce, F.F., 158] But then again F.F. Bruce seems to assume that Jesus walked around Palestine with a secretary who took shorthand. The Muratorian fragment is important since it is used to show that the Christians of the second century had the basic canon of the *Christian Scriptures*. But the fragment supplies no such evidence. The *Interpreter's Dictionary*, like Bruce and most modern writers, accepts a late second-century date for the Muratorian fragment. [*Interpreters Dictionary*, vol 1, 527] However, in its Supplemental Volume, the Dictionary includes an article by A.C. Sundberg, Jr., which disputes the age of the Muratorian fragment.

Sundberg writes, "The early dating of the fragment has been based almost exclusively upon the phrase *nuperrime temporibus nostris*, usually translated 'very



## APPENDIX A EARLY REFERENCES TO CHRISTIANS

recently, in our time,' and taken to mean, within a generation of Pius I." (late 2nd cent). [*Interpreters Dictionary*, Supp Vol, 610] Sundberg reminds us that such a phrase was used by ancient Christians in a way that "...could... mean 'most recently,' with respect to the previously named books; and 'in our time' could therefore just as well refer to post-apostolic times in general...." [ibid]

Sundberg writes, "This partial list of NT books, previously held to have originated in Rome about the end of the second century, must now probably be regarded as Eastern, dating from the early fourth century." [*Interpreters Dictionary*, Supp Vol, 609]

The following is an abbreviated list of pagan writers who lived at the time of Jesus or within a century thereafter who do not mention Jesus or early Christians: Seneca, Pliny the Elder, Juvenal, Martial, Petronius, Plutarch, Epictetus, Lucian, Dio Chrysostom. [Reimsberg, J. E., 18-19]

## APPENDIX B PERSECUTION BY CHRISTIANS

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*Perhaps the saddest thing to admit is that those who rejected the Cross have to carry it, while those who welcomed it so often engaged in crucifying others.*

— Nicholai A. Berdyayev, *Christianity and Anti-Semitism*

*The man who says to men, "Believe as I do, or God will damn you," will presently say, "Believe as I do, or I shall kill you."*

— Voltaire, *Selected Works*.

*The Lord said, "I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*

— Isaiah 49.6

*We decree and order that from now on, and for all time, Christians shall not eat or drink with Jews...*

Pope Eugenius IV Decree, 1442 CE

### SECOND CENTURY CHRISTIAN VIEWS ON JUDAISM

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The central problem with Christian scholarship on Judaism was best expressed by Samuel Sandmel, "It can be set down as something destined to endure eternally that the usual Christian commentators will disparage Judaism and its supposed legalism..." Sandmel concludes "...that with those Christians who persist in deluding themselves about Jewish legalism, no academic communication is possible. The issue is not to bring these interpreters to love Judaism, but only to bring them to a responsible, elementary comprehension of it." [Sandmel, S., 35]

The Christian writers of the second century CE had no trouble understanding the central message of the Christian Scriptures as can be seen in the writings of Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus.

## APPENDIX B PERSECUTION BY CHRISTIANS

R. Wilde writes that Bishop Ignatius (d ca 117 CE) saw Judaism as “...the old and bitter leaven, whereas Christianity is the new leaven.” [Wilde, R., 85]

Justin Martyr (fl c 160 CE) says that the old covenant with the Jews has been replaced by the new covenant with the Christians. [Wilde, R., 108] Justin asserts that the “...Israel of God is no longer the Jewish nation but the Christians...”. [Wilde, R., 109]

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons about 180 CE, asserts that the Christian God adopted “the gentiles” as his sons. [*Demonstratio*, 8, as quoted in Wilde, R., 150] He believed that “the Jews” lapsed into idolatry and so are condemned. [Wilde, R., 151] The Law was given to Jews “...because of their stubbornness and because they would not subject themselves to Him,” [*Adv. Haer.*, 4:15,2; 4:16,4: in servitutum, as quoted in Wilde, R., 151] and because of “...their blindness.” [Ibid] Irenaeus writes that, as was prophesied in the *Jewish Scriptures*, “...the crucifixion of Christ was followed by the obliteration of...” the Jewish Law “...and the deliverance of the Jews into the hands of the Gentiles.” [*Adv. Haer.*, 4:33,12, as referred to in Wilde, R., 153] Thus “...they die in torment.” [*Demonstratio*, 69, as referred to in Wilde, R., 153]

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## JEWS ON PAGANS

According to the *Jewish Scriptures*, can non-Jews be “saved?”

