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**Jesus and the apostolic community: Jewish messianism or
hellenistic soteriology?**

Mamlak, Gershon Fogel, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1990

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A

JESUS AND THE APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY:
JEWISH MESSIANISM OR HELLENISTIC SOTERIOLOGY?

by

GERSHON FOGEL MAMLAK

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in History in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University
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Abstract

JESUS AND THE APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY:
JEWISH MESSIANISM OR HELLENISTIC SOTERIOLOGY?

by

GERSHON FOGEL MAMLAK

Adviser: Professor William G. Sinnigen

Historiography is an amalgam of two elements:

a) general recording of events and b) the deduction of primary events that can be considered the causes of subsequent events.

The first one, (a) requires precision and choice of authentic reliable sources; the second one (b) demands methodical analysis.

The task of a historian begins where the assignment of the chronicler is completed. The harmonious interplay of both elements produces sound historiography.

The bulk of the literature on the theme this study is dealing with, can be characterized as a comprehensive contradiction of both elements. Most of the works dealing with the phenomenon of Jesus have neglected the recording of reliable events, and have deviated from the task of deducing the causes that catalyzed subsequent events.

This dissertation is a modest effort to rectify a process, lasting over two centuries, that has led to

an obfuscation of an event that became the bedrock of western and universal history.

Fundamentaly, this study consists of an attempt to contest prevailing scholarly theories put forth by respectable historians, whose thoughtful works have been a great help to this study, which nevertheless challenges both, the premises and the conclusions of their works.

A final remark seems to be called for.

In addition to the relevance of this theme from the point of historiography, it also has a sociological aspect.

The premise of both Judaism and Christianity is that God, and not a conglomeration of accidental happenings is the Prime Mover of History. There is therefore, a basis for cooperation and reciprocal respect. This can be engendered, however, only by an objective recognition and evaluation of each others theological fountainhead.

Obscuring the origins of the encounter between Judaism and Christianity can only lead away from this objective.

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My oldest sister, Feiga, shared earthly life with me two years. She was the only one to join father by normal death. My mother and sisters, Leah, Yenta and Shulamith were asphyxiated in Chelmna and Birkenau.

In ghetto Lodz Shulamith and I risked our lives hiding mother during the selections. On the sinister route of Auschwitz Germany's crematoria-priests separated the sexes, leaving Shulamith and mother to face the arbiter of life-and-death Dr. Joseph Mengele. The latter evaluated Shulamith's ability for slave work and pointed out to her the way to the right, mother to the left--to the

gas-chambers. With a contemptuous Nein Shulamith embraced mother to share the agony of the gas-chambers.

The macabre mosaic of family separations toughened the spiritual guidelines implanted by mother--a legacy from a physically unknown father.

I acknowledge the debt I owe to my maternal grandfather Laibl Mamlak, who imparted to me his unlimited love for and intimacy with the exoterics and esoterics of Judaism. He also armed me with disdain for any form of vassalage to might.

Turning to the academic sphere I recognize my lasting indebtedness and gratitude to a foremost scholar, professor William G. Sinnigen, who guided my studies and taught me the primacy of Ancient History as a prerequisite to mastering the discipline of History in general.

I am under particular obligation to Professor Richard Lemay, whose profound comments and counsel were of immense help.

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This study would not have emanated without a Providential lightning experience that shattered my post-Holocaust oblivion: my encounter with a person whose female charm provoked me to reclaim the joys of existence. To my wife Miriam, daughter of Berl and Levia Ofman, I owe my regaining the ability to face intellectual challenges and the ardor to redress setbacks. My gratitude and

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The unfolding of this study coincided with the years when our children were devising their academic careers and future. Observing the distinctive ways of their personal struggling, progressing and achievements, enriched my intellectual vision and widened my academic horizon.

In my first-born joy, Rivka, I learned to cherish and admire her compassion for the humane and noble; her superb, hard-won achievements in the field of social sciences were a well of satisfaction and a stimulus to my scholarly pursuit.

My graceful Shulamith Levia Koenig fascinated me with her unique harmonizing of linguistic richness and thematic profundity. Her upright view of life, events and people is a reflection of her deep-seated intellectual subtlety; her staunch personality and her academic position in Tel-Aviv university is a constant source of encouragement.

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Jerusalem as the locus of her therapeutic and family projects made the theme of this study even more meaningful.

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The deep involvement of my children in my academic enterprise was a life-enhancing fountain emanating strength. May the Almighty guard them forever.

And lastly but extremely significant: the exultant awareness of wonderful grandchildren: Tziona Koenig, Aura Rivka Koenig, Chaviva Deitcher, Shira Koenig, Ychok Yair Deitcher and Talia Deitcher. The two oldest already active in shaping the traditional image of the young State of Israel and all of them maturing in the sovereign society of Israel's eternal homeland.

I proudly acknowledge my indebtedness to each one of my adorable grandchildren.

PREFACE

I. Statement of the Problem

The history of the Ancient World was affected by two divergent civilizations: Judaism and Hellas.

In the first century B.C.E. the peoples of the Mediterranean region have been drawn into the social/religious whirlpool of merging cultures; a fusion and diffusion of cults and doctrines from East and West.

During the previous centuries, from the beginning of the Hellenistic epoch, Judaism and Hellas came into closer contact, influencing each other while simultaneously also competing with each other.

Hellas was from its very beginning distinguished by adopting and adapting the ideas of surrounding civilizations. Due to its ability to penetrate the essentials of natural and social phenomena, Hellas became the avant'garde in detecting the intrinsic universality behind the divided upper layers of ancient civilizations. The Hellenistic epoch transmitted to other lands what was prevalent in Greece since the earliest times.

To the Hellenistic world the conception of man participating in his and in universal redemption by following a revealed Law appeared utterly false. The concept of a chosen Nation was antithetical to the essence of Hellenism, its individualism as well as its universalism. Israel's idea of a revealed Law that turned a natural community into a "Kingdom of priests" and a "Light unto the nations" conflicted with the Hellenistic doctrine that a king-Soter was Law incarnate. The idea of a chosen Nation as the instrument for the redemption of mankind seemed a parochial delusion and a detriment to the development of an ecumenical society.

But these concepts so alien and odious to Hellas were the raison d'être of Judaism; its parochial existence was the only way to accomplish the mission for all mankind assigned to it by the Universal God.

The process of syncretism that was a natural phenomenon in the Gentile world was destructive for Judaism. Any movement that aimed to mitigate the particularism of the Jewish people, and to remove the barriers safeguarding its uniqueness--carried a death-sentence for Judaism.

II. Research Design and Sources of Information

In this study we shall not follow the conventional method of presupposing Christianity's origin as a Jewish

sect, but rather approach Jesus' ministry as a phenomenon within the contemporary epoch. The historic adversary of Judaism in the contemporary world was then Hellas. Geographic and/or ethnic boundaries are no hindrance against the crossing over of ideas and theological concepts.

The aim of this study is to present a critical analysis of the phenomenon of Jesus in contemporary Judea by dealing with the phenomenon of Christianity not on the basis of ethnic kinship but against the background of ancient history. The assumption that, because Jesus was a Jew and his activity was (primarily) among Jews, we must look to Judaism for the source of his theology, is a historic misconception. (Actually, revolutionary epoch-making ideas usually surface as a refutation of their native cultures.)

In tracing the origins of Christianity, we will touch upon its doctrines and tenets. However, they will be dealt with only in order to establish their relationship to contemporary Judaism, not with respect to their essential character; the independence of each religion in interpreting its dogma must be a priori accepted.

It is not Christianity per se that is the topic of this study, but its roots in the world around it: a world sharply divided by two incompatible civilizations: Judaism and Hellenism.

Very little attention is given to the fact that Judaism was a full-fledged comprehensive Weltanschauung about man and his role in the universe. Judaism was a manual of human life, both of the individual and of society. Israel's constitution--the Torah--was not just a sacred code of Laws, but a guide to man's existential issues. It is against this background that the assumed affinity of Christianity must be examined, not by the assumed identification of Jesus' ministry with the monotheistic faith of Judaism.

We shall not follow the conventional method of presupposing Christianity's origin as a Jewish sect, but rather approach Jesus' ministry as a phenomenon within the contemporary epoch. The historic adversary of Judaism was then Hellas, or more precisely, the syncretized Greco/Roman world. Geographic and/or ethnic boundaries are no hindrance against the crossing over of ideas and theological concepts.

When research into the roots of Christianity is focused on only one segment of its surrounding, it is a priori confined. The outcome is bound to be unbalanced, because one evaluates all elements of the phenomenon under study in accordance with a preconceived fountainhead. The place of origin is established before deducing it from the historical data; the verdict precedes the trial.

The quest for the historical Jesus was grounded in the new epoch of an awakened interest in thisworldly realities, and this interest was projected by the authors into their Jesus biographies. It was therefore not a search for the realities of the time of Jesus, but the effort to make Jesus relevant to the realities of the time of the author.

The prevailing theory that Christianity originated in the spiritual treasury of Israel raises the problem of reconciling this with the extreme anti-Jewish character of the Gospels and the whole of the New Testament.

Accepting even that the sayings ascribed to Jesus were edited, and pervaded with interpolations and projections, the reduction of his sayings to what is universally accepted as authentic reveals his fierce opposition to the essentials of Judaism.

Two conventional answers are given to this question, both interrelated:

A. Judaism, in the time of Jesus, was divided in various sects on fundamental issues, each sect claiming to represent the legacy of Judaism. The ideas of Jesus, although new and in conflict with those of other groups, were part of the contemporary mosaic in Judea. Jesus' opposition to accepted dogmas did not make his position different from that of the other sects and like them could claim to present true Judaism.

B. After Jesus' death, there were changes in both camps--in those that opposed Jesus and so, too (even more so), in the group that followed Jesus.

It was a mutual "parting of the ways"; Judaism rid itself of a plurality of concepts and of the sects presenting them, and developed into a "normative" Judaism. The fellowship of Jesus drew many converts from among Gentiles and Hellenized Jews, who deviated from the Jewish-Jesus-fellowship and gradually, after a process of internal strife, they were victorious in transforming what originally was a sect within Judaism into a religion alien to Judaism.

We thus have here assumptions about historical processes on whose veracity depends the hypothesis that Christianity, as reflected in Jesus' teachings, was nurtured by Judaism.

This sets the outline of our tasks:

Instead of accepting the prevailing view of Christianity's Jewish roots based on (a) and (b), we will treat them as suggestions in determining Christianity's theological origins (in distinction from biological/ethnical ones, which are totally irrelevant to our research); not as answers but as starting points. We shall then analyze:

a) What was the extent of the differences between

the various Jewish sects in Judea? Was there a general consensus, an irreducible essence of Judaism beyond which one could not be considered as sharing the faith of Judaism? If, despite differences, there was such a consensus, did the Jesus-fellowship share it?

The diversity of views reflected by the plurality of sects in the last centuries of the Second Commonwealth in Judea does not ipso facto demonstrate that there was not a common denominator accepted by all those sects as an irreducible nucleus of Judaism. In that case, the diversity of Jewish sects at the time of Jesus does not warrant the Jewish authenticity of Jesus' preaching--the crucial test would be whether his teachings were part of the spiritual framework of all the other Jewish sects.

b) The same applies to the changes within the community of Jesus' followers. Here too, it is not the indisputable fact of changes and/or adoption of new dogmas about Jesus' life, death, etc., but rather whether these changes were decisive in the legacy of Jesus vis-a-vis Judaism.

Objective research cannot, a priori, dismiss the possibility that Jesus' view might have cut him off from Judaism from the beginning and not after the Jesus fellowship had changed its character.

Thus the two conventional responses to the

irreconcilability between Jesus as a figure within Judaism and the blanket anti-Jewish attitude of the basic documents of Christianity: (a) the plurality of Jewish sects and (b) the transformations within the Jesus fellowship, lose their axiomatic validity; the answers may turn out to be not the end result of scholarship but a substitute for scholarly investigation.

The two pertinent questions should now be redefined:

a) Did Jesus' preachings reflect the nucleus of contemporary Judaism?

b) Were changes in the Jesus fellowship, after his death, of a character to alter the original relationship between them and the community of Israel?

An answer to (a) already reduces the significance of (b) because if Jesus' teachings were irreconcilable with any of the diversified forms of Judaism it is clear that whatever might have been the later developments in the Jesus fellowship, the breach came with Jesus himself; and vice versa. Nonetheless (b) would still remain important as a yardstick in checking the exactness of (a). The answers to both must point in the same direction. If Jesus' teachings coincided basically with those of one or more of the Jewish sects, then later developments among the disciples of Jesus brought about the parting of the ways.

On the other hand, if the answer to (a) is that, Judaism--none of its sects--had room for the teachings of Jesus, then this must be correlated with (b), to the effect that later developments in the Jesus community were not decisive in its relationship to Judaism.

The modus operandi for our study to find an answer to the above questions will be the following:

To establish the essence of Judaism, after allowing for a natural flexibility, to determine whether there remained an irreducible nucleus; to elucidate the primary basis of Christianity as understood by the immediate disciples of Jesus. As in dealing with Judaism, here, too, we must clarify what were later developments in Christianity and what was from its very origin central and immutable in the primitive church of the followers of Jesus.

An analysis of the relationship of Christianity to Judaism must be extended to the contemporary non-Jewish world, and especially to the theological and social views of the syncretizing world of Gentile civilizations.

A comprehensive analysis of these three elements is the sine-qua-non for a study to arrive at an objective conclusion about the origins of Christianity and its relation to Judaism and/or to the contemporary ancient world. As this theme has in our time caused an abundance

of scholarly and fictional volumes (often overlapping each other) a researcher must resist the crushing weight of cliches and axiomatic theories and keep alive the spirit of pioneering scholarship, as well as the faithfulness to primary sources. The respect one owes to the legion of famous predecessors must be weighed against the possible finding of contradictory, irreconcilable conclusions integrated in each of the accepted theories since the days of Reimarus--when the analysis of Jesus' career made its debut in historiography.

PREFACE TO PART TWO

ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY

The nearly unanimous view is that the nucleus of Christianity was a movement of Jews, devoted to their ancestral faith, its dogmas, rituals and visions, and that all its postulates, even when new, were an outgrowth of the sacred sources of Judaism.

Following are the cardinal points meant to prove the Jewish roots of nascent Christianity:

- a) Jesus and all his disciples were Jews; Jesus' mission was confined to Jews.
- b) The central ideal around which Christianity developed was the Messiah-role of Jesus. This was a native Jewish concept that assumed various forms within the diversified Jewish sects; all of them anchored in Jewish ideas.
- c) Christianity expressed the idea of monotheism, a belief that made Judaism unique within the ancient world.
- d) Jesus, and after him the Apostles, proclaimed

the coming of "the Kingdom of God"--the vision of the biblical prophets. Jesus called for repentance and faith in the One God as the prerequisites for establishing this Kingdom. These too were fundamental ideas in Judaism

e) Another axiomatic view is the assumed affinity between the "new" apocalyptic/eschatological ideas in Judaism of that epoch and the teachings of Jesus. A related theme is the wide diversity between contemporary sects in Judaism; it suggests that one could hardly apply a criterion by which an idea could be considered non-Jewish if its propagators were ethnically Jews, believed in the One God, and in the coming of the Messiah.

However, this universally accepted theory is plagued by a perpetual dilemma: how could such a movement have been so rapidly transformed into an adversary of its alleged spiritual source?

The earliest Christian literature, the Corpus Paulinorum was composed less than two decades after Jesus' emergence, and it reflects the activity of a much earlier time, a few years after Jesus. In this literature the refutation of the Torah as the road to man's salvation is fully developed; so, too, is the rejection of a national

entity as part of the Covenant. The very idea about requirement of a national collective to spread the faith in the Universal God is regarded as a stumbling block to salvation. Already even before Paul, Stephen's acrimonious evaluation of Judaism, of its entire history, reached a point that even the church fathers a century later could not fully approve of. The obvious question then is: when was Christianity Jewish?

The conventional explanation is that in an early stage a line of Gentile churches who accepted Paul's Hellenistic interpretation of Jesus emerged alongside of, and in contradiction to the "Mother Church," the Jerusalem Urgemeinde. Accordingly, these Paulinian churches gave rise to an anti-Judaic Christianity.

The explanation of historians that the anti-Judaic and syncretized character of Christianity is the work of Paul is utterly un-historic; it is absolutely illogical to assume that an erstwhile "persecutor inflicting havoc on the faithful"¹ managed in the presence of the venerated disciples, to preach a Jesus-Gospel so radically different from what they had all heard from Jesus' mouth. But let us for a while assume that the unusual happened--the newly converted Pharisee Saul, who left Jerusalem after participating in the stoning of the proto-Paul² (Stephen) challenged the Jewish Church in Jerusalem, spreading his

version of the crucified and risen Jesus in opposition to the Jewish-Jesus,³ a host of questions arise to challenge this hypothesis:

A) A few months after the death of Jesus, Saul became the messenger of the "Sandherin" to persecute the "Churches of the Lord."⁴ But Saul was a Pharisee, the disciple of Gamaliel; if the Sadducees were the driving force in the persecution of the Churches, why should they entrust a leading Pharisee with that mission? And why should he, a devout Pharisee, accept this mission? Secondly, whom did Paul seek out? The "few" Hellenizers were dispersed; the Church in Jerusalem still consisted of Jewish followers of Jesus. If Paul was the key factor in the de-Judaization of Christianity, after whom did Saul chase before he, as Paul, gentilized Christianity? As a Pharisee Saul believed in resurrection. The claim that Jesus came back to life could not have been punishable by a Law that sanctified a prophetic book depicting a mass-resurrection (Ezekiel).⁵ Nor did Jewish religious authorities ever persecute the believers in the numerous claimants to the title Messiah.

Thirdly, why should Paul, a profoundly religious personality, who deified Jesus, consciously distort Jesus' teachings? And why should the entire group of the disciples accept and collaborate with this distortion, all

in less than a decade after this overwhelming experience in their life?

Fourthly, why could Paul, a disciple of a Pharisee, a contemporary of Jesus, develop an anti-Jewish doctrine, and the Galilean Jew Jesus could not?

B. Paul should have been considered the archenemy of Jesus' followers, the distorter of the original Jewish teachings of Jesus that they themselves had witnessed. But the literature of Christianity records the cooperation and the mutual respect between the Paulinian Churches and the Apostles.⁶ Gentile churches everywhere in Geneherae, Galatia, Thessalonica, Hierapolis, Ephesus, Laodica, Colosae, Crete and in Rome⁷ subjected themselves to the control and authority of the Apostles in Jerusalem. The entire movement of evangelization is consistently presented as spreading from, and guided by the center in Jerusalem.⁸ This primordial nucleus of Christianity possessed the absolute power of determining who was and who was not a follower of Jesus. The newly arrived outsider Paul, at whose footsteps Jewish historians lay the creation of a de-Judaized Christianity, could only have entered the body of Christianity with the approval of the Apostles.⁹

The relation between Paul and his churches with the Mother Church in Jerusalem manifests the fundamental unity in the ranks of Jesus' followers; nowhere was challenged

the centrality of the Apostolic community.

The differences between the "Paulinian Churches" and those of the "Jewish"--Mother Church" seem so insignificant that both sides refer to the arbitration of the heads of the Jewish-Christian Church in Jerusalem.¹⁰ Furthermore, Paul and "his" Gentile Churches are entrusted with the task of providing support for their alleged adversary: the Church in Jerusalem.¹¹

That Paul and his theology were integrated within the primitive Church of Jerusalem--and accepted by all the Apostles is additional proof that Paul elucidated the essence of Jesus' teachings.

C. If we accept that hypothesis that a movement originated by Jews within their own sphere could assume a non-Jewish character only through an evolutionary process, then no one in the first generation should have been able to distort the "Jewish" teachings of Jesus. The whole fellowship should have stood up against such a detractor, pointed out his ignorance of the message of the master and his arrogance in claiming authority.

The figure of Paul boomerangs, therefore, against the theory he is supposed to substantiate. Paul was a contemporary of Jesus; his contribution to Christianity follows the death of Jesus almost immediately. Paul's upbringing was just as permeated with Judaism as that of

Jesus, if not more so.

The assertion that Paul's horizon, unlike that of Jesus, was "widened" by Hellenism is also devoid of substance. How much do we know about the horizon of Jesus? How can historians take upon themselves to outline the intellectual scope of Jesus? The countless works of Jesus' biographies created seventeen centuries postfactum, cannot replace this historic hiatus.

D) The explanation that Jesus, a Galilean, could not have been influenced by, or even familiar with, the ideas prevailing in the Hellenistic world is groundless. The fact is that these historians themselves undermine their own argument; they substantiate their claim that Jesus' anti-Jewish statements in the Gospels are interpolations with the argument that the actual Jesus is completely unknown to us. How then can they insist that this unknown Jesus could not have been familiar with ideas familiar to the better known Paul?

Nor was Galilee the backward province depicted by many historians. Historic findings reveal that Galilee was a center of Hellenistic philosophy and influences. One notes in the numerous Talmudic references to the Ame-haratzim of Galilee a disdain for their merging "Gentile ways of life" with partial devotion to Judaism. A Jew of Galilee could therefore, no less than one of Tarsus, harbor

the world view of syncretized Hellenism.

E) By the time of Jesus, and centuries before, the majority of Jews were already living outside Judea. There were Jewish centers all over the Roman Empire and elsewhere. Should not the alleged Jewish version about Jesus have found supporters there? And even when outnumbered, why should they have succumbed to the new anti-Jewish version? Not only was the Church still powerless, it was also persecuted as a new superstition, while Jews of all varieties were respected as a religio licita. Until the fourth decade of the fourth century Christianity had no power against any of its numerous heretic groups.¹² How then did this suppressed church manage so completely to suppress the group that claimed to present the indigenous teaching of Jesus? Alexandria and Rome each had an influential and numerous Jewish community; there were Christian Churches from the time of the Apostles. By what miracle did persecuted Gentile Christianity eradicate so radically the "truly Jewish" believers in Jesus?

Furthermore, there arose Christian Churches in countries that never came under the rule of Rome; official Christianity never reached there the power it achieved later in the Roman world. As there were great Jewish communities, Jewish Christians could never have been

suppressed by a victorious Gentile church, yet even in those countries there is no trace of such a phenomenon.

F) What is most astonishing, there is no extant literature composed by Jewish Christians themselves; all we know about them is accusations by adversaries.¹³ The worthlessness of the epithet "Judaizers," applied by the official Church to some of their heretical groups, is proved by the application of this term to Christian sects as late as in the Middle Ages, whenever a group quarrelled with the Church.

For centuries "heresies" like Arianism, Apollinarianism, Docetism, Monatism, Adoptionism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, etc. plagued Christianity. All of them left historical evidence. It is beyond doubt that had the Mother Church had a Jewish character, had it been, for at least the first decades, the fountainhead of all other churches, it could not have faded out so completely. Especially, when for the three crucial centuries Judaism, in any form, would have been a more protective shelter for Jesus' followers than the Gentile version.¹⁴

G) Attention should also be given to yet another hypothesis seemingly substantiating the theme of the Jewish nucleus of Christianity. Accordingly, it was the Temple hierarchy, predominantly Sadducean, that (sporadically)

persecuted the Jerusalem church. But, outside Judea the influence of the Sadducees, if anything, was minimal. It would have been even more convenient for the Jewish Christians to maintain their "original" position. In Judea itself the destruction of the Temple, despite the national tragedy it constituted, was most disastrous for the party of the Sadducees, the alleged archenemy of Jesus' followers. The Pharisees who presumably were inclined favorably, or at least benignly tolerant, towards the believers in Jesus, became the dominant factor in Judaism; all this should have created a friendlier atmosphere for a Jewish-Christian church.

The claim that the indigenous Jewish presentation of Jesus faded away with the destruction of Jerusalem in the war of 66-70 C.E. contradicts the historical events as they were at the time they were.

The assertion that the Gentile Churches transformed the original character of Jesus' teachings utterly disregards the historical data about the emergence of Christianity. Jesus and his Primitive Church, so vividly and consistently depicted in the variegated literature of the New Testament, has been arbitrarily replaced by the modern researchers into literature: The Quest for the Historical Jesus.¹⁵

It is significant that despite the elaborate

treatises on the topic of Jesus and nascent Christianity, the activities of the Mother church in Jerusalem are glossed over. In the plethora of the historical works, a comprehensive analysis of the activities of the primitive community after Jesus' death, before the appearance of Paul and immediately afterwards is missing. However, an analysis of the activities of the first community of Jesus' followers is of crucial importance in the evaluation of the historic, non-fictional Jesus. Although historians have to resign themselves to the impossibility of establishing with exactness which sayings belong to Jesus and which are later editions, one single historic fact remains: Jesus left a spiritual/theological legacy to his disciples. Jesus' oral legacy was the rock on which they constructed their theological gospels.¹⁶

A basic fallacy in the modern historiography dealing with the roots of Christianity is the focusing on elements of (later) Christology in order to contrast them with pre-Christological views of the Apostles, thereby evidencing a conceptual disparity between the disciples of Jesus and the later Christian Church. The obviousness of Hellenistic elements in Christology provides a convenient criterion for fixing a time-table for the "gradual transformation" of the alleged indigenous Jewish character of the Christian Jewish sect into a Gentile religion.

This study will not deal with any elements of Christology. The later deification of Jesus is not our concern. It is Jesus' approach to the essentials of Judaism that we intend to concentrate upon. The process of how later on Jesus' following drifted even further into the spiritual ambience of Hellas, is not in the scope of this study. Christology was the Christianity's counterpart of the "hedge" built by the Pharisees around the Torah. What the Oral Torah was to Judaism, Christology was to Jesus' teachings. The Pharisaic fence did not transform Judaism; rather, it deepened and extended its dimensions. So, too, Christology did not transform the beliefs of Jesus' followers into another theological system; it only drew deeper conclusions from the indigenous tenets of Jesus.¹⁷

Leaving out the sphere of Christology will help us in evaluating the roots of Christianity as they were at the time when they were planted by Jesus in the hearts and minds of the apostolic community.

The combining of the two "Testaments" conceals the paramount issue of that epoch: the movement of syncretism merged all non-Jewish cults and faiths in the direction of one quasi-universal theology, and the life-and-death struggle for Judaism was to "build fences," religious and social fences against this leveling power that entailed a death-sentence against the essence of Judaism. The

Christian canon combined into one entity, the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament, implying the identity of themes that were separated by many centuries filled with dynamic and spiritual changes within the theological realms of ancient civilizations. Judaism's spiritual war against idolatry had passed its zenith; polytheism as an all-embracing system was waning.

The belief in the One Omnipotent Divinity met very little opposition. The continuing, actually increasing, animosity against Judaism was not directed against its belief in the Divine One, but against its viewing itself as the Chosen Nation, with an earthly mission bestowed on it by the One Universal God.

In this study the New Testament will be evaluated by its affiliation not with the Biblical refutations of idolatry, but by its incompatibility with the Bible's immutable theme of Israel as a Chosen national entity, the instrument of the One God.

In order to illustrate the incompatibility between Jesus' teachings and Judaism we shall analyze Judaism as a comprehensive and unique civilization of antiquity, not just as the only monotheistic religion. The fallacy underlying the conventional view of the Judaic roots of Christianity is that it sees Judaism only as the monotheistic religion of antiquity.¹⁸

The Career of Jesus, his teachings and actions, should actually have been the primary source for our study. However, we cannot use this as our starting point. This material as recorded in the Gospels and in the other books of the New Testament became enveloped in a cloud of ambiguities. The richer it becomes the historiography about the "Historical Jesus" the more diversified became the scholarly views about the substance and/or modifications of Jesus' sayings. It would be a futile task to start our analysis of Jesus' role on the records of his teachings. The argument of "interpolations" and "simplicity of approach" would neutralize any conclusions drawn from such data. However, there is another primary source, relatively free from the ambiguities that complicate the records of Jesus' sayings. There is no doubt that Jesus conveyed his ideas to his disciples, whom he sent out as messengers to spread his gospel.

After Jesus' death this small group made Jesus' gospel the central goal of their life, and to an extent of their death as well. We will therefore start our analysis of Jesus' role by taking this nucleus of Christianity--the actions of his Apostles and of the Mother-Church in Jerusalem--as the primary source of data about Jesus. The Apostolic community will serve as evidence for our hypothesis in reconstructing the theological legacy of

Redemption through Faith (as understood by the Apostolic community) were the spiritual canons of the syncretized Hellenistic world.

The view that the primitive community was a sect, among the various other ones, in Judea is erroneous. The believers in Jesus from the very beginning never considered themselves a sect within Judaism, or the sect presenting true Judaism. They were catholic, i.e., non-exclusive; the ecclesia of all believers. Some Jewish sects reduced the framework of Judaism: instead of recognizing the nation in its entirety, as the "people of the Covenant," they confined it to only a selective group.¹⁹ The Jesus-followers did exactly the opposite. They removed the barriers of nationhood--offering the Covenant to "all from East and West."²⁰

As stated above we shall start analyzing the origins of Christianity through the behavior of the Apostles and not directly from the recorded sayings of Jesus. After having documented our hypothesis, however, we shall then turn back to the Logia and parables of Jesus in order to prove their consistency with the actions of his disciples, as well as the compatibility between sayings and parables of Jesus that are seemingly conflicting.

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PART I
THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE
TWO COMMONWEALTHS

CHAPTER I

THE PROCESS OF RECONSTRUCTING

The history of the First Commonwealth was dominated by two factors that underscored Jewish separateness: a) territorial possession was gained and preserved through contest with Gentiles, and b) the unbridgeable abyss between Jewish Monotheism and the polytheistic religions of the non-Jewish world. As a result the political together with the spiritual elements of Jewish existence were conducive to the idea of Jewish separateness in the Gentile world.

The Exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan counterposed the Jewish people and its religion in the pagan world. It was the tour de force of Judaism; pagans were the enemy par-excellence; a pagan nation was the oppressor in the land of exile, Egypt; pagans blocked the Jews' marches in the wilderness, and had to be fought in the wars for conquest of the Promised Land. Each tribe and each family that took title to a parcel of land was aware of this confrontation. It was a spiritual/territorial either/or: either the pagans and their many gods, or the

Jewish people and its One God.

The Torah and the Prophets deal with a situation where political sovereignty and religious uniqueness were part of one system. "Not to follow in the ways of the Gentiles"¹ harmonized with the warnings not to make any political and military alliances with Gentiles.² Separation from the non-Jewish world was the fountainhead of both. From Moses until the last Judean King, Sidkiah, the sovereign ruler of the People of Israel was viewed as the viceroy of Israel's God. Jewish kings who "followed in the path of the Torah,"³ were righteous rulers; when they deviated, they were sinners against the God of Israel and against His Chosen People. There was no neutral road, no splitting of ways. No ruler over the People of Israel who refused to "Serve God with all his heart" could be looked upon as a benefactor to the Children of Israel.⁴

It was more than an abstract generalization, every detail in the political/royal structure had to fit into this symbiosis. When Moses was forbidden to bring in the Children of Israel into the promised land, it was explained as a **punishment**, since he had once misunderstood the command of Israel's God.⁵

The distribution of land to tribes and families took place according to signs given by God.⁶ Military moves, the pursuing of enemies, the besieging of cities--

everything fell into line with the Torah's Commandments. The shift from the suzerainty of the Judges to a monarchy had to wait for God's approval.⁷ The first ruling house in Israel--Saul's--was repudiated because the anointed King did not obey the order of God as outlined in the message of His prophet, Samuel.⁸

David, the paragon of Jewish royalty, could not build the Temple because too much warfare and shedding of blood fell in his share;⁹ King Solomon's marrying Gentile wives brought about the partition of Judea's Kingdom, etc.¹⁰

There were Kings in Israel who "served other gods." The people of Israel had to suffer them, but the subordination to such Kings was countered through the voice of God's prophets. The Torah of Israel never reconciled Judaism with such rulers. No people, no civilization, has left such documents of protestations of defiance towards royal rulers as the People of Israel.

The Sovereign ruler of the People of Israel was meant to represent the God of Israel. When the ruler deviated against the Torah, it was a betrayal of the national interests of Israel.¹¹ No allowances were made for differences between state politics and loyalty to the Torah. The Torah presented no options for Jews to serve God through collaboration with a non-Jewish sovereign.

The Prophets made derision of the power of Gentile rulers part of their vocation to strengthen Judaism by turning the hearts of Jews to their only Protector in Heaven. The task was simple and clear: "A people that dwells alone and among nations is not counted"¹² had its counterpart in the political configurations. National sovereignty complemented theological aloofness: Rivalry, animosity, and wars with pagans were a corollary of God's anger against idolaters.

In the declining years of the First Commonwealth when Jewish independence was curtailed by Assyria and Babylonia, the relationship between vicissitudes in politics and in theology was emphasized by the prophets. The foreign ruler, his victorious army, and his people remained the enemies of Jews and Judaism. They defeated the Jews because the latter deviated from Judaism. Victorious Ashur and Babylonia were now "the rods of the God of Israel"¹³ who punished His People. Both, subordination to a non-Jewish ruler, and victory over him fitted in with the theological awareness of the separateness of the People of Israel--a separateness that was part of the Sinaic Covenant.

The six-and-a-half centuries of the First Commonwealth had their ups and downs in the process of Jewish confrontation with pagans. There were backslidings,

even experiments in ritual syncretism, but they reflected rather the policy of the royal houses of Judea and Samaria. The efforts to introduce pagan ritual in Judea and Samaria were not the result of a spiritual entente between Judaism and paganism, of an awareness of theological principles common to Judaism and paganism, but the result of government policies; it was not due to a weakening of the consciousness of the uniqueness of Judaism, but to the desire of royal houses to establish closer ties with their pagan counterparts.

The transformation of the Jewish homeland from a sovereign entity into a subordinate province of a Gentile Empire presented Judaism's mentors with a most sensitive problem. The Torah premise is an entity whose political goals are inseparable from the other spheres of religious life; both are aspects of the total interrelationship between the God of Israel, the People of Israel and the Land of Israel.

This integrity of theology and political reality collapsed in fact with the decree of Cyrus--the first pagan king on whose magnanimity the fate of Jews and Judaism now depended.

The Second Commonwealth came into being through an edict of a pagan emperor. The process of return was facilitated through the repeated edicts of pagan rulers.

Each succeeding step had to be approved by the pagan power, to which Jews owed subordination. The leaders of restored Judea were obligated to acknowledge their status as an integral part of a political conglomeration of pagan peoples with whom they shared loyalty to the common pagan sovereign.

Now it was not by the miraculous intervention of the God of Israel and His bringing disaster on a pagan enemy, Pharaoh that Jewish redemption came. This time it was the initiative and the continuous prodding of pagans that enabled a monotheistic Judea to exist as a component of the pluralistic spectrum of multinational Persian, Ptolemaic, Seleucid empires:

Thus said Cyrus, King of Persia, all the kingdoms of the earth gave unto me God, the God of Heavens, and He commanded upon me to build Him a House in Jerusalem, that is in Judea. Who amongst you of His people, be his God with him, let him ascend to Jerusalem that is in Judea, and let him build the House of God, the God of Israel; He is the God that dwells in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:2-3; Jos. Ant. Book XI, Ch. 1/3)

It was more than a single decree; at each succeeding step the returnees themselves needed Cyrus' and his followers' helping hand. The administration of the pagan empire was instrumental in all phases of the renaissance of Jews and Judaism. The emerging Judean State became an integral part of one of the twenty Satrapies of the Persian empire. When conflicts broke out between Jews

and their pagan neighbors, it was not the guidance of Jewish prophets and the message of God's words that decided the issue; it was not even the autocratic will of Jewish monarchs, but the political expediencies of the pagan superpower that decided into the conflicts between Jews and their pagan rivals.

This time it was not a Moses and Joshua who led the Chosen People out from bondage into their Land of Promise. Though the same Omnipotent God of their fathers helped them, he worked no miracles to force the pagan ruler to send out His People from the land of persecution. This time indeed God's prophets called a pagan ruler His anointed. Not by the humiliation of the pagan oppressor were Jews and Judaism liberated, but by the magnanimous decree of a powerful and friendly pagan conqueror.

The resettling of the land was not accomplished through military contests between the People of God and the worshippers of idols, but by repeated pleas to the graciousness of a pagan emperor. Where events during the First Commonwealth had led to hostility between Jews and pagans, such events were now a catalyst for evoking affinity between the two. It was not Jew and Judaism counterposed in hostility to the surrounding pagan world but Jew and Judaism groping for their way as part of an imperial conglomeration expecting favor and help from a

common pagan sovereign.¹⁴

It was not only the novel act of the pagan King of Kings Cyrus, and the consequent indulgence of Jews by a pagan administration, it was also the Persian political system practiced that added a new, complex dimension to the texture of Judaism.

Here we must note that it would be beyond the scope of our theme to dwell on the origins of syncretism. Still, a few passing comments are unavoidable.

In line with the fashionable admiration for the "genius of Hellas" and the uncritical attribution to Hellas of achievements not its own, the phenomenon of syncretism in latter antiquity is unanimously considered a synonym for the Hellenistic era.

However, an analysis of syncretism and of civilizations preceding Hellas and continuing alongside it refutes the above view; here, as in many other domains, the role of Hellas was not that of an innovator but of the vociferous propagandist of a phenomenon started by others.

Long before the Macedonian Alexander enhanced his military prowess by the policy of bringing together the cultures of East and West, Persia had made achievements in this field. We may go a step further: the very idea of ecumenism, allegedly formulated in Hellenic philosophies and taken up by her conqueror and pupil, Rome, was

practiced centuries earlier by the Sassanide architects of the Persian empire. They failed because of the absence of an efficient administrative apparatus later supplied by Rome; but the idea of a convergence of cultures and a political conglomeration of peoples was there. The Persian experiment was also more flexible and adapted to a plurality of human collectives, because it was free from the egocentric feeling of superiority characteristic of Hellas. Persia respected the social/religious differences between human entities.

The above-mentioned decree of Cyrus, which prompted the partial restoration of an autonomous Jewry, reflected Persia's policy to engender the harmonious co-existence of autonomous cultures under the political tutelage of one-world empire. Cyrus preceded Alexander by over two centuries in paying homage to the deities of others, and the Jewish tradition about Alexander's tributes to the Universal God of Israel¹⁵ was voiced more gloriously by the last Jewish prophets about Cyrus of Persia.¹⁶

The nucleus of the concept of a syncretism of religions and cultures lies in the very essence of paganism. That is so because the patterns of paganism were shaped by the fundamental forces of nature, essentially identical through man's habitations. There was no conceptual foundation for a lasting divergence between the

human communities worshipping the same phenomena of nature in different parts of the world.

The issue is, of course, far more complex than sketched here. These few general remarks, however, are sufficient for our theme. It helps establish the political/theological background of the Second Commonwealth and its ramifications for Judaism.

In the age of the Second Commonwealth the concept of One God gradually ceased to be the distinctive mark of the Jewish people. The idea of One God which served as the watershed separating Jews from pagans lost its sharp contours. This gave rise to an opposite trend: it was just that awareness of one Universal Divinity far transcending Israel that brought about a contest for the legitimacy of Jewish uniqueness.

Another outstanding feature of the Second Commonwealth that radically distinguished it from the First is the disappearance of the sin of idolatry, which had been a commonplace phenomenon in the earlier Southern and Northern Jewish Kingdoms.

Since the Exodus from Egypt, during the wanderings in the desert, the age of the Judges and in both Kingdoms, Judea and Samaria, idolatry was the cardinal sin of the royal houses and to some extent of the population.

The books of the Bible, with the exception of the post-exilic prophets, echo the combat with idolatry. Jewish women exiled to Egypt are still paying homage to an idol (Tamuz) retorting to the admonishings of the prophets: "We will continue in the way of our ancestors to serve this idol."¹⁷

J. Kaufman is no doubt right in denying that idolatry ever threatened the monotheism of Israel;¹⁸ the sins of following after idols, although insistentlly pointed out by the early and later literary prophets, were mere superstitions of the common people, or, a means of political expediency of the ruling houses. Even so they were serious enough for the Prophets to view all the afflictions and finally the destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 722 and the Southern one in 586 as a punishment for forsaking the God of the Fathers and following after the idols of the pagans.¹⁹

We never encounter such accusations in the centuries of the Second Commonwealth.

The gradual permeating of the ancient world by the concept of the One God was, to be sure, a process that achieved maturity only over the course of centuries. It made itself felt in Judea, however, when the returnees from Babylon came back.

It may even be argued that the decree of Cyrus is

best understood as a symptom of the new spirit entailed by the spread of the One God concept.²⁰

During the epoch that saw the slow expansion of the One God concept, not only the political but the theological infrastructure was gradually reducing the contrasting features between Jews and their neighbors. In contradistinction to the geopolitical setting of the First Commonwealth, which was a sovereign political entity constantly at war with neighboring pagan powers, the Second Commonwealth came into being through a decree of a pagan emperor, and Judea remained an integral component of non-Jewish empires for about four centuries. It was on the initiative and because of the continuous prodding of pagan rulers that a monotheistic Judea could exist as a component of the pluralistic spectrum of the multinational Persian, Ptolemaic, Seleucid empires.

The Jewish community, although back in its national homeland, was a province of the pagan empire, to which it had to pay tribute as did their non-Jewish neighbors. Spiritual/theological conflicts with pagan neighbors could not be transformed into political/military contests and be solved in an independent manner. They had to be referred to the non-Jewish king--the sovereign of Jews and pagans.

