

Origins of the New Testament

The question is often asked, if Jesus was not an actual historical person where did the Christian religion come from, how did it originate? This is a fair question but not a small or uncomplicated one. The answer, therefore, is neither small nor simple. This article will necessarily include some of from *where* Christianity derived its ideas from but the main focus will be on the *how*, *why* and *by whom* it came about.

The basic methodology of truth seekers is to look beyond the typical and highly questionable evidence and answers offered in defense of belief. Believers usually talk in terms of absolutes regarding their system and the evidence that supports it. In truth, however, absolute proof is not possible on either side of the issue. What we can do though is to point out the fact that there is strong evidence and explanations that demonstrate credible alternatives to blind belief.

Inquiring about origins require us to look backward from the event we are seeking answers to. The biggest mistake people make when they want to understand an historical event is to limit their search to the history of and after the event. To understand any historical event one must look at the history prior to and leading up to the event in question. That historical picture must include substantial information about the cultures and belief systems that preceded and shared that age. What we must resist is narrowing and limiting our view to only what is within the NT itself or the history after those supposed events.

When taken altogether this evidence demonstrates that all the questions have not been answered, all the proof is not in, and that their 'last and final word' is far from the last and final word on the subject. The Pagan origins of Christianity become clearer the more is understood of the ideas and practices of those ancient belief systems. When the beginnings of their system are put back into the much larger, complete and complex context of its historical and cultural milieu a much different picture emerges as to the origins of Christianity.

To begin with there is no indisputable evidence that there ever was a person named Jesus Christ. No verifiable eye-witness accounts exist. Both the Roman Empire and the Jewish people left extensive records none however mention a Jesus Christ. Josephus Flavius, Pliny the Younger, Suetonius and Tacitus are men that the Church says provided proof. None of them ever met Jesus in person and their accounts are therefore in the category of 'hearsay.' There is also no verifiable historical record of any of the other characters that make up the Jesus story i.e. Mary, Joseph or the twelve apostles. Hayyim ben Yehoshua is very correct when he points out that historically speaking, *"the very existence of Jesus has not been proven."*

All the propositions that include, but are not limited to, a male immortal sky god that comes to earth and magically impregnates a mortal female who gives virgin birth, at the time of the winter solstice, to a male child who is god the father, re-born as his own son, are of pagan origin. This son of a god works many miracles, dies to save a sinful humanity, is resurrected, and becomes judge of the dead. The flesh of the god must be eaten as a Eucharist sacrifice in order to commune with the god. All these themes and motifs comprise the core worship of paganism going back 4,000 to 5,000 years and more. I challenge any Christian to show me where any of these themes can be found in the worship of the G_d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

All the above points were the ones that the followers of Yahweh/Elohim argued against. How could monotheism give birth to Trinitarianism? How did the New Testament become an outgrowth of the Old?

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The specific question is: How did the central themes of Pagan matriarchal pluralistic polytheism come out of, or derive from, Jewish patriarchal totalitarianistic monotheism?

Attempting to justify why the major themes of paganism became the identical core themes of their religion the Christians first recourse is circular reasoning: "the devil did it." However, "*No datum counts as support for 'God [or devil] exists' if, in order to show that the datum has the status of evidence, one must presuppose the truth of 'God [or devil] exists'.*"¹ Christians must first prove the *existence* of a devil before being capable using it as the excuse why the core theological points they worship predated their religion by centuries. When forced to justify what appears to be purely a case of plagiarized paganism *without* dependence on circular reasoning, diabolical mimicry, or some other theological fantasy, they are lost and simply cannot do it.

The greatest evidence in favor of evolution is the evolution of belief systems. From the prehistoric people's shamanistic cosmogonies and cosmologies through the age of mythologies to the dogmatism of theologies runs an unbroken thread of ideas and themes. Indeed, if it were not for the fact of evolution, from the original bases of Western theology in Judeo-Catholicism, from where came Protestantism, Mormonism, Mooneism or Umbonda of South America? They are all syncretistic mutations of what came before. And what came before, in the beginning, was Shamanism. Ms. Bancroft in *Origins of the Sacred* is very straightforward about how ancient these shamanistic practices were:

*The shaman is the oldest human manifestation of spirituality known to us, and one which has apparently continued without a break from the Ice Age or earlier up to the present day. He is to be found in many primitive societies, particular in Northern Siberia among the Gilyaks, in North American Indian tribes, in Eskimos, and among the Aborigines of Australia. It is known that about 20,000 BCE, when Shamanism was at its height, there was a wide disbursement of peoples all over the world and it is now believed that where societies and tribes have remained virtually untouched by civilization the ancient religion has remained much the same as it was.*²

Mircea Eliade, one of the world's foremost authorities on shamanism, gives a beginning definition of Shamanism as a "*technique of ecstasy*" and on the same page he says:

*Shamanism in the strict sense is pre-eminently a religious phenomenon of Siberia and Central Asia. The word comes to us, through the Russian, from the Tungusic saman. ...through this whole region in which the ecstatic experience is considered the religious experience par excellence, the shaman, and he alone, is the great master of ecstasy.*³

In *Shamanic Voices*, Ms. Halifax relates the term shaman to the Vedic term "*sram*"⁴ and she also says:

The shaman's initiation - whether in a cave, on a mountain, atop a tree, or on the terrain of the psyche - embraces the experience of death, resurrection, and realization or illumination. Variations on the fundamental theme of death and rebirth are found in all mythological traditions, and an encounter with death and release into rebirth are immutable dimensions of most personal religious experiences. The initiatory crisis of the shaman must therefore be

¹ *On Mystic Visions as Sources of Knowledge*, in S. Katz, *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978 Pg. 222.

² Anne Bancroft *Origins of the Sacred*. London and New York: Arkana Paperbacks - Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1987, Pg. 20.

³ Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, Pg. 4.

⁴ Pg. 3. Referring to *The Catalpa Bow* by Carmen Blacker.

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*designated as a religious experience, one that has persisted since at least Paleolithic times and is probably as old as human consciousness, when the first feelings of awe and wonder were awakened in primates.*⁵

The priest too, like the shaman before him, became the intermediary between the worshiper and the Other World. As the Indo-European tribes moved southward their style of worship blended with the more settled people they encountered. According to Mr. Taylor:

*The developed agricultures which many of the smaller groups of nomads were finally constrained to enter had by now evolved religious ideologies and practices which, whilst naturally rooted in shamanistic traditions - for where else could they have come from? - had become something quite different from nomadic shamanism.*⁶

Prehistoric shamanism blended into the later religious forms and the difference between them increased as the mystery and moralizing aspects became the dominant themes. As nomadic tribes settled into cities and populations increased the shaman gave way to organized priesthood.

Concretely, the distinctions among shamans, prophets, and sages are seldom razor-sharp. Not only do priests, saviors, diviners, and other functionaries intrude, shamans, prophets, and sages themselves break out of our restrictions of their roles.

