

Diogenes of Oenoanda (fl. 2nd cent.)	Numenius of Apamea (Or Neo- pythagore- an) (fl. 2nd cent.)		Demonax of Cyprus (fl. 2nd cent.)	
	Albinus (fl. c. 150)		Demetrius of Sunium (2nd cent.)	
	Alcinous (fl. c. 150)		Theagenes of Patras (2nd cent.)	
	Atticus (c. 150– 200)			Marcus Aurelius (121–180)
	Celsus (fl. c. 180)			
	Galen (c. 129–99)	Aristocles of Messana (fl. late 2nd cent.)	Theodorus (Cynulcus) (fl. late 2nd cent.)	
		Alexan- der of Aphrodi- sias (fl. c. 200)	Sextus Empiricus (fl. c. 200)	

## JEWISH BACKGROUNDS

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### INTRODUCTION

Any study of New Testament texts needs to be informed by an understanding of the Jewish world of the first century. Jesus and his disciples were a part of this world, many details of which feature in the texts, and the main agents of the spread of Christianity into the Gentile world were Jews who continued to see themselves as part of God's chosen people. What was that Jewish world like?

It is now recognized that there was considerable diversity within first-century CE Judaism. At any given time, Jews practised their religion in many different ways. The majority of the people did not belong to any particular group, but were zealous to live according to God's Torah and sought to be faithful to Judaism (see Sanders 1992: 448-51). Within Palestine itself there were different groups: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, some of which were far from unified, as well as a number of teachers and holy men, each with their band of followers. In addition, many Jews lived outside Palestine as a minority group in a Gentile city, spoke Greek rather than Hebrew or Aramaic, and may have only visited Jerusalem once in their lives, if at all. These Diaspora communities were far from uniform in practice and belief. This overall diversity is such that some scholars argue it is best to speak of 'Judaisms' in the plural in this period.<sup>1</sup>

While there was considerable diversity within first-century Judaism, we can also identify a central core of beliefs and practices that the great majority of first-century Jews, who followed no particular party, held in common. Further, there was also broad agreement on these beliefs and practices among the various Jewish parties and groups, agreement at a deeper and more fundamental level than the variations of interpretation and practice which divided these groups. These

<sup>1</sup> See for example, J. Neusner, W.S. Green, and E. Fredrichs (eds.), *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); see also Green in Neusner 1995: 1-10. On diversity in this period see for example Porton in Kraft and Nickelsburg 1986: 57-80; Dunn in Neusner 1995: 236-51.

various areas of broad agreement, to which we will now turn, gave Jews a common identity in very concrete ways.

#### COMMON JUDAISM<sup>2</sup>

With respect to belief, the following elements can be identified as fundamental and shared by most Jews of this period. There is only one true God, who had chosen the people of Israel and had made a covenant with them (Exod. 19:5-6). God, who alone should be worshipped, had created the world and continued to govern it. In the covenant, God had promised to be their God, and they had promised to be God's people. This relationship was dependent on God's mercy and grace (Exod. 19:4). Belief in election set Israel apart and also led to the solidarity of the Jewish people throughout the world. God had given Israel Torah, the covenant charter for all that Israel was, so that, by keeping it, the people might express their answering fidelity to God. Thus obedience to Torah was the appropriate response to the prior grace of God in election, the proper response to the covenant.<sup>3</sup> Obedience would lead to blessing, blessing connected with the promise of the land (Deut. 6:1-3). Transgression of Torah was punished, but in this regard, God's justice was moderated by mercy and by God's promises. Further, transgression could be forgiven by God through repentance, sacrifice and, if possible, making reparation. Obedience and atonement kept people in the covenant, and thus within God's people.<sup>4</sup> It is through God's people that God will act to restore and heal the world.

Inherent in these beliefs are certain practices, practices decreed by

<sup>2</sup> On common Judaism see Cohen 1987: 62-103; Riches 1990: 30-51; Dunn 1991: 18-36; Sanders 1992: 1-303; Wright 1992: 215-79. Of course, these beliefs could be articulated or developed in different ways, and different beliefs and actions could flow from these basic elements of common Judaism (for example, concerning how the covenant is to be maintained and Torah obeyed), and this led to considerable debate and antagonism between different groups. This will be dealt with in the next section.

<sup>3</sup> For the importance of covenant ideas in this period, see for example 1 Macc. 2:49-68; 2 Macc. 8:14-18; *Jub.* 15:1-34; Wis. 18:22; Ben Sira 44-50; 4 *Ezra* 5:21-30; *Pss. Sol.* 9:9-10; CD 6:19; Sanders 1977: 84-107. For a restatement of his helpful notion of 'covenantal nomism', see Sanders 1992: 262-75.

<sup>4</sup> Sanders (1992: 274) notes: 'Salvation depends on overall stance, whether or not one is "in"; for non-Christian Jews, salvation depended on being in the covenant'.

God in the Torah revealed to Moses, which encompasses all aspects of life (see *Apion* 2:171). The covenant, which was entered through birth as a Jew or by becoming a proselyte, was sealed for males by circumcision, since this was the covenant sign of the chosen people. Jews were to worship God, above all at the Jerusalem Temple; in order to enter the Temple, Jews had to be in a state of ritual purity. Jews paid the Temple tax that supported the sacrifices, went on pilgrimage to the Temple where they attended the festivals and tithed their produce. They also observed the sabbath and the food laws that regulated what food could be eaten, how it was to be killed and cooked and with whom it could be eaten. In the time of Jesus, Jews also attended the synagogue on the sabbath to study Torah and to pray. In this period, circumcision, sabbath and food and purity laws in particular seem to have functioned as badges or boundary markers that distinguished Jews from non-Jews, and thus reinforced Jewish identity and distinctiveness. The day-to-day praxis of Torah was thus a vital badge of a person's Judaism.<sup>5</sup>

It is likely that the great majority of Jews in the New Testament period observed these elements of Jewish praxis. The evidence suggests that they were sufficiently concerned about their Jewish heritage to take a fair amount of trouble to observe at least the biblical law, to pray, fast, keep the sabbath, go to the synagogue, circumcise their sons, keep the food laws and to travel to Jerusalem for the regular festivals (see Sanders 1992: 47-303; Wright 1992: 213-14).

The reason Jews followed these practices is worth underlining. As Wright notes, it was not

because Jews in general or Pharisees in particular were concerned merely for outward ritual or ceremony, nor because they were attempting to earn their salvation (within some later sub-Christian scheme!) by virtuous living. It was because they were concerned for the divine Torah, and were therefore anxious to maintain their [G]od-given distinctiveness over against the pagan nations, particularly those who were oppressing them. Their whole *raison-d'être* as a nation depended on it. Their devotion to the one [G]od was enshrined in it. Their coming liberation might perhaps be hastened by it, or conversely postponed by failure in it (Wright 1992: 237).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Our information for the Diaspora is more limited, and cannot be discussed here, but in many cases we have evidence that Diaspora Jews also shared these elements of common Judaism.

<sup>6</sup> Note also Wright 1992: 334: '[A]s Sanders has argued extensively,

Having discussed the broad framework of common Judaism, we will now turn to four facets of first-century Judaism that are particularly significant for New Testament exegesis: Torah, the Temple, the cult and eschatology.

#### A. Torah<sup>7</sup>

The Torah was the covenant charter for Israel as God's people; obedience to Torah was the appropriate response to the prior grace of God in giving the covenant. One of the unique features of Judaism in the ancient world was that Israel's Torah covered all of life.<sup>8</sup> In the first century, Torah was often divided into two parts: laws that governed relations between people and God, and laws that governed relations amongst people.<sup>9</sup> If Torah was to be kept, it needed to be applied to everyday life in more detail than is found in the Pentateuch. For example, the Pentateuch goes into little detail in prohibiting work on the sabbath (e.g. Deut. 5:12-15); what then constituted 'work'? Thus there was the need for the formulation of interpretations of Torah, which developed Torah where necessary and applied it to everyday life. Although such traditions are normally associated with the Pharisees, the Qumranites and almost certainly the Sadducees and the priests also developed a body of interpretation of Torah, since anyone faced with applying Torah had to make such decisions (see Sanders 1990: 97-108). For all Jewish groups, this was the way of maintaining the relevance of Torah, and of putting it into practice.

Did most Jews of this period keep Torah? Sanders comments helpfully:

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membership in the covenant is *demonstrated*, rather than *earned*, by possession of Torah and the attempt to keep it. When the age to come dawns, those who have remained faithful to the covenant will be vindicated; this does not mean "those who have kept Torah completely", since the sacrificial system existed precisely to enable Israelites who knew themselves to be sinful to maintain their membership none the less. And the attempt to keep Torah, whether more or less successful, was normally and regularly understood as response, not as human initiative.' See further Sanders 1977; Sanders 1992: 262-78.

<sup>7</sup> On Torah see Sanders 1992: 190-240; Schürer 1973-87: II, pp. 464-87.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Josephus in *Apion* 2:171: 'Piety governs all our actions and occupations and speech; none of these things did our lawgiver leave unexamined or indeterminate'.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2:63. The latter category of course had implications for relations with God. We should note that the modern distinction between ritual and ethical Torah is anachronistic and misleading.

What we should not assume is what most scholars do assume: people either obeyed the rabbis (or Pharisees), or they were non-observant. We must always remember the very large number of people who, when push came to shove, were ready to die for Torah and who kept most of it in ordinary circumstances (Sanders 1992: 153-54).<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the evidence, some of which will be discussed below, suggests that people generally followed Torah concerning worship, prayer, keeping the sabbath, circumcision, purity and food laws, and supporting the Temple.<sup>11</sup> While the ordinary people did not obey all the Pharisaic rules, they generally tried to follow Torah in all areas of life. Of course, 'following Torah' meant different things to different people. Even the most basic commandments were subject to varying interpretations, and there was a range of opinions about how strictly people should interpret and follow Torah (Sanders 1992: 236).

As noted above, by the New Testament period some aspects of Torah observance—most notably sabbath, circumcision and food and purity laws—seem to have functioned as cultural, social and religious boundary markers that preserved Jewish identity and thus were the main identifying marks of Jews that distinguished them from their pagan neighbours. The observance of the sabbath was one of the best-known Jewish customs in the ancient world, which suggests, along with other evidence, that Jews faithfully kept the sabbath in this

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<sup>10</sup> Sanders (1992: 238-40) notes the number of passages in which ordinary Jews are said to have been willing to die for their faith and Torah; e.g. *Ant.* 15:248; 18:262; *War* 2:169-74; Dio Cassius, *History of Rome* 37:16:2 (keeping the sabbath led to defeat and death). These passages strongly underline the zeal that ordinary Jews had for God and for God's Torah.

<sup>11</sup> Sanders (1992: 237) considers the evidence on these areas sufficient to speak of 'orthopraxy in worldwide Judaism'. We can also note that, in the Diaspora, Jews obtained permission from the Romans and their local cities to assemble, to keep the sabbath, to have their 'ancestral food', to decide their own affairs, to send money to Jerusalem and to 'follow their laws' in general; see Trebilco 1991: 8-20. This enabled Diaspora Jews to maintain a Jewish way of life, and shows that they generally endeavoured to obey Torah. We should also note that, in some writings, the particularly Jewish aspects of Torah were ignored (e.g. Pseudo-Phocylides), allegorized (e.g. Letter of Aristeas 130-69) or otherwise rationalized (e.g. Aristobulus in Eusebius, *P.E.* 13:12:9-16), so as to emphasize to Gentile readers the aspects of Judaism that would be most intelligible to them. This does not necessarily mean that the Jewish authors of these works did not observe Torah, however.

period.<sup>12</sup> Sabbath observance generally involved attending the synagogue, abstaining from work and having a special meal. Circumcision, which for Jews was a sign of the election of Israel and the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17), was regarded by both Jews and non-Jews alike as a distinctively Jewish practice, even though other ethnic groups also observed it. Despite some possible exceptions,<sup>13</sup> circumcision was regarded as an essential part of Jewish practice.

The food laws forbade Jews from eating certain foods, with abstinence from pork particularly attracting the attention of non-Jews. Comments from non-Jewish authors, and the explicit mention of some food laws in various texts, suggest that most Jews kept these laws in the first century (see *Ant.* 14:245, 259-61; Whittaker 1984: 73-80). Purity laws were also important in the New Testament period and were generally obeyed, although various interpretations were adopted by different people. Impurity resulted from such sources as skin diseases, contact with a corpse, childbirth, menstruation, semen and irregular discharges. Impure people were not, for example, to enter the Temple or handle priests' food, and purity laws also governed when intercourse could occur. Various rituals, generally involving water and the passage of a period of time, resulted in purification (Sanders 1992: 214-30).<sup>14</sup>

Given the importance of Torah, there was the need for some people to become masters of Torah through prolonged study, which was itself seen as a religious duty. The priests were the great teachers and guardians of Torah, but alongside them there developed a body of lay scribes and teachers (see, for example, Ben Sira 38:34b-39:8). They were a revered group who commanded the highest respect.

On the sabbath, Jews gathered for reading and exposition of Torah in the synagogue,<sup>15</sup> although the use of the term 'house of prayer' for

<sup>12</sup> See Sanders 1992: 209-12; note, for example, *Jub.* 2:17-33; *War* 1:145-47; *Ant.* 14:226, 264; 16:45-46; *Apion* 2:40; Seneca, *Ep.* 95:47; Whittaker 1984: 63-73. On the sabbath, see R. Goldenberg, 'The Jewish Sabbath in the Roman World up to the Time of Constantine the Great', *ANRW* II.19.1 (1979), pp. 414-47.

<sup>13</sup> For example, the allegorizers mentioned by Philo, *Migr. Abr.* 89-93.

<sup>14</sup> The wide distribution of immersion pools shows that purity rules were generally obeyed, as do the rabbinic passages (given in Sanders 1992: 522 n. 34), which show that the Pharisees thought that ordinary people kept many of the purity laws.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, *Apion* 2:175 and the Theodotus inscription from Jerusalem, which tells us that Theodotus built the synagogue 'for reading of the

synagogues, especially in the Diaspora, shows that prayer was also common during the sabbath assembly.<sup>16</sup> Members of the congregation could address the gathering concerning the Scripture readings, as Jesus and Paul did at various times (Mark 1:14-15; 6:1-5; Acts 13:15). We can note that the synagogue also had a range of other functions, and in areas where Jews were in a minority, such as the Diaspora, the synagogue was a community centre that fulfilled a wide range of functions, including meeting educational, social, political, and economic needs.

### B. The Temple<sup>17</sup>

The Temple was the central communal institution for Jews in Palestine and throughout the Diaspora and was the basic rallying point of Jewish loyalties. Judaism was unique in the ancient world because it had only one Temple. It portrayed the point that for Israel there was only one God, and only one place was suitable for God's dwelling on earth (see *Apion* 2:23; Matt. 23:21). Because the Temple was in Jerusalem, the city of Jerusalem was the centre of the Jewish nation. It was the place where sacrifices were offered to atone for transgressions and so enable the people to maintain the covenant. Many Jews came on pilgrimage to worship at the Temple at the key festivals of Passover, Weeks and Tabernacles, and it was to the Temple that adult male Jews everywhere paid their Temple tax. The Temple and the city of Jerusalem were thus key unifying elements in Jewish life, both for Jews in Palestine and throughout the Diaspora. Further, the evidence strongly suggests that most first-century Jews regarded the Temple, as well as the requirements of prescribed gifts and offerings, as sacred, and that they respected the priesthood (Sanders 1992: 52-54, 170-89, 441).<sup>18</sup> However, because of its significance, the Temple was also a

law and for teaching of the commandments'.