Judaism, continuing within its indigenous theological framework (actually because of it), was

compelled to readjust to a radically changed situation, a situation where it was not Judaism's unique faith in One Universal God that aroused the animosity of pagans, but the claim that the Jewish people alone is a partner in the Covenant with this Universal God. Conversely, it was not the monotheism of the Jewish people that had to be defended so much as the national uniqueness of the monotheistic people.

The mentors of Judaism did not fail to interpret the new phenomena in the light of the tenets of Judaism. Ezra, Nehemiah, the scribes, and the "Men of the Great Assembly," made use of these new events to cement the old bond between Israel and God. It was precisely their concern for the essentials of Judaism that kept them alert to the ramifications of the contemporary geopolitical realities surrounding Judaism and its people.

In the Torah, of course, the oneness of politics and religion is the norm: the alien infrastructure of the Second Commonwealth created an utterly different situation, in which Ezra and his entourage were confronted by the unprecedented task of "building fences" in order to prevent the new syncretism from spilling over into Judaism and thus inevitably leading to the forgetting of the Torah,²¹ which contained no explicit statements how to preserve Judaism in such a situation.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFRONTATION

The challenge to the national integrity of Judaism confronted the returnees from the Babylonian exile from the first day they reached their homeland, led by Zerubbabel the prince, and Joshua the High Priest.

And /the Samaritans/ approached Zerubbabel and the Elders and said to them: let us build together /the Temple/ because we as you worship to your God, and to Him we bring Sacrifices. And Zerubbabel and Joshua and all the Elders of Israel answered: It is not for you and us to build the House to our God, but we /the Jews/ together will build to God the God of Israel . . . (Ezra 4:2-3; Jos. Ant. XI:IV/3)

This claim of an adversary of the Jews to be entitled to a share in the religious realm of Judaism was a new phenomenon in the history of the People of Israel. In the past, hostility to Jews was identical with the hostility to their religion. When Pharaoh insisted on continuing to oppress the children of Israel he derided the God of Israel.¹ When Yephthah quarrels with Achish of Amon about the ownership of some bordering cities he tells them

"What our God gave us is ours, what your god gave to you is yours."² The Courier of Sennacherib, King of Assyria, telling the inhabitants of the besieged Jerusalem that their military might is doomed and they must surrender, he derides the potency of Israel's God.³ All along, from the days of the first Jewish Patriarch on, it was the Hebrews and their One God versus the Gentile peoples and the multiplicity of their gods.

For the first time Jews were told by their Gentile neighbors that they, too, had a share in the God of Israel.

Historians are divided as to the ethnic origins of the Samaritans. Some claim that they were a mixture of the Israeli tribes in the Northern Kingdom not exiled by the Assyrian King Sennacherib (722), who intermingled with Gentiles resettled there by Assyria. The Bible record is that the Samaritans were a motley group of pagans brought in by the Assyrian conqueror in place of the Jews he exiled.⁴ This would be consistent with the policy of Assyria of evicting the defeated natives and replacing them with a mixed population from other defeated countries.⁵

This was a consistent policy applied by Assyria to forestall rebellions of the defeated peoples and at the same time to keep the conquered territories populated. The historical records testify to this. (In the Talmud this is evidenced by a Halakhic ruling that was of primary

importance in the code of Judaism.)

The Pentateuch forbids marrying a male of Amonite and Moabite descent. "An Amonite and Moabite should not enter [by marriage] into the congregation of God (i.e. through marriage with a daughter of Israel)."⁶ (This was due to their inhuman behavior toward the Israelis when they were about to enter Canaan.)

This ban was lifted on the basis that Sanherib, ruler of Assyria, drove out the Amonites and Moabites (as all the peoples defeated by him), from their native lands,⁷ and resettled their territories with others.

Annuling a decree in the Pentateuch was a step undertaken by the sages of Israel only when indisputable evidence called for it. The ban against marrying Amonites and Moabites was listed together with numerous others. However, this is the only marriage ban annulled; its justification is the general Assyrian policy of removing the indigenous population from her conquered countries.

This substantiates the version of the Bible that the Samaritans were not (at least not primarily) descendants of the Jews defeated by Sanherib, but an admixture of Gentiles from other countries.

An overwhelming majority of historians dealing with this topic accept the version of the turning down of the Samaritan proposal by the High Priest Joshua and the prince

Zerubbāvel (repeated later by Ezra and Nehemiah) in the name of the entire community.⁸ This drastically differs from the attitude taken at the building of the first Temple. I Kings records that Solomon not only welcomed but actually invited neighboring Gentiles to help build the Temple.⁹ The Temple services were not all limited to the exclusive use of the people of Israel. Inaugurating the Temple, King Solomon prayed to God:

And also to the Alien who is not from Your people of Israel, and he arrives from a far-off land for the sake of Your Name. And when he will hear Your Great Name and Your Mighty Hand and Your Arm, and he will come and pray in this House. Hear to him from Heaven, Your Residences and do whatever he the stranger will call unto You, that all nations of the earth should be aware of Your Name, and shall come to fear You as do your people Israel, and to know that Your Name Protects your House I built.¹⁰

The motto of the Temple was: "And My House will be called the House of Prayer for all the nations."¹¹

Gentiles were encouraged to bring sacrifices into the Temple; special places were designated for that as well as for their prayers to the God of Israel.¹²

The participation of non-Jews in the Temple building had been accepted in a time when Israel was sovereign, under its own King, and could carry out the sacred project alone. This time, however, the entire enterprise was initiated by a Gentile king, who made available the sacred vessels of gold and silver, plundered

by Nebuchadnezzar seventy years before.¹³ Gentile help was needed at every step of the project. Why then should the Jews be unyielding when offered help by neighbors whom they considered to be Gentiles?

The Jews evidently did not accept the Samaritans' assertions of their acceptance of the One God; but neither could Cyrus' declaration of his compliance with the wishes of Israel's God be taken at face value; both remained Gentiles, according to the Jews. but Cyrus' offer was welcomed and that of the Samaritans rebuked.

Even though the Samaritans might have approached the Jews in an improper way, demanding equal rights in the Temple, still the Jews' response left no room for modifications or for any form of cooperation. It certainly was not aimed at creating a friendly atmosphere between the returnees and their neighbors, with whom they were bound to live side by side in the common empire.

The answer lies in the context of the Samaritan petitions; their claim of sharing Israel's faith in the One Universal God. The Samaritans did not claim that by their turning away from idolatrous cults and acceptance of Israel's God they became or wished to become part of Israel's nationhood, a phenomenon known and welcomed by Jews since the earliest times.¹⁴ Their claim was that the mere recognition of Israel's God meant that separation

between them and Jews was unnecessary.

When the returnees arrived in Jerusalem an altar was erected. If the purpose of the Samaritans was to continue their sacrifices to Israel's God, here was their opportunity. There was no ban on non-Jews bringing sacrifices.¹⁵ Solomon in inaugurating the Temple invited "the stranger" to do so. Sacrifices on the altar started almost immediately after the return from Babylon.¹⁶ Why, then, did the Samaritans, whose justification was that "they, too, were sacrificing to the God of Israel,"¹⁷ wait a year until the building of the Temple started?

(This question applies even if the version is accepted that the Samaritan community consisted of Jews left from the Northern tribes.)

The answer seems to be that even though bringing sacrifices to the God of Israel was accessible to non-Jews it did not obliterate the difference between pagans and Israel; the Samaritans had nothing to gain by asking to be included in this ritual. Their aim was to challenge the justification of an entity to claim national uniqueness by its belief in the Universal God. This challenge could only be demonstrated by demanding to be included in the erection of the House of "their common God."

Historical records give details meager of Persian policy concerning the restoration of Judea. The process

began with the Edict of Cyrus who presented himself as having been ordered from the "God of Heavens" to build him a House in Jerusalem. Cyrus called on Jews from his empire "to ascend to Jerusalem and build the House for God."¹⁸

Although the focal point in Cyrus' edict is "building the house of God that is in Jerusalem," it is clear that he also authorized the return of all his Jewish subjects to resettle their homeland. The repeated use of the city of Jerusalem did not mean to restrict the return to this one city; in fact the returnees from the start preferred to "settle each in his /native/ city."¹⁹

Although the decree of Cyrus mentioned only the erecting of a house for God it could have been seen as initiating Israel's hopes for the restoration of sovereignty, as prophesied in the grandiose visions of Hosea, Amos and others.

The magnanimity of Cyrus was also manifested in his returning the golden and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had pillaged from the Temple, and in his order to the governors of the lands the returnees had to cross to help them with all they needed.²⁰

Nonetheless, one year after the decree the building of the Temple was stopped by an edict from Persia.²¹ It took eighteen years--after the death of Cyrus and his successor, Cambyses--until a new edict of Darius

reinstated the right to complete the erection of the Temple.²²

In the second year of Darius' reign the Jews encouraged by the prophets Hagi and Zachariah renewed the building of the Temple. The Samaritans again denounced them before the satrap of Persia, Tattenei--who came to Jerusalem and inquired who had given them permission to build. The Jews insisted that as they had permission from the king they will only stop when Darius, the new king will order so. Probably the Jews asked this time that a search should be made in the royal archives to verify the original edict of Cyrus. Tattenei was obviously favorably impressed and sending his report he suggested to comply with the pleading of the Jews.

This time a search was made and when the edict was found Darius "instructed Tattenai to give all the help required for the building of the House . . ."²³

The question arises:

Why did the Jews wait eighteen years to "remind" the authorities about Cyrus' edict?

Obviously, during these years a non-Jewish (or non-Judaic) policy was in vogue, and it was preferable not to pressure for what was promised. Another change in the official attitude of Persia encouraged Jews to base their right on a document to be found in the royal archives.

This leads to another question, what caused the sudden change one year after Cyrus' first decree? An explanation for the radical change in Cyrus' attitude may be found in the events that occurred after Cyrus' edict.

Cyrus' empire stretched from the Aegean in the west to the Hindu-Kush in the east. To its northern boundaries was the Caspian sea and to the south the desert of Arabia. Cambyses, Cyrus' son (525-21) later added Egypt and the Greek colony of Cyrene.

"The whole of Palestine constituted only a tiny part of one of these [twenty] satrapies."²⁴

There is no basis therefore to assume that Persia gave credibility to the insinuation of the Samaritans that Jerusalem could become a fortified threat to her rule. The Persian satrap in Syria could easily prevent any act to the disadvantage of Persia.

Neither had the accusations made by the Samaritans any realistic basis, "The complaint refers back to the previous history of Judah . . . suggesting that the re-establishment of Jerusalem will lead to total loss of control of the whole province . . ."²⁵

It is absurd to assume that Cyrus the great should take seriously such insinuation.

It seems logical to look for an explanation in another direction; in other events that took place during

that first year. The possibility of returning to the homeland, erect the Temple and re-establish an autonomous existence did not stir the majority of the Jews. Only 42,360 persons, left Babylonia.

The gathering of the dispersed of Israel was not as the prophet saw it. ". . . disappointing was the exile's response to this edict. . . . Was this meager group of pioneers of the commonwealth he [the prophet] had foreseen? . . . was this insignificant ripple . . . a sign which would demonstrate to the world the greatness of the God of Israel?"²⁶

The writer of these lines L. Finkelstein, speaks about the disappointment of Deutero-Isaiah; such may also have been the inferences of Cyrus.

In issuing his edict, Cyrus may have considered the political gain he would achieve from a mass-return of his Jews into the province of Judea thus fostering tranquility in a remote province, the result made him have second thoughts about his epistle to the Jews.

As it turned out, the tiny group of returnees did not only not become a factor in fostering tranquility in the region, but the Persian authorities began receiving petitions to intervene in new conflicts between Gentiles and the returning Jews. Cyrus may have begun to doubt whether his plan about repatriating the Jews was justified.

Cyrus' familiarity with Judaism was most probably acquired through contact with his Jewish subjects. The separatist aspirations of the adherents to Judaism in his empire were confined to the prescription of rituals and other religious customs. Diaspora life in Babylonia/Persia could not juxtapose Jews and pagans in any other respect. The uncompromisingly negative response of his Jewish subjects to the seemingly friendly overtures of another subject people in his empire must have surprised Cyrus. He saw a trait of Judaism hitherto unknown to him.

Cyrus understood and appreciated the Jews' refutation of the pagans' belief in many deities, their clinging to the concept of One Universal Omnipotent God. There is some evidence that Cyrus was inclined to Zoroastranism in its pristine form, before it compromised with the older religion of the Magis that diluted Zoroastrianian concept of one deity with the dualism of the Magis.

Cyrus' appreciation of Judaism's monotheism may have prompted his unusual edict to return a defeated, uprooted people to its homeland. (Despite the fact that Cyrus abrogated the Babylonian policy expelling defeated peoples, there is no record that any other people [except the Jews] was permitted to return to its previous homeland.) But Cyrus' closeness to the concept of the One

God could rather make him share the Samaritans' antagonism to Israel's claim of a chosen uniqueness, that caused his Jewish subjects in Judea to reject the pleas of the Samaritans to join in building the Temple to the Universal God. Judaism's symbiosis of a Universal God and nationalism might have seemed strange and repugnant to Cyrus. It certainly contradicted the political/religious pluralism that was the mortar holding together Persia's multinational empire; it constituted a danger to the texture of her pluralistic edifice.

Indirectly it also corroborated with the allegations of the Samaritans that this people, the Jews, and their capitol were a great threat to Persia's pluralistic structure.

The vicissitudes in the attitude of Persia toward Judea points to the changed position of Israel amidst the surrounding pagan world. On one side there was a shrinking in the distance between pagan concepts of the divine powers; pagan cults underwent modifications that increased their understanding of Israel's monotheism. On the other side, the very adaptation of the concept of a Universal Divinity (by identifying the various deities as aspects of a central God), engendered an opposition to Israel's claim of being the Chosen Nation of the Universal God.

It was a process of osmosis: the Jews, returning

to their homeland, were the first to collide with its results. The Samaritan claim to be included in the Cyrus edict on the basis of having abandoned their native polytheism, as well as the vacillations of pluralistic Persia, were harbingers of a new epoch that was to determine the character of the Second Commonwealth.

CHAPTER III

EZRA--"BUILDING OF HEDGES"

In this chapter we will focus on the most outstanding personage of the Second Commonwealth: Ezra the Scribe. ("Esdras" in some of the historical records, especially by Josephus.)¹

The date of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem is a matter of dispute among scholars. The Book of Ezra gives as a date the seventh year in the reign of the Persian King Artachshastu. As there were several kings in Persia with this name, the date remains unclear.² (In Josephus the King who authorizes Ezra [Esdras] is Xerxes.)³ For our study, the exact date is not important--whether he came in 458 or in 398 (or any year in between)--it is his role that is decisive.

Ezra came at a time when the great hopes Jews cherished after the edict of Cyrus had turned into gray reality. Eighty years (in case we accept the earlier date) passed between Zerubbabel's arrival and that of Ezra. There are no records of Ezra's life before his arrival into Judea. We know that he was an eminent scholar, "an

experienced scribe of the Torah of Moses."⁴ He was empowered by the King of Persia to make the Law of Moses obligatory in Judea and to "punish anyone transgressing it" (including capital punishment.)⁵

According to Talmudic sources Ezra was three years old when Cyrus issued his epistle to rebuild the Temple. This makes him a sage of eighty-three when he arrived. According to other sources, he was forty years old at his arrival. Either way he witnessed the radical changes in Persia's policy toward Judea. In Ezra's time it was already obvious that the status of Judea as a dependent of Persia was going to last a long time.

In recording the authority accorded to him by the King, Ezra adds a thanksgiving to God "who instilled in the heart of the King" to invest him with such authority.⁶

It should be noted that we encounter here a statement that a millennium later became a standard for Galuth existence: a prayer to the God of Israel to "give in the heart of Gentile kings and princes an inclination to deal gently with their Jewish subjects."⁷

(This too reflects the transformation of the grandiose hopes attached to Isaiah's prophecies.)

Ezra's authority, bestowed on him by the pagan ruler of his people's homeland, was to make sure that the Torah of Israel would be the law in Israel. In the already

close to a century history of the Second Commonwealth, this was not unusual, but just because this was linked to the contemporary structure of Judea, it reveals the radical transformation in the history of Israel.

As pointed out above, the Covenant between God and Israel, anchored in the Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was predicated on the mission to be a light unto the nations, by setting an example to mankind that perfection of the earthly habitat is inseparable from obedience to the Commandments of God.⁸

To facilitate the execution of this mission Abram was ordered to leave his homeland and to establish an independent social nucleus that developed later into the Chosen National entity, Israel, with a sovereign social/political infrastructure.

When prophets in the First Commonwealth required Israel to "follow in the way of the Covenant" they held the people of Israel and its rulers responsible for every act of deviation. Joshua, Samuel, Elijah, Hosea, Amos, Micah and Jeremiah addressed Israel as a sovereign body whose political conditions were no hindrance to her grandiose role. They were "free to choose the way of life" according to the precepts of Israel's Living Torah.⁹ This included all aspects in the life of a national community. The prophets approved and criticized military campaigns,

territorial conquest, economic enterprises, international relations--the entire spectrum of individual and national actions. The relationship between Israel and God was conditioned on one factor--the will of Israel, its people and rulers.

This direct relationship between Israel and God assumed another form in the Second Commonwealth. Israel's implementation of the Covenant-mission had been circumscribed by political subordination to a kingdom whose raison d'etre was outside its Covenant-mission, at times even contradictory to that mission.

But the Covenant between Israel and God was in its very essence eternal.¹⁰ Ezra, as well as the entire body of contemporary scribes, could have no doubts concerning the continuity of the Sinai-Covenant. His duty was to find ways of preserving the eternal Covenant within the temporary setting of the age, to counterbalance external challenges by internal steps. The Old Covenant needed a new wall. Israel's theological fortress--the Torah--needed protection from new adversaries.

When the returnees came to Judea the city of Jerusalem lay open, with no wall to protect it from invaders. So, too, lay the spiritual territory of Israel, the Covenant. Ezra and Nechemiah erected walls for the protection of both.

The Torah assigned a triple guiding system for Israel: 1) civil rulership (Malkhut); 2) Priesthood (Kehunna); 3) Law (Torah). The last one--Torah--was the basis of all. Still, each of them had an autonomous part in the safeguarding of Israel's Covenant.

Civil rule, royal houses, often failed to accomplish its task.¹¹ The priesthood, especially the higher echelons, being closely connected with the ruling houses, followed the road of political leaders. Under righteous rulers the priesthood was obedient to the Law; when the royal house deviated, the rituals performed by priests in the Temple reflected those deviations.¹²

The factor that never faltered was the third one--Torah. The representatives of the Torah remained in their positions at all times, condemning the deviations from whatever side they came.

Since the days of Moses, there was an elite body of Elders and prophets watching over the integrity of the Torah. There were periods when those who held this position converged with that of the priest and/or civil ruler. There were periods when, although separated, there was an entente between the representatives of all three; there were also times when the Torah remained the sole authentic representative of Israel.¹³

Ancient Israel was the only civilization where an independent body, that of the Prophets, challenging every other authority existed. Biblical Prophets, voiced their opinions and challenged the supreme authorities in the other realms of national existence.¹⁴

As pointed out above, the Second Commonwealth was inaugurated on the basis of surrendering one of Israel's three systems: the political one. What remained of civil leadership was transferred to the priesthood, i.e., the High Priest and his entourage. Even when a Jew personified the authority of royal leadership, as governor, he was a representative of the non-Jewish king. Judea's independence was confined to the position of the High Priest, who carried an autonomous scepter--the religious Law of Judaism--governing the prescribed rituals in the Temple.

In the time of Ezra the second system to guide Judaism--the priesthood--was critically weakened. It is significant to note that the priesthood of the Second Commonwealth displayed the same vulnerable feature as during the First Commonwealth--lack of resistance to the norms set by the civic leadership.

During the First Commonwealth when the Jewish kings deviated after pagan idols, priests introduced elements of

idol-cults in the rituals in the Temple. In the age under discussion here, priests in Jerusalem were swayed by the syncretizing trend in the ruling circles of the sovereign empires.¹⁵

Spiritual treasures of national communities in Pagan Antiquity were in the possession of a small elite, who were the guardians and cultivators of the community's spiritual realm. The masses were outside the process of creativity. Gentile religious cults, although based on the participation of the people at large, were controlled by a professional class who safeguarded the mysterious secrets how to "influence" the supernatural beings¹⁶

Judaism sui generis differed from the other ancient entities. Innate in the religion and culture of Israel--in the Torah--was embodied the aim to make the entire community participate in the spiritual treasures of Israel.¹⁷ However, this intrinsic aim had to be realized. The Torah-Commandments directed at every individual as a participant in the duties and awards of Judaism, were in need of a social mechanism to be actualized in accord with the requirement of the epoch. In this age when of the three pillars propping up the edifice of Judaism one had collapsed and another was critically deficient, it remained for the third pillar, that of the Torah, to assume the role in the preservation and continuation of the Covenant

legacy. For this task Ezra mobilized the entire community of Israel--from the princes, priests and scholars on the top, to the simplest ones in the ranks.¹⁸

That Ezra played a central role in determining the theological/social physiognomy of Judaism in the Second Commonwealth is recognized by all sources, the Talmud testifies to it: no less than non-Jewish, and anti Judaic ones. We have thus an universal consensus that Ezra's work was of a pioneering fundamental essence. The basic difference is that the first one sees Ezra as the "builder of fences" to guarantee the continuity of Israel's historical role in accordance with its Covenant mission of chosen nationhood. While Bible critics, on the other hand, take the view that Ezra was the prime figure in shifting religion of Israel from the universalist visions of the prophets to the narrow legalism of the Scribes, laying special emphasis on the mention of sacred texts and religious particularism.¹⁹ (Generally speaking, this is, indeed, the prevailing view of the scholarly world.)

Ezra's ordinances were designed to make far-reaching changes in all aspects of life in Judea. We may divide his work along three lines: 1) Religion, 2) economics, 3) social life.

The division is a relative one: all three are inter-related in the Torah; Ezra's work of reconstruction

embraced all three components in Judaism.

The Talmud equates the achievements of Ezra with those of Moses: "Ezra was worthy of having been the recipient of the Torah from Sinai."²⁰ Another quote states: "If not for Ezra, the Torah would have been forgotten in Israel."²¹

according to Pirke Aboth (Ethics of the Fathers) Ezra is in the fifth line of those who transmitted the Torah through the generations; but none of the others is equated with Moses. They are mentioned as trustees to preserve and continue the legacy from Sinai.²² Only Ezra's role is likened to that of Moses in the basic function of giving the Torah to Israel.

The Pharisees consider themselves followers of Moses and of Ezra.²³ This again singles out the particular status of Ezra within a continuous line of Torah mentors in the history of Israel.

With Ezra we also encounter for the first time the name of a collective body authorized to decide on the issues of the Law: The Men of the Great Congregation.²⁴

It is evident, in any case, that an elucidation of Ezra's activities is indispensable for an understanding of the latter period of the Second Commonwealth; the theme of our study. Ezra's ordinances aimed at expanding the national structure of religious activities, of the

participation of the masses of Jews in all ritual performances, including Temple services, which, in earlier ages, were accessible only to one tribe. For this reason Ezra also made Torah knowledge accessible to the common people--a process that would, in modern parlance, be called the democratization of what was formally the function of a professional elite.

The same is true about Ezra's measures to improve the socio/economic standards in Judea, they were not only humanistic steps to remove social evils, but part of his goal of deepening the awareness of national affinity, and of separating Jews and Judea amidst the political conglomeration of peoples, lands, and cultures within the common Persian Empire.

The geopolitical and, to some extent, also the theological setting of Israel's homeland was radically different from the one that confronted the prophets in the First Commonwealth, and Ezra's task to make Jews follow in the path of the Torah could not follow the classical line of the Prophets to divide Gentile rulers, and pagan empires. It could not even call, as in the time of the judges, for expelling heathens from the Promised Land. Israel's boundaries, as well as its political administrations, were in the domains of Gentile rules. Only the spiritual realm remained under Jewish sovereignty.

This realm had to be elucidated in all its ramifications to outline the crucial steps for continuity and progress in the new epoch.

In the absence of geographic/political boundaries, the spiritual/legalistic dividing lines had to be deepened and reinforced, since the crown of Israelite royalty was missing, and the crown of priesthood was feeble; the remaining crown in the historical triad had to be expanded and popularized to protect the community of Israel.

In a later age a follower of Ezra, encapsulating the task of his predecessor, will categorize it: increase the ranks of Torah students, and erect hedges in protection of Judaism.²⁵

We will now address ourselves to the pertinent issue whether Ezra's T'Kanoth should be viewed as reforms leading to a transformation of Judaism, as Bible critics claim or as the Talmud sees Ezra's role--as the erecting of hedges to the Covenant-Torah.

Let us, at the outset, state that the first view can not be deduced from original Jewish sources; only a predetermined hypothesis and the disregard of native sources can engender such a hypothesis.

Even if there were any credibility in the hypothesis that there are "earlier" and "later" strata in the Pentateuch, there is still not a source in the

Pentateuch-strata that does not justify the direction of Ezra's reforms.

At the very outset, when God conveys to Abraham His will to have a chosen representative, the core of that message is a national community that is obligated as a collectivity to execute this mission.

When selectivity and separation are later brought up, they are not meant to concentrate the Mission of Israel as a whole in the hands of a professional elite, but as a means of facilitating the Divine Plan. The Bible consistently repeats the communal aspect of the entire conception.

The giving of the Torah at Sinai is summed up: "Today you [Israel] are a Nation."²⁶ The selection of a priesthood and Levites for a specialized task is done in order to serve and strengthen the national cohesiveness. In two instances God tells Moses His intention of punishing the rebellious people with annihilations. But this is followed immediately by God's statement: "And I will make [of] you a great and powerful nation."²⁷

When Bible critics spin their theories about stages in Israel/Judaism, they confuse historical elements. The stages reflect an evolution in the way Jews executed various precepts which were from the outset part of the totality termed Judaism.²⁸

The cause(s) prompting the people of Israel to be guided by some fundamentals of Judaism and to deviate from other no less basics in Judaism, were various. At times it was the result of external factors independent of the people of Israel. At other times, it was the attitude of the Jews that made them disparage such or other fundamentals. But the absence of components of Judaism from Jewish behavior does not ipso facto imply that these components were absent from Judaism.²⁹

Ezra's shifting the center of gravity of Judaism to the community at large stimulated the process of deducting from the Torah text a mass of details including the minutiae of human behavior in all aspects of existence, both individual and national.

This was not a deviation from the fountainhead, but its expansion; it was implicit in the Torah commandment to "walk in My statutes"³⁰ as written in the Torah. This meant that every aspect of existence is outlined in the Torah.

With Ezra the phenomenon of collective leadership became institutionalized. It should be stressed that although this, as a formal body, was realized in Ezra's time, the conceptual legitimacy of such an institution goes back to the Pentateuch and Moses. The Book of Exodus relates Moses complaining to God of his difficulties in controlling the People of Israel by himself. God commands

the nomination of seventy representatives from all tribes to share responsibility.³¹

Thus, the existence and the desirability of an institution created by Ezra was already called for at the beginning of Israel's history. The reason we do not hear about the activities (or even the existence) of such a body is due to different causes at different times. In the time of Moses and of his successor, Joshua, their authority was so overwhelming that the coexisting collective leaderships remained mainly nominal (although they are sporadically referred to). Later on, the national cohesiveness of the tribes weakened, due to radical differences between the respective security situations of the tribes.³² While some tribes preferred military action, others benefited from peaceful status quo. This hindered the functioning of a central body representing all of Israel, and preserved for a time the separate leadership of each tribe. Only a charismatic personality could counterbalance tribal divisions and acquire the recognition of the entire people.³³

Thus, either when tribal separateness dominated, or when tribal barriers were swept away by popular enthusiasm for a common leader, an all-national leading body, even if it ever existed, remained ineffective.

In succeeding centuries individual prophets were the representatives of Israel's Covenant, each in his/her time was the recognized authority, as the guardian of the legacy of Israel.

Still, the ideal of a collective authority was the fundamental premise of Judaism. Like many other innovations of Ezra, collective leadership was not the adoption of an external element, but the realization of an innate component to safeguard Israel against the new, unprecedented dangers threatening the returnees from the Babylonian exile.

It is unclear whether the central leadership inaugurated (or charged with authority) by Ezra was the same as that called in later sources "The Men of the Great Assembly," or a different one.³⁴ What is certain is that Ezra did not utilize the power bestowed on him personally by Persia; he created (or reactivated) a national body with the power to legislate and execute decrees in accordance with the Law of Moses.³⁵

We dealt with events in the first century after the return from Babylonia because they provided an insight into the structure of the Second Commonwealth. They underscore the oneness of Judaism's theological system in both Commonwealths and indicate that the newness and otherness of the Second Commonwealth was not a reversal or deviation

of the prophetic ideals of Israel, but the erection of new fences in defense of Israel.

Let us now glance at a later social/theological phenomenon that marks a drastic distinction from the time of Ezra--the emergence of and quarrelling between various parties and sects.

This divisiveness in Judea is of crucial importance to our thesis for several reasons:

A. It seemingly challenges our above-stated view that despite the different structure of the Second Commonwealth the fundamentals of Judaism remain intact.

B. The appearance of a phenomenon dominating Jewish life in the time of Jesus and unknown in the age dealt with above provokes a seemingly valid question: should not the existence of variegated sects, each claiming to represent Judaism, be seen as justifying the hypothesis that Judaism was also the anchorage of the Jesus-fellowship? If a relatively undivided Judaism in the time of Ezra and in following centuries, was in a latter age divided into numerous parties and sects each claiming to represent Judaism, what is the rationale for denying the same claim to the Jesus-fellowship?

The divergences in that time are being utilized as evidence that Judaism in the last centuries B.C.E. was in such a flux that it was almost impossible to apply a

criterion to what separated Judaism from the syncretizing Hellenistic world except the faith in One God, and a diffused many-faceted expectation of a Messiah who was to herald the Kingdom of God: two elements that were also prominent in the Jesus-fellowship.

Both arguments are interrelated and seem to invalidate the hypothesis about the anti-Judaic origins of Christianity.

Thus before we begin dealing with the issue of Christianity's origins we must discuss two problems: 1) Does the emergence of sects in the last two centuries of the Second Commonwealth manifest a basic deviation from the foundation laid down at its beginning by Ezra and the Men of the Great Synagogue? 2) Could the Jesus-fellowship be seen as one among the various sects in contemporary Judaism?

Data about Jewish parties and sects who differed in the essence of Judaism seem to have sprung up suddenly. Scarce as are records of the earlier centuries of the Second Commonwealth, they testify that there were no groups formulating opposite programs in the realms of religion, law, politics, economics etc. Quite to the contrary, issues that caused deep divisions during the First Commonwealth seem to have faded away after the return from the Babylonian Exile. The perennial issue of idolatry, the

following after pagan cults was completely eradicated.³⁶

Another central issue that surfaced in the declining years of the Judean Kingdom: rebellion against or partial subordination to Gentile empires surrounding Judea--became devoid of any actuality in the present geopolitical setting.³⁷ In their confrontation with the Samaritans' demand to be integrated in Judea, either by participation in the Temple building, and later through intermarriage, the response of the Jewish leadership was the consensus of Jewry in toto. The deviators were individuals, and even they repented (at least publicly). There are no records about opposing approaches to Judaism practiced in Judea and/or in the Diaspora until the beginning of the second century B.C.E.³⁸

Significantly, the few conflicts that occurred in earlier centuries were rather of a personal character. In the outrageous act when two pretendants to the position of High Priest had quarreled and one killed the other,³⁹ there was no mention of any religious/political dispute, only the right of succession. There was also the desertion of a son of a High Priest to the Samaritans, because he refused to divorce his Samaritan wife.⁴⁰ Whether there were those who questioned the official line towards the Samaritans or not, it is clear that such opposition never assumed the form of a separate party or sect claiming to present a different

way in Judaism.

(That the response to the Samaritans met with a consensus of all Israel is additionally evidenced from the later quarrels between Pharisees and Sadducees. Despite the fact that the Sadducees accepted only the written Torah, and their opposition to Pharisees was against their belief in an authoritative Oral Law, an issue applicable also in part to the Samaritan group, the Sadducees fully agreed with the Pharisees' anti-Samaritan stand.)⁴¹

The first issue that created two sides in Judean polity was free of religious elements. It was in the sphere of state policy. Judea after the collapse of the Persian empire, and during the wars between the successors of Alexander the Great became a point of contention between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. Each side had its advocates in Judea; there was rivalry between them.

It is noteworthy that in this widening conflict between Jews, ⁴² specific religious ritual aspects were never mentioned. When religion was an argument, it was confined to whether the Ptolemies (Egypt) or the Seleucids (Syria) granted wider autonomy. (In such cases evidence ex-silentio should be valid.)

Later, in the years leading to the Maccabean wars which started as a civil war against the Jewish Hellenizers religion was naturally, not just an issue, but the exclusive

issue dividing Jews.⁴³ Paradoxically, this unique civil war in which Judaism and the Torah were the focal point, could also be used as evidence that there were still no Jewish factions with definite opposing views in the sphere of religion. The Hellenizers cannot be identified with any of the Jewish sects of a later period. Various academic speculations tracing the Sadducees to the Hellenizers are devoid of substance.⁴⁴ To Sadducees the written law was no less sacred than to the most extreme Essenes, and the Hellenizers' primary target was the Mosaic Law. This leaves us with a pertinent question. What was the cause of the new phenomenon in Judea during the last two centuries--the split in the approach to Judaism reflected in the emergence of Jewish sects?

CHAPTER IV

THE EMERGENCE OF SECTS

Despite the paucity of data for that epoch we can point to a terminus a quo for the appearance of sects. The work of Jesus, son of Sirach (in Latin Ecclesiasticus) was a landmark in the non-canonized Jewish religious literature of this period. It is a compendium of short moral essays written on various occasions. The theme and all other evidence point to the era ca. 200 B.C.E.

The book of Sirach belongs to the genre of "Wisdom literature," a widely known category in the pagan world, too. The fundamental difference was that in Judea it was a strictly religious category based on the Biblical axiom: "The beginning of all wisdom is fear of God." While the pagan world discriminated between the knowledge of things divine and things human, in Judaism both were included in the Commandments of G-d, his revealed Law.

Israel's Wisdom literature was based on the traditions of earlier ages. Works of this genre appeared from the 4th Century B.C.E. i.e., ca. 150 years after the

return from the Babylonian exile.

The Book of Sirach is important to this study from a number of viewpoints; I shall give a brief overview.

Ecclesiasticus aims at emphasizing the supremacy of Judaism over Hellenistic philosophy. In doing so the author adopts the modus operandi of the very schools he contests, challenging what we should call today their secular basis, the Hellenistic reliance on absolute power of man's rationality.

Ecclesiasticus agrees with Hellenic philosophers that wisdom is the catalyst for happiness but only when it accepts and subordinates itself to the revealed Law of G-d. Another point against Hellas is the author's emphasis on Israel's choseness; national awareness is prominent through the entire book; it is a challenge to the tenor of cosmopolitanism in the Hellenistic Wisdom literature.

Ecclesiasticus is important to our study because it deals with topics of Judaism without indicating any sectarian divisions: the people of Israel are treated as an undivided entity. This would be unnatural if there were sects contesting each other in the approach to the themes the author dealt with.

(Another derivation of importance to our study is that the author of Ecclesiasticus could in the latter epoch have been a follower of almost each of the latter sects.

This argues for the view [later developed here] that despite inter-sect fightings, there was a common denominator for all Jewish sects.)

The nonexistence of sects until the regaining of full sovereignty is also shown in the Book of Jubilees (also called The Little Genesis), the most important work in the Pseudepigrapha.

The latest event recorded there is the early military success of the Maccabees, before the splitting away of the Hāsīdīm. This sets the date of the work between 162-160. In its detailed elaboration of (past and) contemporary events there is no mention of a break within the national body, or of the existence of sects.

The evidence from Jubilees is of great importance because the author is considered the spiritual father of the Qumran sect; Jubilees was found among the sacred books of this sect. R. H. Charles refers to "the pro-establishment stand in Jubilees." If there had already been an anti-establishment group, the author would certainly have manifested his sympathy with their view.

Furthermore Jubilees is devoted to "instructing contemporaries about matters important in their own times" (O. J. Wintermute). The only disputable issue brought up was the new Lunar calendar, to which the author demonstrates his opposition advocating a calendar where the

year is divided into four seasons of three months of 30 days each, and 1 non-counted day between the seasons, totaling 364 days close to the earth's orbiting around the sun. He would certainly not have remained silent concerning issues about which a sect whose ideas he shared would have split from the others. Furthermore, there is additional evidence that there were no sects until the second half of that century.

In the year(s) 175/4 B.C.E. Jason, the Hellenized brother of the High Priest (Onias) after ingratiating himself with the Syrian King, Antiochus Epiphanes IV, became the High Priest of Judea. This started the Maccabean war against the drive to Hellenize (actually to de-Judaize) the only people that resisted Hellenization--Israel.

The vicissitudes of this unique war are not in the scope of this study; the character of this war, however, led by Jews against Syria and against a segment of their people highlights the non-existence of sects within Jewry.

It is true that it was the goal of one segment of Jewry--the Hellenizers--that caused the Hasmonean wars, but the line dividing this camp from the overwhelming majority of Jews can in no way be defined as a division between sects within Jewry. Jason Menelaus, Silimachus and their group were not claiming a different approach to Judaism,

not even a reform of Judaism; they identified themselves with the culture and religious rituals of an alien power: Hellenistic Syria. Neither did the Jews under the leadership of the Hasmoneans fight for one brand of Judaism against another; it was a defensive war for Judaism per se against a power that aimed to extirpate it. (The dispute between scholars as to whether the Jewish Hellenizers agreed wholly, or only partially with the goals of Antiochus, is of no relevance here.)

The very fact that no sectarian divisions manifested themselves even in such a war, which lasted from 175/4 until 141 B.C.E. demonstrates that there were no such divisions.

The existence in the previous epoch of pious individuals referred to collectively as Hasidim was a continuous phenomenon reaching back to the earliest times in Israel¹ (and even pre-Israel history). Individuals called Hasidim never created the framework of a group or party; the word Hasid meant a person or a performance going beyond the normative boundaries of righteousness. Later Talmudic scholars fixed it into a quasi-judicial role, L'phnim m'shurath Hadin--behaving more beneficially than obligated by the law;² it applied to G-d too and even to Gentiles.

We encounter the first mention of the Hasidim at the time of the religious persecutions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. I Maccabees 7:9-15 called this group ". . . very mighty warriors of Israel, every one a volunteer for the Law." They were the main reservoir for the early Maccabean wars against the Syrian attempt to suppress Judaism, an attempt supported (or even provoked) by the Jewish Hellenizers.

The Hasidim cannot be seen as the forerunners of subsequent sects in Judea. Firstly, the later sects were posed against other groups, whose views and policies they opposed. Secondly, we do not hear that the Hasidim came in conflict with the moderate Hellenizers who were part of the establishment in Judea many decades before Antiochus. Thirdly, and most significant, it was the Hasidim who "welcomed peace with Syria" and with the by Syria-appointed High Priest Alcimus, who was acceptable to the less extreme Hellenizers,³ after they were promised the status quo antes, i.e. religious freedom guaranteed them by the new Syrian King Demetrius (162).⁴

By all indications the Hasidim were the predecessors of the party later established as the Pharisees, also of the Essenes. However, during the time they were called Hasidim, they did not view themselves as an entity with a specific approach to Jewish issues and a

desire to gain adherents and influence. As in every aggregate some are more scrupulous; so, too, the Hasidim were pietists in the performance of the Law; as such they desired all their co-religionists to be strict in obeying the Torah, but they could in no way be considered a party separate from and contrary to any other group in Judea. Until the time the Jewish Hellenizers began their effort to change the autonomous status of Judea by projecting into the Temple rituals and elements of Hellenistic syncretism, the Hasidim did not even react against Jews who adopted Hellenistic ways.

Hence the terminus a quo can safely be moved further down until at least the end of the Hasmonean wars, to the restoration of a Judean state in 141 B.C.E., when the last surviving Hasmonean brother, Simon merged the office of the High Priest with that of a sovereign Jewish state.⁵

The situation after the Hasmoneans freed Judea from Gentile rule created for Judaism's mentors a situation analogous to that of the time of Ezra, although from the opposite perspective; in Ezra's time, there were no direct Torah guidelines for a Judaism integrated within a Gentile empire; and Ezra together with the men of the Great Assembly had to build a new infrastructure to protect the Torah. Centuries later Torah and tradition had no explicit

directives for Israel's newly-won Statehood within the syncretizing Gentile environment; the newly won sovereignty presented a specific complexity.

In Ezra's time a foreign ruler assigned exclusive power to a single authority--the Jewish governor-scribe or High Priest. There was no room for conflicting interpretations of Judaism. Even if such tendencies existed they could in no way mature into opposite parties. The success of the Hasmoneans removed this obstacle. The new situation which required of Judaism decisions of a sovereign power, lacking the exclusive authority of the Prophets,⁶ became the catalyst for a multiplicity of parties with diverse solutions to all problems.

As indicated above, distinct parties appeared in the second half of the Second Century B.C.E. This coincided with the final stage of the Hasmonean wars, which succeeded in restoring Israel's sovereignty in Judea.