*So the descriptions we make are only approximations. In beginning perspective, the shaman stands forth as an ecstatic. Through such techniques as fasting, isolation dancing, and taking hallucinogenic drugs, the shaman gains access to a non-ordinary reality.*⁷

Mr. Hislop sees a more sinister aspect of the older system of Chaldean/Babylonian mystery religion, which was adopted by all the later institutions based on that same mechanism. He demonstrates how the priesthood was interested in absolute power in the sphere of 'spiritual matters' and by extension in every aspect of human life. He comments:

*That object was to bind all mankind in blind and absolute submission to a hierarchy entirely dependent on the sovereigns of Babylon. In the carrying out of this scheme, all knowledge, sacred and profane, came to be monopolized by the priesthood, who dealt it out to those who were initiated in the 'mysteries' exactly as they saw fit, according as the interests of the grand system of spiritual despotism they had to administer might seem to require. Thus the people, wherever the Babylonian system spread, were bound neck and heel to the priests. The priests were the only depositaries of religious knowledge; they only had the true tradition, by which the writs and symbols of the public religion could be interpreted; and without blind and implicit submission to them, what was necessary for salvation could not be known.*⁸

Religion's original purpose was the explanation of *how* and *why* all things came about. The original answer our primitive ancestors came up with was existence of supernatural beings hidden behind and controlling the powers of nature. Everything imaginable was given a human face, a human voice and a human persona and personality. But the Shaman, Diviner and medicine man had a further purpose: to

⁵ Joan Halifax, Ph.D. *Shamanic Voices*. New York, NY: E. P. Dutton, 1979, Pg. 4.

⁶ R. P. Taylor *The Death and Resurrection Show*. London, England: Anthony Blond, Pg. 52-3.

⁷ Carmody & Carmody, *Shamans, Prophets, and Sages*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1985, Pg. 53.

⁸ Rev. Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, Pg. 7.

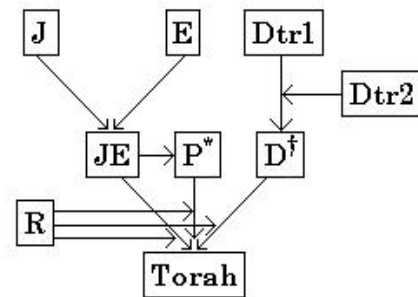
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interact with these powerful forces. They wanted a way to communicate with the powers behind wind, fire, air, water and all other forces of nature. The only way they could communicate was on a level wherein they were both the same thus the personification of the forces of nature. In this context we should also keep in mind that monotheism did not originate in Judaism. Over time these many gods, based on the powers of nature primitive societies did not understand, coalesced into the monotheistic god idea.

To Judaism Christians ascribe the glory of having been the first religion to teach a pure monotheism. But monotheism existed long before the Jews attained to it. Zoroaster and his earliest followers were monotheists, dualism being a later development of the Persian theology. The adoption of monotheism by the Jews, which occurred only at a very late period in their history, was not, however, the result of a divine revelation, or even of an intellectual superiority, for the Jews were immeasurably inferior intellectually to the Greeks and Romans, to the Hindus and Egyptians, and to the Assyrians and Babylonians, who are supposed to have retained a belief in polytheism. This monotheism of the Jews has chiefly the result of a religious intolerance never before equaled and never since surpassed, except in the history of Christianity and Mohammedanism, the daughters of Judaism. Jehovistic priests and kings tolerated no rivals of their god and made death the penalty for disloyalty to him. The Jewish nation became monotheistic for the same reason that Spain, in the clutches of the Inquisition, became entirely Christian.⁹

Is there any other evidence from the Old Testament? Yes! The *Documentary Hypothesis* is the result of observing the presence of parallel or duplicate accounts called doublets [and triplets] in the Pentateuch. These are pairs of stories that occur in two or more separate locations in the text. Along with the doublets are consistent alternations of the divine names, the variations in diction and in style along with a continuity of political outlook and general viewpoint of the authors. It will never be known how many persons wrote those first books but scholars that have done intense studies list at least five sources: J, E, D, P and R.

- **J:** the writer who worshiped JHWH often translated as Jehovah.
- **E:** the writer who worshiped Elohim.
- **D:** the author of the book of Deuteronomy.
- **P:** the writer who added material of major interest to the priesthood.
- **R:** the Redactor(s) who synthesized the J, E, P and D documents into the present Pentateuch.



⁹ John E. Remsburg, *The Christ*, (Chapter 10) At: <http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/rmsbrg10.htm>

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There are:

- Two creation stories in Genesis.
- Two lists of the Ten Commandments.
- Two descriptions of the Abrahamic covenant.
- Two accounts of the flood.
- Two stories of the naming of Isaac.
- Two instances where Abraham deceived a king by introducing his wife Sarah as his sister.
- Two stories of Jacob traveling to Mesopotamia.
- Two stories of a revelation at Beth-el to Jacob.
- Two accounts of God changing Jacob's name to Israel.
- Two instances where Moses extracted water from two different rocks at two different locations called Meribah.

The list could go on and details could be filled in but there are other websites that cover this topic quite well. The point is that these four separate sources were interspersed together by a fifth in order to produce a single work. You will notice that I used the word interspersed rather than synthesized. This is because the (R) redactor(s) included each text completely. I think this was done so that the followers of each original text would be willing to follow the combined result because it did include their unchanged version.

A prime example of synchronization is the story of the flood. The Noah story is a rewrite of the Babylonian text of "*The Epic of Galgamesh*" whose hero is Ut-Napishtim. There are over 20 points that are basically the same or with slightly different particulars. The full story of the Ut-Napishtim flood has been dated 650 BCE. Portions of the story have been found on tablets from about 2000 BCE from even earlier accounts. If it is true that the flood occurred in 2349 BCE then the Babylonian tablets, which contain the Ut-Napishtim account, must have been written by Noah's kin within a few generations of Noah! Or did the Babylonians survive the flood, in spite of JHWH, to write their own account of it? Why would his relatives, within 200 years of Noah, write an account of the flood with Ut-Napishtim as the central figure? The account found in Genesis was rewritten 900 years later around 1450 BCE.

In another example, Ezekiel's vision, the Cherubim contain the four aspects of the Sphinx the oldest among the colossal monuments of Egypt: Bull, Lion, Eagle and Man. In esoteric science they represent the basic elements: water, earth, air and fire. Besides the Cherubim, these four species are also found together in Revelation 4:7: The first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

There are abundant examples in the Old and New Testament of the synchronizing of paganism especially the Zoroastrianism of the Assyrians, Egyptians, Babylonians and Persians. Another prime example is the Moses story and the events surrounding it. The subject is rather lengthy for here so the reader is referred to *Marihuana the Burning Bush of Moses* where it is covered in detail.