<sup>16</sup> Despite continuing debate about the origins of the synagogue, it is clear that synagogues were important in Jewish life and worship in the first century CE. They are often mentioned in the New Testament (e.g. Mark 1:21; Acts 6:9; 13:15) and Josephus and Philo take them for granted (e.g. *War* 2:285-90; *Life* 277, 280, 293; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 155-56.). On the synagogue see now Urman and Flesher 1995.

<sup>17</sup> On the temple see Safrai and Stern 1974-76: II, pp. 865-907; Sanders 1992: 47-145, 306-14; Wright 1992: 224-26.

<sup>18</sup> Note the exception found in *Sib. Or.* 4:24-30. Thus the devotion to the Temple that is clearly shown in Luke 1-2 by Zechariah, Mary and Joseph, and Anna and Simeon reflects the attitude of the majority of Jews of this period.

factor in some of the divisions of first-century CE Jewish life. The Qumran community, for example, had a very high regard for the Temple, but rejected the current Temple regime as illegitimate and corrupt and looked forward to a new Temple.

Herod the Great rebuilt the Temple on a vast scale. He began the work in either 23/22 or 20/19 BCE; it was completed around 63 CE. The whole complex, which measured around 450 by 300 metres and was massively imposing, was an extraordinary achievement and displayed an impressive harmony and simplicity of design. It consisted of the Court of the Gentiles, the Women's Court, the Court of the Israelites, the Court of the Priests where the sacrifices were offered, and finally the sanctuary, which consisted of two chambers, the second of which was the Holy of Holies. These areas are listed in order of increasing sanctity, with admission being progressively restricted, underlining how crucial the concept of purity was for the whole Temple.

The key role of the priests was of course to offer the sacrifices ordained by God in the Temple; as those who alone could minister in the Temple, the priests enjoyed considerable prestige.<sup>19</sup> They were not active in the Temple full-time, but rather were divided into twenty-four 'courses', with each course serving for a week in regular rotation. Many priests, the great majority of whom were not aristocrats, lived away from Jerusalem and stayed in the city only when it was the turn of their group to perform the rituals of the Temple. The priests were also expert interpreters of the Scriptures, although they were not the only such experts. Hence, they functioned as magistrates, key legal and religious authorities and as scribes in their local settings to whom ordinary Jews turned for teaching and for advice and judgments in matters relating to Torah (*Apion* 2:184-89, 193-94). These leadership roles in the nation were traditional to the priests, and they continued to fulfil them in the New Testament period (see for example Ben Sira 45:17; *Apion* 2:187; *Ant.* 14:41; see also Sanders 1992: 170-82). Although some priests were Sadducees or Pharisees, the priests did not constitute a party as such, and most shared the beliefs and practices of other Jews, as well as following the laws which applied to priests, and thus were part of common Judaism. Josephus records that

<sup>19</sup> On the priests see Schürer 1973-87: II, pp. 227-308; Safrai and Stern 1974-76: II, pp. 580-600; Sanders 1992: 77-189, 317-40, 388-404. On the charge that the priests were not sufficiently strict in keeping Torah, see Sanders 1992: 182-89, 336.

there were around 20,000 priests and Levites in his time (*Apion* 2:108).

After the conquest of Palestine by the Romans in 63 BCE, the power of the high priest was curtailed (on the high priest, see Safrai and Stern 1974-76: I, pp. 400-404; II, pp. 600-612; Sanders 1992: 319-27). From the time of Herod, the secular ruler controlled the office and appointed whom he wished, which meant that the office did not gain the full confidence and support of the people. Yet the high priest still retained considerable influence on and authority over the people, as holder of the office that really counted to many of the Jews, because the high priest represented the people to God and God to the people. Further, the Romans dealt in the first instance with the high priest and expected him to have some control over the nation and to act as mediator between the Roman power and the people. Under the Roman prefects and procurators who normally stayed in Caesarea, the high priest basically administered Jerusalem, and the Temple was highly significant as a basis for political life and for the limited Jewish self-government of the period. The role of the high priest in the trial of Jesus clearly reflects this situation (see Mark 14:53-15:1; John 18:12-32; see also Acts 5:17-42; 7:1; 23:2-5).

### C. The Cult<sup>20</sup>

The sacrificial cult was the God-ordained way of expressing thanksgiving and praise, and of obtaining forgiveness and atonement. Therefore it was a principal aspect of the true worship of God. Sacrifice was crucial, since it was part of the means by which Jews maintained their status as the covenant people. There were also daily and weekly services in the Temple, services that included recitation of Scripture, prayer and the burning of incense.

There were a variety of sacrifices, including the Passover lamb, that signified the past act of God and the future hope of national redemption. These included the individual and corporate sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, in which the nation and individuals recognized that Israel had sinned but could receive forgiveness through sacrifice, and the sin-offerings made by individuals to reaffirm their membership of God's people. Sacrifices atoned for sin, showed thanks and praise to God, enabled communion with God, petitioned God for

<sup>20</sup> On the cult see Schürer 1973-87: II, pp. 292-308; Safrai and Stern 1974-76: II, pp. 885-907; Sanders 1992: 103-18, 251-57.

blessing and provided for the feeling of community among all Jews (Sanders 1992: 251-57).

There were also the three major festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles (Sanders 1992: 119-45). Each festival celebrated God's blessings upon the Land and the people. In addition, Passover celebrated the exodus from Egypt and Tabernacles celebrated the wilderness wandering on the way to the promised land. They thus focused attention on key aspects of Israel's history and encouraged the people that God would again liberate them. In addition, Hanukkah celebrated the overthrow of Antiochus Epiphanes by the Maccabees and thus emphasized the importance of true worship and the belief that God would rescue the people from tyranny. Purim, which celebrated the story of the book of Esther, underlined the same point. We can also note the Day of Atonement, which was a day of fasting and solemn rest, a time of examination and confession of sins. It was a communal day of worship on which all-inclusive rites of atonement were carried out.

The festivals thus underlined fundamental elements of the nation's faith: that Israel was the covenant people of the one God, that the land was sacred, the Torah was inviolable and redemption was certain. It seems that participation in festivals in this period was widespread, with very large numbers of people gathering in Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup>

#### D. Eschatology

During the period of the second Temple, there was a flowering of thinking about eschatology, or doctrine concerning the end time or ultimate future. In the first century CE, Israel was dominated politically by the might of Rome, which made inroads into all aspects of Israel's national life. As a result, most Jews longed for 'freedom', although this meant different things to different people.<sup>22</sup> Because of this domination, the longing intensified among many Jews that God would act to reverse the present state of affairs, fulfil the covenant and come to deliver the nation and re-establish the divinely intended order in the world. This longing took a variety of forms, but the hope was widely present that God would act decisively to bring in 'the coming

<sup>21</sup> Note that the Temple could hold 400,000 pilgrims at a festival; see Sanders 1992: 127-28. Sanders estimates that 300,000 to 500,000 pilgrims attended the festivals in Jerusalem; see also Riches 1990: 51.

<sup>22</sup> Sanders 1992: 279-80. The longing for freedom led to a variety of protests and acts of armed insurrection.

age' and forgive, liberate and redeem his covenant people, and restore their fortunes.<sup>23</sup> This would involve the covenant being renewed, the Temple and Jerusalem being rebuilt or purified and made more glorious, the land cleansed, Torah kept perfectly by the renewed and righteous covenant people and the subjugation or conversion of the Gentiles. Then at last Israel and the world would be set to rights and ruled over in reality by the true king, Israel's God; then at last a restored Israel would live within a restored cosmos. This renewed order would be 'the kingdom of God' (see Cohen 1987: 22-23; Wright 1992: 280-338; Sanders 1992: 279-303). For most Jews, one dimension of this hope was for resurrection, although often this was conceived of very vaguely.<sup>24</sup> In the present Israel was to be patient and faithful, to keep the covenant and trust God to act soon to vindicate them at last.

One dimension of the hope of Israel was for a Messiah. Although there was no single and uniform expectation concerning the Messiah in this period, and the expectation of a Messiah was not the rule, his role as the agent of Israel's God could include to fight the battles that would liberate Israel, to enact God's judgment on Israel's oppressors, to execute true justice within Israel, to rebuild the Temple and otherwise to fulfil Israel's hopes. The number of messianic movements in the first century CE, as well as a number of texts, show that the hope for a coming Messiah was reasonably widespread. However, these messianic hopes remained fragmentary; the wider and far more important strain of thought concerned the expectation of Yahweh's coming kingdom, of which the hope for a Messiah was but one (only occasionally discussed) part in texts from the New Testament period.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> There was a wide diversity of opinion concerning whether the people should simply wait for God to intervene and liberate the people, or whether they should begin the battle with the oppressors and hope for miraculous intervention, or adopt one of a number of other possible positions.

<sup>24</sup> Sanders 1985: 237; 1992: 298-303. See, for example, *Life of Adam and Eve* 41:3; 43:2-3; 51:2; *1 En.* 51:1-5; *4 Ezra* 7:32; *T.Jud.* 25:1-5; *1QS* 4:7-8. The Sadducees rejected this belief.

<sup>25</sup> On the Messiah, see J.H. Charlesworth, 'The Concept of the Messiah in the Pseudepigrapha', *ANRW* II.19.1 (1979), pp. 188-218; Schürer 1973-87: II, pp. 488-554; Sanders 1992: 295-98; Wright 1992: 307-20; Charlesworth 1992; Collins 1995. See for example, *4Q174* (= *4QFlor*); *1QSb* 5:23-9; *Pss. Sol.* 17:21-32; *4 Ezra* 11:36-46; 12:10-35; *2 Bar.* 39-40.

### *E. The Importance of these Elements of Common Judaism for New Testament Exegesis*

When interpreting the New Testament, it is important to appreciate the elements of common Judaism outlined above. Further, in exegeting the New Testament, the attitude of the early Christians towards Torah and the Temple and its cult and their modification of eschatology are all crucial issues. Some examples will be discussed briefly.

With regard to common Judaism, we can highlight the importance of the covenant for Paul, and the need for us to appreciate his attitude to the Law within the framework of the covenant. Failure to do so has led to much misunderstanding of Paul, as well as a highly distorted understanding of Judaism. Further, in Romans 9–11 Paul notes that ‘the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises’ belong to Israel (Rom. 9:4), and he goes on to state that ‘the gifts and call of God to Israel are irrevocable’ (Rom. 11:29). In this section of Romans, Paul grapples with the election of Israel, a belief that he will not relinquish, since for him it is self-evident. An understanding of election, and its place within the framework of common Judaism, is crucial to exegesis of the passage. To take one further example, Paul clearly believes that there is only one true God, as the Shema (Deut. 6:4-5), which was said twice a day by Jews, states clearly. Yet in 1 Cor. 8:5-6 Paul modifies the Shema, while clearly remaining a Jew who believes in the One God of Israel (see Gal. 3:20). All Paul says about Jesus Christ must therefore be interpreted against this background.

We have noted that Torah provides the crucial boundary markers for the covenant people. This has great importance for understanding Jesus’ controversies about the Law, and Paul’s theology. Thus, for example, Paul’s phrase ‘the works of the law’ has often been understood to refer to those things that a Jew did in order to earn salvation. However, this was clearly not how first-century Judaism understood the matter, since for them salvation was a matter of gift and grace (see in particular Sanders 1977: 84-107, 419-23; Dunn 1990: 216-25). How then should we understand the Pharisees’ insistence on purity in the Gospels, or Paul’s phrase ‘the works of the law’? As Wright notes:

The ‘works of Torah’ were not a legalist’s ladder, up which one climbed to earn the divine favour, but were the badges that one wore as the marks of identity, of belonging to the chosen people in the

present, and hence the all-important signs, to oneself and one’s neighbour, that one belonged to the company who would be vindicated when the covenant [G]od acted to redeem his people. They were the present signs of future vindication. This was how ‘the works of Torah’ functioned within the belief, and the hope, of Jews and particularly of Pharisees (Wright 1992: 238).<sup>26</sup>

The exegete must appreciate this when endeavouring to understand these debates in New Testament texts.

There was a variety of attitudes to the Temple in early Christianity, which is understandable, given the Temple’s importance for Judaism. The significance of Paul applying the category of the Temple to people and their immediate relationship with God through the Spirit can only be appreciated when we see how crucial the Temple was for first-century Judaism (see 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; see also Dunn 1991: 37-97). The Epistle to the Hebrews is dominated by the question of the relationship of Christianity to the Jewish cult, with its priesthood, tabernacle and sacrifices. To appreciate the argument of Hebrews, the way these elements of common Judaism functioned in relation to Jewish practice and belief must be understood. Finally, the view that sacrifices, and the shedding of blood in particular, atone for sin was widespread in Judaism, and was given a prominent place in Christianity (see for example Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:22; 1 John 1:7). Understanding the Jewish concept of sacrifice is crucial for exegesis of passages that, for example, concern the death of Christ.

Finally, an appreciation of the views on eschatology in first-century Judaism is crucial for an informed understanding of Jesus’ message about the Kingdom of God (see for example Mark 1:14-15; Luke 11:20 = Matt. 12:28; Matt. 11:2-6) and for exegesis of the many New Testament texts that concern eschatology (see for example Mark 13; Rom. 8:18-30; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11 and Revelation).

### JEWISH PARTIES

By the time of the New Testament, special Jewish groups or parties

<sup>26</sup> See also Sanders 1992: 262-78. These insights have led to an ongoing debate, which cannot be entered into here, concerning the ‘new perspective on Paul’, a debate that includes the question of Paul’s view on the Law. See, for example, Dunn 1991: 117-39; D.A. Hagner, ‘Paul and Judaism: The Jewish Matrix of Early Christianity: Issues in the Current Debate’, *BBR* 3 (1993), pp. 111-30.

had arisen, each with their own particular views. Most Jews did not belong to a party, and these parties did not constitute Judaism. However, the parties show that Judaism was not controlled by the priests in Jerusalem; others could come to their own views.<sup>27</sup>

#### A. The Pharisees<sup>28</sup>

Our main sources of information for the Pharisees in the time of Jesus are Josephus, the New Testament and rabbinic texts. Each source has a quite distinctive perspective on the Pharisees, which means they each must be used with great care in historical study; in addition, the rabbinic texts must be used with great caution as evidence for the pre-70 period.

The origins of the Pharisees are debated, but it seems that they originated fairly early in the Hasmonean period, probably before 134 BCE,<sup>29</sup> and probably included some people from the ranks of the more general Hasidean movement. They were made up mainly, but not entirely, of non-priests and few of their members were socially and financially prominent. At the time of Herod they numbered over 6,000 (*Ant.* 17:42).<sup>30</sup>

While the Pharisees shared many of the views common to Jews of the period, there were also some distinctive Pharisaic beliefs and practices. It is clear that they were a group committed to accurate and precise interpretation of Torah and to scrupulous obedience to its commands (see *War* 1:110; 2:162; *Ant.* 17:41; Acts 22:3; 26:5). As Josephus tells us, they had 'the reputation of being unrivalled experts in their country's laws' (*Life* 191). The Pharisees attached great importance to the 'traditions of the elders', which supplemented biblical law (*Ant.* 13:297, 408; 17:41; *Life* 198). These traditions,

<sup>27</sup> Sanders (1992: 363-64) has noted that Judaism produced parties and sects in this period because Torah covered all of life, and study was encouraged. Thus, through study, people came to different interpretations of Torah, and, given the range of Torah, these differences covered most aspects of life.