Quite obviously, when such primary events coincide, research is required to determine whether both events are linked; i.e. whether the new status of sovereignty caused the ideological diversity in Judea? A related question is: did the surfacing of parties and sects denote a radically divided Judaism, a theological flux that, with the exception of a few fundamentals,⁷ would make it impossible to determine what ideas were authentic or alien to

historical Judaism? Or was there a common denominator, an axis around which the newly formed parties united, differing only in solutions to contemporary problems?

In order to find an answer to this we must ponder another question:

Why did the restoration of sovereignty cause divisiveness in Judea?

The vicissitudes of the Hasmonean wars, the military adventures and diplomatic maneuvering that culminated in full independence from the Seleucid empire are outside the scope of this study. Nor do we need to probe into the scholarly dispute about the extent to which political/national aspirations converged and altered the primordial religious goals of the Hasmonean warriors. Still, the elucidation of one aspect is of crucial importance for our thesis: the threat of Judea's being drawn into the expanding sphere of Hellenistic syncretism, which was the cause of the long-drawn-out civil war, officially terminated by the regaining of sovereignty, was not completely removed; the problems of defending the newly erected sovereign Israel and Judaism engendered divisive responses, expressed by distinct parties.

The separate parties and sects in Judea did not present fundamentally different views of Judaism; their differences lay in the question of how to defend what was

common to all of them--the uniqueness of Israel.

It is during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135-104), in the second generation Hasmoneans, that we hear of a conflict between two sects, representing distinct views in matters of religious rituals and state-policy.

That this was a new phenomenon and not the surfacing of a simmering conflict is shown from the way the first collision came about.

John Hyrcanus gave a party after his victories over Judea's enemies. The notables of Judea were present. As narrated in the Talmud⁸ and in Josephus,⁹ leading men of the Pharisees, as well as the Sadducees, came to the party. This is how the existence of the two primary sects was recorded for the first time.

We learn here about the existence of two opposing groups in Judea; the account also tells us that both groups supported the same ruler/High Priest (the Hasmonean rulers, with the exception of the last two brothers held both positions) and that the relationship between them was of reciprocal tolerance. In religious matters John Hyrcanus followed the instructions of the Pharisees, while Sadducees held high military positions. Still, it becomes clear that the Sadducees envied the Pharisees' central religious role in the court of the ruler.

The division between Pharisees and Sadducees in the realm of religious rituals and in the application of the Law could not as yet have assumed the radical forms of the later era. This is shown in that John Hyrcanus during the banquet asked his guests of both groups to ascertain whether he was justified in considering himself a perfect ruler of his people.¹⁰ If the two parties had already differed radically in the interpretation of the Law, it would have been impossible to expect common approval from both sides. John Hyrcanus received unanimous approval as being righteous. But there was one belated exception:

A man from among the Parisees, Eleazar stood up and said:

Since you desire the truth, and you wish to be righteous, lay down the High Priesthood, and content yourself with civil government. We have heard it from old men that your mother was a captive [under the reign of Antiochus].¹¹

(If the wife of a priest was in Gentile captivity, her children could not be in active service in the Temple.)

The accusation itself was (and still is) under dispute. As to the identity of the accuser, the Talmud maintains that Eleazar was a Sadducee and the whole incident was a plot to cause a split between the ruler and the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were known for their leniency in judgment. Although they reproached Eleazar and assured the

ruler/High Priest of their support, they nonetheless were against harsh punishment. In their interpretation, the false accusation required the penalty of "stripes and bondage, not the death penalty."¹² (John Hyrcanus was not a king; it was his son, Aristobolus, who inaugurated the monarchy in the Second Commonwealth, and an insult against a prince, and/or High Priest did not call for capital punishment.)

John Hyrcanus, antagonized by Eleazar's remark that he should resign from the High Priesthood, was furious that the Pharisee leaders, who controlled the Sanhedrin, did not deem Eleazar's remark a capital crime. (*lèse majesté*). He accepted the Sadducees' suggestion that Eleazar had voiced the opinion of the Pharisees and ousted the Pharisees from the Sanhedrin, abolishing the decrees laid down by them.¹³

Whether Eleazar was a Sadducee-provocateur or a Zealot Pharisee remains unknown, but the Sadducees were right that the Pharisees were in principle opposed to the concentration of the two paramount positions in Judaism--civil rulership and Priesthood.

It is conventional to refer to three and later four sects: (1) Pharisees, (2) Sadducees, (3) Essenes and (4) Zealots.¹⁴ The first three were sects with different views about Judaism in that period. The Zealots on the other hand did not differ in any theological sense from any of

the others. They wanted armed resistance against the Roman rule in Judea; their fellowship consisted of members from both groups and from the people at large. Although some of the concepts advocated by one or other of the sects may have been more conducive to the goal of the Zealots, the Zealots could not be considered a separate sect.

Following is a brief outline of each of the sects.

A. The etymology of the term Pharisees (Perushim)

We shall omit here the continuous detailed theorizing about the semantic, etymological, conceptual implications of the name of Perushim. It is irrelevant (and not only for this study). However, we must take exception to one interpretation of the term, especially its application (which happens to be the dominant one), namely the interpretation that Pharisee, as derived from Parush/Perushim, meaning separated, denotes that the members of this Jewish party set as their goal their separation from the general community.

The reason for claiming separation from other Jews as a virtue is explained by the complex Torah laws of keeping purity, by avoiding coming in contact with corpses, unclean animals and other non-pure objects. This encompasses even places wherein such objects are located.¹⁵

The Laws for avoiding "impurity" (Tuma) are extremely complex and minute, so that only scrupulous, pedantic scholars were familiar with them.¹⁶ Therefore, so goes the theory, members of the Perushim party practiced separation from the non-scholarly or not so pious Jews in order to retain purity.

The convenience of substantiating this hypothesis by "notes" and "citations" is encouraging. Objects and localities and situations leading to a loss of "purity" were abundant in contemporaneous Judea. But it is precisely this situation that renders senseless the hypothesis that the Pharisees claimed separation from others for the virtue of staying pure.

This almost unachievable purity was absolutely a non-requirement for a Jew, except in the instances when he ascended into the Temple or was required to consume a special food in a special place. In daily life and in normal activities it was unnecessary. Furthermore, the same Perushim practiced a deliberate tactic of rendering impure the High-Priest (at a certain time) to prove two aspects of the Law of Purity.¹⁷

a) That with the exception of a special function being impure was no stigma;

b) The ease of being transferred from the status of un-purity into purity.

Here is how Maimonides describes it:

Whatever is written about in the Torah and in words of tradition about Laws of pure and unpure (Tumah) refers only to the Temple, its sanctuaries and certain priestly and similar food. In normal relations and in regular consuming of food, it means absolutely nothing. Not only is it allowed to eat and drink objects of (such) impurity and in a state of impurity, so too, is it permissible to cause (such) purity to food and to people. Even priests . . . may render themselves impure, except when they serve in Temple. Only when visiting the Temple (the Beth H'mikdash in Jerusalem) must one be pure.¹⁸

Laws about transient statuses of pure and unpure were absolutely no ground for preaching separation of Jews from other Jews. We have had to elucidate this because it is precisely the ascription of such outlandish concepts to parties in Judea at that epoch that fertilizes the ground for viewing Judaism at that epoch as "open territory" wherein everything was possible (though with one basic exception: proclaiming belief in the One).

There are other difficulties in accepting the view that the term Pharisees designates separation from all other Jews:

(a) Why should the Pharisees, who claimed to be the tribune and spokesman of the Jewish people at large, adopt such a name? Even the Essenes, who believed that the majority of the Jews were sinful, not worthy of salvation, considering themselves as the "just minority" who alone would be redeemed, did not see fit to adopt a name proclaiming separation from the nation.

(b) The Sadducees adopted their name from a High Priest or from a renowned teacher (who may have also been a priest). They considered the central task of Judaism the rituals performed in the Temple, and the priestly class was the group selected for these activities. It would be more plausible for the Sadducees, therefore, to designate themselves with a term emphasizing their status as a group separated from all and set aside for a sublime task. (Actually, a Biblical statement could suggest this.)¹⁹

(c) The Pharisees not only had no reason to define their activities and goals as a program of separatism; by their scrupulous observance of the Torah the Pharisees aimed to influence all of their people to behave as they did. Furthermore, the Pharisees claimed that their behavior and teachings followed the tradition from Sinai. If many, even a great many, of the people behaved differently, this too was not new. Did not many Jews backslide in the times of the Judges, of the prophets? And if, according to the Pharisees, all the laws, including those of purification, were the tradition of Sinai, then the righteous ones in those days, too, had to be careful in their contacts with the Jews who deviated from the tradition of Sinai. Nonetheless, the righteous ones in previous ages never proclaimed separation from other Jews; on the contrary, the deviators were stigmatized as

"separatists."

(d) It is also not plausible to assume that the Pharisees were stigmatized by their adversaries as "separatists." As mentioned above, the Pharisees hallowed the equality of all the classes and strata of the people. "Every Jew has share in the world to come."²⁰ "He who saves one life is considered as having saved the entire world,"²¹ and similar statements. The Sadducees' world view and approach to Judaism were remote from such ideas. Their concept of the role and meaning of the Temple rituals engendered an ethos of disparity and inequality in Judaism; it could not but disseminate an elitist attitude. How could they brandish separatism as a negative trait? What is even more illuminating is that, among the numerous accusations of the Sadducees against the Pharisees, not one makes an issue of their separatism. The Essenes and the groups related to them could certainly not have stigmatized the Pharisees in such a way. It was they who made separation from the "sinners" a virtue. One of the main arguments of the Essenes against the Pharisees was that they were the "Seekers of smooth ways," i.e., they did not separate themselves from the sinners.²²

But even if against all logic the Pharisees had been stigmatized as separatists, why should they accept this stigma? That the Pharisees called themselves so is

clear from many records. Even where Pharisee mentors pointed out the negative aspects in those of their ranks, they ascribed the evils to imperfect Pharisaism, while paying tribute to the title as such.²³

(e) One may also ask, what prompted followers of the scribes who claimed direct continuity from Ezra and of the men of "the Great Synagogue" to adopt a new title? Their aim was to continue the tradition of Sinai, accordingly they followed the road of the Torah scholars and of the priesthood preceding them. Why introduce a new name that ipso facto suggests a new status?

It seems, therefore, plausible to conclude that the Pharisees themselves introduced this name, but not as a reflection of their relation to non-Pharisees, i.e., to the rest of the nation, but as a timely emphasis of the traditional Sinaitic trait of the Jewish people at large: separation from the rapidly syncretizing Gentile civilizations around them that threatened the uniqueness of Judaism.

The term Pharisees was not meant to delineate a spiritual/religious demarcation within Judaism--this would be in contradiction to the very ideology and tactic of the Pharisee movement. The name, the concept embodied in it, signaled that this group, the continuers of the Sinai tradition, were aware of the new danger of obscuring the

historical separation of Israel from the Gentiles.

This interpretation also removes all questions mentioned above; it provides plausible motives for the willingness, even eagerness of the continuers of the traditions of old to present themselves under a new name.

At the same time, it explains the purpose of the Sadducees in addressing their adversaries by that name. The Sadducees, relying completely on Temple rituals and on the priestly class as the guarantor of Jewish uniqueness, were willing to accept a measure of Hellenization, and the strict separatism of the Pharisees was, in their view, a token of the latter's backwardness. To Sadducees, the term Pharisees implied that the people grouped under it were unfit for leadership.²⁴

This is also demonstrated by the fact that the Essenes called the Pharisees "seekers of smooth explanations." According to them the Pharisees were inconsistent and opportunistic; instead of living up to the meaning of the term Pharisees in its totality, they were seeking out smooth explanations in order to cooperate with the deviators, the "sinful" priesthood and Temple authorities. Accordingly, the men who paraded as Pharisees did not deserve the name they applied to themselves.

As a designation of Israel's duty to be separated from the "ways of the pagan peoples" the term "Perushim" is

to be found in the Pentateuch;²⁵ it harkened back to the covenant, to God's Commandment: "You I choose from among the Nations." God chose Jews to be a separate entity;²⁶ it was a perennial theme in the prophetic books dealing with the First Commonwealth, and, most important, it became the paramount issue confronting the returning from the Babylonian Exile.

"Pharisee" is no doubt derived from the term: separated; what the Pharisees propagated was separation of the Jewish people from the conglomeration of syncretizing nations and converging cults.

"Pharisee" did not mean a separated entity within the Jewish people; it was a warning to the nation of Israel to follow the Torah laws of standing outside the process of syncretism that merged and fused the various peoples within the succeeding Ptolemaic, Seleucid, Roman Empires of which Judea was a part.

B. Sadduces

In assessing the role of the Sadduces we must distinguish between the various Talmudic sources concerning them. The sources in the Talmud should be divided in two basic groups: (a) actual disputes between Pharisees and Sadducees during their competitive activities as the two major Jewish parties; (b) the latter Pharisaic

condemnations of heretics including Sadducees after the destruction of the Temple, when the Sadducees as a group ceased to exist.

The differences are glaring. In the first instance the numerous diversities are listed and each side makes an effort to justify its position; the Sadducees are treated with due respect as a religious opponent that defends the fundamentals of the Mosaic Law. In these disputes each side treats the other as a legitimate representative of Judaism despite the effort to refute the opponent in specific cases.

The tone and attitude radically differs when references are made to the Sadducees in retrospective, i.e., in a time when they ceased to exist as a movement because of the destruction of the Temple, the basis of their activities.

In these latter sources the Sadducees are equated with the various "minim"²⁷ considered as traitors to the people and outside the Jewish collective.

Logically the relationship should have been in a reversed process. Animosity between two warring factions is greater when the conflict is an actuality; time glosses over many diversities. It should also be added that the later, extremely disparaging remarks, are related to a time when the views of the Sadducees about Temple-rituals were

no longer a real threat, and the Pharisees ruled in the realm of Judaism. That a previously respected adversary should be treated with such animosity after losing any position of power, unable to compete with the victor, seems illogical. The only explanation would be that the adversary underwent a radical change after losing his tenacity on the common ground.

This is exactly what happened. The two Talmudic sources deal here with different groups of Sadducees: one before the Temple destruction in 70 C.E.; the other of a later day.

The stronghold of the Sadduces party was the Temple and the related priestly rituals. As described above, the Temple Services were, in the Sadducee view, the foundation of Judaism; they manifested the uniqueness of Judaism. The High Priest's office was the embodiment of the Covenant; the Torah and the People revolved around it. So authoritative was the current priestly leadership that even the ruling of the High Priests of previous generations was not (according to Sadducees) binding for the succeeding one. Nothing but the written Torah and the contemporary Temple priesthood were the authorities of Judaism. Whatever the Pharisees' view of such an attitude, they could not but see it as anchored, at least partially, in the Sinai tradition. It was in their view, however, an

incomplete tradition, hence false. They spared no effort to block its spread among the Jewish people. Nonetheless, there was common ground for co-existence and cooperation with them.²⁸

This common ground was completely lost after the destruction of the Temple, and more so with the failure of the rebellions in the following 65 years. Without Temple services, bereft of any realistic hopes for its restoration--Sadduceeism ceased to be a theological/social concept. The ones who survived were embittered, forlorn individuals who witnessed the upsurge into unrivalled popularity and influence of their adversary: Pharisaism. Many of them, the more sincere, gave in: they may even have recognized their errors and joined the Pharisees or remained passive. But some of them became prey to all kinds of heretical ideas and groups. In their bitterness they were ready to join everyone who opposed the Pharisees; they turned into what the Talmud generally termed: Minim.

The severe criticism found in the Talmud against the Sadducees could therefore not be applied to the members of this party before the destruction of the Temple. Neither should serious attention be given to the slanders aimed at the Sadducee High Priests by modern authors who aim to confine the confrontation between Judaism and Jesus to a conflict between a social reformer and Sadducee

collaborators with Rome.

The Sadducees, together with other Jewish sects, shouldered the burden of defending the religious and national values of Israel in accordance with their views about historical Judaism.

C. Essenes, Apocalypticists and Eschatology

The third party (or sect), the Essenes and the Apocalyptic works linked to them, are the vineyard of historic schools that claim Christianity's Jewish origin. This is partially facilitated because of the similarity in terms used in Jewish and in Christian works dealing with apocalyptic and eschatological themes. Their common interest in revealing the hidden future in the realm of supernatural events calls for a similar vocabulary. The crucial aspect, however, is to perceive the essential otherness, indeed, the incompatibility between the two strands.

The attitude of Jewish Apocalypticists to the issue of Jewish uniqueness, to the role of the Mosaic Law, and to the vision of redemption is anchored in the Bible; the inevitability of the restoration of a sovereign Israel, living in accordance with the Mosaic Law.

The Apocalyptic school(s) quarreled with normative Judaism in many respects. In their opposition to the

Temple hierarchy, shared to a large extent by the Pharisees, they believed that any cooperation with the Temple priesthood would be useless and sinful. They viewed themselves as the just remnant of the Chosen Nation; but the focus here is the concept: just remnant, as distinct from a substitute or a transformation of Israel. The concept of the Chosen People as the divine Instrument and the Mosaic Law as its vehicle for executing the Covenant--the two cornerstones of Judaism--remained intact. This is the reason Jewish Apocalyptic sects never found common ground with their counterparts among the Gentiles, despite some similarity of terms and their sharing the expectation of cosmic transformation

The Apocalypticists' view of a Just Remnant from among the Jewish people instead of the people in its entirety, had precedence in Biblical narratives; we shall cite some of them:

(a) When the Jews wandering in the desert after the Exodus sinned with the "golden calf," God tells Moses that he wants to destroy the people, and will preserve the Chosen Nation through the descendants of Moses.²⁹

(b) The same is repeated after the spies frightened the Jews into abandoning the goal of conquering Canaan, and they wanted to "return to Egypt."³⁰

(c) During the reign of Ahab, God reveals to Elijah that because of the idolatry of the Israelis: "I will leave in Israel [only] a remnant of Seven Thousand, the knees that did not bend to the Baal and the lips that did not kiss him [the image of the idol]." ³¹

(d) The destruction of the Northern Kingdom, and the loss of the "ten tribes," was such a phenomenon. ³²

The common trait in all was that the concept of a "parochial community," the idea of a chosen national entity, remained intact. So, too, was its correlation, the "Law," which remained the vehicle to salvation and "a Light unto the Gentiles."

All through the First Commonwealth the threat of eliminating the sinners (which constituted the majority), and instead focusing on the just minority, repeated itself. Nonetheless, the Prophets when threatening Israel with apocalyptic visions asserted that although the numbers of the Chosen Nation might be reduced to only a "remnant" of the People, the concept of a Chosen Nation will remain.

During the Second Commonwealth this theme was no longer heard. This was because: (a) those who survived the destructions of the two kingdoms were already considered the "remanent," (b) the Jews were purified from the sin of idolatry; the sin that caused the reducing of Israel to a just remnant.

The Psalms of Solomon, IV Ezra, Epoch II, Apocalypse of Baruch, The Testaments of the Patriarch, and other Jewish Apocalypses were permeated with the vision of a Sovereign Israel and glorification of the Torah. Their opposition was aimed against part of the Jewish leadership, against calendar reforms and what had been, according to them, deviations from the path of righteousness. The vision of a chosen Israel and of the restoration of Zion's sovereignty was shared by apocalyptic and eschatological groups with all parties in Israel. Jewish apocalypticists narrowed the biological body of the Chosen People but never expanded it to include Gentiles. In respect of the relation to non-Jews and of obedience to the Law, Apocalyptic sects were more discriminating than normative Judaism.³³

The issue of whether the exclusion in the post-exile age of the bulk of the children of Israel from their Covenant was consistent with historical Judaism or a deviation is not relevant here. One may even see in such an attitude a weakening of the national spirit, and a paving of the way for a radical heresy. A physician detecting the hostile virus that infected an organism may assume that a certain form of behavior has made the organism accessible to the virus. But this in no way alters the fact that the virus itself came from outside the

organism. Thus, even allowing for the assumption that the apocalypticists' view of a just remnant, instead of the people as such, contributed to the anti-Judaic phenomenon of Jesus' ministry, the apocalyptic Jewish sects cannot in any way be identified with the teaching of Jesus.

Summary About Sects in Judea

In contesting the hypothesis of the nonexistence of a clearly defined Judaism, it must be pointed out that we are dealing with a relatively modern theory: its genesis coincides with the age of the Enlightenment. The increasing literature about a fragmented Judaism coincided with the Quest for the Historical Jesus. There was a tendency to find a correlation in the two phenomena.

The Talmud relates only one fundamental issue that divided Jewish society at the time: the validity of an Oral Torah expanding the Written Torah. This counter-posed the party of the Sadducees to the Pharisees. It was this issue that led to a fundamental division, turning the adherents of each view into a fixed sect with clearly defined conceptual boundaries.

A primary source for the premise of a Judaism segmented by a multiplicity of sects is a statement twice repeated in the work of Josephus.³⁴

The way this is related by Josephus suggests that the author's goal was to show his Gentile readers that although Judaism was an ancient, trustworthy religion, the parties in Judea reflected the contemporary Hellenistic/Roman society following the lines of division between philosophical systems: a) Plato/Aristotle, b) Sotics and c) Epicureans.

Josephus' picture of Judaism divided in allegiance to three philosophical views enabled him to camouflage the central issue over which Jews quarreled so bitterly: the attitude to the Roman oppressor.

By emphasizing the realm of spiritual views, and anchoring Jewish divisiveness in metaphysics, Josephus ostracized the Zealots (who as indicated came from adversary camps: Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes) calling them outcasts and bandits.³⁵

Philo, who also lived in that age, refers to groups who differed in various aspects. The same can be found in other contemporary sources. But nowhere in historical annals is there recorded a radically fragmented Israel. Nor can even Josephus' statement about Jewish sects serve as a basis for the modern assumption that Judaism in that age was in flux, each of the sects claiming the exclusive right to represent Israel.

The evidence cited in previous chapters disproves the hypothesis that the divisiveness between sects affected the consensus on the fundamentals of Judaism. Quite the contrary--the awareness, shared by all, that Israel was the Chosen Nation and that the Sinaitic Law with its emphasis on human deed was eternal, was the cause of the emergence of sects; differences about ways to safeguard the historical aim of Israel led to their emergence. The Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes (of all shades), and Zealots shared a common theological national awareness, differing only about the ways and means of safeguarding the common legacy.

The conviction that an oppressed Israel was a hindrance to establishing the Kingdom of God was also shared by Jews widely scattered in the Hellenistic world. Philo and his Alexandrian school might have read many Platonic conceptions into the Torah, but to them, too, the dogma of Israel's election was sacred.

Israel viewed its entire history as the scheme of the universal omnipotent God; man's actions were an integral component of God's cosmic design. However, this did not exhaust God's means and ways in shaping history. Supernatural phenomena were not confined to revelation, to theophany; they also included supernatural transformations of historical realities. The Pentateuch narrates how the

exodus of the tribes from Egypt was preceded by a transformation of the natural order on which Egypt's system³⁶ was based. This demonstrated the merging of natural and supernatural phenomena. Moses was first sent to plead for the release of the tribes from the "house of bondage."³⁷ This would have meant a natural flow of history. At the failing of the first, the supernatural followed; both being the design of Israel's God. The natural and supernatural formed an interchangeable motif in Biblical narrations.

The interchangeability between natural and supernatural phenomena is the fibre of Judaism in the Pentateuch, the Prophetic Books,³⁸ and Talmudic texts. In all of them natural and supernatural, human deeds and God's intervention are one seamless process.

Eschatology, Apocalypses and the Just Remnant were perennial themes in Judaism, fusing cosmic disturbances with hopes of salvation for Israel and Gentiles.

The idea of Israel's chosenness made the people aware of the contradiction between being the Chosen of God and their subordination to the tyranny of Rome. There was unanimity that this situation was temporary and that Redemption would bring the promised restoration of the glory of Israel. There were, however, diverse views on how to hasten the process. The certainty that the restoration

of Israel's sovereignty, as documented in the sacred sources, was a prerequisite for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, was shared by the people in Judea as well as by Jews scattered in Greco/Roman provinces. How this small and relatively weak people could overcome a military giant--Rome--was the central divisive issue in Judea.

The Zealots saw Israel's subordination to a Gentile empire as totally incompatible with its Covenant mission. They considered rebellion against Rome as a prerequisite for establishing the Kingdom of God. This view crossed party lines, and its followers were among the ranks of all parties. They found succor in apocalyptic and eschatological visions. But, the opposite view, that fighting for political sovereignty may harm the cause of Judaism, was also shared by adherents of the various parties.

(It is important to point out that the issue that caused extreme divisiveness was external to and above the existing party lines; it overshadowed all party differences. This, too, points up the basic unity of Judean society.)

The extreme loyalty to the fundamentals of Judaism by all groups must be kept in mind in order not to draw too sharp a distinction between the sects while bypassing what united them all.

The simplistic picture drawn in modern historiography about an amorphous Israel consisting of a multiplicity of sects, each claiming a different Judaism, is unwarranted by primary data; it was arrived at through a preconceived assumption.

PART TWO

AN INQUIRY INTO THE ORIGINS
OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER I

THE DISCIPLES AFTER GETHSEMANE

The arrest of Jesus and his death left the group of disciples without a master. Their behavior collectively, and/or individually should demonstrate to us whether they continued acting as a cohesive group in accordance with their master's ministry, or, whether their conduct entailed a retreat from his teachings.

If the answer is continuity, there is reasonable ground to state that Christianity followed the teachings of Jesus; if there was retreat and desertion then there would be room for speculative theories about a later transformation of Jesus' logia.

The way Jesus was led away, as well as what followed after the crucifixion, indicates that the authorities, Jewish and Roman, focused on Jesus alone; none of his followers was in any danger. They were considered no threat either to Rome or to the Jews. Numerous Messianic movements in Judea ended with the removal of their dramatis personae, the followers of a false or

defeated Messiah had no reason to continue meeting as a group.

Thousands of volumes devoted to the Historical Jesus consist of either uncritical traditional accounts or scholarly and semi-scholarly works that while deploying immense energy in dissecting the gospels, avoid clarifying the primary issue, by letting the primary data speak for themselves.

Following are a few examples:

Maurenbrecher writes:

Peter had sworn a fearful oath, before witnesses, renouncing every connection with Jesus. . . . Disillusioned and furious, he had repudiated his Master. . . . He may indeed have concluded that Jesus was only a deceiver, and richly deserved his fate. At any rate, Peter denied all association with him and in doing so actually destroyed it.¹

Even more emphatic is the author in another book, this time speaking about the whole group:

. . . completely in despair, they returned home, intending to remain there permanently; the complete collapse of the movement; they gave up the Master's cause as lost, and abandoned the fellowship which had previously held them together.²

The same view we find by Weisacker: "The existence of the sect [was] interrupted by the execution of the founder . . ."³

This conveys the impression of people disoriented, having lost their goal in life, eager to run for shelter in order to cover up their previous affinity with their

crucified master.

But did the dispersion of Jesus' disciples demonstrate disappointment and resignation, the giving up of Jesus' legacy to them? Did the death of Jesus manifest to them the failure of his mission?

Let us leave aside the meditations of historians so many centuries later and consult the primary sources.

We read in the Gospels that before his arrest Jesus tells his disciples what awaits them after he will be "taken away." "All you shall be offended because of me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, the sheep shall be scattered abroad. Howbeit, after I am raised up, I will go before you . . ." (Mk. 147, Mt. 261) and more: "verily, verily I say unto you, that you shall weep and lament--and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (Jn. 16:20)

Matt. (26:53-7) states that Jesus ordered his disciples not to fight those who came to arrest him because of the inevitability of what is about to happen: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be." In John (18:11) it is Peter who raises the sword in defense of Jesus and then said Jesus unto Peter, "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath

given me, shall I not drink it?"

Numerous times Jesus spoke to the disciples and also to others about his death as a conclusive stage of his ministry; the theme is repeated often in the Gospels (Mk. 8:31, 10:32, 14:24-32; Mtt. 16:21-3, 17:9, 17:22-3, 26:31-5, 37-42, 52-5; Lk. 18:32-4).

Jn. (XII:31-35) has Jesus telling a crowd that by his death he "will draw all men unto" him. The listeners reacted in shock: "We have heard in the Torah that the Messiah abideth forever, and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up?" (meaning removed from this world) And Jesus answered, "Yet a little while is the light with you."

The statements made by modern scholars are based on non-scholarly assumptions. There is not the slightest evidence that the disciples of Jesus even felt defeated for a moment. Quite to the contrary, they behaved according to the directives outlined by their master. It should be added that even the records in the Gospels that the disciples, in the first few days, "Fell away" went "astray" etc., were also in accord with what Jesus commanded them to do after his death. Peter's denial of affinity with Jesus demonstrates not fear and cowardice, but the unbroken will of a disciple to see the unfolding of the messianic career of Jesus he believed in.

Fear, faintheartedness should have made Peter run away from the place, to be as far as possible removed from the scene of action. The same is true about the behavior of the entire group.

The disciples' behavior after Jesus' death does not suggest disappointment and desertion; it indicates obedience to his teaching. The disciples of Jesus perceived their master's death as a foreordained stage in their master's mission.

The conventional explanation that these may well be vaticinium post factum, prophesying after the event, is not applicable in this case because the sources here do not aim to aggrandize the disciples on whose tradition of following Jesus the Christian community was dependent. It should therefore be assumed that we have here a tradition based on facts.

Actually the fear that allegedly took possession of the disciples seems completely unjustified. Jesus has been arrested while he was in their midst, but none of them has been harmed, not even investigated about being in his company. The way Jesus was led away, the questions addressed to him during the procedure of investigating by Jewish authorities and later at the trial before Pilate (there were two trials) demonstrated that no one else had to fear persecution.

But assuming they were afraid, and intent to forsake the teachings of Jesus, it would then be more secure to disperse as individuals, not held together. But we read: "Then the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews . . ." (John 20:19) "The first day" was barely two days after the crucifixion; the frightened, "disillusioned" "furious" disciples who "gave up the master's cause," have already come together.

Why should the disciples seek to stay together? And what was the reason to fear the Jews (or anybody else) if they resigned themselves to passivity? Those with the power to persecute them demonstrated clearly that their response to this Messianic movement was terminated. (That the Roman overlords in Judea did not look for any others who were involved but considered the case closed with Jesus' death, while all other Messiah movements were differently treated by Rome, is another aspect.)

The fear and the meeting "at evenings, when the doors were shut," can be understood when we disregard modern hypotheses that to the disciples of Jesus the crucifixion was an unexpected turn of events, that the disciples expected from Jesus revolutionary political and social upheavals as part of his messianic mission, and instead see the disciples determined to follow the road of

Jesus.

It is also significant that the fear of the disciples was of Jews, not of Romans. Again we do not have to rely on this hypothetical statement alone. The records relate that latter confrontations in Judea were with Jewish authorities. Rome showed no interest in the Jesus fellowship precisely for the same reason that the Jews were worried and concerned.

The procurator of Judea suspected every mass movement of turning into a catalyst, igniting the sentiment for a restoration of Israel's sovereignty. Rome probably remembered that the victorious Hasmonean war began as a call for religious ideas.) Rome followed the Persian, Ptolemaic, Seleucid policy of recognizing autonomy in Judea not merely out of respect for the Mosaic Law; Judaism was granted the status of a religio licita because its *modus operandi* was known and the boundaries of coexistence with Gentile rules were clearly defined. Still, during holidays when great multitudes flocked into Jerusalem, the Roman garrison was put on the alert. Even peaceful demonstrations were at times turned into massacres. Pilate, whom gospel-writers describe in laudatory terms, was a shrewd, unscrupulous procurator who took no risks; he suspected any new movement. Gospel narrations relate that when Jesus spoke in synagogues, Jews at first believed he

spoke about redemption in the traditional way. That he may be the Son of David who will establish the this-worldly glory of Israel, and they mistook him for the hoped for redeemer from Roman subjugation. (Mt. 13:54; 11:9-10; Lk. 4:22, 6:17, 9:11, 12:1; Jn. 7:31, 10:41-2, 11:45.)

Jesus was sent to death by Pontius Pilate despite his considering submission to Rome a non-issue, because Rome felt threatened by any popular figure who drew multitudes regardless of whether their harangue contained anti-Roman elements or not. Jesus attracted Jews who were spreading various, often contradictory versions about his aims and preachings. Jesus' assurance that his "kingdom" is not of this world was not reassuring enough for Pilate. Anything called a kingdom belonged to Rome. Pilate would have a lot to explain to the Roman Senate for tolerating a kingdom not subordinated to Rome, but co-existing with her in one of her provinces.

As Rome's procurator Pilate had to be on guard when Jews from all parts of Judea and from other lands pilgrimaged to Jerusalem; the very ability of Jesus to agitate Jewish crowds was reason enough to remove him.

Pilate of course had a staff of informers assigned to learn what was going on in Jewish circles. (Herod who died ca. two decades before was famous for infiltrating Judea with his informers.) Pilate thus must have known

that Jesus was not a rebel, that to him and to his entourage Rome's oppression of Judea was a non-issue. The negative attitude of the Jewish leadership as well as that of Jews at large, to Jesus, was additional evidence that Jesus' teachings constituted no threat to Rome's maxim that her "destiny is to rule the [earthly] world." Thus after having removed the object of popularity, the mass agitator, Pilate saw no immediate danger, and considered the case closed.

It may well be that Jewish authorities by their moral condemnation of Jesus (the verdict of the Jewish tribunal after their investigation of Jesus was a moral condemnation, nothing else) restrained Pilate from applying to this "messianic" group the bloodletting Roman procurators applied to other followers of Messianic pretenders.

This would also explain why in this case alone none of the followers of the messiah-pretender was arrested, and no mass-killings followed this time.

The conduct of Jesus' disciples after the crucifixion, and Peter's taking the risk of following Jesus after the arrest, must be examined closely. It sheds more light on the historical clash of Jesus' ministry with Judaism than the literature of The Historical Jesus.

Certain sayings in the Gospels tend to suggest that the disciples, in the first few days, "fell away" went "astray" etc. But the reason for it seems to be the tendency to focus on the "vision" of a resurrected Jesus. The original atmosphere of resignation and passivity replaced by a sudden rebounding activism heightens the miraculous underpinnings of the "Vision."

But a historian's terra firma are facts, by facts here is meant the tradition about facts.

It is absolutely not our intention to estimate the disciples' versions about what they saw as appearances, ascension, and other related events. The very meaning of such terms varies extremely; it is totally dependent upon the constitution of those who experienced what the term describes.

The human optic nerve has many facets to be stimulated by; the sense-impression in one's mind differs radically from those in another man's mind. Localities, situations and the expectation of a pending vision is sometimes inseparable from the "Vision."

Paul, stressing that his status as apostle to Jesus is equal to that of the disciples, emphasizes repeatedly that the vision he had of Jesus was of the same character as of the disciples. Paul calls it a heavenly vision, meaning that Jesus' appearance was spiritual not material

(Acts 9:3; 26:13).

In I Corinthians 15:5-8 Paul explicitly equates all "appearances" of Jesus with that of his own:

[Jesus] was seen of [i.e. by] Cephas, then of the twelve . . . of above five hundred brethren at once . . . And last of all he was seen by me . . .

That the "Vision" of Jesus' "appearance" was contingent on the spiritual predisposition of the beholder comes through in Matthew (28:17) "And when they [all the apostles as a group] saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted."

Here we have the entire Apostolic group, all together in the same place, same time, nonetheless, what some perceived so intensely that it made them "worship," left the others "doubting."

But, for the historian, it is not so much the event itself, as the tradition about it. When a tradition about an assumed event dominates the cognizance of a human entity--the tradition becomes a causative force affecting the course of history.

For our study here it is not important whether there was resignation or even discontinuity among the disciples prior to their "vision"; because, even if we accept that the activities of the disciples rebounded after the "visions" of "appearances," the question arises: what was the basis for their self-assertive claim that Jesus was

the Messiah? Jews found in the sources of Judaism many cases of people living, even being "ascended," after death. The Prophet Elijah, and before him Enoch, were exalted to heaven without any claim of messiahship; none of them shared the throne of God!

Certainly the disciples could not have arrived by themselves at the idea that one whose life and ministry left the reality of Israel unchanged, turned into a Messiah after he was executed.

But, not only did the disciples acclaim him as the Messiah, but also as victorious in his messianic task!

Such a conviction could take hold of them only if it had been instilled in them by Jesus himself, i.e., that his death was the verification of what he taught them while he was alive.

The behavior of Jesus' disciples serves as palpable evidence that we have here the first act in the unfolding of an un-Judaic performance on the stage of Israel. The voluminous literature discussing the parting of ways between Christianity and Judaism avoids dealing in depth with this primary act of Jesus' disciples, yet it is precisely this event that marks a watershed between Judaism and nascent Christianity. And it is of little difference that the gospel narrations may have been edited (which is what most probably happened), that some details were added,

others omitted. The main fact is that there was an oral tradition, a tradition attested to by the living disciples of Jesus who were convinced, that salvation of their souls, the validity of their faith depended unconditionally on their loyalty to Jesus' legacy, and they as the only ones entrusted with it could not but guard it the way it was entrusted to them.

The legacy entrusted to them contained two new elements; each of them was a refutation of Judaism:

A) Accomplishment of Redemption is not wedded to the restoration of Israel's sovereignty;

B) Faith in and identification with the Redeemer brings redemption; not the Law of Moses.

Whatever christological ornamentations were attached to this in later years is of no relevance. The sources make it abundantly clear that these two concepts are the basis of primitive Christianity. And it was precisely the introduction of this bipolar concept that determined the breakaway of the Jesus-fellowship from Israel and from Judaism.

The "vision" about a "risen" teacher, of a divine personality, superstitious as it would have looked to the vast majority of Jews, could still be reconciled with Judaism. As the Dead Sea documents revealed, the covenanters nourished the conviction of a Teacher of

righteousness, who although assassinated by a corrupt high priest, will return to life in the role of redeemer, or, as one of the redeemers.⁴ This group lived in strict separation from, and bitterly opposed to the official temple leadership, but their belief in the return of the righteous teacher and in his potential as a redeemer in future did not bring them in opposition to Judaism.

Nor is there a grain of truth in the well-worn hypothesis that a "crucified" one was a stumbling block to Jews."⁵ Great Jewish heroes were crucified by Rome, in the eyes of Jews their hanging degraded Rome not the hanged ones.

If the disciples of Jesus differed from other Jews only in the belief that Jesus was assigned by God to become the Messiah of Israel, and despite his being crucified he was resurrected and destined to restore the glory of Israel in a future time, such a belief, farfetched as it would be, could still find a place in Judaism.

But this was not the legacy of Jesus preached by his disciples. They preached that the death of Jesus brought redemption, and by being crucified, he made salvation possible to everyone who becomes identified with the crucified ones.⁶ It was this concept entrusted by Jesus to his disciples that challenged the very essence of Judaism and Israel's covenant with God.

It was here when the parting of ways between Israel and the Jesus-fellowship began.

CHAPTER II

THE CASE OF STEPHEN

The refrain about the "de-Judaization" of Jesus' legacy that began at a later day, and the conflict between a Judaic vs. Gentile camp in the Jesus fellowship figures in scholarly works like the mythical cat with nine lives; put to rest at one juncture, it surfaces at another. In our task to identify Jesus with the fundamentals of Christianity, we shall single out the crucial phases in the primitive community in order to demonstrate that there was a fundamental agreement in the apostolic camp; differences came up in non-essential matters and, more significant, they were irrelevant where Judaism was involved.

In the previous chapter we analyzed the reaction of Jesus' disciples, and showed how it concurred with the views of Jesus. We shall continue with the Stephen phenomenon.

The event is recorded in Acts 6:8; 7. It will be necessary to comment at specific places in order to illuminate how thoroughly anti-Judaic the essence of

Christianity was from its beginning.

Stephen is described as: ". . . full of faith and power . . .,"¹ he was elected as one of "seven men . . . full of the holy ghost and wisdom."² His accusers are branded as "false witnesses."³

Stephen's speech will reveal whether their testimony should be so classified.

Countering the accusations that he "ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place [the temple], and the Law."⁴ Stephen began a review of Israel's history. Relating Moses' intervention against the Egyptian overseer who torments a Jewish slave, Stephen says: "For he [Moses] supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not."⁵

The Bible (and so the LXX) refers to Moses' complete unawareness of his role in the redemption until two score years later. To Stephen the "corrected" version that Moses was already in Egypt aware of his role as Redeemer is needed for his theme about the perennial blindness of the Jewish people in contradistinction to the saintly individuals God sent them. Stephen relates the episode with two Jews embroiled in a fight; when Moses intervened, one thrust him away saying: who made thee a ruler and a judge?⁶

There were, according to the Talmud, two individuals only (Dathan and Abiram), who said these words to Moses. But here too, Stephen identifies the people as an entity, in his reminding Jews about their sinful past.

Stephen comes to "the golden calf," the Jews made after the theophany at Sinai, in result of what "God turned, and gave them [the entire nation of Israel] up to worship the host of heaven; "as it is written in the book of the prophets, "O, ye house of Israel, have you offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?"⁷

This is an outright distortion of the text. In the Bible as well as in the many-faceted comments, exegeses, homilies about the Bible, etc., there is no hint about a phase during Israel's history when God "gave them up to worship" idols. Neither did the "golden calf" event usher in such a situation. The quotation "have ye offered . . . sacrifices . . . for forty years in the wilderness?" cited by Stephen, was said by the Prophet Amos (Amos 5:25) in no connection at all with the sin of the "golden calf." The Prophet admonished the people they should realize that God ranks sincerity of behavior and doing justice higher than the ritual of sacrifices. It refers to the time of Amos, over six centuries later than the "golden calf" event.