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Christianity was a product of the times. From around 300 BCE to 300 CE the Mystery-Cults were the most popular religious forms. Mr. Angus in his foreword to *The Mystery Religions and Christianity* comments:

*These Mysteries covered an enormous range, and manifested a great diversity in character and outlook, from Orphism to Gnosticism, from the orgies of the Cabiri to the fervors of the Hermetic contemplative. Some of them, e.g. the Eleusinia, were Greek, but the majority were of Oriental provenance and all were infected with the spirit of the Orient.*¹⁰

There was no one style or type of worship but an overlapping of many ideas and practices that make up the beliefs in those that can be called Mystery Religions. The first section of *Marihuana the Burning Bush of Moses* deals with the Mysteries both in Paganism and their mirror image in Christianity. This subject alone is huge and important if one wants to understand the nature of what Christianity was at its beginning.

Not all the mystery religions shared all the diverse aspects found in all of them as a whole group. Each culture produced its own unique system based on the underlying local mythology. The myths themselves, though, all had a common substratum based on the regeneration of nature, astrology, the cycle of the seasons and common roots of Shamanism. As different as they were however, we can see they shared oaths of secrecy/hidden knowledge, initiation rituals/grades of initiation, baptism, sacrifice/holy food or drink, redemption/rebirth/salvation and synchronism. Mr. Hatch tells us,

*During the earliest centuries of Christianity the mysteries and the religious societies, which were akin to the mysteries, existed on an enormous scale throughout the eastern part of the Empire.*¹¹

Mr. Larson defines the Mysteries as:

*The ancient pagan cults based upon ritualistic soteriology. [A soter being:] ...the incarnate god-man savior who dies as an atonement for sinful humanity and whose body and blood must be consumed by the communicant so that he may become divine and immortal by absorbing the essence of the god.*¹²

The Empire of Alexander, and before him the Persian Empire, caused something that had not ever happened before: a great mixing and co-mingling of vast numbers of peoples, cultures and religions. Each group added something unique. From Chaldea and Egypt came millennia of astronomy and astrological observations. Many of their religious aspects therefore surrounded the yearly cycles and dates such as the solstices and equinox. From the northern countries came religions that focused on the cycles of nature and their gods and goddesses were intimately involved with nature and the comings and goings of the seasons. It was through this intermingling of peoples that divergent religious ideas coalesced. Of this tendency Mr. Bentley explains:

¹⁰ Samuel Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*. New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1966, Page XV.

¹¹ Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*. New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Brothers, 1957 Page 291.

¹² Martin A. Larson, *The Religion of the Occident*. New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1959 Page 666.

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Generally speaking...large-scale conversion to foreign cultural standards occurred only when powerful political, social, or economic standards incentives encouraged it - and even then it led universally to syncretism rather than to outright, wholesale adoption of a foreign cultural tradition.¹³

The most popular mystery cults were those associated with a mother-goddess such as Demeter of Greece, Ishtar of Sumer, Cybele of Samothrace, or Isis of Egypt. One aspect of theology they shared was the coming of a savior. At the same time the Jews looked forward to a Messiah the Zoroastrians looked forward to the arrival of a Saoshyant. Many of these cults offered beliefs in salvation through the resurrection of the body after death. The Zoroastrians also taught: baptism, calling each other brothers, holding Sunday as their sacred day, the celebration of their god on December 25th, Hades (Schoel) as a place of 'punishment', resurrection of the dead at the arrival of a Saoshyant, a final conflagration of the world and more.

There exists in the world only one form of pure totalitarianism: monotheism¹⁴ For those that disagree, all they have to do to prove the statement wrong is to explain what is left out. What is it that is completely beyond the preview of god? What is it that god did not create, has no control or power over whatsoever and cannot diminish nor destroy? Only after that question has been answered can we go on to discuss whether monotheism is or is not totalitarianism. So far, no one has given even one example.

It is the nature of a totalitarian concept that nothing can be left out. No gods or goddesses of another peoples can be allowed to upstage or possess powers that the totalitarian 'one' god does not have. (Whatever your god can do my god can do better.) Therefore, it was necessary to adopt all the characteristics and attributes of the gods of the surrounding peoples. According to Mr. Angus:

This syncretistic tendency increased in intensity under the Roman Empire. It prepared the way for the long sway of Oriental cults over the West and for the success of Christianity itself. Alexander's empire suggested as its counterpart a world-religion. Religious syncretism was carried to such an extent as to render it hazardous or impossible to define the differing features of any one of the numerous faiths competing for adherents in the ancient world.¹⁵

The older state religions were being neglected. Pausanias writing in the second half of the second century speaks of temples, statues, or shrines of one form or another in every city and town. The old myths that were well established and known could not be neglected in building the persona of any new god. The ideas that made up the character of the heroes of mythology came from the practices of the shamans that preceded them. In this regard D. A. Leeming says:

But the shaman's main duty is to intervene for other human beings in the Other World. Thus, Jesus, like other culture heroes, such as Attis, Osiris, and Dionysus, is most a shaman during the events surrounding his death. He dies for the good of all, descends into Hell to retrieve Adam, returns from the underworld in his resurrection, and ascends into Heaven in a final

¹³ Jerry H. Bentley, *Old World Encounters*. New York & Oxford.: Oxford University Press, 1993 Pg. 19.

¹⁴ For a more thorough discussion of the relationship between totalitarianism and monotheism visit my website at <http://www.clarusbooks.us>

¹⁵ Samuel Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*. New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1966 Page 20.

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*shamanistic flight. Both the shaman and the hero risk direct confrontation with the Great Mystery in the Other World so that others may live.*¹⁶

It was because of the widespread domination of the Mysteries throughout the Greco-Roman world that Christianity was able to grow. The mystery cults prepared the groundwork for Christianity's acceptance by the Roman people. Christianity was identified by the Romans as merely another mystery cult. Why, because, Christianity WAS just another mystery cult. In fact over three hundred years later Church leaders were still speaking of their new theology as a mystery to be hidden and they used the identical terminology as the other mystery religions when referring to members of their community: initiated and uninitiated. "So early as the time of Justin Martyr we find a name given to baptism which comes straight from the Greek mysteries--the name 'enlightenment.'"¹⁷ St. Chrysostom, (c.354-407) was born at Antioch, Syria and became the Bishop of Constantinople. He said:

I wish to speak openly; but I dare not, on account of those who are not initiated. I shall therefore avail myself of disguised terms, discoursing in a shadowy manner.... Where the holy mysteries are celebrated, we drive away all uninitiated persons and then close the doors.

St. Ambrose, (c.333-c.397) was elected Bishop in 373 and later became Archbishop of Milan. He was a defender of the Nicene Creed and attended the Council of Sirmium in 378. Ambrose is known as the first Latin Doctor of the West. In his *De mysteries* he says:

All the mystery should be kept secret, guarded by faithful silence; it should be inconsiderately divulged to the ears of the profane... It is not given to all to contemplate the depths of our mysteries...that they may not be seen by those who ought not to behold them; nor received by those who cannot preserve them.