“I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isa 49.6; cf. Isa 2.2f,

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

56.6-8, and 45.22, all of which refer to the salvation of gentiles in general). Isa 66.19-20 predicts, as E. P. Sanders reminds us, a mission to save the gentiles. [Sanders, E.P., *Paul*, 214] The Jewish Scriptures never assert that righteous pagans are doomed. E.P. Sanders says that most Jews believed that righteous pagans would be saved. [Ibid]

## PERSECUTION OF PAGANS AND JEWS BY CHRISTIANS IN THE 4TH CENTURY

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Justin addresses emperor Antoninus Pius in his *First Apology*, and “argues for the unique validity of Christianity and claims that demons were responsible for pagan myths mimicking Christianity and for the scandalous allegations against Christians.” [Beard, M., 330 12.7a (i)] Justin condemns the followers of the Gnostic Christian, Marcion, as sexually permissive and cannibalistic. [Ibid]

Justin’s pupil, Tatian (ca 150), says the Greek religion and culture are stupid. He says he was once in the mysteries and that demons incited the evil in these mysteries. [Beard, M., 331ff]

What did all this Christian intolerance lead to? If there is any doubt as to the exclusiveness of ancient Christianity, there can be no doubt once it attained power, i.e., was proclaimed the official state religion in the fourth century CE. Depriving Jews and pagans of their religious and civil rights was intense, widespread, and brutal. We shall give some examples. (For more details see *Paganism and Christianity* by Ramsay MacMullen and Eugene N. Lane

## APPENDIX B PERSECUTION BY CHRISTIANS

(Chapter 22), and *The Death of Classical Paganism* by John Holland Smith.)

Theodore, the future Bishop of Mopsuestia (southern Turkey), in ca 380 abjures Satan and all his angels, i.e., poets, pagan philosophers, heretics, and those who believe in pagan purifications. His catechism says, “It is service of Satan that one should indulge in the observances of Judaism.” It also condemns Christian heretics, the theater, the circus, contests of athletes, secular songs and dance “...which the devil introduced into this world under the pretext of amusement... through which he leads the souls of men to perdition.” [MacMullen, 279-280]

### THEODOSIAN CODE 4TH CENTURY AND LATER

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What follows is from the chronological chart in J. H. Smith’s book, *The Death of Classical Paganism*. [Smith, J. H., 251-267]

The Edict of Toleration (311 CE) supposedly granted equality to all religions, but actually favored Christianity.

Between 318 CE and 789 CE, some of the laws passed by Christians included:

318 CE: “Converts from Judaism protected,” but not vice versa.

340 CE: Paganism banned by Emperor Constans

379 CE: “Heretics outlawed in the East...”

## JESUS CHRIST: A PAGAN MYTH

- 381 CE: “Sacrifices at any shrine prohibited... conversion to paganism forbidden.”
- 391 CE: “Private sacrifices forbidden.”
- 397 CE: “All privileges stripped from continuing pagans.”
- 398 CE: “All temples ordered destroyed.”
- 408 CE: “Edicts banning heretics from public office in the East. Destruction of W(estern) temples ordered.”
- 409 CE: “Astrologers banned by Honorius.”
- 410 CE: “Paganism totally outlawed.”
- 448 CE: The works of the most astute pagan critic of Christianity, Porphyry, were burned.
- 529 CE: The Christian Emperor Justinian closed the School of Athens.
- 609 CE: “The Pantheon dedicated as *Sancta Maria ad Martyres*,....” a Christian Church.
- 742-789 New laws and ones reinforcing previous laws forbidding pagan practices.

Christians were forbidden to work for Jews as servants, and later could not employ Jews as servants. Jews were forbidden to be pupils of Christian teachers. Jewish

## APPENDIX B PERSECUTION BY CHRISTIANS

conversion to Christianity was allowed, but the reverse was a capital offense. Intermarriage between Jews and Christians was forbidden. Jews in general were required to pay for a Christian church if it were destroyed, allegedly by Jews, but when it was known that Christians destroyed a synagogue, Bishop Ambrose (ca 380 CE) successfully opposed compensation to Jews by Christians. Eventually, even Jewish religious teachings in the synagogue were required to have prior approval by Christian authorities.

The last pagan emperor, Julian “the Apostate” (ca 362-363 CE), though much slandered by the Christians, tried to restore religious freedom to the empire. He protested that Christian writers dishonored the gods which inspired Homer, Thucydides and others.

Jews are a small minority in the Christian-dominated Western world of today and the ancient pagans are not here to defend themselves. The thesis of our book can, of course, be rejected, but if scholars are ever to unveil the origins of one of the world’s great religions, they will have to avoid pro-Christian bias, and prejudice against Jews and pagans.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jn 8.32 Jesus said, “...and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

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