Amos refers to the forty years in the desert in a positive sense. The meaning is that in that period, close to God, they were not commanded to bring sacrifices at all. Stephen turns the words to Me in a way that implies that the Jews did bring sacrifices, but to idols, substantiating by this distortion of Amos' meaning his own version that God gave Israel "up to worship the host of heaven," i.e., idols in the form of celestial bodies: sun, moon, stars, etc.

It must be noted that Amos leaves no room for any ambivalence in his words. The sentences preceding the one quoted by Stephen (Ibid., 23-4) reads: "Because if you bring to me brand-offerings . . . I will not will them . . . undo from before me the abundance of your songs [by Levites in temple-rituals]. But let righteousness flow as water and deeds of charity as the river Eiton." The preference of righteousness and benevolence to the rituals of sacrifice was a perennial theme in all prophetic books.

Stephen empties out Amos' words from their lucid meaning in order to fit them in his anti-historical history of an Israel forsaken by God from its beginning and transferred into the serving of idols.

Stephen now deals with the theme of the Temple in Jerusalem: David "who found favour before God and desired to find a tabernacle for God. . . . But Solomon build Him a

house."⁸

Again a manipulation of the terms: "tabernacle," "house," while the object is the same in both cases. What David "desired to find" and what "Solomon [David's son and successor as King] built" was the Temple, not a "tabernacle."

Stephen approaches here the accusation the "false witnesses" are making against him that he downgraded the Temple, and what he says makes the "witnesses" anything but "false."

King David wanted to build a Temple, meaning a permanent House devoted to the rituals of sacrifices and prayer, in distinction to a provisional one (referred to as a tabernacle) that Jews had from the very beginning. II Samuel (7:2f) relates: "And the King [David] said to Nathan the Prophet: See I dwell in a house of cedars, and the Ark of God is in within the tent!" But God told David through the prophet that not he, David, but his son who will succeed him as King is destined to build the Temple.⁹

Thus, what David had planned to build was the same as what his son, who sat later on his father's throne, did build, it was a permanent House: the Temple.

In Stephen's address to the Jews this reads "Solomon built him a house," an implication that he did it arbitrarily. The adding next to it of a statement voiced

at a time entirely unrelated to David's intentions to build the Temple, nor to Solomon's executing his Father's decision as commanded by God, was a flagrant refutation of Biblical texts. Stephen applies to what David "desired to find" the term tabernacle, and what Solomon built he calls a temple. By using two different terms, the first one as tabernacle (Mishcan in Hebrew), Stephen creates an impression that the idea of a temple was contradictory to God's will; he goes on: "But Solomon built . . . a Temple." The word "but" (in Hebrew aval) indicates Solomon did the opposite of what David planned to do and to what God consented.

To emphasize it more, Stephen quotes the Prophet Isaiah: "The Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me?" (Isaiah 66:1)

It should be noted that Isaiah does not aim at all against the Temple as a "dwelling" for God; Isaiah, as other prophets, stresses here the universality of Israel's God concept.

Stephen's partiality lies in the pairing of non-related events and in quoting prophetic sayings out of context. The building of the Temple by King Solomon was the explicit commandment of God. "I am about [says Solomon] to build a house to the Name of God, my God, as He spoke to David my father saying 'your son whom I will put

in your place on your throne, he shall build a House to My Name.'" (II Kings 7:13) Only the will of God made David postpone his desire to build the Temple.¹⁰

Stephen finally summarizes Israel's history:

"Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the just one . . ."¹¹

Stephen's last sentence consummates the radical warping of Israel's history. The number of Prophets (aside from Prophetesses) was legion. (Known ones are given as 48 men plus seven female.) Their freedom to criticize powerful rulers is unparalleled in the annals of history.¹² The records tell of two prophets killed, and these not by the people but by idolatrous Kings. Despite these known facts, Stephen challenges the Jewish audience by stating "Who of the prophets" were not "persecuted and slain!"

Stephen's historiography of Israel was, according to Acts given in response to the High Priest's and the Sanhedrin's inquiry as to the truth or falsity of charges leveled against him by "false witnesses" who said, "this man ceases not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the Temple," and "that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us."¹³

Stephen's speech (assuming even that Luke followed in Acts the pattern of other contemporaneous writers, embellishing the essential statements of Stephen) could in no way disprove the accusation of the "false witnesses." The speech of Stephen, shortly after Jesus' death, was a total refutation of Judaism; not only its future and present but also its past. Even the importance of the Sinaic Covenant and the giving of the Torah were mitigated by transferring it to angels instead of the Supreme God.

The authenticity of the Stephen episode is attested by the fact that the universal Church did not include Stephen's view in its canonized dogmas, it could therefore not have been a "later interpolation."¹⁴

Some questions are pertinent here. Stephen's speech came after he spread in public these very concepts about Judaism and Israel's history. Stephen was not a conspirator, propagating his ideas in a clandestine way. He was renowned as "a man full of faith and of the holy ghost." (Acts 6:5) If we assume the conventional hypothesis that the disciples of Jesus differed from other Jews only by their belief that Jesus was the Messiah, then Stephen's view should have constituted a heresy for the Apostles no less than for the Jewish authorities. Stephen's effort to base his ideas on the teachings of Jesus should have been considered a distortion of the

"real" Gospel; but none of the Apostles ever intervened in the "Hellenistic synagogues" where Stephen gave his sermons!

Furthermore, Stephen and his "group of deviators" were not among the disciples of Jesus. The Committee of Seven headed by Stephen was elected for the task of charity; there was therefore no need to arm them with theological authority. Was it not enough that the Apostles tolerated such deviators as members in their group? Why was it necessary to "endanger" the fundamentals of Judaism and the security of the Jesus-fellowship by giving the "heretics" authority next to that of the Apostles, and allow them to "de-Judaize" the legacy of Jesus?

The Stephen-episode proves that the ideas he propagated were part of the fountainhead of nascent Christianity. Stephen added rhetorical sharpness to those ideas, but essentially they were consistent with the ministry of Jesus, as perceived by his disciples.

It should be added that Stephen led his agitation among Jews who like himself, were familiar with Hellenistic ideas. Living in Greek provinces, they were cognizant with the Eleusinian Mysteries and with the Soter-cults, where a Soter, by his dying and rising brought redemption to those who identify with him. To Jews living in Judea all their lives, the propaganda of Jesus' followers was simply alien,

they could not fathom the real danger that it is the syncretistic anti-national, Soteria concept that is being introduced by the Jesus-fellowship to replace Israel's Messiah-image.

In the "synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia,"¹⁵ the Jews "disputing with Stephen" recognized in Stephen's propaganda the real danger--the undermining of Israel's resistance to the forces of Gentile syncretism. It may even have seemed to them as the return of the pre-Hasmonean assaults of the "Hellenizers" (Mityavnim), against whom the Maccabees stood up in their war in defense of Israel.

The picture given in Acts 7:54 is probably true: "When they [the Jews] heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth."

The Stephen event could at most have been a couple of years after the death of Jesus and probably only months;¹⁶ the exclusive fortress of the Jesus community was still Jerusalem and the apostles the undisputed, sole authority for Jesus' teachings. Stephen could not have presented a deviating view in the presence of the leadership. In fact he was raised to prominence by the apostles because of his embodying the spirit of the group.

Stephen was an outstanding personality in the mother-church of Jerusalem; he outshone all others in the

committee of "seven," including Philip, who played a central role in spreading Jesus' gospel to Samaria. There can be no doubt that Stephen's speech reflected the attitude in the church in Jerusalem, otherwise his propaganda would have made him face a court of the apostles long before that of the Sanhederin.¹⁷

Nor could the Stephen-speech have been composed at a later time. What Stephen said about Israel's history was bad propaganda in the attempt to recruit Gentiles, to whom the church was presenting itself as verus Israel.

Stephen must have propagated his ideas often before. It was because of the fervor with which he publicized them in the name of Jesus that he earned his reputation as full of the "holy spirit and wisdom."¹⁸

If Stephen's views had been in opposition to what the apostles believed to be the legacy of Jesus, they would have been the first to declare him a heretic and a distorter of Jesus' ministry. It was only due to pragmatism that the apostles themselves avoided violent confrontation with Judaism's authorities.

In his defense speech Stephen makes no effort to deny the accusations against him; like revolutionaries in modern times, Stephen turns his defense into an attack on the entire system represented by the tribunal sitting in judgment on him.

The leading idea in Stephen's speech was that in all stages of history Israel as an entity acted against God and His divine purpose.

Even Paul in his theological diatribes against Israel did not refute the entire past of the Chosen Nation. In Paul's epistles, the oldest literary documents of Christianity, Israel is faulted for not recognizing the transformation of history that came with the ministry and death of Jesus.¹⁹

In contradistinction to Paul, who often reveals his inner contradictions through theological inconsistency, Stephen develops his view in a systematic accusation against Israel's history, its nationhood and its claim to land and Temple. Stephen proceeded Paul in all three Paulinian theses:

- a) Antinomianism;
- b) anti-Chosen Nation;
- c) anti-Holy-Center concept.

It is significant that Stephen was not motivated as Paul later to take this position by a fervent desire to preach the gospel to Gentiles, he was speaking to a Jewish audience, expressing the legacy of Jesus, as perceived by the apostles.²⁰

Paul's accusations against Israel and his arguments against the validity of Torah and Law could still be

harmonized with a recognition of the past, pre-Jesus history of Israel and its Torah. (At the bottom of Paul's theology lies the concept that Israel's mission as God's Chosen People under the Law was God's way of proving that only by grace can mankind be saved.)

According to Paul the "blindness of Israel," the negative role of Jewish parochialism, the Temple-cult, etc.) began with the appearance (or crucifixion) of Jesus who through his vicarious suffering fulfilled the Law and inaugurated the Kingdom of God. Even God's turning away from Israel is part of God's universal plan to enable the Gentiles to be redeemed, before Israel resumes its place.²²

Thus, Paul's case against Israel is a dialectical one. In Stephen's speech, there was never a Chosen Nation. There were Patriarchs; Abraham was told to leave his birthland, but there is no mention of God's promise to make of his children a Chosen Nation. The entire people of Israel denounced Moses. At the Burning Bush at Sinai God does not mention a covenant with the Patriarchs to bring Israel into the Promised Land. Moses' only message is--his foretelling that "A prophet like he [meaning Jesus] will God send into Israel . . ."²³

Stephen does not criticize the "lack of spirit" in Temple-rituals: the idea of building one central Temple, the attachment to a Land--the very infrastructure of

nationhood has been false from its inception.

Israel is not blundering, it did not lose its direction at a certain time, at a given historical turning-point. Israel lost God and God forsook Israel at the very moment it perceived itself as Israel.

The Stephen episode deserves close scrutiny for two reasons: (1) in contradistinction to the Jesus-event, no third party has been involved here--the confrontation was between Jews and the Jesus-fellowship. (2) The outrage and violence against Stephen and his group (the "Hellenists," cannot be ascribed to Sadducee "Quislings" of Rome, etc., (as injected in the conflict with Jesus). There has been considerable debate among scholars whether Stephen was sentenced by the Sanhedrin or the Jewish multitude, outraged at the vilification of Israel, took the law into their own hands. But this is irrelevant for us here--the vox populi underscores the point we make that the Stephen-case removes any ambiguities the Jesus-event may present. In the Stephen occurrence the two antagonists met directly and lucidly: it was the Jesus legacy contra Judaism. Behind the first stood the primitive community of the faithful in Jesus, the other side presented Jewish authorities, Pharisee and Sadducee alike supported by the common people of Israel.²⁴

"It showed that the mass of the Jewish people, and not only the Sadducees . . . were opposed to the new views."²⁵

As long as the believers in Jesus' redemptiveness met constantly to hear the apostles teach and to share the common life, to break bread and to pray,²⁶ Jewish authorities could not interfere in their activities; "It was no breach of the law even if they chose to consider a dead teacher as Messiah."²⁷

The Law of the Torah does proscribe deviating theologies, but there is no code of penalties for it. Furthermore, the ethos of Judaism denounces persecuting for deedless deviations. However, the Torah discerns when deviating concepts turn into an imminent threat to Israel. (Deut. 13:7f) Jewish Law was not designed to punish theological systems and dogmatic concepts. Judaism's fountainhead has been the deed of man, of the nation. So, too, was the structure of its Law.

Although the ministry of Jesus, his legacy to the disciples was based on a refutation of Judaism, of the Law and of the nationhood of Israel, charges against Jewish Christians (Gentile Christianity was no concern of the Law) could only be made according to their actings. Stephen was not sentenced because he preached a crucified Jesus as the Messiah, but because of his agitating for "fundamental

changes in the customs which Moses delivered unto us."²⁸

A Summation of the Stephen Case

An analysis of the Stephen case, from the way the committee of "seven men full of wisdom" was chosen, until Stephen's defense-speech before a Jewish tribunal, undermines the hypothesis that it was Paul who transformed the Jewish Jesus-fellowship into a Gentile religion.

Acts 6(1-5) begins with narrating the situation that led to the election of a committee wherein Stephen played a main role:

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose, murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews, because they [the Hebrews] turned their eyes from their [the Greeks'] widows, not giving them the daily ministrations [food]. Then the twelve [Apostles] called the multitude of disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

Wherefore, brethren, look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the holy ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business . . . and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith . . . and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas.

There are a number of questions that, surprisingly, have remained unnoticed by the schools that dissected every line of the gospels.

It sounds quite unbelievable that in a community expecting salvation from a teacher who taught not only sharing but "to give also the cloak to him who takes the coat" (Mt. 5:40; Lk. 6:29) there should be such division,

and discrimination against widows of their own brethren.

Only by complete disregard of the religious temper in the primitive community and the social ethos inseparable from it can we assume that fellow members, especially if they were "widows," would be denied their daily food portions.

The "breaking bread together" was the oldest institution in the church--it reflected the days when at the table-head sat the master, who handed out bread to his disciples; it bore witness that the "faithful" had become the community Jesus wanted them to be.

The "eating together" of Jesus' followers at the "common tables" was not an ordinary meal to which one may invite some and turn away others. Even if it was not as yet the sacramental institution it became later, it served as a reminder of the table-fellowship founded by Jesus in the last evening he was with his disciples. Being the ritual of baptism, participation in the Common Meal could not be refused to a member in the Jesus community.

The comparison between the baptism and common meals is recorded in the Didache (9:5): "None shall eat or drink of your Eucharist save those who have been baptized . . ."

(It is significant that the Didache connects this to the saying of Jesus: "Give not that which is holy to the dogs." (Mk. 7:27; Mt. 15:26). One may thus find here

also the explanation of Jesus' answer to the Canaanite woman who pleaded with him for help to her sick child. No Jewish source provides an explanation for Jesus' refusing help to a Gentile in need. Only Pagan mystery sects compared their initiates to children and outsiders to dogs.)

The "widows" (reflecting the helpless), could not have been excluded from Common Meals, except by violating the very essence of rituals designed to embody the unity of the Jesus-fellowship. Secondly, from where did a number of "widows" come to the newly recruited Greeks to be a divisive issue in the brotherly commune of Jesusists?

It is significant that elsewhere in Acts we again come upon the designation widows when referring to women who joined the Jesus-fellowship; there the term "widows" is quite superfluous.

The story is about Peter being advised that a certain female disciple named "Tabitha . . . full of good works and alms deeds . . . died." Believing that Peter performs miracles they asked him to come.

"when he was come . . . all the widows stood by him weeping . . ."

It is difficult to understand why there should be so many widows in the "primitive community"? (1) It was long before any persecutions against Christians began; (2)

Why the emphasis on their status as widows especially in the case where the object is a "dead" woman whom Peter is about to bring back to life? (Acts 9:36-40)

And finally, the text speaks about not allocating the daily meals. The "Greeks" expected the apostles to order the "Hebrews" to stop "discriminating" and distribute equally the daily provision to all brethren. This was the apostles' answer to the appeal of the Greeks: "It is no reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables," (Acts 6:2), but this seems to avoid the issue. Both parts of the answer are out of place: service to God is not hindered by ordering to give widows their share, and no one required that the apostles should "serve tables."

I venture to state that we have here the first act of the prolonged conflict that began later in Antioch (recorded in Galatians 2:11): the dispute about whether Jewish and Gentile Christians should share common meals, or whether there must be separate tables at the rituals of "breaking bread."

The relationship between Jewish and Gentile adherents to the faith in Jesus was later also the topic of the Apostolic Council, where it was decided that the Torah was not binding for (Gentile?) Christians. But some (whom Paul designates, not without reason, as "false brethren") kept on demanding circumcision in addition to baptism.

There is another piece of evidence that the question of common meals with Gentile converts was already an issue in Judea before it arose in Antioch; it is the famous housetop-vision of Peter. (Acts X)

A Roman centurion in Ceasarea who "feared God" and "gave much alms" was advised in a vision that he should send for Peter. The latter, then in Joppa, went on the roof to pray. He suddenly felt very hungry and "fell into a trance." In his trance Peter "saw heaven opened and a certain vessel descending. . . . Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts . . . and creeping things. . . . And there came a voice . . . Peter, kill and eat."

Peter protests several times, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything . . . unclean." But the order from heaven came three times: "What God had cleansed, that call not thou common."

When Peter is brought to the house of Cornelius he proclaims to the Gentiles assembled there: "It is an unlawful thing for . . . a Jew to keep company, or come into another nation; but God had showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."

When Peter returns to Jerusalem, he explains his eating non-Kosher food at common meals with Gentiles by the order he received from the heavens concluding, "Forasmuch then as God gave them [the Gentiles who believe in Jesus]

the like gift as he did unto us . . . what was I, that I should withstand God?"

To this the Apostles and all those gathered round agreed.

This demonstrates that the issue of common meals arose long before Paul's mission to the Gentiles. It started within the Mother Church in Jerusalem.

It is logical to assume that this was the reason for the "murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews." (Acts 6:1-5) We offer there the following explanation: the conflict between Hebrews (Jews) and Greeks (Gentile converts to Christianity) was in all probability not about distribution of food, but about the observance of dietary laws and other rituals obligatory for Jews.

Neither should the term "widows" be taken in a literal sense: it is known from many sources that Gentile women were more drawn to accept fully or partially Judaism. When Gentiles in Damascus planned a pogrom against the Jews in their city, they kept it "secret from their wives."²⁹ The New Testament mentions on various occasions how women flocked to their ranks. It is logical to assume that many women who did not go all the way to become proselytes chose the more accommodating belief in One God offered by the Jesus-group. ("My burden is light." Mt. 11:30. I Epistle of John 5:3.) Such women members, having abandoned

their pagan husbands, were probably called "widows," as being bereaved of masculine support.

(That the breaking up of families might have been a common phenomenon with the rise of Christianity could be inferred from Paul's finding it necessary to rule that Christians could stay with their non-Christian spouses.) (I Corint. 7:13)

This does not necessarily imply that those wanting to observe dietary laws were less radical in their anti-Judaism than the Greeks. Both sides were in agreement that the Law of Moses had ceased to be (or never was) the vehicle to salvation. To Greeks and to Hebrews in the Jesus-camp, Jesus alone was the vehicle to salvation. However, one should not forget that aside from being the Law, the Torah Commandments were also the law of the country, the judicial system in Judea; obligatory for Jews living there (and probably also for Jews in all provinces of the Roman Empire). Common meals created a serious problem for Jewish Christians, regardless of their religious attitude. Jewish Christians may have enacted some form of segregation in setting up the tables, and in the types of food (included in the generic name--bread--were all foods served to tables of Greeks and Hebrews.

When a separation is being made a two-fold reaction is bound to follow: the side that demanded the separation

will experience a degree of superiority, while the other side will consider itself discriminated against. The Hebrews could also equate their table-ritual with the original one of Jesus, considering themselves authoritative in a faith whose persona dramatis was one of them, and so too were all his apostles. The greeks felt that they were treated as inferiors.

The most hurt by this may have been the "widows," who, as explained above, were God-fearing wives who were deserted by, or had left, their pagan husbands.

As it becomes clear elsewhere in the New Testament it could not be decided by just ordering one side to accept the view of the other side. For the Jesus-fellowship there was no principle involved against common tables; however, there were tactical reasons against it. The approval of common meals between Jews and Gentiles in Jerusalem would have undoubtedly evoked punitive action from those responsible for the observance of the law in Judea, and the Apostles would have "to leave [spreading] the word of God." (Acts 7:2)

The Apostles knew that in Judea, if they wanted to continue to exist, they had to avoid violating the law of the land sacred to Israel and recognized by Rome as the only religio licita in Judea. To proclaim openly, in Jerusalem, that unison at the common meals superseded the

law of the country would have made impossible the continuance of their work. This was hinted at in the Apostles' answer: "It is not reason that we leave the word of God, and serve tables." (Ibid.) The word of God-- meaning the continuity of the Mother Church in Jerusalem-- was more important and should not be put in jeopardy for the cause of common tables.

The establishing of a Committee of Seven from the Greeks whose authority was evidently not restricted to "serving tables" but who were promoting their view about the "obsolescence of the Law," meant giving both sides the opportunity to find a solution to the issue without involving directly the Apostles.

We are now in a position to answer the questions posed above:

(1) It was not the withholding of food from Greeks, it was the beginning of the dispute whether Jewish (Hebrew) followers of Jesus should have common tables with Gentiles.

(2) The term "widows" has been applied to female Gentile converts who left their husbands to join the Jesus-fellowship; the designation "widow" underscores an act of faith, a deprivation embraced voluntarily for the new faith.

(3) The Apostles held that it would be hurting their primary cause of spreading "the word of God" by devoting themselves to "serve [i.e., solve the issue of] tables."

Encouraged by the attitude of the Apostles, which demonstrated that the Greeks were not deviators and pragmatic reasons alone were withholding the Apostles' open approval of their view they started an aggressive anti-nomian propaganda.

The result was not only the death of Stephen, but counter-measures taken by the authorities of Judaism. However, the Apostles and those identified with them were spared and able to continue their work as before.

It should be noted that in a similar way the Apostles acted when Paul came for the last time to Jerusalem. When he reported to them about his work among Gentiles they showed great satisfaction (of his alleged "gentilizing" Jesus' Jewish teachings!), but "said unto him. Thou seest, brother, how many thousands [?] of Jews that are which believe; . . . And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses . . . not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after customs . . ." (Acts 21:20-24).

The Apostles did not ask whether it is true or false what they are informed of Paul"; they pointed out the harm it brings to efforts to win over Jews who are "zealous of the law."

Neither did the Apostles, among whom was "righteous" James, ask Paul to "repent and be forgiven." They found a pragmatic solution: "Do therefore this what we say to thee: We have four men who have a vow on them. [This calls for bringing a sacrifice and immersion in water (tvila) . . . purify thyself with them . . . and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed . . . are nothings; but than thou . . . keepest the law." Paul's view of the Law as a stumbling-block to grace was known to the Apostles long before this last visit of his. His classical statement was Si enim per legem justitia, ergo gratis Christus mortuus est. (Galat. 2:21) (If the Law justifies, then Jesus' death was in vain.)

The Apostles' only concern was that Paul should behave differently in Jerusalem; this was the same goal they had when the conflict broke out for the first time in Jerusalem, and they advised the Greeks to choose "seven men of honest report . . . whom we may appoint over this business." (Acts 6:3)

The "talking with a plurality of tongues" was the authentic legacy of Jesus' ministry.

Stephen's public refutation of Judaism and conveying to Jews his "vision" about Jesus' sharing the throne of God trespassed the line of spiritual deviation. Whatever may have been missing from a strict legal point in the trial of Stephen, it nonetheless demonstrated to Jews that the legacy Jesus had left to his disciples was not restricted to the belief in his redemptive power, but that the role of Israel as a Chosen Nation and the eternal character of the Torah were ended.

The idea to create a public theological platform for the Stephen group came from the Apostles as a body. The Sanhedrin were drawn in after Stephen repeatedly popularized his anti-Judean views in Jerusalem. That the leaders of the Jesus-fellowship did not come out against the activities of the Stephen circle; the honor they bestowed on Stephen by his funeral³⁰ proved that Stephen's evaluation of Judaism was the creed of the Jesusists, and an excessive outpouring of an individual.³¹

Despite all this the majority of works devoted to this topic chose to build scholastic hypotheses that the Stephen case proves that there were fundamental differences between two streams in the primitive Jesus-fellowship. Volatile as it is the hypothesis about two streams in the Mother Church, it claims to be substantiated by the reaction of Judaism's mentors after the Stephen trial.

The limited punitive steps taken by Jewish authorities gave historians an opportunity to substantiate their preconceived hypothesis that the primitive church was an authentic Jewish group, differing only with their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. J. Klausner writes " Since Stephen was a Hellenistic Jew, the Hellenistic disciples suffered. . . . But the Twelve, who were all Hebrews and observers of the ceremonial laws to whom the Hellenist Stephen appeared a complete antinomian, were not touched by the persecution and they remained in Jerusalem and carried out the affairs of the young sect for about fourteen years without being disturbed."³²

Johannes Weiss also sees a principal difference between the apostolic group and that presented by Stephen; although he is not so assertive as Klausner.³³ Pointing out "that the persecution was not directed against the whole church, but only against Stephen's circle, Weiss concludes: ". . . and here a careful investigation should be made as to whether they had introduced his revolutionary views."³⁴

Charles Guignebert, too, refers to the Stephen group as "an element foreign to its essential character [i.e., of the apostolic community] was introduced into it in the person of whom the Acts qualify as Hellenists." He writes about the concern of the Apostles "with the laxity

which the Hellenists display toward the Laws and the worship of the Temple . . . the tendency which . . . develops among them . . . concerning the personality and mission of Jesus far beyond the point which the Apostles themselves had reached. . . . The outcome is that the Jewish authorities become incensed against the Hellenists, persecute them. . . . While the Apostles remain. This means that the Apostles do not regard these views as permissible or accept those who hold them."³⁵

For Guignebert is clear that the remaining of the Apostles in Jerusalem is indisputable evidence that they regarded Stephen's view as non-permissible for those who follow Jesus. The place which the author refers as evidence for his conclusion: Acts 6:11, relates only about "a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." As mentioned above, the place the note refers to proves precisely the opposite. It records how the Apostles raised Stephen and his entourage to a prominent status because they were "full of faith."³⁶ (As it can easily be proved, this is not the only place in scholarly works where footnotes obscure rather than substantiate the author's views.)

Hans Leitzman writes: ". . . persecution was directed only against the Hellenists, who were hostile to

the Mosaic Law. . . . The inner division in the Church had now become [outwardly] visible."³⁷ In order not to contradict his statement about a "division in the Church," the author writes later: "The Church in Jerusalem [the one "severed" from the Hellenistic Church] had maintained the connection with the Hellenist branch after it had separated."³⁸

To describe the relation of the Church in Jerusalem with the "Hellenistic" ones a "maintaining of the connection," and the by the Mother Church's blessing erected Gentile Churches as "separated" ones is a classical example of creating history instead of recording it.

It is only fair to quote some opinions to the opposite.

Gushman McGiffert in A History of Christianity, writes: "There is no reason to suppose that the teachings and practices of Stephen differed in any way from those of his fellow-christians and that his arrest was due to the fact that he was more radical than they." McGriffert's penetrating view culminates in the next paragraph: "It is probable that the hostility of the stricter Hellenistic Jews [who brought Stephen before the Sanhedrin] fell first upon him simply because he had first drawn their attention to the new faith . . . they may have learned for the first time of the startling and ominous prophecies of Jesus.

That many of them should take alarm at the consequences which seemed to be involved in such teachings was inevitable. Their hostility, once aroused, would fall not upon Stephen alone, but upon all that professed the new faith. The attack upon him would be but the beginning of a general attack upon the whole sect. He was . . . brought before the Sanhedrin, not as a disturber of the public peace, as Peter and John had been [the first time] but as the enemy of God and of his Law."³⁹

Professor Johannes Weiss, one of the ablest New Testament Scholars, offers a different view about the "persecutions." Quoting Luke's description (Acts 8:1) "And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church . . . and they were all scattered abroad . . . except the Apostles." Weiss comments: ". . . this is greatly exaggerated . . . soon not only the Apostles but also the church are once more in Jerusalem . . . it is quite unlikely that only the Apostles remained behind. . . . Even the quite indefinite word persecution is a bold generalization" ⁴⁰

The situation, according to the records was, that neither were all of the "Hellenists" persecuted and forced to run away from Jerusalem, nor were the "Hebrew" followers of Jesus completely "unmolested" by Jewish authorities. "It is quite unlikely that only the Apostles remained. . .

The statement is only a redactional expedient to explain how it came about that the church continued peacefully on its way in spite of everything."⁴¹

The sources record that the from-"persecution"-escaping Hellenists "scattered abroad through the cities of Judea and Samaria."⁴² But why should they feel more secure in other cities of Judea? The persecuting hand of Israel's Law certainly prevailed over all of Judea. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that Judaism's status of religio licita in the Roman Empire gave Jewish authorities some rights over Judean subjects escaping to other localities in the Empire. The letter of the High Priest authorizing Saul/Paul to go to Damascus and arrest "whether men or women [and to bring them] bound unto Jerusalem"⁴³ justifies this assumption. In this case the [other] cities of Judea "would be no protection against the Judean authorities!"

It is thus logical to assume that there was another more valid reason for the scattering of the "Hellenists." We offer here such a suggestion: the leadership of the Jesus-fellowship realized that the Stephen-event intensified the awareness of Jews in Jerusalem about the essentials of the "Messianic" preachings of Jesus' disciples.

The aroused watchfulness of Jewish authorities in Jerusalem after the Stephen-event would make it impossible

to continue preaching in the synagogues of Jerusalem, but such propaganda was still possible in synagogues in other regions of Judea, and especially in the Diaspora. To the services in the synagogues, came many Gentiles who had lost their belief in the pagan deities. Such Gentiles found much that attracted them in the synagogues, listening to the expounding of the Torah, and particularly in the Sabbath rest. Only a small part of them decided to go all the way in embracing Judaism, because it meant a breaking of all social and family ties, a life under the minutiae of Law and the complications of being transferred from the Greco/Roman world to the one of a small subjugated nation. The majority of Gentile admirers of Judaism chose a middle road. (They are termed in the ancient literature "Godfearers" [phoboumenoi] or "reverent ones" [sebominoi].)

It was among them that the preaching of a Jewish Messiah severed from Judaism's Law, and from identity with the nationhood of an oppressed people, could gain converts.⁴⁴

Furthermore, while in the propagating of Jesus to Jews--the antinomian and antinational substance of Jesus' "messiahship" had to be restrained, Gentiles, even those sympathetic to Judaism, would be inclined to welcome this. The exposure of these elements were "good tidings" to Gentiles.

The Apostles thus decided that in the new situation that arose as a result of the Stephen case, it would be best to "scatter" those from among them who are more able to preach among Gentiles.

It was actually a dividing of forces in the aftermath of the Stephen-event. Jerusalem, where sensitivity for the Law and Temple rituals was at zenith, seemed to be more fit for the Apostles who served the propaganda for faith in Jesus by "giving themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" of Jesus.⁴⁵ The continuity of the Stephen type propaganda had to be transferred elsewhere.

Thus, it was not in search of protection for acts committed in the past that the Jesusists of the Stephen circle "scattered" outside Jerusalem. They had no need to run away, nor could the "scattering" have helped them. They "scattered" over other regions, because their propaganda in Jerusalem was discredited; they could only continue "preaching Jesus" in other regions of Judea and especially outside Judea.

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word [of Jesus]. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria . . . when the Apostles who were in Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. Who when they

were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the holy ghost."⁴⁶

The "scattering" of the Stephen group began a new epoch in the activities of the Jesus-fellowship: the creation of churches among Gentiles.

The primary records relate that the grand opening of the church's gate to Gentiles was the act of Peter, labeled as the Apostle to the Jews. (In actuality there were no such divisions.)

Being in Philistia, Peter was "ordered in a dream" to denounce two fundamental restrictions of Judaism: (a) the distinction of dietary laws ("What God had cleansed, that call not thou unclean") and (b) the distinction between Jew and Gentile ("God had shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean").⁴⁷

It is quite possible that Cornelius and his entourage were not the very first Gentiles in the church; Philip's convert, "An eunuch of great authority under Candace Queen of the Ethiopians" may have entered before.⁴⁸ But this "was a private action on Philip's part . . . whereas Peter's baptism of Cornelius took place at the seat of the provincial government of Judea, and was . . . to represent an act of policy on the part of the whole Jerusalem apostolate."⁴⁹ On Peter's return to Jerusalem, the Mother Church "glorified God," and approved the

reception of Gentile converts. 50

The fact that the expanding of Jesus' church to include Gentiles was done by the "Hellenizers" and by the Apostles is additional proof of the unison in primitive Christianity and agreement of doctrines originating from Jesus.

That some in the Mother Church were more occupied with the propaganda among Jews, and others turned to Gentiles was not due to theological differences; people in ancient times as in the modern age, prefer and hope to achieve more by work where they feel at home. It may also be a matter of lingual, cultural and social impediments and/or conveniences.

Each activity of the "scattered Hellenists" met with the blessing (and possibly with the foreknowledge) of the pillars in Jerusalem.

Wherever a Hellenistic mission was founded, and new Christian churches were called into being, emissaries of the original church came on the scene to test the quality of the new brethren, and to regulate intercourse with them there was in fact only one single church of disciples its locus was temporarily the earthly Jerusalem. Those who were compelled to live outside Jerusalem belonged equally to the Church of Jerusalem, for all the far-flung branches hosts of Christians were branches of the one all-embracing

central body. All stood under the authority of the apostles to whom had been given the right of pronouncing the final verdict on all questions.⁵¹

The Stephen event, all its aspects, the way the Apostles created the committee of the Hellenists, their reaction to the "trial" and the tribute paid to Stephen at the funeral, demonstrated that Jesus' teachings, as followed by his disciples, were irreconcilable with Judaism. It was not anymore a conflict with deviating individuals but a confrontation between two incompatible theological systems. Each side was driven to make its own conclusion. Israel's authorities declared the Jesus-fellowship as an anti-Judaic group; the Apostles shifted their attention to the Gentile world.⁵²

CHAPTER III

TRACING THE ORIGINS OF ANTI-NOMIANISM
TO JESUS' SECRET TEACHING

Morton Smith, in his work Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark (Harvard Univ., Cambridge, Mass., 1973) is one of the few scholars not following the conventional post-Reimarus track of separating the gospels from the ministry and legacy of Jesus.¹

Cognizant of the primary role of oral tradition in ancient times, Smith disregards the fuss modern scholars make about the claimed lateness of the N. T. books, Smith recognizes the gospels as the primary source where from Jesus' teaching can be deduced. Accordingly, the trend of libertinism (a synonym for the Churches' anti-Judaism) had to have its origin in the practice and in the teachings of Jesus: "A . . . consequence of Jesus' baptismal practice was libertinism. The Christian libertine tradition, because of its early date and wide extent, is best explicable as the consequence of Jesus' teachings that those who have entered the kingdom are free of the law."²

Smith's contribution lies in denouncing the two centuries old academic platitude claiming this concept as the source of Pauline theology. "What has not generally been realized is that Paul as an exponent of Christian liberty [from the Law] was neither unique nor extreme."³

Smith's scholarly tour de force is his excavating an historical truism, buried under mountains of scholarly and belletristic works since the adventurous magnum opus of Reimarus, that Jesus and the Apostles, not Paul and latter Gentile churches, were the fountainhead of Christianity.

Not only was Paul not the transformer of Jesus' theology: "On the contrary, he was a comparatively conservative and mediating figure, consistently attacking and attacked by representatives of the libertine side. The libertine [meaning denying the validity of the Law] party or parties, whose tradition derived from Jesus himself, must have been widespread and influential, since evidence of their importance is to be found in almost every book of the N. T. and in most of the extracanonical Christian literature of the first two centuries."⁴

This is a long overdue, scholarly riposte to the attempts of "Higher Criticism" to replace with their arbitrary theories the primary sources of nascent Christianity.

The ascribing of secret teachings to Jesus is to be found in numerous places in the N. T. Smith points to Mk. 4:10ff; 7:17ff; 9:28f; 10:10ff; 13:3ff; Jn. 2:22; 12:16; 13:7, 28; 2:14:20; 16:12, 25; 20:9. In addition to the above he points to places pointed out by Wrede:⁵ Mt. 11:25; 12:18ff; Lk. 24:25.

The author has overlooked several other places: Mt. 13:3-35; Jn. 10:6. Mt. 13:13-35 is charged so heavily with the secrecy component in Jesus' teaching that it is worth quoting: "And the disciples came, and said unto him, why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered . . . Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. . . . Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."

Jesus goes on to make clear that he does not want "them," meaning "the whole multitude of his hometown, that stood on the shore," to understand, "lest at any time they should . . . be converted, and I should heal them." (Aside from our having here Jesus' teaching in secrets, it raises a question about Jesus' eagerness to make sinners repent: obviously it did not include everyone.) Even if we apply the conventional explanation that we have here an interpolation, this reveals how ingrained has been the

tradition of anti-Judaism in nascent Christianity.

As mentioned above, N. T. sources are replete with reports about secret teachings of Jesus. However, "historical criticism" relegates any section in the N. T. that does not fit their preconceived theory to an anonymous redactor.

Smith gives an example.

Mk. 7:18ff relates how Jesus refutes the laws about Kosher food. "Whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him." . . . but: "To historical criticism this proves the secondary character of Mk. 7:18f . . . [because] a special revelation from heaven was required to persuade Peter to go with a Gentile"⁶ (and eat non-Kosher food).

Smith raises a challenge:

Admitting . . . that the Markan secret explanations are redactional, one has to ask why the redactor chose to represent Jesus in this way. It is not enough to argue . . . that the content of the secret explanations represents the wishes of the Gentile church. Even if one were to accept the dubious distinction between the "primitive Palestinian" and "Gentile" churches, one would have to explain why the secondary material was introduced as secret teaching. Why could the question not have been asked from the crowd and the answer given openly? to this the customary reply, since Reimarus, has been that doctrines falsely attributed to Jesus had to be presented as secret teaching because his public speaking was known and the intended dupes would remember that he had not publicly taught such things. But, first, it is unlikely that the public teaching of Jesus was so completely known to readers of the Gospels that they could confidently deny it had contained one or another element. And second, if it be supposed that Jesus' teaching was clearly and fully remembered by the churches, they would have remembered also whether or not

he taught in secret. So the fact they the editors of the gospels chose to present some editions as secret teachings suggests their churches had a tradition that Jesus did teach in secret, and this tradition was older than the Gospels which relied on it to lend credit to their accounts of what he thus taught.⁷

Smith concludes: "In sum, the Gospels all represent Jesus as teaching in secret. . . . When Christianity first appears in the writings of pagan authors it is described as a secret society."⁸

Having proven that Jesus imparted a secret teaching to his disciples, Smith proceeds to decipher the content of the teaching.

Accepting the hypothesis that his being the Messiah could have been a secret Jesus preserved only to those close to him, Smith sees "no reason to suppose Jesus had only one secret," and Smith points to Mk. 4:11 that "declares that the mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to the disciples (as opposed to those outside)." Smith sees a link between this mystery and the mystery of baptism (according to Smith Jesus himself baptized those close to him). Smith concludes that the secret Jesus revealed to his disciples was that entrance into the kingdom of God through the rite of his baptism liberated its recipients from the Mosaic law.⁹

"There is an important series of sayings in which the coming of the kingdom in Jesus and in his disciples is represented as the beginning of a new age, sharply

distinguished from the old age of the Law. 'The Law and the prophets were until John, from then on the kingdom of God is proclaimed (Mt. 11:12f; Lk. 16:16) '. . . The new kingdom is the new garment which is not to be cut to patch up the antiquated fabric of Judaism (Lk. 5:36); it is the new wine not to be put in old bottles (Mk. 2:22). . . . His yoke, by contrast to that of the Law, is light (Mt. 11:28ff; Acts 15:10). As John said, 'The Law came by Moses, Grace by Jesus' (1:17); . . . it was at last possible to assure the initiate . . . 'the truth will make you free' (Jn. 8:32) 'Free from what?' The saying is directed 'to the Jews (8:31), so the implication is, 'Free from the Law.'"¹⁰

According to Smith the secret draws a line between the "elect" who entered the kingdom by being baptized by and identified with Jesus and all the others. The latter were still "under the law."¹¹

This hypothesis of Morton Smith would explain the later disputes in the Jesus-fellowship whether or not the Mosaic Law is still in force, and the fact that evidence in the N. T. can be cited in both directions.

Smith accepts the authenticity of sources pointing in opposite directions as rooted in Jesus twofold teachings: the esoteric one, liberty from law for those already within the kingdom; the other one the continuity of

the law for the non-initiated." . . . "both are so widely represented . . . that neither can safely be dismissed as secondary."¹²

Smith concludes: "We have arrived at a definition of 'the mystery of the kingdom of God': It was a baptism administered by Jesus to chosen disciples. . . . In this baptism the disciple was united with Jesus. . . . The essential thing was that the disciple was possessed by Jesus' spirit. One with Jesus, he participated in Jesus' ascent into heavens; he entered the kingdom of God and was thereby set free from the laws ordained for and in the lower world."¹³

Stressing that the concept of entering the kingdom of God through becoming one with a divine figure derives from Jesus himself. Smith writes the edifying sentence: "he [Jesus] would not have been the only man in antiquity to think himself the son of incarnation of a supernatural power."¹⁴

Smith's hypothesis puts back Paul to his historical position--the only intellectual power in the primitive church of the Jesus-fellowship. Where Paul's theological conclusions contained novel elements they were a logical, one may say inevitable expansion of Jesus' esoteric teachings.