And in one of his other works he tells us:

He sins against God, who divulges to the unworthy the mysteries confided to him. The danger is not merely in violating truth, but in telling truth, if he allow himself to give hints of them to those from whom they ought to be concealed.... Beware of casting pearls before swine, every mystery ought be kept secret; and, as it were, to be covered over by silence, lest it should rashly be divulged to the ears of the Profane. Take heed that you do not incautiously reveal the mysteries.

There are many more church 'fathers' that could be cited that said the same thing. Mr. Burt in *Man Seeks the Divine* wrote:

Christianity is the prime historical example of a synthetic faith - one that gathers into the unity of its own perspective many factors of diverse cultural and religious origin. This character it showed at the very beginning, when it drew together ideas derived from prophetic Judaism,

¹⁶ David Adams Leeming, *Flights, Readings in Magic, Mysticism, Fantasy, and Myth*. New York & Chicago: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974 Pg. 96-7.

¹⁷ Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*. New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Brothers, 1957 Page 295.

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*from Hellenistic mystery cults, from Persian thought, from Alexandrine philosophy, and even from the mystic teachings of the East.*¹⁸

Philo of Alexandria attempted to bridge the gap between Greek philosophy and Judaism. He sought to harmonize them by means of the *Logos* using allegory to decipher the oral tradition within the Torah the same way the Stoics explained the outward allegorical nature of Greek religion. In reality, what Philo did was to expose the mystery and mystical side of the Pentateuch that was never to be divulged to the ears of the profane. In other words he “cast pearls (taught secret knowledge openly) before swine (non Jews).”

The Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle believed that God was inherently "*unknowable*." God was beyond human understanding and all attempts to describe God would end in failure. The Greek *people* however saw their gods differently. To them the stories and plays like the *Bacchae* told of gods and goddesses that had, from time to time, walked among the people and spoke with them face to face. For almost two thousand years the mysteries were celebrated yearly at Eleusis in honor of Demeter and Persephone. Outside the wall of the temple at Eleusis the Greeks would visit the well where Demeter had sat when she first came to Eleusis.

Yahweh, however, was accessible only through the priesthood and Temple, until after its destruction in C.E. 70. Nevertheless, through many laws and commandments, he was constantly involved with the personal details of everyday Jewish life. Yet Yahweh did not and had not ever visited Jerusalem in the flesh nor had he walked as a god/man among his chosen people. Yahweh was the opposite of *both* the Greek philosophic *unknowable* and of the Greek *people*.

Even after Philo, along with other diasporan Jews, tried to transform the Jewish religion into a universal human ethic irreconcilable discrepancies remained between the two religious philosophies. Among these differences were: 1) the seemingly inseparable gap between polytheism and monotheism, 2) the lack of a Jewish god that walked among the people and 3) the message of, and avenue to, salvation leading to an afterlife that was lacking in Judaism since it is not mentioned in the Torah.

Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE) was animated by the desire to bring Greek culture to inhabitants of the lands he conquered and make them more like Greek people. Thus, he ordered his soldiers to marry women in the lands he conquered. This practice of intermarriage came to be known as Hellenization. The Jews were no exception. When Hellenization came along with Alexander's Empire the more orthodox Jews fought it. The elite high priesthood, most probably the Sadducees (= righteous ones) followers of the laws of the Torah rejected newer customs.

The Jewish religion has a particularly unique trait: it is the only specifically racial religion. The Jewish God is a God only for Jews. Other Gods could be worshiped by anybody but the Jewish God was specifically designed only for Jews. By 168 BCE the Hellenized Jews were in open hostility with the more nationalistic Jews. Conflicts between various groups within the Jewish community along with the forced Hellenization and compulsory worship of pagan gods by Antiochus, ultimately led to the Maccabean rebellion and later to independence from the Seleucids.

Rather than continuing open conflict a group of Jews separated from the main community and founded a new sect, the Essenes, under the leadership of the "Teacher of Righteousness," that formulated a Jewish

¹⁸ Edwin A. Burt, *Man Seeks the Divine; A Study of the History and Comparison of Religions*. New York, Evanston and London: Harper Colophon Books, 1970 Page 389.

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God for all people. Because Josephus (*Antiquities* 18) remarks "*It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men that addict themselves to virtue, and this in righteousness;*" it is assumed that they are not much different than other Jewish sects. But, when a closer inspection of their practices are examined, it seems they were quite different indeed. In fact many of their rituals and practices were amalgamations from Greek and Persian religions.

As in the beliefs of Ahura Mazda the Essene theology, in opposition to Judaism, included belief in an Apocalypse, a Kingdom of God, Last Judgment and life everlasting for the reunited soul. At "Judgment" a man's own conscience judges his own soul as opposed to being judged by a deity. Zarathushtra's God was neither Omnipotent nor Omniscient and was called Loving because he works for the good. Ahura Mazda was therefore *not to be feared*. These ideas were alien to Orthodox Judaism. Jehovah, a god of plagues, wrath, and vengeance *was* a god to be *feared*.

A spiteful, murderous, jealous god was morally abhorrent to the sensibilities of those who worshiped a matriarchal mother goddess. It is only through the stitching together of these two philosophically contradictory ideologies that produces the oxymoronic god that is the ultimate of love that one must live their life in mortal fear of. The result of this amalgamate of opposites is the schizophrenic god that is the fount of forgiveness who will condemn you to eternal damnation and torment.

The Essene consisted of adult celibate males that lived in a highly organized monastic like community that held possessions in common. Their ceremonial purity entailed scrupulous cleanliness and the wearing of only white garments as did the Magi. According to some mystically-minded individuals, Jesus performed his miracles using kabbalistic techniques learned from the Essene practice of mysticism. As in Zoroastrianism and Gnosticism they practiced a form ritual purification through immersion in water similar to baptism.

When this universal mystic teaching became historicized and connected with an actual physical baptism by John the Baptist it is impossible to say, but it is very certain that the "heresy" of "election," and the claim of the early mystics that all men who lived the life of true holiness could become Christs, was the unforgivable sin of the subsequently orthodox Fathers, and that this teaching has been relentlessly crushed out by the Catholic Church wherever found throughout the centuries.¹⁹

In the same manor of the sun worshipping Persian anchorites the Essene rose before the sun, and no word was uttered until they had assembled together and, with faces turned towards the dawn, offered up prayers for the renewal of the light (a practice repugnant to the spirit of Orthodox Judaism). Another meaningful difference was the Essene *solar* calendar (364 days) whereas the orthodox Jews had a *lunar* calendar (354 days). The scroll called the *War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* describes a final war between the cosmic forces of Light and Darkness (good and evil).

When taken altogether the practices and rituals of the Essene deviated tremendously from the laws of Moses. It is amazing how many similarities there are between the theology of the Essenes and the Zoroastrians. Understanding of these differences makes it clear why there was so much conflict between the Essene and the wider Jewish community. The religious ideas of Zoroaster predated Christianity by many hundreds of years and are thought to be extensions of what the Egyptians taught a thousand years before that.