<sup>28</sup> On the Pharisees see in particular Neusner 1971; 1973; 1984: 45-61; 1991: 1-15; Saldarini 1988: 79-237, 277-97; Sanders 1990: 97-254; 1992: 380-451; Mason 1991; Wright 1992: 181-203; Grabbe 1992: 467-84.

<sup>29</sup> They probably originated between 164 and 134 BCE; Josephus's first concrete story about them belongs to the period of John Hyrcanus (134-104); see *Ant.* 13:288-98.

<sup>30</sup> But see the discussion in Wright 1992: 196-97, who suggests that this figure does not give us an assessment of the number of Pharisees in the country as a whole, and argues that they were probably far more numerous.

handed down by former generations, helped the Pharisees to interpret and apply the written Torah to the conditions of their age.<sup>31</sup> Sometimes the traditions made the law more difficult, but sometimes less restrictive.<sup>32</sup> They were also noted for their leniency in judgment, which is reflected in the attitude of the Pharisee Gamaliel towards Peter and John in Acts 5:33-40.

A key issue for the Pharisees was purity. As Sanders has shown, the Pharisees aspired to a level of purity above the ordinary, but below that of priests and their families, a level of purity that reflected in some degree the purity proper to priests serving in the Temple.<sup>33</sup> Thus they made minor gestures towards living like priests, thereby intensifying biblical purity regulations, and strove for purity more thoroughly than did most Jews (Sanders 1992: 440).<sup>34</sup> Further, Pharisees would not generally eat with ordinary people, because of the latter's routine impurity, although they did not form a sect that avoided all contact with others.<sup>35</sup> They also went beyond biblical Law in their very strict and scrupulous view of tithing and handling the priests' food, and had particular views, for example, concerning the sabbath year, what constituted work on the sabbath, and on festivals.

We know of two other elements of the Pharisees' belief system. They believed in resurrection (*War* 2:162-63; *Ant.* 18:14; Acts 23:6-8), a view the Sadducees rejected, and they believed that, although

<sup>31</sup> Sanders (1992: 423-24) notes that the Pharisees and early rabbis did not claim that their oral Torah was of equal age and status as the written Torah, but they did defend their traditions by an appeal to their antiquity.

<sup>32</sup> An example of a less restrictive law is that by constructing doorposts and lintels the Pharisees joined several houses into one, so that food could be carried from one to the other on the sabbath. This distinguished the Pharisees from the Sadducees and the Essenes; see *Eruvin* 6:2; CD 11:7-9.

<sup>33</sup> See Sanders (1992: 432) where he argues convincingly that the Pharisees did not think that all food and wine that they consumed should always be kept pure, and that they distinguished the handling of food before the heave offering and first and second tithes were taken from it, from the way food was handled afterwards for their own use.

<sup>34</sup> See the debate on this between Sanders 1990: 131-254; 1992: 431-40 and Neusner 1992. In my view, Sanders is most convincing. See also Wright 1992: 187-88, 195.

<sup>35</sup> See Sanders 1992: 428-29, 436-37, 440-43. He also notes on p. 434: 'The Pharisees did not think that the common people were excluded from the sphere of the divine and sacred; they were just one step lower on the purity ladder than the Pharisees themselves, who were one step below priests outside the temple.'



everything was brought about by providence, humans still possessed free will (*War* 2:162-63; *Ant.* 13:172; 18:13). Thus the Pharisees took a middle position between the Essenes who were 'wont to leave everything in the hands of God' (*Ant.* 18:18) and the Sadducees who believed everything depended on the exercise of human free will (*War* 2:164-65). We can also note that, in the Roman period, the Pharisaic movement was divided on some issues, with the great teachers Hillel and Shammai and their schools representing differences of opinion on a number of issues, including the attitude to adopt towards Rome.<sup>36</sup>

During the later Hasmonean period, particularly under Salome Alexandra (76-67 BCE), the Pharisees were also a major political force and were a *de facto* power in the land.<sup>37</sup> While they were not the official teachers of Torah, since this was one of the functions of the priesthood, in this period they did seek to bring pressure to bear on those who had actual power. Faced with the issue of the proper stance to take with respect to the encroachments of non-Jewish ways of life, the Pharisees stood firmly for strict adherence to the covenant.

During the Roman period from 63 BCE to 70 CE, the possibilities of the Pharisees exerting influence on those with political power were greatly reduced. We do, however, know of continuing political and revolutionary activity on the part of some Pharisees at this time; hence their focus was not solely on private piety and they were as active in public and political life as they could be without being crushed.<sup>38</sup> Their agenda remained the same as in the earlier period: 'to purify Israel by summoning her to return to the true ancestral tradition; to restore Israel to her independent theocratic status; and to be, as a pressure-group, in the vanguard of such movements by the study and practice of Torah' (Wright 1992: 189). Hence they still wanted to direct public policy and to be influential in national life, but given the political situation, they had to be very careful in their attempts to do so.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The Hillelites were more ready to accept Roman rule, provided Jews could study and practise Torah, and the Shammaites advocated some form of revolutionary zeal; see Saldarini 1988: 204-11.

<sup>37</sup> It seems that they led the opposition to Alexander Jannaeus who ruled before Salome Alexandra; see *Ant.* 13:410.

<sup>38</sup> See for example, *Ant.* 15:370; 17:41-45, 149-67; 18:4-10; 19:332-34; *War* 1:567-73, 648-55; 2:118; see also Saldarini 1988: 95-105; Sanders 1992: 380-85; 409-10; Wright 1992: 190-94; compare Neusner 1973: 45-66; 1983: 61-82.

<sup>39</sup> We note Herod's fears for his safety and his jealousy that made it very

While the Pharisees did not exercise general supervision of all aspects of life and worship, and rulers did not obey the Pharisees (who would then have been indirectly powerful), as has sometimes been thought,<sup>40</sup> it seems clear that they were generally highly respected and popular amongst most other Jews because of their precision as interpreters of Torah and the devotion and strictness with which they obeyed it.<sup>41</sup> Thus their influence as unofficial *de facto* teachers of many of the people probably remained considerable, and it seems that many people were prepared to take at least some of the Pharisaic positions with some seriousness (see Wright 1992: 195, 212-14; see also Mason 1991: 372-73).<sup>42</sup> However, they should not be thought of as controlling the masses and strict Pharisaic laws were probably observed only by the Pharisees and not by the people at large.

### B. The Sadducees<sup>43</sup>

While we have no Sadducean sources, and our other evidence for Sadducees is slight, we do have some information on this group. The origins of the Sadducees are unclear, but the group probably began in the Hasmonean period, perhaps when Simon was ruler. The most likely explanation for the name of the group is that some of its founders were members of the Zadokites, the former high priestly family.

In the first century CE they were a small party that opposed and were opposed by the Pharisees. Some priests were Sadducees (*Ant.*

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difficult for others to be influential, and that the Romans ruled through the aristocracy, of which the Pharisees were generally not a part.

<sup>40</sup> In four passages (*Ant.* 13:288, 298; 18:15, 17) Josephus attributes great authority and indirect power to the Pharisees, and suggests that they controlled the masses. However, these summaries are not borne out by Josephus's account of individual events, which show that they did not control the populace; see Sanders 1992: 388-402.

<sup>41</sup> See Sanders 1992: 402-404 and, for example, *War* 2:563; 4:159. Josephus also notes that they practised 'the highest ideals both in their way of living and in their discourse' (*Ant.* 18:15).

<sup>42</sup> Sanders (e.g. 1992: 402-404) underestimates the influence of the Pharisees on Jewish society; see M. Hengel and R. Deines, 'E.P. Sanders' "Common Judaism", Jesus, and the Pharisees', *JTS* 46 (1995), pp. 1-70.

<sup>43</sup> On the Sadducees see Saldarini 1988: 79-133, 144-237, 298-308; Sanders 1992: 332-40; Wright 1992: 210-13; C. Wassén, 'Sadducees and *Halakah*', in P. Richardson and S. Westerholm (eds.), *Law in Religious Communities in the Roman Period: The Debate over Torah and Nomos in Post-Biblical Judaism and Early Christianity* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991), pp. 127-46.

18:17), and all or almost all Sadducees were probably aristocrats, although not all aristocrats were Sadducees. They accepted the essential points of common Judaism, such as that God had chosen Israel, and that Israel was to obey Torah. Their principal additional doctrines as a group were that they claimed to follow only the written Torah, and thus rejected the Pharisaic 'tradition of the elders' (*Ant.* 13:297),<sup>44</sup> denied the resurrection (*War* 2:165; *Ant.* 18:16; *Mark* 12:18) and believed in free will (*War* 2:164-65; *Ant.* 13:173). They were also less lenient in judgment than the Pharisees (*War* 2:166; *Ant.* 20:199), as is shown by them being depicted in *Acts* 4:1-6, 5:17, 33-39 as the chief persecutors of the early Christians.

### C. The Qumran Community<sup>45</sup>

In 1947, the first Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in caves adjacent to ruins at Khirbet Qumran, to which the scrolls were linked by pottery fragments. The fragmentary documents, which number around eight hundred in total, date from the third century BCE to the first century CE and can be divided into three groups. First, manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, targums and Greek translations of the Old Testament; secondly, apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works like *Tobit*, *Sirach*, *Jubilees* and *I Enoch*, which originated outside of Qumran; and thirdly, works which were written by the Qumran sect itself, such as commentaries on biblical texts, the Manual of Discipline (also called the Community Rule), the Temple Scroll and the War Scroll. The Qumran ruins were a communal centre that was occupied from around 140 BCE to 68 CE, when they seem to have been destroyed by the Romans.

The group that produced the Qumran scrolls shares many features with the Essenes described by Pliny the Elder, Josephus and Philo— notably geographical location, commonality of property, entry procedures, sacred meals, the emphasis on purity, the non-use of oil, strict community organization and discipline, celibacy and belief in

<sup>44</sup> Sanders 1992: 333-35 notes that Josephus's implication that the Sadducees rejected anything that was not written in Torah is an oversimplification. They rejected the Pharisees' traditions, and probably claimed to follow only the biblical law, but likely had their own oral traditions, since much biblical law needed both interpretation and supplementation; see also Saldarini 1988: 303-304. They also should not be thought of as literal interpreters of Torah.

<sup>45</sup> On the community and the Scrolls see in particular Davies 1987; Knibb 1987; Sanders 1992: 341-79; VanderKam 1994; Ulrich and VanderKam 1994; Collins 1995; Martínez and Barrera 1995; Maier in Neusner 1995: 84-108.

predestination. Thus, many strong arguments suggest that the members of the Qumran community were Essenes, although some scholars dispute this.<sup>46</sup> It also seems likely that there were two basic types of Essene groups. One form, envisioned in the Manual of Discipline (1QS), was a society of celibate men living in isolation from other Jews, as at Qumran; this group is therefore a sect, since the members considered themselves to be the only true Israel and all other Jews to be apostate. The second type of Essenes, envisioned in the Damascus Document (CD), was a community of men, women and children who lived among non-Essenes; they can be considered as an extremist party within Judaism rather than as an alternative to it (Sanders 1992: 352). Josephus and Philo put the number of Essenes at around four thousand (*Ant.* 18:20; *Quod Omn.* 75). The community resident at Qumran was never bigger than a few hundred, so most members of the Essenes probably lived among non-Essenes.

The origin of the Qumran community can probably be traced to around 152 BCE, when a Zadokite priest, who is called 'the Teacher of Righteousness' in the scrolls, was joined by members of a pietist group, probably the Hasideans mentioned in 1 Maccabees. The Teacher had come into conflict with 'the Wicked Priest', who seems to have been the high priest of the time (see for example 1QpHab 8:9-13:4), and must have been one of the Hasmoneans, most probably Jonathan, although his brother Simon is also a possibility (see Knibb 1987: 4-10; VanderKam 1994: 100-104). As a result of this dispute, which probably grew from disagreements concerning sacrificial law and ritual purity, the Teacher and his Hasidean followers decided to separate from someone they saw as a corrupt and impure high priest and so departed (perhaps circuitously) to Qumran. They probably chose Qumran because they took literally the command in *Isa.* 40:3 to prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness (see 1QS 8:12-16).

The theology of the Qumran community has a number of clear elements. A redefinition of Jewish membership, and thus a shift in understanding of the concepts of election and covenant occurred, which meant that the election of Israel was understood to have been refocused on the group, which now formed the people of the new

<sup>46</sup> See the discussion in VanderKam 1994: 71-98. The suggestion that the group was Christian is contrary to the archaeological and paleographical evidence that it existed well before the time of Jesus. The suggestions that the residents of Qumran were Sadducees or that the scrolls were hidden in the caves by people fleeing from Jerusalem at the time of the First Jewish Revolt are unlikely.

covenant (CD 6:19; 8:21; 20:12; 1QpHab 2:3-4; 1QH 6:7-8). Members of the community thus saw themselves as the true representatives of Judaism who alone were destined for salvation, the new elect, the 'sons of righteousness', the 'men of the Covenant' ruled by the Prince of Light (1QS 3:20). Those who were not part of the group were not part of the elect, whatever their current status in the eyes of many Jews. The group had been eternally predestined by God and would be brought into the covenant by God's grace and call (see 1QH 2:20-21; 15:13-19; 1QM 13:9-11); related to this was a dualism between the way of light and the way of darkness. Becoming a member of the community was thus seen as separating from people of falsehood and as uniting with those who keep the covenant (1QS 5:1-3). It required a conscious voluntary decision, with full membership occurring after a period of instruction and testing.<sup>47</sup>

As members of the renewed covenant, strict obedience to God's will as understood by the community was required of them. They were stricter than other Jews in their interpretation of Torah on many points; for example, concerning what they could do on the sabbath (see *War* 2:147; CD 10:14-11:18). Acceptance of the discipline of the community was the sign that one belonged. The community also applied to themselves additional purity laws that were derived either from the practice of priests, or from laws governing lay people in connection with the Temple. Thus a higher level of purity than the Torah required was rigorously maintained. The whole community regarded itself as in some sense analogous to priests in the Temple, and the community served in place of the Temple, in which members did not participate, since they regarded it as a polluted institution run by a corrupt and sinful priesthood which followed an incorrect calendar. Hence they saw the obedience and worship of their community as a substitute for the sacrificial and atoning rituals of the Temple (1QS 9:4-5). Yet obedience to the community's rules and observance of purity were not regarded as 'earning' membership, or salvation. Rather, obedience and purity were appropriate expressions of membership in the group, and of election and salvation (see Wright 1992: 207-208; Sanders 1992: 357-79; Maier in Neusner 1995: 102-103). Further, the texts show a strong emphasis on the inability of humans to be righteous; correspondingly, gratitude at being chosen

<sup>47</sup> Clearly, they saw no conflict between predestination and the need for individual choice and commitment; see Sanders 1992: 373-74.

and a total reliance on God's graciousness (see e.g. 1QS 11:2-3; 1QH 7:26-31; 11:3-4).