Even if Paul would not have expounded the Christology of Jesus' redemptive death (a dogma Paul found in the pre-Paulinian church as the common faith of the entire Jesus-fellowship), the entrance into the kingdom could not have remained closed to those whom Jesus disciples baptized.

As Smith argues the original principle of the Jesus-fellowship was that by coming into possession of the Jesus-spirit one entered the kingdom. Conversely, the disciples being in the kingdom were in the possession of Jesus' spirit. Identified with him they had the same power as Jesus to impart his spirit to others.¹⁵

The Secret Element

Morton Smith perceived the phenomenon of a secret teaching in Jesus' ministry with remarkable acumen; however, the recognition of the real character of Jesus' secret teaching eluded him. Later we shall suggest the reason Smith failed to draw the compelling conclusion of his own hypothesis but first it may be appropriate to elucidate some aspects.

A) Smith contests the claim of some scholars that Jesus' secret teaching, reserved only for an elite, his disciples, was the awareness of his being the Messiah. Smith correctly argues that some Gospel sources record

Jesus' communicating his Messiahship to the disciples. One may add that there are also stories about Jesus' being acclaimed as Messiah by others. The implication of Smith's argument that something other than Jesus' Messiahship must have been the secret element in his teaching, is that Jesus' claim of Messiahship did not call for secrecy.

The obvious question would be why? The Jewish authorities were not the only ones from whom secrecy would provide protection from persecution. In fact, the Jewish authorities were not even the principal factor to be protected from by secrecy. In the years preceding and following Jesus many who claimed the Messianic title fell at the hands of Roman executioners. This in itself would be reason for keeping the claim of being the Messiah a secret, except that Smith considers Jesus' Messiah-message of a character that did not conflict with the political/military attitudes of Judea's oppressor--Rome.¹⁶

But, if this is so, Smith is only revealing to his readers part of his scholarly hypothesis, and not at all its germinal part.

B) Smith claims that the emancipation from the Law of his initiated disciples (those secretly baptized by Jesus)¹⁷ was the secret element in Jesus' teaching. But the Gospel narratives, aiming to relate the historical/

chronological framework of Jesus' ministry, make no secret of his deriding, often also violating, prescriptions of the Law, thereby provoking the anger of the Jewish authorities. How does Smith reconcile these Gospel-records with the hypothesis he draws from the same source?¹⁸

C. Another incoherent aspect of Smith's proposition about the secrecy of the libertine tradition is manifested through the mission of Paul. Whether or not we accept Smith's original proposition that Paul attenuated the secret doctrine of Jesus' libertine tradition,¹⁹ it is a fact that Paul employed Jesus' death as proof of the obsolete character of the Law: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us [by being crucified]."²⁰

Paul quotes the Law itself as evidence for this novel thesis:

Know ye not, brethren . . . that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband, . . . so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man . . . ye also became dead to the law by the [crucified] body of Christ; that ye should be married to another; even to him who is raised from the dead . . .

The argument that this view of Paul brought him in conflict with the Jerusalem church cannot be used in defense of Smith for two reasons: (1) According to Smith those who argued against Paul's freeing from the Law the

"faithful in Jesus" were not the "immediate disciples" of Jesus but the "orthodox" group--the legalist party. Smith considers them so hostile to the original disciples of Jesus that he accuses them of having "asked their friends . . . for a timely persecution to help get rid of their libertine rivals."²¹

(2) Nor can the death of Jesus be used to explain a group of the elect shifting from Jesus' secrecy to Paul's dogma, open and available to all. Wherever Paul defends a seemingly novel postulate of his own he is unsparing in searching for theological support. It is only logical to assume that if Paul's preaching the termination of the Law after Jesus' death, was consistent with, but seemingly an opposite tradition to that preached by Jesus, Paul would have made an effort to reconcile his view with Jesus' tradition.

D) In his otherwise profound discourse on the topic Smith himself contributes another argument against his classifying the libertine tradition as Jesus' secret teaching, which restricted the status of being free from the Law only to those identified (by Baptism) with himself: "On the same day, seeing a man working on the Sabbath, he said to him, 'Man, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed, but if you do not know, you are accursed and a transgressor of the Law.'"²²

The "man working on the Sabbath," committing a cardinal violation of the Law, was not a disciple of Jesus, certainly not one qualified to be set free by Jesus from the Law; how could Jesus pronounce him blessed by disregarding the Law if he "knew" what he is doing?

True, to know may be synonymous with possessing a mystery, but it would then be a mystery unrelated to being initiated by Jesus and identified with him.

The only logical conclusion would be that the knowledge needed to set one "free from the Mosaic Law" is a distinct concept; it may have run parallel with Jesus' ministry, but is definitely not identical with having been initiated by Jesus.

E) Paul reproached Peter because the latter "withdrew, and separated himself" from the non-Kosher common tableship after the messengers of James arrived.²³ Peter, according to Smith's theory, would have had a perfect explanation: public violation of the Law is against the Jesus (secret) tradition. Nor is this an isolated fact. Smith's view is that the so-called "Judaizers" who insisted on a symbiosis of Jesus and the Law, presented none of the disciples (with what this writer fully agrees).²⁴ But if Jesus "set free" of the Law only an elect group, the "Judaizers" were at least to a degree justified in their demand.

F) Smith convincingly argues against the various theories that Paul reconstructed Jesus' teachings; he demonstrates that Paul embraced the tradition of the Mother Church in Jerusalem that followed the teaching of Jesus. But in Paul's preaching of Jesus there is absolutely no trace of a dual attitude to the Law.

Smith's insightful penetration into the origins of Christianity obfuscated by many scholars, was halted at the doorway leading to Jesus' secret teaching, a door that Smith preferred to leave closed: the secret teaching of Jesus was his revelation of a de-nationalized cosmopolitan/individual Messiah-Soter severed from the Torah. This teaching needed secrecy because it was alien and antagonizing to all and any parties and sects--from the Herodians subservient to Rome to the excessive Zealot groups; from the Pharisaic mainstream to the sectarian Apocalyptists; the urbanized Sadducees as well as the Covenanters in the Judean desert--the entire nation of Israel itself.

Jesus' ministry and later his legacy offered another vehicle for achieving redemption; a vehicle that perforce collided with the core of Judaism.

The secrecy Smith rightly detected in Jesus' legacy to the disciples was not his being the Messiah but the transmutation of Israel's Messianic vision.²⁵

I venture to propose that Morton Smith was hindered from discerning "what did Jesus tell his disciples in the darkness"²⁶ by the lingering effect of the very theorem he set out to contest, i.e., "the dubious distinction between the primitive Palestinian and 'Gentile' churches . . ."²⁷ and, what Smith calls, "the customary reply, since Reimarus."²⁸ It was Reimarus who set going the prevailing view that the Church's fundamental anti-Judaism is due to doctrines falsely attributed to Jesus.

Despite his brilliant exposure of the baselessness of seeing anti-nomianism as a deviation from Jesus' "Judaic" teachings, he attributes to Judaism anti-nomianism and its teacher Jesus.

The evidence Smith brings to substantiate his hypothesis is as baseless as those making Paul the de-Judaizer of Jesus' Judaic teachings.

Smith's postulate, as seen above, is that the Church's refutation of the Mosaic Law came to the Church through Jesus' secret teachings and secret rituals. Those elements ". . . had been particularly common in ancient near-eastern religions (Hooke, Religion 53), and the religion of Israel had been no exception in this respect: its official center was a temple of which the area around the altar might be entered only by members of the various grades of the priestly caste. None save the high priest

himself was permitted to enter the adyton."²⁹

The contents of the Temple, including those in the "area around the altar" and in "the adyton" are specified to the smallest detail in the Bible.³⁰ A few Gentile kings and/or their military chiefs forced their entrance into the inner Sanctuary³¹ plundering the national treasury. None reported finding any mysterious object. An inseparable tenet of Israel's monotheism was the purification of Judaism's rituals from magic and mysteries. Witchcraft and magic were expurgated by severe penalties, including capital punishment.³² All aspects of individual and national conduct were guided to exclude the remotest symbol of magic, sorcery, necromancy, etc.³³ To equate the assigning of rituals openly conducted to a specific group and "purity laws" publicized in minutiae for the information of Jews and Gentiles, with the "mystery religions" in "the ancient world" is the ultimate disregard of reality. In the age discussed here the Jewish synagogues were visited by a great number of educated Gentiles. They heard that the reading of the Pentateuch and the Prophets which listed all the details of Temple service and of rituals executed "by members of the various grades of the priestly caste" including those performed by "the high priest . . . permitted to enter the adyton."³⁴ What is the basis, where are the data for Smith's equation

of Judaism with mystery religions?

Smith tries to trace to Judaism Jesus' view that "possession of the spirit [and] entrance of the kingdom" frees from this world (subject to the Law)" by becoming an inhabitant of "the coming world or age [of liberty]" with the following: "A century later Elisha ben Abuyah was believed to have learned how to enter the paradise in the heavens, and this was thought the cause of his throwing over the Law and becoming a libertine. Like Jesus even after he had become a libertine he continued to be consulted as an authority on legal questions."³⁵

Following is a factual description of the Elisha ben Abuyah event. It will demonstrate how a scholar's preconceived determination can insert meaning into facts instead of deducing it from them.

"Four were they who entered the Pardes [a term denoting the hidden, innermost heavenly sphere where one may learn the secrets of creation]; they were ben Azai and ben Zoma and Akhar, [a synonym for Elisha ben Abuyah] and Rabbi Akiba . . . ben Azai stared at and perished. Ben Zomah stared at and his mind became impaired. Akhar turned into a heretic. Rabbi Akiba came out in peace."³⁶

The story in itself conveys a warning against excessive meditation about the process of creation, a note repeated in other Talmudic passages.

The eagerness of Elisha to penetrate the secrets and purpose of creation (something totally unrelated to man's secrets) engendered in him an alertness to the concept of reward and punishment. He later witnessed how a boy fulfilling the wish of his father performed an act for which the Pentateuch assures long life.³⁷ Obedience to a parent according to the Torah is rewarded similarly.³⁸ However, the boy whom God should have granted a doubly long life was killed while performing his deed. Elisha therefore turned into a nonbeliever, a heretic.³⁹

Talmudic scholars then changed Elisha's name to Akhar, meaning a "turncoat."

Obviously this story in no way proves Smith's version that Judaism also knew of a libertarianism following "entrance into the kingdom."

That Elisha, "even after he had become a libertine," continued to be consulted as an authority on legal questions,"⁴⁰ is totally irrelevant. His turning into an heretic did not, naturally, affect his comprehensive erudition. When his pupil Rav Mayer was reproached for consulting his former tutor, Rav Mayer answered: I peel off the rotten husk and take out the healthy kernel.⁴¹

Does Morton Smith claim that the libertarianism of Jesus and his disciples implies the denial of the existence

of an Omnipotent and Omnibenevolent God? And the Church's refutation of the Law implies atheism? 42

Smith quotes Jewish sources about ascending into heaven and performing supernatural acts as evidence that Judaism was no different from other civilizations in that region: "an archetype of the Christian experience." But the issue Smith deals with is not whether or not Judaism censured contemplation on the mysteries of creation, the issue is whether such mediations were allowed to replace the commandments of God to man; to denounce the Revealed Law and the national entity embodying it as obsolete and a stumbling block to redemption?

While Judaism did not outlaw mysticism (although it warned against it), Judaism made impossible the relationship between mysteries and Law. Not only rational and ethical commandments (Mishpatim), but so, too, rituals seemingly devoid of any practical and rational underpinning (Hukim) had to be executed because they were the Commandment of God.

The recognition (or belief) that an outstanding individual "ascended" into heaven (alive or dead) or was capable of performing miracles, did not turn the exalted individual into a law-maker and/or a law-denouncer. In fact it does not change at all his status vis-a-vis the Law. Johannes Weiss puts it succinctly: "Taken by itself,

one does not readily see why the Messiahship of Jesus must have followed from his resurrection or restoration to life . . . exaltation does not imply Messiahship."⁴³ Certainly it does not empower one to make arbitrary decisions about the Mosaic Law.

The claim of possessing a Revealed Law and of being God's Chosen Nation instrumental to His universal design singled out Israel from among the nations, and not some marginal concepts about the beginning and/or end of the world, common to contemplative individuals everywhere.

In tracing the anti-nomianism of Jesus' church, Morton Smith began with a courageous iconoclasm against the theories originated by Reimarus about a Church anchored in Jesus transformed in an anti-Jesus religion. Having forcefully disproven this, Smith makes a volte-face and embraces the age-old cliché of Bible criticism that Judaism shared the cults of the Near Eastern religions.

We have demonstrated above that Smith erred in identifying the secret element of Jesus' teaching with the freedom from the Law of those who entered the Kingdom; but Smith's hypothesis that there was a secret element in Jesus' teaching is documented through all the Gospels; in fact, the New Testament gravitates around this secret element.

Before we deal with this, we want to point out why liberty from the Law could not be the secret element in Jesus' teachings.

Firstly, Jesus never avoided quarreling with the Pharisees and Scribes about issues of Law, or in making light of the Law. Had such liberty been the secrecy preserved for his closest, Jesus would have avoided public demonstrations of this issue.

Secondly, liberty for an elite of his disciples, is too marginal a subject to be turned into the strictly guarded secret of Jesus' teaching. It would also have contradicted the goal of those teachings. There may be legitimate doubts as to the veracity of the saying ascribed to Jesus: "My gospel must first be brought to all the nations,"⁴⁴ but that his teaching should become known to all of "the lost sheep in Israel"⁴⁵ was certainly his aim. a teaching whose most essential element must remain a secret for all except an elect few, cannot be a "gospel of good news" for masses.

Thirdly, Smith's explanation does not solve the problem he poses; the discovering of a secret element in Jesus' teaching was supposed to explain why the Jesus-fellowship became divided in their attitude to the Law. But the "division" between the (alleged) Law observers and the libertarians does not follow the division between the

close disciples of Jesus and the others. Granting that Peter could be counted among the libertarians (and this is extremely questionable), the disciples as a body certainly did not present the camp of libertarianism (granting there really was such a division).

The first open collision in which the trend of libertarianism was manifested was with the Hellenists of the Stephen circle. None of them belonged to the disciples of Jesus; they could therefore not have learned Jesus' "secrecy" of freedom from the Law for the initiates!

We pointed out above that the description in Acts⁴⁶ about a wave of persecutions after the Stephen trial is unsubstantiated. but this does not mean that no steps were taken against those who openly violated the Law. None of those close to Jesus was among the Law-violators punished; those persecuted were recruited after the crucifixion, and could thus not have known of Jesus' secret teaching.

Fourthly, if we should assume that the incentive of anti-nomianism in ur-Christentum was the secret teaching of Jesus, and also assume that by some circuitous way it was the newly arrived Jesus-followers who found out the "secret" and decided to behave accordingly--why, when it became an issue of dispute, the libertarians never used it to justify their view against the other side--the "Law observers" in the Jesus camp?

The answer to all those questions above is that the issue of the Law and of the secrecy of Jesus' teachings are two separate themes. What Jesus had to say about the Law needed no secrecy, and it was kept not for an elite but for all who wanted to hear his gospel.

Jesus' message about the Law was also not the (direct) cause of disputes between Antioch and Jerusalem, or, between Paul and the disciples.

In this respect Jesus' teaching was clear and unambiguous: the Law is not the vehicle for the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven, that would be established only by faith. The sphere of the Law is man's deeds, and the deeds of man have no bearing on the cosmic struggle between the forces of evil and those of good.

Whether baptism was practiced by Jesus as a means of joining or was introduced later is a disputed issue;⁴⁷ however, what is beyond dispute is that no one could become a member of the Jesus-fellowship without accepting faith and not Law as the means to realize the Kingdom of Heaven.

But the evidence disproving the hypothesis that libertarianism was the secret element in Jesus' teaching does not apply to the hypothesis itself, that Jesus' teaching contained a secret element and that he cautioned his disciples about the need for secrecy while spreading the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The secret element of Jesus' teaching, more exactly, of Jesus' ministry, was related to his gospel about the Kingdom of God. The secret element was needed because Jesus aimed to propagate his idea of the Kingdom of God to a people whose vision of a Kingdom of God was incompatible with the one he proclaimed.

Teaching Jews that the Law would not realize the coming of the Kingdom of God, antithetical to Judaism though it was, it did not call for secrecy. It could only expose Jesus to the disdain and opposition of the Pharisees, Scribes, and all other sects. The judiciary system of Judaism was not geared to deal with such aberrations. As to the masses, it would certainly not reverse their sympathetic approach to one who pretends to be the redeemer of Israel.

But one aspect of the Torah was embodied in the minds and hearts of the common man, the am-Haretz no less than the learned ones, and in a way even deeper: it was the hope for the restoration of Israel's glory. The common people envisioned this restoration even in more earthly, this-worldly elements than the learned ones. This went together, with a passionate hatred for Rome--the oppressor of their land, the hated Gentile who robbed them of the fruits of their work, who killed their sons, who plundered and desecrated their sanctuaries, whose legionnaires

demonstrated contempt and cruelty during the pilgrimage of Jews to the Temple in Jerusalem.

The hatred of Rome intensified the expectation of a Redeemer. Their simple mentality did not distinguish between the various redemption themes promoted by the spokesmen of different sects: Zealots, Apocalypticists, Pharisees etc. Neither did it matter to them whether redemption from Rome came through rebellion and victorious armies or by eschatological upheavals; the twofold vision of a glorious Israel and the downfall of Gentile Rome captivated their minds and inflamed their hearts.

In the works dissecting New Testament texts, one of the unsolved issues is whether Jesus viewed himself as the Messiah foretold in the Bible or not; and if he did, at what stage in his ministry did it occur? What is beyond doubt is that the people who followed him, especially the common folk, saw in him a potential Messiah. It should be added that this view about him was not constant; it surfaced, then withered away. Enthusiasm and raised hopes flared up, to be replaced by doubt and disappointment. Each time Jesus performed a "miracle" healing the lame and sick, it was accepted as evidence of his messianic potentials; when he asserted in general terms the imminent coming of the Kingdom their expectations were fixed on the man who proclaimed it with such assurance. Whatever were

the opinions about Jesus among the scholars and the upper echelons of Judea, the enthusiasm of the masses had one channel only--the bearer of Israel's redemption, the destroyer of the Gentile oppressor. When they followed Jesus enthusiastically, they bestowed on him praise reserved for the Messiah;⁴⁸ when they turned away, disappointed, it was because his parables did not reflect Israel's Messiah-image.⁴⁹ This was the criterion the common people applied to Jesus' ministry, his miraculous doings, his interpretations of the prophets, his telling of parables, gained significance only as a sign of the coming redemption.⁵⁰

The Need for Secrecy

New Testament scholars are continuously disputing the problem whether Jesus saw himself as the Messiah or whether it was his disciples who assigned him this role.⁵¹ As a popular adage has it: "the less one understands the material the more one speaks about the material." Here it should be changed slightly: the less one cares to see the true character of the problem the more one focuses on non-essential aspects of that problem.

The heart of the problem is not Jesus' view about his role in the Messiah-phenomenon, but the relationship of Jesus' ministry to the Messiah-vision of Judaism.

Evidence for the hypothesis that the secrecy in Jesus' teaching was his concept of redemption in opposition to the Messiah-ideal of Israel is the theme of all four gospels; it is the motif in the instructions Jesus gives to the disciples: "Go not . . . [to] the Gentiles, and . . . the Samaritans. . . . But go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils. . . . And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart . . . shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha is the day of judgement, than for that city. Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, be yet therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves . . . for they will deliver you up to the councils. . . . And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child, and the children will rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. . . . Fear not therefore; there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. . . . Think not that I come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword."⁵²

The entire chapter (Mt. 10), of 42 sentences, is devoted to Jesus' message; it is a compendium of several themes, their unified essence deserves to be elucidated.

The verbal texture, the thematics and the form testify to our having here a tradition that must have been widely known in detail. Some aspects in the discourse must have been inconvenient to the Church later, thus there was no reason for the "anonymous editor" to introduce them.

Following are the main themes in Jesus' message to the twelve:

A) That "the lost sheep of Israel" are "rather" in need of his message.

B) The disciples' task is a therapeutic one--to "heal," "cleanse," "cast out devils," also a miraculous one--to "raise the dead."

All of a sudden the peaceful mission that should be met by gratitude turns into its opposite:

C) Warnings of hate and persecution awaiting the messengers of blessings, therapy and miraculous works. There will be those that "shall not receive you, nor hear your words . . ."

What follows is no less dramatic: Jesus, "the prince of peace," who teaches to turn the other cheek and "love those who hate you,"⁵² strikes back vehemently at the entire city wherein his disciples are not welcomed.

D) What is even more astounding is the sudden transformation from the inhospitality accorded to the messengers of Jesus into a cosmic conflict: "Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for . . . Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgement than for that city." And: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves."⁵⁴ The encounter is not a local one; the battlefield is the entire nation of Israel. The issue is-- the war between God and Satan:

"And brother shall deliver up his brother to death, and father his child, and children shall rise up against their parents. . . . For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother . . . and a man's foes shall be they of his household."⁵⁵

The themes are elaborated comprehensively in Mt. 10, but various parts of them are also to be found in numerous other places: Mk. 6:7-11, 13:9f; Lk. 12:51-53; 21:12-13. In Lk. 10, Jesus sends out after the twelve a group of seventy with the same mission. but in Mt. 10, the themes create a consistent theology that makes clear why the content of Jesus' Messiahship had to be taught in secret to his elected disciples, even they could be fed with that secret only gradually.

More telling than the spoken themes is the unspoken part. It was for Judea and Israel the most turbulent

period--the entire people, all its segments--were concerned with the social/political/military/economic and religious aspects resulting from Rome's occupation of the country. In the itinerary of Jesus' disciples this item was glaringly missing. Jesus' disciples did not have to wait until after the crucifixion to hear from their master that the issue of Israel's sovereignty "is not for you" to be concerned with.⁵⁶ Jesus communicated to them his complete indifference to Israel's national fate by his silence during his ministry.

In the time of Jesus, from a generation earlier until a century later, all provinces in the Jewish homeland were in sporadic rebellion against Rome. Patriotic bands led by Hezekiah (murdered by Herod in 46 B.C.E.)⁵⁷ and by the later militants of the swelling Zealot movement roamed the countryside. The unwavering Pharisee opposition kept increasing until the eruption of 66 C.E. Throughout the vast Roman Empire no province, no people demonstrated such vigorous national life. Mithridates fought Rome for a quarter-century (89-64 B.C.E.); Jugurtha waged a rebellion against Rome for only six years (111-105); Macedonia was defeated in less than half a century. But the Jewish resistance that started with Pompey's intervention in Judea (63 B.C.E.)⁵⁸ lasted until the end of the Bar Kokba war (134 C.E.).⁵⁹ For two centuries the people of

Judea fought a heroic war against Rome.

Jesus was aware that Israel's hope of redemption and expectations for a Messiah was based on the restoration of a Davidic kingdom and of the supremacy of the Law.

But Jesus denied and refuted the hope that a Messiah would restore the national glory of the people of Israel--its early, this-worldly Kingdom.

Jesus' silence about the central issue at Israel at that time, his omitting to instruct the twelve as to the ongoing rebellions against Rome, was not because he opposed Zealotic violence. Israel was deeply divided in that issue; there were diverse views, and Jesus too could have chosen one of them, or formulated his own. Jesus' silence stemmed from his belief that Israel's national infrastructure was a stumbling block to the realization of the kingdom of heaven.

The helplessness of man in improving earthly existence was a correlation of Jesus' teachings--that the material world was the domain of Satan; he, therefore, made no distinction between various governments and economic-political systems. All of them were part of the "corrupted flesh" from which man could be freed only by faith.

Believing that faith in the Universal Creator must be severed from Israel's parochialism Jesus contended that the Mosaic Law was not designed as a vehicle of redemption.

"Israel is a blind people led by blind leaders." They turned the light of the prophets' recognition of One Omnipotent God and put it in a low corner of a this-worldly parochialism instead of holding it to a universal height.⁶⁰

It is noteworthy that Jesus, instructing the twelve to preach the nearness of the kingdom of heaven, finds it necessary to tell them they should "go rather to the lost sheep of Israel."⁵⁷ To whom should the ultimate realization of Israel's Messianic vision--the kingdom of heavens--be proclaimed if not to the 'House of Israel?

But Israel, being given preference needs elucidating: it is not Israel as the locus classicus to whom God's kingdom should be first announced. The need to tell announcers they should "rather" go there than to the Gentiles precludes this. The gospel makes it clear that it is the people of Israel that urgently need therapeutic activities. As a physician concentrates his medical efforts on the diseased so, too, Jesus told his disciples, "go to the lost sheep of Israel," because it is there where help is urgent.

A great fundamental change must take place in Israel. To realize the coming of the heavenly kingdom the barriers of Israel's nationalism must be shattered. The enemy is not any foreign political power. "Love thy enemy" meant that the destroyer of the Jewish homeland is not an

enemy, because the terrestrial homeland does not matter. The evils in social life, the cruelties of heads of state, oppression and exploitation are elements of earthly life. Jesus' "pure" religion is above the needs of man's terrestrial existence.

Believers should not rebel against the social status God has placed them in, but "render unto Caesar what is his." The this-worldly sphere belonged to those whom God had destined to be Caesars.

The enemy is not the Gentile power outside Israel but the "blind leaders within." A sword and dagger were needed against the guardians of national parochialism: the Pharisees who opposed the establishing of the Universal Kingdom: the heavenly Kingdom that knows no geographical or national boundaries; there is no chosen people and there is no Law. The time of the Law is "fulfilled"; the role of Israel is ended: "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men."⁵⁸

To the Samaritan woman who asked him if Jerusalem rather than Samaria is the holy place, Jesus answered: "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain [of Gerizim] nor in Jerusalem will man worship the Father."⁶⁷ And to the Jews: "I will tell you the Kingdom of God will

be taken away from you."⁵⁹

His message was clear and unambiguous: "The wedding is ready . . . go therefore, to the thoroughfares and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find. And the servants went and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good."⁶⁰

The great confrontation with the "obsolete" status claimed by Israel and the Pharisee's aggrandizing of human deed guided by Law lies ahead. The great thing is that the battle began. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it grows, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree."⁶¹

Jesus who is so willing to pardon sinners, to demonstrate comradeship with publicans, to admire the faith in those "not from Israel" speaks with extreme harshness against the Pharisees and scribes: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead man's bones, and of all uncleanness . . . full of hypocrisy and iniquity. . . . That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth."

More than any other party, the Pharisees strived to cultivate the uniqueness of Israel--its Torah and its people. To Jesus, both the parochial awareness of the

people and the claim that the Law is the vehicle of redemption, were the main hindrance to the realization of the kingdom of heaven, he therefore considered the Pharisees as his main adversary.

Jesus knew how difficult the task he assigned to the twelve was, a task that will turn their Jewish brothers into "wolves" against the "sheep"-ish Messiah-vision preached by them. In revealing to them the secrecy of his anti-national anti-Law redeeming-concept he warned them: "they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues."⁶²

Testimony about Jesus' anti-Judaic Messianism-idea comes even from Joseph Klausner who wrote two pro-Jesus works.

In his book Jesus of Nazareth, Klausner concludes that Jesus' teachings were destructive for Judaism as a religion and for the Jews as a nation. The parables of Jesus carried a death-sentence to everything Judaism presented. The laws regulating civic life and the laws outlining the obligation to God were inseparable in the Torah; the concept that faith and nationalism are an inextricable entity is false. "Jesus gave nothing to his nation . . . to adapt the teachings of Jesus is to remove oneself from the whole sphere of ordered national and human existence."⁶³

In a whole chapter, "Judaism and the Teachings of Judaism," Klausner illustrates how Jesus refutes the social, economic and political requirements for the existence of the Jewish people. The ethical teachings of Jesus contradicted the resistance of "the tiny nation . . . [to] sinking into the sea of heathen culture and to realize the moral teaching of the prophets in civil life and of the present world of the Jewish state and nation."⁶⁴ Klausner quotes Jesus' negation of the unique position of children of Israel: "Many shall come from the East and from the West and shall sit . . . in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the children of the Kingdom [the Jews] shall be cast out in outer darkness,"⁶⁵ "he Jesus both annulled Judaism as the lifesource of the Jewish nation, and also the nation itself as a nation."⁶⁶

(This does not prevent Klausner from putting on the toga of an apologetic fiction-writer.) He says: "Jesus is the most Jewish of Jews, more Jewish than Simeon Ben Shetah, more Jewish than Hillel.")⁶⁷

In another place Jesus claims: "You have heard it said: 'you shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But the last part of this "saying" is not to be found anywhere in the Hebrew Scriptures or in any Jewish sources--quite the contrary. Proverbs states: "Do not rejoice when thy enemy falls, and with his stumblings let thy heart

not triumph."⁶⁸ "If hungry is thy enemy, feed him bread, if he is thirsty, give him water."⁶⁹

But it was not a non-existing biblical statement Jesus refutes: Jesus refers here to the hatred against the Roman oppressor of Judea. Jesus called the Jews to give up the opposition to the Gentile world that strikes Judaism "on the right cheek" and rather "turn to him the other cheek as well."⁷⁰

Jesus' call to "sell the cloak and buy a sword";⁷¹ his proclamation that he came "to set man against his father, and a daughter against her mother"⁷² were not in contradiction to his preachings of love. Unity and division, love and hate were primary elements in Jesus' vision of reconstructing the house of Israel, of taking its people out of their national exclusivity. Both hate and love were the cornerstones of the new universal community; a community spread out like a fisherman's net which will gather fish of every kind.

Sending the twelve (according to other sources also seventy), on the mission to wean away the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" from their parochial messiah vision Jesus reiterated to them his secret teaching: "Fear them not therefore . . . what I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in your ear, that preach ye upon the housetops."⁷³

The primary goal of all who aim to negate an existing entity has always been to reshuffle the social boundaries by changing the objects of hate and love. They teach that friends and enemies are not along the traditional lines, but according to new divisions.

"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division, for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against son, and the son against the father."⁷⁴

As a religious visionary, Jesus must have been familiar with the prerequisite set by the last of the prophets for the coming of the Kingdom of God: "I will restore the heart of fathers to sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers."⁷⁵

If Jesus had this prophecy in mind when he instructed the twelve, he could not have chosen a more appropriate juxtaposition for demonstrating the antithesis between Israel and the Church he was founding.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHOICE OF GALILEE

Jesus' choice of Galilee rather than Judea is a matter of speculation for New Testament scholars.¹ It is true that Galilee was where Jesus had lived from his childhood. But Jesus also stated, "there is no prophet recognized in his hometown."² He was also aware of the low esteem Galilee was held by the spiritual echelons of Israel;³ that any messianic gospel coming from there was certain to encounter suspicion and mistrust.

Jesus' choice of Galilee right after the arrest of John the Baptist seems even more odd. Galilee was part of the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, the other province being Peraea, where John was arrested by the Tetrarch of the two provinces. Jesus saw his mission linked to that of John, and it certainly would have evoked Herod Antipas' suspicion.⁴

Our hypothesis is that Jesus' gospel about the immediacy of the Kingdom of God (or its having already come), could only be accepted by transmuting the messianic vision of Israel. As the latter was anchored in the Torah,

Galilee seemed to be preferable because of: (a) the knowledge of Torah was at a level lowest than at everywhere in Israel. Jesus' usage of Biblical sayings for propagating his version of the kingdom encountered less opposition than in other provinces. Jesus' sharp attacks of the Pharisees and Scribes, his fraternizing with sinners and his magnification of the simple and unlearned was to gain him sympathy, (b) As the leaders of the Zealotic movement came from Galilee, its population was probably exposed more than other parts to the punitive steps of Rome and Jesus' stand of non-resistance could gain adherents. (The course of the war against Rome (66-70) gives ground to assume that cities in Galilee were more willing to compromise than elsewhere.)⁵ (c) Due to the centuries-long non-Jewish character of Galilee, its being surrounded on all sides with Gentile peoples, Galilee was vulnerable to the growing syncretism in the Roman Empire and would be less aware of these elements in Jesus' Kingdom of God gospel.⁶

Jesus' gospel about the Kingdom of Heaven differed radically from that hoped for by his people. But Jesus hoped that the common people in Galilee, laborers of the land, the simple farm-workers and the economically and spiritually underprivileged would be lifted up by his attacks against the learned who looked down on their semi-

ignorance and their "making light" of some of the burdens of the Law.

Of all the provinces in the Jewish commonwealth, Galilee seemed the most appropriate location for Jesus to launch his campaign against the parochial infrastructure of the monotheistic ideal. New Testament scholars while devoting much attention to the geographical/social peculiarities of Galilee, fail to elucidate the specific aspects that could explain why Jesus devoted most of his ministry to this backward province, and only at the end made his entrance into Jerusalem the metropolis of Judea.⁷

Josephus describes the beautiful landscape of Galilee, its wealth, fruitfulness and numerous population in exaggerated terms characteristic of him, although it is basically true that Galilee was more fruitful than the other provinces in Israel.⁸ Modern scholars dealing with Jesus' ministry also consider it proper to belabor this aspect. Maybe it was the rising (and still lingering) ethos of economic determinism that has exacted its toll, suggesting that a spiritual phenomenon must be anchored in a material environment. However, it is totally inconceivable that Jesus and the nascent church refuting Judaism's this-worldly character and excluding man's existential problems from faith in God, were to any degree influenced by natural landscapes and/or economic

conditions. But it is clear that the social structure of Galilee was more suitable for Jesus' planned confrontation with the spiritual leadership in Israel.

About eight centuries before Jesus' time, Isaiah (first of the three major Biblical prophets), referred to the Galilean province as Galil Hagoim: Galil, the district of Gentiles.⁹ In the last quarter of the eighth century, with the destruction of the northern kingdom Assyria drove out the Jews and repopulated the land with a mixture of pagan peoples,¹⁰ who dominated this part until the very end of the second century B.C.E. During the Hasmonean wars the entire Jewish population was evacuated from Galilee into Judea because they were repeatedly attacked by hostile Gentiles, the overwhelming majority of that province.¹¹

It was only after the first Hasmonean king Aristobolus defeated the Itureans (104 B.C.E.) that the entire province of Galilee became part of Israel. The Hasmonean ruler then gave the pagans the choice of either accepting Judaism or leaving Galilee. The Gentiles preferred to convert, thus creating a Jewish majority in Galilee, permeated with non-Judaic traditions.¹²

The provincial administration of Galilee had its own separatist tradition. When Rome interfered in the war between the two Hasmonean brothers (63 B.C.E) they decided to strike at the national unity of the Jewish land.

Gabinus, Rome's governor in Syria divided the land in five provinces, each having a separate administration,¹³ imposing economic restrictions in their interrelationship.

The imposed integration of Galilee with Israel, undoubtedly weakened by the tradition of the non-Jewish past, lasted half a century. The separated administrative apparatus, coming after a relatively short period of integration added to the centuries-old tradition of Galilee's separatism.

Under Herod I Galilee was reunited with Judea but was again separated after his death, to be ruled by one of Herod's sons, the Tetrarch Antipas (4 B.C.E.-39 C.E.)¹⁴

In addition to all this Galilee from 50 B.C.E. distinguished itself as the headquarter of the Zealotic warfare against Rome, "From Galilee stemmed all the revolutionary movements which so disturbed the Romans."¹⁵

The first leader of guerrilla-bands, Hezekiah (executed by Herod 47 C.B.E.), was a Galilean. Judas his son incited the revolt against the Roman census. From him ensued the revolutionary call to refuse paying any taxes to a pagan ruler. Two of Judas' sons were executed as Zealots.¹⁶ Galilee became so identified with the rebellion against Rome that Galilee ceased to be a geographical term,

becoming a synonym of armed resistance.¹⁷

The fact that Galilee was the home of Zealotic chieftains added to the general ethos of its being a separate entity; thus augmenting its autonomous character. Despite the hate against Rome shared by the Jewish people "the Zealotic policy of a military confrontation with Rome was denounced by all other groups in Judea."¹⁸

All this resulted in creating the ethos of separateness among the Galileans; a sharp antagonism to the spiritual elite in Judea and to its scholarly authorities, Pharisees and Sadducees.

The scholarly world on the other hand expressed its distaste for Galileans, their lack of knowledge and laxity in the observance of the Law: "Galilee, Galilee, you hate the Torah."¹⁹ This saying, although a gross exaggeration, shows the reputation Galileans had for their lack of concern with the minutiae of the Law whose main purpose was to build a fence around the Jewish people to protect them from the prevailing syncretism. "Fun was made, too of them on account of their provincial accent."²⁰

The sharp antagonism between Galileans and Judeans was drastically expressed in the following Talmudic statement: "Greater is the hatred of the am ha-arez (a

synonym of a Galilean) for the learned than the hatred of the Gentiles for Israel; but the hatred of their wives is even greater."²¹

The Gospels, too, abound with sayings that echo the low reputation of Galileans. When many of the people lauded Jesus as Messiah, the reaction was: "Surely the Messiah is not to come from Galilee."²²

And again in a rebuke to Nicodemus' defenses of Jesus: "Are you a Galilean too?"²³ "Search and look: for out of Galilee no prophet arises."²⁴ And in reference to Galileans gathering around Jesus: "As for this rabble, which cares nothing for the Law, a curse is on them."²⁵

Even assuming the Gospel-writer was interested in depicting the disdain for the Galileans in exaggerated language, it echoes the deep-seated antagonism between Galilee and the other parts of Judea.

As Jesus' main opposition was against the Pharisees and Scribes; precisely those who were so scrupulous about the Law held in low esteem in Galilee, then this could turn the Galileans into followers of his gospel. Is he not accusing the Pharisees and scribes of being too stringent with respect to the Law? Does he not proclaim that those held in low esteem will be the first?²⁶

Jesus could also count on the sympathy common Galileans felt towards each other, and the local distinction from the others. He and nearly all his disciples were Galileans. It was in Galilee where he cured the sick, made the lame walk, and the blind see again.²⁷ In the synagogues of Galilee, at their marketplaces and seashores, he gathered masses; they marveled at his parables and his expounding of scripture.²⁸ There was a major obstacle--Galileans passionately hated the Roman oppressor and his publicans. They were expecting a Messiah who would return an earthly glorious Israel. But, all this was ascribed to the "blind leadership"²⁹ in Jerusalem, and the priestly aristocracy in the Temple. The Zealots, although most active in Galilee, were only a small minority. The simple peasants and the humble, i.e., the overwhelming majority in Galilee stood aside from the Zealots.³⁰

Galileans were attracted to Jesus at the beginning; he was welcomed in synagogues to lecture there; from there came his disciples, and there he performed most of his miracles, including the reviving of the daughter of a local ruler, "when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, which had given such power unto men."³¹

The Galileans flocked to him, they appreciated his downgrading the rich and those who prided themselves with their knowledge of the details of the Law. The Galileans gladly followed a "Messiah" who preached that the poor and simple would enter paradise: "the first shall be last and the last shall be first," "Judge not, that ye be not judged": "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven."³²

About no other place can be found a record such as the following: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. [And] when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they . . . were scattered as sheep having no shepherd."³³

The enthusiastic attitude towards Jesus in the cities of Galilee is recorded in numerous places, throughout all four gospels: Mk. 1:28-39; chapters 2, 3, 4; Mt. 4:25; Lk. 4:15-22, 44, 5:1f; Jm. 1:44-6 and others). It shows that Jesus was right when he considered Galilee a basis wherefrom to spread his gospel about the Kingdom of Heaven based on faith and miraculous happenings. In the

cities and villages of Galilee was a feeling of local pride with one of their own displaying so much knowledge and authority in the Torah and in the prophets.³⁴

But all this lost its glamour when the simple and semi-ignorant Galileans realized that together with this downgrading of wealth and scholarship, Jesus refuted Israel's version of national redemption; that side by side with his love for the poor and unlearned Jesus called for love of the oppressor of Israel.

What happened among the Galileans reflects the changes in the attitude of Jews to Jesus in general. The Galileans demonstrated it in a more temperamental way: such was their nature. Simple and backward in the finer points of the Law, they were unable to distinguish the anti-Judaic elements in Jesus' interpretations of the Torah and prophets. But they were quick to realize that Jesus' gospel of the heavenly Kingdom had nothing in common with Israel's Messiah vision.

But the verbal content alone of Jesus' message contained nothing that could have jeopardized its carriers: "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" was the predominant theme among the Jews.³⁵ The proclamation of its coming was bound to evoke gratitude to the carriers of the message.

The enthusiasm over Jesus' disciples should even be greater because of their benevolent activities: healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, casting out many devils, etc.³⁶ Why then did Jesus warn the conveyors of his gospel about the extreme dangers expecting them? What part of his gospel could transform obvious benefits into their opposite, so that the disciples would become "hated by all men," and it was necessary to assure them to "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul . . ."