¹⁹ G. R. S. Mead, *Did Jesus Live 100 BC?* New Hyde Park, New York: University Books Inc., 1968. Page 359

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Their ideological discord with mainstream Judaism eventually again brought the Essenes into open conflict with the more orthodox Jews. Traditional rabbinical leaders urged Jews to stamp out the new cult. But, rather than being destroyed, the Essenes hid their scrolls by the Dead Sea dispersed and melted into Jewish society. According to Josephus the Essenes had settled "*not in one city*" but "*in large numbers in every town.*"²⁰ There they preached the universality of Yahweh as a God for all people, not just for the Jews. It would not be surprising that that message, their major ideological difference with mainstream Judaism, would be attractive in Hellenized Jewish communities.

According to Josephus many Messiahs and Christs emerged after the earthquake in 31 BCE when the survivors of Qumran poured forth to preach their eschatological message. Essenism in itself did not create Christianity but, along with Philo's work, it laid the groundwork and provided a starting point for inclusion and acceptance of foreign yet corresponding ideas. These new teachings resulted in overcoming all three of the irreconcilable discrepancies mentioned above.

The Children of Hellenized marriages were not well looked on by the full-blooded Jews. These Hellenized Jews were semi-outcasts in the home of their birth. But, living where they did, and having parents from both cultures, many of them felt as much Jewish as Greek. However, some doors were closed to them. For example, they could not become a part of the priesthood. They could not wear the linen robes or officiate in the Temple. With all the wars and deaths in the Jewish community it was necessary for the more orthodox Jew to allow these Hellenized Jews to do the work otherwise done by themselves. Nonetheless, they were relegated to the lowest task in the Jewish hierarchy: a scribe.

But, the slow, laborious and tedious work of copying manuscript after manuscript and book after book year after year made these Hellenized Jews experts in Jewish lore and knowledge. Not only were they well versed in Jewish doctrine but, from their other parent, in pagan teaching and wisdom as well. They also became aware of the method the Jews had used for hundreds of years to incorporate pagan themes into Judaism: From the general to the specific and from the specific to the general. From the literal to the figurative and the figurative to the literal. From history to mythology and from mythology to Jewish pseudo-history.

This works even better if your religion is not written down. Oral arguments can be adopted on the spur of the moment (make it up as you go) according to the conditions encountered. Once the OT was written down (the LXX) it was hardened and could no longer be added to as circumstances changed. Writing down of the Septuagint left Judaism without the flexibility to synchronize pagan themes that came into being with the Mystery Cults. Behind the scenes though the work of synchronization continued and the proliferation of writings from the period attest to the fact that scribes missed nothing of importance. The *Pseudepigrapha*, *Mishna*, *Talmud*, *Nag Hammadi Codex*, *Tosefta*, *Baraitas*, *Gnostic Gospels*, *Apocrypha* as well as the NT and a great number other works known about but lost were all written within a few hundred years of each other.

It is well known that the first Christians were also Jews. Those Jews who compiled the New Testament were only part Jewish. They were also part Greek. "*Put bluntly, He (Jesus) lacked the curriculum vitae of a messiah. He was from a region known as the Galil'ha goyim (i.e. Galilee) whose reputation for*

²⁰ War 2.124

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religious and ethnic mixing - apostasy in the mind of some Jerusalemites - was well established."²¹ They were the children of Hellenization and were the human connection between the ancient Hebrew tradition and the latest developments in the 'evolution' of belief systems. Yet they were not prejudiced against either one. They were free to incorporate or omit anything they wished to. They could take the oldest stratum of shamanistic practices validated by the pronouncements of the Jewish Patriarchs, wrap them around a Greek metaphysical framework, cover it over with a mythological allegory and present it as something new and unique. 'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.'

If the compilers of the New Testament created a religion that was altogether different and strange the people would have rejected it out of hand. The trick was to put together one that was familiar and comfortable. That was done by adopting the principals and motifs of those religions that were so successful in dominating the minds of the people throughout the Fertile Crescent. This way there was no transition or culture shock in adopting this new religion by an otherwise foreign cultural group. All of the NT stories started out as oral stories. They grew and developed their basic form as word-of-mouth recital of themes and ideas current in the wider Jewish community of that time. We all know the saying about "the tales grow taller on down the line." Each retelling of the stories made them more comfortable to those who told them and those who listened to them. Mr. Radhakrishnan comments:

*Besides, the Christian message could not have won its way if it had not found an echo in the religious searchings and beliefs of the time. Christianity developed in the same world and breathed the same air as Alexandrine Judaism, Gnosticism, and Neo-Platonism.*²²

It was not the leaders of the movement but the followers that made the burgeoning movement a religion. They did this by accepting those ideas and written works that they felt added to their growing story. The church itself did the same thing in later centuries to determine which books to include in the canon. (The Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Philip, Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Mary, and others were all left out.) The various books that make up the NT were not written all at one time as one would expect they would be if they were written about an individual historical event. The only word to describe this process is that it "evolved" as some stories, tales and legends were left in and others left out as time went on.

Did they start out to deliberately create a new and altogether different religion? I do not think so. The Hellenized Jews only did what was natural. They brought together the strands of religious thought that mirrored a world that was a reflection of what they were: part Pagan and part Jewish. As people before them they wanted a god in their own image. They saw in the totalitarian mono-god an inclusive simplicity that was lacking in polytheism. At the same time they saw that the mono-god lacked many of the powers that Pagan gods possessed such as virgin birth, sacrificial death to save humanity and resurrection into immortality. The incorporation of Pagan iconography and imagery into a Jewish framework was easier than creating a new Pagan god with Jewish attributes.

Their aim was to bring non-Jews into a form of Jewish monotheism that would be acceptable to them, the pagans, without all of the ridged Jewish observances, ceremonial laws and regulations, i.e. circumcision, etc. In Acts 14:27 it says that he "*had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles*". The only

²¹ R. Joseph Hoffman, *Porphyry's Against the Christians*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1994 Page 122.

²² S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, A Galaxy Book, 1959 Page 220.