We can note then that the Qumran community participated in common Judaism in significant ways: they believed in the one God, in divine election, the giving of Torah, and repentance and forgiveness. However, they were radicals in the sense that they believed that only they were truly in the covenant, that they had the one true interpretation of Torah and that only their priests were acceptable.

The community was waiting for the war of the endtimes when their Israelite enemies and then the Gentiles would be destroyed. They would take control of Jerusalem (1QM), rebuild the Temple according to their own plans and restore true worship (11QT). The ordered community would then live pure lives under a rigorous discipline. They would be led by two Messiahs, a Davidic Messiah who would defeat Israel's enemies and execute justice, and a superior priestly Aaronic Messiah who would instruct the Davidic Messiah concerning the teaching of Torah and making judgments according to it and would carry out other priestly duties.<sup>48</sup>

Revelation and scriptural interpretation at Qumran also led to knowledge of the true calendar and the correct times at which to celebrate the festivals. The Qumran calendar called for a solar year of 364 days, which differed from the 354 day lunar calendar in use in the Temple. This meant that the Qumranites observed a unique cycle of festival and effectively distanced themselves from the common pattern of festivals of the period. They also celebrated some festivals that other Jews did not observe.

#### *D. Use and Abuse of our Knowledge of Jewish Parties in Exegesis*

The Pharisees figure in the New Testament as opponents of Jesus, and Paul tells us that he himself was a Pharisee. As Sanders has shown, a considerable amount of New Testament scholarship has misjudged the Pharisees and seen them, for example, as those who tried to earn salvation through keeping Torah, or as self-righteous exclusivists who despised the common people (Sanders 1992: 413-51). Neither view does justice to the evidence; working with these views of the Pharisees will distort the New Testament text.

In the Gospels, the Pharisees feature as informed and learned adversaries of Jesus, which is in keeping with what we know of them

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, 1QSa 2:12-21. Note, however, that there is no Davidic messiah in the War Rule.

as experts in the interpretation of Torah. The statement in Matt. 5:20 that 'unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' reflects the common view of the period that the Pharisees were among the most committed to obedience to Torah (see also Matt. 23:2-3).

In the Gospels, the Pharisees dispute with Jesus over matters that we know from other sources were some of the major concerns of the Pharisees. These include matters such as fasting (Mark 2:18), keeping the sabbath (Mark 2:24; 3:2), purity (Mark 7:1; Matt. 23:25-26), eating with sinners (Mark 2:16) and tithing (Matt. 23:23).<sup>49</sup> In order to appreciate these disputes, we must understand the beliefs and practices of the Pharisees, and also appreciate their motivation for being strict interpreters of Torah. They did not see this as 'earning salvation', nor as being nit-picking, but rather as being fully obedient to God's Torah.<sup>50</sup> The Gospels also present Jesus as criticizing the Pharisees for obeying insignificant rules and not attending to the weightier matters of the law (Matt. 23:23; cf. Mark 2:24). Such passages clearly reflect a situation of polemic. In addition, as Sanders notes:

others could see their [the Pharisees'] scrupulous definition and fulfilment of the laws as being merely external activity that masked inner hypocrisy and self-righteousness, but they did not themselves see it that way. They thought that God had given them his Torah and bestowed on them his grace, and that it was their obligation within the loving relationship with God to obey Torah precisely (Sanders 1992: 446).

The commitment of the Pharisees to 'the tradition of the elders' is reflected in New Testament passages where Jesus criticizes the Pharisees on this point. In Mark 7:1-8, Jesus criticizes them concerning handwashing, which is not a biblical requirement, and in

<sup>49</sup> Other matters include divorce (Mark 10:2-9), oaths (Matt. 5:33-37), and Roman taxes (Mark 12:13).

<sup>50</sup> I have noted above that purity matters functioned as boundary-setting mechanisms. Saldarini (1988: 150) comments: 'Thus the Pharisees are the defenders of a certain kind of community and Jesus challenged the Pharisees' vision of community by attacking their purity regulations concerning washing and food, as well as sabbath practice. The effect of Jesus' teaching is to widen the community boundaries and loosen the norms for membership in his community. Jesus thus created a new community outside their control and quite naturally provoked their protest and hostility.' This must be connected with Jesus' preaching concerning the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15).

Mark 7:11-13, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for the way they used the practice of declaring property or goods *korban*, or 'an offering' to God (cf. Matt. 15:1-9; see also Matt. 23:15-26).

We know that Paul had been a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5-6; Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:5); thus knowledge of the Pharisees helps us to understand some of Paul's presuppositions and theology. For example, Paul tells us that he was zealous for the 'traditions of the elders' (Gal. 1:14) and 'as to the law, a Pharisee' (Phil. 3:5-6); in both cases he is referring to the Pharisees' views on Torah. As a Christian, he faces the issue of the place of the law in relation to Christ. This can be seen as working through one of the most important features of his Pharisaic background in the light of the coming of Christ.<sup>51</sup>

The Scrolls are immensely helpful for New Testament exegesis, since they provide numerous illustrations of contemporary ideas.<sup>52</sup> Clearly there were major differences between the two movements. Two obvious examples are: first, for the early Christians, Jesus, who was believed to be the Messiah, was the central figure whereas the Teacher of Righteousness fulfilled this role at Qumran; secondly, some Jewish Christians launched a Gentile mission in which purity was not observed, whereas the Qumranites formed a pure Jewish community in the wilderness. Yet there are also significant similarities in vocabulary, doctrine, organizational and ritual practices. We note the following examples:<sup>53</sup>

(1) The Scrolls probably give the Semitic original for a number of expressions found in the Greek New Testament. Examples include

<sup>51</sup> See also J.H. Neyrey, *Paul in Other Words: A Cultural Reading of His Letters* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990) who argues that Paul's socialization as a Pharisee led to his passionate concern as a Christian for such categories as order, hierarchy and boundaries with respect to purity.

<sup>52</sup> A number of highly improbable claims have been made with respect to the relationship between the Scrolls and the New Testament, including that the Qumranites were Christians, that some parts of the New Testament have been found at Qumran or that Jesus was the Wicked Priest of the Scrolls. All these views are highly unlikely.

<sup>53</sup> See J.A. Fitzmyer, 'The Qumran Scrolls and the New Testament after Forty Years', *RevQ13* (1988), pp. 609-20; J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Doubleday, 1992); C.A. Evans, 'The Recently Published Dead Sea Scrolls and the Historical Jesus', in B. Chilton and C.A. Evans (eds.), *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (NTTS, 19; Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 547-65; VanderKam 1994: 159-85; Collins 1995; Martínez and Barrera 1995: 203-32.

'the majority (οἱ πλείονες)' (2 Cor. 2:6), 'overseer (ἐπίσκοπος)' (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9) and 'works of the law (ἔργα νόμου)' (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:20, 28).

(2) Scholars have noted the similarities between John the Baptist and the Qumranites concerning eschatological urgency, teaching and practice. It is possible that John had some contact with Qumran prior to his own independent ministry.

(3) Various elements in the teaching of the two groups are similar, such as the use of dualistic language (1QS 3:19-26; 4:16-18; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; John 8:12; 1 John 2:8-11), the belief that group members participated in a new covenant (CD 20:12; 2 Cor. 3:6), that some are given the gift of divine wisdom (1QH 12:12-13; 1QpHab 7:4-5; 1 Cor. 2:7; 12:8) and the ban on divorce (11QT 57:17-19; CD 4:20-21; Mark 10:2-9). Further, in 11QMelch we see something of a parallel to the exalted status and characteristics of Melchizedek in Hebrews.

(4) Both the Qumranites and the early Christians were eschatological communities that were convinced that the end was near and that their community should live accordingly. Both groups shared a number of beliefs about the Messiah, although the Qumranites looked for two Messiahs in the future, and the Christians believed Jesus was the Messiah who would return. Similar titles are used in the different texts (cf. Luke 1:32-33 and 4Q246; Matt. 11:5 and 4Q521).

(5) There are a number of similarities in the practices of the Qumranites and the early Christians. We note the sharing of property (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32; 1QS 6:17-22) and regular participation in a meal with eschatological associations (Mark 14:22-55; 1QS 6:4-6, 16-17; 1QSa 2:11-22).

(6) Similar methods of biblical interpretation were used, with both communities believing that some biblical texts concerned the latter days in which the group was living, and hence referred to contemporary events.

(7) It is also interesting that the three biblical books for which the largest number of copies have been found at Qumran (Psalms, Deuteronomy and Isaiah) are also the three that are most frequently quoted in the New Testament (see VanderKam 1994: 32).

The extent of the parallels between the two movements shows how deeply rooted early Christianity was in Jewish soil and the way in which it borrowed much of the heritage of Judaism in shaping its own life and beliefs. Further, these parallels show that the uniqueness of early Christianity lies not in its eschatology or community practices,

but in its central confession that Jesus who taught, healed, suffered, died and rose again was the Messiah, Son of God and Lord.

There are numerous other ways in which the Qumran texts aid exegesis of the New Testament, but one further illustration must suffice here. None of the 11 manuscripts of *1 Enoch* found at Qumran contains anything from the Similitudes of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37-71). Scholars have debated whether the concept of a super-human son of man who will be involved in the final judgment, and who plays a central role in these chapters of *1 Enoch*, may have been a source used by the evangelists in writing of Jesus as the Son of Man. However, since the Similitudes are not present at Qumran and all the other parts of *1 Enoch* are, it seems likely, though not certain, that the Similitudes are a later composition, which could not have served as a source for the evangelists.

#### COMPARATIVE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

##### A. Scriptural Interpretation in Judaism

The Hebrew Scriptures were fundamental for all Jews of this period. However, a wealth of different interpretations, reflecting a variety of approaches, developed at this time. This diversity of interpretations witnesses to the diversity of Judaism.

Scriptural study and interpretation were central at Qumran, as is shown by the number of texts that are commentaries on Scripture or concern its interpretation.<sup>54</sup> They believed that the purposes of God were revealed in the Scriptures and these had now been made known to the community through its inspired leader, the Teacher of Righteousness. God had revealed to the Teacher the mysteries of the Scriptures and principles and techniques of its interpretation, so that he and subsequent interpreters could instruct the community in the true understanding, clarification and application of the Scripture (CD 1:1-2:1; 1QpHab 7:4-5, 8). Hence they believed that only their interpretation of Scripture was true and certain and that through correct interpretation they were provided with 'the way of salvation (CD 14:1-2) and the knowledge of the divine plan for history (1QpHab 2:6-10)'.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> On the interpretation of Scripture at Qumran, see Brooke 1985; Fishbane in Mulder 1988: 339-77; Martínez and Barrera 1995: 111-21. On its importance see for example 1QS 6:6-8.

<sup>55</sup> Fishbane in Mulder 1988: 340. One interesting example of the authority

Through its study of Scripture, the community was convinced that the latter days predicted by the prophets had arrived; in addition, the words of some of the prophets spoke about the history of the community. These views were factors that led to the community's peshirim texts<sup>56</sup> being unique within Judaism. Scriptural interpretation also led to the derivation of various specific rules and practices that they believed lay hidden in the words of Torah, by which the members of the community were to live (e.g. CD 3:13). Transgression of these hidden and secret requirements was regarded as sin. Thus, it was not Scripture alone that had authority over the community, but Scripture *and* its interpretation—Scripture as understood through their inspired interpretation of its 'hidden' sense. In this way, Scripture was interpreted so that its meaning was redirected to the community's own day, and it was used so as to relate to their own practices and beliefs. We see then the vital role played by the interpretation of Scripture in shaping the identity of one particular Jewish community.<sup>57</sup>

Interpretation of Scripture was also fundamental to the Pharisees. Through their interpretations, which became called the 'traditions of the elders', they sought to apply the written text to the present and thus to make it relevant. Key teachers were involved in this interpretative enterprise, and there were often disagreements concerning proposed interpretations.

In the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Scripture is occasionally explicitly quoted and the situation described in the Old Testament text is then equated with the later situation being presented in the new text, thus seeing in the new text the fulfilment of the old.<sup>58</sup> On other

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given to their own interpretation of Scripture is that, in the Temple Scroll (11QT), the author or redactor presents the text not as an interpretation of Scripture but as an immediate divine revelation by regularly presenting both quotations from Scripture and supplementary legal material as directly spoken by God. Thus the whole text is presented as Torah revealed by God to Moses.

<sup>56</sup> In peshir interpretation, the biblical text is read as a prefiguration of contemporary events.

<sup>57</sup> Fishbane (in Mulder 1988: 360) notes: 'It was, in fact, precisely in the special way that the old laws were reinterpreted or extended, the old predictions reapplied or decoded, and the institutions of ancient Israel restructured or regenerated, that the covenanters of Qumran saw themselves as distinct from other contemporary Jewish groups'.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Lev. 26:24 in *3 Macc.* 6:15 and Amos 8:10 in Tob. 2:6; see Divant in Mulder 1988: 389-90. On the interpretation of Scripture in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, see Divant in Mulder 1988: 379-419; J.H.

occasions, biblical elements are interwoven unobtrusively into a new text using implicit quotations, allusions or motifs from biblical texts, without such elements being formally introduced. Often this leads to new texts in which the biblical text is expanded and rewritten (e.g. *Jubilees*, Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, *1 Enoch* 6-11). In the process, the biblical text is interpreted, for example, by way of editorial alterations and substitutions, giving the story a new, more explicit and contemporary meaning. Thus we find both dependence and innovation with respect to the biblical text. Further, implicit quotations are often used to imitate biblical styles (e.g. in Tobit, Susanna, *1 Maccabees*), or a text employs the biblical text as a pattern (e.g. most of the Testaments use Genesis 49 or Deuteronomy 31-34 in this way).

#### *B. The Use of Comparative Interpretation in New Testament Exegesis*<sup>59</sup>

Interpretation of Scripture was also of crucial significance for the early Christians. We cannot discuss this in detail here, but two points are noteworthy. First, the early Christians followed presuppositions, perspectives and methods with respect to the interpretation of Scripture that are also found in Jewish writings of the period, so an awareness of these matters is very helpful in exegesis. Thus, for example, in writing the story of Jesus and the early Church, Luke adopted the language and themes of Scripture, and uses Scripture to give shape to the narrative in much the same way as had the authors of *Jubilees* and the Genesis Apocryphon; in addition, the use of interpretative alterations or expansions within Old Testament quotations, which is a form of implicit midrash found in Jewish

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Charlesworth and C.A. Evans (eds.), *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* (JSPSup, 14; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); see also van der Horst in Mulder 1988: 519-46.

<sup>59</sup> On the interpretation and function of Israel's Scriptures in the New Testament, see, for example, Ellis in Mulder 1988: 691-725; R.B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); C.A. Evans and J.A. Sanders, *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); C.A. Evans and J.A. Sanders (eds.), *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (JSNTSup, 83; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); C.A. Evans and W.R. Stegner (eds.), *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (JSNTSup, 104; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994).

texts,<sup>60</sup> occurs in Acts 4:11 (cf. Ps. 118:22) and Rom. 10:11 (cf. Isa. 28:16).

Secondly, it is noteworthy that the most distinctive feature in Christian texts is the thoroughgoing reinterpretation of Scripture in the light of the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus, as at Qumran, Old Testament eschatological texts are taken to apply to the present (e.g. Acts 2:16-21), but, in contradistinction to Qumran, the messianic and eschatological orientation of the early Christians is focused on Jesus.