Something else is puzzling: according to the message there was nothing hidden, what was the meaning of Jesus' intimation: "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hidden that shall not be known."³⁸

And finally: why should a gospel about the coming of the Kingdom of God cause a "civil war" (in modern parlance) in Israel--setting "man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother . . ."³⁹

To be exact, Jesus' announcement about the Kingdom of Heaven omitted some aspects that Jews considered interwoven with the Kingdom: "No saying of Jesus mentions the Messiah-king who is to crush the enemies of the people, nor the lordship of Israel . . . nor the gathering of the twelve tribes, and the joy that will be in the Counteous

peace-blessed Land." He said a good deal about justice, peace. . . . But of rebellion and the triumph of the Chosen People he never said a word."⁴⁰

But Jesus was not alone in not preaching military confrontation with Rome. The most popular party, the Pharisees, counseled for patience and a *modus vivendi* with Rome. Several times they even sent representatives to Rome asking to remove the hated sons of Herod and to restore the status of Judea when under Ptolemaic and Seleucid rulers: religious and social autonomy.⁴¹ The Essenes too did not advocate military conflict with Rome; and no one ever threatened them with being "delivered . . . to the councils," and scourged, not that brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child."⁴²

Josephus indulged in apologetics and in servile cringing to his Roman patrons (whose family name he adopted)⁴³ when he described Zealots as bandits, etc.⁴⁴ Nonetheless he was recording a historical fact that the legitimate representatives of Jewry were against the Zealots' bellicose policies.⁴⁵

Jesus' avoiding a "call to act" against Rome could thus not jeopardize the messengers of his gospel, and it should not necessitate the strategy of being as "wise as

serpents and harmless as doves."⁴⁶

Let us now consider two possibilities:

(a) If Jesus ordered his disciples to promote non-resistance and passivity, to "render unto Caesar what is his" and put hope on faith in God alone, this could in no way elicit the reaction against his disciples that he warned of. Faith and exclusive reliance on supernatural events in a given situation are grounded in Judaism; preaching this does not necessitate the steps advised by Jesus.

(It should be noted that John the Baptist, whose role Jesus took over, never hinted at rebellion against Rome.)⁴⁷

(b) The other eventuality is that Jesus' message may have amounted to "making light" of some aspects of the Law.

But Galileans would be the last to be concerned with "making light" of the Law, as how Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes stressed it. Galileans had the reputation of not being overly concerned with details of the Torah⁴⁸ to such a degree that we find in Talmud the maxim: "Galilee, Galilee, you hate the Torah."

Assuming, as we should, that we have here an exaggeration, it still proves that an outburst of hate because of "religious impropriety" was extremely unlikely in Galilee; this was an accusation leveled at Galileans in general.

To one who examines this event, without preconceived (or uncritically adapted) hypotheses, it is clearly evident that the New Testament narration of the event, even if it is not a verbal report of Jesus' words, describes Jesus' dilemma in spreading his gospel among Jews, even in the province of his choice--Galilee.

It is safe to infer that the dilemma confronting Jesus was not the task of confining the expectation of the Kingdom of Heaven to faith and supernatural phenomena, or of sidetracking rebellion and military confrontations with Rome--these were elements of Judaism. Even if Jesus had focused on them to the exclusion of everything else, it could not have caused any of the effects Jesus was preparing his messengers for.

Unfamiliar and irritating as such gospel would be to the ethos of Judaism, there was nothing in the judiciary system of the Torah to prevent it. The conviction that God could at any moment bring about supernatural phenomena to

change history was part of Judaism.

We come here across the element of secrecy in Jesus' teaching discussed above; it was to this secret Jesus was referring when he said: "What I tell you in the darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops."⁴⁹

The Gospel chapter which narrates Jesus' authorizing the disciples to spread his gospel to Galilean localities (Mt. 10) is the locus classicus where Jesus refers to the secret component around which his ministry gravitates, and which his disciples must disseminate although in a devious way, being ready to face persecution and death because: "he that loseth his life for my sake, he shall find it."⁵⁰

The secrecy and its importance is dealt with also at numerous other places: "And his disciples asked him, saying, what might this parable be? 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." (Lk. 8:9-10, similar 10:21-25; Mt. 11:25; 13:11-17; Mk. 4:11-12).

It is obvious that the secrecy is such a crucial element in Jesus' ministry that in order to preserve it he

speaks in parables that make it difficult even for his disciples to understand. This is done so that the Jewish authorities, the mentors of the Torah should not see or hear.

Jesus expresses thanks to God because He was hiding this secret ("these things") "from the wise and prudent." That Israel's wise men hear and do not hear, see and do not see.⁵¹ The secret element in Jesus' gospel about the Kingdom of God taught that it would be realized without any recourse to human deed, and resistance to the forces of evil; it taught that the centrality of the Torah, the covenant with Israel were sidetracked, muted. Emphasis had to be put on the supernatural, superhuman authority of Jesus; his coming is the Kingdom of God!

But the secret element in Jesus' ministry, his legacy to his followers, was not a separate body of dogmas unrelated to the outer stratum of his teachings. There was harmoniousness and correlation between the two strata. This also explains why the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, those told by him of the "secrecy," could never come out against the so-called "Gentilizers" in primitive churches, who openly refuted the Torah and the concept of a national Israel. The "secret" (a more appropriate term

would be the non-publicized) part of Jesus' ministry was the fountainhead, the theological reservoir from which the believers drew their inspiration and guidance.

The interrelationship between the two strata of Jesus' ministry was that between a primary force and its derivative. However, conditions in Judea made it necessary that this relationship should be kept camouflaged; the primary force of Jesus' teaching had to be turned into a secret element.

According to Albert Schweitzer the "task which confronted those engaged in the historical study of primitive Christianity is to explain how the teaching of Jesus developed into the early Greek theology."⁵² It is a pertinent question only because nearly everything written on this theme takes for granted a priori that the teaching of Jesus was anchored in something unrelated to that into which it developed. The origin of Albert Schweitzer's question was not in the ministry of the Jesus of history--it was the product of modern historians' quest for a Jesus that should reflect the thos of their time.

CHAPTER V

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS AND JUDAISM

Julius Wellhausen summarizes his evaluation of Jesus as follows:

"Jesus was not a Christian: he was a Jew. He did not preach a new faith, but taught men to do the will of God; and, in his opinion, as also in that of the Jews, the will of God was to be found in the Law of Moses and in the other books of Scripture."¹ The academic phraseology of this assessment conceals an unhistorical content: it disregards the subject Wellhausen is assessing.

We have cited Wellhausen's summary because it is the matrix, for the modern approach to the Jesus-phenomenon; this assessment became also the paradigm for research into the origins of Christianity.

But the issue is not whether Jesus preached a new faith or not, the issue is whether his understanding of Israel's faith in the One God was along the lines of Judaism. Wellhausen's statement that Jesus "taught men to do the will of God," which in his opinion as also in that of the Jews . . . was to be found in the Law . . ."

contradicts all primary sources; the assumption so obvious to Wellhausen that Jesus' opinion about "the will of God" corresponds with "that of the Jews" was unknown, in fact denied, through seventeen centuries by the entire Christian world as well as by Jews. It was in the post-Enlightenment period, in the "Quest for the Historical Jesus," that this axiomatic view made its debut for reasons this paper can not dwell on.²

There is truth in Wellhausen's claim that "Jesus was not a Christian" (a term coined some years after his death in Antioch), but it is an undeniable fact that Christianity came into being because Jesus' opinion about the "will of God" clashed with "that of the Jews."

It is the disagreement between Jesus and Jews about "the will of God" that renders meaningless Wellhausen's statement that Jesus "did not preach a new faith." When what is maintained by a community as the quintessence of its faith is refuted, and a radically different view is claimed, "new" and "old" become hollow words; and the logical inference is: "No man putteth on new cloth unto an old garment. . . . Neither do men put new wine into old bottles."³

The content of all four Gospels is replete with bitter disputes between Jesus and "the Jews" "the Pharisees" "the Scribes" "the High Priests," etc., etc. It

is true that the dispute is not about the God in Whom both sides believe, but it is no less true that they are totally divided about how "the will of God" is to be found.

The fact that Jesus' ministry was to proclaim the immediacy of God's Kingdom--a vision that was harbored by all sects in Israel--does not bear testimony that Jesus identified himself with Judaism--but precisely the opposite--they radically differed about the quintessence of, and the road to the realization of the Kingdom of God.

The way to determine whether an idea claimed by two groups or persons is of the same essence is to confront the supporting views of that idea put forth by each side.

To Israel, all parties and sects included, the realization of God's Kingdom meant the crushing of Israel's enemies, the ingathering of the exiled, the restoration of sovereignty and peace in the Promised Land.

There was diversity as to the way the realization of that Kingdom would take place; however, the perfection of deed as guided by the Law was the common, unifying denomination amidst the variety of views about the realization of the Kingdom.

Let me now juxtapose this view with that preached by Jesus. This is how Rudolf Bultman sees it:

"The dominant concept of Jesus' message is the Reign of God . . . its immediately impending irruption . . .

which will destroy the present course of the world, wipe out all the contra-divine, Satanic power under which the present world groans. . . . The coming of God's Reign is a miraculous event, which will be brought about by God alone without the help of men . . . it is clear that this thought is not determined by the national hope. . . . Rather, Jesus' message is connected with . . . a hope which awaits Salvation not from a miraculous change in historical (i.e. political and social) conditions. . . . The presupposition of this hope is the pessimistic-dualistic view of the Satanic corruption of the total world-complex. . . ."

Bultman adds: "According to Jesus, man cannot hasten the divinely determined course of events, either by strict observance of the Commandments and by penance--as the Pharisees supposed--or by driving out the Romans by force of arms--as the Zealots fancied . . . its coming is a miracle independent of every human act--as miraculous as the growth and ripening of seed, which proceeds without human help or comprehension."⁵

We have emphasized two passages: they are of extreme importance to our theme. Bultman's excluding "penance" as a precondition for the coming of Redemption undermines another of the conventional equations of Jesus' ministry with Judaism, which sees repentance as a primary factor in the realization of Redemption. Bultman's blunt statement that all phenomena of men's actions (deed) are

"of no help" to the coming of the Kingdom underscores the hypothesis suggested here that Jesus' claim to authority is not grounded in any claim of representing Judaism's Messiah-vision.

Bultman's interpretations also provides an apt explanation for Jesus' numerous parables about "seeds and leaven."

According to Judaism man is the potential, permanent accessory in the hastening of the coming of God's Kingdom; each deed of his, even a minor one counts:

"Before one is about to act he should consider the scales on which the deeds of mankind are weighed as balanced; good on one side and evil on the other; any deed may tip the scales to one side--and he world will be judged accordingly."⁶

To Jesus it is the very opposite: "With the reign of God it is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground . . . and the seed sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe at once he sends the harvesters, because the harvest has com." (Mk. 4:26-29)

How Jesus arrived to the conclusion that his view about the Kingdom is corroborated by Israel's scriptures, and the entire "house of Israel are lost sheep"⁷ is not the

historian's task to pursue; the data available for analysis are the historian's domain. And as stated above, the sources prove that Jesus argued against Israel's vision of the Kingdom from the very source that engendered it.

It was Jesus' conviction that the Kingdom of God, whose immediacy he preached, was being misinterpreted by the totality of Israel, all its sects, and that there is no affinity between his view and those of others. This gave rise to the self-awareness of his authority, his presenting himself as the "bearer of the Kerigma."

Jesus attacked the Pharisees not, as the conventional explanation goes, because of the alleged affinity between him and the Pharisees, but because it was primarily the Pharisees who devoted themselves to the strengthening of the national character of Israel and to the integration of faith in the One with existential problems of earthly life.⁸

Jesus believed that he alone had penetrated the will of God hidden within the text of the Torah. The Torah's sacredness was in indicating to the children of Israel the way in which man could regain the completeness of faith in God forfeited by Adam's sin. Jesus' proclamation of the worthlessness of human efforts drained all theological/existential substance from the concept of the Chosen People. The refutation of the this-worldly element

in the God-man relationship was simultaneously the refutation of Israel's national uniqueness.

If faith in God was the sole guarantor of the believers' redemption, then Israel's national infrastructure was the stumbling block for salvation, since it would be a diminishing the light of "a lamp put under a bushel."⁹

The refutation of Israel's nationhood is not an inference from Jesus' preaching of faith alone as the means to the believer's redemption--the refutation of Judaism's nationhood was an essential component of Jesus' Gospel. As Jesus raised the believer out of his this-worldly setting, so, too, he raised him out of any ties to a Chosen Nation, and of his concern for the Promised Land.

The Kingdom of God Proclaimed by Jesus

The earliest Gospel narrates the commencement of Jesus' ministry: "Now after that John was put 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, and believe in the Gospel." (Mk. 1:15-16)

The expectation of the Kingdom of God was the paramount theme in the land of Israel; but it was inseparable from another theme: the restoration of

Israel's sovereignty, that went together with the removal of evil from the face of the earth."

But Jesus adamantly refuses any linkage between his Gospel and any political and social issues. Jews attracted by his message of the Kingdom of God asked for a sign (that could only mean a sign that the reign of Rome is being contested), Jesus responds:

"A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given . . ."¹⁰

Jesus' statement seems odd in view of the fact, that his ministry abounds with signs. When the disciples of John, sent by their master to inquire whether he is the one "that should come" Jesus points to the many "miracles" he performed as a "sign" that he is the one "that should come."¹¹ The question that arises is a twofold one: (a) Why do the Jews, witnessing the "miracles" pointed out by Jesus as evidence that he is the (messiah) "that should come," not accept this as a sign? (b) Why does Jesus not point out to Jews these "miracles" as the sign they ask for, but instead call them "a wicked and adulterous generation?"

The explanation to both questions seems to be, that the sign the Jews looked for was not Jesus' "miraculous" deeds (something completely unrelated with the claim to be a Messiah)¹² but a sign related to the national hope of

Israel. By demanding such a sign Jews demonstrated their traditional view about the Kingdom of God, prerequisites by national redemption. This angered Jesus: according to whom the wedding of the concept of God's Kingdom with Israel's nationhood turned the Jews into a "wicked and adulterous generation."

The helplessness of man in improving earthly existence was a correlation of Jesus' teachings--that the material world was the domain of Satan; he, therefore, made no distinction between various governments and economic-political systems. All of them were part of the "corrupted flesh" from which man could be freed only by faith. Accordingly the realization of the Kingdom of God demanded the believers' complete faith in God, a faith not bound to a pretentious conviction of one's own potentials.

In discussing Jesus' view of deed in relation to the Kingdom of God, Rudolf Bultman writes:

It would be a misrepresentation of Jesus' gospel to interpret his perception of "God's Reign as the triumph of the Demand for Good either in the human mind or in historical human affairs." Or to identify the Reign of God with the time "when the divine Demand . . . takes shape in an ethical social order. [Such interpretation] . . . not only distort the concept Reign of God, but also misunderstood the intent of God's demand--it aims neither

at the formation of 'character' nor at the molding of human society."¹³ "He [Jesus] does not, as the prophets did, raise the demand for justice and right."¹⁴

"His proclamation of the will of God is not an ethic of world-reform . . . it does not envisage a future to be molded within this world by plans and sketches for the ordering of human life."¹⁵ "The Reign of God, demanding of man decision for God against every earthly tie, is the salvation to come."¹⁶

Bultman concludes:

". . . the synoptic tradition leaves no doubt that Jesus' life and work measured by traditional messianic idea was not messianic."¹⁷

Hans Leitzman (1875-1942) in op. cit., points out that Jesus using traditional Judaic terms, charged them with radically different meaning: "just as he had quite a new sense to the term, Kingdom of God, so too, he entirely transformed the meaning of Messiah." (p. 56).

F. F. Bruce summarizing Jesus' redemption-teaching concludes: "In all his recorded teachings, there is not one reference to the restoration of David's Kingdom."¹⁸

Bruce compares the manifold efforts to depict Jesus' teachings in consistency with the traditional Judaism: [This] is as probable as that fifty years after the Dublin rising of Easter Week, 1916, an attempt should

be made . . . to portray Michael Collins and other leaders of the Irish independence struggle as pacifists who inculcated in their followers an attitude of sweetness and light towards the 'Saxon foe'."19

Rudolf Bultman whom we quoted above gives a synopsis of Jesus' Redemption-Gospel:

"it is clear that his thought is not determined by the national hope . . . of the Jewish people. . . . No saying of Jesus mentions the Messiah-king who is to crush the enemies of the People . . . nor the gathering of the twelve tribes, nor the joy that will be in the peace-blessed land."20 Jesus denied that any of the above signs are needed for the Kingdom of God: "he in his own person is the sign of the time."21

Jesus' Mission to Israel

The conventional view that Jesus' mission to the House of Israel means that his ministry identified itself with Judaism's theological goals, bounds New Testament scholars to their unsubstantiated assumption, and to arbitrary theories about historical facts that contradict their theories. It was as setting out to assemble cardboard pieces of a complex puzzle while refusing to follow the pattern according to which the separate pieces were made: Jesus' mission to Israel, and the character of

that mission do not fit into the pattern construed by the overwhelming majority of New Testament scholars.

Jesus' ministry, although directed to Israel, was sui-generis a refutation of Judaism, of Israel's theological fountainhead and its Messiah-vision. Jesus' silence about the central issue in Israel at that time, his omitting to instruct the twelve as to the ongoing rebellions against Rome, was not because he opposed Zealotic violence. Israel itself was deeply divided in that issue, and Jesus too could have formulated his own. Jesus' silence stemmed from it, that he saw Israel's national infrastructure as a stumbling block to the realization of the kingdom of heaven.

Nothing in the New Testament indicates that Jesus' ministry identified itself with contemporaneous Judaism or, with any event and/or spiritual creativity of Israel for a span of over half a millennium. Any gospel identification with a phenomenon in Israel's history, or of affirmation with Judaism, goes back to the times of pre-exile prophecy; and this, too, in an extremely confined way. Jesus never cites the prophet's references to Israel as a corporal entity; it is the prophet's admonishings of Israel's sins that Jesus refers to.²²

The nucleus of Jesus' ministry was that Israel's assumption that its nationhood is inseparable from the

recognition of the One, and that man contributes through his deed in the realization of the Kingdom of God has been false. Judaism's view of man as God's accomplice in perfecting his earthly habitat gave rise to the sinful concept of merit through deed.

In excluding deed and concern with existential issues from the itinerary of obedience to God, in condemning man's claiming salvation due to him for his righteous deeds, the refutation of Israel's nationhood was inevitable.²³

The doctrine that Jesus conquered death, and that his victory over death became accessible to his followers, obviously arose after the crucifixion, nonetheless the tradition of this doctrine harkens back to the ministry of Jesus.²⁴ According to Christian dogma Jesus brought to mankind the way to conquer death by redeeming his followers from the curse of Original Sin. Jesus was a Second Adam, free of the sin of the first Adam. The primordial Adam brought death by giving priority to deed; Jesus showed the way to abolish death by denouncing the validity of deed and embracing pure faith.

God revealed himself through the Torah to Israel that recognized Him as the One Creator. The ultimate purpose of God's revelation to Israel was to make them recognize man's helplessness on earth and to realize that

any claim of human capacity is an evil urge, the work of Satan, who due to Adam's sin controls the This-Worldly realm.

The history of Israel, however, was a history of deviation from and distortion of this ultimate goal. Israel's leaders utilized the Torah to justify earthly aspirations, to recognize the temptations of earthly existence as a form of serving God. Not only did the Torah not destroy the individual's belief in the capacity of his deed but the Torah was turned into a magna charta for an even more sinful concept: the collective earthly force--nationhood.

The entire house of Israel had lost its way; the teachings of their leaders turned them into "lost sheep," by erecting a national structure around the faith in the One, and by making them believe that their deeds will merit for them entrance in the Kingdom of God. Because of that "the publicans and the harlots [will] go into the kingdom of God before" the law-abiding Jews.²⁵

Proclaiming that the "Kingdom of God is at hand" . Jesus specifies two conditions: "repent and believe in the gospel."²⁶

We pointed out in another place that Jesus' concept of redemption by faith could not be identified with the Torah, here we want to discuss briefly the other part of

Jesus' call: "repent."

The call to repent was heard from all Israel's prophets. It was not even confined to Israel alone. Jonah (and also others) addressed the call to Gentile peoples.¹⁷ But, the call to repentance was defined: "Repent for your wrongdoings against God." More often it was a call to rectify wrong done to fellow-man, to the widow, the orphan, the poor and the weak, etc.

Jesus' call to repent is non-qualified; it does not specify any contemporary evils, any specific sins committed by the people of his generation.

Furthermore, Jesus' entire approach to sin and sinners as recorded is extremely ambivalent. When he is in the company of sinners he does not point out to them their specific sins, he rather admires their faith in him, a faith that momentarily cleansed them from their sin.²⁸

Jesus' attitude to sin is even more complex: When he is being reproached for his friendliness with those who are considered as sinners he answers. "I did not come to the righteous but to the sinners."²⁹ This would sound logical if Jesus would utilize his coming to the sinners for pointing out to them their sins. But instead the Gospels record not one remark of his against their sins, instead we hear quite often his accusations against the ones he accordingly did not come to: the Pharisees,

scribes, even Zealots.³⁰

The scribes and Pharisees (the righteous ones to whom he did not come) turn out thus to be much lower on the scale of sin than the sinners (to whom he came); why then did Jesus exclude them from the "sinners" to whom he "came"?

It is obvious that Jesus' evaluation of righteousness and sin differs from the norm applied by Israel; the difference being not so much the view of what constitutes sin but in the two categories of sin: (1) violating commandments of the Torah committed by harlots, publicans and the Am-Haretzim (the ignorant); and (2) the sin of Pharisees, Scribes, Zealots, High Priests, etc.--sins detrimental to the realization of "the Kingdom of God." This is even more elucidated in another place: "Verily I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."³¹

Repent and believe the gospel--are the two, the only two prerequisites for entering the "Kingdom of God that is at hand." Jesus precedes his twofold call with the proclamation: "The time is fulfilled."³² It meant that the Torah lost its validity; the struggles and hopes for

political/social issues are not only obsolete but "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." There are sinners, publicans and harlots, but "more joy will be in heaven over one sinner that repents than over ninety-nine just persons, which need no repentance."³³ The meaning can only be: who think they need no repentance.³⁴

The dividing line is not anymore the traditional concept of sin and righteousness "all sins shall be forgiven [even] blasphemies."³⁵ Only the refusal to recognize the Holy Ghost--i.e., the Gospel of the Kingdom of God" brings "the danger of eternal damnation."³⁶

The realization of the Kingdom of God could take place only by faith in God not bound to a believer's conviction of his own potentials.

To enter the Kingdom of God Israel must therefore be expurgated of its two cardinal sins: (1) the sin of cultivating the potency of righteous deeds as the vehicle to redemption and (2) the sin of glorifying an earthly, national kingdom. "One can not serve Mammon and God."³⁷

We quote again Rudolf Bultman:

"From the parable of the seed growing of itself, in which of itself is the point, one must not draw the conclusion that God's Reign (or Kingdom) is an entity growing in history; rather it assumes that its coming is a miracle independent of every human act as miraculous as the

growth and ripening of seed which proceeds without human help or comprehension." Bultman naturally realizes that the reader today will be inclined rather to make a different analogy, that the ripening of a seed requires human help. He adds, "It is far from Jesus and the world he moved in to regard the growth of seed as a natural process of development."

"Neither do the parables of mustard seed and of the leaven (Mk. 4:30-32 or Mt. 13:31f par.) tell of gradual development of the "Kingdom of God" in history. The point is the contrast between the minuteness of its beginning and the magnitude of its completion. . . . Both beginning and completion of God's Reign are miraculous, and miraculous is the happening which brings its fulfillment."³⁸

"All that man can do in the face of the Reign of God now breaking in is this. Keep ready or get ready for it. Now is the time of decision. . . . The 'Queen of the South' once came to hear the wisdom of Solomon; the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Torah behold, something greater than Solomon is here! Behold, something greater than Jonah is here!" (Lk. 11:31, par.)³⁹

Jesus' severing the idea of God's Kingdom from the activities of man, his de-secularization of man's faith in God, could not but include the refutation of Israel's nationhood, and of seeing the faithful as a non-

differentiated collective.

Jesus points to Gentiles that reveal faith in God as "not to be found in Israel." To the Samaritan woman Jesus speaks about a time when neither Jerusalem, nor the mountain sacred to her people will be the place of God-worship.⁴⁰ Jesus refutes Israel's claim to a special status in the relationship of God: "I say unto you [Jews], the Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Even if some editing has been performed, the message as such must reflect the tradition imbued by Jesus in the disciples. The Gospels were composed by men for whom Jesus was the guarantor of their salvation (leaving out the issue of deifying him).

Jesus' case against Judaism coincided with the allegations the Hellenistic world made against Israel's claim to be the Chosen entity of the Universal God, and to possess a Law as its vehicle to redemption. Because of this bi-polar doctrine Israel was stigmatized as the Odium humanum in the midst of mankind being brought together in the process of syncretism.

The prolific literature on anti-Semitism obscures the fact that the stimulus of Judeophobia was anti-Judaism. There were no occasions in antiquity for singling out Jews as an object of animosity. Israel's refutation of polytheism,

its adherence to the One God never stirred pagans to hate Jews. In late antiquity it even won administration for Jews.

Israel's coupling the faith in the One God with the claim of being his Chosen Nation and with the goal of demonstrating the redemptive efficacy of human deed, became a causal factor of anti-Judaism and its derivative - anti-Semitism.

Mutatis-mutandis, the gospel of Jesus was a reverberation of the subsequent Hellenistic anti-Judaism. But while confining this anti-Judaism to his disciples, Jesus knew that it had to remain a secret to the people whose support he wanted. (The scholars who designate the secrecy in Jesus' teaching as the messianic secret are partially correct: Jesus believed that only by "purifying" faith in the Universal One from Israel's national parochialism can one be redeemed and the Kingdom of God realized: but they are wrong in supposing that his being the Messiah was the secret element in his teaching.)

Jesus realized how deeply rooted is in Israel the oneness of faith and the idea of Chosen nationhood; and the work needed to accomplish the division between the two ideals. Being aware that the extent of his refutation of Judaism had to remain a secret to the people whose support he wanted, he therefore recruited a group of close

disciples with whom to share his view about the "imminent danger" in wedding faith in the One with the national concept of Israel.

Jesus' aim was to change the theological climate in Judea, to rid the people of their belief that the Law of Israel is the road to redemption. Israel's "leaders are blind and they mislead a blinded people" with the illusion that this worldly life can become sanctioned through man's deed guided by Law. The conviction of Israel that a deed is called for to perfect man's earthly habitat, and Israel's community of believers in the One constitute a national entity was the hindrance to the salvation of mankind.

A great fundamental change must take place in Israel; the barriers of Israel's nationalism must be shattered. "Love thy enemy" meant that the destroyer of the Jewish homeland is not an enemy, because the terrestrial homeland does not matter. The evils in social life, the cruelties of heads of state, oppression and exploitation are elements of earthly life, pure faith is above the needs of terrestrial existence; the believers should not rebel against the social status God has placed them in, but "render unto Caesar what is his."⁴¹ The this-worldly sphere belonged to those whom God had destined to be Caesars.

Jesus sees the people of the Covenant as "salt that loses its savour"⁴²; he warns them: "I tell you the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you."⁴³ Jesus told his disciples:

"The wedding is ready . . . go therefore, to the thoroughfares and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find. And the servants went and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good."⁴⁴

Jesus spoke in parables to prepare the ground. He considered Galilee (for reasons mentioned above) as more likely to win followers. He cautioned the messengers, that when what "he tells them in secret" will eventually be revealed it will "bring no peace but a sword." Families will be divided, hate and persecution will ensue. Israel as an entity will never dissolve the bond of faith in One with the awareness of national Oneness. But as Davies states: "It was not to the nation of Israel that Jesus sent his disciples, but "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (I am aware that Dr. Davies may have used the last words in a different connotation than used here, but his profound insight should be noted.)

Sending the twelve (and according to another version also seventy) on the mission to wean away the "lost sheep of the house of Israel"⁴⁵ from their parochial messiah vision Jesus said to them:

"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division; for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against son, and the son against the father.⁴⁶ He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."⁴⁷

The primary goal of all who aim to negate and destroy an existing entity has always been to reshuffle the social boundaries by changing the objects of hate and love. They teach that friends and enemies are not along the traditional lines, but according to new divisions.

A surgical knife must sever one from the other releasing the universal G-d idea from the parochial structure that Israel's "blind leaders" had constructed around Him, and make the "lost sheep in the house of Israel" aware of the incompatibility between their recognition of the universal G-d, and the construction of the parochial fence they build around Him.

In summary: Jesus' ministry, although directed to Israel, was a disavowal of the Sinaitic structure of Judaism.

Whatever differences one may find in the original group of Jesus' fellowship, one basic principle was common

to all: Salvation comes through Jesus sui-generis, Jesus mediates the salvation of those who believe in him, and that salvation is not contingent on any changes in the material world around him. This was the sine qua non of the Jesus tradition.

The preassumed hypothesis that the "parting of the ways" between Israel and Jesus' church could only have come through an evolutionary process, sidetracked the Quest for the Historical Jesus, whose ministry was the catalyst of the anti-Judaic theology presented in Jesus' church(es).

The parting of the ways was not a process but an event--the ministry of Jesus.

The enormous pains taken to discover in Judaism the cradle of Christianity is a historic fallacy. It is exactly this assumption that is in dire need of a comprehensive investigation.

Christianity was not the acclaimed Judaic breach in the realm of the syncretized gentile world but a legitimate part of the latter's multi-faceted pattern. Jesus transformed into the realm of theology the ideas of syncretized Hellas.

The refutation of the national phenomenon in general and the national uniqueness of Judaism in particular was the nucleus of Hellas' conflict with Judaism. In its continuous syncretization Hellas could

adapt and absorb many elements of Judaism; even the grand idea of One Omnipotent Universal God instead of a plurality of gods could be made to fit the individualistic/universalistic Weltanschauung of Hellas. However the idea that the Universal God designed a natural-parochial entity as an unavoidable component in His Cosmic pattern contradicted the essence of Hellenism.

Through Christianity, Hellas went to the farthest point of its syncretic flexibility while retaining its essentiality: its indigenous views about the fatal helplessness of man to achieve salvation by its own efforts, and man's reliance on a deified, corporal redeemer (king, philosopher, Soter). Christianity, being the ultimate achievement of syncretism, provided Hellas with a comprehensive theological framework, and gave a new impetus to the Hellenic struggle with Judaism.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND
SKETCH OF CHAPTERS

Jesus' ministry took place towards the end of the Second Commonwealth, an epoch that modern scholarship sees in its entirety contrasted to a previous period in Israel. Whence the First Commonwealth should be characterized as the civilization of Israel that ended with the destruction of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. (720 and 587 B.C.E. respectively); the Second Commonwealth, which began after the return from the Babylonian exile (539), is characterized as the era of Judaism as distinct from Israel.

The applying of separate nomenclatures to two periods of the Jewish people provided a basis for the arbitrary theories of modern criticism about a prophetic Judaism having been transformed (or submerged) into a legalistic one, and the perennial clashes between the two.

Accordingly, Jesus' ministry was a phenomenon of those clashes.

We therefore devoted the first part of our study to the structural changes between the two Commonwealths, amassing proof about the continuity of the fundamentals of

Judaism during the Second Commonwealth. These changes were not conceptual, but a means to preserve spiritual sameness within the new socio-political infrastructure of the Second Commonwealth.

The first chapter of that part deals with the differences between the two Commonwealths, and the dangers arising from the situation when the only monotheistic entity in antiquity, previously a sovereign state, was integrated within a pagan empire.

The following chapter deals with the confrontation of Israel with the Samaritan demand to be accepted as part of the religious community on the basis of their sharing the faith in Israel's One God, and the non-traditional steps of Israel's leaders to prevent it.

The third chapter deals with the decrees of Ezra and Nehemiah in defense of the national and theological character of Israel.

The fourth chapter elucidates the origin of sects after the restoration of Israel's sovereignty and the link between the two new phenomena: division into Sects and the new statehood. The emergence of sects reflected different responses to the newly arisen challenges facing a sovereign Israel and the common aim of preserving the uniqueness of Israel.

The plurality of sects was not the result of a loosely defined Israel, but on the contrary, a heightened awareness of Israel's uniqueness and its concern to preserve itself amidst an alien world.

Part One thus sets the stage for Part Two: could Jesus' ministry be perceived as one of the contemporaneous Jewish sects? Such an enquiry should actually begin by an analysis of Jesus' ministry and his logia. However, modern scholarly literature in this field has established a tradition that strikes out any evidence based on Jesus' activities and relegates such evidence to a later tradition about Jesus, not to that practiced by Jesus.

Paradoxically, this standard works only in one direction--to invalidate evidence of anti-Judaic logia and actings of Jesus; anything that lends itself to prove that Jesus was anchored in Judaism is judged as authentic.

Part Two of our study begins therefore with the post-crucifixion behavior of Jesus' disciples. It is only logical to assume that their tradition about Jesus comes directly from Jesus himself; the only source of the disciples' tradition about Jesus must have been his teaching and activities.

The first chapter of Part Two analyzes the reaction of the disciples after Gethsemane, as radically distinct from the reaction of Jews in similar situations (failings

of messianic adventures, etc.) in Judea.

Chapter Two aims to forestall the classical argument that Paul transformed the Judaic character of the Jesus-fellowship, infusing it with Hellenistic/syncretistic elements. The chapter deals with the recommendation of the Apostles to elect the committee of the seven "Hellenists," their conflict with the "Hebrews" and Stephen's refutation of Israel and Judaism.

The proximity of that event, and the attitude of the Apostles proves that anti-Judaism was indigenous to the Jesus-legacy.

This chapter analyzes also the dispersion of part of the Jesus-fellowship and the founding of churches among Gentiles, arguing that the dispersion after the Stephen-event was not due to the "persecution" against the church in Jerusalem, but rather a tactical step by that church as a result of its failing among Jews.

Chapter Three is devoted to an analysis of the secret element in Jesus' ministry; a discussion of scholarly theories about the essence of the secrecy. It concludes that neither Jesus' antinomianism, nor the recognition that Jesus was the Messiah could have required secrecy. The element requiring secrecy was Jesus' teaching that Israel's messianic-vision as well as his concept of the Sinaic-Covenant is an obstacle to the salvation of man

and to the realization of the Kingdom of God.

As the above meant the denunciation of Israel as a Chosen Nation and the repudiation of the Torah, it could be intimated for the time being only to the select few close to Jesus. The non-secret gospel preached to the Jews should be that faith alone and not merit by deed will realize the Kingdom of God.

The study concludes that the parting of the ways between the Church and Israel commenced with the ministry of Jesus. His denial of human deed and his insistence that the salvation of the faithful lies in escape from this-worldly problems contradicted the essence of Israel and its awareness of being the instrument of God in the perfection of creation.

Jesus' mission to Israel contained the message of Israel's dissolution as a national entity; as God's earthly accomplice to perfect human existence. Jesus' gospel that through faith and identification with a divine being the believers enter the Kingdom of God was anchored in the variegated soteria-phenomena of the syncretizing Hellenistic world.

In this respect there were no disagreements between the Mother Church in Jerusalem and the Gentiles (pre-Paulinian and later Pauline churches). The only difference was whether Jesus' mission to the lost sheep in the House

of Israel should still be continued. Those who claimed that it should be continued believed that the secrecy in Jesus' teaching must be maintained. The denunciation of Israel, and the removal of any distinction between Jew and Gentile should be delayed. But, the number and influence of those who claimed that by not accepting Jesus, Israel forfeited its position was growing. As a result the secret element in Jesus' teaching--the repudiation of Judaism became the manifested doctrine of Jesus' churches.

NOTES

PREFACE TO PART TWO

(Pages xxi-xxxv)

1. Acts 7:3; 22:4, 26:11; Gal. 1:13 Phil. 3:6.
2. Acts 9:1-2.
3. II Cor. 5:16 ". . . though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth we know him no more." similar Rom. 3:24-5; 6:3-5; 7:4. These New Testament passages that elucidate the way Paul developed the legacy of Jesus' ministry are being manipulated to substantiate the theory about Christianity, "not the religion of Jesus but the religion about Jesus."
4. Acts 9:2; 22:3-5; 26:10-11.
5. Yech. 37:1-14. Yechezkiel was one of the last prophets (between Jeremiah and Isaiah 6th century B.C.E.) Although some historians place him centuries later. See Enc. Mik., Vol. III, pp. 637-8). His book abounds with eschatological visions, among them the vision of the "dry bones" and their resurrection. About the reason of "why should Jesus' followers have been persecuted?" is also discussed by Morton Smith in his work Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1973). "To believe the Messiah had come or to expect he would soon come again, were not offenses punishable by Jewish law. And a man like Paul would not have taken an active part in a persecution . . . without serious cause." pp. 254-5.
6. See F. F. Bruce, New Testament History (Doubleday & Co., New York, 1969), pp. 288-9. "The decree formulated by the Jerusalem leaders embodied the answers. . . . The yoke of the law [Torah] was not

to be imposed on Gentile believers. . . . Their status as members of the redeemed community was assured, as was the status of their Jewish fellow-members, by their acknowledged Faith in Jesus as Lord." See also, Johannes Weiss, Earliest Christianity (Peter Smith, Gloucester, Mass, 1959), pp. 258-272. Discussing The conference in Jerusalem, the author concludes: "The establishment of the partnership and the recognition of the Apostles to the Gentiles [given by the Apostles in Jerusalem] meant also a recognition of their methods of work . . . the original Apostles could not help recognizing the Gentile Christians who had received the Spirit of God as Christian brothers. . . ." (p. 269).

The author discussing views to the opposite resumes: ". . . the fact remains that . . . The Mother Church and its leaders had been forced to recognize that converted Gentiles had just as good a claim on the Kingdom of God and Salvation as the brethren of circumcision . . . the Gentile mission could pursue its way undisturbed, and a Christianity could be developed which would be more than an offshoot of the . . . Judaism of the Rabbis." (p. 272).

7. See Hans Leitzman, A History of the Early Church (The World Publishing Co., Cleveland and New York, 1937) "Wherever a Hellenistic mission was founded, and new Christian churches were called into being, emissaries of the original church came to the scene to test the quality of the new brethren . . . there was in fact only one single church of 'disciples' of the Lord; its locus was temporarily the earthly Jerusalem. . . . (p. 73).
8. Ibid., p. 74. ". . . there grew in a few years from the little group of enthusiasts in Jerusalem a great fellowship whose links reached as far as the Mediterranean and the capital of Syria . . . as a brotherly unity . . . the original church laid claims upon the diaspora where Peter exercised the headship of the Apostolic College, and was the rock on which the church was built." See also W. D. Davies, Christian Origins and Judaism (Barton, Longman & Todd, London, 1962). He quotes J. Munk who claims that the recognition of Paul's churches by the Apostles reflected the teaching of Jesus: ". . . the attitude of Jesus became also that of the Urgemeinde, so that the latter is drawn nearer to

Paul. . . . According to J. Munk there was "agreement between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders at every point." Neither was Jerusalem "the center from which Judaizers sent emissaries" to demand obedience to the law, etc. (This is by the way also the view of Morton Smith who traces the radical antinomianism to Jesus. (M. Smith, op. cit., pp. 252-66).

According to Professor Munck the phenomenon of Judaizers emerged not among the disciples of Jesus but among Gentile converts to Christianity. They were so fascinated by the "sympathetic picture . . . of the Palestinian Urgemeinde" given to them by Paul "that some of his [St. Paul's] . . . Gentile converts desired to imitate it, and secondly, the LXX which . . . the Pauline Churches used was easily understood to affirm that Israel after the flesh was the object of God's special favor, and therefore, the desire to be like Israel after the flesh became natural." Ibid., p. 196.

9. See above note 7.
10. Acts. 15:1-31, Gal. 2:1-10.
11. Ibid., 2:10. Acts 11:29-30.
12. The union of the Christian church and state came toward the end of Constantine's reign (ruled 324-337). It was at the councils in Constantinople (381) Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) that the church got the power to begin the "correction" of heretical dogmas.
13. There is no literary work that can be ascribed to a Jewish-Christian sect, and there is little about them written by others. Jrenaeus (2nd century) mentions a sect of Ebionites in his book Adversus Haereses. Attempts made by modern historians to trace such a group to the Mother Church in Jerusalem failed. Their attacks against Paul certainly contradicted the view of the primitive community. Reference to such a group is also made by Epiphanius (4th century) in his book Panarion. He lists them among the 80 heresies he deals with.

If there were such individuals or even an organized group, they had very little in common with the disciples of Jesus nor with Judaism.

14. In protesting against being persecuted by Rome Christian Apologists, and before them Paul argued that the followers of Jesus are actually an ancient religion, part of (or, the true) Israel.
15. The quest for a Jesus different from that in the Gospels began in the post-Enlightenment epoch when this-worldly issues became the foremost concern of the spiritual elite who sought in religion an answer to existential issues. With it came the need to reevaluate the gospel's denial of the terrestrial sphere of man, and to adjust the Christian ethos to the spirit of modern age; Jesus' exclusive emphasis on an heavenly kingdom, his sidetracking all social, national, economic and political problems was irreconcilable with the new ethos of Enlightenment; it conflicted with the Weltanschauung of progressive Christians. Post-Enlightenment scholars brought into being a new ethos of Christianity: the glorification of the human person in Jesus of Nazareth, the prophet of comprehensive social reforms.

The quest for the Historical Jesus was thus not caused by new data found or excavated; it was an indigenous method among Western humanists of making Christianity compatible with the new Zeitgeist.