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peoples that called other peoples Gentiles were Jews, or in this case Hellenized Jews. Following this in Acts 15 is a debate about whether or not believers in this new sect should be circumcised or not. The decision is made against the painful practice. They knew that having their penis mutilated was one of the reasons the Jews could not convert many non-Jews (Gentiles) to Judaism. This principal of inclusion is true for the ideas and traditions within Judaism as well as those adopted from the outside. Jerry Bentley put the situation this way:

Postexilic Jews adopted and adapted many elements of Zoroastrian belief--including notions that a savior would arrive and aid mortal humans in their struggle against evil; that individual souls would survive death, experience resurrection, and face judgment and assignment to heaven or hell; and the end of time would bring a monumental struggle between the supreme creator god and the forces of evil, culminating in the establishment of the kingdom of god on earth and the entry of the righteous into paradise. Many of these elements appear clearly in the Book of Daniel, composed about the middle of the second century B.C.E., and they all influenced the thought of the Jewish Pharisees. Indeed, in its original usage, the term Pharisee very likely meant "Persian" - that is a Jew of the sect most open to Persian influence. It goes without saying that early Christians also reflected the influence of these same Zoroastrian beliefs.²³

Were the Pharisees (=separated ones) the offspring of the intermarriage between Jews and Persian Babylonians during the Babylonian Captivity? Was the Book of Daniel written by the Pharisees reflecting the dual nature of their parentage? This would certainly explain the adoption of so many aspects of Persian religion as described above by Mr. Bentley. It should be noted that the ideas above and others were accepted by the Pharisees but not by the Sadducees. Especially divergent from traditional Jewish thought were the original Arian/Persian ideas found in the Book of Revelation. Many of these Persian (Zoroastrian) ideas lay dormant within Judaism for lack of an acceptable outlet.

The Magi, said to bear gifts to Jesus in the manger, were the priests of Persian Zoroaster. Thus it is assumed the Magi sanctioned the new god/child as the Saoshyant whose arrival had been long looked forward to. At the same time the story combined the religions by combining the awaited Saoshyant of the Zoroastrians with the awaited messiah of the Jews. Who else except Jews of a Jewish/Persian/Hellenistic ancestry could or would have combined these otherwise opposing ideologies into one story?

Hellenized Jews became the bridge between polytheism and monotheism. For Jews today to admit this would be to admit also that what those Hellenized Jews did was just a continuation of what Jews had been doing for a thousand years. The way they constructed their arguments against paganism was to first take the core concept from the pagans, find a way to incorporate that idea into a Jewish integument, then use it back in a game of one-upmanship (my god can do anything your god can do). Both the Jewish Pharisees and the Hellenized Jews used this same ancient method in an inclusive manner.

Trinitarianism became a necessary *compromise* between polytheism and monotheism. Nowhere in Judaism can there be found a Father/Son god or anything that relates to such a proposition. All Paganisms had a Father/Mother/son trinity. Mary has been elevated to the semi-goddess position with a wink and nod and 'tradition' within the church. Pope Pius XII officially designated Mary the "Queen of Heaven" and "Queen of the World" thus making her Co-Redemptrix. The picture of Mary, Joseph and baby in the

²³ Jerry H. Bentley, *Old World Encounters*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993 Pg. 55-6.

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stable is the original Pagan Trinitarianism. Besides that, virgin birth etc, was the only acceptable way a new god could have come into existence.

Just as the Hellenized Jews wanted to be accepted in both communities, they wanted their religious compromise or 'covenant' to be inclusive enough to be acceptable in both communities. It did not work out that way because they could not see, from their vantage-point in time, the result of their work. They could not see that it was so divergent from conservative Jewish thought of the time it would be rejected by mainstream Judaism and therefore could only exist as a standalone religion. At the same time, Pagans did not see it as a form of Judaism but as a culmination of what their own religions had been preaching all along. This is why Christianity did succeed so well in non-Jewish communities.

There is one word in the NT that has puzzled readers for two thousand years. In the bible it talks about preaching to the "churches" when, at that time, there were no churches! There wasn't even a 'Christian religion' let alone a Christian "church." The word 'church' is a corruption of the Greek word '*churlich*' which was what the Greeks called their colonial settlements. They were communist in style and were sent out to establish Greek city/states all around the Mediterranean. It was only natural that the Hellenized Jews would want their new doctrine taught to the closest Greek/Hellenistic communities. Once the 'churlichs' were converted they were the places where devotees went for religious instruction and to associate with like-minded adherents.

There were stories about numerous men who pretended to Messiah-hood. However that term must be understood in the Jewish use of the time. It did not mean a god, son of god or mode of god in any manner. It was the new religion that turned Messiah into a synonym for god. Originally the term meant merely a ruler, a commander in chief, a temporal human King.

Like Moses, this king would defeat their enemies and lead the Jewish people out through the desert to a new "promised land" where they would not be under the yoke of the Greeks or the Romans. Judas Maccabeus led a rebellion and gained independence from the Seleucids, became the first Jewish King in Palestine, and founded the Maccabean dynasty that lasted until 64 BCE. The Romans were aware of this definition and were wary of anyone called the King of the Jews.

There were real historical Jewish persons that make up the persona of the Jesus character. There was Jeschu Ben Pandera (Yeishu ben Pandeira) that lived 90 to 100 BCE, also the Teacher of Righteousness whom the Essenes claimed had been killed and had risen from the dead and the Jesus related in his book *The Fall of Jerusalem* by the Jewish historian Josephus. Also, Josephus' book *Jewish Antiquities* contains information about three false Messiahs, Yehuda (Judas) of Galilee, Theudas and Benjamin the Egyptian. There was also Jesus Bar-Cocheba, Moses of Candia, and Sabatai Zevi to name but a few of many that assumed the mantle of messiah. None of them can be regarded as the historical Jesus however the background character of Jesus appears to be based in part on many if not all of them.

The Hebrew name for Christians has always been Notzrim.²⁴ This name is derived from the Hebrew word neitzer, which means a shoot or sprout - an obvious Messianic symbol. There were already people called Notzrim at the time of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachyah (c. 100 B.C.E.). Although modern Christians claim that Christianity only started in the first century C.E., it is clear that the first century Christians in Israel considered themselves to be a continuation of the Notzri movement which had been in existence for about 150 years. One of the most notorious Notzrim was Yeishu ben Pandeira, also known

²⁴ Parts of what follows are from THE MYTH OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS by Hayyim ben Yehoshua.

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as Yeishu ha-Notzri. Talmudic scholars have always maintained that the story of Jesus began with Yeishu. The Hebrew name for Jesus has always been Yeishu and the Hebrew for "Jesus the Nazarene" has always been "Yeishu ha-Notzri."

All modern works that mention him are based on information taken from the *Tosefta* and the *Baraitas* - writings made at the same time as the *Mishna* but not contained in it. The skimpy information contained in the *Baraitas* is as follows: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachyah once repelled Yeishu with both hands. People believed that Yeishu was a sorcerer and they considered him to be a person who had led the Jews astray. As a result of charges brought against him Yeishu was stoned and his body hung up on the eve of Passover.

Yeishu had five disciples: Mattai, Naqai, Neitzer, Buni, and Todah. The connection between Yeishu and Jesus is corroborated by the fact that Mattai and Todah, the names of two of Yeishu's disciples, are the original Hebrew forms of Matthew and Thaddaeus, the names of two of Jesus' disciples in Christian mythology. The first two disciples were Peter and Andrew. The name Andrew is a purely Greek name. There is no Semitic equivalent. However, Peter's name was Simon which is purely Semitic. The conclusion can only be that they were a Hellenized Jewish family. They would have spoken both Aramaic and Greek. They would have had both a Hellenistic and a Jewish upbringing. Philip is another disciple with a Greek name.