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<sup>60</sup> As for example in 4QTest 22 (cf. Josh. 6:26) and 1QpHab 8:3 (cf. Hab. 2:5).

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## THE ROMAN EMPIRE AS A CONTEXT FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT

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The New Testament documents were written against the background of the Roman Empire. The Gospel narratives take place within the province of Judaea (Bauckham 1995), and the Acts of the Apostles record the spread of the Church through most of the significant eastern provinces (Gill and Gempf 1994). The epistles were written to the Christian communities in Roman colonies (Corinth, Philippi), Greek cities (Ephesus), and even in the city of Rome. Private individuals lived and travelled in a world dominated by Roman culture and institutions; although at the same time regional differences would have been quite apparent. Control of an empire was often with the consent and indeed co-operation of local elites, and local civic political structures continued under the authority of the provincial governor and ultimately the emperor (Millar 1981: 81-103). Any reading of the New Testament background needs to take account of the local setting as well as the broader issues of empire.

### PROVINCES

One of the most important regional structures of the empire was the province. Following Augustus's reforms, there were essentially two main types: those under senatorial control and those under the emperor (imperial). In general, provinces on the frontiers, with significant numbers of troops, tended to be imperial, while the more peaceful regions would be senatorial. The chief person in charge of the province was the governor, and a number appear through the New Testament: for example, Quirinius in Syria (Luke 2:2), Sergius Paullus on Cyprus (Acts 13:7), L. Junius Gallio in Achaia (Acts 18:12), Pontius Pilate (Matt. 27:2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28-29), Felix and Festus in Judaea (Acts 24-26). The status of these men is revealed by further details about their careers. For example, Sergius Paullus had earlier served as one of the river commissioners appointed by the emperor Claudius to supervise the banks of the river Tiber, and may have eventually held the consulship under Vespasian (Nobbs 1994). Governors had a small staff to assist them with the



administration of the province. One of the most important members was the procurator, who had different functions depending on the status of the province. In an imperial province, the procurator was responsible for the collection of taxes, as well as the payment of those on official duty. Such men were usually of equestrian rank.

An exception to this provincial framework was Judaea itself, which, like Egypt, did not have, at least in the New Testament period, a full governor, but rather a prefect (ἑπαρχος) or procurator (ἐπιτροπος) (Schürer 1973: 358). Thus, when Pontius Pilatus dedicated a temple of the imperial cult at Caesarea (Tiberieium), he was described in the Latin inscription as prefect (Schürer 1973: 358). Such men were drawn from the equestrian class of Roman citizens. They required a property qualification of 400,000 sesterces—a third of that of a senator—as well as having had free status for two generations. Equestrian governors were thus of a slightly lower status than other senatorial governors.

#### CLIENT KINGDOMS AND THE PLACE OF JUDAEA

Alongside the provinces were a series of client kingdoms which maintained diplomatic relations with Rome. For example, when Paul fled from Damascus (2 Cor. 11:32), he was within the kingdom of Aretas, the king of Nabataea, which later formed part of the province of Arabia (Bowersock 1983: 68).

The status of such kingdoms is well illustrated by Judaea. On Herod's death in 4 BCE, Sabinus the procurator of the adjoining province of Syria intervened to secure the royal treasury at Jerusalem. However, it was not until 6 CE that Archelaus, Herod's heir, was deposed and sent into exile, thus allowing Judaea to become a province under the control of a prefect (Gill 1995a). The first governor was Coponius. At the same time, the tetrarchs Herodes Antipas and Philip were left in charge of their own territories. When Philip died, his territory was incorporated in the province of Syria rather than Judaea.

One of the most important changes was that, in January 41, Agrippa I, who had been at Rome, was rewarded with Judaea for his support of Claudius following the assassination of the emperor Gaius. This change in the status of the region is reflected in Acts (12:20-21), where Agrippa is recorded as receiving an embassy from Tyre and Sidon. However, after his death in 44, instead of the kingdom reverting to his sixteen year old son Agrippa II, Claudius appointed

the equestrian Cuspius Fadus as procurator, thus reestablishing Judaea as a province.

Some governors seem to have been quite insensitive to Jewish customs and culture. Thus, Pontius Pilate used money from the 'Corbanus' treasury in order to pay for the construction of an aqueduct, and, on another occasion, caused a riot by introducing images of the emperor into Jerusalem at night. Felix, who appears in the book of Acts, was married to Drusilla, the daughter of Agrippa I. In spite of this, he was high-handed with the Jews, and allowed their homes to be looted by his troops.

Tensions against Rome may in part look back to 63 BCE, when Pompey captured Jerusalem, even entering the Holy of Holies. Suspicion of gentiles can be traced to the interference of the Hellenistic rulers of the region, and their imposition of Greek culture (Schürer 1973: 137-63). For example, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BCE) had tried to impose a ruler cult in the Temple at Jerusalem, and there had been an active policy of Hellenization, which had sought to undermine Jewish orthodoxy. It is important to realize that the governor of the province of Judaea had considerable influence over Jewish cult practice (Goodman 1987). Like some of the Hellenistic rulers they had the right to appoint the High Priests. It was only in 36 CE, following intervention by the legate of Syria against Pontius Pilate, that the right of the Jews to control the priestly robes was returned. This right was in fact redemanded by Claudius's new governor Cuspius Fadus when he was appointed in 44 CE. This caused such offence that petitions were sent to the legate of Syria, as well as Claudius himself, and it may have been to appease the Jewish elite that the next governor, Tiberius Julius Alexander (c. 46–48 CE), was from a Jewish family from Alexandria. Even so, the subsequent procurator Cumanus gave considerable offence and the legate of Syria had to intervene and send him to Rome.

One clear way that incorporation into the Roman Empire interfered with those in the province was the imposition of a census mentioned by Luke (2:2), who claimed that it took place when Quirinius was governor of the adjoining province of Syria (but see Schürer 1973: 399-427; Millar 1993: 46). This episode has caused chronological problems since, although Quirinius's survey is likely to have been linked to the incorporation of Judaea in 6 CE, Luke 1:5 also places this in the time of Herod, who died in 4 BCE.

Certain parts of the province of Judaea were more gentile than

others. The port of Caesarea, named in honour of Augustus, was the administrative centre and residence of the governor. Its gentile nature is reflected in the way that the imperial cult was located here; according to Josephus (*Ant.* 15:339), the temple of Roma and Augustus could be seen from out at sea. A temple in honour of the emperor Tiberius was erected during the governorship of Pontius Pilate (Schürer 1973: 358). Indeed, in Josephus (*War* 2:270) it was at Caesarea that the Jews had to mount their protest. Paul himself was imprisoned in Herod's *praetorium*, which reflects the origins of the city (Acts 23:35).

#### CITIES AND LOCAL ELITES

Cities within the empire did not all have the same legal status. In a province such as Achaëa, there were Roman colonies like Corinth that had a very Italian feel to the architecture, sculpture and language, whereas, at the same time, a city like Athens very much retained its Greek feel and structures (Gill 1993a). Thus, the cultural background of a specific community becomes significant when trying to understand the biblical text.

The *pax Romana* enjoyed by the cities at the same time deprived communities of a way to express inter-city rivalry. Thus, in the Roman period there is a noticeable flourishing of agonistic festivals supported by local elites. This imagery is a theme to which Paul returns on several occasions (e.g. 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:14).

Individuals within the empire did not have the same status. Distinctions were made between slave and free, rich and poor, citizen and non-citizen. Paul is a good case in point, in that he was a Roman citizen—and would thus have had a tripartite name—through birth (Acts 22:28) (Rapske 1994b: 71-112). It is no doubt significant that it was in a scene before the governor of Cyprus, Sergius Paullus, that Luke records Saul also being called Paul (Acts 13:9). This probably signifies the way Paul had adopted the use of his patron's name (Nobbs 1994: 287-89). Paul's inherited citizenship is in marked contrast to the arresting tribune at Jerusalem, Claudius Lysias, who claimed to have bought his (Acts 22:26, 28); this man's name suggests that he obtained his citizenship under the emperors Claudius or Nero.

The way that the local civic community, or *polis*, continued to form the framework of each province, meant that the local elites of those communities had a special place. Some of the more prominent members may have been Roman citizens, though, in the New

Testament period, not all. These cities were thus able to continue under their own civic institutions. For example, at Thessalonica Paul was brought before the *politarchs* or civic officials (Acts 17:6) (Horsley 1994). A more detailed example of the way that a legal body in a Greek city continued to function under the empire is provided by Paul's speech before the Areopagos at Athens (Acts 17:19-34). Although at first sight it appears that this is no more than a hearing in front of the Athenian intellectuals, there are elements that imply that this was a legal hearing. Athenian inscriptions of the Roman period show that the city could be addressed in terms of its civic institutions: 'the *boule* of the Areopagos, the *boule* of the Six Hundred and the *demos* of the Athenians'. Indeed, as a body, even in the Roman period, it may have been possible for the Areopagos to exact exile and capital punishment. Barnes (1969) has suggested that, just as Paul was brought before civic magistrates at Philippi and Thessalonica, or the governor at Corinth, in the 'free city' of Athens, the Areopagos was the logical place to lay charges against an individual. He proposed that the charge against Paul was that he was introducing a new religion to the city, and that Paul's speech forms the key elements of his defence.

The riot at Ephesus caused by the silversmiths who were associated with the worship of the civic goddess, Artemis, brings into sharp focus the problems faced by the civic authorities under the Roman Empire (Acts 19:23-41) (Trebilco 1994: 302-57). Paul's companions were seized by the mob, and even the provincial officials, the Asiarchs, advised against Paul intervening (Horsley 1994). Such unruly behaviour might cause an intervention by the governor, and so there is little surprise that the city *grammateus* (secretary) intervened to quieten down the proceedings (Acts 19:35). He pointed out that, if any laws had been broken, then the courts were open and they could take appropriate action. Secondly, he reminded the crowd that the city ran the risk of 'being charged with rioting because of today's events' (Acts 19:40).

It is clear from epigraphic evidence from elsewhere that such behaviour was not tolerated. For example, an inscription, almost certainly relating to a second-century CE riot at Magnesia on the Maeander by the bakers, reveals the threats made by the governor for such behaviour:

I therefore order the Bakers' Union not to hold meetings as a faction nor to be leaders in recklessness, but strictly to obey the regulations... When from this time forward any one of them shall be caught in the act of

attending a meeting contrary to order, or of starting any tumult and riot, he shall be arrested and shall undergo the fitting penalty.

At the end of the first century CE, Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 34:21-22) addressed the people of Tarsus and suggested that, if the linen workers caused trouble, 'you should expel them altogether and not admit them to your popular assemblies'.

Elite members of these urban communities do appear in the New Testament documents. For example, Aristarchus from Thessalonica has a name that is suggestive of high status (Gill 1994b). Moreover, the way that he appears at Ephesus as well as on the final voyage to Rome suggests that he belonged to this social group which had the means to travel (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Phlm. 24; Col. 4:10).

At Thessalonica some Christians had stopped working and were 'living in idleness' (2 Thess. 3:6; cf. 1 Thess. 4:11). Winter (1994a: 41-60) has argued that the appropriate background to this may have been a food shortage which hit the Mediterranean in the 40s and 50s. Some members of the church had built up a patron/client relationship with the elite members of the church during the crisis, and continued to use it even when the time of need was past. Such shortages may have also influenced the Thessalonian interest in eschatological concerns.

#### SLAVES AND FREEDMEN

One of the most important institutions of the ancient world was that of slavery. It underpinned much of the ancient economy, including the running of the home and agriculture. Slavery appears at several points in the New Testament documents (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:11; Philemon *passim*). It is important to remember that, in some ways, slaves in a good household may have been considerably better off than the urban poor, especially at Rome (Finley 1968; 1980). Former slaves, on obtaining their freedom, could become Roman citizens, an image used by Paul (1 Cor. 7:22-23). In the epigraphic record, they can often be identified either by the omission of their father's name, or the mention that they were the freedman of a named individual, whose name they would take. The children of such individuals obtained full rights. Some of these freedmen could be extremely rich. Take, for example, C. Julius Zoilos at Aphrodisias (in western Asia Minor)—a freedman of either Julius Caesar or more likely Augustus—who is known to have given a series of buildings to

his home town (Smith 1993). Freedmen even became governors of Judaea. For example, Felix was a freedman of the emperor Claudius, and may have obtained his position through the influence of his brother Pallas. Although Pallas's full name was Antonius Pallas, as he received his freedom from Antonia the mother of the emperor Claudius, Josephus (*Ant.* 18:6:6) calls his brother Claudius Felix. A tantalizingly incomplete Greek epitaph that was found between Dora and Athlit mentions a procurator called Tiberius Claudius, and Felix must be a possibility (Gill 1995a: 22).

#### ROMAN AUTHORITY AND CHRISTIANITY

Roman authority appears in the New Testament in several places. The most obvious is the role of Pontius Pilate as prefect of the province of Judaea. Although the charges brought against Jesus came from the Jewish authorities, the governor alone had the responsibility to punish Jesus with a death sentence. At the same time, it has to be realized that, although Pilate had the authority to reject the charges, his position in the province largely rested with the goodwill of the Jewish authorities, in particular members of the Jewish elite (Goodman 1987). Moreover, with only a limited number of troops available to him, the easiest course of action was often one of appeasement.

One of clearest statements about the legal status of Christianity may be found in Acts. The Jews at Corinth brought Paul before the governor, Gallio (the brother of Seneca), and suggested that he was guilty of 'persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law' (Acts 18:13). Gallio came to the conclusion that Christianity was no more than a sub-group of Judaism, and therefore should be accorded similar privileges and rights as the Jews. He thus dismissed the case (Winter 1994a: 142-43). The privileges of the Jews in the empire are well documented, especially from Anatolia (Trebilco 1991). For example, a civic decree at Sardis (c. 49 BCE)—recorded by Josephus (*Ant.* 14:259-61)—declared that Jewish citizens of the city could 'adjudicate suits among themselves' and even that 'the *agoranomoi* (the officials in charge of the markets) shall be charged with the duty of having suitable food...brought in'. Further privileges were granted in 14 BCE, when Rome guaranteed the right of Jewish communities to send money to Jerusalem (Josephus, *Ant.* 16:162-70).

Other governors mentioned in the New Testament include Sergius Paulus on Cyprus, who may have helped Paul's ministry by

encouraging him to visit Pisidian Antioch where his family had estates (Mitchell 1993: 6-7; Nobbs 1994). In Judaea, Paul was imprisoned under the governor Felix (Acts 23:35), a state of affairs that continued under his successor Festus. Indeed, Paul identified Festus as being the emperor's representative when he stated, 'I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried' (Acts 25:10).

Finally, behind much of the New Testament stands the shadowy figure of the emperor. It is to him that Paul finally appealed as a citizen (Acts 25:12). It was this appeal that removed him from the authority of the provincial governor, Festus (Rapske 1994b: 85-88; Millar 1992: 510-11).