16. Robert P. Meye in his work, Jesus and the Twelve (William B. Erdmans Pub. Co., Michigan, 1968) writes: ". . . the historian must reckon with the fact that . . . [the disciples] were chosen by Jesus and were with Jesus. . . . [It] guaranteed their permanent position of authority . . ." (p. 197).

The acting of Jesus' disciples after his death is the terra firma for concluding the essence of his teachings.

17. W. D. Davies, The Gospel and the Land (University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1974) makes a scholarly effort to reduce the theological barrier to a Jewish-Christian reproachment. "The question then emerges whether essential Christianity can ever be expressed in non-incarnational [i.e., non-Christological] terms which would lessen the gulf between it and Judaism . . . would it be possible to conceive of Christianity . . . as a way of life?" His final answer is: "Even so conservatively

halakic a figure as James . . . was finally unacceptable to Judaism. . . . there is a Christological factor in Christianity which . . . is non-negotiable . . . just as there is a centrality of Torah in Judaism which is non-negotiable." (pp. 403-4).

18. Evaluating the relationship of Jesus' ministry to Judaism by the dogma of faith in the One God is avoiding the issue. It was not the metaphysics of Judaism, its concepts of what is taking place in Heaven, but Judaism's approach to man's earthly problems that was incompatible with the teachings of Jesus.

It is of utmost significance that among the cardinal commandments in Judaism the duty of faith is not listed. In the detailed register of the Law there is nothing concerning faith, nor any admonition, any warning of punishments for lack of faith.

The aim of the Chosen People was to live according to God's Law--a Law whose details orbited around the primordial commandment bestowed on mankind: control and perfect the earth in subordination to the Heavens.

Judaism's terrain was the perfection of social life, the solving of existential problems between man and man and between individual and community. Abstract theologies delving into the Being of God are nonessential to Judaism.

The Talmud is replete with the minute and precise legalism of Judaism not because prophetic Judaism declined into casuistry, as an academic platitude claims, but because of the need to keep alive Judaism's involvement in earthly activities, and the will to separate its people from the mythological and mystical escapism rampant in their Gentile surroundings.

The Jewish messianic vision of the coming Kingdom of God was not a mankind transformed into heavenly angels, devoid of earthly desires, but a mankind that has overcome its bestial residue and rules the earth as the human allotment in the cosmic Kingdom of God.

Jesus' teaching was a total refutation of Judaism's this-worldly perception of man's religious obligation. Rudolf Bultman, in his work, Theology of the New Testament, (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1951), writes: To Jesus "The coming of God's Reign . . . will be brought about by God alone without the help of men." (p. 4). Jesus "does not, as the prophets did, raise the demand for justice and right. . . . Man must become like a child, who knowing no such thing as appeal to any rights or merits of his own, is willing simply to be given a gift." (p. 14). In conclusion Jesus "de-historized God and man; that is, released the relation between God and man from its previous ties to history."

Jesus' ministry, accordingly presented the antithesis to Judaism, whose mission was to make the existential issues of mankind inseparable from faith in God.

19. The just-remnant concept, whether right or wrong at this stage, was not a new element in Judaism.
20. "The activity of Jesus, then, was . . . by teaching, preaching and healing, at creating a community--not a nation . . . and at inducing them to give the appropriate response, so that they might become effectively members of the new people of God which was coming into being." W. D. Davies, op. cit. (2), p. 353.

As to the conventional academic assertion "that the tradition about the works and words of Jesus has been moulded in the course of its transmission by the needs of the Church; but this is not to admit that the tradition owes its origin to the Church. The tradition about Jesus has its source in his activity: it is not the creation of the community, however, much coloured by its needs. W. B. Davies, op. cit. (1), p. 11.

Part I, Chapter I (Pages 1-14)

1. Lev. 18:3, "After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do; and after the doing of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their

- statutes." In the same vein, differently phrased:
Ex. 23:24. Num. 33:52. Deut. 12:3; 30-31.
2. Ex. 23:32; 34:12. Similar Jehos. 23:12.
 3. Deut. 17:19-20. I Sam. 12:14-15. I Kings 2:3-4; 9:4f.
 4. The advantages to Israel of a pious King vs. the evils caused by a ruler who deviates from the path of the Torah were told to King Solomon by God in a vision. See I Kings 9. Also I Chr. 12:9. II Chr. 7:12f.
 5. Num. 20:12.
 6. Jos. 15:16.
 7. I Sam. 8:21-2.
 8. Ibid., 15:26.
 9. I Chr. 28:3
 10. I. Kings 11:4-13; 31-40.
 11. I Kings 18:18. Hos. 5:11-14; 12:2; 13:8; 14:4. Isa. 30:16-7; 31:1f. Jer. 13:13. Am. 7:9-11.
 12. Num. 23:9. The maxim was coined by a Gentile prophet called Balam; but this characteristic has been accepted as leitmotif of Israel's destiny among the nations.
 13. See Isa. 10:5-15. Ez. 16:37. Jer. 10-4; 32:4; 34:2. Am. 9:1-40. All these places deal with the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (720) and/or that of Judea (586) by the Gentile empires of Assyria and Babylon respectively. Their explanation is that Gentiles were the instrument of God in punishing His people for their sins.

The concept that the God of Israel will engage Gentile rulers as executors of His wrath against Israel is a basic and primordial tenet in Judaism. It was the only way to reconcile the notion of an Omnipotent, Omnipresent God who supervises all phases in history, especially the history of His Chosen People, with the victories of pagans over Israel. The Pentateuch in Lev. (26:14-43) and in

Deut. (28:15-68), warning Israel about the consequences of disobedience and describing in much detail the penalties and horrors for sins concludes with the warning that: "Ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy" to be "plucked from the land. . . . And God shall scatter you among all peoples"

As Israel's victories in conquering the Land, so too, Israel's defeats by pagan armies were the work of the One God.

This was the inevitable inference from Judaism's view of the exclusive role of the One in history.

14. See Ezra, Chapters 4, 5, and 6; also Josephus Ant., Chapters IV, V, which describe the intrigues of the Samaritans who wrote letters to the rulers in Persia denouncing the rebuilding of the Temple as an act that would lead to rebellion. For eighteen years the work had to be stopped until a new order in favor of the Jews arrived from Persia.
15. Talmudic sources tell many stories about Alexander the Great (Alexander Mokdon), his favoring Jews and siding with them in their conflicts with the Samaritans. One of the legends is that when he approached the city of Jerusalem on his march to Egypt, the High Priest and the Elders went out to meet him. When Alexander saw the High Priest in his attire, the King bowed before the High Priest. To his astonished generals Alexander explained that before his decisive battle over Babylon he saw in a vision a heavenly image assuring him that he would be victorious. In the High Priest he recognized the image in his vision.

Alexander's positive impression on Jews was so pervasive that many children born then were named Alexander.

Stories and remarks about Alexander are to be found: B. T. Joma 69; Sanhedrin 91; Tamid 31-2; J. Sanh. 74, 83. Breishit Rabba 61.

16. While the favorable remarks about Alexander (supra note 15) were confined to this one Hellenic ruler, the recognition of Cyrus' positive role in Israel's history extends to Persia in general. Cyrus was also the only Gentile King to whom the term anointed

(Meshiah) was applied: Is. 45:1 preceding this (44:28) the prophet describes Cyrus being called by God: "My shepherd, [shepherd of God's people] Israel.

17. Jerem. 44:17.

18. See Yehezkiel Kaufman, The Religion of Israel. Translated and edited by Moshe Greenberg. (Schocken Books, N.J., 1960, Part I, Ch. 4, pp. 112-149.) He argues against the view that Israel's monotheistic faith was an evolutionary process from an original polytheism and henotheism. He demonstrates that the Tribes were already permeated with the concept of the One Universal God.

19. Ahab in the Northern Kingdom introduced the Sidonian deity Baal to strengthen his ties with Sidon whose king's daughter, Isabel, Ahab married. In Judea, houses for the pagan deity Astarta and Moloch, idols of the Amonites, were erected to gratify King Solomon's wives, daughters of pagan kings. The extreme idolator, King Ahaz of Judea (733/4-715), who erected in the Temple an altar, according to the model he saw in Damascus, had the purpose of demonstrating his servitude to the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (745-727).

It was against the idolatrous cult of Ahaz that Isaiah addressed his admonitions about "putting trust in Ashur." Ahaz offered his services to Assyria after he was attacked by a coalition of the Northern Kingdom, Edom and Moab. See II Kings 16:6; II Chr. 28:17-8. See also Encyclopedia Mikraith (Hebrew) (Mosad Bailik, Israel, 1950), Vol. I, pp. 207-8.

Talmudic sages defined the sins of Israel that caused the destruction of the First Temple, and the one sin that caused the destruction of the Second Temple in two separate categories.

Accordingly, Israel (referring to both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms) committed three cardinal sins: idolatry, bloodshed, and proscribed sex. (These are the only transgressions a Jew should accept the threat of death rather than commit any one of them.)

The only sin the sages found in the epoch of the Second Commonwealth was unjustified hate between various groups (Sinath-Khinam). And, the Talmud points out, the punishment for transgression during the First Temple had been seventy years' exile; for that in the Second it still continues.

Anyway, the sin of "following after the pagans" was never recorded after the return from the Babylonian exile.

20. There are conflicting views as to the exact age when Zoroastrianism gained influence in the Achaemenian royal houses in Persia. William Foxwell Albright writes: "Epigraphic discoveries have made it quite certain that Darius and his immediate successors . . . can safely be called Mazdayasnians [another name for Zoroastrians] . . . and the references to the Ahura Mazda the great god who has created heaven, earth, mankind . . . suggest that they were followers of Zoroaster." (From the Stone Age to Christianity, 2nd ed., Doubleday Anchor Books, New York, 1957), p. 360.

The decree was issued by Cyrus ca. twenty years before Darius' reign. But it is safe to assume that two decades should not be accepted as a rigid line in discussing a religion that began over three centuries before Cyrus.

Followers of Zoroastrianism, the only pagan religion that came close to the concept of one universal god, should have been inclined to have a positive view to Judaism. The text of Cyrus' decree and the words "All the kingdom of the earth were given to me by God, the God of heavens and He commanded me to build him a house . . ." undoubtedly indicates a leaning toward Judaism's God-concept.

It is true that Cyrus reversed the policy of Babylon and Assyria by resettling the defeated peoples; he also paid homage to the gods of other peoples in his empire. It is, however, a fact that Jews alone were allowed, to return to their homeland.

21. B. T. Sukah, p. 20a, and Sopherim 16 state: "[In the time] when the Torah has been forgotten in Israel, Ezra ascended from Babylon and [re-]established her."

Ezra's stature is even more strongly emphasized in other talmudic passages. "Ezrah would have been worthy of delivering the Torah to Israel, if not for the fact that Moses was before him; but although the Torah had not been given through him its writing was changed by him." Before Ezra the old Hebrew letters were used; Ezra changed them for the "Assyrian," i.e., Aramic letters.

According to a Talmudic version Ezra restored the indigenous alphabet, that was for a time changed into a "broken" one as a punishment for Israel's sins. After they repented the letters were given back their original straight forms. (T. B. Sanh. 11a, see comment of Rabeinu Chananel, loc. cit.)

This corroborates the view that the exiles rid themselves of the sin of idolatry.

Part I, Chapter II

(Pages 15-27)

1. Ex. 5:2 "And Pharaoh said: 'Who is the Lord, that I should hearken unto His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord.'"
2. Judg. 11:24 The text there is: "Therefore what your god ~~Thamos~~ made you inherit you should inherit; and all that God, our God made an inheritance for us that we will inherit." Jos. Ant. Book V, ch. VII/9.
3. II Kings 18:30-35.
4. Ibid., 17:6-7; Jos. Ant., Book IX, Ch. XIV/1.
5. II Kings, 17:24; Jos., Ibid., par. 3.
6. Deut. 23:4.
7. B. T. Brachot 28a. Yoma 54a. In a controversy between Rabbon Gamliel and Jeshaiiah, the latter allowed intermarriage with Amonite males. (Females were never restricted because the blame for inhuman treatment was directed only against the male population.) The basis for removing a Torah Law was: "Since long Sanaherib, King of Ashur, went up

and mixed all the populations."

See also Jos., op. cit., Book X, Ch. IX/7: "... for the people of the ten tribes [i.e., the Northern Kingdom] were carried out of Samaria by the Assyrians in the days of King Hosea . . . Schalmanazar, he removed the Israelis of their country, and placed therein the nation of the Chuteans, who had formerly belonged to the inner parts of Persia and Media, but were then called Samaritans, by taking the name of the country, to which they were removed."

8. Ezra 4:3; also Jos. Ant. Book XI, Ch. IV, p. 3.
9. I Kings 5:15ff. II Chr. 2:2ff. Jos., op. cit., Book VIII, Ch. 11/6.
10. I Kings 8:41-4; II Chr. 6:32-3.
11. Is. 56:7.
12. The outer court had a part where Gentiles could come to pray. See supra, note 30 that Solomon in his inaugurating the Temple pleaded with God to accept and fulfill the prayers of Gentiles.
13. II Kings 24:13; II Chr. 36:18; II Chr. 36:18. See also Jos. Ant. Book X, Ch. IX par. 5.
14. The acceptance of proselytes was practiced in Judaism from the beginnings of the history of Israel. Ex. 12:38 narrates that at the exodus from Egypt: "And a mixed multitude went up also with them." They (or at least part of them) remained within the multitude ("erev-rav" in Hebrew) that instigated "complaints" during the wanderings in the desert.

The role of the "multitude" was especially great in the sin of the Golden Calf; see Ex. 32:1-6. See commentators, loc. cit.

In several places the Torah accentuates the rights of the proselyte (Ger, Ger Tsedek) and his being equal to born Jews (with rare exceptions, such as being anointed as King, etc.).

At each place where the Torah warns about protecting the socially underprivileged the proselyte is included. To give a few examples: "You shall leave them [fallen fruits of the vineyard at harvest] for the poor and the ger." Lev. 19:10.

"God, the mighty . . . executes justice for the orphan and widow, and loveth the ger . . ." Deut. 10:17-18.

"You shall not pervert justice due to the ger, orphan; nor take the widow's raiment to pledge." Deut. 24:17.

"Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones, and the ger that is within thy gates that they may hear [the instructions in the Torah] and . . . learn, and fear the Lord your God." Ibid., 31:12.

"And you shall rejoice in your feast, you, and your son, and your daughter . . . and the ger, and the orphan and the widow . . ." Ibid., 16-17.

Some of the regulations listed above refer not only to the ger that converted to Judaism, but also to a non-Jew inhabiting in the Land, but all of them demonstrate that Judaism welcomed converts since the earliest times.

It is in place here to note, that in contradistinction to Hellas, Rome and also other contemporaneous civilizations, where there were fundamental differences between citizen and stranger, the Torah demanded equal rights for the stranger. Num. 24:23.

15. See supra, note 12.
16. Ezra, 3:2-3.
17. Ibid., 4:2.
18. Ibid., 1:3; II Chr. 36:23; Jos., op. cit., Book XI, Ch. I/3.
19. Ezra 2:70; Jos., ibid., Ch. III/10.

20. Ezra 1:6-7; Jos., *ibid.*, Ch. I/2.
21. *Ibid.*, Ch. II:2; Ezra 4:21. Jos. however, writes that Cambyses, not Cyrus, ordered the building stopped. The text in Ezra is ambivalent in this respect; but several commentators understand the text as meaning that Cyrus also issued the second edict.
22. *Ibid.*, 6:3; see also Jos., *ibid.*, Ch. III/8.
23. Ezra Ch. 6.
24. The Cambridge History of Judaism. Ed. by W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984), p. 152.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 152. Analyzing the complaint of Judah's neighbors and the reaction of Persia, the following is stated: "Governors of areas neighbouring Judah might well resent the re-establishment and growth of its power. . . . But we must observe that . . . the complaint refers back to the previous history of Judah and to its long tradition of rebellion against higher authority [i.e., its pagan rulers] suggesting that the re-establishment of Jerusalem will lead to total loss of control of the whole province." While this may be seen as the hyperbole of political accusations, the same can hardly be said of the reply. This not only reiterates the reference to the past; it also states that "powerful kings were over Jerusalem and had authority over the whole province."
26. L. Finkelstein, The Pharisees, 2 Vol. . (The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), pp. 476-80. The fact that the majority of the Jewish population in Persia did not respond to the edict of Cyrus evoked also sharp criticism among the leaders of Jewry in Judea.

In Talmud we find accusations against those who remained in the affluent Diaspora instead of returning to the homeland. It suffice to quote one such statement: "Hated to God are you 'Babylonians.' Would you have returned in great masses, Judea would have become an indestructible,

unconquerable force, but now it has remained weak and vulnerable."

Part I, Chapter III
(Pages 28-47)

1. Jos. Book XI, Ch. V.
2. Enc. Micrait, Vol. VI, pp. 37-143.
3. Jos., op. cit., Book XI, Ch. V.
4. Ibid., calls him "skillful in the law of Moses."
See Solomon Zeitlin, The Rise and Fall of the Judean State (The Jewish Publ. Soc. of America, Philadelphia, 1962). Zeitlin states: "He [Ezra] . . . laid the foundation for the future of Judaism." Vol. 1, p. 18.
5. Encyl. Mikrait, Vol. VI, pp. 138-9. Ezra 7:26. Two aspects in the decree of the Persian King are noteworthy: 1) He motivates his help in the restoration of the Temple rituals in Judea as follows: "For why should there be the anger [of God] over the kingdom of the king and his sons." (Ibid., 23). As Cyrus in the first decree, now, too the alternative whether to return to Judea or not is left with each individual Jew: "He who from the people of Israel in my kingdom . . . volunteers to go to Jerusalem, let him go without being hindered." (Ibid., 13).

As in the original decree of Cyrus, it demonstrates a hitherto unknown respect for Israel's One God concept; it also restricts the granted autonomy to the Temple rituals and the rule of the Torah in Judea's domestic affairs.
6. Ezra VII:27-8.
7. Jewish congregations in the Diaspora included later in their prayer book (sidur) a special prayer for the ruler and the land they lived in with the cited phrase.

There was another form by which the sovereignty of the Gentile ruler was recognized: offering in the Temple a special sacrifice for the well-being of the King. But there was a fundamental difference: the sacrifice in the House of Israel's God demonstrated the Gentile ruler's dependence on Israel's chosen status by God; the related passage in Ezra recognized that Israel's chosen status is, to a degree, dependent on "the heart of the King." See on that Elias Bickerman, From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees (Shoken Books, n.l., 1972), pp. 8-10.

8. Genesis 18:18-19. Micah 4:2-3.
9. Deut. 30:19. Jos. 34:5/22. I. Sam 12:14f. I Kings 18:21ff. Dispersed over all books of the Bible and so also in Talmud is the motif of Israel's free choice to follow the law. "I call heaven and earth to witness this day against you, that I have set before thee life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live." (Deut. 30:19).

The concept that the covenant is based on deed and was to be accepted voluntarily is the cornerstone of Judaism.

10. Yechez. 20:32-44; 36:7-15, 38; 11-44. Isa. Chs. 43; 44, 66:5f. The eternal character of the covenant is stressed in almost all prophetic books.
11. All the royal houses in the Northern Kingdom and some of the kings in Judea deviated from the "way of God." See I & II Kings; II Chronicles, 12:2-5; 21:6; 22:3f; 25:14-16.
12. See sources listed above (11). Also Hos. 5:1; Yehez. 8:16f.
13. See for example the lamenting of Elijah in I Kings 18:10-14, also Yerem. 4:30-31; 14-15.
14. The oracles in Greece and in Rome were completely under the control of the rulers. Their independence manifested itself only in the divination of favorable dates for starting military campaigns.

15. The Hellenizing decrees of Antiochus IV Epiphanes were triggered by the high priests of that time (ca. 168). See Josephus, Ant. Book XII, Ch. IV/9. See also E. Bickerman, op. cit., pp. 93-111. He argues that Jason and Menelaus only "desired to accommodate traditional Judaism
16. See Yehezkel Kaufman, op. cit., pp. 67-70.
17. Deut. 29:9-14. Jos. 24. I Sam. 12:14-25.
18. Ezra 3:1-7; 10:9-14. Nech 8:2-6. Enc. Mik. Vol. VI, pp. 139-40.
- 19 The various schools of Bible criticism see in Ezra the transmuter of what they denote as Israel into Judaism, i.e., a ritualistic/legalistic cult instead of a spontaneous monotheism imbued with the spirit of the Biblical prophets. Accordingly, the power granted him by the Persian king has been the authority to introduce a new Torah, composed in Babylonia. This was the part assigned by these scholars as P. Accordingly, the introduction of a "new Torah" was the main goal of Ezra's coming to Judea and he at once assembled the people, promoting them to accept it.

There are two difficulties in this scholarly hypothesis: 1) The assembly called to renew the allegiance of the people to the Torah, which these scholars interpret as the introduction by Ezra of the new P Torah, is recorded in Nechemiah as called by Ezra many years later. The Book of Ezra, preceding that of Nechemiah, records as Ezra's first act the sending away of the Gentile wives of some of the returning Jews.

But Bible critics are not impressed by such facts. **They** take out the chapters (8-10) from the Book of Nechemiah and transfer them to the Book of Ezra (between 8 and 9); they also switch around the arrivals of Ezra and Nechemiah, putting the first after the second. They also change the kings who authorized Ezra. The 37th year in the rule of Archasta I becomes the 7th year of Archasta II.

2) The second difficulty, a fundamental one disregarded by these schools (Van Honacker, Raully

and others), is that there is not the slightest indication that something new has been introduced to the gathering. The clear impression is that Ezra and Nechemiah are reproaching the people for neglecting the Torah of their forefathers.

Furthermore, Ezra's call to obey the Torah caused severe hardships, as dividing families, economic sacrifices, etc. Some of those who were hurt belonged to the aristocracy and/or wealthy classes. If Ezra introduced a new Torah they would certainly put up resistance. There is no trace of this. Quite to the contrary, the people confessed their failings and repented (Ezra 9:12-19; Nech. 9).

Most revealing is that the Samaritans in their claim against Israel and in their bitter clashes against Ezra never argued that Ezra introduced a new Torah. According to the Samaritans, the transmutation of Israel happened in the time of Eli, more than half a millennium before Ezra.

Even if one accepts the Samaritan version that their hostile acts against the returnees and their letters of denunciation to Persia against Jews were not caused by being denied participation in the building of the Temple in Jerusalem, the fact of their hostile campaigns remains (see above). Nonetheless, the "new Torah" introduced by one of their chief antagonists does not figure at all. See J. Kaufman, Golah V'nechor (Hebrew) (Dvir, Israel, 1962), Vol. I, pp. 257-66. Also, S. Zeitlin, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

20. T.B. Sanh., p. 20b.
21. T.B. Sanh., p. 20a.
22. Pirke Abot, Cha. 1:1.
23. Ibid., 1:2-12.
24. Ibid., 1:1. See S. Zeitlin, op. cit., p. 29.
25. Abot. 1:1.
26. Deut. 4:20.

27. Ex. 32:10. Num. 14:12.
28. See Encyc. Mikrait, Vol. VI, p. 141: "The hypothesis [that parts of the Torah were of latter composition] has the purpose to substantiate the theory that the Torah is an amalgam of various strains."
29. See note 4.
30. Lev. 26:3.
31. Num. 11:14-17.
32. The Book of Judges tells how in various campaigns different tribes lacked any interest in participating in a war against an oppressor. The reason was that not all tribes felt the oppression of an adversary equally and/or in the same period. This was due to that the distribution of land to the Twelve Tribes has been in separate regions, not always exposed to the same danger. See Judges 4 and 12.
33. Only a few among the Judges/warriors who redeemed the Israeli tribes from their enemies gained such status. Outstanding among them were Deborah (Jud. 4); Gidon (8); Iiftah (11) and Samson (14-15).
34. See n. 24. See Enc. Mikrait, Vol. IV, pp. 193-6.
35. Ezra 10:14. Nech. 8:4, 13; 10:1-25.
36. See above note 19. Chapter II P. 228
37. Such an issue was, for example, the wrath of Jeremiah against those he called "false prophets," because they enticed the people to rebel against Babylon, assuring them that God could not let Israel be conquered by a pagan king (Jeremiah, Chapters: 21, 23, 26, 27, 28).
38. See below: The Emergence of Sects.
39. Jos. Ant. Book XI, Ch. VII/1.

40. Ibid., Ch. VIII/2. Neh. 13:28.
41. In the numerous disputes between Sadducees and Pharisees concerning a variety of issues, none had any relation to the perennial conflict with the Samaritans. Ezra was the authority for the Pharisees and he was involved in the furthering of the Samaritans, the Sadducees would certainly have brought up the issue of the Samaritans if they would not agree with what Ezra had done. Their silence about it shows that the arising of sects was confined to events in the second century (B.C.E.).
42. L. Finkelstein, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 581-85. S. Zeitlin, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 69-76. Both authors claim that parties existed long before; still in this conflict they did not find evidence for that hypothesis.
43. I. Macc:1-11-15, 43-52. II Macc:4-12-17. Jos. Antiq. Book XII, Ch. V:4; Book XIII, Ch. XI:1. E. Bickerman, op. cit., pp. 95ff. S. Zeitlin, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 89-109.
44. L. Finkelstein in a two-volume work (cited above) tries to discover "proto-Pharisees" and "proto-Sadducees" during the First Temple epoch. He identifies the differences between the two parties with those of "Patricians" and "Plebeians" grounded in the "environmental differences between the climate of Jerusalem and the seashore 2,400 feet below . . ." (Op. cit., Vol. I, p. xi).

The irrelevance of that reasoning becomes even more poignant when the author reveals to us the evidence for his hypothesis: "On a visit to the Holy Land in 1925 I first realized the actual basis for the inter-Pharisaic controversies recorded in the Talmud, and the controversies between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. . . . At once many controversies in the Talmud seemingly derived from arbitrary exegesis, appeared reasonable and logical. They actually derived from difference of environment. . . . The Pharisees of the same era were a product of the Jerusalem market place." (Ibid., pp. xi-xii).

Part I, Chapter IV
(Pages 48-80)

1. The term denotes a person whose actions surpass the norm required by the Law. It is found in the farewell sermon of Moses referring to the tribe of Levi (Deut. 30:8) also Mic. 7:2. It is numerous times mentioned in Ps. The prophet Jer (3:2) applies the term to God. See Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism (Fortress Press, Ph-a, 1974), Vol. 1, p. 179 about the Hasidim movement and the emergence of parties "after the Maccabean revolt."
2. B. T. Baba Metz. 30b.
3. I Mac. 7:12-16. See also Jos. Ant. Book XII, Ch. X/2-3.
4. Ibid., Ch. IX/7.
5. Ibid., Book XIII, Ch. VI/4-7. I Mac.: 14-41-8. See also The World History of the Jewish People (Jewish History Publ., Israel, 1971). The First Hasmonean Rulers, by J. Klausner, Vol. VI, pp. 199-200.
6. The last prophets were Haggai, Zachariah and Malchi. See S. Zeitlin, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 30-1. He discusses "the reason for the cessation of prophecy." Zeitlin gives two reasons: (a) "prophets became involved in politics," and (b) "the canonization of the Pentateuch, by which the leaders sought to have the Judeans resort to the interpretation of the Word of God as there recorded."

Both reasons are utterly false: (a) Prophets were always involved in politics. Their primary task has been to preach the link between the politics of Israel and the Word of God. (b) The Pentateuch (Torah) was canonized at the time of the Prophets; they based their preachings and admonishings on the Torah.

The reason for the cessation of prophecy seems to be obvious. The power basis of the prophets was

Israel's sovereignty, unhindered in its actions. From such a people and their rulers the prophets could demand that all their actions should be consistent with the ideals of the Torah.

The Second Commonwealth lacked this; Judea was part of Gentile empires--there was no room for prophecy. The last prophets (mentioned above) lived and prophesized at the time when the edict of Cyrus and the rebuilding of the Temple kept yet alive the hope that Israel will re-establish its sovereignty.

The fact that only a small minority of Jews responded to the edict of Cyrus to return had a negative impact on the history of the Second Commonwealth. L. Finkelstein, op. cit., summarizes it: "The exaltation of the prophet [meaning the last ones shortly after the return to Judea] was short lived. . . . Neither Cyrus nor Israel was ready to accept the prophetic mission. . . . It reduced the aspirations of the Judaites to an almost negligible minimum." (p. 479).

Prophecy required the ethos of a maximum.

7. The conventional view is that the establishing of the Talmudic Centre in Yabne (towards the end of the first century C.E) and the crystallizing of (what is called) a normative Judaism. The latter has been presented by diverse groups in radically opposed versions. There is no substantiation for this view.
8. B. T. Kidushin 66a.
9. Jos. Ant. Book XIII, Ch. X/5.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., WHJP (full title n.5), Vol. VI. Essay by A. Schalit, pp. 270-3.
12. A relatively minor punishment, ascribed in Deut. 25:2-3.
13. Jos. Ant. Book XIII, Ch. X/6; S. Zeitlin, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 171.

14. Jos. Ant. Book XIII, Ch. V/9; Ch. XVI/1-3; XVIII, Ch. I/12-6. Also Wars Book I, Ch. V/1-2; II, Ch. VIII. It is in this chapter where Josephus describes the sects as the "three philosophical sects among the Jews," and tries to depict them as reflecting the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic world.
15. Mishna, Tractats: Kelim emd Oholim.
16. Ibid. See also on this Louis Finkelstein, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 661-92.
17. Ibid., p. 671.
18. Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Vol. V, p. 87a.
19. Numbers XVIII. It deals with the hereditary elitists' status accorded to the priests and the special laws of purity assigned to them.
20. Abot, preamble at beginning of each chapter.
21. Mishna, Sanhedrin 4:5.
22. The Talmud abounds with controversies between Pharisees and Sadducees about issues of rituals, purity, etc. However there is no mention of basic halakhik differences with the Essenes. Both Pharisees and Essenes are being traced back to the Hasidim. Accordingly both were disappointed from the way the Hasmonean state evolved. But while the Pharisees became, what would be called today, a loyal opposition, the Essenes separated themselves leading a life as righteous communities, and criticized the former for seeking explanations to cooperate with the official priesthood. See Joseph Klausner Jesus of Nazareth (The MacMillan Co., 1925), p. 200. See also Jos., Wars, Book II, Ch. VIII. The difference between Essenes (apocalyptists included) and the Pharisees is aptly described in the following quote: "Thus a scholar like Chaim Rabin states that the Qumran sect was a die-hard Pharisee group trying to uphold genuine Pharisaism . . . against the more flexible ideology introduced by the Rabbis in authority." Neil S. Fujita, A Crack in the Jar (Paulist Press, New York, 1986), p. 35.

23. B. T. Sota, 22b. The Talmud criticizes seven categories of Pharisees for their hypocrisy; also J. Sota, III,4.
24. In the view of the Sadducees the Pharisees "were entirely lacking in awareness of the actual situation of the nation (i.e., of the Hasmonean Kingdom)." The Sadducees believed that from among all other parties only they "were imbued with the facts of the existence of the Hasmonean state, full of vitality and striving for territorial, military and economic expansion." A. Shalit, in essay cited above (n. 11), op. cit., p. 293.
25. The body of dietary laws, forbidding certain foods, the directives how to prepare foods permitted as well the proscription of certain rituals, aimed to prevent consorting with pagans. The sacrificial cult, an institution common to all religions and cults in antiquity, has been in the Torah (Leviticus) set in a manner radically different from that in the pagan world. All this in order to preserve the unique, separate composition of Israel.
26. Amos III/4. It reads, "You alone I knew from all the nations," but the Hebrew know means chosen. . Similar Ex. 19:5-6. Is. 42:6.
27. B. T. Er. 28b-29a. Gitt. 45b. Ab. Zar. 65a.
28. See L. Finkelstein, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 637-753. Relating the numerous differences in Temple rituals between the two parties, Finkelstein quotes a Talmudic source that High Priests that belonged to the Sadducee party followed when in the inner sanctuary alone the teachings of the Pharisees: "Although we teach our tradition, we act according to the teaching of the sages [i.e., Pharisees]." And when one such High-Priest acted otherwise, his father reprimanded him. "I wonder whether you will live long." p. 659. (The episode is recorded in B.T. Yoma, p. 19b.)

The very fact that Pharisee authorities trusted a Sadducee High Priest when he took an oath that he

would obey their norm (Yoma 18b-19b) indicates the reciprocal respect between them.

29. Ex. 32:10.
 30. Num. 14:12.
 31. I Kings 12:18.
 32. II Kings 18:9-12.
 33. The sacred and eternal character of the Law and the belief in Israel's Chosen Status was to the Essenes and Apocalyptists no less fundamental than to the Pharisees: "Torah and Apocalyptic together shaped and determined the religious ideal of Israel during this period . . ." D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalypics (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1964), p. 85. See also essay by Elisha Quimron and John Strugnell, in Biblical Archaeology Today (Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem, 1985).
- "One main difference between the Essenes and the Pharisees . . . was that the latter continued to participate in the temple cult at Jerusalem, while the former believed that all offerings made at this place were impure . . . because they were carried out under the authority of non-Zadokite Hasmonean high priests . . ." p. 416.
34. Jos. Ant., Book XVIII, Ch. I/2-6. Wars, Book II, Ch. VIIIf. Jos. refers to Jewish sects, also in other places (Ant. XIII/V/9; also in Wars I/V) but it is in these two places where he describes the Jewish sect as resembling the three main Hellenistic schools. It is characteristic that in Ant. (XVIII/V/9 Josephus speaks very favorably about the Zealots, while all other times he denounces them as murderers, etc. Here are his words: "These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is the only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value denying any kinds of death . . . nor can any such fear make them any man Lord." And he accuses the Roman procurator that his going "wild" made them revolt.

35. Jos. Wars, Book IV, Ch. III and IV; V, Ch. I/5-6.
36. Ex. 8, 9, 10. The miracles transmuted the natural phenomena in Egypt, while the negotiations between Moses and Pharaoh continued on a natural level.
37. Ibid., 3:7-11.
38. Ezekiel; Jonas. The Talmud merges miraculous events with the natural phenomena. The question here is not the historicity of the narrations, but of pointing out that the apocalyptists and their supernatural (eschatological) themes were not the introduction of a new element in Judaism.

Part II, Chapter I
(Pages 81-95)

1. Johannes Weiss, op. cit., p. 19. (Quote from Maurenbeccher in From Nazareth to Galgotha, pp. 259f.
2. Ibid., note 6.
3. Ibid. (Quote from Wisacker, The Apostolic Age, pp. If.)
4. See J. Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth. (McMillan Co., New York, 1944), p. 357. He writes: "a crucified Messiah," "a curse of God that was hanged was such a repellent idea to the Jews. . . ."

This theme that the form of Jesus' death was a central aspect of why Jews did not accept Jesus' teachings is a total misconception. It is hard to understand how Klausner and numerous other scholars can discuss this argument seriously.

Paul must have been aware of the baselessness in deducting this from the Bible. We will discuss it briefly.

The hypothesis that death by being hanged is a curse is allegedly derived from the biblical commandment to remove the corpse of the "hanged one" because the "abuse of God is hanging." (Deut. 21:23) The term

used is "killath." This word means curse as well as abuse. (In fact cursing in Hebrew means abusing. Both are derived from the same root kall--easing, diminishing. Being cursed or abused means being reduced.)

Man carries the image of his creator--God--as the Bible specifically states: "And God created man in His Own image, in the image of God He created him." (Gen. 1:27) Man's helpless body exposed to the elements of nature, to the very elements God commanded man to rule over them (ibid., 28) is an abuse of God: therefore a human body should not remain exposed but be buried.

The twisting of the phrase to make it mean that the hanged one is cursed, is, in addition to being a conceptual distortion, also a violation of linguistic structure.

It is not the way how Jesus died that constituted an obstacle ("stumbling block") for Jewish recognition of his messiahship, but the way he presented the Messiah image. Rome crucified countless Jews; the activities and memory of many of them were preserved with glory in Israel's history.

Despite the many scholarly discussions on this theme that Jesus' death on a Roman cross was the "stumbling block to Jews"--the idea is a literary and conceptual hoax.

5. Gal. 3:13.
6. Rom. 3:20-6, 6:3-8; Gal. 2:16-20; similar Jo. 3:16; Acts. 13:39.

Arthur Gushman McGiffert, in A History of Christian Thoughts (Scribner's Sons, New York, 1932) discussing the first Christians writes: "Henceforth the right attitude to God and to one's fellows was not enough; there must be first of all and above all the right attitude toward Jesus. Only his disciples, only those who acknowledged his Messiahship and declared their faith in him, could hope to share in the blessings of the coming age. Thus the movement crystallized into a sect marked off from the rest of the people by its belief. . . .", p. 13.

Part II, Chapter II
(Pages 97-134)

1. Acts 6:8.
2. Ibid., 6:5.
3. Ibid., 6:13.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 7:25.
6. Ibid., 7:27.
7. Ibid., 7:42.
8. Acts 7:46-7.
9. II Samuel 7:12-3.
10. Ibid., 7:18ff.
11. Acts 7:52.
12. Only in Israel prophets were independent without any supervision of the rulers.
13. Acts 6:14.
14. The incentive for "redoctoring" records is to make tradition consistent with the prevailing ethos. However, in this case the argument does not apply: the canonized dogma of the Church did not accept Stephen's "historiosophy" about Israel. In fact, it was the (semi-)heretic Marcion to whom Stephen's view appealed. (Although he went all the way, also degrading the God of Israel as an inferior power.)
15. Acts 6:9.
16. The trial and death of Stephen is given as having occurred on December 26, 29 C.E. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. XI, p. 548.
17. Epiphanes (Haeres 20:4) records him as one of the seventy disciples of Jesus (a group next to the apostles (see Lk 10:1). According to Basil of Seleucia in his "Oratio de Stephano" Stephen's Jewish name was Kelil, the Hebrew term for a crown;

that equates in Greek Stephanos. Taken from Jewish Encyclopedia, ibid.

18. Acts 6:5.
19. Romans 11:20f.
20. It is true that the "mission to the Gentiles" did not begin, as it is conventionally assumed with Paul; it started with the "scattering of the Hellenists" after the death of Stephen. Nonetheless, Stephen could not have, like Paul, utilized anti-Judaism as a means to win over Gentiles.
21. Gal. 3:19-25; also 3:8; 2:16. Also Acts 13:39.
22. Romans 11:11-22.
23. Acts 7:37. Deut. 18:15 & 18. However, the saying came as a warning not to listen to anyone claiming authority of a prophet to dissuade Israel from obeying the Law.
24. What most influenced Jews was Stephen's claim that the Temple as an institution, not its contemporary leadership, "stood against the desire of God" (words in quotation marks are taken from The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. XI, p. 545). It should be noted that it was not the leadership but common Jews from the synagogues where Jews of the Diaspora gathered, who demanded steps against Stephen's propaganda. These Jews were living or had lived in Hellenic cities teeming with various mystery cults offering redemption through the mediating role of a divine Soter. In Stephen's preaching they heard the familiar theme of the mystery-cults. "And we can readily understand how easy it was for the Hellenistic Jews in view of these heresies, to stir up the Jerusalem mob and the men who supported law and order against Stephen." J. Weiss, op. cit., p. 168.
25. Joseph Klausner, From Jesus to Paul (Menorah Publishing Co., New York, 1943), p. 294.
26. See Acts 2:44-7.
27. Johannes Weiss, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 170. See also on the Stephen event, H. Leitzman, op. cit., 70-72.

28. J. Weiss, op. cit., p. 167.
29. Jos. Wars B. II, Ch. XX:2. ". . . the people of Damascus . . . set about the slaughter of those Jews . . . yet did they distrust their own wives, which were almost all of them addicted to the Jewish religion . . . their greatest concern was, how they might conceal these things from them.
30. Acts 8:2.
31. The way Stephen has been given authority, the honor attributed to him at the funeral and the activities of the group-members after the "scattering" testify to it, that Stephen was an authority in the Mother Church in Jerusalem. See F. F. Bruce, op. cit., p. 224 about the Stephen "trial."
32. J. Klausner, op. cit. (2), p. 294.
33. J. Weiss, op. cit. (p. 171) suggests that: "It is at this period [after the "scattering"] that the saying about the jot and the tittle (Matt. 5:18) . . . began to be emphasized as the shibboleth of the stricter tendency in the church. Moreover, the narrow-minded missionary regulation, 'go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans' (cf. SNT on Matt. 10:5f), must have originated at this time. What was in Jesus' case instinctive self-limitation, has here become a maxim of exclusiveness. One would probably not go far astray in surmising that this timid attitude of fear of defilement, so foreign to the spirit of Jesus, emerged only when the primitive church alarmed by far-reaching enterprises, withdrew completely within itself and confined itself to work among its own race."
34. Ibid., 170.
35. Charles Guignebert, Ancient Medieval and Modern Christianity (University Books, New York, 1961), p.84.
36. Acts 7:5. J. Weiss writes about Stephen and his group: "The seven however are introduced not . . . as administrators of charity, or even as waiters of table, but as men . . . full of the spirit and of wisdom (6:3) as preachers (6:10) and as missionaries (6:5ff)." (p. 166)
37. Op. cit., p. 71.