In the *Tosefta* and the *Baraitas*, Yeishu's father is named Pandeira or Panteiri. These are Hebrew-Aramaic forms of a Greek name. In Hebrew, the third consonant of the name is written either with a *dalet* or a *tet*. Comparison with other Greek words transliterated into Hebrew shows that the original Greek must have had a *delta* as its third consonant and so the only possibility for the father's Greek name is Panderos. Since Greek names were common among Jews during Hasmonean times it is quite possible that he was both Jewish and Greek.

The Notzri movement was particularly popular with the Samaritan Jews. While the Pharisees were waiting for a Messiah who would be a descendant of David, the Samaritans wanted a Messiah who would restore the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Samaritans emphasized their partial descent from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who were descended from the Joseph of the Torah. The Samaritans considered themselves to be "Bnei Yoseph" i.e. "sons of Joseph," and since they believed that Jesus had been their Messiah, they would have assumed that he was a "son of Joseph."

People who confused ben Stada with Yeishu had to explain why he was also called ben Pandeira. Since the name "Stada" resembles the Aramaic expression "stat da," meaning "she went astray" it was thought that "Stada" referred to the mother of Yeishu and that she was an adulteress. It is known from the Gemara that he was confused with Yeishu. This probably resulted from the fact that both were executed for treasonous teachings and were associated with sorcery. Since ben Stada lived in Roman times and the name Pandeira resembled the name Pantheras found among Roman soldiers, it was assumed that Pandeira had been a Roman soldier stationed in Israel.

This certainly explains the story mentioned by Celsius. Consequently, people began to think that Yeishu was the illegitimate son of Pandeira. These ideas are in fact mentioned in the Gemara and are probably much older. According to the Gospel of Matthew, Joseph's father is named Jacob, just like the Torah Joseph. Later, other Christians, who followed the idea that the Messiah was to be descended from David, tried to trace Joseph back to David. They came up with two contradictory genealogies for him, one recorded in Matthew and the other in Luke.

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Most Christian denominations claim that Jesus was born on 25 December. Originally, the eastern Christians believed that he was born on January 6th. The Armenian Christians still follow this early belief while most Christians consider it to be the date of the visit of the Magi. As pointed out already, Jesus was probably confused with Tammuz born of the virgin Myrrha. We know that in Roman times, the gods Tammuz, Aion and Osiris were identified.

..it was at the winter solstice that Tammuz was thought to return from the netherworld; while in Egypt that date was regarded as the birthday of Osiris; in imperial Rome, as that of the Unconquered Sun (Sol Invictus), in turn identified with Mithra... In Hellenistic times, January 6th - the older calendar date of the Solstice - was recognized as the birthday of Aion and the festival of the New Age, while in Christianity, the winter solstice became the natal day of "the Light of the World".²⁵

Osiris-Aion said to be born of the virgin Isis on January 6th and this explains the earlier date for Christmas. Isis was sometimes represented as a sacred cow and her temple as a stable that is probably the origin of the Christian belief that Jesus was born in a stable. It is known as a fact that certain early Christian sects identified Jesus and Osiris in their writings. The date of 25 December for Christmas was originally the Pagan birthday of the sun god, whose day of the week is still known as "Sun" day. The halo of light that is usually shown surrounding the face of Jesus and Christian saints is another concept taken from the sun god. It should also be remembered that the horned god Dionysus is often depicted as a bull being born in a stable.

Others believed that the birthday of their new god was at Easter. This was the time of fertility celebrations in Pagan religions. The idea of "shepherds out tending their flocks" in the dead of winter (December) just didn't make much sense to some early Christians. However, such an occurrence would be natural during the springtime. Mr. Hoffmann gives an example of the expropriation of pagan symbols and iconography. He says:

The power and persistence of the symbol, however, could be shown by the fact that in 325, still during Constantine's reign, Christian bishops in Nicaea would define the power of Christ and his relation to god the father as "light from (the) light, true God from true God." More graphically, the early (ca. 300?) mosaic known as "Christos Helios" (Christ the Sun) in the Mausoleum under St. Peter's in Rome shows a glorified Christ having assimilated the attributes of the sun god. He holds a glob in his left hand and drives a chariot pulled by a team of horses, like Apollo. Grape-vines surround the central figure - an allusion to the life-giving wine of Dionysus, but also to Christ, the true vine, whose "life" is made available in the Eucharist.²⁶

The death and resurrection journeys were very much a part of the shamanistic journey that preceded the pagan mythologies of Near Eastern cultures. The stories of these shamanistic experiences evolved into the Pagan ideas of Gods or Goddesses that died with the onset of winter and were reborn in the spring. *"The memory of the cyclic mysteries haunted its (Christian) followers to the extent that the church eventually had to incorporate many practices from the pagan past into its rituals."²⁷* These more ancient ways of the

²⁵ Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1977. Pg. 273-4.

²⁶ R. Joseph Hoffman, *Porphyry's Against the Christians*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1994 Page 152.

²⁷ Carl G. Jung, *Man and his Symbols*. New York, NY: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1964. Pg. 139.

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shaman did not just come to an abrupt end; they blended into and were modified to fit the needs of the later myths and heroes. Even some Christian writers made it known how little difference there was between the religions.

When we say that the Word, who is the first-birth of God, was produced without sexual union, and that He, Jesus Christ, our Teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter.²⁸

Why did the Christians believe that Jesus and his family had fled to Egypt when Jesus was an infant? Why did the Christians believe that Herod had ordered all baby boys born in Bethlehem to be killed, when there is no historical evidence of this? Since the early Christians believed that Jesus had lived in Roman times it is natural that they would have confused the evil king who wanted to kill Jesus with Herod.

To answer these questions we again have to look at pagan mythology. The theme of a divine or semi-divine child who is feared by an evil king is very common in Pagan Mythology. The usual story is that the evil king receives a prophecy that a certain child will be born who will usurp the throne. In some stories the child is born to a virgin and usually he is son of a god. The mother of the child tries to hide him. The king usually orders the slaying of all babies who might be the prophesied king. Examples of myths that follow this plot are the birth stories of Romulus and Remus, Perseus, Krishna, Zeus, and Oedipus. Although Torah literalists will not like to admit it, the story of Moses' birth also resembles these myths (some of which claim that the mother put the child in a basket and placed him in a river). There were probably several such stories circulating in the Levant that have been lost. The Christian myth of the slaughter of the innocents by Herod is simply a Christian version of this Pagan theme.

Let's say that you were a Jew and lived at the time of the Maccabees. If you went around telling everyone that the awaited messiah of the Jewish people was going to be *a virgin born dying and resurrected savior god whose flesh must be eaten and the blood drank as part of a sacramental meal*, you might well be stoned to death for blasphemy. All of these themes were the fundamental principles of all the non-Jewish (Pagan) religions in the Near East. Other than usurping these ideas from Paganism where else could they have come from?