#### CHRISTIANITY IN A ROMAN COLONY: CORINTH

Historical and archaeological study of the colony of Corinth has now recognized the Roman nature of the community (Clarke 1993; Gill 1993a). Latin appears to have been the main language for public inscriptions and, until the reign of Trajan, there are only a handful of inscriptions in Greek; for these a special case can be presented, including their link to the Panhellenic Isthmian Games held under the auspices of the city. This is perhaps emphasized by the choice of Latin for a Trajanic inscription honouring Titus Prifernius Paetus (Kent 1966: no. 134), which has an identical text in Greek from Argos. There are nevertheless problems with this, as the excavations have concentrated on the Roman forum where public documents might be expected to have been in Latin. The few published examples of graffiti scratched on pottery show that Greek was also used in the first century CE, and that is, of course, the language of Paul's correspondence to the Corinthian church.

Although Pausanias records that the colony was drawn from Italian freedmen, it is also clear from the epigraphy that the urban elites of the province were drawn to Corinth to fulfil civic and indeed provincial magistracies. A good example is provided by the Euryclid family from Sparta. Members of the family include C. Julius Spartiaticus, son of Laco, who held the post of *duovir quinquennalis* possibly in 47/48, and *agonothetes* in 47 (West 1931: no. 68); the same man is also known from Greek inscriptions at Athens, Epidauros and Sparta (Gill 1993a: 263). Indeed, Pausanias (2:3:5) records that one of the sets of baths in the city was donated by a member of the family, although the baths at Corinth are now thought to be Trajanic not Hadrianic. The donor would be the Trajanic senator C. Iulius

Eurycles Herculanus L. Vibullius Pius (Spawforth 1996: 179). A further example of the links between the minor towns of the province and the colony is represented by the honorific inscription of the Corinthian L. Licinnius Anteros (Spawforth 1996: 180; this inscription has also been published by Foxhall, Gill and Forbes 1997: 273-74 no. 15). This individual was granted the right to graze sheep on the peninsula of Methana (adjoining the Saronic Gulf) in return for acting as *proxenos*, or intermediary, for the community at Corinth. The date of 1 or 2 CE can be linked to the difficulties facing the local communities during the early years of Roman rule, and thus show that elite contacts in the colony itself were of prime importance (Gossage 1954: 56). A further example of mobility is represented by the honorific inscription of Junia Theodora, a Roman citizen resident at Corinth, who was celebrated around 43 CE in a series of decrees by the Lycian league and other cities of that region in 43 CE (Pallas *et al.* 1959; Robert 1960: 324-42).

In a city where status mattered, it is perhaps not surprising to find such issues appearing within the New Testament documents. For example, Paul reminded the church that 'not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth' (1 Cor. 1:26). The implication is clear: some members clearly were well-born, in other words, members of the Corinthian elite. One possible case is the Erastus who is named in Romans (16:23) as the *οἰκονομὸς τῆς πόλεως* (Clarke 1993: 46-56; Gill 1989). There has been considerable debate about whether or not this is the same individual who, in return for being elected as *aedile* of the colony, gave a piazza adjoining the theatre. As the Epistle to the Romans does not provide the *praenomen* or *nomen*, and the inscription is fragmentary, there can be no certainty that they are the same individual. Indeed, a second-century CE inscription on a sundial from Corinth shows that it had been dedicated by Vitellius Erastus along with Vitellius Frontinus, perhaps two freedmen (Clarke 1991). At the same time, there is discussion about whether the Latin *aedile* is the equivalent of the Greek term *oikonomos*. However, given the realization that the Corinthian church is likely to have contained members of the social elite, certain objections can be eliminated.

If the Corinthian correspondence is read against such a Roman elite setting, new issues can be detected. Take, for example, the case of civil litigation (Winter 1994a: 81-121). At face value, this might be seen as an injunction for Christians not to take other Christians to

court. Yet, once it is realized that the Roman legal setting needs to be considered, a different view emerges. As the case was over the 'smallest causes', such matters might be considered to be within the scope of a civil rather than a criminal case. As Winter (1994a: 107) has pointed out, this would be within the area of 'legal possession, breach of contract, damages, fraud and injury'. As such cases were between social equals, or against someone of an inferior social status, it is likely that such cases were brought by members of the local social elite. Winter (1994a: 113-15) has argued that personal enmity might lie behind such actions, perhaps within the setting of a young man keen to demonstrate his forensic skills. Clearly such actions would be divisive within the church, and this is why Paul calls for care in such areas.

The issue of sexual immorality within the church was highlighted by Paul, who observed that it was of 'a kind that does not occur even among pagans' (1 Cor. 5:1). The issue was that a man was having a sexual relationship with his stepmother (Clarke 1993: 77-85). There were indeed penalties for such a situation within Roman law—exile to an island. Jewish law also forbade such a relationship. Clarke has raised the possibility that the woman involved was childless, and that this limited her to one-tenth of her inheritance. However, if she could conceive a child—in this case through her stepson—then her financial security was assured. In any case, the fact that the Corinthians knew about the affair (1 Cor. 5:1) suggests that the husband of the woman was no longer living, since, if he had been, he himself would have had to have taken legal actions or be implicated in the crime.

Then there is the advice not to marry in the 'present necessity' (1 Cor. 7:26). Although some have taken this to be advice on not to marry and that celibacy is in fact a better way, it ignores the immediate context. The present 'necessity' (*ἀνάγκη*) would seem to apply to a contemporary period of unease. A particular issue facing the Mediterranean world at this point in time was famine or food shortage (Winter 1994b). It is recognized that famine had hit the Mediterranean. At Corinth itself, the different 'tribes' of the colony honoured one Tiberius Claudius Dinippus (Spawforth 1996: 177-78) with portrait statues in public spaces, as he had acted as *curator annonae*, or curator of the food supply. This in itself implies that, in c. 51 CE, Corinth was hit by a major food shortage that was relieved only by a member of the local elite helping out with a distribution. Indeed, this period coincides with the apparent development of the harbour

facilities at Lechaëum, one of the ports of Corinth (Williams 1993: 46). This picture seems to fit into the wider literary and papyrological testimonia that imply fairly widespread crop failure due to droughts in the Mediterranean region. When it is realized that Corinth at this point in time may have had a population of some 20,000 people, and only had a territory of some 207 km<sup>2</sup>, then it seems likely that the poorer members of society would be hardest hit (Gill 1993b: 333-34). Indeed, there is evidence that food shortages caused urban riots, and it may be this type of civic dislocation that lies behind this part of the epistle. Paul's advice here is clear. Marriage might mean procreation of children, who would be born into a situation where famine was a major and likely risk.

Behind the epistle may lie issues relating to patron–client relationships within the colony. Clearly in a large urban community like Corinth, the poor would have to rely on the generosity of the urban elite either through established patron–client relationships, through public patronage, or through elite members within the church. This probably explains the situation at Corinth where the 'household of Stephanas' was commended by Paul for 'devoting themselves to the service of the saints' (1 Cor. 16:15). Presumably, the resources of the *oikos* or *domus* of this member of the Corinthian elite were being released to the benefit of the new Christian community.

Elite presence in the Church may also be reflected in the very buildings which could be used for times of worship, and, in particular, the commemoration of the Lord's supper (Blue 1994). The factions that Paul notes in the church at Corinth, especially in this celebration, may reflect the social divisions of the church where some ate and drank while other went hungry and thirsty (1 Cor. 11:21). The poorest group are even identified as the 'Have-nots'.

If Corinth was a strongly Roman city, then the issue over head coverings in 1 Corinthians (11:2-16) needs to be reassessed against the Roman evidence (Gill 1990). The notion of men covering their heads is linked to the way that a Roman priest would cover his head with his toga when making a sacrifice, so as to cut out all distractions. One of the most famous examples of this pose is the portrait statue of Augustus, a type found at Corinth. As such priesthoods were often filled by members of the social elite, Paul seems to be challenging the view that a Christian minister was the equivalent of a sacrificial priest, and that he automatically had to be a member of the elite. The covering of the head for women is more problematic, although there

are indications that social norms may have influenced Paul's instructions.

The issues that the church faced at Corinth may be similar to those found in the Roman colony of Philippi in the province of Macedonia (Winter 1994a: 81-104). It is no doubt significant that Paul frames the inheritance of Christians in terms of citizenship (πολιτεῦμα) (Phil. 3:20). As members of a Roman colony and holding Roman citizenship, the members of church would understand the privileges of heavenly citizenship.

#### CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNICATIONS

The spread of Christianity as reflected in the New Testament documents reflects the way that the communication routes of the Roman Empire were exploited to the full. Take, for example, Paul's travels through Cyprus (Gill 1995b). Acts (13:6) records that Paul and Barnabas passed through 'the whole of the island', before reaching Paphos where they encountered the provincial governor, Sergius Paulus. An inscribed Roman milestone on the road along the south coast of Cyprus towards Citium shows that the road had been constructed in the Augustan period sometime after 12 BCE. As other evidence suggests that the road system on Cyprus was not developed until the Flavian period, when one inscription records the construction of 'new roads' throughout the province, it seems likely that the south coast was the most likely route for Paul. This would have allowed him to have passed through some of the key cities of the province, each roughly 20 Roman miles apart, the distance that could be travelled in a day.

Likewise, Paul's journey up into central Anatolia would have taken advantage of the newly-constructed road system (French 1980; 1994). Milestones show that the *via Sebaste* was constructed in 6 BCE. Paul and Barnabas are likely to have landed at Attalia, and then used the road constructed under Tiberius—and repaired under Claudius—as far as Perge. From there they joined the *via Sebaste* which passed through *Colonia Comana* and thence to Pisidian Antioch. They would have been able to follow the road to Iconium and Lystra, although the final part of their journey to Derbe may have been on unpaved tracks. In Macedonia, Paul was able to use the *via Egnatia*, constructed in the 140s BCE, which joined the Adriatic (and thus Rome) with Macedonia and the eastern provinces (Gill 1994c: 409-10). Two key churches on this route were established at Philippi and Thessalonica.

Sea journeys also play a large part in Acts (Rapske 1994a). The major church at Corinth was a strategic location, as it lay at the hub of two systems: eastwards via its port of Cenchreae (cf. Rom. 16:1) and the Saronic Gulf to the eastern provinces such as Syria and Egypt, and westwards via Lechaem and the Corinthian Gulf to Italy. Paul in his trip to Rome made use of one of the grain ships (Acts 27:6) that formed an essential link between Egypt and the ever-hungry city of Rome.

#### THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

It is hard to make generalizations about the religious background to the empire. The New Testament documents themselves are remarkably quiet about the religious landscape of the provinces. Acts is perhaps the most explicit. The major civic cult of Artemis at Ephesus sparked the major riot (Acts 19:23-41). Although at first sight Artemis, the equivalent of the Roman Diana, might seem to be a standard classical deity, her iconography reflects her local Anatolian nature. For example instead of images of a huntress, the cult statue, best known from a copy recovered from the *bouleuterion* at Ephesus, shows the goddess with multiple appendages over her body which can either be considered as breasts or possibly bulls' testicles draped around her. Acts (20:35) also records that the cult image was thought to have fallen from the sky; such sacred rocks or *baetyls* are common throughout the eastern empire. Famous examples include the cult of Aphrodite at Paphos on the island of Cyprus, and Artemis at Perge in Pamphylia. An inscription found at Agios Tychon near Amathus records a cult of 'Cyprian Aphrodite' and the sanctuary of 'the Seven within the Stelai', which was patronized by the Roman governor of Cyprus, L. Bruttius Maximus (79/80). This was presumably a *baetyl* cult. The worship of sacred rocks may in fact reflect an interest in aniconic worship, which was derived from the Semitic heartlands. One famous example was the cult of Elagabal at Emesa in Syria; this was the home of the third century CE Roman emperor Elagabalus who transported the sacred rock to Rome (Millar 1993: 300-309).

Other local cults seem to have continued throughout the empire. This is perhaps reflected in Paul and Barnabas's arrival in Lycaonia in central Anatolia. At Lystra, the pair were perceived as gods in human form, and they were identified as Zeus (Barnabas) and Hermes (Paul) (Acts 14:11-13). This episode also recalls the local myth that deities had visited the sea and had been refused hospitality by everyone

except one elderly couple, Philemon and Bacis (see Ovid, *Met.* 8:670-724). Both deities could be linked to local cults in this region.

One important Anatolian cult, although not mentioned in the biblical documents, was that of Mên. One of the main cult centres was at Pisidian Antioch, a city visited by Paul. The sanctuary itself lay a little distance from the city in a large classical style temple. In many of the dedications, the deity appears to be linked with the moon—a crescent moon is often used to represent the god—and the Latin version of the cult seems to have been that of Luna, even though Mên was a male god. Members of the local elite seem to have fulfilled priesthoods at the sanctuary and an agonistic festival was founded to honour the deity.

The imperial cult was a major feature of provincial and urban life, yet there is little comment from the biblical documents. In Anatolia, the imperial cult had an extremely high profile, in part building on the earlier divine aspect of Hellenistic rulers (Price 1984). In Galatia, the provincial imperial cult seems to have been established as early as 25 BCE. Mitchell (1993: 100-17) has noted how the construction of elaborate temples changed the urban landscape of these cities. For example, the so-called State Agora at Ephesus contained a series of buildings linked to the imperial cult that included a double temple of Roma and Julius Caesar and temple of Augustus (Price 1984: 139 fig. 3). At Pisidian Antioch, there was an important temple built in honour of Augustus, and indeed a copy of the *Res Gestae* has been found there (Mitchell 1993: 104).

At Athens, a round temple in honour of Augustus and Roma would have dominated the skyline next to the Parthenon on the acropolis. At the same time, the main public space, the agora, was filled with a temple of Ares which may have housed the cult of Augustus's deceased heir, Gaius. At Corinth, there is evidence that there was a provincial imperial cult established c. 54 CE that included an annual festival along with a wild beast show (Spawforth 1994). The first high priest to hold this office was C. Julius Spartiaticus, a member of the influential Spartan family of the Euryclids.

The imperial cult itself would have made an impact on members of the local elite, and for Christians among this group, there would have been certain questions of loyalty raised (Winter 1994a: 123-43). The description of the imperial cult at Narbo in Gaul suggests that three *equites* and three freedmen were each responsible for the sacrifices as well as the provision of wine and incense for the population of the

colony. This group of six would change each year, so that each family was not over-burdened. The strain this caused is probably reflected by the situation in Britain where the local members of the elite were expected to service the cult of the divine Claudius at the colony of Camulodunum (Colchester), and were required to take out substantial loans as a result; this formed one of the reasons behind Boudicca's revolt. Presumably in colonies like Pisidian Antioch or Corinth, the turn would come round relatively quickly, and Christians would be faced with the dilemma whether or not to take part. This dilemma may have been resolved by the decision of Gallio which extended to Christians the privileges of a *religio licita* and thus exemption from aspects of the imperial cult.

The imperial cult may lie behind Paul's discussion of 'so-called' gods at Corinth distinct from the 'many gods and many lords' (1 Cor. 8:4-6). As there was an obligation to engage in the imperial cult, it may be argued that the reason why Christians in Galatia were eager to seek circumcision and therefore be identified as Jews would be for the reason that they would obtain the legal privilege of the Jews who were excluded from such cultic activities (Gal. 6:11-18) (Winter 1994a: 123-43).