38. Ibid., p. 73.
 39. Gushman McGiffert, A History of Christianity, pp. 91-2.
 40. J. Weiss, op. cit., pp. 169-70.
 41. Ibid.
 42. Acts 8:1.
 43. Ibid., 9:2.
 44. F. F. Bruce, op. cit., p. 145f. Acts 15:21; 17:17. See also J. Weiss, op. cit., ". . . the nearest and surest road to the Gentiles led directly through the synagogue, for here the preachers [of Jesus] . . . met with a number of proselytes who were already won over to monotheism and had acquired a tolerable familiarity with the scriptures so that they could understand the proclamation of the Messiah." (p. 211)
 45. Acts 7:4.
 46. Ibid., 8:4-15.
 47. Ibid., 10:15-16; 11:9-10. This corroborates the saying of Jesus, "Whatsoever thing from without entered into the man, it cannot defile him because it . . . goeth out into the draught, purging all meats. . . . That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man." (Mk. 7:18-20; Mt. 15: 17-18). It should be noted that the laws in Judaism prohibiting certain foods and regulating the preparation of the permitted ones are linked to the concept of Israel being a separate entity among the Gentile nations. The distinction between clean and unclean beasts was already outlined by God at the time of the Flood: 'Of every clean beast you shall take seven . . . and of the beasts that are not clean two . . .'" (Gen. 7:2). The housetop vision of Peter reinforced by Jesus' words earlier reflects Jesus' negative approach to Israel's national infrastructure.
- (Preferences in the Pentateuch: Ex. 13, 14, 18:23-5.)

About the concepts of clean and unclean beasts being an inseparable component of the status of Israel see also Enc. Micrait, Vol. 3, pp. 391-2.

48. Acts 8:27.
49. F. F. Bruce, op. cit., p. 231.
50. Act. 11:18. About Peter's central role to the evangelization of Gentile communities, see also F. F. Bruce, op. cit., p.230. "But the initiative in evangelizing Gentiles is ascribed by Luke . . . to the apostle Peter . . ."
51. F. F. Bruce, op. cit., p. 270; also J. Weiss: "it is plain that the Jerusalem church claimed a kind of oversight over that of Antioch, generally over all those of Syria and Cilicia . . .", op. cit., p. 173.
52. J. Weiss, op. cit., p.173.

Part II, Chapter III
(Pages 134-170)

1. Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) was the first to propose an hypothesis severing Jesus from all the religious dogma, rituals and theological concepts of Christianity. Before him the Deists in England (John Toland: 1671-1723); Thomas Woolston: 1669-1731) and some French writers in the eighteenth century (Voltaire, J. J. Rousseau) undertook to refurbish the image of Jesus' ministry by claiming that he had been the founder of a "natural religion" aiming to reform social conditions in the this-worldly realm. Accordingly they pointed to substantial differences between the Christian Church and the original views of nascent Christianity.

But Reimarus drew a radical cleavage between Jesus and his immediate disciples. In his vast work (4,000 pages) part of which was published after his death by Gotthold Lessing in 1778 as Von dem Zwecke Jesu und Seiner Junger, Reimarus undertook to eliminate the very relationship of Jesus with the Christian Church based on him.

The central, factual, indeed the only idea Reimarus's hypothesis is based on is that since Jesus' message was that of the Kingdom of God, and

the gospels never explain what this meant, it must have referred to an idea current among the Jews of that era.

For Reimarus, the whole of Jesus' message is summed up in the summons: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." According to Reimarus, Jesus is wholly contained within the structure of Judaism. Reimarus dismisses entirely the dogmas of baptism and the Last Supper as having had nothing to do with the legacy of Jesus or with his conduct and/or sayings.

For Reimarus, moreover, there is an out-and-out Jewish political element in Jesus' activities, since by holding the Temple when he drove out the money changers Jesus actually seized power.

Accordingly, Christianity could not have been generated by whatever Jesus had said, but had been given rise to by events and relationships that only after his death were deliberately linked to him.

To Reimarus, Jesus' cry on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!", proves that he saw his goal of establishing an earthly Kingdom of God as having failed.

But the disciples, having expected material greatness and shocked by the unexpected death, fell back on another Jewish tradition--a spiritual one--from Jewish apocalyptic literature, and they developed the concept of a "second coming" that would establish the "Kingdom of God."

The disciples then stole the body of Jesus hiding it for several weeks so that no one should be able to recognize it in case it were found, and declared that Jesus had arisen from the dead.

Although in Reimarus's day no one took seriously this hypothesis, a super-detective story spun in academic terminology, his posthumously published work fathered the diversified literature referred to as the Quest for the Historical Jesus.

2. Smith, p. 254. The entire Chapter Four: The Background (pp. 195-278), deals with this issue. The author cogently argues that the tradition goes back to Jesus' teaching, and it was the token of having entered the close circle of those who became identified with Jesus.

Smith concludes from the fact that "Paul protests that his name and his sayings are being misused by the libertines (Acts 20:29, Rom. 3:8). It was probably in the interest of some already existing position. (p. 262) Smith continues: "He [Jesus] not only taught his disciples that the law had come to an end with the Baptist, but he also administered a baptism--the mystery of the Kingdom of God--by which he enabled some of his disciples, by union with himself, to enter the kingdom and to enjoy his own freedom from the law." (Ibid.).

3. Ibid., p. 254.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., pp. 199-200. Smith quotes Wrede what the later terms as Messiasgeheimnis and was also "noticed by many critics--Schleiermacher, Strauss, Keim, Hilgenfeld, and others--". . . the conception of the disciples as initiates to whom the mystery has been given. . . . [this] Wrede declares. . . . All these are characteristics . . . as if Jesus like a hierophant led the twelve . . . step by step into the mysteries of the 'church'?" Wrede's italics.
6. Ibid., p. 199.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 201. Author lists: Pliny, Epistulae and Traianum 96.7; Etheria; and others.
9. Ibid., pp. 201-2.
10. Ibid., pp 244-50. Jesus' liberty goes to such extent that his "exegesis is so dramatic as to practically annul a provision of the Mosaic Law." But Smith adds that it does "not call into question the validity of the general system."
11. Ibid., pp. 248-51. Accordingly "freedom [from the Law] began with his [i.e., Jesus'] identification with the son as a result of his possession by the spirit at his baptism, and that the freedom of his disciples resulted from their identification with him through their possession by his spirit, in the baptism which he administered.
12. Ibid., p. 250.

13. Ibid., p. 251. The author claims that "This understanding of the mystery of the kingdom enables us to understand in the history of the early Church of a number of problems which hitherto have gone either without solution or without recognition." To which one can only fully agree.

14. Ibid., p. 246 quoting Wetter, Sohn ch. 1.

15. We saw above (n.2) that possessing of the spirit equates entering the Kingdom of God, and as those who possessed the spirit could also impart the spirit, which meant bringing in those to whom the spirit was imparted into the Kingdom, Jesus therefore did not preach the coming of the Kingdom but its actually having already come.

It thus meant that the Kingdom of God that Judaism envisioned as the total transformation of the earthly reality in a social/ethical/political/economical sense was severed from those elements.

This is the most drastic evidence that the parting of the ways between the Church and Israel was not a "process" (in either revolutionary or evolutionary meaning); it was an event--the ministry of Jesus.

16. One of the "mysteries" in the research of Jesus' ministry is the glossing over of the following:

Jesus was the only messiah-pretender whose fellowship was not persecuted by Rome. With his arrest and death Rome felt secure not even trying to investigate those close to him. In all other "messianic" movements there were mass executions.

Indirectly, this substantiates Smith's hypothesis that the secret element in Jesus' ministry must have something other than his claim to be the messiah.

17. Ibid., pp. 209-213. On p. 237 Smith maintains that "It was while performing such a baptism that Jesus was arrested. The rite was secret. He chose a lonely garden, through which a stream still flows, and went there late at night, after the ceremony of the eucharist had assured the magical union of his circle of initiates."

This is a stunning hypothesis. (As far as known to me no one yet said this.) According to this, the last supper had nothing in common with Israel's

ceremonial Passover meal. Instead of the traditional Seder commemorating Israel's freedom from slavery, its becoming a Nation, this event was transmuted into the "eucharist" for "the magical union of his circle . . ."

As to the guards set up that night in Gethsemane, interpreted by many scholars as evidence of the militant, political character of Jesus' messiahship, it had accordingly, a different aim; totally unrelated with the national aspects of Israel--it was Jesus' "wish not to be interrupted" while performing "the magical union of his circle."

18. Ibid., pp. 249-50. Smith gives a long list of Gospel sources of Jesus' challenging the validity of the Law. But he does it only partially. In actuality Jesus (according to the Gospels) refuted fundamentals of the Torah. To cite some: a) The establishing of the courts and judges is derided in Mt. 7:1-4; Lk. 6:37-8. b) Against the Law of Divorce--Mt. 5:32-3, 19:3-4; Mk. 10:2-13. c) The Commandment to be fruitful and multiply, the first precept given to man, is derided in Mt. 19:10-12. d) The Commandment against castration is contested in Mt. 19:12; e) The obligation to care for the burial of the dead is revoked in Mt. 8:20-22 and in Lk. 9:60-61. f) The dietary laws are derided in Mt. 15: 11 etc., etc.

But even on the partial list Smith concludes that it was Jesus 'to whom all the early and widespread branches of the libertine tradition can plausibly be traced. . . . He [Jesus] broke the sabbath, he neglected the purity rules, he refused to fast, made friends with publicans and sinners . . ." (p. 262).

19. Ibid., pp. 262-4.
20. Gal. 3:13. Similar Rom. 8:3.
21. Smith, op. cit., pp. 255-6.
22. Ibid., p. 251.
23. Galatians 2:11-13.
24. In the entire literature about the primitive church(es) constituted by Law-abiding Christians, not one of the original Jesus disciples is mentioned. Peter--the so-called apostle to the Jews

broke the Law and evangelized Gentiles (as Gentiles) when Paul was still the fervent Pharisee Saul.

The only known name is of James the brother (or cousin) of Jesus. But his position as a Judaizer may be challenged by at least three pieces of evidence:

1) He sided with Peter after the latter broke the Law eating non-kosher food in the house of Cornelius in Caesarea being also the first to accept Gentiles into the Jesus-fellowship. (Acts 10).

2) As the Apostolic Council dealing with the issue of whether acceptance of the Law should be a condition in recruiting Gentiles, James, together with all the apostles decided against it: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." (Acts 15) The necessary things were part of the seven Noahide laws obligatory for Gentiles. (That it was only part of the Noahid laws can not be overemphasized. That the apostolic body consisting only of Jews, saw it fit to disregard the most elementary Bilical precept about the seven primordial Laws obligating the human race, makes it clear that the mother-church in Jerusalem was not only non-Judaic, but anti-Judaic.

3) According to some sources, the decisive element in James' "trial" and his condemnation was, when asked "what is the gate of salvation," he responded: Jesus.

What seems to be the tradition here is, that due to James' pious behavior, there were some who claimed that despite his belief in Jesus, he cannot be accused of heresy because of his following the Commandments.

But, at that time (60-62 C.E.) Jewish authorities were already aware that faith in Jesus is based on refutation of Israel's covenant and the validity of Torah as the way (the gate) to salvation.

By his answer James proved it.

The legality of the trial was not substantiated by this, and this was why the Pharisees protested, but the lack of legality does in no way alter the fact that in the fundamental issue the Judaizing apostle

James made a declaration similar (actually-- identical) to the extreme Hellenist, Stephen.

25. The cornerstone of Judaism is not the concept of One God, but His engaging a national entity as His earthly instrument.
26. Smith, op. cit., p. 202.
27. Ibid., p. 199.
28. See supra, note 1.
29. Smith, ibid., p. 197.
30. The structure and the interior of the Temple is described in I Kings, ch. 6, 7, 8 also in II Chronicles, ch. 3, 4, 5 and in Ant. (Josephus) Book VIII, Ch. 3.

The contents and the forms of ritual for the High Priest (what Smith calls "the adyton" wherein "None save the high priest himself was permitted to enter" (p. 197) is outlined in the Pentateuch (Ex. 26-27; 36, 37). The interior and exterior, the decorative details and all forms of ritual are outlined without a shred of secrecy.

31. a) In ca. 174 B.C.E. Heliodorus chief minister of King Seleucus IV entered the Temple and the Holy of Holiness (II Macc. 3:23, 20; S. Zeitlin, op. cit., p. 74.

b) In 168-7 Antiochus IV, Epiphanes entered the Temple and plundered the treasures in the innermost Sanctuary. I. Macc. 1:21-4; II Macc. 5:15-16; Ant. 12:5, 4; S. Zeitlin, pp. 88-9.

c) In 63 "Pompey himself entered the Temple and boldly stalked into the Holy of Holies He found it empty, there were no representations of the gods which he had been accustomed to see in all other temples. He was sufficiently impressed not to seize anything as booty . . ." Zeitlin, p. 354, also Ant. 14:4-5.

None of them reported of any symbols of magic and mystery. It was the rabid anti-Semite Anaseas of Patros (2nd c. B.C.E. who originated the fable that Jews adored in the Temple the golden head of an ass.

This story was repeated later by Apollonius Malon (of Rhodest) and Democritus (in his On the Jews).

Apion, called by the Emperor Tiberius cymbalum mundi, repeated the embellished the stories about Jewish mystical rituals.

Josephus relates Apion's account of the mystical rites in the Temple:

"Antiochus found in the Temple a bed, and a man lying upon it with a small table before him, full of dainties." The man told the king that he is being fed in order to be sacrificed. Jews will eat part of him "then they threw the remaining parts . . . into a certain pit." This is done every year for this purpose is a Greek foreigner, and fat him thus up . . . and kill him . . . and take an oath . . . that they will ever be at enmity with the Greek." Jos., Against Apion, in The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York), pp. 885-6.

32. Ex. 22:17; Deut. 18:11-14; I Samuel 28:9.
33. The Torah proclaimed a total war against all form of witchcraft and magic, that was widespread in all ancient civilizations. The war was led in many ways; (a) by special harsh laws against those who practiced witchcraft; (b) penalties against those who turned for help to magicians. See Jer. 27:9; Mic. 5:11. See also Enc. Micraït (Hebrew, Bialik Institute, Jerusalem, 1961).
34. Morton Smith, op. cit., p. 197.
35. Ibid., pp. 148-9.
36. B. T. Hagiya 14b.
37. The Law demands to spare the mother bird when sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs" (Deut. 22:6-7). The award for it is longevity.
38. Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16.
39. B.T. Kid. 39b; Hag. 14b. See comment ad loc.
40. M. Smith, op. cit., p. 249.

41. B.T. Hag. 15b.
42. Morton Smith argues that Jesus maintained that freedom from the Law comes because "the entrance of the Kingdom [should be] conceived as a passage from the world of age (subject to the Law) to the coming world or age (of liberty)."

Such transition accepts the rule of God in the new stage (free of Law) no less, actually even more, than in the previous one ("subject to Law"). But this is radically different from the transition of Elisha ben Abuyah. The latter proclaimed that his "penetration into the kingdom" made him realize that there is no kingdom and no god at all. Smith does not claim that he "found" a different version about Elisha ben Abuyah; he quotes the Talmud and there it states that Elisha denied the existence of judge and or judgment: ("Let din v'let dayan" in Aramaic.) There is absolutely no comparison between them.
43. Johannes Weiss, Earliest Christianity, p. 81.
44. Mk. 13:10; Mt. 18:14, Lk. 14:47. The verbal form slightly differs in each of the synoptic gospels, the message is the same.
45. Mt. 10:7.
46. See pp. 128-129, Part I, Ch. 2.
47. This issue is widely discussed by M. Smith, op. cit., pp. 243-254. ". . . we have arrived at a definition of the mystery of the Kingdom of God. It was a baptism administered by Jesus to chosen disciples, singly, and by night. In this baptism the disciple was united with Jesus. The union may have been physical."
48. Mk. 11:10; Mt. 21:8-9.
49. Jo. 6:66, "many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. See W. D. Davies, op. cit. (2), pp. 321-331.
50. See R. Leitzman, op. cit., about the conflict between what Jews expected as a sign, and that of Jesus: "Basically, therefore, he in his own person is the sign of the time."

See also Ch. Guignebert, op. cit. (2), p. 41. "It was said that Jesus multiplied signs; . . . a thing common enough in that country in those days. . . . Plain folks . . . remained irresolute and perplexed."

51. New Testament scholars differ on the issue whether Jesus himself considered himself as the Messiah. See discussion about this in the book of Geza Vermes, Jesus the Jew (Collins, London, 1973), pp. 145-57.

Ch. Guignebert, op. cit. (1) states: "The Gospel passages . . . leave us in a state of uncertainty as to what Jesus himself thought about the guiding principle of his mission . . . and the scope of his own part." (p. 39)

On the other hand Hyam Maccoby, in his book The Mythmaker (Harper and Row, New York, 1986) states: "Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, was not in any way blasphemous in the eyes of the Pharisees . . . none of these [messianic] aspirations had any tinge of blasphemy." (p. 37)

See also R. Bultman, op. cit., pp. 26-32.

52. Mt. 10:5-34; also Mc. 6:8-11; Lk. 9:3-5, 10:1-16. (Quote in full is only in Mt.)
53. Mt. 5:44; Lk. 6:27.
54. Mt. 10:16.
55. Ibid., 10:35.
56. Acts 1:7.
57. Mk. 9:50; Mt. 5:13; Lk. 14:34.
58. Mt. 21:43.
59. Ibid., 22:10.
60. Mk. 4:31-32; Mt. 13:31f.
61. The Prophets. Micah is describing a tragic situation: deviating from God's Torah led to demoralization and infights. "Woe . . . lost is the righteous from the land . . ." (Micah 7:1 et al.)

The prophecy ends with a note of consolation that justice and peace will be restored as "in the days of old."

In the Gospel "division" of Israel and infighting in Jewish houses: "three against two and two against three" was a prerequisite for the Jesus ministry.

(The vulgatae has the same wording in the prophecy of Micah and in the logia of Jesus: "et inimici hominis, domestici ejus.")

62. Mk. 13:9; Mt. 10:17; Lk. 21:12.
63. J. Klausner, op. cit. (1), p. 397.
64. Ibid., 376.
65. Mt. 8:11-12; Lk. 13:28-29.
66. Klausner, Ibid., p. 390.
67. Ibid., p. 374.
68. Prov. 24:17.
69. Ibid., 25:21.
70. Mt. 5:39; Lk. 6:29.
71. Lk. 22:36.
72. Mt. 10:35; Lk. 12:53.
73. Mt. 10:26-27; Mc. 4:22; Lk. 8:17, 12:2.
74. Lk. 12:52-53. It should be noted that in Matthew (10) this proclamation of Jesus, that his aim in confining this mission of his disciple, "rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, contains an additional paragraph: "and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Ibid., 36)
75. Malachi 3:24.

Part II, Chapter IV
(Pages 171-187)

1. "Galilee is the land of revelation and the scene of eschatological fulfillment." T. A. Burkill, New Light on the Earliest Gospel, p. 92. And again: "the activities of Jesus had made a deep impression upon the villagers of north-eastern Palestine." Ibid., p. 182.

See also Ch. Guigenbert, The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus, p. 11.

See also J. Klausner, From Jesus to Paul, p. 584.

See F. F. Bruce, New Testament History, p. 169f. "Why he chose Galilee rather than Judea must be a matter of speculation."

Bruce may have implied that Jesus chose Galilee because it was the "One part of Palestine which John does not appear to have visited," p. 160. See also R. Bultman, Theology of the New Testament, p. 52; W. D. Davies, The Gospel and the Land, p. 1612, pp. 424.

2. Lk. 4:24; similar Mt. 13:57; Mk. 6:4.

3. T. B. Erubin 53a & b; Jn. 7:41-52.

See Geza Vermes, Jesus the Jew, p. 55. "As in the rabbinic quotations, the qualification 'Galilean' is synonymous with a cursed, lawless rabble."

4. Lk. 13:31; Mt. 14:1-2. "[Herod] said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he [Jesus] is risen from the dead." Same in Lk. 9:7.

5. Josephus, Wars Book III, Ch. VI/3 also Ch. IX/8.

6. Mk. 13:9; Mt. 10:16-17; Lk. 10:13, 21:12.

7. The Synoptic Gospels narrate this only. John has it that Jesus went up to Jerusalem more than once. S.

Zeitlin, op. cit., 172 also maintains that "Jesus went to Jerusalem several times.

8. "Of the four districts the Galilee was the most fertile." S. Zeitlin, *ibid.*, p. 258.
9. Is. 8:23.
10. II Kings, 17:23-4.
11. I Maccabees 5:21-3; Josephus, Antiquities Book VII, Ch. VIII:1-2.
12. J. Klausner, Judah Aristobulus and Jannaeus Alexander, essay in The World History of the Jewish People V. VI, pp. 226-8. See also Ch. Guignebert, op. cit. (2), pp. 7-11.

The prevailing opinion about the Galileans found its expression in the words of the Tannai Reb Yochanan ben-Zakkai: "O, Galilee, Galilee! You hate the Torah; in the end you will get oppressors." B.T. Shaboth.

13. Jos., Wars, Book I, Ch. VIII/5.
14. Jos. Wars Book II, Ch. VI/3; Antq. B. XVII, Ch. XI/4.

See also Hyman Maccoby, Revolution in Judea (Taplinger Publishing Co., New York, 1923), p. 37f.

15. Geza Vermes, op. cit., p. 46. Quoting Simon Dubnow, History of the Jews V. I, p. 4. Also Hyam Maccoby, op. cit., pp. 37-8, 110-111.
16. The census i.e., counting the population for the purpose of taxation levied by Rome on the Jews (6 C.E.) came about when Judea passed from its semi-independence under Herod to Roman control. The (first) procurator over Judea was Coponius (C. 69 C.E.). The governor of Syria, Coponius' superior, saw fit to carry out the census. According to Law such census is forbidden (II Samuel, 24). In addition Jews saw it as an act of servitude and the people rose in a rebellion. J. Klausner, op. cit. (1), 1925, p. 161; Solomon Zeitlin, op. cit., V. II,

p. 137. This was the beginning of the party of Zealots. See also Jos. Antiq. Book XVIII, Ch. I/6. He described the Zealots as the "fourth Jewish sect."

17. Ibid., see also H. Maccoby, op. cit., pp. 110-111.
18. In the Talmudic literature, the Zealots (as a movement, or rather movements, because they were plagued by bitter feuds) is called by extremely disparaging names. The second of the main parties the Sadducees were even more so opposed to the Zealots; so too, the Essenes. For some odd reasons, modern Jewish historiography (probably to be in accord with the age of revolutions) adapted a positive attitude to these groups who undoubtedly contributed to the demise of the Second Commonwealth. But, Joseph Klausner (Jesus of Nazareth, the McMillan Co., New York, 1925, p. 204) calls them "the finest patriots Israel knew from the rise of the Macabeans to the defeat of Bar Kokhba. . . . Their one crime was that they acted according to their conscience."

The last words are simply meaningless, since Judaism and Law should be the criterion. But it is by far not the only illustration of Klausner's approach to historical events. Yet Klausner, too, concludes that "the best of the Tannaim and the enlightened of that generation opposed them and dubbed them . . . 'licentious' and Josephus loads them with all manner of derogatory epithets." Ibid., p. 205. Jos Ant XVII:X/8 calls them "a pestilence."

19. Vide Supra n. 12 the saying of Rabbi Yochanan.
20. Ch. Guignebert, op. cit. (1), p. 32.
21. B. Pes, 49b.
22. Jn. 7:41; similar 7:52.
23. Ibid., 52.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., 49.

26. Mk. 10:31 "many that are first shall be last; and the last first. Similar Mt. 23:12; Lk. 14:11; 18:14.
27. Mt. 11:5; Lk. 7:21-2.
28. Mk. 1:21-2, 11:18; Mt. 7:28-9; Lk. 4:31-2; Jn. 7:46.
29. Mk. 4:12; Mt. 13:13; Similar, Lk. 8:10; Jn. 12:40.
30. See above n. 18. According to Charles Guigenbert, it was not the native population of Galilee that gave rise to the Zealotic movement, it was due to it that: "some very resolute nationalistic gangs had taken refuge in their mountains." Op. cit. (1), p. 32. This corroborates with what Josephus records about the attitude of the population in Galilean cities during the war.
31. Mt. 9:18, 23-26; See also Mk. 5:22f; Lk. 8:41ff.

The chances Jesus' Gospel would gain adherents in Galilee is brilliantly elucidated by Hans Leitzman: "Galilee was surrendered by pagan districts, separated by Samaria from the Judaistic centre of religion, and penetrated with foreign elements. Hence there was no sympathy here with the strenuous legalism of the Pharisees. In this region, therefore, a hearing could be found for a message which proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was open to pagan or half-pagan taxgatherers, to despised sinners, . . . but closed to the Pharisees with their display of righteous correctness . . ." op. cit., p. 55.
32. Mt. 9:24.
33. There is what New Testament scholars denote "the Galilean Tradition" is all four Gospels. In Galilee Jesus began his public career as a teacher; there he recruited his disciples. In the synagogues of Galilee he manifested authority and gained followers. Galilee became so identified with Jesus' message (Kerygma) that although what the Church later called the crowning act of the mission--his death--occurred in Jerusalem, the earliest Gospel,

Mark, sees Galilee as the center also after Jesus' death: "I will place myself at your head and lead you to Galilee." (14:28 and 16:7), Johannes Weiss rightly points out that "This saying . . . must rate as a very old and historical datum, for the very reason that it voices an expectation never realized, and one that was disappointed: the Lord did not lead them back to Galilee." Weiss maintains that because of that "disappointment" the other Gospels disregarded the tradition. Thus the omission in the other Gospels is no evidence, it rather substantiates the record in Mark. (J. Weiss, op. cit., V. I, pp. 17-18.)

Here we want to add some arguments for Jesus' relative success in Galilee (alone).

There were two main factors: (1) The secret element in Jesus' Kingdom of God proclamation: the denunciation of Israel's Chosen nationhood was still a well-kept secret. The simple people of Galilee could thus not perceive that the extreme emphasis on faith into the Omnipotent God contained a condemnation of the Sinaic Covenant. (1) The downgrading of the primacy of deed according to the Law, and the aggrandizement of faith, had a special appeal for Galileans whose knowledge of Law was at a low level.

It is our hypothesis that the so called Judaizers, a later phenomenon, among whom not one of Jesus' disciples is to be found, came from those Galileans who were impressed by Jesus' preaching and by his "healing the sick," and to whom the secret element in Jesus' teaching has never been intimated. See W. D. Davies, op. cit. (2), Appendix IV, Galilee--Land of Salvation?, pp. 409-438, also pp. 429-35 citing views of other scholars about the Galilean tradition. See R. P. Meye, op. cit., pp. 80-85.

- 34. Mk. 1:22; Mt. 7:28, 22:23; Lk. 4:32-37.
- 35. Mt. 10:8; Lk. 9:2, 10-11.
- 36. Mt. 10:8; similar Lk. 9:2.
- 37. Mt. 10:28.

38. Ibid., 10:26; Mk. 4:22; Lk. 8:17, 12:2.
39. Mt. 10:35. Similar Lk. 14:26.
40. R. Bultman, op. cit., p. 4. See Hans Leitzman (op. cit., p. 56): "just as he [Jesus] had given a new sense to the term, Kingdom of God, so too, he entirely transformed the meaning of Messiah." See also W. D. Davies, op. cit., p. 336f.
41. Jos. Wars, Book II, Ch. VI/1.
42. Mk. 13:9f; Mt. 10:17-21; Lk. 21:12.
43. Josephus, scion of a noble Jewish family, was one of the commanders in the Jewish rebellion against Rome. He was taken captive by the Romans (his survival in the battle and defeat at Jotapata remains suspiciously unclear). He served the Romans in their military campaigns against Judea and became a favorite of Vespasian and Titus, adopting their family name Flavius. Wars, Book III, Ch. VIII. H. Graetz, Jiddishe Folks Geschichte (Yiddish), V. II, p. 4.
44. Jos. Antiq. Book XX, Chp. VIII/5. Wars, B. II, Ch. XXII/2, Book V, Cho. I. Josephus' accusation against the Zealot groups fighting Rome and also among themselves in the beleaguered Jerusalem are partially justified.
45. See S. Zeitlin, op. cit., Vol. Two, pp. 238-243. T. B. Gitlin, 56a. Graetz, op. cit., pp. 14-16. See also supra n. 18.
46. Mt. 10:16; and in a modified form in Lk. 10:3 where Jesus sends also out the "appointed seventy." Ibid., 10:1.
47. Mk. 12:8; Mt. 3:1-13; Lk. 3:3-18; Jn. 1:6.
48. See above notes 3,12.
49. Mt. 10:27; in a modified form Mc. 4:22. This should be understood as a future development, not for the present mission. Otherwise the entire line of

instructions "be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" makes no sense.

50. Mt. 10:39; Mk. 8:35; Lk. 9:24, 17:33; Jn. 12:25.
51. Mt. 11:25; Lk. 10:21.
52. Quote taken from W. B. Davies, op. cit. (1), p. 111.

Part II, Chapter V
(Pages 188-211)

1. Joseph Klausner, op. cit. (1), p. 363, quoting from Wellhausen's work: Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien, p. 113).
2. See n. 1, Part Two, Chapter II.
3. Mt. 9:16-17; similar Mk. 2:21-22; Lk. 5:36-7.
4. R. Bultman, op. cit., p. 4.
5. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
6. B. T. Kid 40b; Maimonides, Laws of Repentance, Ch. 3/1-2.
7. Mt. 10:6, 15-24.
8. See Part One, Ch. IV about Pharisees.
9. Mk. 4:21; Mt. 5:15; Lk. 8:16, 11:33.
10. Mt. 12:39; similar Mc. 8:12; Lk. 11:29.
11. Mt. 11:2-6; Lk. 7:19-23.
12. None of the "miracles" performed by Jesus, "cleansing lepers" making "the lame walk" even the "miracle" "raising the dead" is among the "signs" by which Israel would recognize the Messiah. Maimonides, in discussing the signs of the Messiah, concludes: "The King Messiah does not have to perform any supernatural act." Rabbi Akiba accepted Bar Kochba as the Messiah without having ever

performed any initial miracles. All his achievements were his initial victories over the Roman occupant.

Rudolf Bultman, op. cit., states that the "miracles" Jesus performed were totally unrelated to the sign Jews demanded as proof of his messianic role:

"The fact that their question [for a sign] chronologically follows the sign of the bread-miracle makes it clear that the meaning of the sign does not lie in the miraculous occurrence." Vol. II, p. 44.

Robert P. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 69-70, comments: "Jesus warns his disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees--those who seek a sign. . . . It is the evil disposition of the Pharisees that they seek a sign from Jesus when great signs, i.e., the repeated feeding of the multitudes, have already been given." In a note to this (n. 10) Meyer quotes from the work of Gerhard Delling, Botschaft und wunder in Wirken Jesu, p. 390 that the later draws attention to the fact "that it was not expected that the Messiah should appear as a wonder-worker."

It is in place to add that it was, however, expected from non-Jewish redeemer-figures that they should be wonder-workers.

13. R. Bultman, op. cit., V. I, p. 19.
14. Ibid., p. 12.
15. Ibid., p. 19.
16. Ibid., p. 21.
17. Ibid., p. 27.
18. F. F. Bruce, op. cit., p. 170. See also pp. 186-187 where Bruce points out that many of those who followed Jesus realized that he is not the messiah they hoped him to be, and because of it "many of his Galilean followers left him."
19. Ibid., p. 181.

20. Rudolf Bultman, op. cit., p. 4.

21. Ibid., p. 9.

The concept of Satanic power controlling man's existence is a Christian dogma rooted in the Kerygma of Jesus. Davies writes: "One can hardly turn to any of the Christian classics from the first century down to . . . Niebuhr, without at times being overwhelmed by the profound sense of sin. . . . I do not recall any Rabbinic passage where there is a pervading sense of the miasma of sin or anything like a doctrine of original sin." (Davies, op. cit. (2), p. 397.)

The catalyst for "being overwhelmed by the profound sense of sin" is, as Davies mentions, the dogma of the irreversible stigma of Original Sin. the primordial deed of man enticed by Serpent-Satan that man can through his act become as God gave birth to a continuous rebelliousness in man, making him believe that human deed can influence history. (It seems logical to assume that the emphasis on sin and the de-emphasis of deed are theologically connected. The Original Sin was man's first deed, motivated by the desire to become as God, as advised by the serpent. Deed and sin are thus interlaced.)

Judaism with its emphasis on the role of man's deed, keeps alive the Satanic concept born of Original Sin.

This also explains Jesus' accusation against the Scribes and Pharisees: "You Serpents, generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?" And makes them co-responsible for "all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel . . ." (Mt. 23:29-35; similar, Acts 7:52).

22. With a few exceptions, when a reference to the Messiah is made, Jesus' quotes are extremely negative about Israel and prophecies of doom.

Viz.: Matthew 13:14, 15:8-9, 21:43-44; Mark 4:12, 7:6-9, 11:17, 13:14; Luke 19:46, 20:16-18; John 12:40-41.

23. The Torah makes it clear that Israel's parochial infrastructure was of an instrumental character--to restore the role of man as God's accomplice on earth. God's call to Abram to become the progenitor of a Chosen Nation states: "and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). Gen. 18:18 supplies the rationale to this: "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the world shall be blessed in him. For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of God, to do righteousness and justice."

It was not faith alone, it was not even the primacy of faith that called for a Chosen Nation. The foremost task of Israel was to make all of mankind aware of its capacity and duty to perfect their this-worldly habitat.

Jesus' view that man's awareness of the importance of his deed denigrates pure faith and deters the aeon of God's Grace was, therefore, sui generis the refutation of Israel's nationhood.

The Church, too, although in a different way, recognized that the rationale of Israel's existence is an instrumental one: T. A. Burkill writes: "In the evangelist's thinking. . . . God chooses Israel to be the instrument of His remedial action for the restoration of a degenerate humanity, . . ." (op. cit., p. 165).

Burkill, following "the evangelist's thinking," naturally adds: "But, Israel persistently fails to fulfill the obligations associated with privileged position. . . . The place of Abraham's seed must be taken by others [Mark] 12:9) and God's elect reconstituted on a new foundation." (Ibid.)

The parable of the fig tree Jesus "said to it, No man eat fruit of you hereafter forever" (Mk. 11:13-14)--explains the parable "to be intended as a

symbol of Israel." (Ibid., p. 147) (Mt. 21:19 has the same story; Lk. 13 gives it in a slightly different version.)

See the discussion about "The Parable of the Fig Tree" by W. D. Davies, op. cit., pp. 355-57.

24. G. McGiffert, op. cit. (2) discussing the theology in the primitive churches, writes ". . . the heart of it was the belief that Jesus Christ was a divine being who by his death and resurrection saves those that are unified to him by faith." (p. 20)
25. Mt. 21:31.
26. Mk. 1:15.
27. The Book of Jonah; I Kings 19:15; in an indirect way many of Israel's prophets had a message to Gentile peoples.
28. Starting with Moses, the call of all prophets calling the people to repent, was not abstract: "repent and believe," but the pointing out of specific misdeeds. When the prophets admonished the people for their lack of faith, they pointed out their economic/social/ethical misbehavior as its result. In Israel's turning away from faith in God, the prophets saw the anchorage of human deprivation. The arch-enemy of God in the prophetic Books, is the man of evil "who distorts justice, oppresses the poor, the widow and the orphan."

That in Jesus' ministry the call to repent had a different meaning than in the tradition of Judaism is testified too, in the pentecost narration, in Peter's advice to the Jews:

"Now when they [the Jews] heard this, . . . and said . . . what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins. . . ." (Acts 2:37-8).

Repentance was confined to faith in Jesus.

29. Mk. 2:17; Mt. 9:13, Lk. 5:32.

30. Jesus' silence about the Zealots should not make one overlook his anti-Zealotic statements and actions. W. D. Davies discusses this problem at length. Some of his points are brought here:

"The claim that the Christian community deliberately falsified the historical figure of Jesus [i.e., covering up the anti-Roman features in his ministry] must be rejected: it ignores the evidence in the Pauline epistles, the earliest documents in the New Testament, for a suffering Lord who died for all; it does wholesale violence to the text of the Gospels and ignores much in the traditions that sets Jesus over the Zealots." (Op. cit. (2), p. 340f).

Some of Davies' arguments are of special importance: "When Jesus was told of the slaughter of Galileans by Pilate in the Temple, he did not respond with indignant denunciation of Roman brutality, but with a warning to his own people to repent." (Luke 13:1-2)

It is difficult to understand why Davies stops here. It is also not exact to describe Jesus' reaction when he heard about "the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, that "he did not respond with indignant denunciation." Jesus actually, although indirectly, saw in Pilate the executor of a divine decree:

"And Jesus answering said . . . suppose of you that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay: but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." (Lk. 13:1-3)

As brought out in a previous chapter, "Galileans" was then synonymous with rebellion against Rome. Jesus is not here criticizing a faulty policy of the Zealotic movement--he refers to them as not exceeding the other Jews. In the next paragraph he equates Galileans with "all men that dwell in Jerusalem." (Ibid., 4). And Jesus concludes: ". . . except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." (Ibid., 5)

It should be added, that the episode is related in the Gospels in a way entirely different from others. Usually the Gospel narrates who were the people that came to Jesus: The "Pharisees," "Pharisees and Scribes," "The Jews" "a great multitude gathered around him," etc. This story begins: "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans . . ." (The Latin version is: "Aderant autem quidam ipso in tempore, nuntiantes illi de Galilaeis, quorum sanguinem Pilatus miscuit cum sacrificiis eorum.")

The text obviously avoids relating who "some people" were; what sort of a "season" was then, etc., etc.

The animosity is also manifested in Jesus' generalized response. Here, it is not the usual sin of the "hypocritical Pharisees" "Herodians" "Sadducees," even the term "Galileans" fades out; it is all of you--the people of Israel.

There was only one trait that was (with rare exceptions) common to "all of you" in the Jewish Commonwealth--hate of the Roman ruler of the land. To Jesus this was the sin that left for the people the alternative: "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish."

Of special interest is Davies' insightful interpretation of Jesus' saying "and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles." (Mt. 5:41) Davies sees this as a reference "to the right of the Roman soldiers to require non-Roman subjects to carry their equipment one mile." Davies sees Jesus' saying as anti-Zealot in its intent." As this is followed by the saying: "love your enemies . . . and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Davies sees in all these utterings of Jesus a consistency of "a Messiah whose nature was hidden in suffering: he is not a triumphant and militant, but a despised and humiliated figure." (Ibid., pp. 340-1

Davies sees this tradition reflected also in "that the Jerusalem Christians refused to take part in the war against Rome, but fled to Pella, and were

persecuted by Bar-Kochba in the second rebellion."
(Ibid.)

The parable about the fig-tree, following Jesus' comment about the massacres of Galileans and the deadly accident of Jerusalem undoubtedly substantiates what was said above.

31. Mk. 3:28-29; Lk. 12:10.
32. Mk. 1:16; similar Mt. 4:17.
33. Lk. 15:7, 10.
34. Meaning the Pharisees; however, according to the discussion above (note 30) concerning Jesus' response to the killing of the Galileans (Lk. 13:1-5), it could refer to the people of Israel as an entity.
35. Mk. 3:28; Lk. 12:10.
36. Ibid., Mk. 3:29.
37. Mt. 6:24.
38. R. Bultman, op. cit., p. 8.
39. Ibid., p. 9.
40. Jn. 4:21.
41. Mk. 12:17; Mt. 22:21; Lk. 20:25.
42. Mt. 5:13; Mk. 9:50; Lk. 14:34-35.
43. Mt. 21:43; similar Lk. 20:16.
44. Mt. 22:10.
45. Mt. 10:7.
46. Ibid., 34-35; Lk. 12:51-52.
47. Mt. 10:34-37. Luke gives it even a more drastic form. "If a man come to me and hate not his father, and his mother, and wife, and children, and brethren

and sisters, ye, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (14:26)

This form of preaching could only have been meaningful when Jesus searched for individuals within an entity who were bound to be alienated by his preachings. Such was the situation during Jesus' ministry among Jews. A Jew could only be won over to the Jesus-fellowship when he/she was ready to sever family relations and national affinities. the preservation of such sayings, in a time when they were not only useless, but a hindrance to the expansion of the church, is testimony that the sayings were widely known as coming from Jesus himself.

In Paul's epistles, the earliest Christian literature, we hear a call to retain close family ties with members who remained outside the Church.

"If any brother has a wife that believes not [meaning she remained a non-Christian], and she is be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which has a husband that believes not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." (I Corint. 7:12-13)

The same note is echoed in I Peter 3:1: "Ye wives, be in subjection to your husbands; that is, if any obey not the word [meaning--the Gospel]: they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives."

Quite obviously, that was not the time to project into the Jesus tradition a call to divide families and a message that to join Jesus one must "abandon his family . . . "(see above, note

The call to divide families found a place in the Gospels because it was the authentic echo of Jesus' mission to dismantle the parochial structure of the house of Israel.

A. G. McGiffert in op. cit. (2) discussing Jesus' statements sees in it evident that Jesus aimed "to bring home to his hearers the seriousness of the impending crisis . . . " (p. 3) D. Davies quotes G.

B. Laird (Jesus and the Jewish Nation, p. 7): "The extreme urgency with which the disciples were sent out on their missionary tour (Matt. 10) arouse from Jesus' belief that 'Israel was at the cross-roads . . . the time for choice was horrifyingly short.' . . . he regarded his generation indeed as being in imminent danger of being the last of Israel's history. It was the purpose of Jesus to bring into existence . . . a restoration [of Israel] that should be accompanied by the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Kingdom of God." (Op. cit. (2), p. 347)

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