I am the Bread. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.²⁹

Jesus does not eat the Last Supper: Jesus **IS** the Last Supper! Mr. Larson said:

This concept, which was the core of the pagan mysteries, was an abomination to the Jews, who "therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" [John 6:52.] . . .according to Luke [22:15] Jesus attempts to Judaize this Orphic ritual by calling it a Passover. The Eucharist established by Jesus was therefore a pagan ritual encased within an Essene-Judaic integument.³⁰

²⁸ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 21

²⁹ John 6:35+55-56

³⁰ A Larson, *The Religion of the Occident*. New York, NY The Citadel Press. 100-1

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The fall of Jerusalem and the Destruction of the Temple were important factors in the history of Judaism and Christianity. Deprived of the Holy City, priesthood and the temple, the Jews turned to the Rabbis, synagogue and the Law, and produced the Mishna and the Talmuds. Deprived of the Sacred Place they shared with the Jews the Christians turned to the 'churlich(s)' and to bringing together the diverse writings that later became the gospels.

The accepted dating of the Gospels is: Mark 65-70; Matthew and Luke in the 80s; John in the 100s. But, they did not acquire the status of canonic literature until around 170 C.E. Most are in agreement that Matthew wrote his Gospel using the same sources as Mark and Luke. His narration is different on several essential points. In spite of this, Matthew borrowed heavily from Mark's Gospel although the latter was not one of Jesus' disciples. Even with the accepted dates they were all written as historical narratives long after the events they describe.

The New Testament stories confuse so many historical periods that there is no way of reconciling them with history. The traditional year of Jesus' birth is 1 C.E. Jesus was supposed to be not more than two years old when Herod ordered the slaughter of the innocents. However, Herod died before 12 April 4 B.C.E. This has led some Christians to re-date the birth of Jesus in 6-4 B.C.E. However, Jesus was also supposed have been born during the census of Quirinius. This census took place after Archelaus was deposed in 6 C.E., ten years after Herods' death. Jesus was supposed to have been baptized by John soon after John had started baptizing and preaching in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias i.e. 28-29 C.E., when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea i.e. 26-36 C.E. According to the New Testament, this also happened when Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene and Annas and Caiaphas were high priests. But Lysanias ruled Abilene from c. 40 B.C.E until he was executed in 36 B.C.E by Mark Anthony, about 60 years before the date for Tiberias and about 30 years before the supposed birth of Jesus!

Also, there were never two joint high priests, in particular, Annas was not a joint high priest with Caiaphas. Annas was removed from the office of high priest in 15 C.E after holding office for some nine years. Caiaphas only became high priest in c. 18 C.E, about three years after Annas. (He held this office for about eighteen years, so his dates are consistent with Tiberias and Pontius Pilate, but not with Annas or Lysanias.) Although the book of Acts presents Yehuda of Galilee, Theudas and Jesus as three different people, it incorrectly places Theudas (crucified 44 C.E.) before Yehuda who it correctly mentions as being crucified during the census (6 C.E.). Many of these chronological absurdities seem to be based on misreadings and misunderstandings of Josephus' book *Jewish Antiquities* which was used as reference by the author of Luke and Acts.

Certainly the syncretism of pagan themes is of no small consequence but the syncretism that is most important is the one that took place among the teachings of the various sects within Judaism between the Maccabean and Herodian Periods. In *Dead Sea Scrolls*, we hear of a Prophet (Interpreter of the Law) and *two* Messiahs: a Messiah of David that is a kingly figure who will lead the war and a priestly Messiah of Aaron who will restore the Temple at Jerusalem to its original purity and worship of God. *The Parables of the Book of Enoch* merges the "Son of Man," "Elect One," "the Anointed," and the "Just One" into ONE person. Add to that the stories of the Teacher of Righteousness that *had already come*, had died and was resurrected and the would-be Messiahs that had been stoned or crucified at Passover. Many of the elements of the Christian myth were already present within Judaism leading up the time of the destruction of the Temple.

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Usurpation, synchronization, and plagiarism of pagan art, iconography, and core themes are plain to see for anyone who wishes to look honestly at the historical evidence. For proof of this one need look no further than *what is happening today!* Science and evolution are much too powerful to be defeated intellectually and cannot be destroyed by religious violence or inquisitional decree. The only thing left is for Christians to try and steal it. In Petersburg, Ohio they are building The Creation Museum. In it are displays of Dinosaurs in the Garden of Eden. According to the bible timeline the garden happened only 6 *thousand* years ago. The era of the Dinosaurs, Mesozoic era, lasted between 65 to 245 *million* years ago.

Talking about theft, the evangelical creationist Kent Hovind was found guilty by a federal court in Florida of tax fraud on 58 counts of money laundering and non-payment of social security. Twelve of the charges are for failing to pay employee-related taxes at Dinosaur Adventure Land totaling \$473,818 and 45 of the charges are for evading reporting requirements by making multiple cash withdrawals just under the \$10,000 reporting requirement. Hovind faces a maximum of 288 years in prison and his wife Jo Hovind who handled the money (also found guilty) could face up to 225 years. Dinosaur Adventure Land is another place where creationists present the lie that Dinosaurs and humans existed on the earth at the same time.

The methodology remains the same in every era. Whenever knowledge contradicts or overturns church dogma the first response of the church is attack the new knowledge and those who endorse the knowledge. Christianity fights against any new thing. Whatever comes along is viewed as 'evil' by the religious mind. They rail and preach against it until they realize that their preaching will do no good. People like it and want it regardless of whatever boggy men priest-craft can conger up. At that point they usually shut up their harangues. Then they work at finding a way to incorporate what they called 'evil' into being a prop for religious propagation.

They said the same things when lightning rods were invented and people started putting lightning rods on their houses. Preachers preached from their pulpits that 'lighting rods subverted the will of god if he wanted to have lightning strike your house and burn it to the ground.' People continued to put them on their houses in spite of all the preaching. Soon, throughout the Midwest, the only buildings without lightning rods, that were getting hit regularly by lightning were - church steeples! Preachers shut up and quietly started installing their own lightning rods.

Even Rock-n-Roll today is a tool of religion. There are plenty of old newsreels showing evangelical religious groups burning early Rock-n-Roll records in huge bonfires as they called those records "evil," "satanic," "spawn of the devil," and other similar abusive epitaphs of condemnation. Does anyone remember backward-masking? Sixty years after the birth of Rock-n-Roll there are religious-Rock-n-Roll stations on the radio, Rock-n-Roll bands perform in churches on Sunday and there are religious (Christian) Rock-n-Roll concerts.

This is an unfinished work. Once and while I get time to work on it.

If you would like to add to this work email your additions to [bthorn \[at\] clarusbooks \[dot\] com](mailto:bthorn@clarusbooks.com)