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## EXEGESIS IN THE SECOND CENTURY

THOMAS H. OLBRICHT

It is common for New Testament exegetes to search backgrounds in the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds in order to better understand New Testament expressions and concepts. Less priority, however, is assigned to scrutinizing succeeding documents, such as those of the second century. In many cases, these documents are instructive in augmenting comprehension. With respect to worship, for example, many valuable insights may be obtained. Ignatius (35–107) wrote of Christians 'no longer observing the Sabbath but living according to the Lord's day' (Ignatius, *Mag.* 9). Pliny (62–113) declared that Christians '...were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god...then reassemble to partake of food' (Pliny, *Ep.* 10:96). Justin Martyr (100–160) described the proceedings at some length:

The memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then when the reader ceases, the president in a discourse admonishes and urges the imitation of these good things. Next we rise together and send up prayers. And, as I said before, when we cease from our prayer, bread is presented and wine and water. The president in the same manner sends up prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people sing out their assent saying the 'Amen'. A distribution and participation of the elements for which thanks have been given is made to each person, and to those who are not present it is sent by the deacons. Those who have means and are willing, each according to his own choice, gives what he wills, and what is collected is deposited with the president (Justin Martyr, *Apol.* 1:67).

On this and various other subjects, valuable insights as to New Testament documents may be obtained.

We now take up second-century authors and the aspects of their writings from which help may be obtained. The extant writings from the second century by no means cover all the topics of interest to New Testament exegetes. The documents early in the century relate Christianity to the Greek and Roman worlds. Somewhat later writers evince a breaking off of Christianity from Judaism. Soon persecution of Christians occurred erratically in the empire and some of the

writing pertains to martyrdom. After the middle of the century, various authors were consumed with aberrant perspectives on Christianity, both by way of affirmation and refutation. The literary styles and genres differ in these authors, providing interesting comparisons and contrast with New Testament documents. Except for persons with roots in Alexandria, most of these writers eschewed metaphorical and allegorical interpretations.

The writers of the second century of the Christian Era continued, for the most part, the varieties of manner in which the Old Testament Scriptures were employed in the New Testament. But, in addition, they began to incorporate references to the various New Testament documents, though not as often as we in the twentieth century might suppose. The privileged documents cited most frequently by these second-century authors were the Old Testament, the epistles, especially of Paul and James, and the Gospel of Matthew.

#### THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

The *Epistle of Barnabas* was written at the end of the New Testament period. Some of the early churchmen held the letter to be inspired, and were disposed toward including it in the canon of the New Testament. The *Epistle of Barnabas* is found in Codex Sinaiticus after the Old and New Testament texts, along with the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Clement of Alexandria cited the *Epistle of Barnabas* as though it were Scripture, and both Jerome and Clement declared it to be authored by the traveling companion of Paul, who, in Acts, is designated an apostle (Acts 14:14). Authorship by Barnabas of the letter, however, seems doubtful. It seems more likely that the name Barnabas was attached to the document in order to give it apostolic status. The *Epistle of Barnabas* was likely written 96–100 CE, possibly in Alexandria of Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

The main contribution of the *Epistle of Barnabas* to the New Testament exegete is the manner in which it draws upon the Old Testament, and how its rhetoric and hermeneutics compare and contrast with the Letter to the Hebrews, and to a lesser extent with the writings of Paul. The document is more a discourse than a letter, much like Hebrews. The author recommends hope, righteousness according to judgment, and the love of joy in an evil time. He declares that the

<sup>1</sup> L.W. Barnard, 'The Problem of the Epistle of Barnabas', *Church Quarterly Review* 159 (1958), pp. 211-30.

Old Testament prophets (by which he means from Moses on) heralded these latter times and disclosed the means of combating the malfesance. He ends with the two-way option of embracing light and darkness or life and death. Unlike Hebrews, which sustains a closely reasoned theological argument, the *Epistle of Barnabas* is a discursive marshaling of prophetic utterances.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* has no specific reference to contemporary Judaism. The writer believes that Israel failed in its response to God, but that, more importantly, the real message of the Old Testament prophets anticipates the followers of Jesus. Much like the epistles of the New Testament, the author rarely references or quotes words and deeds of Jesus. By his time, Christians, as evidenced in the writing of the Gospels, relished the words and works of Jesus, but still cited the Old Testament as the authentic word from God. With some frequency, the *Epistle of Barnabas* explicates extended allegorical meaning in texts, for example, in regard to the offering of a heifer in Numbers 18 (*Barn.* 8:1). The sacrifice clearly points ahead to Christ's sacrificial death. While Barnabas clearly employs allegorical interpretation, the application is more practical/theological than philosophical in a Philonic sense.

#### THE DIDACHE

The full title of the document now designated *The Didache* was *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. A subheading identified it as 'The teaching of the Lord through the twelve apostles to the nations'. *The Didache* was highly regarded in the fourth-century Church, and was believed in some quarters to have been composed by or on behalf of the original twelve disciples of Jesus, a conclusion which scholars do not now embrace. It is thought to have been written between 80 and 120 CE, probably in Antioch of Syria, most likely by a Jewish Christian. The work bears comparison with the Pastoral Epistles, and indicates how some New Testament injunctions were later fleshed out.

In this short work, the author contrasts the way of life, which entails love and keeping God's commandments, with the way of death, which is filled with lust and other undesirable traits denounced in Scripture. Thereupon follow instructions with regard to foods, baptism, fasting, prayer, sound teaching, and the roles of apostles and prophets, wandering Christians, bishops and deacons, monetary assistance, assembly, correction and warnings.

These instructions are grounded first of all in the Old Testament,

especially in regard to violations that lead to death. The instructions for the believing community incorporate many echoes from the Gospels and some from the epistles, though some of these may be from common sources rather than directly from the New Testament writings. In terms of clear dependence, more allusions may be found to the Gospel of Matthew than to the other three Gospels. References tend to be short phrases and allusions, rather than direct quotations. Their applications tend to be more literal, rather than metaphorical or allegorical. In this manner, the bringing in of biblical materials reflects a different hermeneutic than the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Almost no effort is directed toward showing how the Old Testament was fulfilled in Christ.

#### THE LETTER OF PLINY THE YOUNGER TO TRAJAN

The letter of Pliny the Younger (c. 62–113) to the emperor Trajan (53–117; emperor 98–117) and Trajan's response comprise an unprecedented imperial insight into second-century Christianity. Pliny, a favorite of Roman emperors, served as governor of Pontus/Bithynia from 111–113 CE. The important letter regarding Christianity is preserved in the tenth book, along with Trajan's reply (10:96, 97). Trajan's father fought in the 70 CE war against the Jews, and was later appointed governor of Syria and then Asia by Vespasian. Trajan was therefore familiar with Jewish concerns and conditions in the near east.

These letters show that no official Roman policy had been enacted with regard to Christians or to their persecution. Pliny was concerned because of the increase of the Christians and the abandonment of the native religions. He therefore demanded that alleged Christians worship the image of the emperor and the statues of the gods. He killed those who refused. Trajan agreed with this policy, but declared that Christians were not to be sought out, nor was Pliny to pursue charges against persons made anonymously. Of interest to New Testament interpretation is that the Christians met before dawn, sang a hymn to Christ as God, and bound themselves to each other by an oath. They reassembled then toward nightfall to eat together.

#### IGNATIUS (C. 35–107 CE)

Ignatius was reputed to be the second bishop of Antioch. He was singled out for martyrdom and traveled from Antioch to Rome

accompanied by ten soldiers. Little is known about his life otherwise. On the journey across Asia Minor, Ignatius wrote seven letters, probably from 105–110 CE. These letters reflect what he considered the most pressing matters for the believers as he anticipated death. He made stops in Smyrna, where he was honored by Polycarp, and Troas. The letters from Smyrna were to Tralles, Magnesia, Ephesus and Rome, and the letters from Troas were to Philadelphia, Smyrna and Polycarp.

These letters are important to the exegete with respect to comparison and contrasts with the canonical epistles. Their purview is somewhat more narrowly conceived. They are, therefore, worth consulting regarding epistolary style and rhetorical features. The tendencies are less metaphorical and allegorical, than, for example, the works of Clement of Alexandria. They are also helpful simply because of the number of topics they cover. Evidence of an early mono-episcopacy may be found in the letters, though the full meaning and implications are, to a degree, problematic. Another topic worthy of pursuit is the creedal material embedded in the letters. This may be compared and contrasted with creedal statements in the New Testament, and with other early creeds, such as the Apostolic Creed in its various versions. Perspectives on servanthood and martyrdom are also worthy of perusal. It should also be noted that Ignatius eschews heresy, but is not too specific as to what sorts of heresy he has in mind. The most obvious seems to be some version of docetism. He also highlights Christian Old Testament foundations over the Jewish, but this is not a major concern. Other topics less developed include perspectives on the baptism of Jesus, the ramifications of the cross, the Lord's Supper, unity, and Onesimus.

#### THE EPISTLE OF POLYCARP TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Polycarp was a respected leader (bishop or elder) of the church in Smyrna. He was martyred in Smyrna, probably on February 23, 155 CE. He wrote an epistle to the church in Philippi in conjunction with efforts of Irenaeus and at the church's request. The letter that has survived may, in fact, be the conflation of two of his letters. *Philippians* is of interest because of the manner in which Polycarp cites New Testament epistles. In contrast with *Barnabas*, he refers little to the Old Testament. He refers little to the Gospels, but on occasion does refer to Matthew. His employment of statements from the epistles is mostly straightforward with little metaphorical

implication. He cites epistles, not so much by way of shoring up his points, but in a manner of amplification.

*Philippians* first of all sets out a profile of righteousness. Polycarp mostly provides exterior specifics rather than theological or psychological ramifications, in contrast with Paul's theological reflection upon God, the cross and the parousia. He also rejects a docetic Christology, perhaps with Marcion in mind, but this is not certain. Comparisons and contrasts with the Johannine epistles are of potential exegetical value. In addition, he emphasizes the unity of the Church and the need to respect the leaders.

#### THE MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* was apparently written by an eyewitness, not long after it occurred on February 23, 155 CE. The author clearly parallels the death of Polycarp with that of Jesus. The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* assumes an epistolary form but, aside from the introduction and conclusion, may best be described as a discourse on martyrdom. Little reference is made to Scripture, but a knowledge of the death of Christ in a Gospel or the Gospels is presupposed.

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is the first in a catalog of Christian martyrdoms, unless one includes Paul's reflections on death for Christ's sake or certain comments in Revelation. In order to explicate New Testament depictions, a foray into the martyrdom literature should be of value. In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Christians are not encouraged to seek out martyrdom, but neither to resist it if no other avenue is available. The grounds for standing firm according to conviction are expressed in this document. Especially of concern are the previous actions of Christ and the conviction that God will give life anew to those who have witnessed unto death.

#### 1 CLEMENT

*1 Clement* is normally accepted as an authentic letter from Clement of Rome to the church in Corinth sometime between 81–96 CE. If so, it is among the earliest of the non-canonical Christian materials. The situation assumes rifts in the church at Corinth. It is interesting, however, that the causes are not addressed directly, as, for example, in Paul's 1 Corinthians. The form is epistolary, but incorporates elements of Greek diatribe and synagogue homiletic style. A number of references are made to the Old Testament with occasional quotations,

especially of Genesis. The biblical examples are incorporated so as to illustrate the results of jealousy and division. The references to the Gospels are largely from Matthew. Some of the letters of Paul, as well as James, were apparently familiar to Clement. Little allegorical or metaphorical use is found. *1 Clement* was often alluded to by Clement of Alexandria (150–215 CE), and he adduces evidence that various early churchmen considered it inspired and belonging in the canon.

*1 Clement* focuses on the fractures that appeared in the Corinthian community. The desired church situation exhibits order or peace. The case for peace is expounded not so much from the ramifications of the cross as in 1 Corinthians, but through the advancement of Old Testament examples which display the consequences of jealousy and strife, though the author does emphasize the humility of Christ. Repentance and obedience are the solution. Order, Clement argues, is endemic in nature, almost as in Stoic thought, and all aspects of creation demonstrate obedience. Facets of revived nature likewise establish sufficient grounds for affirming the resurrection of Christ, as does also the legend of the Phoenix, metaphorically.

#### 2 CLEMENT

On the grounds of internal style and the absence of external evidence, *2 Clement* has been assigned to a later unknown author. Clement of Alexandria did not seem to know of *2 Clement*, and the early Church historian Eusebius questioned its authenticity. The style is that of a tractate or homily rather than an epistle. Some have supposed that the letter was in fact to the Corinthian church at a later date, and, since it was stored with *1 Clement*, was therefore presumed to be by the same author. The probable date is between 120 and 140 CE. Many of the references are to Isaiah. The allusions to the New Testament are more than in *1 Clement*. The author obviously knows the epistles as well as the Synoptic Gospels, mostly Matthew and Luke.

The author affirms the divine relationship of Christ and the salvation that he alone provides. Believers therefore need to respond in service and obedience. The Christian life is one of righteousness and holiness, and the wayward are exhorted to heed the call for repentance. The author, for the most part, addresses general problems, rather than specified situations explicitly located in the Corinthian church.

## SHEPHERD OF HERMAS

The *Shepherd of Hermas* is of particular value for the study of the apocalyptic genre of biblical materials, but also legal and parabolic writings. It reflects both similarities and differences. The setting for the document is ostensibly Rome during a time of persecution. The date is less certain and if it is in two parts, the first (1–24) is c. 90–110, and the second (25–114) is 100–150. The work falls into three clear parts: (1) Visions (1–25), (2) Commandments (26–49), and (3) Parables (50–113). The work was highly respected, and sometimes regarded as canonical. Jerome and Origen argued that the author was the Hermas of Rom. 16:14. In the second vision (8:3) Clement is mentioned, and so some argue that he is the author of *I Clement*. Since the author is reporting original visions, he makes no appeal to the Scriptures to authenticate his statements. Few quotations from the Old or New Testaments may be found, but allusions to both are present, especially to the Gospels and James. The allusions are not as clear nor as frequent, however, as in the canonical Revelation. Scriptures are employed in much the same manner as in Revelation, that is, to amplify specific statements with canonical language. The intentional metaphorical use of Scripture is minimal. The visions and parables, however, depend on highly metaphorical or symbolic entities with regard to the Church and heavenly powers. The visions in their narrativity look forward more to John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* than to prior biblical materials. Key topics in the *Shepherd of Hermas* have to do with repentance, purity, the Church and loyalty to it, the characteristics of the Spirit, and Christology. The author is especially interested in whether forgiveness is possible after having been baptized. He argues that indeed it is, however, only once.

## LETTER TO DIOGNETUS

The author of *Diognetus* is unknown, but is most likely a non-Jewish Christian who wrote toward the end of the second century CE. Scholars have suggested various dates between 117 and 310 CE. The consensus view is that the document consists of two separately circulated parts later joined. The first (chs. 1–10) is in the form of a letter. The second (chs. 11–12) is a treatise or homily. Though the document is not a narrative history of Christianity as is Acts, a comparison of the apologetic outlook of each is rewarding.

The author speaks of Christianity as a new way of worship, neither

pagan nor Jewish. Christianity is a third way. Pagans, he charges, worship objects made from stone, wood and metal, arguments similar to those of Isaiah 44. It is not certain, however, that he drew on Isaiah. The Jews, in contrast with the pagans, have rules in respect to the Sabbath and other celebrations that impede human welfare and become idolatrous. Christians live as all others in outward appearance, but are pilgrims in the world, a third race. They do not expose their children, that is, abandon them to certain death, and they love all persons. Christians constitute the soul of the people of the world, just as the individual soul sustains the body. Christians are imprisoned in the world, and thereby support the world. The last section of the epistle extols the committed believer, who is consigned to enjoy the fruits that God has provided. Allusions to Scripture mostly borrow biblical language and ideas.

## JUSTIN MARTYR (100–165)

Justin Martyr was born of non-Christian parents in Flavia Neapolis, the ancient Shechem in Samaria. After embracing several philosophies, he became a Christian about 130. He taught at Ephesus, where he engaged in discussion Trypho the Jew in an effort to convince him that Jesus was the predicted Messiah, and that Christianity was the new covenant. Later he moved to Rome where he opened a Christian school. His extant works judged authentic are the *First Apology*, the *Second Apology*, and the *Dialogue with Trypho*. The *First Apology* was written about 150 CE and addressed to the emperors Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius. In it, Justin defended Christians against the charge of atheism and hostility to the Roman state. His *Second Apology* was addressed to the Roman senate about 161 CE, in which he argued that Christians were being unjustly punished by Rome. Justin was denounced by the Cynic philosopher Crescens, with others, as a committed Christian in 165. Because they refused to sacrifice to the Roman gods, many believers were scourged and beheaded, as was Justin that same year.

Justin declared that Christianity can be defended not only on the grounds of revelation, especially fulfilled prophecy, but also through reason. His chief contribution lay in setting forth history as the arena in which God brought salvation to fruition through the converging of Old Testament revelation and Hellenistic philosophy or reason so as to form Christianity. The writings of Justin are of interest to the New Testament scholar because in them is an ostensible effort to adapt to

the Hellenistic world, an adaptation which goes beyond that of any New Testament writer. Also of interest in Justin are his depictions of early Christian baptism, worship and the celebration of the Lord's supper.

In order to assimilate Greek reason to Christianity, Justin identified the biblical Word (logos) with Platonic or Stoic concepts of logos. When addressing philosophers, logos, for Justin, had a philosophical dimension. But in arguing with Trypho, Justin pinpointed the Hebrew Word (logos) by which God creates and controls. Justin did not, as Philo, explain biblical conceptions by allegorizing them into Platonic forms. Unlike Plato, he believed that sensation continues after death in the world to come. He tended to focus on the predictive aspects of biblical interpretation. He was apparently won to Christianity, in part, because of the allure of ancient documents and the prophetic disclosing of future events. He assigned a significance to prophecy—fulfillment that exceeded that of the biblical documents. Justin interpreted most Old Testament actions and statements as pointing ahead to the coming of Christianity. The first advent of Christ disclosed in some measure the nature and purpose of the second. In the first advent, the institutions and actions were this-worldly and therefore contingent. The New Covenant, in contrast, is eternal. The first advent likewise produced what will ultimately pass away. But what Christ brings at the second advent will be permanent and eternal. The Old Testament therefore presents symbols and parables that point beyond themselves and are fully and inextricably realized in the New Testament. So Justin was given to what Christian thinkers have labeled typology, not allegory. Justin in this manner reflected the typological methods so obvious in Hebrews.

#### MARCION

Marcion is important for his doctrine of God, the manner in which he interpreted Paul and his perspectives on the canon, which in turn may have initiated canonical discussions among other churchmen. Marcion was born in Sinope in Pontus early in the second century and died about 160 CE, apparently in Rome. His father was the bishop and, according to later statements, excommunicated his son on the grounds of immorality. The son himself had status in the church in Sinope and shared the wealth of the family. He was an owner of ships. About 140 CE, Marcion attached himself to the church in Rome where he influenced various believers and made a large gift to the church. In

144 CE, he was excommunicated by the Roman church and thereafter he expended much energy in establishing a network of counter churches throughout the empire. Many of these churches later assimilated into Manichaeism.

Marcion was greatly influenced by a perspective on God which emphasized his love rather than law, and whose being transcended the confines of material existence. In this belief, he shared with the Platonists and Gnostics a claim as to the superiority of the suprasensible world, but Marcion's outlook was at the same time tintured by the Hebraic vision of a God who is a loving person. In order to explain the God of the Old Testament who is ostensibly a God of law, he differentiated the God of the Old Testament from the God of Jesus Christ. In this manner, he cut adrift the New Testament from the Old. According to Marcion, the purpose of Jesus was to overthrow the God of the Old Testament. The earliest Christian leader who best understood the contrast of law and love or grace was the apostle Paul. Because of Marcion, Paul's theology drew especial attention in the churches where Marcion's views were known. Without that influence, the churches dwelt on the Old Testament, the Gospel of Matthew and James.

In order to develop his perspective, Marcion found it important to identify the writings that he believed supported his interests. He therefore first of all rejected that the Old Testament could be a word from the God of Jesus Christ. The central documents were the letters of Paul. In his list of acceptable New Testament books, Marcion included ten letters of Paul (the Pastorals were excepted) and an edited version of the Gospel of Luke. It is not clear whether Marcion did not know about the Pastorals, or whether he rejected them. Some have argued that Luke was the Gospel preferred by Marcion because of the traditional relationship of Paul and Luke, but, since Marcion edited the text of Luke by leaving out sections, the reason may be that he found the Gospel the one most useful for his purposes. Clearly an insight into the views of Marcion enhances an understanding of the manner in which the New Testament became Scripture alongside the Old Testament.

#### ARISTIDES

Aristides was among the early Christian apologists. Little is known about his life. He is important for his early efforts to bolster the superiority of the Christian faith after the manner of the Greek

philosophers. According to Eusebius, Aristides delivered his apology to the emperor Hadrian in 124 CE, but J. Rendel Harris argued that it was addressed to Antoninus Pius, who died in 161 CE. Aristides used to good advantage a detailed insight into various concepts of deity in Greek writings having to do with the Middle East and Egypt, as well as writings detailing the exploits of the Hellenistic gods. He therefore detailed the defects of the gods of the major civilizations known to the Greeks up to that time. He criticized the plurality of the gods and the immoral and unethical actions characteristic of them. He gave the Jewish view of deity a stronger recommendation, but presented the Christian view as superior in that, because of Christ, God is more clearly revealed and Christians live a more admirable moral and ethical life. Though he presented short narrative accounts of God both in the Old and New Testaments, he did not quote from the Scriptures. His method of amplification was to identify certain specifics, especially with regard to the Christians' love for God and their life characteristics.

#### ATHENAGORUS

Another early apologist was Athenagorus, whose dates are also unknown, but who addressed an apology to Marcus Aurelius and his son Commodus about 177 CE, *A Plea for Christianity*. He apparently spent most of his career in Athens. In addition, he wrote a treatise, *Resurrection of the Dead*, which is disputed, but usually held to be authentic. Athenagorus is of interest in observing the manner in which initial efforts by Paul to relate the biblical themes of God, nature, Christ and the resurrection to the Hellenistic world were further developed in the second century.

In his two treatises, Athenagorus was chiefly interested in establishing the reasonableness of Christianity for the Athenian thinker. In *A Plea for Christianity* he sets forth three charges made by opponents against the Christians: atheism, Thyestean feasts, that is, the claim that the Lord's Supper involved eating flesh, and Oedipodean intercourse, that is, incest. Athenagorus denied the charges in each case. In regard to atheism, according to Athenagorus, many Greeks held that matter was eternal and that the gods themselves had emerged from the cosmos. Christians, he declared, distinguish God from matter and declare God the creator of all that exists. They therefore hold that God created all things by the logos and sustains the universe by his Spirit. This means therefore that the created realm is orderly and may be

apprehended by reason. His view of reality and creation therefore, though different, shared many of the same presuppositions of those of Plato and Aristotle, and he concluded that these philosophers were not judged to be atheists.

With regard to the resurrection, Athenagorus argued that, since God created the world out of nothing and providentially sustains it, he naturally recreates by resurrection those who have perished. God's creation is always purposeful and orderly, and the resurrection is consonant with logos and natural order as well as God's purpose for man in the universe. Clearly Athenagorus engaged with more fundamental Hellenistic thought from the Christian perspective than those who preceded him.

#### BASILIDES AND VALENTINUS

Gnosticism may be either a background study for New Testament exegesis, as Rudolf Bultmann and his school argued, or a foreground study, as has been declared by those associated with R. McL. Wilson. Though good grounds exist for rejecting a developed Gnosticism by the New Testament period, incipient Gnosticism lies behind some views opposed by certain New Testament documents. In this essay, the focus is the second century. Two main leaders of Gnosticism emerge in Basilides and Valentinus.

Basilides flourished in Alexandria about 130 CE. He published a commentary on the Scriptures in twenty-four books, and perhaps also a book entitled *The Gospel*, as well as some odes. Only fragments of his writings survive, but he employed secret traditions that he claimed came from Peter and Matthew, as well Platonic and Stoic philosophy. According to Hippolytus, Basilides held that God, who was wholly transcendent, created a good world and an elect race. The God of the Jews was a source of strife, and, in time, heavenly light raised up Jesus to summon the elect and raise them above the Jewish God to heavens appropriate to their abilities. He believed that these higher stages were achieved through suffering. The Scriptures were to be interpreted spiritually through the use of allegory. His disciples founded a separate sect, but were perhaps a part of the ill-defined Alexandrian Christianity.

Valentinus was a younger contemporary of Basilides, also of Alexandria, but who spent much of his later career in Rome about 140–165 CE. According to Clement of Alexandria and Jerome, he was a person of great ability, who was almost appointed bishop at Rome,

and is said to have worked under Pope Anicetus (154–165). Four of the Nag Hammadi documents somewhat reflect his thinking (if we may trust Irenaeus's account of his views): *The Gospel of Truth*, *The Gospel of Philip*, *The Exegesis on the Soul*, and the *Treatise on Resurrection to Rheginus* as well as another contemporary document, *The Teachings of Silvanus*.

Valentinus proclaimed a transcendent God who originated in the Primal Cause, that of Depth ( $\beta\upsilon\theta\acute{o}\varsigma$ ). From the Depths, Silence, Understanding ( $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ) and Truth ( $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ ) also developed. From these arose Word and Life, Man and Church, and thirty aeons, the last being Wisdom ( $\sigma\omicron\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha$ ). Falling into despair, Wisdom gave birth to a child who created the world with its imperfections. Jesus then appeared to Wisdom and, pushing aside her negative attributes, launched salvation. The ideas of Valentinus are more Hellenized than those of other gnostics. A preference was given to a psychic or allegorical interpretation of the Scripture. The gnostics tended more and more to reject the Old Testament, pushing aside the typological for the allegorical. These writings provide the impression that, whatever gnostic elements may be found in the New Testament, they were much less developed than the views of Basilides and Valentinus.

#### MONTANUS, MAXIMILLA, PRISCA, AND TERTULLIAN

The Montanist movement in Phrygia resulted in continuing claims about the Holy Spirit, prophecy and eschatology. About 172 CE, Montanus, along with two women companions, Prisca and Maximilla, claimed to be inspired by the Paraclete to be prophets to the churches. They announced that the return of Christ would take place some 15 miles east of Philadelphia. It was a new outburst of the Spirit in the wilderness. Many persons were attracted. While these three may have come from certain indigenous religious groups, the perspectives they brought to bear came from biblical materials, especially the Gospel of John and Revelation. This region was a seed-bed for spirit-filled prophecy. The movement had widespread influence, but was rejected by many churchmen on the grounds that the prophecy often arrived in ecstasy or sleep. They were also discredited because the parousia did not occur on their predicted date. Montanism especially flourished in the countryside of North Africa, where interest continued in apocalyptic, prophetic and Holy Spirit-filled activities.

The Montanists were also interested in the moral purity of the Church, as is evidenced in the shift of Tertullian to the movement in

207 CE. Tertullian was born in Carthage and well trained in classical culture. Although he employed the tools of classical argumentation, he attacked what he considered to be the pagan elements of classical culture. He was faithful to the mainline churches in Carthage for ten years, but, after 207 CE attacked them, as well as the pagans, for lack of dedication, integrity among the leadership, and moral purity. Tertullian opposed second marriages, lax rules on fasting, flight in times of persecution and what he perceived as a lenient penitential code. He also emphasized prophetic apocalyptic and a disciplined moral and ethical life. In his lifetime he published a long list of apologetic, theological, controversial and ascetic works. He generally preferred a literal and historical interpretation of Scripture as opposed to a metaphorical or allegorical one.

#### IRENÆUS (130–200)

A major figure in the life of the second-century mainstream Church was Irenaeus of Lyons. In his works, he opposed heresy and proceeded to flesh out the core of Christianity or the *Regula Fidei*. Since Irenaeus was said to know Polycarp, he apparently was a native of Smyrna. He studied at Rome, but spent his later career as a bishop and author in Lyons of France. His chief work was *Adversus omnes Haereses*, in which he opposed Gnosticism and Montanism. In modern times, an Armenian translation of his *The Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching* has been discovered. He centered in upon the developing polity of the Church and its unity, the canon of Scriptures, and the traditional doctrines handed down by the apostles. These focused upon God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. Irenaeus especially developed an incarnational Christology. Though he considered himself a philosopher, when he went searching for proofs he almost always went to the Scriptures.

Irenaeus wrote systematically on most aspects of Christian theology. He emphasized a historical perspective on the Scriptures, which especially connected the Testaments typologically. In this manner, he set out in a new way to systematize the theological teaching of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament was crucial, yet not an embarrassment, because it was superseded by the New Testament. This resulted in a sense of salvation history and a means of responding to what some saw as primitive life and ethic in the Old Testament. Irenaeus for the most part avoided explicit allegorization.



## CELSUS

The most significant programmatic antagonist of second-century Christianity was Celsus, who flourished 170–180 CE, and was from somewhere in the region of Palestine. He studied the writings of both the Old and New Testaments, especially the Pentateuch and Matthew. His attack on Christianity was more an intellectual than an irrational one. His central charge was that Christianity was a revolutionary movement which would eventually undercut traditional culture, society and government. Christ, rather than being a miracle worker as presented in the Gospels, was something of a quack who had learned magic in Egypt. Christians should abandon their role as a disruptive force, and support the emperor and the empire. The unity and preservation of the empire rested, he believed, with the embracing of the ancient traditional deities. He attacked the Christians for departing from a monotheism by affirming God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. He failed to comprehend how it was possible for the three to be one. Various persons in the third century, including Origen, attempted to answer his charges.

## MELITO OF SARDIS (D. 190)

Melito, bishop of Sardis, who flourished 160–180, wrote many documents, all of which were only known in fragments prior to the middle of the twentieth century. Melito attacked the Jews for having crucified Christ. Christ for him could best be described as both God and man, anticipating Chalcedon. He also affirmed the unity of the Old and New Testaments, but tended to find the meaning for everything in the Old Testament as adumbrating the New Testament, and believed that only Christians understood the New Testament correctly. He argued that, while sin destroyed the unity of body and soul in man, the salvation possible in Christ restores this unity. Melito probably influenced Irenaeus and Tertullian. He too interpreted the Scriptures typologically and eschewed allegory.

Many other documents were produced in the second century, but these are the major ones. These works present a rich diversity of approaches and conclusions. The explication of New Testament documents is augmented through an exploration of these successors of New Testament Christianity.

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